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Geneva



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of Vocational Training

SKILLS FOR GREEN JOBS A GLOBAL VIEW



**SYNTHESIS
REPORT
BASED ON
21 COUNTRY
STUDIES**

Olga Strietska-Ilina • Christine Hofmann • Mercedes Durán Haro • Shinyoung Jeon

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First published 2011

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Strietska-Ilina, Olga; Hofmann, Christine; Durán Haro, Mercedes; Jeon, Shinyoung

Skills for green jobs: a global view: synthesis report based on 21 country studies/Olga Strietska-Ilina, Christine Hofmann, Mercedes Durán Haro, Shinyoung Jeon ; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department, Job Creation and Enterprise Development Department. - Geneva: ILO, 2011

ISBN 978-92-2-125091-3 (print)

ISBN 978-92-2-125092-0 (web pdf)

ISBN 978-92-2-125093-7 (CD-ROM)

International Labour Office; Job Creation and Enterprise Development Dept; International Labour Office; Skills and Employability Dept

green jobs/environmental protection/skill/occupational change/skilled worker/retraining/training needs/developed countries/developing countries

13.01.3

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

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Foreword

Climate change and environmental degradation are jeopardizing the sustainability of many kinds of economic activity around the globe. At the same time, moving towards a greener economy is creating opportunities for new technologies, investment and jobs.

This is the message of the *Green jobs* report (2008), which estimated that efforts to tackle climate change could result in the creation of millions of new “green jobs” in the coming decades.¹ This assessment was made as part of the Green Jobs Initiative, a joint effort launched by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to help governments and social partners turn this potential for decent work into reality by aligning environment and employment objectives.

As part of this Green Jobs Initiative, the ILO Skills and Employability Department defined a global research project to investigate skill needs for greener economies. A series of 21 country studies was conducted in partnership with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), a European Union agency located in Thessaloniki, Greece.² The global synthesis of these countries’ experience was prepared by the ILO. Cedefop conducted the research on the six EU countries included in the study, and also published a separate summary of their findings.³

The analysis of countries’ experience revealed that skill shortages already constrain the transition to a greener economy — in terms of preparing for some new occupations and in terms of changing the skill profile of a large number of occupations. The research also documented the need to provide opportunities for acquiring new skills to those who are at risk of losing jobs in high-emissions industries. Countries’ experiences in adapting training provision to meet all of these needs vary. Some countries are developing innovative strategies and policies to proactively anticipate and address emerging skill needs; others adjust existing mechanisms and systems on a more ad hoc basis. The report has assembled case studies across a wide spectrum of challenges, documenting a broad array of approaches to promote the transition to greener workplaces with sustainable, productive and decent employment.

A number of examples of good practices demonstrate that public policy together with private initiatives can foster the green transformation and job growth. These policies focus on equipping young people entering the labour market and older workers mid-way through their careers with the ability to learn the skills required for adopting new technologies, meeting new environmental regulations and shifting to renewable sources of energy. National efforts are placing increasing emphasis on the core skills that enable workers to adapt to changing technologies, and are also

¹ UNEP, ILO, IOE, ITUC: *Green jobs: Towards decent work in a sustainable, low-carbon world* (Geneva, 2008), available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_098504.pdf

² The background country reports are available at http://www.ilo.org/skills/what/projects/lang--en/WCMS_144268/index.htm

³ Cedefop: *Skills for green jobs: European synthesis report* (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010).

focusing on building up competencies in mathematics, engineering, technologies and science. Many countries and communities target training and employment measures to disadvantaged groups out of concern that the green transformation also be a socially just one.

This research project on skills for green jobs builds on earlier ILO research on how skills development can improve productivity, employment growth and development.⁴ Skills development systems need to go beyond matching training to labour market needs; they need to play a catalytic role in future economic growth and resilience by enabling enterprises and entrepreneurs to adapt technologies, compete in new markets, diversify economies and thus accelerate job growth. The broad availability of good quality education and training means having the capability to take advantage of opportunities and to mitigate the negative impact of change.

Propelling the transition to the green economy is a case in point. Environmental and climate change policies bring enormous employment opportunities but also the risks associated with structural changes. Countries need coherent strategies that bring together energy, environment, education and skills development objectives, policies and responsible ministries in order to adapt to climate change and shift to clean and sustainable production and consumption in ways that maximize creation of decent work and make it available to all. Countries that are succeeding in such a challenging task are placing a high premium on effective social dialogue, coordination among ministries and communication between employers and training providers. Labour market information systems, institutions for social dialogue and labour market mediation services are prerequisites for being able to anticipate future skill needs and to adapt skills development systems accordingly.

Every job can potentially become greener. Integration of sustainable development and environmental awareness into education and training at all levels, starting from early childhood education, is an important task. It will contribute to changing consumer behaviour and triggering market forces to push the greening agenda ahead.

The availability of workers and enterprises with the right skills for green jobs plays a critical role in triggering the green transformation and in facilitating transitions that are fair as well as efficient. Employers investing in new technologies need to be able to find workers with the right skills. Workers and communities that lose jobs in “brown” industries need opportunities for acquiring new skills and employment. This report documents both these needs and provides cause for optimism that the opportunity for job growth inherent in the green transformation will be seized, that it will not be lost for want of right-skilled workforces and that environmental sustainability will be well served by workers, employers and communities, who with confidence stake their future on new, cleaner economic activities.

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⁴ ILC: *Conclusions on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development* (Geneva, 2008).

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