Sector Skills Alliances

What are the aims and priorities of a Sector Skills Alliance?

Sector Skills Alliances aim at tackling skills gaps, by identifying sector specific labour market needs and demand for new skills with regard to one or more occupational profiles (demand side), or by enhancing the responsiveness of initial and continuing VET systems, at any level (supply side), to sector-specific labour market needs.

Drawing on evidence regarding skills needs, Sector Skills Alliances support the design and delivery of transnational vocational training content, as well as teaching and training methodologies.

Sector Skills Alliances for strategic sectoral cooperation on skills identify and develop concrete actions to match demand and supply of skills to support the overall sector-specific growth strategy.

The projects will contribute to the improvement of quality and relevance of Europe's Vocational Education and Training systems as outlined in the 2015 ET 2020 Joint Report, and by the Ministers in charge of VET in the 2015 Riga conclusions agreeing on a new set of medium-term deliverables for the period 2015-2020.

This should be achieved through actions aimed at the following objectives:

- developing strategic approaches to sectorial skills developments through partnerships for sustainable cooperation between key stakeholders in the sector and public authorities;
- identification of existing and emerging skills needs for professions in specific sectors, also feeding this intelligence into the European Skills Panorama;
- strengthening the exchange of knowledge and practice between education and training institutions and the labour market, with particular reference to sectorial actors;
- promoting relevant sectorial qualifications and support agreement for their recognition;
- building mutual trust, facilitating cross-border certification and therefore easing professional mobility in a sector, and increasing recognition of qualifications at European level within a sector;
- adapting VET provision to skills needs, focusing both on job specific skills as well as on key competences;
- integrating work-based learning in VET provision, whenever possible coupled with an international experience, and exploiting its potential to drive economic development and innovation, increasing the competitiveness of the sectors concerned;
- planning the progressive roll-out of project deliverables leading to systemic impact in the form of constant adaptation of VET provision to skill needs, based on sustained partnerships between providers and key labour market stakeholders at the appropriate level (“feedback loops”). This planning should identify and involve key national and/or regional stakeholders, while also ensuring the wide dissemination of results.

What is a Sector Skills Alliance?

Sector Skills Alliances are transnational projects identifying or drawing on existing and emerging
skills needs in a specific economic sector and/or translating these needs into vocational curricula to respond to those needs.

Sector Skills Alliances are intended for projects in Vocational Education and Training (VET). However, the scope of VET goes beyond the upper-secondary level and covers the post-secondary, non-tertiary level but also the tertiary level (e.g. Universities of applied sciences, Polytechnic institutes, etc.). Proposals that also include tertiary-level VET providers, can be submitted provided that the curricula and/or qualifications to be developed cover both tertiary (EQF levels 6 to 8) and upper secondary VET levels (EQF levels 3 to 5), i.e. not-exclusively tertiary level.

A particular focus will be on digital skills as they are increasingly important on all job profiles across the entire labour market. Also, the transition to a circular and greener economy needs to be underpinned by changes to qualifications and national education and training curricula to meet emerging professional needs for green skills and sustainable development.

Projects can achieve these aims by applying to one or several of the following Lots (an organisation can be involved as applicant in several proposals and Lots as long as the proposals address different sectors):

**Lot 1: Sector Skills Alliances for design and delivery of VET:** This Lot aims at responding to identified skills gaps and needs by developing common trans-national training content for European occupational core profiles as well as teaching and training methodologies, with a focus on work-based learning.

Projects can include skills anticipation aimed at identifying skills needs, gaps and training provisions in a given specific economic sector or provide evidence that the proposed design and delivery of VET is based on existing skills need identification.

**Lot 2: Sector Skills Alliances for implementing a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on skills:** The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills is one of the ten actions in the New Skills Agenda for Europe. In the current call, the Blueprint will be implemented in six sectors that are experiencing severe skills shortages (see eligibility criteria). Alliances under Lot 2 will support the implementation of the Blueprint by developing a sectoral skills strategy. This strategy has to lead to systemic and structural impact on reducing skills shortages, gaps and mismatches, as well as ensuring appropriate quality and levels of skills to support growth, innovation and competitiveness in the sector. The sectoral skills strategy must include a clear set of activities, milestones and well-defined outputs with the goal to match demand and supply of skills to support the overall sector specific growth strategy. The objectives of Lot 1 (responding to identified skills needs through design and delivery of VET) have to be included in the sectoral skills strategy. Lot 2 Alliance must also implement Lot 1 activities. For Lot 2 only 1 proposal per sector can be funded.

