



# OECD SKILLS STRATEGY **FLANDERS**

## LAUNCH OF DIAGNOSTIC REPORT

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Deputy Secretary-General

**OECD Centre for Skills**

**Brussels, 21 January 2019**

# 1. WHY DO SKILLS MATTER?



# What do we mean by skills?



**COGNITIVE AND  
META-  
COGNITIVE  
SKILLS**

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**TECHNICAL,  
PROFESSIONAL  
SKILLS**

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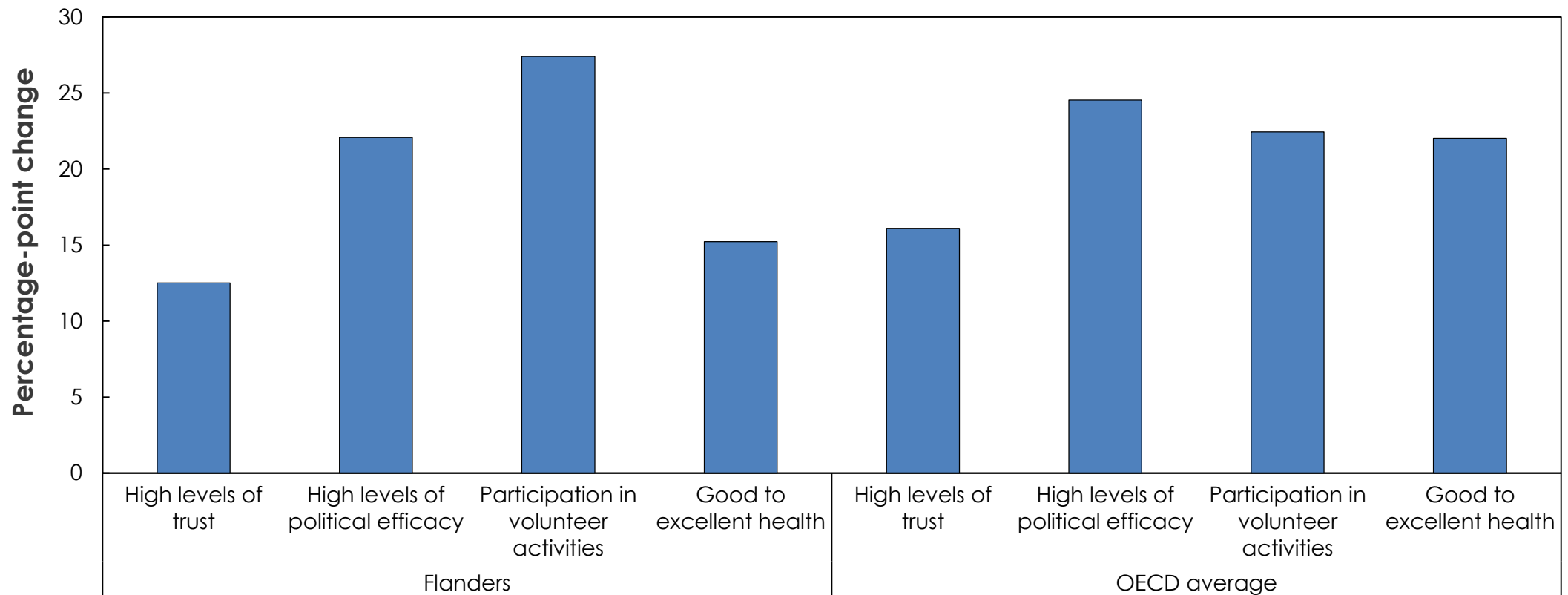
**SOCIAL AND  
EMOTIONAL  
SKILLS**

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# Skills matter for people's well-being

Differences between the % of adults with high and low literacy proficiency reporting high levels of trust and political efficacy, good to excellent health, or participating in volunteer activities

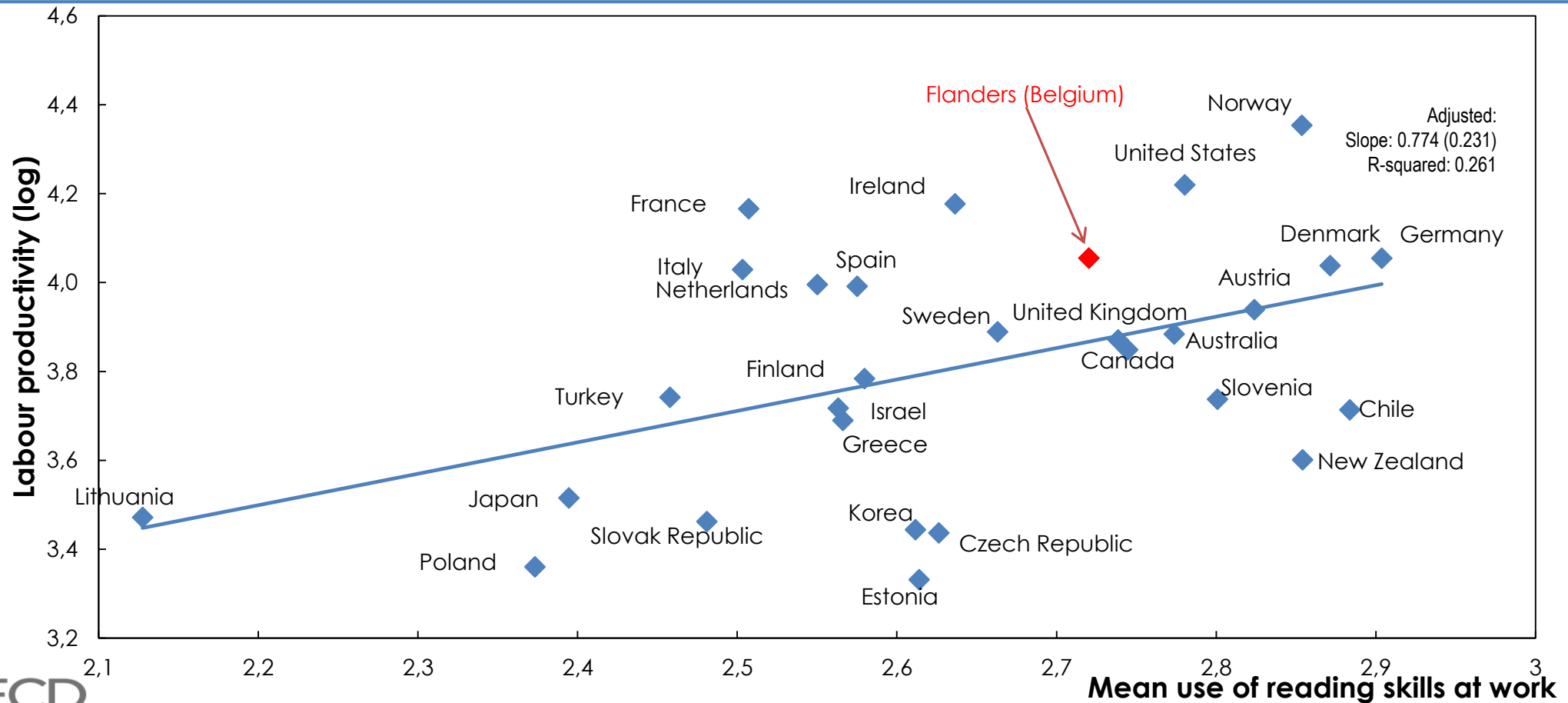


Source: OECD (2016), Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skill.



