

THE PACT FOR SKILLS – A TOOL TO ACCESS UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING NEEDS

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Abstract: *The paper reviews the Pact for Skills in terms of supporting public and private organisations with upskilling and reskilling, so they can thrive through the green and digital transitions. Members of the Pact have access to knowledge on upskilling and reskilling needs, they may receive advice on relevant funding instruments to boost the skills of adults in their regions and countries, and partnership opportunities within our growing community. All members of the Pact sign up to the Charter uphold its four key principles: promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all, building strong skill partnerships, monitoring skill supply/demand and anticipating skill needs, working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities.*

Keyword: Skills, Formal, Non-formal learning, Upskilling, Reskilling

JEL Codes: L10, L11, J24

INTRODUCTION

Skills are central for building a resilient and competitive work force, and for mastering the digital and green transitions. Large and small businesses need skilled people to innovate and grow. The dynamic nature of the labour market can lead to skill mismatches and shortages, which can be major factors for unemployment. This is where the Pact for Skills comes in.

The Pact for Skills promotes joint action to maximise the impact of investing in upskilling and reskilling. It calls on national, regional and local authorities; companies; social partners; cross-industry and sectoral organisations; chambers of commerce; education and training providers; and employment services to work together and make a clear commitment to invest in training for all people of working age in the EU. The Pact is the first of the flagship actions under the European Skills Agenda. This approach can enable economic or regional sectors to coordinate their efforts in relation to skills, whilst also demonstrating their commitment and contribution to the Europe-wide skills agenda. Skills partnerships are sector led and aim to address the specific and strategic skills needs that will enable the continued economic success and growth of sectors and regions skills. Ultimately the power of partnerships is rooted in that help to create opportunities for collaboration and which serve the priorities of the partnership's members.

EXPOSITION

The Pact for Skills aims to boost investment in the skills development of the adult age population in Europe. Members are public and private sector organisations, including national, regional and local authorities, companies, social partners, cross-industry and sectoral organisations, chambers of commerce, education and training providers, and employment services. As of March 2023, around 1,0005 organisations had officially registered with the Pact, either individually or as part of skills partnerships, in the 14 industrial ecosystems and in all 27 EU countries and EU candidate countries. Partnerships and umbrella organisations together represent more than 25% of members and contribute to extending the reach and impact of the Pact beyond its direct membership. Members of the Pact commit to translating their engagement into concrete actions on upskilling and reskilling, contributing to one or more of the Pact's four key principles:

- ✓ Promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all;
- ✓ Building strong skills partnerships;

- ✓ Monitoring skills supply/demand & anticipating skills needs;
- ✓ Working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities.

Pact for Skills helps members access information, share knowledge and network. One of the key benefits of membership in the Pact for Skills in 2022 reported by respondents was access to information, such as information on upcoming events and updates concerning the EU high-level strategy regarding upskilling and reskilling (35% of respondents, 72). This was followed by knowledge sharing, including sharing of good practices and access to sectoral insights (30%, 62), closely followed by networking and the ability to access and connect with relevant stakeholders (28%, 57).

Nearly one third of respondents (29%, 76) highlighted partnerships and cooperation with stakeholders as one of the main enabling factors, encompassing partnerships with stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels, as well as at European and international levels. The second most cited enabling factor was EU funding, mentioned by 17% (44) of respondents, who particularly highlighted their participation in Erasmus+ and ESF+ projects. National-level funding was also frequently mentioned by respondents (13%, 34), including both public and private sources of financing.

Pact for Skills partnerships are shared commitments by multiple private and public organisations to support upskilling and reskilling opportunities for people of working age. With the support of the Pact for Skills Support Service, partnerships can enable collaboration at the level of economic sector and region(s) (see Figure 1 for illustration) across a range of objectives, such as:

- creating the opportunity for member organisations to articulate their commitment to delivering upskilling and reskilling opportunities in line with key sectoral or regional economic or skills needs;
- enabling member organisations to achieve relevant upskilling and reskilling goals, including through pooling of resources and building synergies between respective activities;
- creating communities of practice and networks that can foster new collaborations and partnerships to share practice and create collaboration opportunities;
- tracking and demonstrating the impact of partnerships and member organisations on skills needs and economic growth, and over time as part of a Europe-wide initiative.

A key strength of partnerships is engaging the full range of partners to deliver upskilling and reskilling opportunities and activities across an economic sector or region. This may include employers of all sizes including small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), or different parts of the sector, social partners and professional associations, different types of education and training providers as well as research institutions, public bodies and representative groups. The types of organisations that skills partnerships typically engage include:

- private and public companies (large and micro, small, medium enterprises);
- social partners (e.g. trade unions, employers' organisations) or their umbrella organisations and networks relevant to skills;
- public authorities at national, regional and local level;
- training providers or education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions or their umbrella organisations;
- adult education institutions and lifelong learning institutions and their umbrella organisations;
- higher education institutions and their umbrella organisations;
- sectoral organisations or their associations;
- business and SMEs' associations;
- chambers of commerce, trade and crafts and other relevant similar organisations;
- industrial and regional clusters or their networks and associations;
- NGOs, CSOs or their networks and associations;
- research institutions (including universities);
- public or private employment services.