**Which activities are supported under this action?**

Each Sector Skills Alliance shall implement a coherent, comprehensive and variable set of interconnected activities which are flexible and adaptable to different current and future labour markets’ needs, such as:
Lot 1: Sector Skills Alliance for design and delivery of VET

**Designing trans-national sector-wide vocational curricula:**

- when needed, gathering and interpreting evidence of skills needs on the labour market in a given economic sector, drawing on the EU Skills Panorama and, where relevant, the work of existing Sector Skills Alliances;
- identifying needs in terms of training provision, drawing on, where available, the occupational profiles of the Classification of the European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO);
- on the basis of identified skills needs for specific occupation profiles in a given economic sector, identify and design VET curricula and, where appropriate, qualification standards (in line with EQF and informed by ESCO), to respond to those needs;
- translating skill needs into innovative, learning outcome-oriented modular VET programmes and/or qualifications (applying ECVET for designing qualifications composed of units of learning outcomes), to allow for transparency and comparability, taking also into account needs of validation of prior learning (e.g. non-formal or informal);
- applying quality management to the new training content either by applying the quality assurance principles of EQAVET or by using already existing quality assurance systems which, however, should be in line with EQAVET;
- integrating periods of work-based learning into the new training content, including opportunities to apply knowledge in practical "real life" workplace situations, and embedding trans national learning experience whenever possible;
- designing VET provision focusing both on job specific skills as well as on key competences, soft skills, and STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), while providing effective opportunities to acquire or develop those competences, particularly in work-related training contexts;
- promoting relevant VET sectoral qualifications (including trans-national joint programmes awarded by more than one VET provider), and support agreement for their recognition by implementing ECVET principles, and referencing qualifications to NQFs and the EQF as well as other relevant European tools and instruments in the sector concerned;
- increasing recognition of qualifications at European and national level within a sector, by promoting and agreeing on sectoral qualifications, facilitating cross-border certification, and building mutual trust, contributing to increased learner and professional mobility in the sector;
- identifying, documenting and promoting successful skills or qualifications related projects and good practices, as well as those fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, including from other sectors or from outside Europe and make detailed proposals to replicate or scale them up, where relevant;
- where relevant, ensuring that results of the project are available in open data format so that they could feed into the Skills Panorama and ESCO.

**Delivering vocational curricula:**

- identifying the most appropriate delivery methodologies for the curricula, using innovative approaches to teaching and learning, as well as a strategic and integrated use of ICTs (e.g. blended learning, simulators, augmented reality, etc.), virtual/blended mobility solutions for learners and staff, and open educational resources (e.g. MOOC’s);
- identifying ways to implement innovative VET teaching and learning methods to respond to the needs of specific target groups of learners; and through the provision of work-based learning;
- developing actions to facilitate inter-generational transfer of knowledge within VET;
• describing the ways in which assessment methodologies and procedures can embed all forms of learning, including work-based learning, and facilitate the validation of skills and competences acquired prior to training;
• identifying adequate measures to track learners after completing their training in order to provide “feedback loops”. These tracking and feedback systems can build on information from companies, learners/employees, as well as public information resources and labour market stakeholders;
• proposing the appropriate measures for the formal recognition of the new or adapted vocational curricula and qualifications in participating countries and in the sector(s) covered;
• planning the progressive roll-out of project deliverables leading to systemic impact.

Lot 2: Sector Skills Alliances for implementing a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on skills

Sector Skills Alliances under this Lot shall set up sustainable cooperation on skills development between key industry stakeholders in a given sector, education and training providers, and public authorities.

Alliances in this Lot cover the activities of Lot 1. Moreover, they have to cover the following activities:

• developing a sectoral skills strategy to support the objectives of the established growth strategy for the sector. This strategy should be the first key deliverable of the project, identifying concrete actions and indicating clear set of activities, milestones and well defined outputs, to suggest how to match demand and supply of skills. The strategy should detail how major trends, such as global, societal, and technological developments in the sector, are likely to affect jobs and skills needs. It should describe the expected timeline and give particular attention to the impact of digital and key enabling technologies;
• to underpin and illustrate the strategy, identifying, documenting and promoting concrete examples of policies and initiatives at national and regional level aiming at addressing skills shortages and mismatches as well as fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships (e.g. between industry, social partners, education and training, public authorities). Such examples should be presented in the form of fiches, containing a clear description of the policy/project, role and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, duration, funding (where available), and results;
• developing a common methodology for assessing the current situation and anticipating future needs as well as monitoring (on a yearly basis) progress and the evolution of the demand and supply of skills based on credible forecast scenarios;
• identifying occupational profiles that need to be revised or created and their corresponding skill needs as well as the required proficiency level, drawing on, where available, the occupational profiles in ESCO and existing competence frameworks; where relevant, the development of sectoral competence frameworks may be considered;
• identifying, describing and indicating priorities for the review or the establishment of new qualifications on the basis of the relevant occupational profiles;
• fostering the development of concrete solutions in VET provision (including higher VET) as well as business-education-research partnerships;
• developing concrete solutions to promote mobility of vocational students, jobseekers and trainees across Europe in the sector, capitalising on the use of existing EU tools (e.g. Erasmus+, EURES, Drop'Pin, European Alliance for Apprenticeships);
• developing actions to promote the attractiveness of the sector as a career choice, in particular among the young, while also aiming for a gender balance in the sector;
• designing long term action plan for the progressive roll-out of project deliverables after the
project has finished. This plan shall be based on sustained partnerships between education and training providers and key industry stakeholders at the appropriate level. It should include the identification of appropriate governance structures, as well as plans for scalability and financial sustainability. It should also ensure the appropriate visibility and wide dissemination of the work of the Alliance, including at EU and national political level and include details on how the roll-out will be implemented at national and/or regional levels with relevant governmental and sectoral authorities; The action plan shall also indicate how EU funding opportunities (e.g. European Structural Funds, European Fund for Strategic Investment, Erasmus+, COSME, sectoral programmes), as well as national and regional funding can support skills strategies. This should take into account national and regional smart specialization strategies;

- delivering all relevant EU and/or country level qualitative evidence and quantitative data according to linked open data format.