# And how these skills are used matters for the economic success of people and countries

**Labour productivity and the use of reading skills at work, PIAAC 2012/2015**  
Adjusted for literacy and numeracy proficiency



Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015).



# Mega trends are changing and increasing the skills needed for success in work and life

## GLOBALISATION

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**More integrated world economy than ever**

**Emergence of global value chains, offshoring and outsourcing**

**Increased vulnerability of some workers**

## TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

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**Rapid development of new technologies**

**Emergence of new forms of work**

**Expansion of sources of learning, especially online**

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

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**Large expected decline in working-age population**

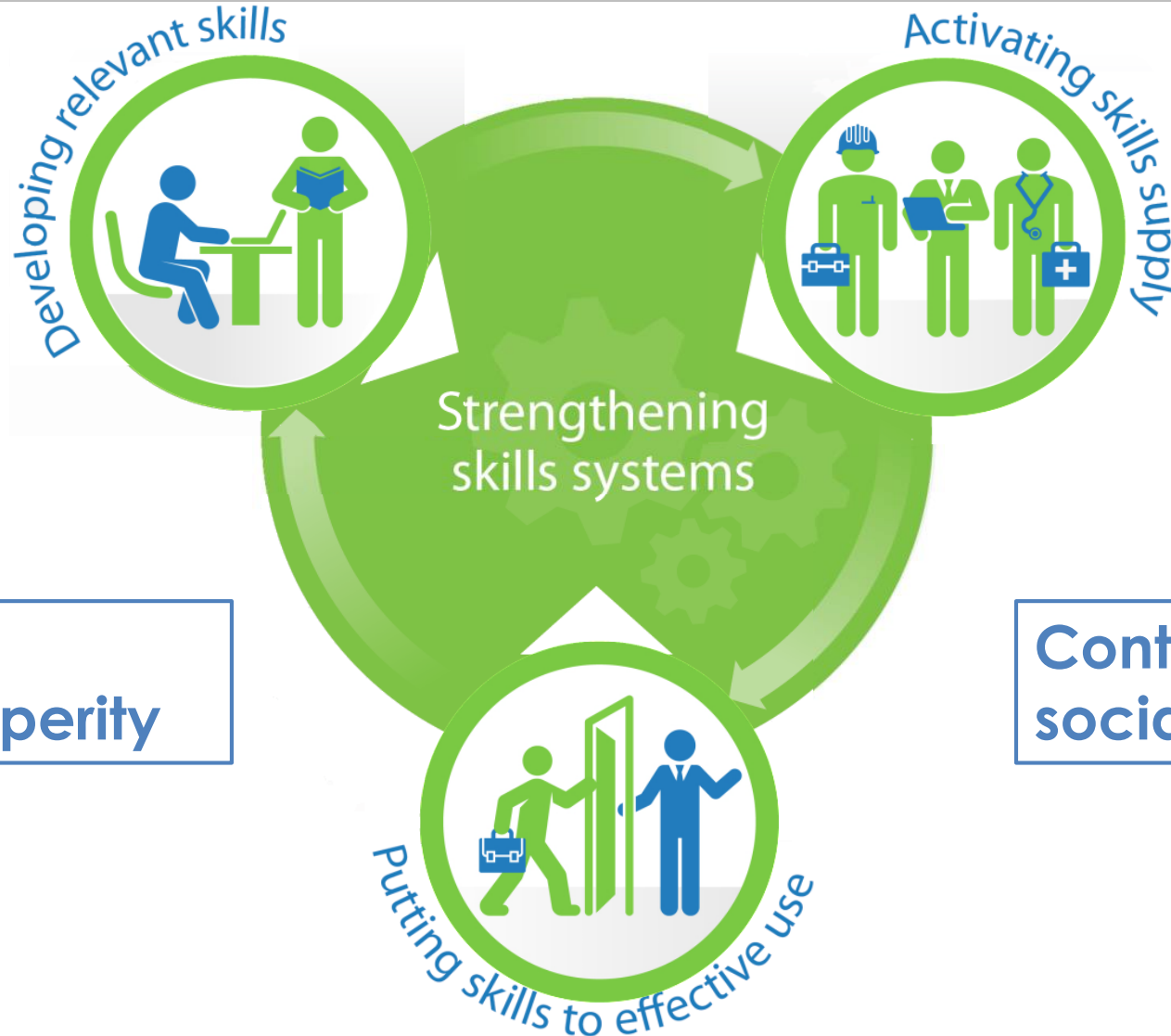
**Important reallocations towards care services**

**Need to ensure youth have the right skills**

## **2. WHAT IS THE OECD SKILLS STRATEGY IN FLANDERS?**



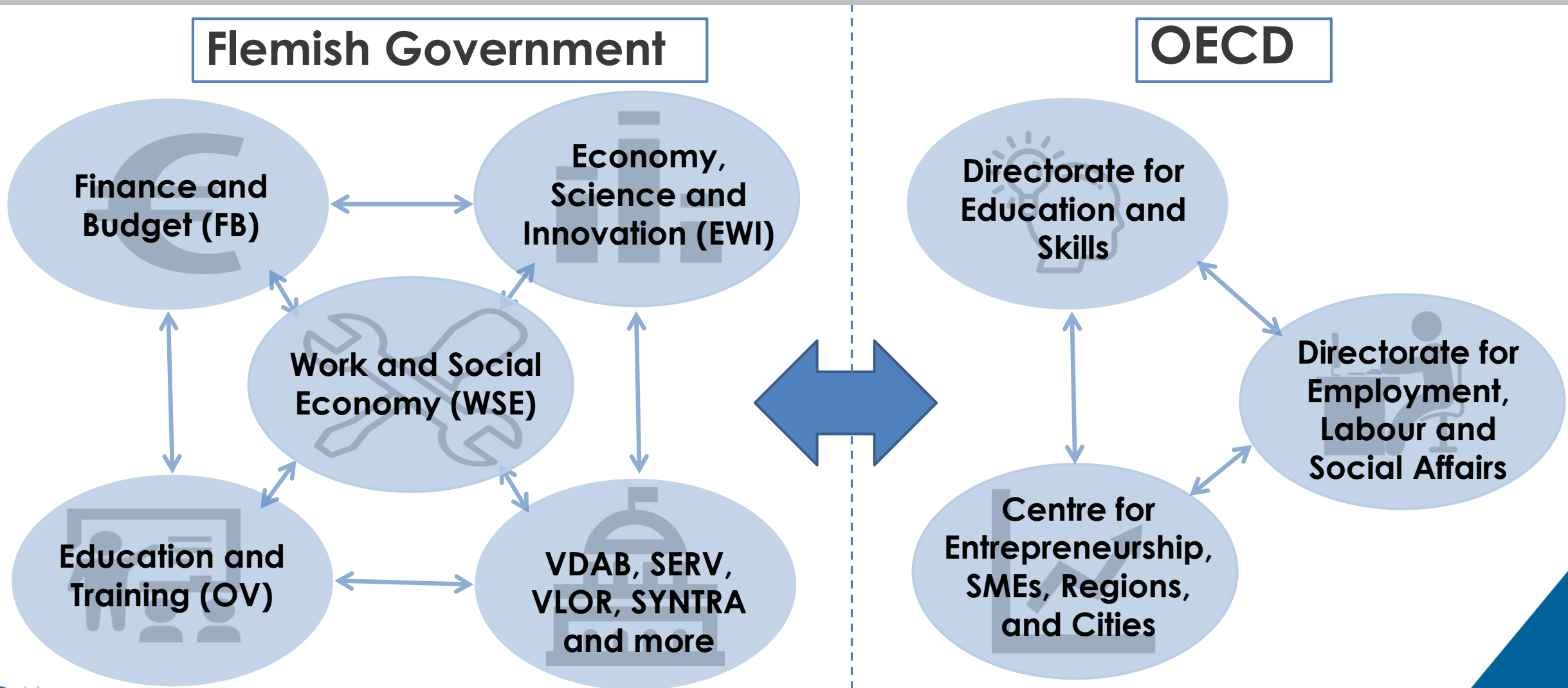
# OECD Skills Strategy







# A collaboration between the OECD and Flanders





# Engaging all relevant stakeholders

**Diagnostic Workshop (15 May)**  
Approx. 75 participants



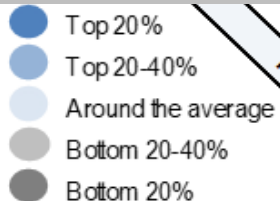
**Good Practices Workshop (18 Sept)**  
Approx. 75 participants





