

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 27TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP

The COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group (PAWG) successfully held its 27th Meeting on 16-17 September 2026 in Ankara with the theme of "Preventing the Skill Mismatch in the Labor Market of the OIC Member Countries". In the Policy Debate Session titled "Formulation of Policy Recommendations on 'Preventing Skill Mismatch in the Labor Market of the OIC Member Countries' to be submitted for the 42nd COMCEC Ministerial Session", held on 17 September 2026, the PAWG deliberated on the policy recommendations related to preventing skill mismatch in OIC Member Countries. The policy recommendations were formulated by taking into consideration the research report prepared on the same theme of the above-mentioned meeting as well as interventions of the participants.

Policy Recommendation 1:

Developing labor market information and skills anticipation mechanisms by making better use of available data to identify and respond to skill mismatches.

Rationale:

Effective policy first requires distinguishing among qualification mismatch, field-of-study mismatch, skill gaps, genuine occupational shortages, skill obsolescence, and weak use of available skills. Vacancy difficulties alone do not demonstrate a training deficit. Low wages, poor working conditions, high turnover, geographic barriers, or recruitment practices may produce similar signals. A shared diagnostic framework allows OIC Member Countries to identify the actual source of mismatch before expanding training provision or committing public resources.

The system can be introduced gradually according to national capacity. Countries with limited data infrastructure can begin with existing statistics, public employment service records, recurring employer surveys, and selected sector assessments. More developed systems can integrate administrative and real-time vacancy data with occupational, regional, and task-based forecasts, including analysis of jobs affected by AI, digitalisation, and the green transition. A concise skills dashboard can cover employment and participation, NEET, informality, vacancies, wage trends, graduate outcomes, field match, and regional labor market pressures. Each indicator is most useful when linked to a specific decision, such as programme review, training procurement, career guidance, or regional investment planning.

Policy Recommendation 2:

Strengthening foundational and future-oriented skills by integrating relevant competencies into education and training and promoting equitable access to skills development opportunities.

Rationale:

Rising educational attainment does not by itself ensure that learners possess the skills required to enter productive employment or adapt to technological change. Weak foundational and transferable skills can coexist with formal qualifications, producing overeducation and underskilling at the same time. Embedding these competences across curricula, teacher preparation, assessment, and applied learning provides a stronger base for later vocational specialisation, reskilling, and lifelong learning. Future-oriented skills should increasingly include digital competencies and the capacity to work with emerging technologies, including AI, as digital transformation reshapes tasks and occupations.

Career awareness is also important before labor market entry. Learners need reliable information on occupations, wages, employment prospects, progression routes, and future skill requirements. Countries can start with secondary-level modules on digital literacy, communication, and career awareness, and progressively build a lifelong guidance system connecting schools, universities, TVET institutions, public employment services, and digital platforms. Adult education and continuing training should also be promoted to enable workers to update their skills throughout their careers. Delivery arrangements need to account for man and woman stereotypes, regional disparities, the social status of vocational pathways, disability, connectivity constraints, and the needs of learners in remote or underserved areas.

Policy Recommendation 3:

Enhancing the attractiveness of TVET while aligning TVET, higher education, and training with evolving labor market needs through regularly updated curricula, work-based learning, and flexible learning pathways.

Rationale:

Expanding enrolment in programmes labelled as high demand is insufficient when training quality, workplace exposure, recognised standards, employer trust, and progression routes remain weak. Improving these dimensions can also enhance the attractiveness of TVET by strengthening its perceived value and employment prospects. Recurring sectoral mechanisms can bring employers, worker representatives, chambers, training providers, and education authorities into the updating of standards, curricula, assessment, and certification. Apprenticeships, internships, cooperative education, firm-based training, and simulated workplace learning can strengthen relevance when accompanied by quality assurance, learner protection, safety provisions, and clear employer accountability.

Greater permeability between vocational and academic pathways allows workers to build, update, and redirect skills over the life course while making vocational pathways more attractive by providing clearer progression opportunities. Modular provision, portable credentials, credit transfer, and recognition of prior learning are especially valuable for adults and informal workers whose competences may not be documented. Programme review also benefits from evidence on graduate employment, field match, skill use, wages, and employer satisfaction, while preserving the analytical and transferable capabilities associated with higher education. Training decisions should be linked with industrial upgrading, innovation, productivity, and job creation so that skills policy responds to both current demand and the economy's capacity to generate better jobs.

Policy Recommendation 4:

Improving school-to-work transitions by enhancing employment services, practical work experience, and employer engagement, with particular attention to young people facing barriers to employment.

