7 Turning results into policy action for the green transition

Some approaches to assessing and anticipating skills related to the greening of the economy are more successful than others in leading to policy action. By means of best practice examples, this chapter identifies common challenges and success factors for evidence-based policy practices on skills for the green transition. While both skills analyses and policy initiatives in this area are still relatively novel, there are some common characteristics of successful approaches that are illustrated.

Introduction

Using evidence from skills assessment and anticipation to design policies that support the green transition is not an easy endeavour and comes with several challenges. First of all, most skills policies for the green transition are still relatively recent and require resources and innovation to be developed. Secondly, setting up a skills assessment and anticipation exercise comes with important choices about its methodological approach and sources of data. Third, the translation of the results of SAA exercises into policy practice relies on good co-ordination and communication among institutions and public bodies. Fourth, this translation also requires policies for the green transition to be prioritised at a political level, particularly given their inter-connectedness with other policy issues. Lastly, using SAA results for decision-making of green transition policies is demanding because SAA exercises and the policy implications derived from them are often national, while the implementation of green transition policies typically takes place at a local level. Decision-makers need to keep these challenges in mind in order to identify innovative solutions and use SAA in a more strategic and effective way for real policy change.

After providing more details on each of these challenges, a number of innovative policies and programmes are reviewed that make effective use of the results of green SAA exercises for their design. Five key insights into using SAA for the green transition are drawn from the review: (1) most examples of SAA exercises that translated into policies underscore that trust and collaboration across stakeholders is essential; (2) those SAA exercises designed specifically to target skills needs for the green transition are more likely to lead to sustainable policy than pre-existing general SAA exercises featuring a smaller green dimension; (3) focusing the analysis on skills – rather than on occupations or industries – allows for more targeted policies for the green transition; (4) green SAA exercises with a more narrow scope – in terms of geographical or sectoral coverage – have been more easily put into practice; and (5) SAA exercises mixing both qualitative and quantitative analysis seem to ensure better tailored green policies.

Challenges of using skills intelligence for green policy making

Challenge #1: Initiatives on skills for the green transition are novel

The urgency and complexity of the green transition require innovative policy solutions, and, as for any policy innovation, this means that new evidence needs to be generated. In fact, with state-of-the-art data and information on the changes in skills that are needed for a greening of the economy, new policies can be developed or existing policies adjusted. Yet, such policy reform takes resources to be formulated, implemented, and deliver impact. Evidence on what skills are needed to support the green transition is still comparatively scarce. At the same time, few green policies are currently applied to the area of skills. While this chapter identifies and discusses a number of innovative initiatives that have successfully taken new approaches to skills policy for the green transition, these are, in many cases, still under development in the context of pilot projects or institutional reform.

For instance, in lower Austria, the first training centre focused on green jobs – called the Climate Protection Training Centre (*Klimaschutz-Ausbildungszentrum*) – was opened in 2023. It is financed by the regional public employment service in co-operation with the Vocational Training Institute (BFI) in Austria. It offers vocational education for occupations that are in high demand and supports the green transition in areas such as electromobility or building technology. In the context of the investments linked to France's Recovery Plan, the Network grouping the *Centres d'animation, de ressources et d'information sur la formation* (CARIF) and the *Observatoires régionaux de l'emploi et de la formation* (OREF) started to identify training related to the green transition. CARIF-OREF are publicly financed bodies which provide guidance and research on adult learning issues at local level. The Network of CARIF-OREF have developed an online platform (CertifInfo) with an inventory of almost 7 000 certifications available in France, based on an underlying thesaurus (Formacode) which classifies training into different domains.

The Formacode of each training was manually labelled to identify those who are connected with the green transition, resulting in 333 certifications that are green-related. Such rethinking of existing policies, or entirely new approaches are the start of a new policy agenda on green skills.

