

THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS FOR CENTRAL AFRICA
(ICE)

Yaounde, Cameroon
05-09 October 2020

“Skills for economic diversification in Central Africa”

**Webinar on: Skills for Economic diversification in Central Africa: challenges
and opportunities**

CONCEPT NOTE AND CONTROL SHEET

Virtual conferencing, 10:00 – 12:00, 29 May 2020

Context

The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) will be organizing the 36th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Central Africa from 05 to 09 October 2020 (to be confirmed) in Yaounde, Cameroon. Its theme will be: “Skills for economic diversification in Central Africa.”

The forthcoming session will build on the last three ones aimed at deepening the region’s structural transformation processes through economic diversification, underpinned by resource-based and trade-induced industrialization. This series started with the 33rd session of the ICE which produced the Douala Consensus on economic diversification in Central Africa, then the 34th session which identified mechanisms for financing industrialization and the 35th session which made recommendations on developing sub region’s Digital Economy.

If anything, the challenge posed by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has amplified the need for countries of the sub-region to transit quickly from mostly commodity exports to knowledge-based industrial and diversified economies. If the subregion could upgrade, and re-calibrate its skills sets, economic diversification supported by resource-based and trade-induced industrialization would take strong root.

During the forthcoming ICE meeting, ECA’s Central Africa Office wants to convene key stakeholders to produce premium answers to the question: how do we plug the skills gap

for diversification in the subregion? To have a streamlined content-packed ICE session, the Office will therefore be organizing two webinars to lay the groundwork for conclusive discussions and recommendations during the Yaounde rendezvous. This first webinar will be on ***Skills for Economic diversification in Central Africa: challenges, opportunities, partnerships***, while a follow-up one will examine the issue of leveraging experiences from successful comparators.

Objectives

1. To whip-up interest among key actors on the central thrust of the 36th ICE
2. To get feedback on the overall theme of the ICE and more ideas on how to render the session productive and practically beneficial for Central African countries
3. To get inputs that can be used to enrich the background study for the ICE
4. To identify more partners with whom to work consistently for content creation and policy advocacy on Skills for economic diversification in Central Africa

Expected results

1. Webinar is attended by at least 70 experts and senior officials of key ministries across the seven countries covered by ECA/SRO-CA and beyond
2. Experts' ideas on the challenges, opportunities of and partnerships for skills needed for economic diversification are advanced and documented
3. List of new partners to contribute to SRO-CA content on skills for economic diversification is harvested
4. Communication on the event is published via ECA channels and via the news media

Participating parties (in categories)

1. Senior civil service officials (Ministries of Industry; Trade; Economic Planning; Employment/ Vocational Training; Secondary Education; higher Education; SMEs; Finance; Scientific research; Digital Development/Telecoms; Agriculture, Mining)
2. Representatives of national development bodies (standards and norms; investment authorities; national employment agencies; national enterprise upgrading agencies)
3. Officials of Regional Economic Communities (ECCAS, CEMAC, AMU, EAC, SADC, ECOWAS)
4. IDEP

5. Private sector (Central African federation of employers' association – UNIPACE and country based chapters; big data consultants; investment consultants; ICT Activists; leadership coaches)
6. Public-Private bodies (chambers of commerce and industries; chambers of agriculture)
7. Academia and think tanks
8. Youth and startups; informal sector representatives
9. UN partners and other international development bodies (ACBF, UNIDO, ILO, UNESCO, UNDP AfDB, Smart Africa, AfCFTA Secretariat, International Trade Centre,)
10. Officials of IFIs (World Bank, IMF, IDB)
11. Media

Webinar Structure

PART I: Statements

1. Pre-introduction by moderator
2. Welcome by the Director, ECA/SRO-CA
3. Presentation by Head of Section for Subregional Initiatives, ECA/SRO-CA, on “What Skills for Economic diversification in Central Africa?”
4. Word from the Minister of Economy and Development Planning, Chad, on the experience of jointly elaborating PDIDE-Chad with ECA and where Chad wants to go from here

PART II: Themed interactions

CHALLENGES/INVENTORY

1. What are the general challenges to economic diversification in Central Africa?
2. What skills sets are available for industrialization in the subregion?
3. What do mid-secondary school curricula look like? Do they prepare kids for an impactful higher education or for the industrial world after school? What should the curriculum be? How do we practically change the current model and make it efficient to produce the required skills without further waste of time?
4. What is the complexion of higher education learning in Central Africa? Why is STEM not attractive to students? What investments are made for effective STEM education? And why do science and technology graduates still leave school without a job? How do we practically change the current model and make it efficient to

produce the required skills without further waste of time? How should training be quickly targeted to meet the subregion's comparative advantages for diversification?

5. What do industrial structures produce in sectors such as agribusiness, mining, household product manufacturing, textiles, infrastructure development, digital technology?
6. How skilled are workers of industry? What are the exact skill gaps which need to be plugged? What is the experience of enterprise upgrading offices in addressing these?
7. What skills can businesses and suppliers from the subregion quickly acquire to upgrade themselves into higher levels of the regional and global value chains of production and service provision?
8. What about general leadership in our society?

PARTNERSHIPS

9. How should learning institutions (secondary schools and universities) relate with those of the industrial world?
10. Industrial employers unions – what work do they do on skills development? How can this be enhanced for deeper levels of vertical economic diversification and wider levels of horizontal economic diversification?
11. Public-private partnerships: What level of engagement exist between State organs and the private sector in terms of upgrading skills for industrialization? What concrete platforms can be created to improve on what is happening? How can existing industrialization/economic diversification masterplans be successfully implemented?
12. How can tech innovators be supported to scale-up their skills for impact?
13. How can STI structures across the subregion collaborate for better results?

PART III:

Concluding word from the Director, ECA's central Africa office