**What are the essential features of a Sector Skills Alliance?**

The key features of Sector Skills Alliances are:

- Innovation in **vocational education and training** for specific professions in economic sectors (where available ES-CO9:);
- Impact going beyond the project's lifetime and beyond the organisations involved in the Alliance. It is expected that partnership and activities persist. Changes in VET provision for professional profiles have to be measurable. Results and solutions have to be transferable and accessible to a broader audience. The results of Sector Skills Alliances should become available for use and publication in the EU Skills Panorama.

Sector Skills Alliances have to demonstrate the commitment and added value of all partners. The partners should combine systemic and sector-related information with a solid knowledge of skills needs and training practices in their economic sector. The distribution of tasks and deliveries should show a right match between the partners' expertise and the activities they are in charge of. The partners should be representative in the sector at least at national level, have a European out-reach and expertise or competence in vocational skills anticipation or supply, training, or qualification design.

In **Lot 1- Sector Skills Alliances for design and delivery of VET** partners will have to interpret research evidence on profession-specific skills needs when implementing vocational education and training or designing qualification standards based on a common European professional core profile, drawing, where available on ESCO.

Where appropriate, they should base themselves on already existing sector skills studies that have been commissioned by the European Commission. The EU Skills Panorama provides a wealth of skills intelligence, analyses and studies on professions (occupations) and sectors. The Alliance should then translate these into innovative, learning outcome-oriented vocational curricula (applying ECVET) which include periods of work-based learning and which should be underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms (in line with EQAVET).

The Alliance partners should demonstrate in the proposal what measures they will take in the countries and in the sector covered for the formal recognition (initial vocational education & training) or the certification (continuing vocational training) of the new or adapted vocational curriculum and how they will pursue the procedures after EU funding has ended. Career guidance services together with regional or local authorities should play a "facilitator" role in supporting the
process of skills matching with the planning of vocational curricula in order to attract initial VET schools, young learners or their parents to specific professions with high labour market demand.

Sector Skills Alliances are supposed to carry out the proposed activities in a way that maximises the impact on one, or several related profession/s in a given sector.

In Lot 2- Sector Skills Alliances for implementing a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on skills in addition to what is outlined for Lot 1, partners will have to develop a comprehensive and strategic approach encompassing all activities. This strategic approach should be clearly linked to the overall growth strategy of the sector, with a view to support the sector in addressing its most pressing challenges and achieving its medium and long-term goals, including where relevant in terms of growth, innovation, competitiveness and employment.

The Alliances will have to take into account and reflect in their work the main policy developments and publications at EU level pertaining to their sector.

What is the role of organisations participating in a Sector Skills Alliance?

**Applicant/coordinator:** a participating organisation that submits the project proposal on behalf of all the partners. The coordinator has the full responsibility to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the agreement. Its coordinating responsibilities cover the following duties:

- represents and acts on behalf of the Alliance towards the European Commission;
- bears the financial and legal responsibility for the proper operational, administrative and financial implementation of the entire project;
- coordinates the Alliance in cooperation with project partners.

**Full partners:** participating organisations which contribute actively to the accomplishment of the Sector Skills Alliance. Each full partner must sign a mandate by which the signatory agrees that the coordinator takes over the above listed duties on behalf of the partnership during the implementation of the project.

**Affiliated entities (optional):** Organisations which contribute to the achievement of project objectives and activities. Affiliated entities must be identified in the grant application and satisfy the requirements as described in Annex III (Glossary of terms) of this Programme Guide.

**Associated partners (optional):** Sector Skills Alliances can involve associated partners who contribute to the activities of the Sector Skills Alliance. They are not subject to contractual requirements because they do not receive funding. However their involvement and role in the project and different work packages have to be clearly described.

What are the criteria used to assess a Sector Skills Alliance?

Here below are listed the formal criteria that a Sector Skills Alliance proposal must respect in order to be eligible for an Erasmus+ grant:

**Lot 1: Sector Skills Alliances for design and delivery of VET**

*Eligibility Criteria for Lot 1*
The following organisations, their affiliated entities (if any) and associated partners (if any), are eligible to take part in a Lot 1 Alliance. They can be public or private organisations established in a Programme Country (see section "Eligible Countries" in Part A of this Guide).