Two additional promising programmes that are currently under development are the New Energy Apprenticeship and New Energy Skills Program, launched by the Australian federal government in 2023. Both programmes, managed by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, have been influenced by internal assessments on skills needs for the green transition as well as the quantitative findings of Jobs and Skills Australia. The programmes aim at tackling skills needs of students and workers in green industries, through career guidance, apprenticeship incentive payments, and supporting the delivery of VET qualifications for clean energy jobs.

Challenge #2: SAA exercises use diverse definitions and methods

The lack of common definitions on what green sectors, jobs and skills are (see previous chapters) is an important challenge for skills assessment and forecasting. There is not yet a universally accepted definition of these concepts, neither at international nor national level. This means that SAA exercises, even if they are undertaken, may not be interoperable, as they apply different concepts without complementing each other. While further work is necessary for an internationally accepted definition of green sectors, jobs and skills, countries can aim to take a consistent conceptual approach when they conduct or commission SAA exercises.

Another barrier is a scarcity of analyses and information that focuses specifically on skills rather than employment and occupational projections more generally. It is currently still difficult to reliably measure and forecast the demand and supply of skills for the green transition in a quantifiable way. Most SAA exercises that are dedicated to skills for the green transition rely on qualitative expert consultations. An example is the explorative study undertaken by the Network Association Carif-Oref (*Centre animation ressources d'information sur la formation / Observatoire régional emploi formation*) in France, which compares the extent to which skills and training needs are changing due to the green transition across three regions (Réseau des Carif-Oref, 2023[1]). While qualitative approaches can deliver robust and detailed information, they are limited in their potential to be repeated and scaled. They typically rely on stakeholder consultations and are more focused on a specific sector or region. As such, they are less suited to provide whole-of-economy insights and are difficult to update regularly, which means that it may be more difficult for qualitative insights to translate into policy action. Innovations in this area could involve big data analysis on skills requirements, as well as incorporating skills components in existing labour market datasets.

Challenge #3 The governance of policies on skills for the green transition is complex

The co-ordination among different public and private institutions that are involved in the governance of skills policies, including those supporting the green transition, is relatively complex. Indeed, policies for the development of skills are at the intersection of education, labour and industrial policy, and, therefore, their responsibility is often shared across different ministries and public agencies at the central level of government. In addition, skills development for the green transition has an important regional component, which brings into play local and regional actors, both private and public. Without good co-ordination both horizontally and across levels of government, the policy agenda on skills for the green transition risks being fragmented, inconsistent and overall, less effective than it could be. An interesting approach to ensure co-ordination is the newly formed General Secretariat for Ecological Planning (*Sécrétariat général de la planification écologique*, SGPE) in France, which co-ordinates policy planning related to the green transition across government ministries. As it is placed directly under the authority of the Prime Minister, the Secretariat manages to consistently drive the green policy agenda, engage a multitude of stakeholders, and measure the impact of a wide range of policy actions (Gouvernement Français, 2023[2]).

Another important aspect where governance is crucial is the governance approaches to SAA itself. Whether SAA exercises rely on a central model, a collaborative model, or an external model (Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3) might influence how their results are shared with policy-making authorities. Across all three governance approaches of SAA exercises, however, the dissemination and communication of SAA results is typically not (yet) streamlined and standardised. One of very few exceptions is Jobs and Skills Australia, which performs skills assessment and anticipation exercises and makes their results publicly available. As a central government agency, the information generated by them is distributed across different government institutions and guides policy making in a range of areas.

Challenge #4 There are competing and interconnected political challenges

As other important megatrends impact labour markets at the same time as the green transition, policy makers face the tough challenge of integrating environmental sustainability with policies to reduce the digital divide, fight inequalities or curb long-term unemployment. This means that policy action on skills for the green transition needs to be linked to a range of other policy objectives, which might be competing on the political agenda. Partially, this challenge needs to be addressed through political leadership; however, institutions and mechanisms can support the prioritisation of green policies, such as skills policies for the green transition, and facilitate the alignment with other policy objectives. Institutions that are located at the highest, central level of government, such as the French General Secretariat for Ecological Planning, might be particularly suitable to overcome this challenge. Such institutions are able to oversee policy action on the green transition, and drive reform across different ministries and public agencies, while avoiding a duplication and inconsistencies with respect to other policy objectives.