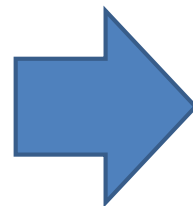
# 5 Priority areas were identified for Flanders

## Dashboard indicators across pillars of the Skills Strategy



Flanders (Belgium) England (UK)<sup>2</sup> Netherlands Germany Austria Denmark France Norway Sweden

		Flanders (Belgium)	England (UK) <sup>2</sup>	Netherlands	Germany	Austria	Denmark	France	Norway	Sweden
Developing relevant skills	How skilled are youth?	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	Are skills of youth improving?	Bottom 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%
	Are skills of youth being developed inclusively?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	How many young adults attain tertiary education? <sup>1</sup>	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	How skilled are young tertiary educated adults?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	How inclusive is tertiary education?	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	How strong are foundational skills of adults?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	Do adults have a broad set of skills?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	Is there a strong culture of adult education?	Bottom 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
Are skills being developed inclusively?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	
Activating skills supply	How well are skills activated in the labour market?	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	How inclusive is the labour market? <sup>1</sup>	Bottom 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	How well aligned are skills with labour market?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
Putting skills to effective use	Do workplaces make intensive use of skills?	Bottom 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	Do people use their skills intensively in daily life?	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	Is the use of skills at work improving?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Bottom 20%
	Are firms designing workplaces to use skills effectively?	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Bottom 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%
	Is skills use stimulated by innovation? <sup>1</sup>	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%	Top 20%



## 5 priorities:

- I. Developing a **learning culture**
- II. Reducing **skills imbalances**
- III. Strengthening **skills use** in the workplaces
- IV. Strengthening the **governance** of adult learning
- V. Improving the **financing** of adult learning



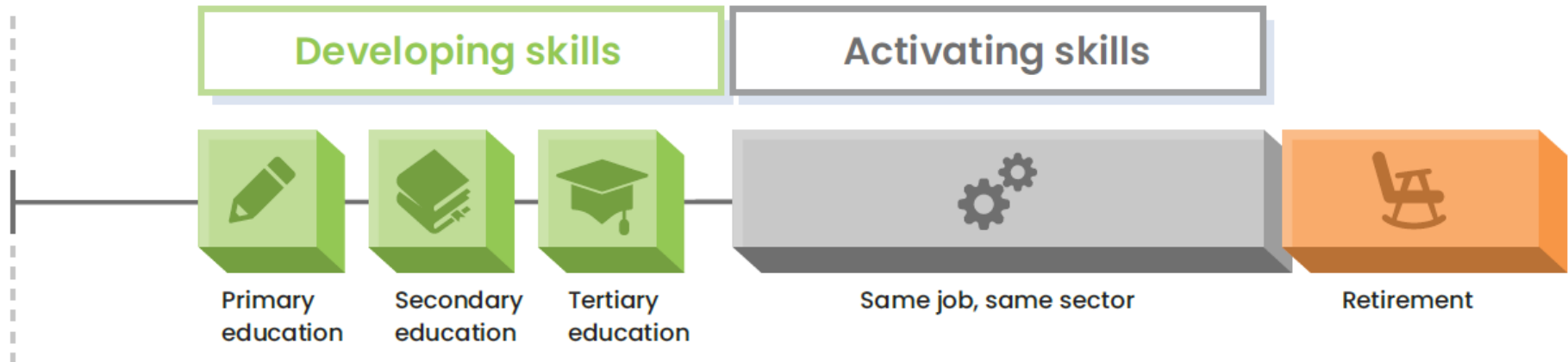
# **PRIORITY 1: DEVELOPING A LEARNING CULTURE**



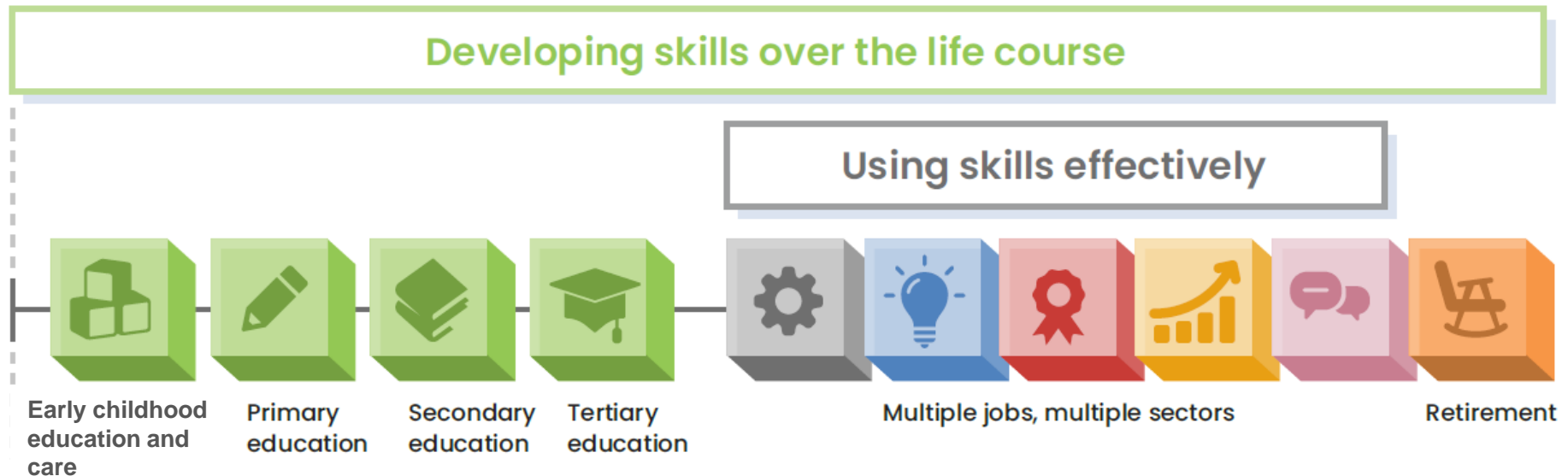


# Learning is Life long

From this:



To this:





