



# PACT for SKILLS

## Report from the roundtable

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

The roundtable with the construction sector, chaired by Commissioners Schmit and Breton on 27 November 2020, brought together executive representatives of industry, social partners, education and training providers; research, cluster and regional representatives. The aim of the meeting was to discuss skills challenges that the sector is facing and identifying comprehensive responses by stakeholders mobilised under the Pact for Skills framework.

The participants agreed that construction is an indispensable ecosystem to address the various challenges the EU is facing, notably climate change. The human capital is a critical factor in the green and digital transitions of this ecosystem. However, companies are reporting a shortage of workers as well as skills mismatches, so attracting more people into the workforce and providing it with appropriate skills is imperative.

Yet, the ecosystem is often less attractive to young people. New training methods based on research and applied in a flexible manner, together with digitalisation, may shift this perception. The sector widely promotes good practice examples. Vocational education and apprenticeships are key to facilitate smooth school-to-work transitions and to increase the availability of a skilled workforce for the sector to keep pace with evolving technologies. The roundtable participants stressed the importance of quality in training and of valuing knowledge acquired.

Social partners play a crucial role in the design and implementation of skills programmes at national and local levels. They are also very active in various skills development initiatives, launched by the European Commission, like Build Up Skills, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills. Moreover, the stakeholders have participated in numerous EU-funded projects with the focus on skills development and training.

The participants highlighted the high mobility of the construction workforce that can help address local skills shortages. However, this mobility is hindered by the lack of mutual recognition of qualifications amongst EU Member States, due to differences in training systems and legislation. To facilitate the recognition process, the representatives suggested a uniform assessment of workers and an automatic recognition of qualifications on a voluntary basis.

The participants agreed on the importance of occupational health and safety, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proper training and digital tools contribute to safer work places, increase competitiveness of construction companies and improve the image of the sector, thereby attracting workers. The sector representatives suggested developing further sector-specific legislation in this respect.

The companies provided information that the current pandemic situation led to fewer investments, whilst initiatives like the Renovation Wave represent win-win solutions – the sector will profit from the increased demand for construction/renovation works and subsequently will contribute to achieving EU climate targets.

The construction sector is willing to be part of the Pact for Skills initiative, to foster further the sectoral collaborative approach in the skills development. Both Commissioners emphasised this approach, committed to back up the effort of the sector and invited the sectorial representatives to formalise their commitments.