

TRAILS

Enabling Data Analytics for Actions
Tackling Skills Shortages & Mismatch



Policy brief #8 AGE, INCOME AND INEQUALITY IN SKILLS MATCHING

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WHY IT MATTERS

Matching skills to jobs is critical for **economic efficiency and social fairness**. Persistent skills mismatching limits productivity, reduces income security, and reinforces inequality. TRAILS analysis of **EU-SILC data** highlights how mismatch varies by age, gender, and income, showing that it is not only an economic issue but also a social one.

WHAT DATA SHOWS

- **Structural feature:** While most workers are well matched, a significant minority experience overeducation or undereducation.
- **Age differences:** Younger workers are more likely to be overeducated; older workers often compensate for lower formal qualifications through experience.
- **Gender gaps:** Women are slightly more likely to be mismatched, particularly overeducated, reflecting concentration in service sectors with limited progression. Men are more often undereducated in technical or manual occupations.
- **Income disparities:** Higher-income workers are generally better matched. Lower-income and undereducated workers face greater financial strain and limited upward mobility. Skills mismatch thus contributes to **economic vulnerability and inequality**

POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Support young workers:** Expand apprenticeships, dual-learning schemes, and structured early-career programmes to better align education with employment opportunities.
- **Recognise older workers' experience:** Implement validation of prior learning and modular training to maintain skills and adaptability.
- **Address gender disparities:** Strengthen career progression frameworks in service-oriented sectors and facilitate training for part-time or flexible workers; monitor gender gaps through national and EU indicators.



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- **Link skills use to social inclusion:** Combine lifelong-learning incentives with targeted income support for economically vulnerable households; integrate qualification-to-job matching into European Skills Index and national monitoring systems.

LOOKING AHEAD

Ensuring fair and efficient **skills utilisation** is key to Europe's competitiveness and cohesion. Policies that address age, gender, and income inequalities can transform skills mismatch from a structural constraint into an opportunity for inclusion and productivity.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Full deliverables: D6.3 and TRAILS reports
- For more information, please visit the TRAILS website(<https://www.trails-project.eu/>) and social media channels.

