

# ILO High-Level Panel on Skills for Competitiveness

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The side event, organised by the ILO at the WTO Fourth Global Review of Aid for Trade on 9 July in Geneva, provided an opportunity for sharing research findings and policy approaches on the role of skills development in translating trade openness into sustainable growth of productive and decent work. Diverse research and survey data show that many firms rank finding adequately skilled workers as a major constraint to their business. New research from the WTO documented that, in particular, such difficulties impede small and medium sized enterprises from connecting to and benefiting from Global Value Chains.

**Background information** New research by international organizations and results of policy innovations point to practical ways to address the complex question of how to anticipate and meet skills demands in sectors with high trade integration. These findings and experience highlight the importance of strategic policy coordination by government and private actors to integrate skills development in growth and export strategies, and therefore in trade-related technical assistance. Experience of successful developing and emerging countries demonstrates that trade openness can promote GDP growth and employment creation when accompanied by appropriate complementary policies. Skills development is one of these key policy areas. Well designed and pro-active education and skills development policies are required to complement

trade openness in general, and to enable small enterprises, in particular, to adopt new technologies and new ways of organizing work. There is growing interest in how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) participate in, and benefit from, global value chains and what effect this has on the quality and quantity of their employment. Policies that improve their access to a skilled labour force will make it easier for smaller firms to participate in global value chains and adjust to changing conditions in global markets, as well as to survive and thrive in domestic ones. Skills are thus an important determinant of countries' ability to diversify exports and integrate more fully in the global economy. The speeches of the Director-General of the ILO, Guy Ryder, and the Director-General of the WTO, Pascal Lamy, as well as the link to the event are provided below.

#### [ILO High-Level Panel on Skills for Competitiveness](#)

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