- public or private VET providers, including social enterprises, in particular those with an own training department, those providing apprenticeships, and those providing shared training (collaborative training);
- EU or national organisations representing industry, small and medium-sized enterprises, relevant sectoral organisations;
- networks of VET providers and European or national organisations representing them;
- Education and training authorities at regional or national level, and Ministries;
- organisations or networks – at EU or national level – representing social partners, industry, sectoral organisations, professions and education and training stakeholders, including youth organisations;
- chambers of commerce, of industry, of skilled crafts or of labour, and other intermediary bodies;
- sector skills councils;
- economic development agencies, statistical bodies and research institutes;
- cultural and/or creative bodies;
- bodies providing career guidance, professional counselling, information services and employment services;
- accreditation, certification, recognition or qualification bodies (bodies with “regulatory function”).

Any participating organisation established in a Programme Country can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project.

The Sector Skills Alliance must cover at least 4 Programme Countries and include at least 8 full partners, out of which at least 3 are companies, industry or sector representatives (e.g. chambers or trade associations), and at least 3 are education and training providers.

All sectors except the six sectors that are eligible under Lot 2.

WHO CAN APPLY?

NUMBER AND PROFILE OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

ELIGIBLE SECTORS
DURATION OF PROJECT

2 or 3 years. The duration has to be chosen at application stage, based on the objective of the project and on the type of activities planned over time.

In exceptional cases, the duration of a Sector Skills Alliance may be extended, upon request by the beneficiary and with the agreement of the Executive Agency, of up to 6 months. In such a case, the total grant will not change.

WHERE TO APPLY?

To the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, located in Brussels.

Applicants have to submit their grant application by **26 February at 17:00 (midday Brussels time)** for projects starting on 1 November or 1 December of the same year, or 1 January of the following year.

WHEN TO APPLY?

When to apply?

Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant **exclusion and selection criteria**. For more information please consult Part C of this Guide.

Award Criteria for Lot 1

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:
RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT
(MAXIMUM 25 POINTS)

• Link to EU policy and initiatives: the proposal takes into account and contributes to achieving the European objectives in the field of VET; the proposal takes into account and contributes to giving visibility to existing EU tools and initiatives for skills development;
• VET representation: the Sector Skills Alliance includes partners that adequately represent VET design and delivery;
• Sector representation: the Sector Skills Alliance includes partners that adequately represent the sector concerned;
• Digital skills: extent to which the proposal integrates digital skills in the training content for one, or several related, professional profiles. Proposals including this aspect will be considered highly relevant;
• Green skills: extent to which the proposal integrates skills linked to the transition to a circular and greener economy in the training content for one, or several related, professional profiles. Proposals including this aspect will be considered highly relevant;
• Purpose: the proposal is relevant to the objectives of the Action (see section "What are the aims of a Sector Skills Alliance");
• Consistency: the objectives are based on a sound needs analysis; they are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the Action;
• Innovation: the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions;
• European added value: the proposal demonstrates clearly the added value generated through its transnationality.
• Coherence: the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities and budget proposed. The proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate activities to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results;
• Structure: the work programme is clear and intelligible, and covers all phases (preparation, implementation, exploitation, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination);
• Methodology: the proposal is compliant and makes use of EU instruments and tools related to skills and occupations such as the EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, Europass, EURES, Drop 'Pin, ESCO, etc. Whenever possible, the proposal takes into consideration and capitalizes on previous relevant activities (e.g. Programme Countries initiatives, Knowledge Innovation Communities-KIC of the EIT, previous and on-going Sector Skills Alliances). It uses the learning outcomes approach, ECVET (units of learning outcomes) and quality assurance principles in line with EQAVET;
• Management: solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity;
• Budget: the budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated;
• The quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of participants' learning outcomes, in line with European transparency and recognition tools and principles;
• Financial and quality control: control measures (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient. Challenges/risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are planned as an integral part of the project. The Alliance work programme includes an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project.
QUALITY OF THE PROJECT TEAM AND THE COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS (MAXIMUM 25 POINTS)

• Configuration: the composition of the partnership is in line with the project objectives, bringing together as relevant the expertise and competences required in curriculum design, qualification standards design, training delivery methodology and training policy. The representativeness and expertise of the partners in the sector concerned and at European level is convincingly demonstrated. The partners combine systemic and sector-related information with a solid knowledge of skills needs and training practices in their economic sector. The participation of European social partners and/or national social partners in the countries covered by the Alliance with a clear attribution of a role to develop the curriculum/a and ensure work-based learning is highly relevant. The spread and representativeness of relevant partners over the Programme Countries involved in the Alliance should be such that the Alliance has high implementation capacity in the countries covered by the Alliance (e.g. through the participation of a European sector organisation or European social partners) If the proposal also involves bodies with regulatory function in VET it will be considered highly relevant;

• Commitment: the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear, appropriate, and demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity;

• Tasks: the coordinator shows high quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment. Individual tasks are allocated on the basis of the specific know-how of each partner;

• Collaboration/Team spirit: an effective mechanism is proposed to ensure a good coordination, decision-making and communication between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder.
IMPACT AND DISSEMINATION (MAXIMUM 20 POINTS)

