FROM SKILLS GAPS TO SKILLS ECOSYSTEMS

Work, Learn, Evolve: Conference on Workplace Learning

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OECD work on local employment and skills

Labour market data, evidence, intelligence



Reforms and policy implementation



Country-, regional- and city-level policy reviews



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What defines our approach to support cities, regions and countries?

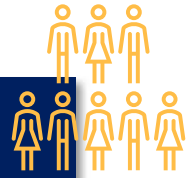


Empowering places

Helping regions and cities make the most of existing systems

People first

Putting people at the centre of employment and skills





Actionable guidance

Providing concrete policy advice for reforms and decisions

Ecosystem perspective

Engaging all actors across the skills and employment landscape



Peer learning

Sharing good practices across countries to enhance effectiveness



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Responsive local skills systems exist within an ecosystem

Understand local skills systems

How responsibilities, funding and delivery differ across levels of government.



Respond to labour-market pressures

How local actors can mobilise untapped labour supply and support transitions.



Anticipate future local skills needs

[FORTHCOMING]

Strengthening the local relevance and use of skills anticipation in the Nordics

How can forward-looking intelligence become more locally relevant and better support place-based industrial and economic development?

Structural change is reshaping skills needs, with highly uneven impacts across places

Demographic change

Digitalisation & AI

Green transition

Reversal of globalisation

Local jobs in decline, local jobs in demand, in different places

32% vs 21%

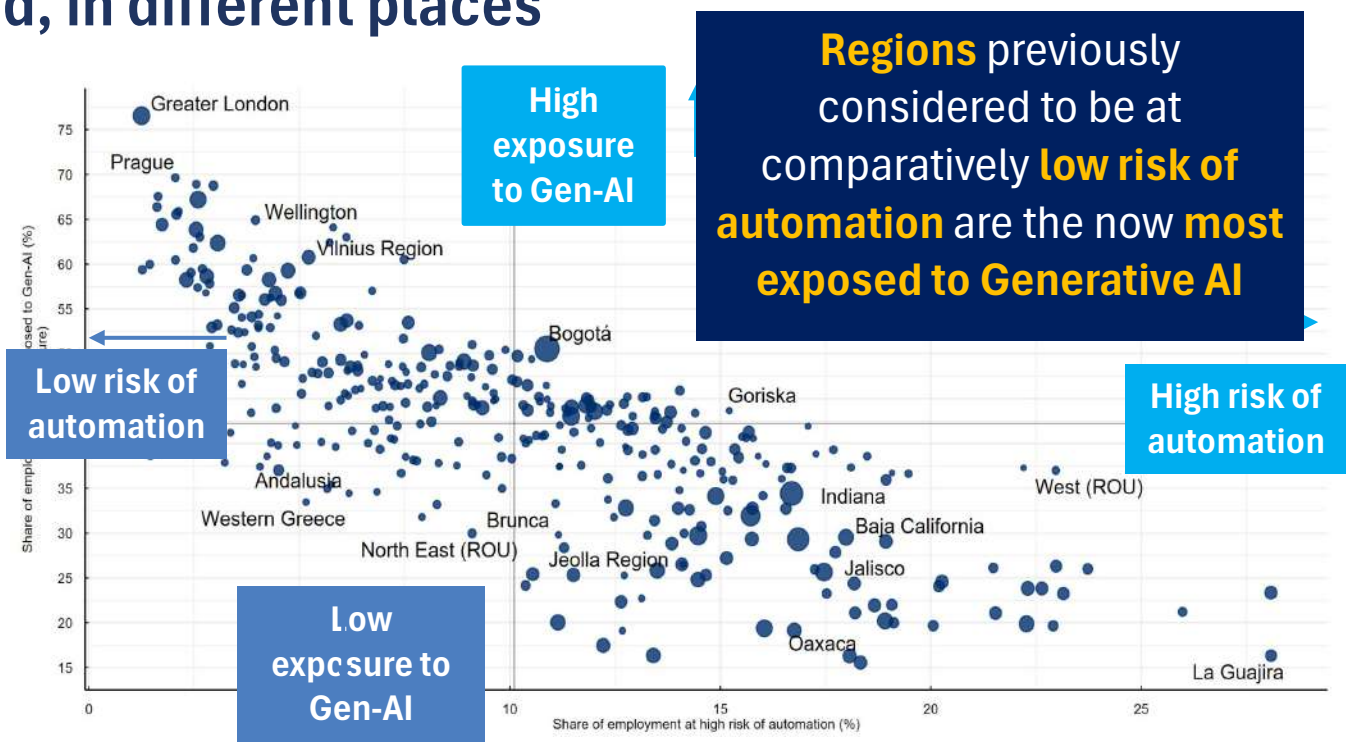
AI exposure is higher in urban labour markets