In Austria, the Ministry for Climate Action, the Ministry of Labour and Economy, and the social partners co-operated to create the Environment Foundation (*Umweltstiftung*). Implemented in 2022 together with the Austrian public employment service, the programme aims to support training and upskilling in occupations that have been identified as in shortage yet critical for the green transition. The target groups are jobseekers or persons with low employability, who receive income support and coaching during their training period. The inter-ministerial collaboration underlines a successful consolidation of two priorities within the programme: to strengthen the supply of skills for the green transition, on the one hand, and to better integrate vulnerable groups in the labour market, on the other hand (Aufleb Association, 2023[3]).

Challenge #5 Implementation takes place locally

While policy decisions related to skills for the green transition might be taken at the central level of government, the implementation of these policies typically takes place at a local or regional level, through the work of different community actors, including companies, training centres, public employment services, VET providers, adult learning institutions, etc. Depending on the country context, regional and local public authorities may also have significant responsibilities to shape policies on adult learning or vocational education and training. As a result, they themselves are key stakeholders to (re-)design skills policies that support the green transition.

The local dimension of skills policies for the green transition has several consequences. First, the results of SAA exercises need to take into account local economic structures and skills needs in order to be useful for regional policy makers. Second, these results need to be communicated to community actors on the ground, so that they can use them in their own decision-making. The frequent lack of expertise of local actors also means that the results need to be made accessible for a broader public. The Carif-Oref Network Association in France is translating and communicating information from skills analyses and forecasts for local and regional actors. Their role is to inform regional actors about developments related to employment, training, and career guidance.

Key elements for effectively translating green skills analysis into policies

Despite the challenges governments face when relying on SAA to help design evidence-based skill policies for the green transition, a few noticeable cases have recently emerged. Policy making in the area of skills for the green transition is still relatively new, so a common element of the cases identified is that they have been introduced recently or are still in the early phases of implementation. There are many innovative policies in the pipeline for the five countries reviewed, however, there is not yet sufficient information available to assess the role played by skills intelligence in their design and implementation. Reviewing both implemented and planned policies points at five key insights into using SAA exercises for the green transition. This section highlights the policies identified where an SAA has had a direct impact on policy making for the green transition, and untangles what makes these SAA exercises and policies successful.

Key insight #1: Policy dialogue across a wide range of stakeholders is essential for translating skills intelligence into action

To tackle the issue of co-ordination, some countries have created forums for different stakeholders to come together and share insights and challenges, and tackle issues arising from the green transition. Many non-governmental stakeholders (such as non-profit organisations, research institutes, think tanks and advocacy groups) have established themselves as important actors in the green transition. These stakeholders have built a wealth of knowledge on sustainability and manage extensive networks of key players in the green transition. As they often possess expertise related to the green transition, many stakeholders also carry out SAA exercises. This is the case, for instance, for Race 2030 in Australia, the Shift Project in France, Vinnova in Sweden, NHO in Norway and GWS in Austria. When governments are tasked with creating skill policies, SAA exercises can be of a great value as they can supplement policy makers' own knowledge and analysis.

In France, the National Observatory of Jobs and Occupations in the Green Economy is a government-led initiative that brings together a range of stakeholders including governmental units across different ministries and cabinet, the national institute for statistics, the public employment services, research institutions, employers' associations, local authorities, educational bodies, and think tanks. The Observatory maintains an overview of a large number of SAA exercises and policy initiatives thanks to its extensive network and uses this overview to inform its own skills assessments and anticipation. In addition to this, the Observatory is tasked with managing a central SAA produced by the government. The Observatory is one of the leading advisors for policy making for the green transition in France and facilitates the use of SAA results by other non-governmental bodies, thereby operating as a bridge between public and private research and initiatives. Similarly, in Norway, the Committee on Skills Needs brings together representatives from academia, employer/workers' organisations and regional representatives to create a knowledge base of existing SAA exercises for the green transition and carry out an independent SAA exercise. It is also planned that the Committee will act as an advisor to policy making on the green transition once the skills assessment is completed. Co-operation between different stakeholders is key to gaining a full perspective over existing initiatives and exploit synergies to create holistic policies for the green transition. However, it also requires the co-ordinating body to have a clear mandate to implement actions based on findings, or have a key role in the policy-making process.

