



PACT for SKILLS

Report from the roundtable

Pact for Skills Roundtable with Commissioners Schmit and Breton for the Aerospace and Defence Sector

The roundtable with the aerospace and defence sector, chaired by both Commissioners on 16 October 2020, brought together companies' CEOs, education and training associations and social partners. It aimed at pointing out the skills needs of the aerospace and defence manufacturing ecosystem, suggest concrete ways to address them and obtain participants' commitments for engagement and contribution.

The event demonstrated a clear convergence in needs to be tackled in a dynamic, future oriented and agile manner. The aerospace and defence ecosystem faces a series of common challenges and a clear need for upskilling and reskilling to help it undergo the twin green and digital transformation and respond to the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. Demographic challenges, mismatches between industry needs and education/training input and stiff competition for skilled workers with other, more attractive sectors, hamper a continuous and sustainable supply of skills. This situation challenges the ability of the sector to remain at the competitive edge and the sector's competitiveness on the global market.

Participants recalled the need for an early anticipation of needs and for collective action in the area of skills. Collaborating was recognised as necessary to prepare the skills of the future for such a strategic sector. Participants emphasised the need for alignment and sharing in developing employees' employability including in the supply chains.

Industrial partners gathered under existing EU-initiatives and projects, such as the European Defence Skills Partnership and Assets+, to define common actions that formed the basis of their proposal for a sectorial charter. These actions, backed by commitments to engagement and contribution, were presented to the Commissioners:

Skills forecasting, common online training, knowledge transfer from large companies to SMEs and suppliers, intercompany training centres, apprenticeships, Masters and PhD programmes, exchange of researchers analysing and solving industry's problems, a qualification framework and related enhanced talent development and mobility, including life-long learning are actions well aligned with the political ambitions for a greener, digital, autonomous and resilient Europe.

Presented actions were accompanied by examples of initiatives that were already put into practice with the ambition to roll-out and upscale:

- An online training platform open to all employees was used in its first year by 4,000 employees, making it a huge success and a best practice.
- An empowering advanced partnership dealing with digitalisation of the supply chain was set up to allow suppliers and SMEs who join the programme to structure their growth and expansion plans, where high transversal skills are required.
- Apprenticeships based on established models and practices were successfully set up in large companies and are ready to be spread widely within supply chains across the EU.
- Orientation courses/workshops and programmes helping senior workers adapt to new skills needed in the industry are organised to incentivise and keep aging employees while allowing for transfer of knowledge to younger employees.
- Digital and connected platforms were developed to help workers acquire skills to work on big data, artificial intelligence, DDMS (digital design, manufacturing & services) etc.
- Established structured communication of industry needs to universities resulted to specific Masters programmes undertaken, such as on Quality Assurance in Aviation Production etc.

The Commissioners appreciated contributions made, as well as the big number of ideas for strengthening the Pact and adapt it to the needs of the sector. They welcomed the very dynamic, future oriented and agile approach discussed, the usefulness of digital platforms, the need to keep up with fast technological developments, and the need for a strong cooperation in the value chain. They stressed that the Pact should be a platform to lead to changes, should have strong added value and be in conformity with the existing strategic approach.

Taking note of the positive feedback, participants and representatives of the sector stand ready to turn this proposal into a fully-fledged Charter for the Aerospace & Defense sector defining key performance indicators and building on best practices for rolling out collaborative actions across the EU.