Share of workers exposed to generative AI in urban vs non-urban areas; in some countries urban areas are 2–3 times more exposed.

More than 10 pp

Large disparities in exposure to the green transition

Share green-task jobs ranges by over 10 p.p. between the most and least exposed region, such as in Finland, France Hungary, Lithuania and the U.S.



OECD (2024), Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2024; OECD (2023), Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2023.

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Regional shortages in ICT & green talent hold back innovation and growth



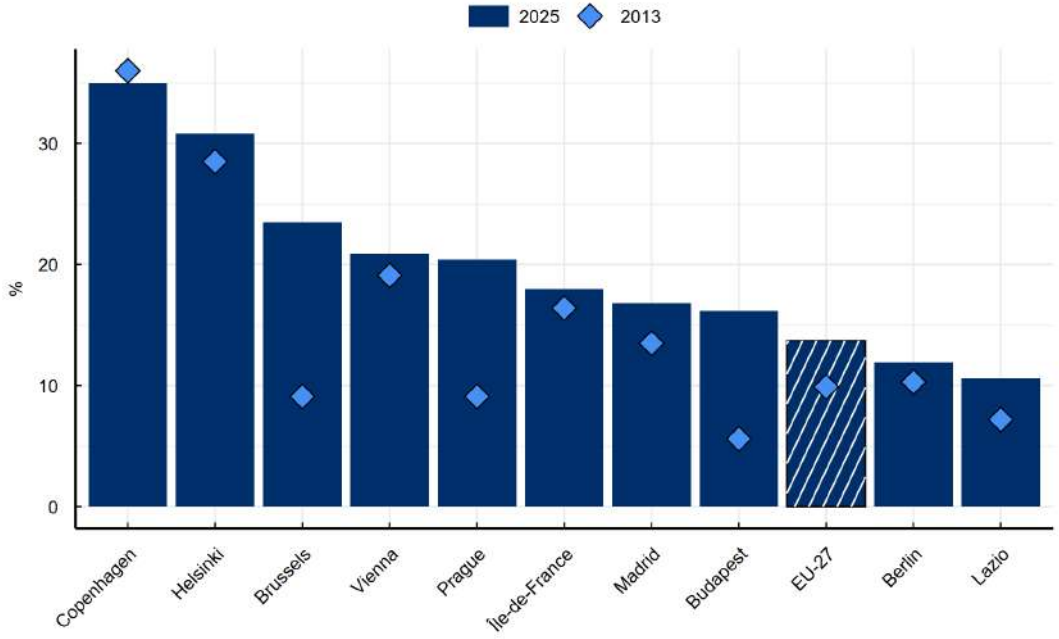
ICT jobs are at least **twice as tight** as the average job in **over six out of ten regions**



Green-task jobs are about one third tighter than the average job

Changes require strong **local adult learning** cultures, but in most places, **rates have not kept up**

Share of adults aged 25-64 who participated in training in the last 4 weeks



What's the risk?