Key insight #2: Skills intelligence focusing specifically on the green transition is more often exploited for policy making

This chapter's review of green SAA exercises that directly impact policy initiatives has not identified any cases where the green dimension has been added to a pre-existing general SAA exercise. By contrast, good practices suggest that the most impactful exercises are designed specifically to focus on green transition from the start. When looking across the board of the SAA exercises reviewed, those that have

focused primarily on the green transition are the ones that have resulted in the most extensive policy actions. For example, the public employment services in Sweden conducts assessments of skills needs brought about by the rapid expansion and greening of the battery and steel industries in Västerbotten and Norrbotten (the northern part of the country). The analysis identified skills needs for the industry itself (which includes analysis on the changing skills needs due to the fossil-free production and electrification of these industries), skill needs needed to support the industries (including manufacturing and transportation), and skills needs of the region following an expansion of the cities in the north (such as healthcare workers and teachers). As such, the policies that are being implemented by the newly established PES office in Skellefteå are targeting both green (technical) skills and skills that will support the greening of the economy and are being informed by ongoing SAA exercises (Box 7.1).

By contrast, the SAA exercises that feature a smaller analysis of skills needs for the green transition as part of a broader skills analysis are used less in policy making. Such exercises shed an important light on the skill needs and help bring the issue to light, and their results are being used to raise awareness of the skill need related to the green transition, rather than directly impacting policy making by the government or the organisations themselves. Yet, there are exceptions. For example, the Workforce Specialist Initiative in Australia uses SAA exercises to identify key industries and occupations and inform delivery of projects. The SAA exercises used as inputs include skills for the green transition as part of a broader assessment of skill needs, and policies on the green transition are a part of a larger framework to guide and inform the Workforce Specialist panel. This larger framework highlights potential opportunities related to green industries, particularly in construction and manufacturing industries, and identifies green jobs as an emerging priority (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2020[4]). Even though the green dimension features as part of a larger skills analysis, the SAA exercises used for the Workforce Specialist Initiative are new and have been developed to yield useful information for the programme design and delivery.

Box 7.1. Providing holistic support for the green transition through the public employment service in Skellefteå

In June 2022, the Swedish PES published a skills assessment and anticipation study on competences needed for the expansion of large companies in Västerbotten and Norrbotten (northern Sweden). The large investments being made in northern Sweden revolve around both new establishments such as Northvolt (battery manufacturing) and H2 Green Steel (fossil free steel) as well as greening of existing companies within mining industry and other traditional industries. Among other findings, the SAA exercise highlighted the need to strengthen the use of skills intelligence in policy planning, to co-ordinate efforts to provide the skills needed in the industries and the region, to improve the policies for labour market mobility, and to foster co-operation with the companies to tackle employment and skills shortages.

In September 2022 the public employment service opened a new office in Skellefteå in northern Sweden. The central government mandated the Skellefteå office to tackle employment-related challenges for the industrial changes in the region as identified in the SAA exercise. The office focuses not only on attracting talent with “green skills”, but also on providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities, and strengthening labour mobility to the region to support employment growth in the green industries. Still in the early phases of the project, the office is carrying out new, more tailored SAA exercises on the skill needs of the region to inform the design of new policies by the public employment services. Currently, the PES is piloting or evaluating the following policy tools:

- Co-operation with VET institutes in other regions, so that students can do practical placements in northern Sweden.
- Design of PES-administered vocational training based on the need of the labour market (already implemented).
- Subsidies for seasonal employment in the summer (offering subsidies for accommodation).
- Working with migrant construction workers that are building the new factories to incentivise them to stay in northern Sweden after their work is completed, also by offering job-seeking help to their spouses and families to relocate to northern Sweden.
- Dissemination of information on labour market needs, including co-operating with PES offices in locations with high unemployment.
- Working on expanding legislation that gives jobseekers financial support to travel for job interviews.

