



# Live Discussion on the Pact for Skills – Mobilising all partners to invest in skills

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) | 19 January 2021

Following the recent launch of the Pact for Skills by the European Commission, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) organised a live discussion to discuss the potential and benefits of the Pact and its implications for companies, workers, public authorities, social partners, cross-industry and sectoral organisations and training providers.

Opening up the floor, **Alison Crabb**, Head of Unit for Skills and Qualifications, Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), explained that the Pact for Skills aims to mobilise public and private investment in building skills for people of a working age, regardless of their field of activity and skill level. Since the launch in November 2020, 300 organisations have expressed interest in signing up to the Pact Charter. Looking ahead, the priority of the Pact is to build partnerships and generate concrete commitments for up- and re-skilling across Europe.

**Manuela Geleng**, Director for Skills, DG EMPL, stressed the critical importance of mobilising skills today, as 70% of European companies report that a lack of skills hinders their investments. Addressing the skills challenge, the Pact for Skills provides networking opportunities, knowledge sharing, guidance and information on relevant EU funding. The Commission invites all potential partners, whether they are in the public or private sector, at a national, regional or local level, to join the pact with an up- or re-skilling initiative.

## LIVE DISCUSSION – VIEWS ON THE EUROPEAN PACT FOR SKILLS

Kicking off the live discussion, **Jakub Stolfá**, Programme Manager and academic staff member at the Technical University of Ostrava, highlighted how the automotive sector is going through unprecedented changes as many jobs and processes are being redefined and certain skills are diminishing in importance. In these challenging times, the Pact for Skills contributes to effectively connecting relevant stakeholders and paves the way for a new model for skill development.

The next speaker, **Olga Sbutega**, Head of People Sustainability Planning and Portfolio Management at ENEL, stressed the importance of putting people first to improve their skills and to improve access to training and education. As the energy sector finds itself in a deep transition, offering and identifying new opportunities represents a demanding yet crucial task. Key challenges that will require special attention include: women empowerment, opening up the labour market for people with disabilities, work-life balance, and changing demographics.



For the next seven years, the EU budget and the recovery plan have put substantial funding on the table. Decisions on how to use this funding are being taken right now. At a national level, I urge you to make the most of these funding opportunities and to invest in skills for the future.

**Manuela Geleng, Director for Skills,  
European Commission, DG EMPL**

**Giorgos Giorgakis**, Founder and Managing Director of Eurosuccess, praised how the Pact envisions involving all relevant stakeholders, including SMEs and training providers, and how it offers value through three hubs: networking, knowledge, and guidance and resources. To ensure successful engagement, stakeholders need to understand the purpose and objectives of the initiative. Additionally, the pact is a contribution to European crisis-resilience, which was tested during the pandemic, since it can be continuously updated according to present needs.

**Margarida Segard**, EVBB Vice President and Director at ISQ, expressed her great hope and enthusiasm for the Pact for Skills and underlined how the initiative is, above all, a call to action. The importance of raising the bar and accelerating up- and re-skilling efforts cannot be understated in times when employment

is at stake. A lifelong learning culture must be fostered rapidly, an area in which Europe still has a long way to go. Meanwhile, as the green transition unfolds and technical skills are in increasing demand, women need to be further empowered to fully participate in STEM professions.

**Zdenek Karasek**, Moravia-Silesia Governor's Deputy for RESTART and Coal Regions in Transition programmes, provided an overview of how the employment pacts have developed and managed to do well in the Czech Republic. One of the lessons learned, from which the Pact for Skills may draw inspiration, has been the importance of ensuring a strong link between strategies and actors on the ground. If the pact can succeed in convincing and involving all relevant stakeholders, it holds potential to become a fundamental game-changer.

## LIVE DISCUSSION – CONCRETE INITIATIVES AND CHALLENGES TACKLED BY THE PACT



*A virtual group photo of the eminent speakers of the live discussion.*

*In the top row (starting from the left) **Giorgos Giorgakis**, **Olga Sbutega** and **Jakub Stolfa**.*

*In the bottom row (starting from the left): **Margarida Segard**, **Zdenek Karasek** and **Alison Crabb**.*

**Zdenek Karasek** highlighted that the Moravian-Silesian region, a typical coal and steel region since 18th century, will close its coal mines by 2022 at the latest. Currently in a phase of transformation, the region has benefitted from growing automotive and IT sectors. Since 2018, the region is actively contributing to the EU Coal Regions in Transition initiative.

Addressing challenges, **Giorgos Giorgakis** underlined the significance of having a holistic approach to skills at European level and the importance of connecting the pact to existing Commission initiatives. Commenting further, **Margarida Segard** identified key challenges such as: convincing employers of the value of up- and re-skilling, finding new partnerships, and ensuring cohesion between European and Member States' skill agendas.

In the next part of the live discussion, speakers shared concrete initiatives involving up- and re-skilling and commented where challenges are and how the Pact for Skills can help to address these.

As a first example of a concrete initiative, **Jakub Stolfa** shared how the Automotive Skills Alliance was set up to meet the ambitious target set by the automotive sector: to upskill 5% of the workforce (700,000) per year. The mission is to involve stakeholders across the automotive ecosystem to ensure continuous, pragmatic and sustainable cooperation in view of the European Skills Agenda.

**Olga Sbutega** explained how ENEL is accelerating its renewable energy capacity while exiting from coal generation. In the next decade, closing down power plants will have an impact on a large number of people. As one of several concrete measures, ENEL plans to up- and re-skill 1,500–2,000 of the most affected workers. The aim is to ensure long-term employability during the energy transition.

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