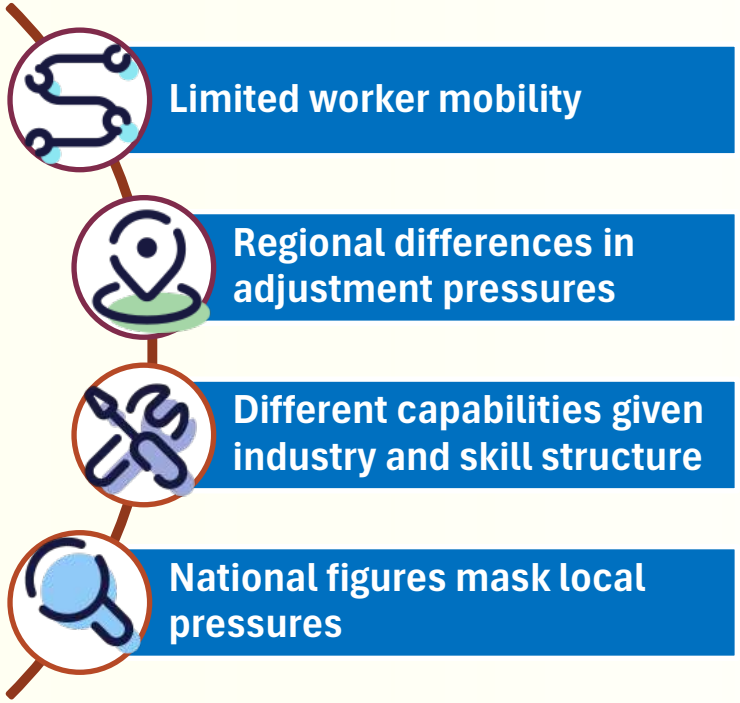
Labour shortages risk **hampering productivity**, **economic growth** and a successful **digital and green transition**

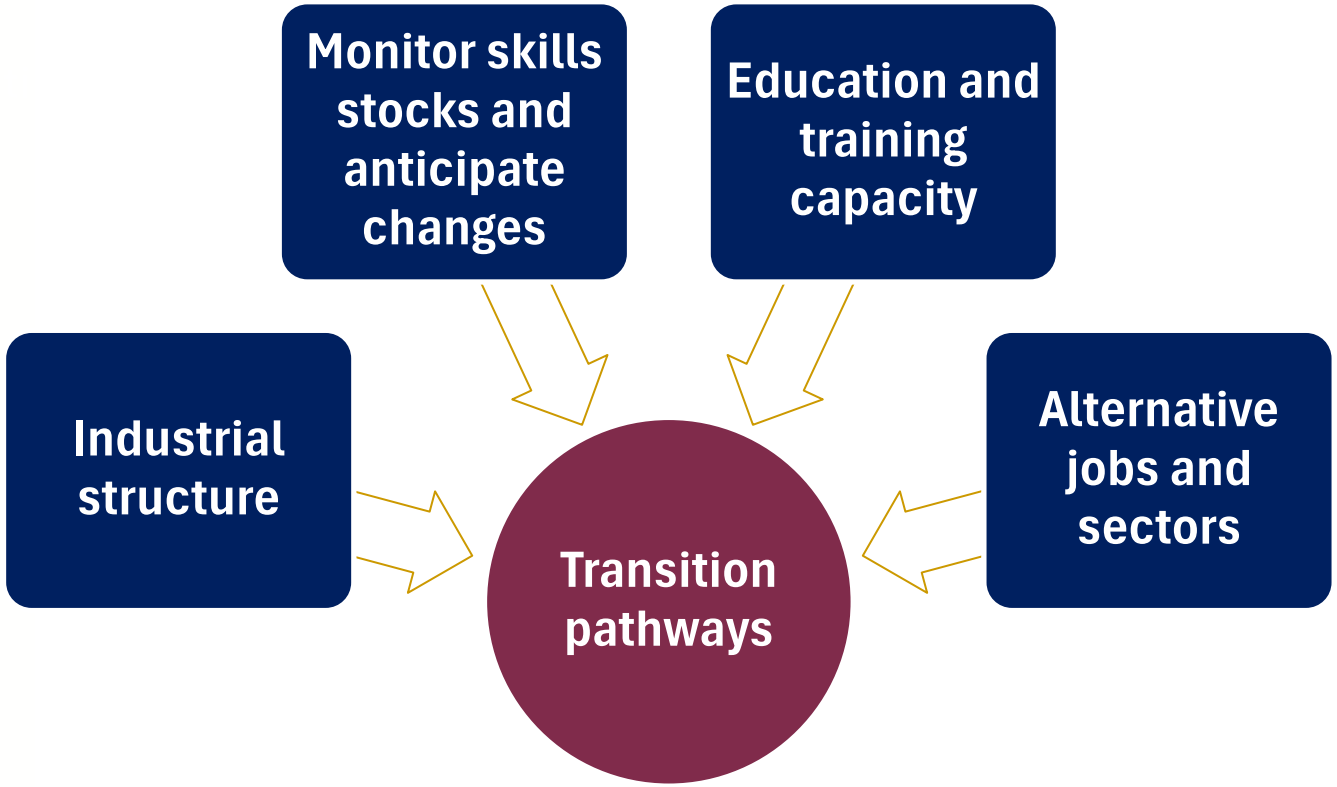
Increases of less than 2 pp in Copenhagen, Berlin, Paris, Vienna

