



Report of the workshop on Which upskilling opportunities for whom? Identifying strengths and blind spots of the different approaches

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Report

Format:

Interactive online session

Speakers:

Mr. Michael Schulze, Task Force „National Skills Strategy, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany

Mr. Daniel Benhayon, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Department of Labour Law and Diversity, Netherlands

Number of Participants:

1450

Main Message:

The presentation of the Qualifications Opportunities Act (Germany) and presentation of the STAP budget (The Netherlands), showed two contrasting approaches at work. One targets individuals and gives them responsibility for their learning budget, and the other favours reaching out to large target groups who have specific upskilling needs, in this case older workers, disabled workers and workers with no vocational qualifications. Both methods are successful in funding the up- and skilling of large numbers of the labour force annually. This goes to show that when carefully planned and implemented by the right structures, various solutions are possible.

Detail of the Meeting:

The session looked at ways to bring upskilling opportunities to more employees, in the context of the increasing number of professional transitions they can expect to experience over their working life, and the OECD prediction that more than one billion jobs worldwide may be transformed by technology, and with increasing speed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two different approaches were presented by the speakers.

The German measure, supported by legislation, provides financial support to employers to upskill employees who are most at risk of losing their jobs, due to structural changes taking place. It is financed and organised through the Public Employment Service. The financial assistance is based on positive discrimination in favour of SMEs and people without formal vocational qualifications. Small



companies can receive 100% of the training costs compared to 15-30% for large companies, and employees who are over 45 years, disabled, or who have no qualification can receive 100% funding.

The Dutch approach focuses on the individual and his/her learning pathways, by encouraging people to take charge of their careers. The system created for that is STAP (stimulerend arbeidsmarkt positie) aims to increase the employability of people in the labour market and is targeted at every adult within the Dutch labour market. In practice STAP is a subsidy for certain educational activities up to the value of 1000 euros. The STAP budget is meant for everybody and does not have targeted groups yet, but could be adjusted. Currently the available budget should serve 200,000 to 300,000 individuals annually. Advantages of the STAP over ILA are, according to Mr. Benhayon, lower overall costs, simple execution, easy-targeted help to special groups as well as a possibility for co-financing, e.g. from employers.

In both cases, the quality of the training is important. Germany only registered training of at least 120 hours, The Netherlands training from the national register but of shorter duration given the ceiling of €1000 per annum. The German system is anchored in the national skills strategy.

The risk of fraud in financing methods came up in the discussion. In the Dutch system, the funding does not go directly to the learner but to the provider of the training undertaken by the learner, thus reducing the circuit and possibilities for fraudulent practice. The issue of using money from the Public Employment Services to finance the initiative in Germany means that it is built on an existing well-established infrastructure and financing source. Mr. Schulze did not see any immediate risk of PES channelling funds away from the targeted at risk groups towards the growing number of unemployed resulting from the COVID pandemic. A dedicated body to administer the funds has also been appointed in The Netherlands.

Conclusion:

Every big crisis has an effect on the skills needs of our continent, so does for example the climate crisis and the COVID pandemic. Cooperative working with the social partners is key to determine the skills needs of the future and the pathways to implementation. Awareness has to be spread to all actors involved be they learners, companies or social partners. Formalizing through certification is a good way to make sure a smooth acceptance of the new skills is achieved.