Key insight #3: Focusing SAA exercises on skills rather than on occupations or industries allows for more targeted policy making

Most of the SAA exercises covered in this report do not have a skills-based approach, but rather focus on sectors or jobs that are defined as crucial for the green transition. Choosing a skills-based approach often reveals that a broad range of skills are needed for the green transition and they are present in many occupations but at different levels, creating a green continuum with every job and sector having a certain extent of 'greenness' (OECD, 2023[5]). The benefit of such an approach is that it identifies which specific skills or tasks are needed to support the green transition, and changes in education or training can be adjusted across different policies and programmes to satisfy the demand, such as investing in skills related to recycling across different educational programmes and occupations.

Many of the other SAA exercises described in Chapter 1 define green sectors that need to be supported by the government for the transition to a cleaner economy. Under this definition, all jobs and skills that are part of a green sector are considered implicitly green and hence should be boosted. Such SAA exercises are useful in designing industry policies, however, these policies will likely also cover non-green jobs that are in a green industry, such as accountants and cleaners. Other studies focus instead on occupations, and attempt to define what constitutes a green job, regardless of the industry. This type of SAA can be used to target training for e.g. solar panel engineers, regardless of whether the engineers work in renewable industry production (green sector) or installation in the construction sector (non-green sector). Many SAA exercises have moved towards occupation-based analysis to gain more granular insight in how to boost the green transition, but there are challenges in translating findings into policy action as the occupations span across different sectors, stakeholders, and it can be challenging to pinpoint direct policy action. For example, the Global Talent Visa programme in Australia relies indirectly on SAA results at the occupation level, however, the government has decided to focus the visa scheme on green industries instead of occupations, to allow for more flexibility in attracting talent.

Some countries have initially carried out assessments at an occupation level and supplemented this with a skill-level analysis further into the policy-making process. For example, the initial analysis conducted by the Swedish PES focused on jobs for the green transition and identified which skills might be needed for these jobs through qualitative assessments. Since the establishment of the new office in Skellefteå the PES has carried out more skill-focused SAA exercises and are continuing to tailor services based on more detailed findings, including skills findings.

In France, the Skills Forecast: Occupations 2030 exercise is in the process of defining which specific skills are needed for the green transition and how prevalent they are across different occupations. In Australia, the Workforce Specialist programme will map the skill supply of their target group against the skill demand in green industries to support career transitions and career pathways towards green occupations. In Sweden, programme co-ordinators at University West map skills and competences covered in educational programmes against those in-demand in the labour market to update curriculum and implement industry training programmes (Box 7.2). Carrying out assessments at a skill level allows for more tailored policies, as it drills down on exactly what a worker needs to know, not just what job they have to do. Knowing that the green transition will bring about increased demand for engineers is a good start but needs to be supplemented with a skills analysis to unlock exactly what it is the engineers should know – e.g. sustainable manufacturing. Assessments at the skill level can also shape how policy makers view the green transition, as skills-focused SAA exercises often reveal that the green transition is closely tied to the digital transition. Or they can reveal that workers in green occupations need to be good communicators and have high problem-solving skills, as the road to sustainability is complex.

Box 7.2. Adapting formal education to skills needs through Work-Integrated Learning at West University

Since the 1990s, University West (*Högskolan Väst*) in Sweden has been collaborating closely with the regional industry and regional partners to design higher education courses and programmes tailored to the labour market and regional economy in relevant areas. In 2002, the University was asked by the Swedish Government to develop forms of work-integrated learning as part of an initiative aimed at renewing the pedagogy of higher education. Since 2018, this work has been further developed through the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) evaluation model, which provides a methodology and framework for programme co-ordinators to ensure the labour-market readiness of their students (University West, 2022[6]).