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Moving towards proactive and impactful place-based skills and workforce strategies

Why geographic granularity matters





Transition planning needs to move beyond monitoring expected shortages

Steps towards coherent and proactive place-based skills strategies

Exposure to structural change

Identify jobs and sectors in regional and local economies exposed to AI, green transition, ageing or restructuring

Capabilities to adapt

Map existing local skills stocks, occupations, institutions and industrial ecosystems

Transition opportunities

Understand related growth sectors, investments and feasible job transitions



Two existing LEED tools

Place-based policy response

Link local training supply, PES support, employer engagement and place-based industrial strategy

LEED tools for understanding industrial and skills linkages to support place-sensitive diversification

Industrial structure

Map activities that co-occur across locations
→ Reveal **related industries**



Local skills structure

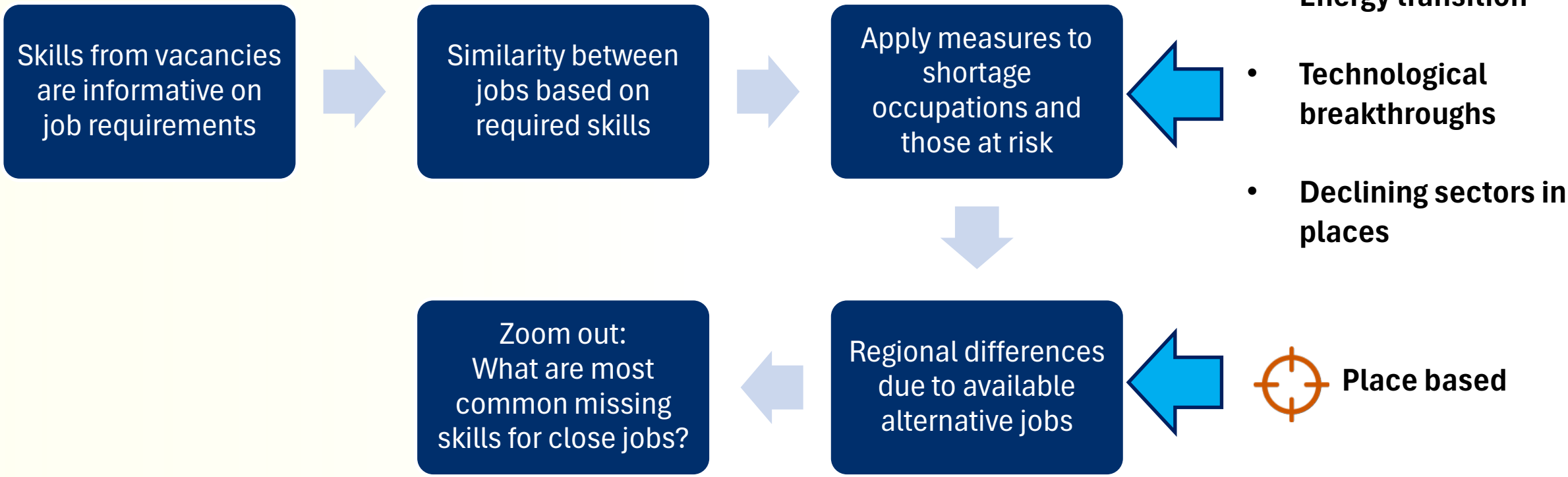
Map skills that co-occur across occupations
→ Reveal **proximate occupations and feasible job pathways**



