



NEW ILO STUDY SAYS GREENER ECONOMIES WILL REQUIRE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW GREEN JOB SKILLS

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GENEVA (ILO News) – The employment potential of the transition to greener economies cannot be realized without the development of a wide range of relevant new skills for green jobs, according to a new global study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) of 21 countries¹ representing some 60 per cent of the world population.

Skills for Green Jobs: A Global View is the most comprehensive look to date at the needs and challenges of developing new skills that will be critical to sustaining the growth of green economies. The study was produced by the ILO Skills and Employability Department (EMP/SKILLS), in cooperation with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).

The study notes that while greening economies offer considerable potential for job creation, the development of new skills will be very much country specific, largely determined by environmental challenges, national policy and politics and the regulatory framework. However, international policy and legislation are playing a greater role and are driving further change at the national policy level.

“Environmental and climate change policies bring enormous employment opportunities but also the risks associated with structural changes”, says Olga Strietska-Illina, Coordinator of the study. “The report shows that economies moving towards greener production can seize the potential for job creation if they deal with the coming structural change and transformation of existing jobs.”

The report reveals that skill shortages already pose a major barrier in the transition to greener economies stemming from a number of factors such as underestimated growth of certain green sectors, for example in energy efficiency in buildings; a general shortage of scientists and engineers; the low reputation and attractiveness of some sectors, such as waste management; and the general structure of the national skill base.

The transformation wrought by greening economies affects skill needs in three ways. The first is ‘green restructuring’, which implies shifting activities at the industry level from carbon intensive to greener production. The second is the emergence of new occupations with the introduction of new regulations and the development of new technologies. Third is changing skills profiles in existing occupations as the result of greening production processes and workplaces. This source of change in skill requirements is the most widespread. It also calls for major efforts to revise existing curricula, qualification standards and training programmes at all levels of education and training.

Although new job opportunities arising from greener production are expected to offset job losses, workers who get ‘green’ jobs may not necessarily be those who lost their jobs in so-called ‘brown’ industries. The study says retraining workers and upgrading skills remain matters of urgency in facilitating a smooth and just transition to a low-carbon and green economy.

The conclusion from the country comparison is that sustained inclusion of skills development in strategies to speed the greening of national economies remains limited to isolated initiatives.

In addition to this specific problem of lack of policy coordination, many of the case studies also revealed a lack of enforcement of environmental regulations already adopted. This diminishes the incentive to invest in new skills, which, in turn, detracts from compliance capabilities and, in a downward spiral, further exacerbates the difficulty of implementing regulations.

“Every job can potentially become greener. The 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”, Ms Strietska-Illina says.

In 2008, the ILO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) jointly launched the Green Jobs Initiative to help governments and social partners turn this potential for decent work into reality by aligning environment and employment objectives and policies.