



PACT for SKILLS

Report from the roundtable

Pact for Skills for energy-intensive industries ecosystem – Roundtable with Commissioners Schmit and Breton

The Roundtable on the Pact for Skills for the energy-intensive industries ecosystem held by Commissioners Schmit and Breton on 7 June 2021 belongs to the series of sectoral roundtables with representatives of the 14 strategic industrial ecosystems of the European economy. The Roundtables foster stakeholder involvement under the Pact for Skills and shape the sectoral Pacts adapted to the specific needs of each ecosystem.

The Roundtable brought together representatives of energy-intensive industries (steel, ferro-alloys, non-ferrous-metals, ceramics, pulp & paper, chemicals) as well as representatives of local authorities, of social partners and of VET providers.

The EIIs share the ambition of the Paris Agreement and acknowledge the extent of the transformation challenge as well as the opportunities it brings. However, the twin transition will be a challenging one. Technology developments, investments and a re-thinking of the business model will be needed. This will have implications at the level of skills required by the industry. Therefore, along with the analysis that DG GROW is conducting on other consequences of the green transition and the relevant instruments the Commission will adopt in this regard (“Fit for 55 package”), this meeting was useful to shed light on the impact of the transition on EII workforce.

The participants discussed with the Commissioners the needs and challenges of their sectors regarding skills and reflected on what else they could contribute to in the framework of the Pact.

The key messages to be drawn from the interventions could be summarised as follows:

- There is a presence of aging/aged workforce with low level of education in some EII sectors and lack of motivation by young people. Attracting and retaining young talents is increasingly difficult. There is a need to change the image of the sector and improve the attractiveness of careers in the EII ecosystem;
- It is essential to anticipate market needs in time to meet demand. Mismatch in skills have been identified for several sectors: demand for skilled people is growing but education systems often don't match these needs; a need for core technical competences but also increase in importance of soft skills have been underlined;
- EII sectors are transitioning both in products and in processes. Future challenges lie for example in digitalization, data analysis, robotics, resource efficiency, recycling, business process... the climate transition will be a key driver of technological changes and skills are a key to support the decarbonisation process (EU steel industry for example is starting massive transformation to hydrogen-based metallurgy that will require fundamental reskilling in the entire production process); a comprehensive value chain approach should be adopted to face this challenge; VET providers should accompany these changes;

All participants showed vigorous interest in developing cooperation towards upskilling workforce in this ecosystem. The Commissioners underlined that under the Pact for Skills, we can promote a new approach to managing skills at ecosystem and cross-sectoral level, so that large organisations will invest in skills not only of their employees but also across the whole ecosystem, in order to support smaller institutions with less investment capacity. They also stressed the importance of working together to: design up-to-date training schemes that promote excellence, drive innovation and restore growth; find ways to better recognise and validate skills acquired at the workplace. It was also highlighted the importance of the Pact to build awareness and encourage all the stakeholders to make use of the significant EU resources available to invest in upskilling and reskilling.

