



# PACT for SKILLS

## Report from the roundtable

### **Pact for Skills Roundtable with Commissioners Schmit and Breton for the Tourism Ecosystem**

Commissioners Breton and Schmit hosted on 29 October a Roundtable on skills for the tourism ecosystem with senior representatives from the industry and relevant stakeholders. The objective was to discuss and provide top-level political momentum to the development of partnerships and lay the ground for a Pact on skills in tourism.

There was general agreement that Europe's tourism is facing unprecedented hardship this year because of the pandemic and businesses survival is the main concern; this situation intensifies the major structural challenges linked to the competitiveness of tourism businesses, adoption of digital tools, difficulty to find appropriate staff and the image of a sector offering low wages and difficult work conditions. On the other hand, COVID crisis can act like an accelerator for the needed transformation and restructuring, as the idleness in activity can be used to lay the ground for the upgrading and reshaping of the tourism ecosystem and especially its workforce.

Main ideas stated by participants during the roundtable:

- Survival is priority for now and difficult to focus on long-term planning.
- The need to address the fragmentation of skills initiatives in the EU and encourage core training initiatives which can then be easily adapted for local and regional use;
- Encourage closer co-operation between companies and educational institutions to set jointly curricula and apprenticeships programs; need for alignment of education content and industry forecast.
- Skills strategies in tourism need to be part of national recovery plans;
- SURE should be connected to upskilling/reskilling of idle workers (even for low skilled staff).

- Funding could go to training programmes of national associations because they reach out to companies on the ground, especially SMEs.
- The need of staff with digital skills (i.e. engineers, marketing, digital customer experience, AI and machine learning) and data scientists is a general concern on which tourism competes with other sectors; in the context of the pandemic, also need for crisis and risk management profiles. Green skills necessary, but lower priority for SMEs than digital skills; support and right incentives needed, as SMEs face tremendous frictions to transition to green models. These skills are difficult to find or too expensive.
- Prevent leakages of human capital to other sectors and change the image of tourism jobs; Member States should support apprenticeship schemes.
- Collaboration between industry, unions, employment agencies (PPP) to set job retention schemes that ensures continuous upskilling;
- Commitment must be clear and objectives/incentives are necessary to change behaviour. Funds to companies should come with strings attached to engage them in the effort of providing the staff with regular and continuous trainings; certification, including for skills acquired on the job, and clear and accessible financing tools for the skills programs;
- The important role that local and regional training centres and clusters can play in identifying skills needs (especially for SMEs) and help in the delivering of training.
- At local level consolidate employment through the complementarity of seasonal periods between sectors; a systemic approach and not just sectoral approach;
- The issue of employment and training is complex and dependent on the collaboration of several actors; much of the success lies in the leadership of working groups/partnerships; to do this, human, technical and financial resources must be dedicated.