Rationale:

Relevant qualifications do not automatically lead to suitable employment. Limited work experience, weak job-search support, incomplete labor market information, narrow employer networks, and insufficient entry-level opportunities can delay labor market entry or push workers into jobs below their qualification level. Public employment services can respond by moving beyond registration-based delivery toward skills profiling, counselling, employer outreach, vacancy development, training referral, and post-placement support.

Youth programmes are more likely to improve transitions when training is connected to work experience, mentoring, identifiable vacancies, and active employer participation. They can also support transitions into self-employment and entrepreneurship through entrepreneurship training, mentoring, and access to finance and business development services. Where labor demand is weak, targeted hiring incentives can complement these

services. Graduate tracer systems can help distinguish employment from suitable employment by monitoring occupation, wages, field match, skill use, job quality, and progression. Service delivery also needs to address participation constraints through care, mobility, language, flexible learning, digital access, and recognition support. As AI and automation change entry-level tasks, supervised practice and early-career progression routes will become increasingly important for preventing a loss of opportunities through which young workers normally acquire experience.

Policy Recommendation 5:

Strengthening institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement by promoting cooperation and social dialogue among relevant institutions, employers, workers, and other stakeholders in skills development.

Rationale:

Skills policy typically spans education, labor, industry, finance, youth, social protection, and regional development institutions. Fragmentation becomes costly when data, standards, curricula, employment services, and financing operate without a common decision cycle. A national coordination mechanism with a clear mandate, technical secretariat, access to data, measurable deliverables, and links to funding decisions can convert consultation into accountable action. Sectoral and regional bodies can complement the national mechanism by adapting priorities to local labor market conditions and identifying skills in demand.

Employer engagement is most valuable when it goes beyond occasional consultation. Firms and worker representatives can contribute directly to diagnosis, occupational standards, curriculum review, workplace learning, and quality assurance. Firms may also need support to identify skill bundles, redesign jobs, organize workplace learning, and respond to technology adoption. SMEs require particular attention to their specific skills needs and support because they may lack the capacity to identify skill gaps or organize training independently. Shared facilities, pooled programmes, sector intermediaries, cluster-based workforce development, and simplified access to training finance can widen their participation. The effectiveness of coordination should be assessed by decisions taken, standards or programmes updated, and resources redirected, rather than by the number of committees created.

Policy Recommendation 6:

Developing/strengthening sustainable and inclusive financing for skills development through appropriate financing mechanisms and greater stakeholder participation, with particular attention to SMEs, women, youth and persons with disabilities.

Rationale:

Skills development requires both adequate resources and incentives that support quality and relevance. Reliance on annual public budgets, donor projects, or fragmented subsidies can limit continuity. At the same time, poorly designed employer levies or outcome-based funding may encourage low-value training or disadvantage providers serving harder-to-place participants. Public finance is particularly appropriate for foundational skills, inclusion objectives, and other public goods, while employer co-financing can support occupation-specific and workplace learning that yields more direct firm benefits.

Training funds, levy-grant arrangements, and subsidies need transparent eligibility rules, recognized quality standards, evidence of additional skill formation, and measurable labor market outcomes. Administrative simplification, pooled training, cluster arrangements, targeted grants, and care or mobility support can reduce barriers faced by SMEs, women, youth, persons with disabilities, rural populations, low-skilled and informal workers, and persons with care responsibilities. OIC Member Countries may also consider waqf-based education

funds, zakat-linked training support, scholarships, and development-finance facilities as complementary instruments within national governance and quality frameworks. Monitoring participation and benefits by firm size, sector, region, and worker group to identify unequal access and minimize inefficient use of resources.

Policy Recommendation 7:

Improving results-oriented monitoring and evaluation by using labor market outcomes and other relevant evidence to inform the review and improvement of skills policies and programs.

Rationale:

Skills policies lose relevance when reporting focuses on participation, completion, and certification without examining employment, retention, wages, field match, job quality, skill use, employer satisfaction, or productivity. Technological and sectoral change also means that programmes that perform well today may become outdated. Major policies therefore need a clear results framework setting out target groups, intervention logic, outputs, outcomes, equity dimensions, indicators, and institutional responsibilities for data collection and review.

Evaluation methods can be proportionate to programme scale, cost, and risk. Large programmes merit rigorous designs, while pilots can use lighter approaches supported by credible outcome data. The essential requirement is that findings influence decisions: curricula and standards are updated, weak providers are improved or removed, budgets reflect evidence, and successful programmes are scaled with attention to context. Countries with limited capacity can begin with a small indicator set and an annual public review, then add tracer studies, employer surveys, linked administrative data, and impact evaluation. OIC-level peer learning can further support comparable indicators and shared tools in LMIS, TVET, adult learning, and training finance.