European Commission

Just Transition Platform Case study:

The Just Skills Hub

Key information

Member State:
Netherlands

Region(s):
Global

Sector:
Valid for all sectors experiencing transition processes

Duration:
There is no set timeframe for the project

Activities and support:
- Data-driven ecosystem for workforce support, including a mobile App that supports workers to capture and explore skills, and apply for jobs
- Supporting understanding of skill supply and demand for companies, governments and unions

Responsible Agency:
SkillLab

Background

To ensure a successful green just transition, it is essential to assess the level of technological innovation in different industries and explore opportunities for economic diversification in the country and the specific region(s). This involves evaluating transition pathways for workers who are moving from unsustainable to sustainable industries. In addition, educational programmes that focus on upskilling and reskilling should be implemented, tailored to the needs of each sector and the requirements of emerging industries in that location. Industrial policies in the country should also support workers throughout the transition, ensuring that their skills are suited to their new careers and providing opportunities for their economic growth.

The Just Skills Hub is a programme that operates globally and provides valuable support to workers and industries that are most affected by the green transition, including oil and gas, coal, and combustion engine manufacturing. The level of economic diversification and technological innovation varies depending on the region and country, however some common emerging occupations identified by the Hub include cable jointers, heat pump installers, operators of hydrogen and renewable energy plants.

Nationally consistent, and locally driven and implemented transition plans are essential to ensure a secure future. For labour market transformation to be both equitable and scalable, social dialogue and planning efforts by employers, workers and governments should be based on workers' experiences and supported by detailed labour market data.

The development of the Just Skills Hub was driven mainly by the realisation that the market's current demand for skills might not be in line with the skills needed for a just transition. For example, there was a strong demand for skills in sectors that are demonstrably 'sunset' industries and do not have long-term prospects that could meet a just transition. However, there was little information available on how to define skill sets and jobs that will be needed in future green industries. The development of the Just Skills Hub is meant to address the lack of information and wrong incentives by the labour market.

Description of project approach

General project details and partners

The Just Skills Hub, led by SkillLab and supported by the United Nations High Level Champions for Global Climate Action, is an initiative that aims to establish a multi-stakeholder ecosystem for planning and action for inclusive and equitable workforce transitions. The Hub seeks to provide immediate and meaningful career guidance to workforce and minimise the negative impacts of the transition on workers by creating a data-driven ecosystem that enables governments, regions and companies to make better-informed decisions.

Other partners such as the EBRD, ILO, ITUC, IDB are convened by the Hub depending on the project and necessities of the initiative. For each project that the Hub is running, the relevant stakeholders to support a green and inclusive workforce transition are engaged, including governments, ministries, labour market agencies, institutions, companies, workers and unions.

Goals and approach

The Hub serves as a co-creation forum for local and global workforce solutions to achieve a more resilient, healthy, and zero carbon economy. It does this by empowering workers and informing policymakers and businesses about skills pathways for workers in declining jobs through user-generated data and by developing tools to guide workers in their careers. The ultimate goal is to create an inclusive informational environment that offers everyone a pathway to employment during the green transition.

Currently, the Hub operates on a request-based approach, supporting countries, regions or companies seeking support for their workers in transition. Project execution is carried out on a case-by-case basis, ensuring tailored analysis and support.

Within its working, the Hub answers the following questions for all stakeholders in the transition toward net-zero economy, including policymakers, companies, worker representatives and especially individual workers:

- *What are achievable pathways into resilient employment for workers in 'declining occupations' (occupations likely to decline in demand due to the green transition)?*
- *What are the workforce's needs of 'green occupations' (occupations likely to increase in demand due to the green transition)?*
- *What are the necessary and available educational options to enable the transition of workers in declining occupations and serve the needs of green occupations?*
- *How can granular skills data be utilised to simplify choices and strengthen decision making in workforce transitions and development?*

Type of activities

As part of its effort and to achieve its mission, the Hub employs a range of activities, including:

