



European  
Commission



# BLUEPRINT FOR SECTORAL COOPERATION ON SKILLS

**Textile/Clothing/Leather/Footwear  
(TCLF)**

Responding to skills  
mismatches at  
sectoral level

A key action of the New  
Skills Agenda for Europe

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# Introduction

Technological progress and globalisation are revolutionising the way we live, learn, work and do business. Digital and other key technologies are reshaping the foundations of industry and the wider global economy.

This offers tremendous opportunities for innovation, growth and jobs, but it also requires skilled and adaptable people who are able to drive and support change.

In order to deliver **sector-specific skills solutions**, the New Skills Agenda for Europe has launched **the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation** on Skills. The Blueprint is a new framework for strategic cooperation between key stakeholders (e.g. businesses, trade unions, research, education and training institutions, public authorities) in a given economic sector. It will stimulate investment and encourage the strategic use of EU and national funding opportunities. The aim is to develop concrete actions to satisfy short and medium term skills needs to support the overall sectoral strategy.

The Blueprint can only bring results if it is driven and owned by sector stakeholders. In this respect, the full involvement of social partners is very important. The Blueprint has been and will continue to be discussed in an open exchange with interested parties, including in the context of sectoral social dialogue committees.

The Blueprint builds on previous work by the European Commission and sectoral partners (in particular the Sector Skills Councils<sup>1</sup> and the European Sector Skills Alliances<sup>2</sup>) to fight sector skills mismatches. Going forward, it could also support smart specialisation strategies, which help regions choose to specialise in sectors where they can be most competitive.<sup>3</sup>

All relevant EU and national qualitative evidence and quantitative data produced under the Blueprint will contribute to the Skills Panorama and the new Europass Framework.<sup>4</sup>

In this publication we outline the steps towards cooperation on skills across the six pilot sectors of this initiative. We then review specifically the needs and benefits of the Blueprint in the context of the Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector.

For more information about the overall initiative please visit <http://europa.eu/!gc96YU>

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# Three steps to match skills to sectors' needs

The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills fosters sustainable partnerships among stakeholders to translate a sector's growth agenda into a comprehensive skills strategy and to take action to address sectoral skills needs.

## Six Pilot Sectors



AUTOMOTIVE



DEFENCE



MARITIME  
TECHNOLOGY



SPACE  
(GEO INFORMATION)



TEXTILE,  
CLOTHING,  
LEATHER AND  
FOOTWEAR



TOURISM

The Blueprint will be extended to additional sectors in the future.

## 1. Is the sector ready for an EU-wide partnership on skills?

In this preliminary phase, skills gaps in the sector and their potential impact on growth, innovation and competitiveness are assessed.

The presence and maturity of the overall growth strategy for the sector is verified, as well as the link to EU policy priorities. On this basis, the decision is taken on whether to move to the next phases or not. This groundwork is carried out by the Commission in cooperation with social partners and stakeholders. It can take place in more or less structured ways, depending on the way the sector is organised.

## 2. Launching sustainable sectoral partnerships

Once the sectors have been chosen, the Commission supports the set-up and the work of sectoral partnerships at EU-level. Each partnership will develop a sectoral skills strategy to support the objectives of the overall growth strategy for the sector and match the demand and supply of skills.

Partners will look into how major trends, such as global, societal, and technological developments, are likely to affect jobs and skills needs, as well as their potential impact on growth, competitiveness and employment in the sector (e.g. restructuring, hard-to-fill vacancies). It will then identify priorities and milestones for action and develop concrete solutions. The partnership will:

- Revise or create occupational profiles and the corresponding skills needs, drawing on the classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)<sup>5</sup> and existing competence frameworks<sup>6</sup>;
- Update or create curricula while promoting sectoral qualifications and certifications;
- Promote benefits of choosing a career in the sector and foster gender balance;
- Promote job-seeker and student mobility across Europe in the sector, capitalising on the use of existing EU tools<sup>7</sup>;
- Identify successful projects and best practices, including effective use of EU funding;
- Design an industry-led action plan for the long-term roll-out of the strategy and its results and ensure sustained cooperation among stakeholders at European, national and regional levels.

