CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

40 years

EN

# Matching skills and jobs in Europe

## Insights from Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey

European skills & jobs survey

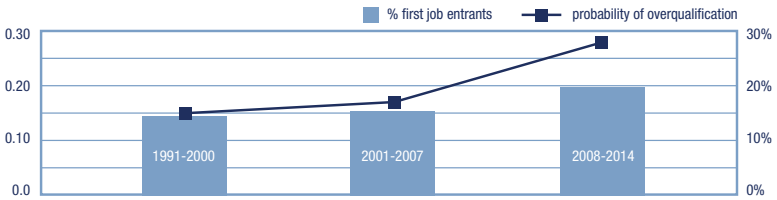
The common impression of skill mismatch in the European Union (EU) is one of employers unable to fill vacancies despite high unemployment. But Cedefop's European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey reveals a more complex problem. Skill mismatch, a term not always clearly understood (see Box), affects most of the workforce, not only those looking for a job.

## Skill mismatch – finding a job

The economic crisis has made skill mismatch worse. Due to weak employment demand, more people are taking jobs below their qualification or skill level. The survey shows that, in the EU, around 25% of highly qualified young adult employees are overqualified for their job. Those graduating after 2008 are almost twice as likely to be overqualified for their first job as those who graduated between 1991 and 2000.

The worry is that the economic downturn will undermine the long-term potential of the EU's skilled workforce. Unemployed people returning to work are also more likely to enter less skill-intensive jobs that may not develop their skills; 42% of adult workers looking for a job in the years following the crisis had few opportunities to find jobs suitable for their skills and qualifications.

**Overqualification of first job entrants by graduation cohort**
EU-28, 2014

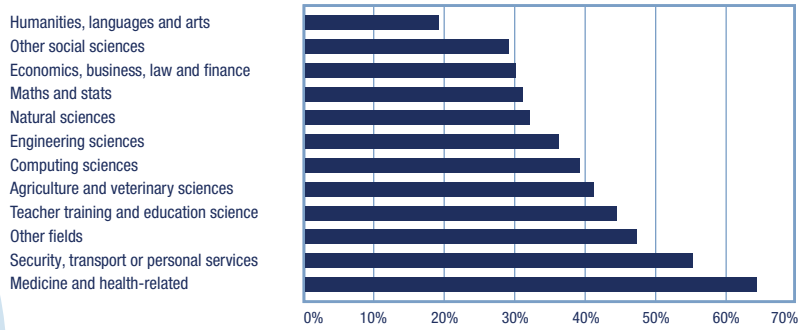



Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey, 2014.

The ESJ survey gives new insights into work-based learning in Europe. People whose studies involved work-based learning are more likely to go directly from education to their first job and into more skill-intensive jobs. Around 40% of adult EU employees have completed education or training involving some work-based learning, but this varies considerably across countries and fields of study. Only about 25% of younger (aged 24 to 34) graduates in humanities, languages and arts, economics, business and law have participated in work-based learning.

Sectors also vary: some 62% of adult employees in professional, scientific or technical services completed studies only in an educational institution. Employees in services relating to education or health are more likely to have completed study that involved some workplace learning (48%).

**Work-based learning by field of study**
EU-28, 2014



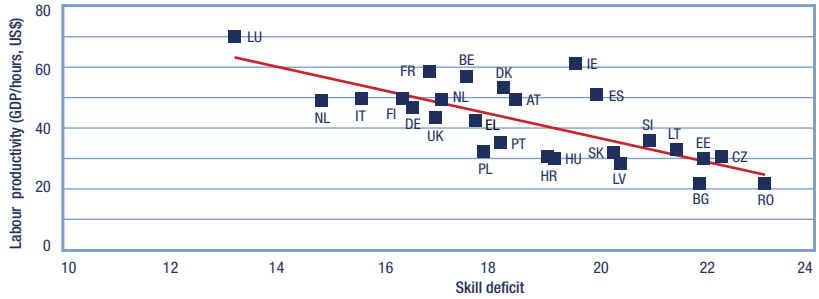

(% adult employees with WBL)

Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey, 2014.

## Skill mismatch at work

The ESJ survey shows that, to avoid skill mismatch, 53% of adult employees in the EU had to learn new things continuously, as the variety of their tasks increased significantly since they started their job. Overall, around 26% of EU adult employees have significant skill deficits (their skills are much lower compared to those an average worker needs to be fully proficient in their job) leaving much scope to improve skills and productivity. More than one in five adult employees in the EU have not developed their skills since starting their job. Countries with the highest shares of adult employees suffering from skill deficits have lower levels of labour productivity.

**Skill deficits and labour productivity**
EU-28, 2014




Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey, 2014.