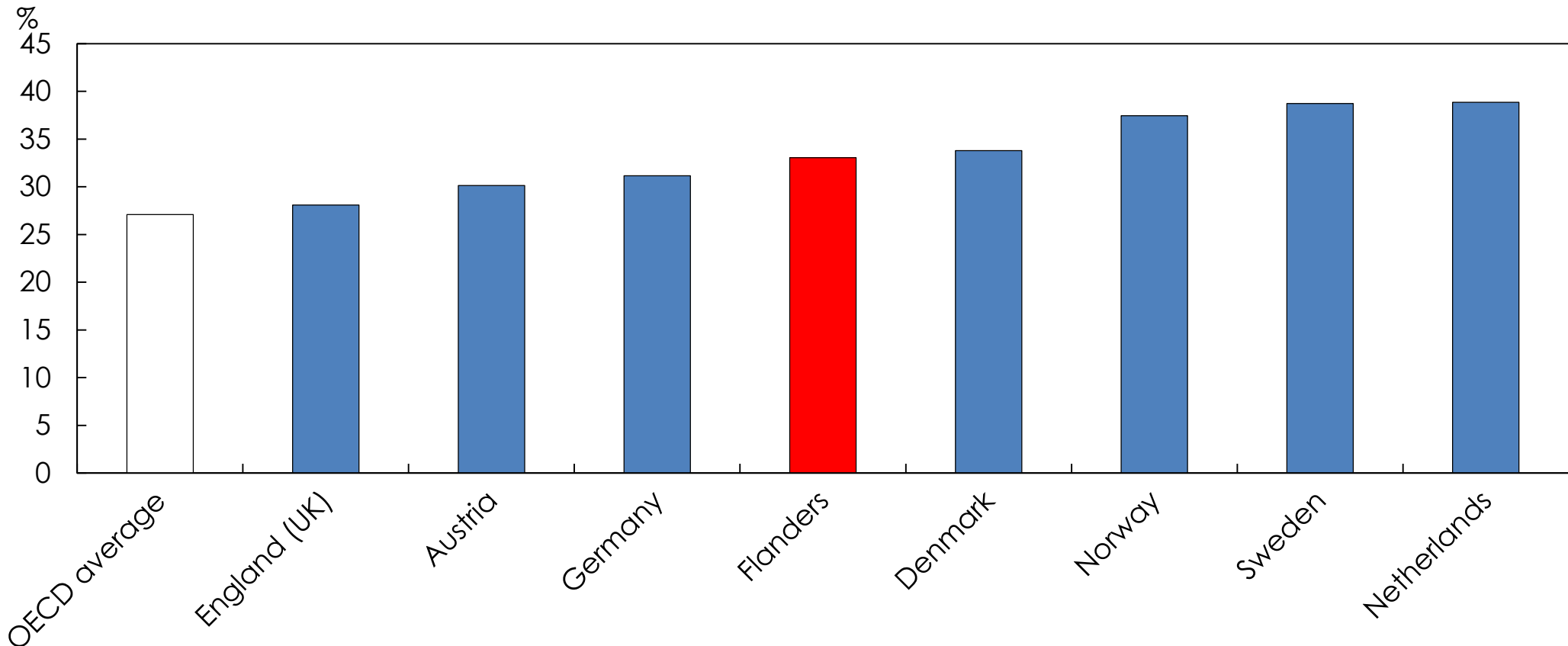
# And learning is life-wide





# Strengthen the skills of adults to thrive in the digital age

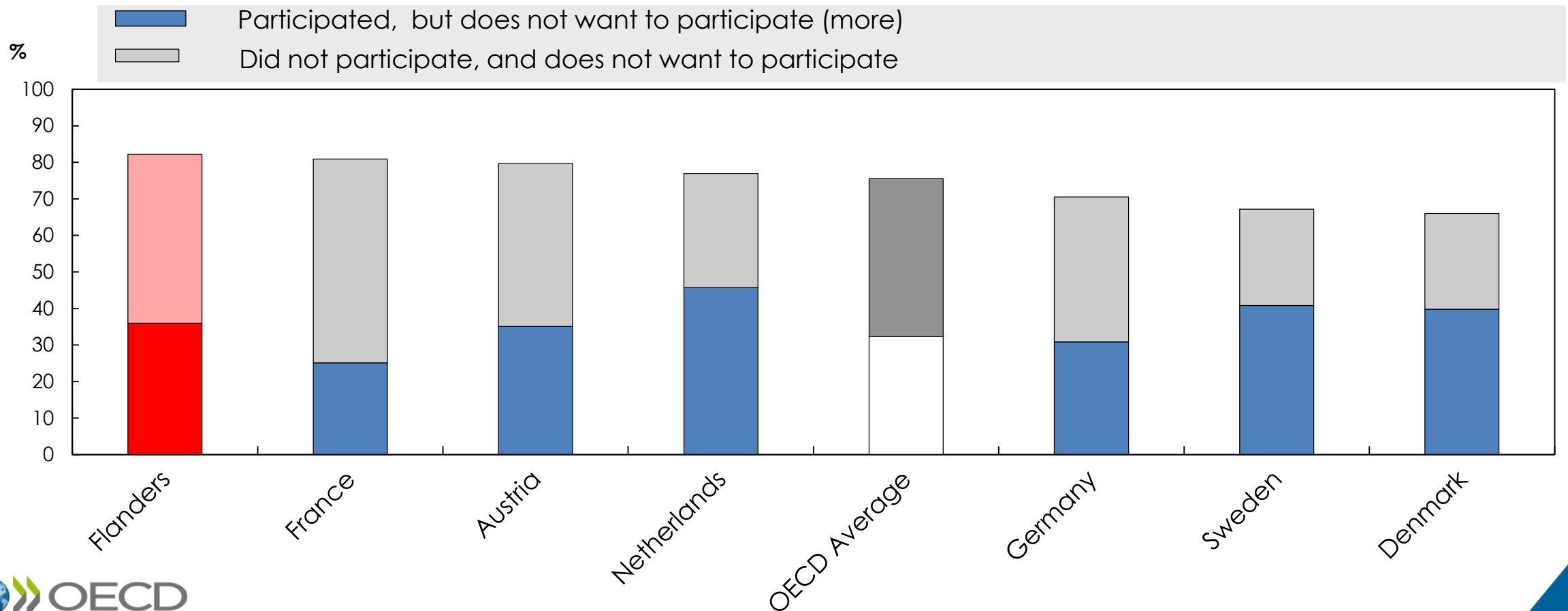
**Share of adult with well-rounded skills (PIAAC), 2012 or 2015**  
Level 3-5 in literacy & numeracy, Level 2/3 in problem solving





