



Partnerships for Skills – Building Bridges Across Sectors

Webinar Background Note

Community for Educational Innovation – CEI

14/10/2026

BACKGROUND NOTE

Partnerships for Skills – Building Bridges Across Sectors

Thematic Strand 4: Lifelong learning for an innovative workforce

The [Community for Educational Innovation \(CEI\)](#) webinars bring together education, research, industry, civil society and public sector stakeholders to share good practices and discuss innovation in education. These sessions focus on strategic competence development to boost student success and advance education and training systems, aligning with the Communication of the European Commission on the [Union of Skills](#).

This document outlines the background and key questions for the upcoming [Webinar Partnerships for Skills – Building Bridges Across Sectors](#) on 14 October 2026.

Skills are central to Europe's competitiveness, resilience and capacity to respond to economic and technological change. At the EU level, a skill is defined as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.¹ Developing the skills needed by individuals and the labour market requires coordinated action across education and training providers, employers, social partners, public authorities and other regional actors. The European Skills Agenda (2020) reinforced this approach by calling for collective action on skills and stronger cooperation among relevant stakeholders.²

Skills partnerships can support the identification and anticipation of skills needs by combining knowledge from employers, education and training providers, social partners, public authorities and employment services.³ They can also help translate skills needs into education and training responses, including curricula, qualifications and teaching approaches.⁴

EU Policy Framework for skills partnerships

The European Skills Agenda (2020) launched the **Pact for Skills** as its first flagship action.⁵ The Pact provides a shared engagement model for skills development,

¹ CEDEFOP. Terminology of European education and training policy.. <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-glossary/glossary/spezifische-bzw-berufliche-kompetenzen-undoder-fach-sachkenntnisse>

² European Commission (2020), *European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience*, COM(2020) 274 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274>

³ European Commission (2025), *Pact for Skills Large-Scale and Regional Partnerships: Guidance handbook – introducing and setting up skills partnerships*. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/community-resources/publications-and-documents/guidance-handbook-introducing-and-setting-skills-partnerships-0_en

⁴ European Commission, *Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills*. https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/working-together/blueprint-sectoral-cooperation-skills_en

⁵ European Commission (2020).



bringing together public and private actors around four principles: promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all, building strong skills partnerships, monitoring skills supply and demand and anticipating skills needs, and working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities.⁶ The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (2021) set the EU headline target of at least 60% of adults participating in training every year by 2030.⁷

The **Union of Skills** (2025)⁸ provides the current overarching EU strategy to strengthen education, training and lifelong learning. It reinforces and strengthens the Pact for Skills,⁹ including its Large-Scale Partnerships, and strengthens skills governance through a European Skills Intelligence Observatory and a European Skills High-Level Board, bringing together education and training providers, business leaders and social partners.

Other relevant EU frameworks and instruments include:

- **European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021–2030:**¹⁰ identifies governance as a priority and calls for partnerships between governments, regional and local authorities, education and training providers, companies, social partners, public employment and social services and civil society.
 - **Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs):**¹¹ establish transnational collaborative networks of local and regional VET stakeholders, creating skills ecosystems for innovation, regional development and social inclusion.
 - **Alliances for Innovation:**¹² support cooperation and knowledge flows between higher education, VET and the wider socio-economic environment.
- Two strands are particularly relevant to partnerships for skills:
- **Lot 1 – Alliances for Education and Enterprises:** partnerships that foster innovation, skills development and new approaches to learning.

⁶ European Commission, *Pact for Skills – About the Pact for Skills*. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/about_en

⁷ European Commission (2021), *European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

⁸ European Commission (2025), *The Union of Skills*, COM(2025) 90 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0090>

⁹ Ibid., p. 11, 18.

¹⁰ Council of the European Union (2021), *Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021–2030*, 2021/C 504/02. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021G1214(01))

¹¹ European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide – Centres of Vocational Excellence*. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/centres-vocational-excellence>

¹² European Commission, *Erasmus+ Programme Guide – Alliances for Innovation*. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/alliances-innovation>

- **Lot 2 – Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills:** partnerships that address skills needs in specific industrial ecosystems and support the Pact for Skills.

