



PACT for SKILLS

Report from the roundtable

Pact for Skills Roundtable with Commissioners Schmit and Breton for the Microelectronics Sector

The roundtable meeting with the microelectronics sector, chaired by both Commissioners on 5 October 2020, brought together executive representatives of industry and research; education and training; regional and social. It aimed at recognising skills gaps and deficiencies whilst identifying ways to address them by mobilising relevant stakeholders under a dedicated framework.

It was clear that the technological ambitions of the microelectronics sector, such as leading in EdgeAI, preparing quantum computing on silicon and coming closer to the further miniaturisation of components (2nm), are well aligned with the political ambitions for a greener, digital, sovereign and resilient Europe.

Examples of existing initiatives on skills were presented by industry, only to emphasise that despite these ongoing efforts, skills gaps in the sector were still increasing. In general, actions related to the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce are considered as concrete engagements within the companies, though it was generally agreed that the focus would have to be extended. What still needs to be conquered by the microelectronics sector relates to its attractiveness and ability to motivate people to be part of this ecosystem.

Students need to be enticed from a young age, instilled with passion for technology, through engagement programmes with industry. Company employees could dedicate time to act as teaching ambassadors, for example. Europe cannot win the global challenges in this field with just half of the talent pool. To increase the number of women choosing engineering paths, semiconductors could be linked to the grand societal challenges in which they play a role, such as the Green Deal. Flagship programmes for women in science could be promoted, and projects (Erasmus+) that reach a 50:50 gender balance could be favoured.

The most important conclusion for the sector's needs was in relation to the role of on-the-job learning. Both lifelong learning and apprenticeships for graduates were emphasised as the most suitable solutions. Technology is evolving at a much faster rate than current training and academic development can offer. Therefore, companies would have to come closer to learning institutions, organise exchanges and offer internships.

Overall, the participants, with clear commitments of involvement, could already embrace the proposed Pact for skills initiative. Both Commissioners expressed the importance of collaboration and committed to complementing the effort so far, by following up with the sector on next steps. Clear ideas and an agreement on commitments would have to be decided on soon, in order to establish the Pact for skills in the immediate future.