# Willingness to participate in adult learning is low

## Adults not willing to participate, % of 25-64 year-olds, 2012/2015

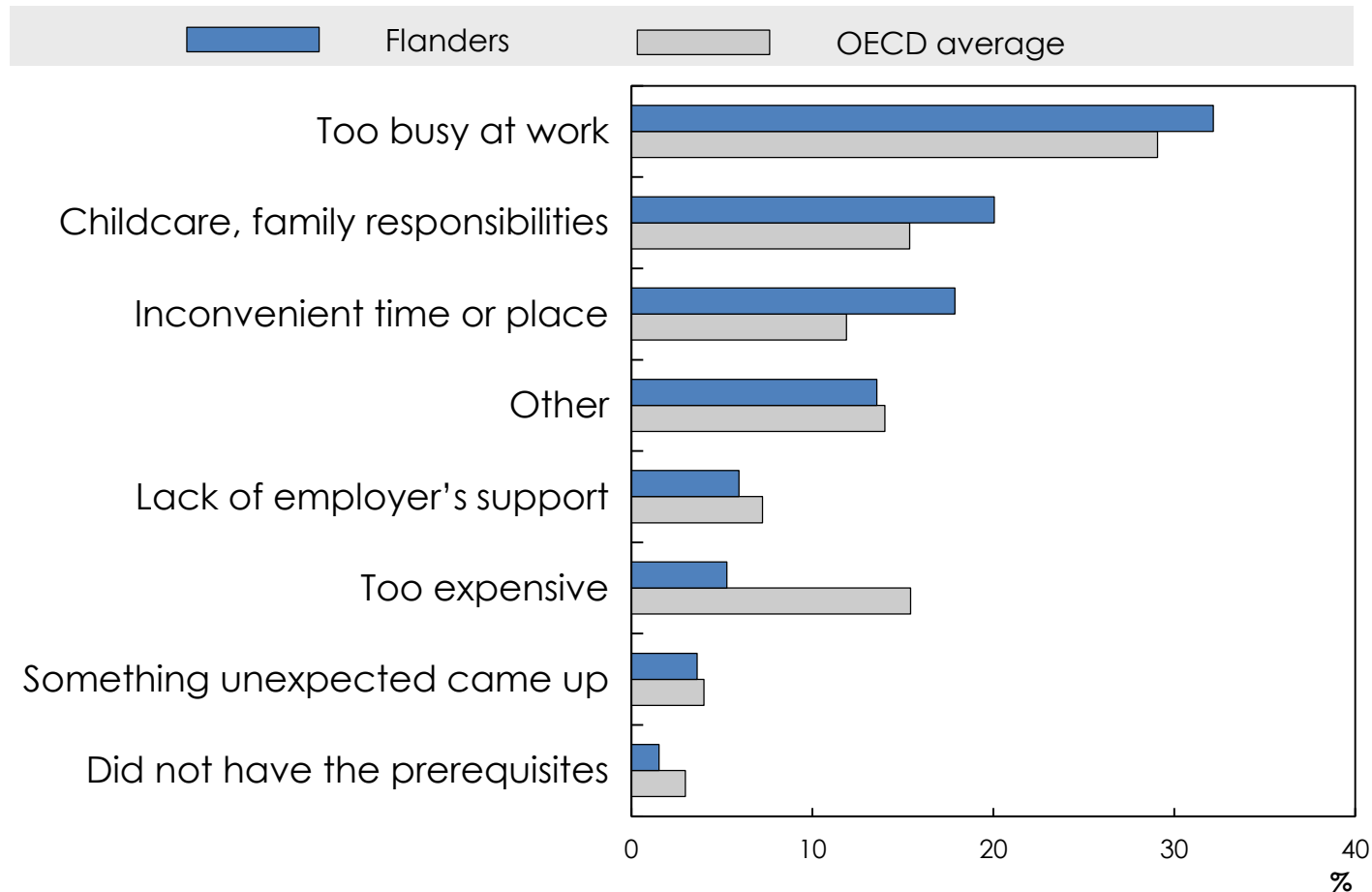






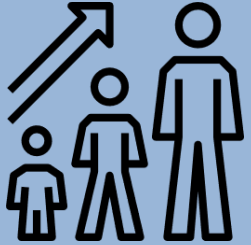
# and barriers to participation are high

## Main obstacles to participation, % of total, 2012/2015





## Recommendations: Learning culture



**Embed adult learning within a lifelong development approach**



**Make adult education more accessible and relevant**



**Enlarge the accessible course offerings for adult learners in higher education**



# Recommendations: Learning culture



**Raise awareness of the importance of adult learning**



**Transform adult learning providers into learning organisations**



**Establish a co-operation network to identify and disseminate best practices in stimulating a learning culture in the workplace**



**Expand work-based learning in university colleges, universities and adult education**



# PRIORITY 2: REDUCING SKILLS IMBALANCES





# Flanders has a tightening labour market

## Record number of vacancies as labour market tightens further

Last month the Flemish employment agency VDAB had 41,303 job vacancies on its books. This is the highest figure since the agency started to collect such figures way back in 1999.

VRT, 14/02/2018

**Eén op drie werkgevers vindt de juiste werknemer: "Jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs" maar niemand die ze kan**

Het Laatste Nieuws, 26/06/2018

**Belgium struggles to fill the highest number of vacancies in the Eurozone**

The federal government has announced 130,000 vacancies after it emerged that businesses have 130,000 vacancies despite the fact that a large number of people are still unemployed.

VRT,  
20/05/2018

**"Krapte op de Vlaamse arbeidsmarkt wordt steeds nijpender"**

Newsblad, 21/08/2018

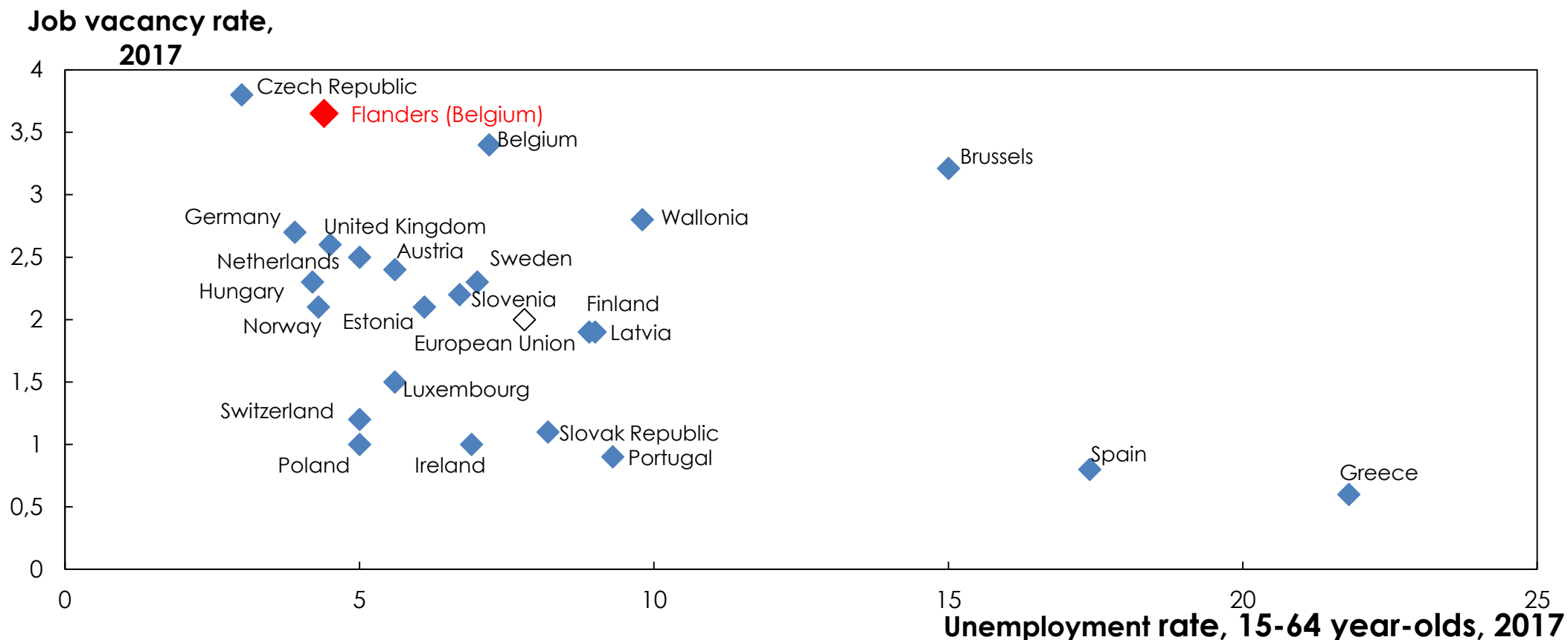
**Many job seekers are "digital illiterates"**

