THEMATIC STRAND 4 · LIFELONG LEARNING FOR AN INNOVATIVE WORKFORCE

Partnerships for Skills

Building Bridges Across Sectors

Webinar Summary

Community for Educational Innovation - CEI

14/10/2026

European Commission | CEI

Partnerships for Skills: Building Bridges Across Sectors

Thematic Strand 4: Lifelong Learning for an Innovative Workforce

This webinar examined how intersectoral partnerships can address skills needs through practical action. Three speakers discussed collaboration at the European, sectoral, and institutional levels.

Level	Speaker	Focus of the presentation
European	**Eva Revilla**, Team Leader for Skills for Competitiveness, European Commission (DG EMPL).	Partnerships: Pact for Skills.
Sectoral	**Nathalie Richet**, Senior Manager, EUREC.	The Renewable Energy Skills Partnership: From skills needs to skills action.
Institutional	**Nelly Narges Karimi**, Programme Leader, University of Stavanger.	Preparing students for working life: Building future competences through university–industry collaboration.

These three levels of collaboration illustrate the European Union's commitment to aligning skills development with labour market needs. Europe's competitiveness and resilience require timely skills, achieved through cooperation among education providers, employers, social partners, public authorities, and regional actors. The ***European Skills Agenda***[1] launched the ***Pact for Skills***[2] in 2020 to unite these stakeholders around shared priorities. In 2025, the ***Union of Skills***[3] further strengthened the EU's approach to skills development and governance.

This summary outlines key insights, practical lessons, and implications for policy and practice.

EUROPEAN LEVEL

Partnerships: Pact for Skills

The Pact for Skills brings stakeholders together to support long-term upskilling and reskilling of the working-age population. It is based on the principle that Europe's industrial goals require a skilled workforce. Partnerships operate at two levels: i) Large-Scale Skills Partnerships engage key stakeholders across EU strategic sector value chains, and ii) Regional Skills Partnerships address skills needs in specific territories, including cross-border areas with strong economic ties.

The Pact for Skills in numbers[4]

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

[2] European Commission, *Pact for Skills*, https://ec.europa.eu/social/PactforSkills

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

[4] Figures as presented by the speaker, based on the Pact for Skills Annual Survey Report 2025. See European Commission, *Pact for Skills Annual Report 2025*, 2026. https://pact-for-

4,000 members	**20** Large-Scale Skills Partnerships in EU strategic sectors	**48** Regional Skills Partnerships
10 million people benefited (3.9 million in 2025)	**€2 billion** invested in upskilling and reskilling (€1.02 billion in 2025)	**142,000** training courses updated or developed (46,500 in 2025)

Pact for Skills members initially aimed to upskill 25 million workers by 2030. The 16 current Large-Scale Skills Partnerships have increased this target to 35.5 million people, representing an average of 28% of their workforces.

In 2025, the Union of Skills called for stronger Large-Scale Skills Partnerships aligned with the **Competitiveness Compass**[5], closer coordination across EU skills initiatives, enhanced cross-sector cooperation, and more ambitious commitments. Members have shown interest in joint action on batteries, energy efficiency, advanced manufacturing, and water management.

The European Commission has introduced three measures to support this agenda:

- **European Alliance for Apprenticeships[6]:** The communities of the Pact for Skills and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships are brought together and share support services. Pact members can now include apprenticeships in their pledges.
- **Erasmus+ Blueprint Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills[7]**: Pact membership now counts as an award criterion for Blueprint Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills.
- **EU Skills Intelligence Observatory[8]**: Large-Scale Skills Partnerships will contribute data to the Observatory, complementing statistical sources with insights from the field.

The Pact does not have dedicated EU funding. The Commission offers technical support through an external contractor, while partnerships seek funding through open calls. Relevant instruments include Erasmus+ Blueprint Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills, Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence, planned VET Business Partnerships under the European Competitiveness Fund, EU Skills Academies, and Erasmus+ European University Alliances.

skills.ec.europa.eu/document/download/84378a3e-3380-488f-b35a-9bd97a024ab1_en?filename=Annual%20Report%202025_FINAL.pdf

[5] Competitiveness Compass, https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/competitiveness-compass_en

[6] European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/working-together/european-alliance-apprenticeships_en

[7] 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

[8] *European Skills Intelligence Observatory – First brief to the European skills high level board*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2026, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/3646741

To promote sustainable partnerships beyond individual funding cycles, the Commission recognises those that meet the requirements of its **Guidance handbook**[9]. The handbook, informed by several years of experience, outlines seven building blocks for lasting partnerships:

1 An engaged community of members
2 A partnership agreement
3 Ambitious yet realistic commitments
4 A coordinating or steering group
5 A work plan
6 A strong link between sectoral and regional dimensions
7 A clear monitoring framework

On 15 September 2026, the Commission adopted the **Fair Labour Mobility Package**[10], comprising five legislative proposals, including measures under the **Skills Portability Initiative**[11].