- Supporting individual workers through a mobile App that helps workers capture their skills, explore skills and apply for jobs.
- Skills profiling by using a gamified and AI-enabled interview that allows workers to capture their experiences and skills.
- Career orientation based on their skills profile, workers can explore vacancies and receive tailored recommendations.
- Job application support by automatic creation of customised application materials (e.g. CV).
- Building a repository with population-level data that identifies the needs of individual workers.
- Providing a better understanding of skill supply and demand for companies, governments, and unions by the collection anonymous data from workers who create individual skill profiles. To ensure that skill demand is captured accurately, the Hub collaborates with online job vacancy and labour market information providers.
- Identify and address skill gaps through the structured data on skill supply and demand, the Hub then also maps the available education to ensure that the curricula addresses workers' learning needs and enables transitions.
- Building a data-driven ecosystem that enables better decision making on curriculum and policy design, and workforce support for the green transition, ensuring that no vulnerable workers are left behind.

Tools for supporting economic diversification and reskilling/upskilling

The tools developed by Just Skills Hub to support economic diversification and reskilling/upskilling include:

1. Informing equitable workforce transitions by collecting data to ensure that no one is left behind;

The Hub developed an award-winning AI tool – that can also be presented in the form of an App (see Figure 1) – that interviews workers about the skills they use day-to-day and enables the creation of structured skill profiles of their occupations. The AI organises skill and occupation taxonomies, including the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO),[1] the Occupational Information Network (O*NET)[2] and any other taxonomy. The organised skill taxonomy helps develop an adaptive line of questioning to survey each workers' unique skills and connect people with jobs and education (see example Figure 2 for the skills mapping tool).

1 https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en
2 https://www.onetonline.org/

Box 1: The European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) and the Occupational Information Network (O*NET)

ESCO is a comprehensive system that provides a common language for labour markets across Europe, facilitating recruitment processes and promoting greater labour mobility. The taxonomy is made up of over 2 700 occupation descriptions, 13 000 skills and 1 400 qualifications,[3] and is continuously updated to reflect changes in the labour market and the evolution of skills and occupations. It is used by a variety of stakeholders, including education providers, public employment services, and job seekers. ESCO can contribute to addressing skills shortages and promoting upskilling and reskilling by identifying the skills and qualifications required for specific occupations, and supports the development of education and training systems that respond to the needs of employers and workers.

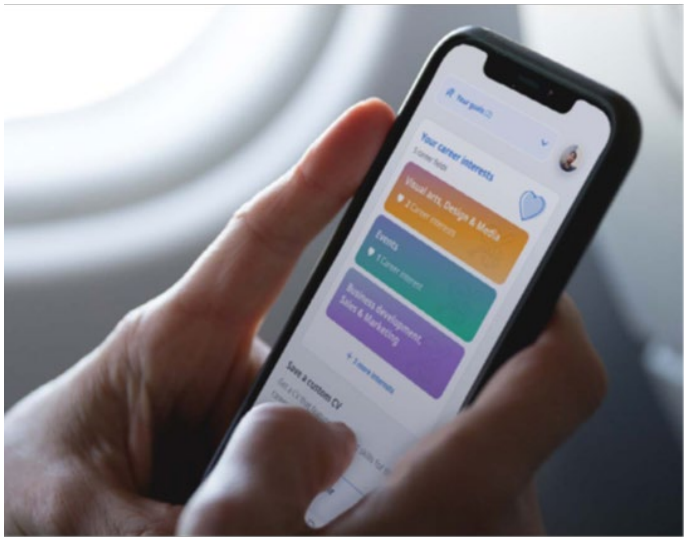
Similarly, in the USA, the O*NET database is a valuable resource for anyone seeking comprehensive information on industries and jobs. It provides detailed information on occupational skills, abilities, knowledge, and work activities for over 1 000 occupations,[4] including job duties, required experience, education, and average salaries. The standardised language and metrics used by ONET ensure consistent and reliable occupational data collection and analysis. Users can explore and match their skills and interests with compatible occupations using the interactive website. Employers and human resource professionals can also use ONET information to create training programmes, job descriptions, and define essential job requirements.

The aim of the tool is to help identify achievable pathways into resilient employment and analyse the available and necessary educational options to enable the transitions for workers in polluting industries. With more detailed data in hand, transition planning and social dialogues can be more tractable and actionable.