Through the WIL programme evaluation, each educational course is asked to reflect on the theoretical and practical skills and competences students should gain throughout university courses. Sustainability is an evaluation criterion in the WIL-programme. Each education programme must evaluate how their programme fits within the ambition to create knowledge to ensure the development of social, economic and environmental sustainability. There are currently three education programmes at University West on sustainability. Examples are new technical education programmes shaped by the need for a green transition have been initiated. These programmes include courses on green technology, energy prices and how the demand for sustainable production will affect the training needs of students, and adjust the curriculum accordingly.

Labour market needs are identified through strategic partnerships with key employers within each sector, either through a branch organisation or other contacts established through alumni. The programme co-ordinators, in co-operation with key labour-market players, map out the gap between skills needs and skills acquired through the education programme, with (if relevant) inputs from labour-market representatives, and national assessments of industry growth/changes. Once the assessment is carried out, the programme co-ordinators use different pedagogics and tools to bridge the gap, including changing curriculum, introducing new practical learning exercises, or implementing work placements such as internships, apprenticeships and study visits. All University West programmes are evaluated based on a co-operation by the programme responsible with inspiration from other programmes responsible by the WIL committee, that then evaluate the education programmes and approves them. The whole process is based on WIL-guidelines and clear evaluation criteria, the process focusses on quality enhancement of the programmes and their work on integrating theory and practice. Currently, the University West has almost finalised the evaluation of all their programmes and, in partnership with the Sweden's innovation agency Vinnova, is working on transferring the WIL-methodology to other universities in Sweden.

Key insight #4: A narrower scope allows for an easier implementation of green skills analysis

As examined in Chapter 2, the scope of SAA exercises for the green transition varies widely in terms of coverage. Some studies look at regional impacts while most take on a national perspective; similarly, a number of green SAA exercises adopt a whole-of-economy approach, while some take an industry-level perspective. Although such heterogeneity in scope leads to rich information on the skill need from various angles, it can also limit the uptake of SAA exercises in policy making due to a lack of data disaggregation. Indeed, according to an OECD survey, policy makers identify the lack of information required to establish specific policies as the most challenging factor that makes it difficult to use SAA as a tool to plan policies (OECD, 2016[7]). SAA exercises with a wide coverage provide fewer details on challenges on the ground and the specificities of the sectors and regions undergoing changes due to the green transition. This

hinders the direct use of these SAA exercises in designing specific employment, training, and education policies, although they still contribute to drive the public discourse towards greater sustainability.

However, even when SAA exercises have a limited target, they also face challenges in providing segmented and tailored information of green skill needs required by a specific policy initiative. Therefore, it is important to consider the specific scope of the policy and its objectives when initiating, designing, and executing SAA related to the green transition. For example, in Australia, the Victorian Skills Authority conducted a small range of tailored SAA exercises that fed into policies on wind turbine training and support measures in the coal-mining sector. Similarly, the Swedish public employment service conducted a tailored SAA exercise focused on five of the largest companies in the region which are transitioning to more sustainable operations, so that the analysis can be applied directly to their specificities. In both cases, the SAA exercises were conducted ad hoc when a labour market need was identified, utilising qualitative methods such as consultations and workshops with experts and industries, with limited scope. These factors increased the likelihood of successful application to policy making, as detailed information needed for implementation was provided through the SAA exercise.

When planning a new policy, the policy maker might find that the most efficient option is to carry out a tailored SAA exercise themselves. On the other hand, designing and executing a tailored SAA exercise for every policy area, region, sector, and topic can be time consuming and costly. Some initiatives, such as the Global Talent Visa Programme of Australia leverage several existing SAA exercises and use the results indirectly in management of the visa scheme for green sectors.

