



Overcoming skill gaps in the ICT and Green Economy sectors

Chapter 5: Unlocking financial and non financial means to improve skills needs identification and skills matching



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CHAPTER 5: UNLOCKING FINANCIAL AND NON FINANCIAL MEANS TO IMPROVE SKILLS NEEDS IDENTIFICATION AND SKILLS MATCHING

This chapter focuses on describing the main initiatives, both at a financial and non-financial level, that may help SMEs of the ICT and Green Economy sectors face the daily challenge of identifying skill needs and realize an effective skills matching.

5.1 Overview

The main assumption of the NeMESI project lies on the fact that SMEs in the ICT and Green Economy sectors face a complicate task when it comes to identify their skill needs and exploit skills matching services.

These services, both on the financial and non-financial side, are often “hidden” to SMEs who don’t have HR managing capabilities and therefore get less informed on this topic in respect to larger sized companies.

While financial means are almost at a glance – the EU itself as well as local governments have allocated resources for this purpose –, non-financial means are less obvious to be discovered and exploited.

Nonetheless, access to funding and application activities are a severe task to be achieved, especially for those enterprises – mostly SMEs – do not enclose HR professionals who can manage this issue.

5.2 Financial and non financial means to improve skills needs identification and skills matching: main challenges

Both the ICT and Green Economy sectors experience a very fast pace of innovation and change, both in technologies and working processes and finding talents who can keep the pace of innovation in those sectors is crucial for business, especially for SMEs..

Skill needs identification is maybe the main challenge to be faced; once identified, in fact, skills may be fastly created or improved by creating networks involving the education and





training sectors who can take concrete actions together with the entrepreneurial system in order to train the right personnel to be employed by enterprises themselves.

Skill shortages often come out in high personnel costs and in high turnover rates, where competition for talents arises; not too many initiatives, though, can be found with the aim of reducing skill shortages and helping private and public institutions face this issue.

As stated before, while financial means are available though sometimes hardly approachable, non-financial means are not as manifest as financial ones. This making enterprises – mostly SMEs – undergo a severe lack of information on how to solve skill issues.

5.3 Experiences and best practices

Notwithstanding the mentioned issues, several initiatives may be found aiming at creating networks including public and private sectors to spread information about means and activities to be exploited to reduce skill gaps, especially for SMEs.

5.3.1 Spain

In the northern Aragon region, outward the city of Huesca, a network of around 50 ICT companies has implemented the “WALQA technological park” as a model to improve skill matching.

The park has created a total of 800 job positions, around 600 of which are related to the ICT sector; to improve skills matching for the participating enterprises, specialised training combined with traineeship has been implemented and proved to be the best way to improve skills matching.

The park operates under the responsibility – and receives the financial support – from the local Public Employment Service (INAEM).

To gain effectiveness at the highest level, the park has borrowed and applied the CTA (Advanced Technology Center) model to the training programmes and to attract qualified personnel. The model contemplates high-standards training homologated by main ICT companies worldwide: Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco, Linux, SAP, Sun Microsystems, Google, etc. and training often comes out in direct employment for trainees.





The Walqa park may be considered as a non-financial mean to improve skills matching since, beyond the main interest of the greater enterprises involved, it promotes re-qualifying of personnel for the whole ICT sector supply chain.

5.3.2 Slovak Republic

In Slovak Republic an important example of a transnational initiative to improve skills development has been implemented, though not directly referred to the ICT or Green Economy sectors.

This initiative is the “Vocational Education and Preparation for Labour Market” project, supported by the Program of Swiss – Slovak Cooperation, coordinated by the Slovak ŠIOV (State Institute for Vocational Training) in cooperation with the Slovak Republic Government Office, and the Embassy of Switzerland with a swiss project partner – the Governmental Center of competence for the provision of tertiary-level basic and continuing training to VET actors, for the development of professions and for VET research.

The project aims at improving VET effectiveness through updating curricula in line with labour market requirements, starting from the description of the requirements that employers define for hiring qualified experts.