The platforms will build on European tools relating to skills and qualifications.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Roll-out at national and regional level

Building on the results achieved at EU level, the Blueprint will be **rolled out at national and regional level**, in cooperation with national and regional authorities, and stakeholders. The members of the EU partnerships and the Commission will actively engage in dissemination and awareness raising activities to rally all interested national and regional stakeholders and ensure broad involvement and take up. The main tasks of national/regional partnerships will be to:

- Implement the EU-level sectoral skills strategy and action plan recommendations, while adapting them to national contexts and priorities;
- Implement business-education-research partnerships on the ground, including in the context of smart specialisation<sup>9</sup>;
- Raise visibility and share results widely to influence EU, national and regional policies, initiatives and intelligence tools.

#### Funding the Blueprint

The Blueprint is a new framework for strategic cooperation between stakeholders and is independent from individual funding instruments. However, a number of funding opportunities are available to support the different steps.

Lessons learned during the pilot phase will help in refining the Blueprint, including funding arrangements.

#### Step 1

This is a preliminary phase of the Blueprint. It is only at the end of the step that the decision on going ahead with the Blueprint is taken, therefore there is no dedicated funding. However, relevant activities can be funded by existing instruments. Work on step 1 should start with the sector's interest. It should reflect how the sector is organised and take previous work into account. For example, calls for tender on sectoral studies could be launched by the Commission. Or, sectoral stakeholders could apply for projects under Erasmus+ Sector Skills Alliances (E+ SSA) Lot 1. Alternatively, work could be taken forward within existing structures at EU level, such as high level groups or sectoral dialogue committees.


#### Step 2

For the pilot phase, a specific call, open only to **the six pilot sectors**, will be published in early 2017, under the new **Lot 3 of the Erasmus+ Sector Skills Alliances**<sup>10</sup>. The call will make available € 4 million per sector to cover up to 80 % of eligible costs over a 4-year period. Only one European Alliance per sector will be supported. It must ensure good coverage of EU Member States and be representative of the sector. It must be led by representatives of the industry (e.g. companies, chambers or trade associations) and include education and training providers. The presence of social partners and public authorities is highly encouraged.

In 2017, calls for tenders will also be published under the COSME programme<sup>11</sup>. Other funding opportunities and arrangements could be considered in the future, also taking into account the results of the pilot phase.

#### Step 3

This step needs to be financed at national and regional level. EU Structural and Investment Funds<sup>12</sup> (ESIF) could support Step 3 of the Blueprint, but this would require a decision by the relevant managing authorities. The EU partnerships will look into replicable models to facilitate the use of EU funding to support this step. Other public and private funding should also be used.



## TEXTILE/CLOTHING/LEATHER/FOOTWEAR (TCLF) SECTOR

# Why a blueprint for cooperation on skills in the **TCLF** sector?



The TCLF sector, comprising textiles, clothing, leather and footwear, is part of complex and interlinked value chains of fashion, high-end industries and relevant innovative technologies. These sectors are among the most promising and most creative in Europe. They provide an important contribution to the EU economy with 5 million people employed in the fashion value chain and over 1 million in high-end industries. Despite the economic crisis many European companies have expanded in global markets, thanks to knowledge within the sector and Europe's worldwide reputation for craftsmanship and quality.

However, in spite of innovation and creativity, the TCLF industry faces increasing skill gaps and shortages, mostly due to its ageing workforce, a mismatch between education and industry's needs, technological change and low levels of worker mobility.

The sector suffers from an image problem which causes difficulties in attracting new recruits, especially younger workers, creating significant skills gaps along the sector's entire supply value chain. Nonetheless, the sector has evolved, leading to many new opportunities that require a wide spectrum of skilled and qualified professionals from engineering technologists and digital experts to people with craftsmanship skills and more traditional knowledge.

**Find out more**

Details about European Commission initiatives to develop skills in the TCLF sector:

[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/fashion/skills\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/fashion/skills_en)

TCLF Skills Council:

<http://europeanskillscouncil.t-c-leu>

## What can the blueprint achieve?

The Blueprint will enable key stakeholders in the TCLF sector to develop solutions to:

