Konstantinos Pouliakas

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

Making sense of uncertainty: Two decades of Cedefop building the EU's skills intelligence warehouse, helping learners navigate changing jobs and skills in Europe

Over the past 20 years, Cedefop has transformed skills intelligence from a technical exercise into a cornerstone of modern labour market and education policy across Europe. Far beyond traditional labour market information, skills intelligence represents a dynamic, expert-driven process of gathering, analysing and communicating both quantitative and qualitative insights on skills trends and mismatches.

Through innovative tools like the European Skills Forecast, Cedefop's European skills and jobs surveys (ESJS) and the big-data-driven Online Vacancy Analysis Tool for Europe (OVATE), Cedefop provides actionable intelligence to anticipate future skill needs and guide policy development, curriculum design and career guidance.

Yet, five core challenges remain: aggregation limits practical use, data gaps and comparability persist, resourcing is uneven, real-time insights are partial and accurately surveying skills is complex. Big data, while promising granularity and speed, faces representativity and classification hurdles.

To address these gaps and align educational provision with evolving labour market needs, Cedefop champions a participatory and blended methodological approach to skills intelligence. Cedefop's recent TalentGap index is a case in point.

Ultimately, the next generation of skills intelligence depends on robust skills governance, shared infrastructures, and sustained multi-actor engagement. Cedefop's proposed EU blueprint provides a strategic framework for countries to build tailored systems that support better learning and stronger skills matching.

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