• Exploitation: the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the Alliance will be used by the partners and other stakeholders. It provides means to measure exploitation within the project lifetime and after;
• Dissemination: the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate activities and their timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to the stakeholders, policy makers, guidance professionals, enterprises and young learners in compulsory education concerning occupations with high labour market demand or new business creation potential; within and after the project’s lifetime; the proposal indicates which partners will be responsible for dissemination and demonstrates the relevant experience that they have in dissemination activities;
• Impact: the proposal shows societal and economic relevance and outreach. It includes partners with a significant role in the sector concerned including in education and training. It includes measures as well as targets and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short- and long-term); if bodies with regulatory function (in particular on qualifications) are convincingly involved to ensure recognition or certification of the training content the proposal is highly relevant. If a European sectoral umbrella organisation representing either social partners or the sector concerned is a full partner, the proposal is highly relevant;
• Open access: If relevant, the proposal describes how the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences and does not contain disproportionate limitations;
• Sustainability: the proposal explains how the action plan for the roll-out at national and regional levels will be developed. The proposal includes appropriate measures and the identification of financial resources (European, national and private) to ensure that the results and benefits achieved by the Alliance will have a long-term sustainability.

To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least 70 points. Furthermore, they must score minimum 13 points for the categories “relevance of the project” and “quality of the project team and cooperation arrangements”; 16 points for the category “quality of the project design and implementation”, and 11 points for the category “impact and dissemination”.

Lot 2: Sector Skills Alliances for implementing a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on skills

Eligibility Criteria for Lot 2
The following organisations, their affiliated entities (if any) and associated partners (if any), are eligible to take part in a Lot 2 Alliance. They can be public or private organisations established in a Programme Country (see section “Eligible Countries” in Part A of this Guide).

- public or private enterprises active in the selected sectors especially those with an own training department, those providing apprenticeships, and those providing shared training (collaborative training);
- EU or national organisations representing industry, small and medium-sized enterprises, relevant sectoral organisations;
- public or private education or training providers, including training centres and higher education institutions;
- networks of education or training providers and European or national organisations representing them;
- authorities responsible for education and training or employment, at regional or national level, and related Ministries;
- organisations or networks – at EU or national level – representing social partners, industry, sectoral organisations, professions and education and training stakeholders, including youth organisations;
- chambers of commerce, of industry, of labour and other relevant sectoral intermediary bodies;
- sector skills councils;
- economic development agencies, statistical bodies and research institutes;
- bodies providing career guidance, professional counselling, information services and employment services;
- accreditation, certification, recognition or qualification bodies (bodies with “regulatory function”);
- bodies representing relevant authorities at regional and national level.

Any participating organisation established in a Programme Country can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project.

The Sector Skills Alliance must cover at least 8 Programme Countries and include at least 12 full partners, out of which at least 5 are companies, industry or sector representatives (e.g. chambers, trade unions or trade associations), and at least 5 are education and training providers.
**ELIGIBLE SECTORS**

1. Blockchain  
2. Cultural heritage  
3. Cybersecurity  
4. Rail supply and transport industries  
5. Work integration Social Enterprises  
6. Software services

4 years.  
In exceptional cases, the duration of a Sector Skills Alliance may be extended, upon request by the beneficiary and with the agreement of the Executive Agency, of up to 6 months. In such a case, the total grant will not change.

**DURATION OF PROJECT**

**WHERE TO APPLY?**

To the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, located in Brussels.

**WHEN TO APPLY?**

Applicants have to submit their grant application by **26 February at 17:00** for projects starting on 1 November or 1 December of the same year, or 1 January of the following year.

**HOW TO APPLY?**

Please see Part C of this Guide for details on how to apply.

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Additional information that must be taken into account per sector in lot 2 projects

Regarding LOT 2 - Sector Skills Alliances for implementing a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on skills, the following information must be taken into account for each of the sectors:
The Alliance must include at least two of the following areas:

• "Technical skills" specific to blockchain/Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLT) such as consensus algorithms, smart contracts; as well as technical skills which are essential, but not specific to the sole blockchain/DLT technologies; such as cryptography, peer-to-peer network, privacy (The list of topics identified under this bullet is indicative)

• "Non-technical skills" which are required for development and uptake of blockchain/DLT solutions and their applications, such as game theory/business processes; specific expertise in legal and governance issues; as well skills to educate potential adopters of blockchain/DLT (The list of topics identified under this bullet is indicative) and blockchain for social good/impact

• Use of blockchain/DLT solutions for improving the development and management of skills, competences and certification in different sectors

To ensure complementarity and synergies, activities must be compatible with existing evidence for the sector, including the actions and orientations provided by:

• EU Blockchain Observatory and Forum
• International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA)
• Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition
The Alliance must address skills development in at least the first three following areas:

• Safeguarding and Preservation: Protection; conservation-restoration; archiving; collection management, care and enhancement; materials science / analysis; fieldwork; conservation; restoration; (including via digital means);

• Crafts and traditional knowledge: Heritage-related crafts; traditional construction techniques; materials suppliers; (including via digital means);

• Dissemination and communication: Audience development; community engagement; promotion; visitor care and experience; accessibility; education; cultural mediation; interpretation; presentation; (including via digital means);

• Knowledge: Cultural heritage identification; study; recording, (including via digital means);

