SkillUP

Sustaining competitiveness in the EU manufacturing sector
Overview
Upskilling the labour force in key manufacturing industries is a game-changer for the EU. SkillUP is a two-year (2015-2017) research funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (H2020-MSCA-IF-2014 Proposal No. 660022). This project focuses on exploring routes that combine firms’ upgrading strategies along with workforce skill development to enhance the innovative capability of EU manufacturing industries.
SkillUP intends to provide options to hinder the hollowing out of manufacturing activities impacting on the EU labour market, mainly due to multinational firms’ strategies of offshoring production to low cost economies. This hollowing out of manufacturing activities is affecting the demand for jobs in the EU, as well as the local and regional stock of competences. It raises concerns over a mismatch between firms’ skill needs and persistent skill shortages caused by lagging training and skilling responsiveness.

Research objective
European competitiveness depends on its capacity to cultivate and attract the best human capital within its industrial ecosystems. Accordingly, SkillUP contributes by enhancing the understanding of:

- What skills companies need in industrialised economies to maintain their innovation capabilities;
- Where from such skills can be sourced;
- What training needs to be put in place to ensure that workforce skill development matches industry demand.

SkillUP delivers evidence based policy recommendations in the form of a toolkit to:

- design and implement effective skills development interventions (such as: educational/training programmes),
- enhance employability (jobs created and jobs filled),
- promote a smart and inclusive economic growth of Europe.

Team
Mariachiara Barzotto is a Post-Doctoral International Fellow at the Birmingham Business School. Before joining the School, she has been a visiting Ph.D. student and research collaborator at Cass Business School (UK). She obtained her Ph.D. degree at Ca’ Foscari University Venice (Italy), where she worked as a Post-Doctoral researcher. Her research interests and work experience mainly focus on organisation of global value chains, international competitiveness, EU industrial policy and employment in advanced economies - including skill misalignments and skill development in high-income countries.

Lisa De Propris is Professor of Regional Economic Development at the Birmingham Business School. Her main research interests are: small firms and clusters, competitiveness in clusters and regions, forms of clusters and governance, innovation, clusters and foreign direct investment, regional development, knowledge economy and clusters. In parallel, she has been concerned with the role of the government and institutions, and has looked at policy implications. She has made a distinctive contribution through her involvement in scholarly debate, she has extensively published in top-ranked journals.

Learn more
If you are interested in finding out more about workforce skill development and firms’ upgrading strategies, please contact our team at skillupeu@contacts.bham.ac.uk or visit our website at www.birmingham.ac.uk/skillup.