Core objective: Identify capability and skills gaps and define realistic diversification pathways for **place-based industrial strategies**

Combine with a skills- and place-based approach to job transitions

A big data approach on skills, jobs and places



Basauri, A. et al. (2026), "The role of skills and geography for job-to-job mobility in the green transition", OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Papers, No. 2026/06, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/4144ab74-en.

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The right skills might not be enough: job transition options differ by place

Vacancy-to-employment ratio of emission-intensive occupations, average and maximum within region, 2023.



Many workers have few direct options in their own region

For some occupations, feasible pathways are plentiful in some regions

Occupations with, on average, the most and fewest options vary in each region

Some applications...



This quantitative work serves as a flexible tool:

- Determine skills gaps – what are the missing skills to become a …
- Identify **realistic** career pathways for workers
- Realistic in terms of **skills**… and **location**
- Adaptable to **any place specific job transition need**



Supports policy work in several dimension:

- Career guidance, job matching, skills-based hiring
- Evaluate local training and adult learning
- Tailor training to bridge those gaps and respond to local labour market needs



How to get started?
Avenues for action

Where to start? Key questions

What are the **most pressing challenges** and possible short and long-term objectives?

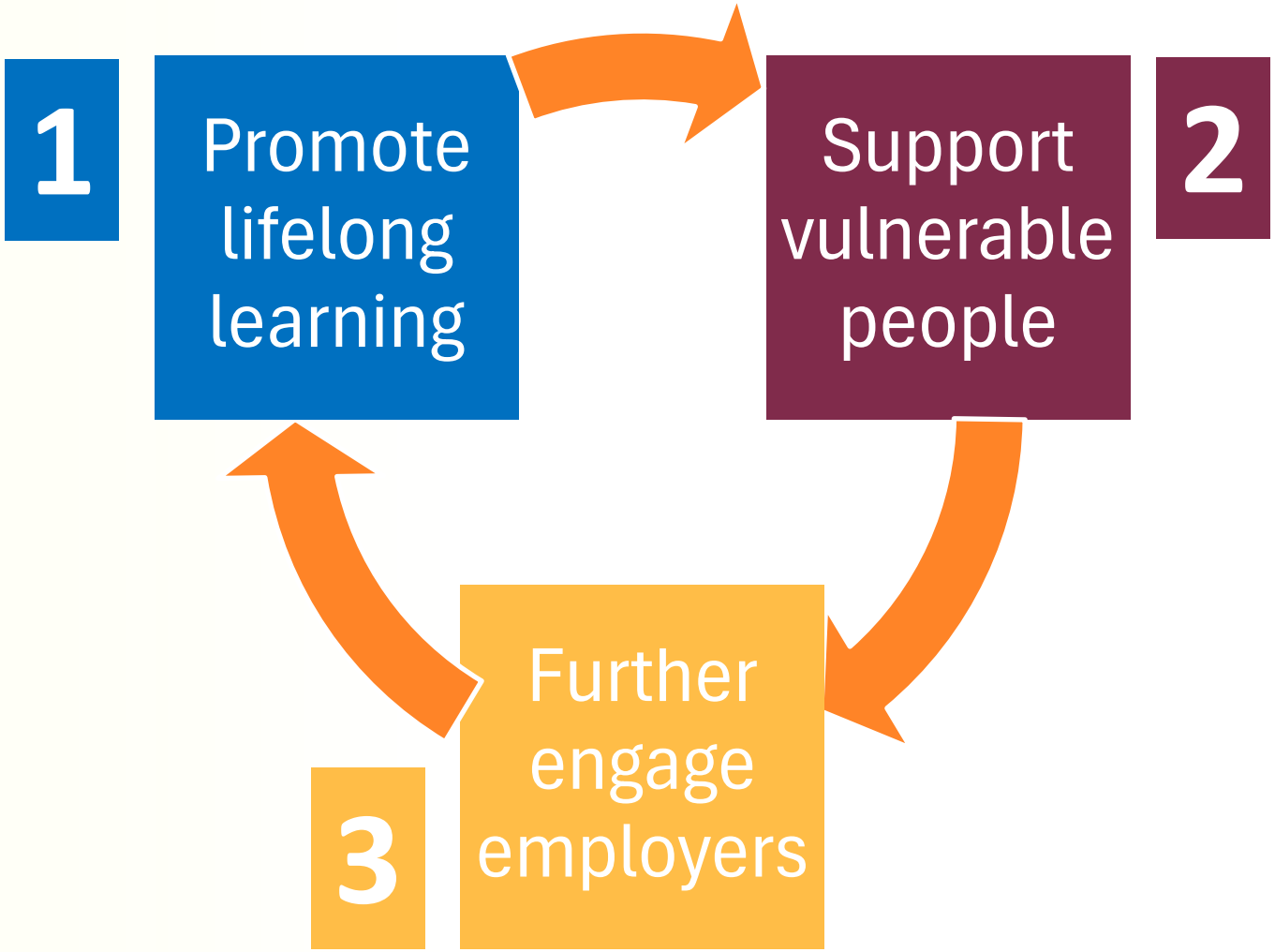
Which groups are the **most vulnerable** or furthest from the labour market?

Which **stakeholders**, should be involved in developing coordinated actions?

Does the local economy face **specific challenges?**

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Three pillars to build more effective local skills systems





Employer engagement - some recent lessons from good practices

Why do we need to engage employers in designing training and education programmes?



Labour market intelligence

Employer insights add essential context to labour market data, helping to identify and interpret evolving skills needs



Training complementarities

Most skills development occur at the workplace, making employer involvement essential for relevance and impact



Pathways into employment

Employer engagement and skills-based hiring help align training with recruitment needs and support smoother school-to-work transitions