• Planning / Management: strategic planning; site and project management; mediation; procurement; policymaking and regulation; fundraising; logistic; security; legal and IPR aspects;

To ensure complementarity and synergies, activities must be compatible with existing evidence for the sector, including the actions and orientations provided by:

• Commission Communication “Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe”

• Commission Staff Working Document, “European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage”

• Declaration of cooperation on advancing digitisation of cultural heritage

• European quality principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact upon cultural heritage. Manual. ICOMOS International

• Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe – prospects on skills, training and knowledge transfer for traditional and emerging professions

• Fostering cooperation in the European Union on skills, training and knowledge transfer in cultural heritage professions. Report of the Open Method of Coordination Working Group of member States’ Experts

• Competences for access to the Conservation-restoration profession
Cybersecurity

The Alliance must include at least two of the following areas:

• Skills to develop cyber ranges, cybersecurity exercises, incident handling methodologies and open source tools, vulnerability assessment methodologies and open source tools, penetration testing open source tools
• Skills to establish physical/virtual cybersecurity laboratories in order to host cyber ranges.
• Skills required for the development and uptake of cyber security scenarios, test cases, cybersecurity requirements, threats and vulnerabilities in various critical sectors, e.g. transport, energy and industry taking also into account the needs of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

To ensure complementarity and synergies, activities must be compatible with existing evidence for the sector, including the actions and orientations provided by:

• The EU cyber range Europe Realistic Global Cyber Environment33
• ENISA CyberEurope exercises34
• Horizon2020 projects: e.g. Cyberwiser35, the four pilot projects36 (ECHO, SPARTA, Cyber-Sec4Europe, CONCORDIA)
• Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition37
• Certification Act38, NIS directive39, GDPR40
• European Committee for Standardisation (CEN)41
• Advanced Digital Skills in the Digital Europe Programme (2021-2027)42

Rail supply and transport industries

The Alliance must include at least two of the following areas:

• Technical and engineering skills required for manufacturing of rail products.
• Technical and engineering skills required for operation and maintenance of rail products.
• ICT skills related to use of digital technologies in manufacturing of rail products and digitalisation in rail transport (such as internet of things, (big) data analytics and cybersecurity).

To ensure complementarity and synergies, activities must be compatible with existing evidence for the sector, including the actions and orientations provided by:

• Commission Communication ‘Europe on the Move - An agenda for a socially fair transition towards clean, competitive and connected mobility for all’43
• Final Report of Commission Expert Group on competitiveness of the rail supply industry
• European Parliament resolution on the competitiveness of the RSI (2016)44
• Study CCA – Human Capital (Shift2Rail JU 2019)
The Alliance must include at least the following areas:

- Skills related to management and organisation of the Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISEs): HR, production processes, logistics, marketing and communication.
- Skills (for the staff as well as people from disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities) to improve the employability and productivity of people from disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities to overcome their cognitive, social or other impairment from a labour market perspective.
- Skills related to using and developing (adapted) ICT and technology (such as assistive and accessible technologies and user interfaces) in relation to both of the above aspects.

To ensure complementarity and synergies, activities must be compatible with existing evidence for the sector, including the actions and orientations provided by:

- European Disability Strategy 2010-2020
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities
- Council Directive 2000/78/EC that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief in employment and occupation
- The European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (4, 8, 10, 11 and 17)
- The Digital Single Market Strategy
- Digital Inclusion for a better EU society
- GECES (Commission Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship) Report 2016: Social enterprises and the social economy going forward
- OECD Policy Brief on Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities
- European Parliament publication: Assistive technologies to support people with disabilities
- EU projects; Inno-Wise, Innovative management of skills and training in inclusive enterprises and Zero Project.
- European Accessibility standards following Mandates 376, 473 and 420: EN 301 549, EN 17161, prEN 17210.
Software services

The Alliance must include at least two of the following areas:
• Skills required for the software production covering the whole software lifecycle (software design, development, testing, validation & verification, deployment and maintenance).
• Skills required to develop links between software production and Open Source communities.
• Skills required to strengthen software engineering discipline and ensure software quality and security against malfunctioning and cyberattacks.

To ensure complementarity and synergies, activities must be compatible with existing evidence for the sector, including the actions and orientations provided by:
• CEN Technical Committee CEN/TC 428 “Digital competences and ICT Professionalism”
• The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)
• European Commission, “Unleashing the Potential of Cloud Computing in Europe”
• Commission Communication on “A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe”
• Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition

Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant exclusion and selection criteria. For more information please consult Part C of this Guide.

