

### *What are Occupational Standards?*

Occupational standards describe what a person in a particular occupation must know and be able to do to be formally recognised as competent in a given occupation.

### *Who develops Occupational Standards?*

Occupational Standards are developed in partnership with employers and approved by Sector Skills Councils, to ensure that they are industry specific and technically updated.

### *What are Sector Skills Councils?*

*Sector Skills Councils* (SSCs) are state-sponsored, employer-led organisations that cover specific economic sectors. They have the following key goals:

- to reduce skills gaps and shortages;
- to improve productivity ;
- to boost the skills of their sector workforces;
- to improve learning supply;
- to recognise and certify skills;
- to contribute towards the development and updating of Occupational Standards.

*Occupational Standards provide a good practice framework outlining benchmarks against which performance can be assessed*

### *Who uses Occupational Standards?*

**1** Employers undertaking recruitment, carrying out appraisals and planning staff, professional development and training.

**2** Individuals to help plan their careers and professional development.

**3** Educationalists to design courses, informal and non-formal learning, vocational qualification and courses in higher education.

### *Why do we need Occupational Standards?*

Occupational standards serve a number of different purposes for different players in education and training as well as within the labour market. These different purposes include:

- *To direct curriculum development:* There is more emphasis on training to be closer to and reflecting needs within the labour market. The drawing up of occupational standards for a diverse range of jobs serves to direct curriculum development of vocational training courses. Rather than having education dictating skills inputted within the labour market, it is now the other way round, with occupational standards driving the content and skills in training courses targeted at particular occupations;
- *To specify competences which workers need to possess:* Occupational standards serve to help both employers and employees know what their job entails and what knowledge and skills they should possess.;

- *To help certify workers:* Since occupational standards recognise competences which are not usually considered within traditional educational training institutions. They also provide the opportunity for workers to validate their learning as part of their work experience and obtain certification;
- *To help employers carry out skills-audit:* Occupational standards allow and facilitate the process of skill-audit within the company carried out by employers. Employers are thus in a position to know what knowledge and skills his workforce possesses;
- *To direct professional development within the workforce:* Employers wishing to validate their workers' competences can utilise occupational standards to identify what workers already are able to do and what additional skills and knowledge they need to acquire in order to obtain full certification. This knowledge thus helps direct investment in continuous professional development within an enterprise to the benefit of both the enterprise and employees;
- *To facilitate the recruitment process to employers:* As more and more training courses are based on occupational standards, employers are in a better position to know the competences which applicants bring. The match between employee's skills and those required within the enterprise will be easier to achieve;
- *To set quality standards within sectors and occupations:* The setting of occupational standards ensures that a certain level of competences for the different occupations is respected. This is an aspect of quality assurance within the sector;
- *To facilitate the validation of informal and non-formal learning:* Validation of informal and non-formal learning needs to be carried out against some form of standard. Occupational standards allow this comparative assessment to be done;

- *To allow government to stock-take skills capacity at a national level:* As the opportunities for certification of occupations gains momentum, and more and more workers put themselves forward to validate their learning, the easier it will be for governments to map the skills and competences of the workforce at a national level.

- *To promote mobility of workers business within the European labour market and beyond:* The existence of occupational standards allow workers in Malta to have a reference which employers from other countries can consult to understand what skills and competences potential candidates have to offer.