To help member organisations realise their collective and individual upskilling and reskilling objectives, partnerships may undertake a range of supporting activities. The precise approach

depends on the needs and priorities of the partnership, its members, economic sector, or region. Supporting actions and themes that partnerships may address include:

- raising awareness of sector and regional skills challenges amongst employers and training providers, and relevant stakeholders;
- supporting ongoing skills intelligence, including monitoring skills supply and demand, and creating opportunities to anticipate skills needs;
- disseminating training resources and tools, including curricula, courses, qualification and learning recognition arrangements, and creating practical training opportunities;
- promoting inclusive approaches to upskilling and reskilling, and supporting the digital and green transitions with necessary skills;
- addressing any other specific skills challenges or themes that are relevant to the long-term economic success of the sector, cluster, or region.

The aims and objectives of a partnership are articulated in an overarching partnership agreement that describes the skills needs for the sector or region, the commitments of the partnership and supporting actions. Individual members of partnerships are encouraged to support the delivery of the partnership's commitments and activities, including through their own commitments to deliver skills opportunities, whilst collaborating on projects or initiatives that can support these goals. Members of partnerships may implement their activities in different ways such as individually as companies, or public organisations as part of tripartite or social partner initiatives, jointly as local, regional, industrial, cross-sectoral partnerships, or as Large Scale public-private Partnerships (including companies, associations and public authorities).

When joining the Pact, organisations and partnerships are encouraged to propose commitments to support concrete upskilling and reskilling actions, including relevant enabling activities that can support the core principles. At least one key performance indicator (KPI) to monitor the commitment should be set, for instance the number of people taking part in the upskilling or reskilling action.

To achieve their commitments, organisations leading, preparing or running partnerships should consider the following principles in their approach.

- Member led: Partnerships should be owned by the participating organisations in line with their needs and priorities. The approach should enable the partnership to address the priority needs and specific characteristics of the sector or region, and their long-term skills needs, across supply chains, sub-sectors, stakeholders, and education and training systems.
- Collaborative: Partnerships should be a shared responsibility of its members. Through active participation and collaboration of its members, a partnership can create opportunities for practical action at different levels, from individual organisations and specific groupings, through to the sectoral or regional level.
- Inclusive: A core but inclusive group of members may take on responsibility for driving work of the partnership. Partnerships may build on existing networks or cooperation but should also be open to a wider community that shares the goals of the partnership, and which may extend beyond existing networks or groupings.
- Sustainable: Partnerships should aim to support the long-term upskilling and reskilling needs of sectors or regions. It is key to have a proportionate approach to coordinating activities that support the objectives of the partnership and its members that build on existing projects and initiatives, whilst supporting new activities and approaches.

National, regional and local authorities; companies; social partners; cross-industry and sectoral organisations; chambers of commerce; education and training providers; employment services – they can all become members of the Pact for Skills. University of Ruse – Silistra Branch and its Centre for Continuous Education became a member of the Pact for Skills in September 2023. (fig.1, fig.2, fig.3, fig.4)

“Dear Prof. Diana Zhelezova,

Thank you for your interest in the Pact for Skills.

We would like to confirm that your application has been accepted by the European Commission and published on the Pact for Skills [website](#), in the "[find partners](#)" page.

You are now a member of the Pact for Skills community which aims to mobilise a concerted effort for quality investment in up- and reskilling Europe's workforce.

Your contribution ID is: d99eaf41-5cf8-4776-bbdb-80efc3c55cef. Please note that you can [edit your application](#) online using your contribution ID whenever you need to update details to your application (e.g. commitments, partners, description, contact, etc.).”