Award Criteria for Lot 2

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:
• Link to EU policy and initiatives: the proposal takes into account and contributes to achieving the European objectives in the field of VET; takes into account and contributes to give visibility to existing EU tools and initiatives for skills development;
• Education representation: the Alliance includes partners that adequately represent education providers;
• Sector representation: the Alliance includes partners that adequately represent the sector concerned;
• Digital and key-enabling technologies (KETs), including Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills: extent to which the proposal integrates these skills in the training content for one, or several related, professional profiles. Proposals including this aspect will be considered highly relevant;
• Green and Blue skills: extent to which the proposal integrates skills linked to the transition to a circular and greener economy, both in terms of skills needs and in terms of training content for one, or several related, professional profiles. Proposals including this aspect will be considered highly relevant;
• Purpose: the proposal is relevant to the objectives of the action, themes and activities described in section 2. The proposal contributes to building transnational networks and cooperation tools between relevant stakeholders to adapt education to emerging needs of the sector's industry;
• Consistency: the objectives are based on a sound needs analysis; they are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the action;
• Innovation: the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions;
• European added value: the proposal demonstrates clearly the added value generated through its transnationality.

RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT
(MAXIMUM 25 POINTS)
• Coherence: the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities and budget proposed. The proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate, concrete and practical activities to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results
• Structure: the work programme is clear and intelligible, and covers all phases (preparation, implementation, exploitation, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination);
• Methodology: the proposal is compliant and makes use of EU instruments and tools related to skills and occupations such as the EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, Europass, EURES, Drop 'Pin, ESCO, etc..
Whenever possible, the proposal takes into consideration and capitalizes on previous relevant activities (e.g. Programme Countries initiatives, Knowledge Innovation Communities-KIC of the EIT, Sector Skills Alliances. It uses the learning outcomes approach, ECVET (units of learning outcomes) and quality assurance principles in line with EQAVET;
• Management: solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity;
• Budget: the budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated;
• The quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of participants’ learning outcomes, in line with European transparency and recognition tools and principles;
• Financial and quality control: control measures (continuous quality evaluation, expert peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient. Challenges/risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are planned as an integral part of the project. The Alliance work programme includes an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project.
QUALITY OF THE PROJECT
TEAM AND THE
COOPERATION
ARRANGEMENTS
(MAXIMUM 25 POINTS)

• Configuration: the composition of the Alliance is in line with the project objectives, bringing together as relevant the expertise and competences required in skills identification and anticipation, skills supply, curriculum design, qualification standards design, training delivery methodology and training policy. The partners combine systemic and sector-related information with a solid knowledge of skills needs and training practices in their economic sector. The Alliance ensures adequate representativeness of the whole sector: the representativeness and expertise of the partners in the sector concerned and at European level is convincingly demonstrated. The participation of European social partners and/or national social partners in the countries covered by the Alliance is highly relevant. The geographical spread and representativeness of relevant partners over the Programme Countries involved in the Alliance should be such that the Alliance has high implementation capacity in the countries covered (e.g. through the participation of a European sector organisation and/or European social partners). If the proposal also involves bodies with regulatory function in Education and training it will be considered highly relevant;
• Commitment: the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear, appropriate, and demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity;
• Tasks: the coordinator shows high quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment. Individual tasks are allocated on the basis of the specific know-how of each partner;
• Collaboration/Team spirit: an effective mechanism is proposed to ensure a good coordination, decision-making and communication between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder.
IMPACT AND DISSEMINATION
(MAXIMUM 20 POINTS)

- Exploitation: the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the Alliance will be rolled out in the participating countries;
- Dissemination: the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate activities and their timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to the stakeholders, policy makers, guidance professionals, enterprises and young learners in compulsory education concerning occupations with high labour market demand or new business creation potential within and after the project’s lifetime; the proposal details how concrete examples of best practice will be identified, documented and disseminated; the proposal indicates which partners will be responsible for dissemination and demonstrates the relevant experience that they have in dissemination activities;
- Impact: the proposal shows societal and economic relevance and outreach. It includes partners with a significant role in the sector concerned including in education and training. It includes measures as well as targets and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short- and long-term). It includes bodies with regulatory functions (in particular on Qualifications) that are actively involved to ensure the recognition or certification of the training content of the proposal. If a European sectoral umbrella organisation representing either social partners or the sector concerned is a full partner, the proposal is considered highly relevant;
- Open access: if relevant, the proposal describes how the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences and in linked open data format, and does not contain disproportionate limitations;
- Sustainability: the proposal explains how the action plan for the roll-out at national and regional levels will be developed. The proposal includes appropriate measures and the identification of financial resources (European, national and private) to ensure that the results and benefits achieved by the Alliance will have a long-term sustainability beyond the project lifetime.

For Lot 2 only 1 proposal per pilot sector can be funded.

To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least 70 points.

Furthermore, they must score minimum 13 points for the categories "relevance of the project" and "quality of the project team and cooperation arrangements"; 16 points for the category "quality of the project design and implementation", and 11 points for the category "impact and dissemination".

What else should you know about this action?

Quality assurance is vital in order to ensure that Alliances successfully deliver their results and
achieve an impact going far beyond the partner organisations themselves. Alliances are expected to achieve results which are widely transferable within the economic sector concerned. Therefore, Alliances need to provide a sound quality management plan.

Alliances should also implement expert review processes as an integral part of the project. The Alliance work programme should therefore include an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project, to be submitted together with the project progress and final report respectively. In its progress report, the participating organisations will have to demonstrate the follow-up actions resulting from the recommendation of the mid-term quality assessment.