Key insight #5: Mixed method approaches to SAA are most useful for tailored and targeted policies

The review of green SAA exercises and their policy applications in the five participating countries show that mixing quantitative and qualitative methods increases the likelihood of the SAA results influencing policy making. This is mainly due to two characteristics of the mixed method approach.

Firstly, quantitative data can be a good source for measuring the emergence of new skills needs for the green transition, as it compares skills use across different occupations and provides a comparative view of skill intensity. These results can help policy makers allocate resources for emerging green skills and the SAA exercises can be updated regularly to identify new trends and developments within green sectors. If disaggregated sufficiently (preferably at the skill level), the data can be used in policy planning for a wide range of policies. Public support for training, education and employment initiatives on the specific skills needed for the green transition is even easier to obtain when these policies are supported by a quantitative forecasting exercise (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011[8]). The Workforce Specialist Initiative in Australia uses data from the SAA exercises by JSA as well as their own data from their previous programme, Jobactive, to measure the skill level of participants and adjust services accordingly.

On the other hand, the process of gathering qualitative data fosters co-operation between stakeholders and gathers the support of key institutions and stakeholders, which is valuable during the implementation stage. Qualitative methods often involve stakeholder consultations, workshops, and expert interviews. Although these engagement activities are instrumental to gathering data they also serve as opportunities for awareness building. Further, as qualitative methods are more tuned to the on-the-ground challenges of the green transition, the information gathered is often better suited at tailoring the policy tools. For example, the public employment service in Sweden used qualitative methods that involved several key stakeholders which facilitate the subsequent policy response that requires co-ordination among a broad range of actors including the public employment services, industry representatives, formal education and adult training, local, regional, and national agencies. All these stakeholders are currently in the process of implementing programmes that together make up the wider policy intervention by the PES in northern Sweden. Co-ordination at the level of SAA increased the likelihood of policy co-ordination and strong delivery of service.

The way forward: Bridging direct and indirect uses of SAA results in green policy design

A direct use of SAA results in policy design implies that decision makers are presented information on skills demand and supply for the green transition and are able to make choices that are informed by that data. For example, SAA exercises can identify the rise of new skills and occupations related to the green transition, which then helps policy makers adjust existing qualifications or update occupational standards. Information on current and future skills gaps in green sectors can also inform priority areas for training. Yet, as outlined in the Chapter, the challenges of such a direct use of green skills intelligence in policy making are numerous. Decision makers face having to navigate, reconcile and co-ordinate a vast network of stakeholders and a multitude of definitions and targets, while at the same time working in a field that is relatively new and highly interconnected with other policy areas.

Given these difficulties, policy makers are not always able to make use of skills intelligence directly; yet, a considerable number of policies reviewed in this report still use the information indirectly. Indeed, in many circumstances the results of green SAA exercises are not explicitly used to tailor polices and implement new initiatives, but they can still inform the public debate and push the sustainability agenda forward.

While, in this way, SAA exercises can trigger policy changes even if these changes are not directly linked to the SAA findings, indirect use of SAA exercises is challenging to measure. It is hard to draw a direct link between SAA exercise and the policy initiative, as there are different factors that influence a policy initiative. For example, it can be hard to grasp if the SAA has influenced the policy initiative through bringing general knowledge of the green transition to the forefront, or if it has inspired one individual policy maker in the design of the policy, without necessary being a major source of data.

Through policy questionnaires, interviews, and desk research, it is apparent that in the case of the green transition, indirect use of SAA results far outweighs their direct use. The commonality among the policies that use skills intelligence indirectly is that the results are often not disaggregated enough to be used in policy making. Though there is a need for broad and large-scale policy actions to reach sustainability goals, the reality on the ground is that often the most efficient and effective policies are highly targeted. These initiatives require skills assessments that are customised to the practical challenges of fostering sustainability. Turning indirect use of green SAA results to direct use requires rethinking how the studies are framed, what type of data is used, and how a wide range of actors can be empowered to make evidence-based changes. For this purpose, skills assessment and anticipation can be the missing link between aspirations and change.

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