VRT, 28/06/2017



# A large share of vacant jobs and low unemployment contribute to skills shortages

## Job vacancy rate and unemployment rate, OECD-EU countries, 2017



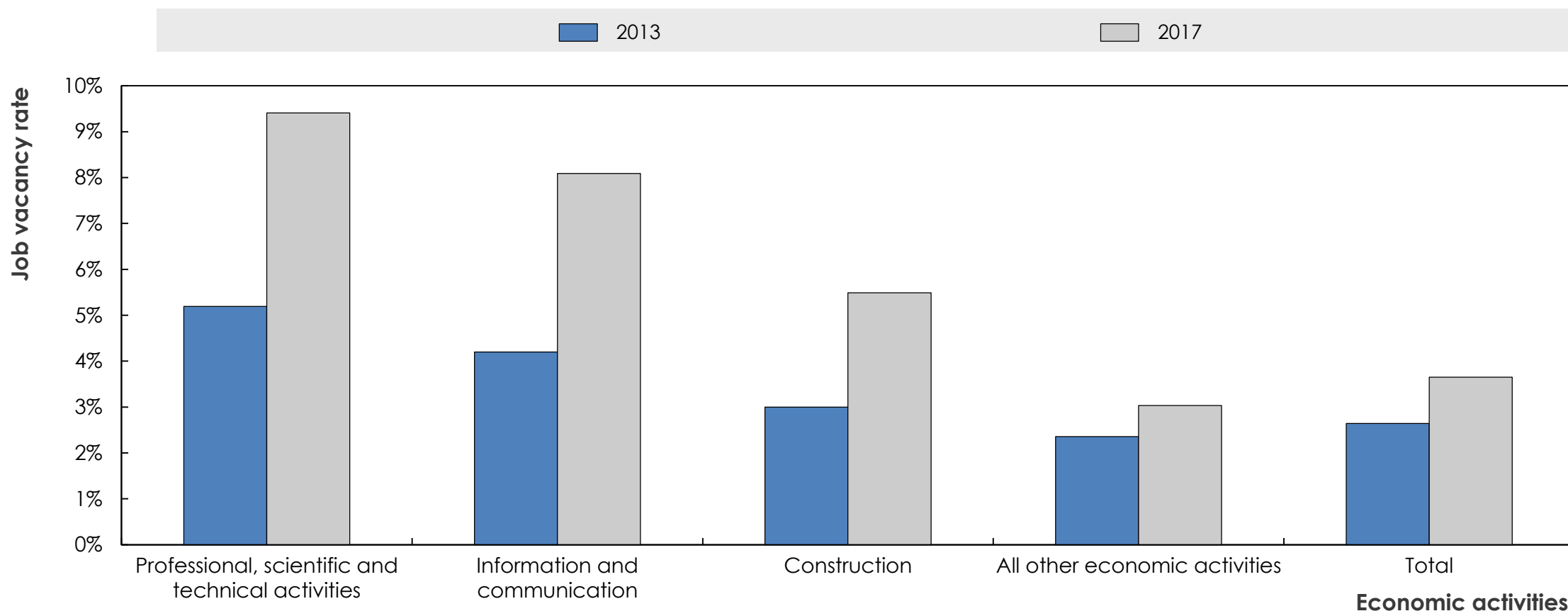
Note: the job vacancy rate is defined as the number of job vacancies expressed as a percentage of the sum of the number of occupied posts and the number of job vacancies.

Source: Eurostat (2018), Job vacancy rate by NACE Rev. 2 activity - annual data (from 2001 onwards) [jvs\_a\_rate\_r2]; Statbel (2018), Job vacancy rate; OECD (2018), Regional Labour statistics.



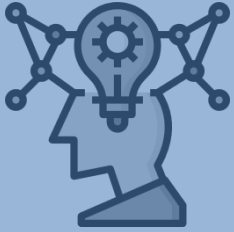
# Skills shortages are largely concentrated in STEM and ICT occupations

## Job vacancy rate for selected economic activities and total, Flanders, 2013 and 2017





# Recommendations: Skills Imbalances



**Make the education system more responsive to changing skills demand**



**Mobilise sectoral training funds to address skills shortages**



**Create bridges between learning and career development support**



**Support assessments of skills needs and skills forecast exercises**

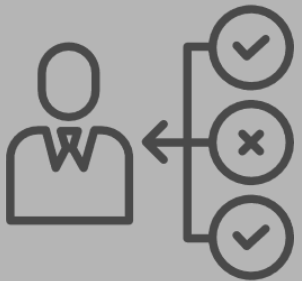




## Recommendations: Skills Imbalances



**Prioritize training in skills in high demand for jobseekers, particularly those at risk of long-term unemployment**



**Raise awareness about skills validation (Erkennen van Competenties, EVC) among employers and potential users**



**Provide individuals with a balanced portfolio of skills**



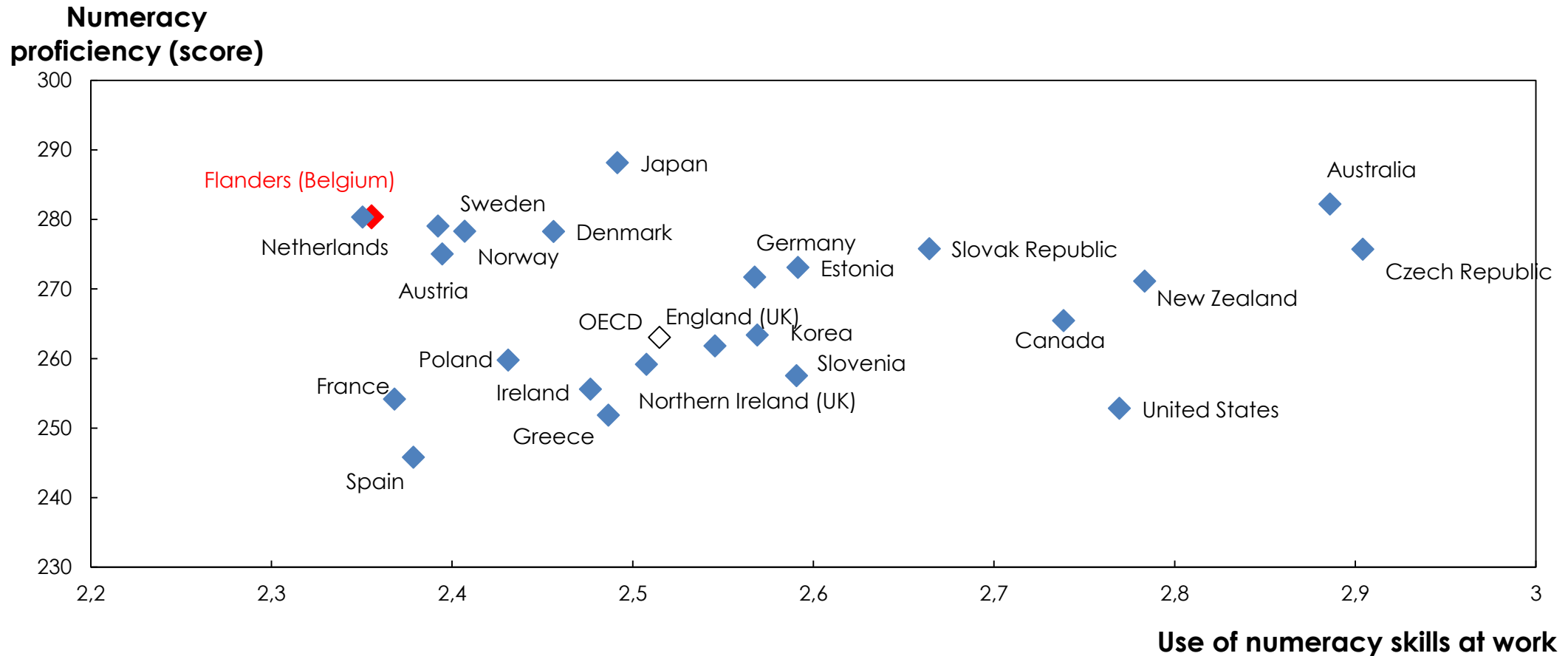
# PRIORITY 3: STRENGTHENING SKILLS USE IN THE WORKPLACE