SECTORAL LEVEL

From skills needs to skills action: the Renewable Energy Skills Partnership experience

Deploying renewable energy technologies requires investment, infrastructure, innovation, and a skilled workforce. The ***Large-Scale Partnership on Renewable Energy Skills***[12], one of 20 partnerships under the Pact for Skills, demonstrates how a sector can address these skills needs. Key characteristic of the partnership include:

Purpose	Address shared skills challenges that slow the deployment of renewable energy technologies and the achievement of EU targets. The partnership estimates the sector will need 3.5 million people by 2030.
Who is involved	26 member organisations, many of them are associations representing many more companies in industry, research and education. 21 members take part in the RESkill4NetZero project, with skills intelligence specialists, employment agencies, universities and training providers.
Governance	Three associations share coordination: EUREC[13] for research and higher education, *SolarPower Europe* for the photovoltaic sector and *GCP Europe* for technicians and installers. Working groups organise the work.
Funding	Members worked on a voluntary basis until 2024. Since then, the Erasmus+ Blueprint project **RESkill4NetZero**[14] has supported the partnership.

[9] 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

[10] Fair Labour Mobility Package, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/moving-working-europe/working-another-eu-country/fair-labour-mobility-package_en

[11] European Commission, *Skills portability, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/skills-portability-helping-skills-and-qualifications-travel-across-borders_en*

[12] RESkill4NetZero, *A large-scale skills partnership for the renewable energy ecosystem*, https://reskill4net-zero.eu/partnership/

[13] The Association of European Renewable Energy Research Centers, https://eurec.be/

[14] RESkill4NetZero, https://reskill4net-zero.eu/about/

Results so far	Skills needs analysis, occupational profiles, a skills strategy, a modular curriculum and a certification framework, all publicly available.[15]

In 2022, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER) brought together industry, technology, research, and education associations to address shared skills challenges in renewable energy. Although these groups had similar needs, they had not previously collaborated. The partners mapped skills gaps, expanded membership, established joint coordination, and drafted a partnership declaration with Commission support, resulting in the RESkill4NetZero project. The table below shows how RESkill4NetZero translates priorities into action:

Understand	**Develop**	**Test and improve**	**Sustain**
Skills needs analysis and an evolving skills strategy for a fast-moving sector	Curriculum, modular learning units and a certification framework	Pilot training, feedback and adaptation over one year	The RESkill Alliance takes the work beyond the project

The partnership bridges gaps between different perspectives. For example, a company and a university may identify the same need but describe it differently. The partnership translates industry needs into training that learners can complete and have recognised, guided by the following key questions:

Skills need	**Competences**	**Learning outcomes**	**Training**	**Assessment and credentials**
What does industry need?	*What must people be able to do?*	*What should learners achieve?*	*How will they learn it?*	*How will learning be demonstrated?*

RESkill4NetZero concludes in 2028. To ensure its legacy, the partnership is establishing the European Renewable Energy Skills Alliance (RESkill Alliance), an action-oriented community. It welcomes EU-funded projects, companies, universities, and individuals who wish to share challenges and solutions without a formal Pact commitment.

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Preparing students for working life: Building future competences through university–industry collaboration

The University of Stavanger (UiS) in Norway demonstrates how a single institution can make industry collaboration a standard part of education. UiS has over 13,000 students across six faculties in Rogaland County, which is home to 9% of Norway's population. In 2024, the Stavanger region's 26,554 companies employed 176,274 people, primarily in energy (44,433), construction (25,546), and manufacturing (16,479).

[15] RESkill4NetZero, *Results*, https://reskill4net-zero.eu/results/

UiS launched the **InGenious Programme**[16] in 2020, a challenge-based course designed to prepare students for a sustainable future and working life. It serves as a platform to engage industry in study programmes and bridge the gap between academia and business. By spring 2026, the InGenious Programme has engaged:

900	35	65	18
students	nationalities	projects with industry	specialisations

Students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds collaborate, reflecting real-world working environments. The scale of participation demonstrates that partnership-based collaboration is now embedded in both curricular and co-curricular activities.