VET programmes therefore may be updated as well as state education programs for each group of specializations. The project directly involves employers in the training design phase, by helping training design and implementing practical education as well as participating to examinations of trainees.

5.3.3 Germany

A mixed financial and non-financial initiative can be found in the German system, where the private sector – together with the public one – has managed to find solutions for solving skills gaps in many sectors but especially addressing SMEs in need to enhance skills of their employees.

The RKW centre is an initiative of the German Economy Association (a research body of experts in the economic sector) that includes financial and non-financial support to enterprises, mostly SMEs.

The RKW competence centre cooperates with SMEs, social partners, associations, politics and the world of science to develop concepts and tools which are strongly oriented to practice and may be quickly implemented and exploited by targets.





The RKW is carrying out several initiatives to face skill shortage. The RKW is fully supported by institutions, both at a local and national level, especially by the Federal Department of Economy and Energy.

5.3.4 Italy

In Italy, a public desk called “Donne@Work” (“Women@Work”) has been promoted by the public and private sectors and NGOs, collaborating to promote female occupation (therefore including a gender issue) in the ICT sector.

The desk has been implemented in response to a research of ASSINTEL (the Italian Association of ICT Enterprises) stating that women with ICT professionalism often are less employed than male colleagues and, where employed, less paid (up to a 22% less for managing profiles).

The desk activities can be assimilated to the activities of a job agency: it provides pre-selection of female ICT professionals to companies, mainly SMEs, in the territory of the province of Milan.

The desk experts identify the best expertises to meet the needs of the targeted companies but also give guidance to women seeking a job in the ICT sector (i.e. by recommending further training and redirecting professionals to the right training companies).

The desk experts also provide consulting to companies in order to solve their skilled personnel issues, define the skill needs and match with the right professionals.

Activities of the desk mainly consist in launching recruitment campaigns, matching professional profiles demand and supply, meet and perform selection of candidates in line with the companies requirements.

In the first 6 months of activities, the desk has collected more than 600 curricula of skilled female workers in the ICT sector, performing matching activities for the enterprises of the province of Milan.

The Donne@Work desk can be fully considered – since free of charge and not aiming at providing funds – as a non-financial mean to promote occupation and solve skill gaps in the ICT sector.

The desk is also an example of cooperation among the public and private sectors. Indeed, it is driven by the Municipality of Milan, the “Women Entrepreneurs” workgroup of ASSINTEL, the “Manager Women” workgroup inside Manageritalia (Association of





managers and high level professional of the tertiary sector) and PrimaDonna, (Italian NGO which promotes the presence of women in the workforce) and the sponsorship of the Chamber of Commerce of Milan.

5.4 Lesson learned: recommendations for SMEs

The described context suggests different solutions focusing on the creation of frameworks of financial and non-financial means to improve skills matching. These solutions could be adopted and implemented by SMEs and local or national institutions; among those:

- Increasing Private – Public partnerships. These alliances have shown to be the better solution to the issue of qualified workers shortages in the considered ICT and Green Economy sectors, to overtake the lack of public financial means or the difficulty to access to them.
- Specialised training combined with internships has proved to be the best way to improve skills matching in the technological park Walqa (Aragon, Spain), making this a new way to recruit skilled resources in a non-financial framework.
- Dialogue and cooperation between universities and employers are crucial for the design of innovative curricula, with a strategic view to respond to labour market needs. The traditional VET paths and high education systems, in fact, appear unable to adapt rapidly to the high-innovation pace of the ICT and Green Economy sectors.
- Gender issue may also be addressed as an added value within the set of non financial means aiming at overcoming skills mismatch. Women, in fact, are often underrepresented in the so called “technological sectors”, at least in the EU southern countries, as well as less paid in respect of their male colleagues.
- SMEs should have to be proactive in searching and exploiting initiatives – at a local, national and European level – to solve their skill shortage issue. On the other hand, institutions have to widely spread communication on those initiatives, in order to reach the widest platea of enterprises, including smaller SMEs.