# Skills are not used to their full potential in the workplace, especially numeracy skills

## Use of numeracy skills and numeracy proficiency

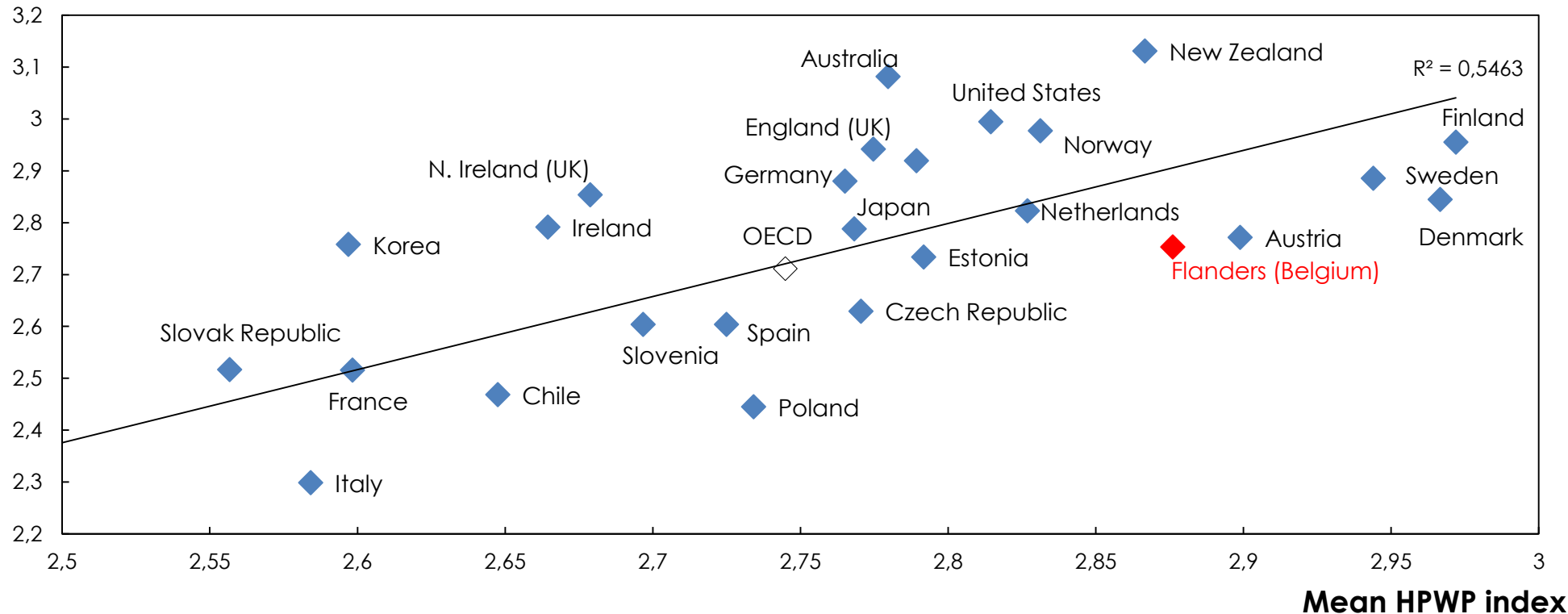




# Higher intensity of High-performance work practices (HPWP) help drive skills use

## Skills use at work and High Performance Workplace Practices, PIAAC 2012,2015

Reading at work index



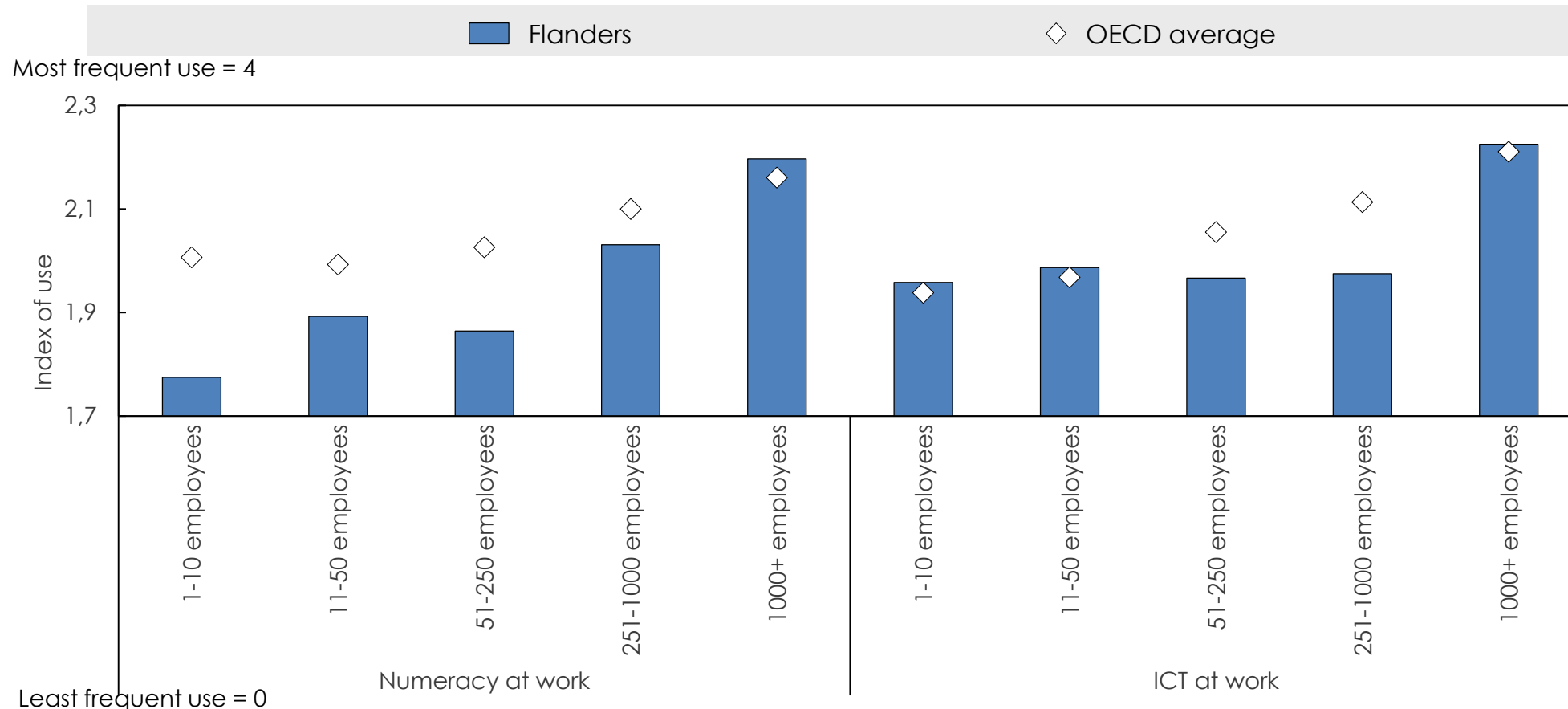
Management and organization practices such as:

- Teamwork
- Autonomy
- use of incentive pay,
- training practices, and
- flexibility in working hours



# Especially small firms tend to use the skills of their workers less

## Use of information-processing skills at work, by firm size, 2012 or 2015





# Recommendations Skills Use



**Raise awareness of the importance of skills use in the workplace**



**Provide direct funding to employers to re-shape the workplace and encourage more management training, especially among small and medium enterprises**



**Promote flexible career mobility opportunities within sectors and firms**



**Examine company working conditions and human resource practices to help fill job vacancies and address potential skills shortages**



**PRIORITY 4:**  
**STRENGTHENING**  
**THE GOVERNANCE**  
**OF ADULT LEARNING**





# Responsibilities for adult learning are shared widely across governments

## Flemish government

- Provision of adult education
- Budget
- Sectoral training funds
- Paid educational leave
- ...

Culture,  
youth and  
media

Economy,  
Science  
and  
Innovation  
(EWI)

Agriculture  
and  
fisheries

Education  
and Training  
(OV)

Work and  
Social  
Economy  
(WSE)

Finance  
and Budget  
(FB)

## Federal government

- Collective labour agreements
- Time credit
- Degree standards
- Taxation

Provinces: Antwerp, East-Flanders, Flemish Brabant, Limburg, West-Flanders

308 municipalities





# And there is a large number of providers of adult learning in Flanders





# Coordinating, aligning, sequencing reforms is key to optimise the output of policies

Instead of piecemeal reforms, introduce a multidimensional approach with reforms in all policy dimensions related to skills



Optimal effectiveness and possible complementary effect



# Recommendations: Governance



**Establish a comprehensive and concrete vision for adult learning**



**Promote coherence and complementarity between levels of government in adult learning**



**Establish a common knowledge and evidence base**



**Support local community organisations to foster, host and co-ordinate local networks of stakeholders that work to improve adult learning**



## PRIORITY 5:

# IMPROVING FINANCING OF ADULT LEARNING





# Despite many financial incentives, the motivation to participate in adult learning remains low

Paid educational leave

Training credit

Training vouchers

Registration fee exemptions

Career guidance vouchers

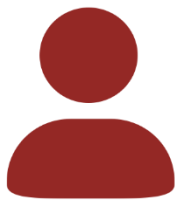
8 out of 10 adults do not want to participate in adult learning

Sectoral training funds

SME wallet

Strategic transition support

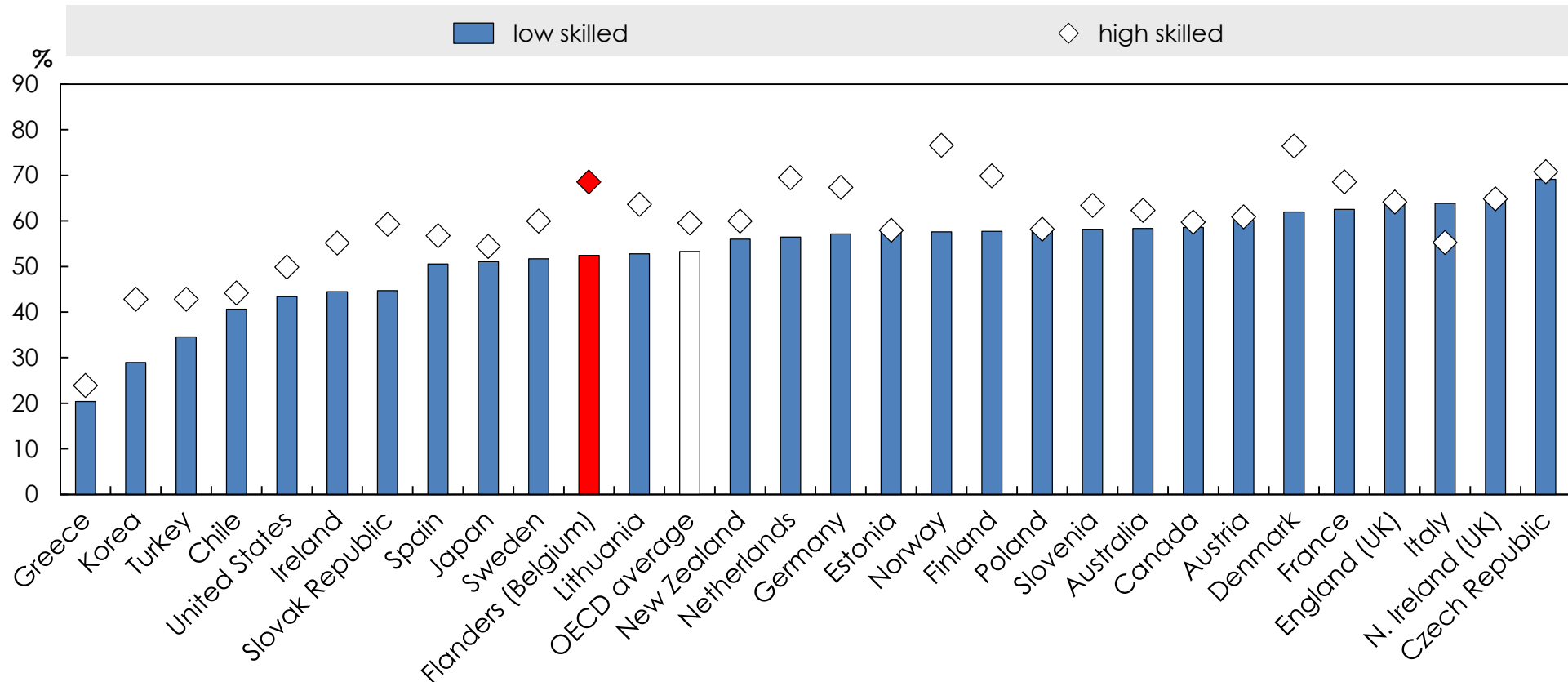
Tax deduction





# And financial measures do not seem to reach the groups most in need

**% of employees receiving employer financial support for education or training, by skills level, 25-64 year-olds**





# Recommendations: Financing



**Group all existing training incentives into a single learning account**



**Expand programmes to reach out to marginalised groups with information, advice and guidance about training**



**Explore options for financially supporting transitions from job to job or from one employment status to another**



**Ensure that training incentives support flexible modes of training delivery**



# Engaging everyone in a clear, comprehensive, mobilizing vision

## 5 priorities:

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Education institutions



Government



Companies



Learner



Public employment service



Social partners





## For more information

To discuss OECD's work with countries on National Skills Strategy projects contact:

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[andrew.bell@oecd.org](mailto:andrew.bell@oecd.org)

To learn more about the OECD's work on skills visit: [www.oecd.org/skills/](http://www.oecd.org/skills/)