## What is skill mismatch?

Employers unable to find the right talent, despite offering competitive wages, face skill shortages. Skill gaps arise where the skills required are unavailable in the workforce, for example, due to technological advance. Over- or under-qualification occurs when individuals take jobs that do not match their qualifications. People are over- or underskilled when, whatever their qualification level, their skills do not match their job

## Good jobs for good skills

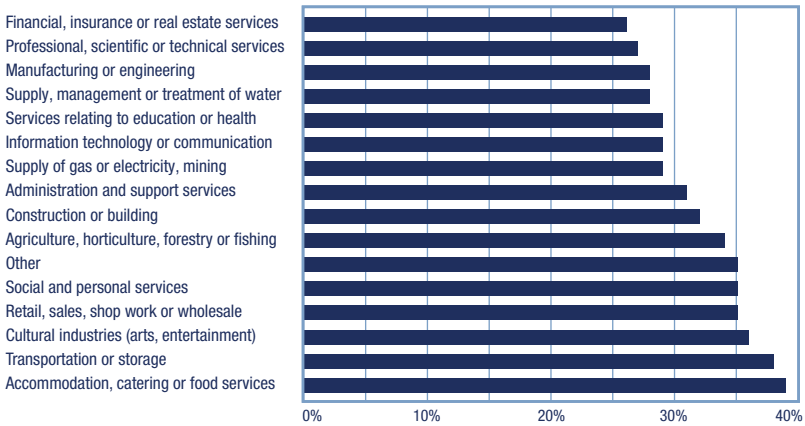
Even though workers with unnourished skills could 'bloom' and develop, not everyone has the chance, as 27% are in 'dead-end jobs', with higher skills than they need to do their job and only limited potential to develop.

This leads to another important survey finding: that **good jobs develop good skills**. Skill-intensive jobs with complex tasks that provide opportunities to acquire skills continuously are a sign of a healthy labour market. Europe needs more jobs that fully use and develop the skills of its workforce.

Cedefop's survey found that 41% of adult employees only need basic literacy skills to do their job and 33% need only basic or no ICT skills at all. In some sectors, job complexity is stable or decelerating. Over a third of jobs in sectors such as hotels and restaurants, transport, and wholesale and retail trades have stagnant skill needs, where the variety of tasks has not changed significantly over time.

The ESJ survey also confirms the importance of employment stability for promoting investment in skill development, as it enables workers to cope with complex workplace changes that place higher demands on their skills.

**Share of EU jobs with stable or decelerating job complexity by economic sector**
EU-28, 2014




(% no change or decrease in job tasks since start of job)

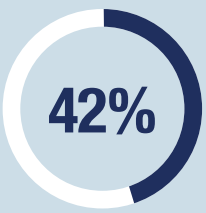
Source: Cedefop European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey, 2014.

European skills & jobs survey

cedefop

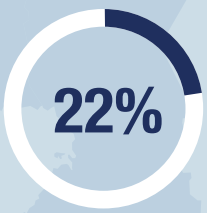
# European skills and jobs survey

Highly qualified young adult employees who are overqualified for their job



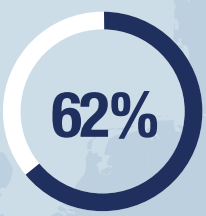

Employees with few opportunities to find a job matching their skills and qualifications

Employees whose tasks have become significantly more varied since they started their job

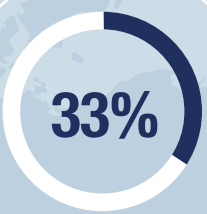



Employees whose skills have not developed since they started their job

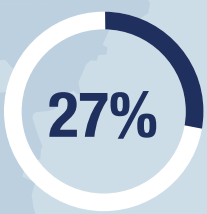
Employees completing education and training involving some work-based learning




Employees in professional, scientific or technical services completed studies with no work-based learning




Employees need only basic ICT skills or no ICT skills at all to do their job




Employees in 'dead-end' jobs with skills higher than needed to do their job and limited potential to grow

Scan the QR code to access the EU skills panorama

Launched in 2014, Cedefop's survey asked 49 000 adult employees (aged 24 to 65) across all 28 Member States how their skills and qualifications match the needs of their jobs. The ESJ survey is the first to look at skill mismatch over time, taking account of changes to people's skills and their job tasks.

European skills & jobs survey

Scan the QR code to access Cedefop's website

Results and key indicators will be available from Cedefop's website (http://www.cedefop.europa.eu) and the European skills panorama web portal (http://euskillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/).

For more information about the survey, please contact:
Konstantinos Pouliakas:
konstantinos.pouliakas@cedefop.europa.eu

8088 EN – TI-01-15-552-EN-N – doi: 10.2801/159395

CEDEFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, E-mail: info@cedefop.europa.eu

Copyright © European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2015
All rights reserved.

visit our portal **www.cedefop.europa.eu**

40 years

Publications Office

978-92-896-1911-0