

Investing in the Future of Jobs and Skills. Scenarios, implications and options in anticipation of future skills and knowledge needs for the Post Sector.

Policy Summary

The post sector comprises postal services ('national postal activities') and courier activities. An important difference exists between companies with a universal service obligation (Universal Service Providers: USPs) for specific mail items and other companies with no such obligation (mainly Competitive Postal Operators: CPOs). With 40,000 enterprises, of which 37,000 in courier activities, the post sector employs 1.94 million people, accounting for 0.89% of overall EU employment. Almost 81% of all jobs is based in the EU-15. Two thirds of total sector employment is in national postal activities (mainly USPs). EU employment has grown with 1.7% annually, and with 2.7% in the Member States during the period 2000-2006. Almost two thirds of value added is generated by national post activities and one third by courier activities.

Sector strengths include a stable overall demand, trusted brands, dense networks but also an influx new innovating companies. Liberalisation and deregulation offer opportunities for new start-ups, new products and services and further diversification, and opens up new forms of public-private cooperation for the sector. High skilled job opportunities will increase, together with a need for up-skilling and retraining of important parts of the workforce, either to take on new other functions in post, or to be (re)employed elsewhere in the economy. Weaknesses include a still pervasive 'old' culture of incumbents (at least in some Member States), monopolistic market structures, and the universal service obligation affecting competition. Threats include security, relocation (in the longer term) and increasing regulation. Another threat is image-related and concerns the attractiveness of jobs in a downsizing, yet dynamic sector in a context of technological change.

Four main recommendations apply to the future of skills and jobs in the post sector. There is a need to: a) Improve the image and attractiveness of the sector in view of attracting high-skilled and technical staff; b) Collaborate with all relevant stakeholders and intensify co-operation: Partnerships for Innovation and Job creation and Social Dialogue; c) Recognise prior learning, promote skills assessments and their validation and stimulate the international and intersectoral acknowledgement of qualification certificates; and d) Invest strongly in human capital and enhance the possibilities to engage in life-long learning.

More flexible and apt education and training are indispensable to address the future needs of both employers (firms) and employees. The following eleven recommendations are key:

- 1) Adapt and modernise vocational education and training (VET) and general education systems, but do this nationally rather than at the EU level;
- 2) Modernise VET by enhancing flexibility and addressing training needs by modularisation;
- 3) Work towards closer collaboration between companies and education;
- 4) Increase flexibility by promoting e-learning and blended learning;
- 5) Pro-actively re-train and up-skill employees and those made redundant;
- 6) Train the trainers – keep vocational training up-to-date;
- 7) Improve the provision of information on future skills and training needs to both students and trainers;
- 8) Provide career guidance for labour market entrants and employees;
- 9) Actively promote multi-skilling;
- 10) Provide special training and support to self-employed and part-time employees;
- 11) Specifically address and take special courses and support for older workers seriously.