2) Enabling the green transition by collecting data to inform planning to ensure net-zero economy.

The transition from a carbon-intensive economy to a net-zero future will require a workforce equipped with the right skills demanded by a green economy. To this end, the Hub creates worker-generated skills data for in demand green jobs and maps the educational environment to establish gaps in the curriculum for each project. The collected data is then integrated into the developed tools to encourage and support workers' choices of green careers and the acquisition of green skills. In this way the Hub aims to define the workforce needs of the green economy and analyse the available and necessary educational options to enable the green transition.

Figure 1. Just Skills Hub App



Source: Just Skills Hub brochure (2022)

3 https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/actions/european-initiatives/esco-european-skills-competences-qualifications-and-occupations
4 https://www.onetcenter.org/overview.html

Figure 2. Just Skills Hub skills mapping tool Key success factors and lessons learnt

Source: Just Skills Hub brochure (2022)

Key success factors and lessons learnt

The Just Skills Hub is currently working on several projects, however since they are not yet completed, it is difficult to assess key success factors and lessons learnt.

Scalability and transferability

In terms of scalability and transferability, the Just Skills Hub relies on a mobile application, available in all EU languages, to generate structured data around the skills of individual workers. Given that implementing partners are responsive and can give access to workers data, the approach is scalable and transferable to any given environment.

Moreover, all data and information of the Hub is based on the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. Therefore, the generated data of the Hub is standardised across EU Member States. This doesn't mean however that the Hub can only be implemented in the EU but also worldwide, as a project is currently being developed in Egypt.

The experience of the Hub gained from working for a particular company or region can be adapted and applied to other areas or regions with similar characteristics. This can help identify valuable insights, create career opportunities for similar workers who have been or may be affected, and provide open-source data to other regions with similar needs.

Key challenges

The Hub's main obstacles are related to obtaining funds and identifying and approaching a diverse set of implementing partners. The Hub's essential component is the data created by workers who use it. Therefore, workers must be able to access the Hub to make a difference. Gathering data from workers has also proven challenging, and accessing data from affected workers sometimes depends on partnering with the right organisations.

Strengths and weaknesses

The Just Skills Hub offers a multi-stakeholder perspective on inclusive workforce transition. The Hub is a tool that will show future job demand and future skills needed, therefore contributing to a just workforce transition.

The Hub stands out for offering a personalised service not only to companies, but also to impacted workers. Its App, available for workers, provides suggestions that cater to career aspirations, skills needed to achieve the aspirations and educational pathways available. This detail sets the Hub apart from consultancies that provide only generalised recommendations to companies.

However, one of the weaknesses is that the Hub's effectiveness relies on partner sophistication and accuracy of data on affected workers and regional labour markets. Another challenge is the Hub's demand-driven nature, which makes it challenging to secure long-term funding and partner engagement.

Outlook

Currently the Hub is running several pilot projects in order to evaluate its effectiveness. Once it has been proven to work and benefit workers and regions, the Hub will be developed into a scalable model. The ultimate objective is to establish an easily implementable model that companies, regions, and workers can use to plan, anticipate, and take necessary measures for a fair transition.

It is also crucial to provide de-risk implementation strategies for partners in the future since when working with companies, these may not always be willing to share data and employers may not want to inform employees of potential job losses.

Additionally, obtaining more and longer-term funding, writing funding applications with partners, and increasing capacity are necessary to quickly scale up and benefit from the Just Skills Hub.

Lastly, in the future, it would be helpful to determine not only the skills and educational gaps that exist in achieving fair workforce transition, but also to identify both company and national level solutions. For instance, if workers aspire to obtain certain kinds of green job but no training for it exists in the area, possibilities might include establishing vocational training programmess for adults in specific green skills, revamping the national adult education system, enlisting support from the Ministry of Education or of Labour, or improving the relevance of existing courses.

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Manuscript completed in July 2023
Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

Print ISBN 978-92-68-17580-4 doi:10.2776/982238 KN-09-24-426-EN-C
PDF ISBN 978-92-68-17581-1 doi:10.2776/86949 KN-09-24-426-EN-N

Publications Office
of the European Union