

# Foreword

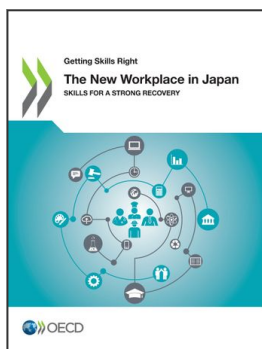
The COVID-19 pandemic sparked one of the sharpest contractions in economic activity in living memory. A swifter than expected recovery followed, but the crisis exposed a number of flaws in the current labour market and skills systems in many, if not all, countries. The extent to which workers can adapt to changes in the type and content of jobs depends critically on the readiness and flexibility of adult learning systems to help people develop and maintain relevant skills over their working careers.

Digitalisation of key public services, such as employment support, career guidance and training, as well as adoption of teleworking practices, have altered the way in which adults navigate the labour market and have the potential to help address challenges brought about by economic disruptions and rapidly changing skills needs. Such services are particularly important in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many adults are faced with new ways of working and learning.

This report reviews Japan's employment policy response during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, and provides policy recommendations to improve the responsiveness of the adult learning system to changing skills needs, by strengthening training provision, broadening access to career guidance and fostering teleworking. Chapter 1 reviews recent labour market developments in Japan, and discusses how the skill composition of the Japanese workforce changed during the pandemic. Chapter 2 discusses employment policy responses to the pandemic, including employment and training subsidies, teleworking and career guidance. Chapter 3 focuses on persistent inequalities in skills and training, and offers suggestions on how Japan can create more responsive training policies through the use of well-integrated labour market information systems.

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