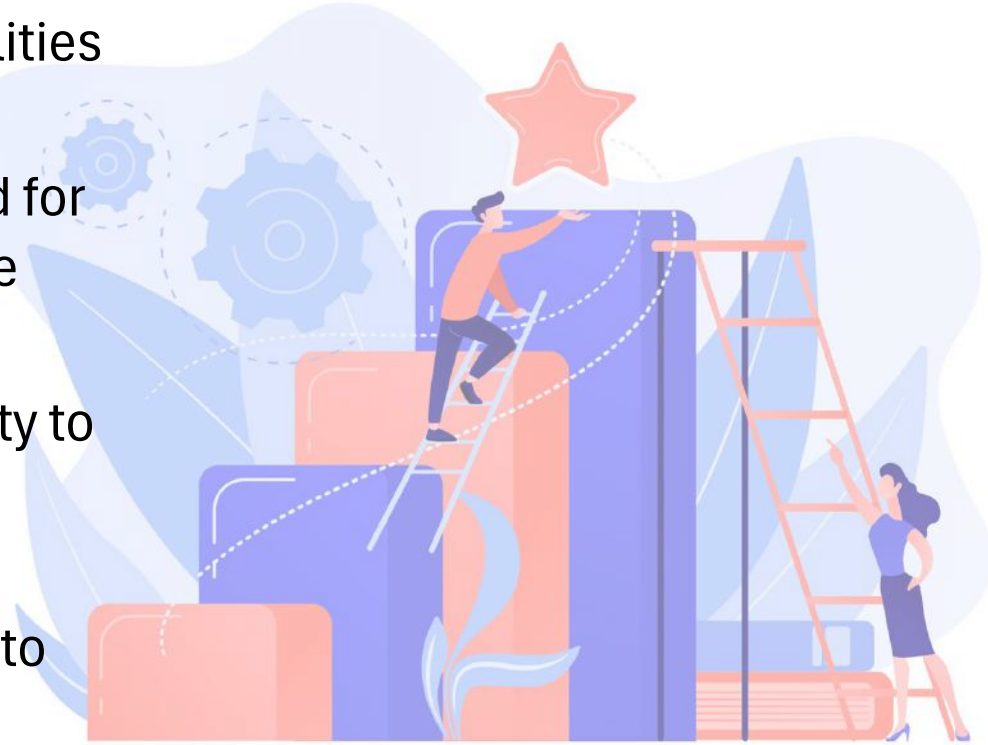
Innovation and economic performance

Innovative workplace solutions and training for managers and leadership

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Why is it not always easy to engage employers in designing education and training programmes?

- **Employers often face unclear benefits,** with tension between policy goals and business realities and few incentives to invest in lifelong learning
- **Labour market information** is usually designed for policymakers rather than employers' immediate workforce planning needs
- **SMEs often lack** the time, resources, or capacity to engage in the design or delivery of training
- **Fragmented governance and overlapping responsibilities** make it difficult for employers to know whom to engage with



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The role of subnational governments in adult skills systems



Why is it important to understand the role of subnational governments in skills systems?

- **Urgency** → Strong adult learning systems are needed to respond to growing labour and skills demand.
- **Distribution of responsibilities and system complexity** → Subnational governments often play a key role in adult learning systems; effective governance structures are essential.

Employment services	Adult education	VET
• Often led or financed nationally, but delivered locally through offices and partners.	• Frequently designed or delivered by subnational governments and non-state providers.	• Often requires national, regional and employer alignment.

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Slovenian Public Employment Service provides integrated employer services for inclusive hiring



- All employer services in one place
- Supported by a customer relationship management system
- Tailored services

- PES counsellors represent jobseekers with barriers to employers
- Builds trust-based, long-term relations

- Communication, negotiation, and persuasion skills
- Labour market and sectoral knowledge
- Learning on inclusive and green recruitment practices

Economically inactive/long-term unemployed

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Engaging SMEs in Austria through HR counselling and workforce planning for SMEs – a gateway to other support

Pathways into employment

Offer tailored HR consulting services

- Support on recruitment, retention, training, gender, and the green transition
- Focus on company-level solutions rather than generic advice

Focus on SMEs' most pressing needs

- Over 2 900 companies supported since 2020 – majority SMEs
- Challenges: recruitment, retention, knowledge management

Use engagement as a gateway to other services

- Connect firms with VET/PES programmes and incentives
- Builds trust and long-term cooperation with SMEs

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Employment pacts in Paris

Training complementarities

Context: High demand in the **digital sector** and high unemployment for people from **disadvantaged groups**

Objective: The pacts aim to improve employment opportunities for job seekers by helping them develop **digital skills**

How:

- ✓ The City has signed over **20 pacts** with big employers
- ✓ The pacts also involve the **VET providers/PES and other stakeholders** working with people from disadvantaged groups
- ✓ Employers share their skills needs with the city and the VET/PES to **shape training**

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Discussion Question One

Where does the chain from skills intelligence to action currently break in your region?

Is it understanding changing skill needs, developing appropriate programmes and training, or making learning happen in workplaces?

Discussion Question Two

Which local partnership between a workplace, a learning provider and a public body would make the biggest difference in your area/work?

Who is missing from the table?

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Thank you!

Feel free to reach out if you'd like to learn more about our work

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