



54ème colloque
ASRDLF

5-7 juillet 2017, Athènes, Grèce



15th conference
ERSA-GR



Les défis de développement pour les villes et les régions dans une Europe en mutation

GREEN SKILLS AND THEIR ROLE IN BUSINESS STRATEGIES, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

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Référence à la session / reference to the session

B4, B8

Résumé / Summary

In recent years, European economies are undergoing substantial transformation. Promoting a more resource efficient and greener economy is one of the primary priorities of the new European strategy. Green concerns reflected in various agreements and directions, and intangible parameters such as globalization and green technological boost, are causing important shifts in labor markets, through altering the traditional job profiles and skill needs. The basic aim now is to increase employment rates by improving both the quality of jobs and conditions for jobs creation, combined with greater security in the labor market. More specifically, as sustainability and social responsibility concepts have gained ground, there is an increasing priority for “green” skills and qualifications, based on the shift towards green economy. Availability of skills for green jobs now plays a crucial role in triggering labor market change: green sectors will require new jobs, but will also need to redefine many existing job profiles. Therefore, the link between improving and updating skills, thus affecting labor productivity and growth, should be strengthened.

Regarding policy-makers, there is a great need to support the emergence of social and environmental enterprises as the foundation of the Green Economy, thus improving the public awareness of the green benefits they are delivering to their communities, and convince more and more companies to see social responsibility as a long-term undertaking or in other words, as a strategic investment in corporate policies such as marketing and management. Enterprises now have to follow calls for innovative and greener strategies, altering the way they achieve sustainable development and working towards a combination of environmental, economic and social targets.

Making the swift towards green economy successful, requires a new way of working that will affect not only enterprises, but also the whole of society, as the sustainability scenario requires dynamic and real changes in the way both economies and communities function. In order to succeed in this green transformation, basic steps such as making knowledge the main resource, filling the funding gap and reducing inequalities, should be done.

This paper will try to enlighten the increasing priority for new skills and qualifications in the labor market according to the European directions, in the basis of the modern boost towards green economy, and analyze the role of social entrepreneurship in the process of achieving green, sustainable outcomes. More specifically, in order to approach the subject of green entrepreneurial skills in a meaningful way, it is important to understand what kind of skills, capabilities and attitudes are critical for green growth, as a driving force for employment and training. Furthermore, the identification of the role of education and training programs, in the process of capitalizing the knowledge and enhancing competences and abilities, is equally important. In particular, skills and education needs should be examined not just across all business and jobs sectors, but wider society too, to account for differences in economic and social conditions. Therefore, increased emphasis should be given on investing in human capital through lifelong learning in education and training methods, matched to the needs inside and outside the labor market.

Concerning the theoretical outcome, it could be claimed that teaching sustainability not only to policy-makers but also to employer organizations, civil society organizations and the public, is critical to the green growth scenario. Towards this direction, education and training as critical sources of employment and future growth, can contribute to the development of green skills requirements, in the presence of an improved social dialogue between education and training programs developers, and social partners.

Key words: green economy, social responsibility, sustainability, green skills, education.

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