- **Overcome mismatches between industry demand for skills and education supply**, through specific strategy, action plan and learning programmes addressing skills gaps, particularly by promoting both existing skills (e.g. traditional craftsmanship and artisanal skills) and emerging skills (e.g. digital skills, environmental skills, skills in technical textiles innovation);
- **Upgrade the image of careers in the TCLF sector**, by showing why the sector is such an attractive employer and how it can support desirable transversal career opportunities (e.g. starting a business in the TCLF sector);
- **Provide well-designed methods of training, educating and mentoring** using innovative educational and vocational training tools (online games, webinars, social media, etc.), taking into **consideration the specific needs of the sector**;
- **Upgrade transnational mobility in training and employment through** specific actions enabling and encouraging jobseekers and businesses to use existing EU tools and instruments (like Drop'Pin, Alliances for Traineeships, Erasmus+) in order to find and offer apprenticeships, traineeships and jobs in other EU countries;
- **Establishing long-term cooperation and good practice exchanges** among industry stakeholders, research institutes, education centres and VET providers involved in skills development in the sector at EU /national and regional levels.

**The focus** should be on concrete actions and measures. The development of sector-specific skills should be, where needed, complemented with transversal skills, notably entrepreneurial and business skills. Only close cooperation between key industry stakeholders, public authorities, research and education centres (including VET) will guarantee adequate implementation of these actions.





## 🔗 Links to other related projects and initiatives

The European Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Skills Council (TCLF Skills Council) was the first established European Sector Skills Council (2011). It accomplished many results in the area of sector-based skills development (e.g. database<sup>13</sup> of best practices of existing national and regional textile and clothing observatories dealing with skills in EU and candidate countries and the publication of four reports on skills needs). Stakeholders were involved in the ESCO sectoral reference group (TEXAN) developing a common language to compare skills, competences, occupations and qualifications. TCLF was one of the six sectors eligible for the Sector Skills Alliance call for proposals within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme for 2014, aiming to ensure that vocational education and training (VET) better responds to labour market needs.

The “Knowledge Platform for Transferring Research and Innovation in Footwear”<sup>14</sup>, has been designed to create a curriculum and platform for project-based learning to allow interns to transfer research and development skills and knowledge to the manufacturing field.

The “Leather is my job!”<sup>15</sup> project aimed to raise the interest of people - in particular young people - for this traditional, yet innovative industry.

SMEs, universities and non-governmental organisations cooperate in TECLO project, “Textile and Clothing Knowledge Alliance”<sup>16</sup>, which promotes professional and transversal skills, with a special focus on entrepreneurship and innovation.



## Endnotes

1. **European Sector Skills Councils:** <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=784>
2. **Projects financed by Erasmus+:** [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills-alliances\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills-alliances_en)
3. **Smart Specialisation Platform:** <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>
4. **Skills Panorama:** <http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en>; Europass: COM(2016) 625
5. **European Skills, Competences, Occupations, and Qualifications(ESCO):** <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>
6. **Examples of competence frameworks:** Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, **the** Entrepreneurship Competence Framework and the European e-Competence Framework
7. **Examples of EU employability and mobility tools:** Erasmus+, EURES, Drop'Pin, European Alliance for Apprenticeships
8. **Examples of EU skills & qualifications tools:** European Qualifications Framework, ESCO, Europass, ECVET and EQAVET
9. **Smart Specialisation Map:** <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/map>
10. **Erasmus+ Sector Skills Alliances:** [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/home/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/home/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills_en)
11. **COSME Programme:** [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme_en)
12. **EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF):** [http://ec.europa.eu/contracts\\_grants/funds\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/funds_en.htm)
13. **The European Skills Council – Textile Clothing Leather & Footwear:** <http://europeanskillscouncil.t-c-l.eu/>
14. **Knowledge Platform for Transferring Research and Innovation in Footwear:** <http://knowledge4foot.eu/>
15. **“Leather is my job” project:** <http://www.euroleather.com/index.php/news-activities/177-leather-is-my-job-follow-up>
16. **Textile and Clothing Knowledge Alliance (TECLO) project:** <http://teclo.eu/>



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The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills is a new framework for strategic cooperation to address short and medium-term skills needs in a given economic sector. This publication focuses specifically on the textile, clothing, leather & footwear sector and shows how stakeholders (businesses, trade unions, public authorities, research, education and training institutions etc.) can apply the framework to address challenges, illustrating the steps towards delivering sector-specific skills solutions through sectoral partnerships.

The Blueprint currently focuses on six pilot sectors including: Automotive; Defence; Maritime Technology; Space (geo-information); Textile, Clothing, Leather & Footwear (TCLF); and Tourism. It will be extended to additional sectors in the future

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