



PACT for SKILLS

Report from the roundtable

Pact for Skills for the textiles ecosystem - Roundtable with Commissioners Schmit and Breton

The Roundtable on the Pact for Skills for the textiles ecosystem, held by Commissioners Schmit and Breton on 16 March 2021, brought together industry representatives (companies and associations) from textiles, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) sectors, social partners, a VET provider and a regional cluster. The participants discussed the challenges faced by the ecosystem in terms of skills, the needs for reskilling and upskilling, the possible support the Pact for Skills can bring to address skills needs in TCLF sectors, and the possible commitments from the participants regarding their involvement and contribution to the Pact. This roundtable was part of a series of sectoral roundtables to foster stakeholder involvement under the EU Pact for Skills initiative.

The roundtable made it evident that the replacement of the retiring workforce is an important challenge for the TCLF sectors (34% of the current workforce will retire within less than 15 years). It is anticipated that 94% of all new and replacement jobs will require medium (57%) to high-level (37%) skills.

Attracting young talents to the sector can play an essential role in reskilling and upskilling the existing workforce, responding to the needs of adapting to the rapidly transforming manufacturing and end-market requirements, especially in the context of the digital and green transitions.

When it comes to skills and savoir-faire in high-end and luxury industries, participants emphasized the need to preserve and develop traditional know-how to maintain the production capacities in Europe.

Vocational training as well as apprenticeships and mentorship programmes were identified as the most suitable ways to address the difficulty of attracting talent and to increase the availability of a skilled workforce for the sector.

Industry representatives presented examples of promising initiatives on skills, including programmes in Portugal for skilling refugees in footwear and thus also contributing to their integration. It was

emphasised that the sharing economy (rentable fashion) can contribute to changing consumer (traditional) perception on fashion and apparel, and to reducing the impact of the industry as a whole on the environment. Very specific skills are required for this sector to grow.

Trade Unions emphasized the need to ensure that the Pact addresses the particular realities of different regional clusters within Europe. The growth potential of the sector in Southeast Europe (not least because of the potential reshoring of supply chains) was pointed out, but also the importance of addressing poor working conditions and wages in the TCLF supply chain, which makes the attracting talents difficult.

There was a broad agreement that the aim of the TCLF Pact for Skills should be to enhance the competitiveness of the TCLF industries and its workforce mainly through:

- Improving the skillsets of existing workforce through upskill and reskill with focus on digitalization, green skills, design and product development, artisanal skills, but also entrepreneurial skills;
- Supporting on-the-job learning and generational skills transfer through coaching and mentoring programmes enabling experienced/retiring employees to pass on their technical expertise;
- Responding to new and emerging skills by fostering technical faculties including through industry mentoring and collaboration;
- Facilitating EU-wide mobility of learners and trainers through partnerships, and exchange programmes between VET and educational institutions/industry;
- Supporting apprenticeship and mentorship programmes established and implemented across Europe.

The participants showed a strong engagement for the TCLF Pact for Skills. The Commission is committed to complement the efforts made so far by the sector. Concrete commitments will have to be now developed and agreed in order to establish TCLF skills partnerships in the immediate future.

By joining the Pact, stakeholders will get access to networking, knowledge, guidance through the Pact for Skills Support Services regarding quality upskilling and reskilling. In addition, information will be made available about EU funding opportunities in skills, notably through ERASMUS+, ESF+, Digital Europe and where relevant under the Next Generation EU.