Partnerships in practice

Skills partnerships bring together stakeholders to take collective action on skills development. The scope and composition of partnerships vary according to the sector, territory and objectives involved. Three forms are particularly relevant:

- **Sectoral partnerships** address skills needs across an industrial ecosystem or value or supply chain. As outlined above, the Pact for Skills supports this model through Large-Scale Skills Partnerships.¹³
- **Regional and local partnerships** respond to skills needs within a specific territory, including regions with shared economic or geographical characteristics. The Pact for Skills supports this approach through Regional Skills Partnerships.¹⁴
- **Education–business partnerships** connect higher education and VET providers with enterprises and other labour–market actors. Cooperation can include identifying skills needs, developing curricula and teaching approaches, continuing education and work–based learning.¹⁵

Effective partnerships require clear objectives, roles and governance arrangements that reflect the contributions of different partners.¹⁶ Sustained engagement also depends on identifying shared priorities and maintaining cooperation between organisations with different needs and capacities.¹⁷ Partnerships also need to remain sustainable beyond individual projects or funding cycles. This requires long-term planning, appropriate resources and arrangements for maintaining and scaling cooperation.¹⁸

¹³ European Commission, *Industrial Ecosystems and Partnerships*, Pact for Skills. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/about/industrial-ecosystems-and-partnerships_en

¹⁴ European Commission, *Regional Skills Partnerships*, Pact for Skills. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/about/regional-skills-partnerships_en

¹⁵ European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, ECORYS, Danish Technological Institute, BCS, 3S, Pedersen, P., Olesen, N., Hougaard, K.Andersen, T., *University-Business Cooperation on innovative teaching and learning practices*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/891903>

¹⁶ European Commission, *Pact for Skills Large-Scale and Regional Partnerships: Guidance handbook – introducing and setting up skills partnerships*, 2025 https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/community-resources/publications-and-documents/guidance-handbook-introducing-and-setting-skills-partnerships-0_en

¹⁷ European Commission, *Pact for Skills Annual Report 2025*, 2026, pp. 39–41. https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/document/download/84378a3e-3380-488f-b35a-9bd97a024ab1_en?filename=Annual%20Report%202025_FINAL.pdf

¹⁸ European Commission, 2025.

Challenges for education and training providers and employers

Evidence from the 2025 Pact for Skills annual survey¹⁹ and from Commission research on university–business cooperation²⁰ points to recurring challenges in building and sustaining skills partnerships:

- **Limited capacity to engage.** Partnerships require staff time, coordination and financial resources alongside organisations’ core activities. Resource constraints can therefore limit both participation and the scope of joint work.
- **Different priorities and working rhythms.** Education and training providers and businesses operate under different objectives, decision-making processes and timeframes, which can make it harder to agree on priorities and maintain cooperation.
- **Translating skills needs into provision.** Identifying skills needs is only one step; partners also need to convert this information into relevant curricula, training and other education responses. Gaps in skills intelligence can make this process more difficult.
- **Uneven capacity across employers.** Smaller businesses may have less time, staff and organisational capacity to engage in placements, joint projects or other forms of cooperation, making intermediary support particularly important.
- **Sustaining cooperation over time.** Long-term partnerships depend on continued commitment, adequate resources and alignment between organisations whose priorities may evolve at different speeds..

Webinar ‘Partnerships for Skills – Building Bridges Across Sectors’

This webinar examines how partnerships across education, industry and other sectors can build stronger skills ecosystems and prepare for future workforce needs. The session runs on 14 October 2026 at 15:30 CET and covers the Pact for Skills, regional, and university–business partnerships, through three expert presentations, audience Q&A and an interactive debate.²¹ Key questions guiding the discussion will include:

¹⁹ European Commission, 2026.

²⁰ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Davey, T., Meerman, A., Galan-Muros, V., Orazbayeva, B. and Baaken, T. (2018), *The state of university-business cooperation in Europe: final report*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1b03ee59-67a4-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1>

²¹ HEInnovate. *Webinar Partnerships for Skills - Building Bridges Across Sectors*. <https://www.heinnovate.eu/en/events-webinars/webinar-partnerships-skills-building-bridges-across-sectors>

- How can European and sectoral partnerships turn skills needs into coordinated action across countries and industries?
- What makes skills partnerships effective and sustainable, particularly when partners have different roles, priorities and capacities?
- How can universities and businesses work together at the institutional level to prepare learners with the competences needed for working life?

This webinar is part of 'Thematic Strand 4: Lifelong learning for an innovative workforce'. It also includes the webinars [Creating Flexible Pathways for Innovation](#) (September 15, 10:30 CET) and [Empowering Learners for Workforce Transitions](#) (December 02, 10:30 CET).