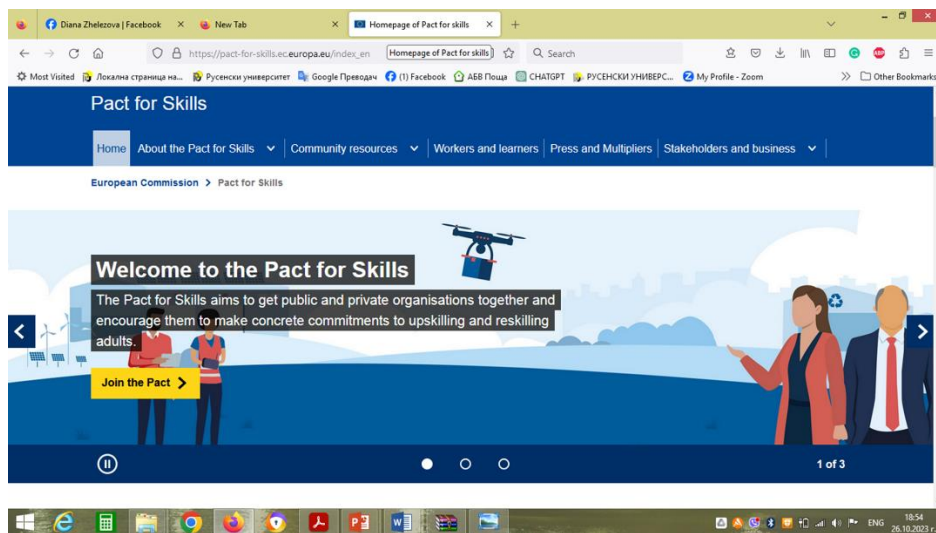


Fig.1 Website of Pact for Skills

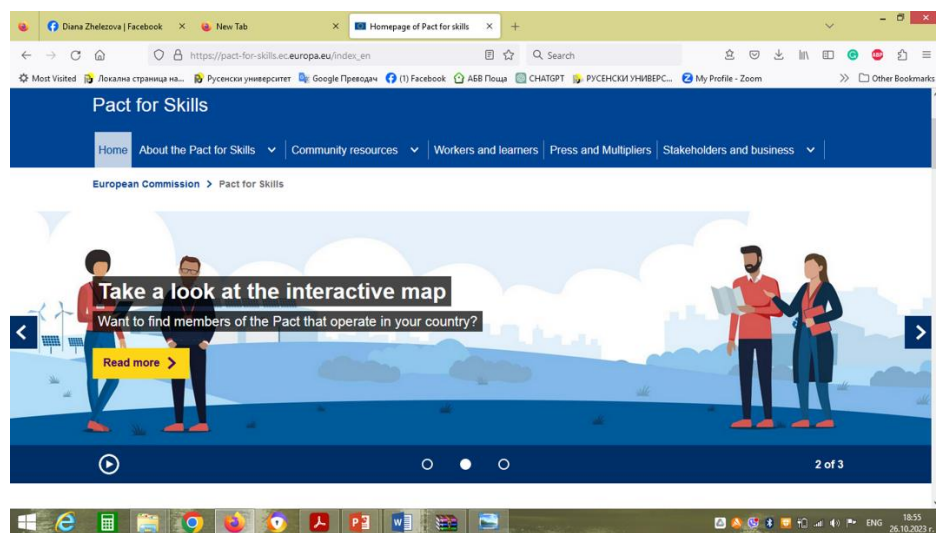


Fig.2 Interactive Map

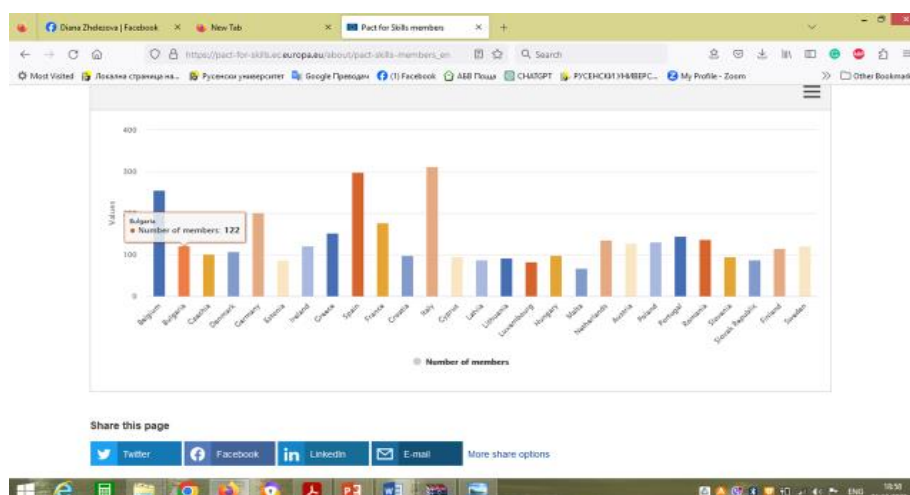


Fig.3 Number of members

Your organisation/partnership name	What type of stakeholder does your organisation represent?	Countries in which the organisation/partnership operates	Give a short description of your organisation/partnership	Website of the organisation/partnership	Would you like to join the Pact with concrete commitment?	Full member profile
Silistra Branch of "Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse	Training provider	Bulgaria	Silistra Branch is an accredited educational structure of "Angel Kanchev" University of Ruse.	https://www.uni-ruse.bg/branches/Silistra		

Fig.4 Published results for members of Pact for Skills

CONCLUSION

The Pact for Skills was launched on 10 November 2020. It aims to support public and private organisations with maximising the impact of their investment in upskilling and reskilling, so they can thrive through the green and digital transitions. Partnerships can create opportunities for members to share practice and experiences in relation to upskilling and reskilling. This includes sharing of experiences between different organisations within the sector such as VET providers and SMEs to illustrate potential approaches, or the dissemination of specific products, such as training curricula or tools. Partnerships may include dedicated activities to support knowledge sharing between members as well as with other stakeholders and audiences, including disseminating reports and case studies, and peer learning workshops.

All members of the Pact sign up to the Charter and agree to uphold its four key principles:

- ✓ promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all;
- ✓ building strong skill partnerships;
- ✓ monitoring skill supply/demand and anticipating skill needs;
- ✓ working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities.

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