All Alliances are required to undertake targeted dissemination activities, notably through organisations/bodies providing professional guidance/orientation. They will have to provide a comprehensive dissemination plan including:

- an active dissemination strategy to reach out to stakeholders, policy makers, guidance professionals, enterprises and young learners in compulsory education concerning occupations with high labour market demand or new business creation potential;
- mainstreaming the results throughout the sector;
- making the results of the Alliance available through open licences.

The dissemination plan should clearly explain how the planned project results will be disseminated, including definition of the targets, the objectives, the means to be used and the relevant timing. Applications should also indicate which partner will be responsible for dissemination and demonstrate the relevant experience that they have in dissemination activities. Selected projects will have to produce a short publishable summary of the project activities at the end of the project to be published in the Programme dissemination tool.

Sector Skills Alliances are a recent and ambitious action; they are subject to a particular monitoring which requires active participation from all participants and stakeholders. Sector Skills Alliances have to foresee their participation in meetings and events organised by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and the European Commission. A budget for up to 3 meetings per year has to be planned.

**What are the funding rules?**

The budget of the project must be drafted according to the following funding rules (in euro):

**Lot 1 - Sector Skills Alliance for design and delivery of VET:**

- Indicative total budget: 6 000 000 €
- Maximum EU contribution awarded for a project (2 years): 700 000 €
- Maximum EU contribution awarded for a project (3 years): 1 000 000 €

**Lot 2 - Sector Skills Alliance for implementing a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on skills:**

- Indicative total budget: 24 000 000 €
- Maximum EU contribution awarded for a project (4 years): 4 000 000 €

For Lot 2, only 1 proposal per pilot sector can be selected.
## Eligible costs

| Contribution to any activity directly linked to the implementation of the project including: project management, project meetings, intellectual outputs (such as curricula, pedagogical materials, open educational resources (OER), IT tools, analyses, studies, etc.), dissemination, participation in events, conferences, travel, etc. The number of days and the profile of staff involved by country is the basis for the calculation of the EU contribution. |

## Financing mechanism

| B3.1 per manager involved per day of work on the project |

## Amount

| B3.2 per researcher/teacher/trainer involved per day of work on the project |

## Rule of allocation

| Contribution to unit costs |

| B3.3 per technician involved per day of work on the project |

| B3.4 per administrative staff involved per day of work on the project |

### Implementation support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Teacher/Trainer/Researcher/Youth worker</th>
<th>Technician</th>
<th>Administrative staff</th>
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<tr>
<td>B3.1</td>
<td>B3.2</td>
<td>B3.3</td>
<td>B3.4</td>
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#### Table A - Project implementation (amounts in euro per day) Programme Countries

The amounts depend on: a) profile of staff engaged in the project and b) the country of the participating organisation whose staff is engaged.

| Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Norway | 353 | 289 | 228 | 189 |
| Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Finland, United Kingdom, Iceland | 336 | 257 | 194 | 157 |
Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager</th>
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<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>93</td>
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Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, North Macedonia, Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>47</td>
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5. A MOOC is a Massive Open Online Course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions among students, professors, and teaching assistants.
8. This should be done using Cedefop’s ‘Practical framework for including sectoral skills evidence in the Skills Panorama’. http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en
10. They are defined by the Eurostat NACE – Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Union.
19. The beneficiary must publish all educational materials produced with Erasmus+ funding free of charge and under an open license.
20. A way by which the owner of a work grants permission to everyone to use share and adapt the resource. A licence is associated to each re-source. An open licence is not a transfer of copyrights or Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and the benefit.
22. https://www.eublockchainforum.eu/
23. https://inatba.org/}
26. COM(2014) 477 FINAL
27. SWD(2018) 491 FINAL
29. openarchive.icomos.org/2083/2083/
32. HTTP://WWW.ECCO-EU.ORG/FILEADMIN/ASSETS/DOCUMENTS/PUBLICATIONS/ECCO_COMPETENCES_EN.PDF
33. https://jyvsectec.fi/CYBER-RANGE/OVERVIEW/
35. https://www.cyberwiser.eu/
42. HTTPS://EC.EUROPA.EU/DIGITAL-SINGLE-MARKET/EN/NEWS/COMMISSION-WELCOMES-AGREEMENT-DIGITAL-EUROPE-PROGRAMME-2021-2027
43. COM(2017) 283 FINAL
44. 2015/2887(RSP)
45. HTTPS://EC.EUROPA.EU/EIP/AGEING/STANDARDS/GENERAL/GENERAL-DOCUMENTS/EUROPEAN-DISABILITY-STRATEGY-2010-2020_EN
46. HTTPS://WWW.UN.ORG/DEVELOPMENT/DESA/DISABILITIES/CONVENTION-ON-THE-RIGHTS-OF-PEOPLE-WITH-DISABILITIES.HTML
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59. HTTPS://EC.EUROPA.EU/DIGITAL-SINGLE-MARKET/EN/DES
60. SWD(2012) 271
61. COM (2015) 192
69. https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home
70. https://eit.europa.eu/activities/innovation-communities