InGenious applies a three-step approach to developing and supporting collaboration:

1. Internal engagement
Engage educators and identify courses with potential for industry collaboration; support them before, during and after the semester

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2. External engagement
Connect public bodies, start-ups, SMEs and large companies with suitable courses and practical learning opportunities

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3. Follow-up
Gather feedback from students, educators and partners, and use it to plan the next collaboration

InGenious connects people and translates their needs into educational opportunities. It identifies needs, aligns expectations, and co-designs education. The following are the expectations of the programme's stakeholder groups:

Educators	Students	External stakeholders
Attractive, relevant courses; learning linked to professional practice	Connections to the world of work; access to future employers; skills and career opportunities	Access to emerging talent; fresh perspectives on real-world challenges; a workforce with relevant competences

In InGenious, students develop technical and soft skills that employers seek and that are difficult to acquire from textbooks alone. Working on real cases enhances problem framing and critical thinking. Team projects foster collaboration and responsibility. Interaction with professionals builds communication skills and the ability to ask insightful questions. A strong focus on sustainability develops judgement about impacts and trade-offs, as demonstrated in projects that reduce companies' carbon footprints or support sustainability reporting.

InGenious offers flexible formats, including:

- **Science and Industry Day:** Held each semester, this event features thematic editions on energy, innovation, strategy and leadership, and societal security, preparedness, and resilience. Educators present their courses, and companies explore collaboration opportunities. Shared interests lead to student projects, teaching contributions, and lasting partnerships.

[16] University of Stavanger, InGenious Programme, https://www.uis.no/en/student/collaboration/ingenious-programme-preparing-students-for-the-sustainable-future-and-working

- **Thematic summer school:** The five-day Aqua-Tech Skill Accelerator School brought students, researchers, and industry together to focus on aquaculture and technology, with external partners serving as educators. Student projects continued into the following semester within existing courses.

Over seven years of practice, InGenious has identified six recurring challenges:

Challenge	Why it matters	How UiS responds
Different priorities	Academic goals and commercial needs pull in different directions.	Early dialogue to balance both sets of expectations.
Time and capacity	Teaching cycles, business deadlines and limited staff time are hard to align.	Open agreement upfront on what each side needs and expects.
Finding the right partners	Expertise and company needs are not always visible to each other.	Regional proximity to industry and matchmaking events.
IP and confidentiality	Ownership, data access and publication rights complicate agreements.	Clear terms on data and publication rights before data is shared.
Incentives and resources	Engagement needs recognition, funding and coordination.	Clear commitments agreed upfront, with programme support for educators.
Continuity and trust	Partnerships depend on individuals and lose momentum after a project.	A structured follow-up step that plans the next collaboration.

Small student projects often serve as the first step toward larger outcomes. Collaboration through InGenious has led to bachelor's and master's theses, research proposals, industrial PhD projects, and externally funded research. Students have launched start-ups with university support, and companies have offered internships and jobs to talented students identified during projects.

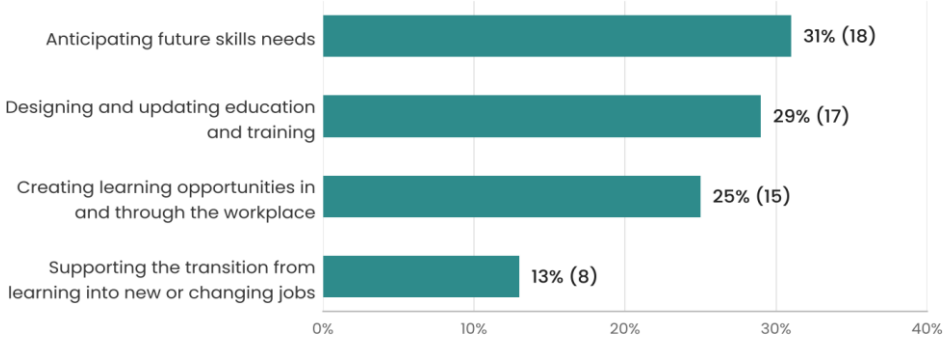
Key takeaways:

1	**Partnerships start from a shared problem:** A common, concrete skills challenge kept renewable energy associations engaged before any funding was secured.
2	**Commitment comes first; funding follows:** The Pact for Skills has no dedicated budget, yet recognition gives partnerships credibility when they compete for Erasmus+ and other funds.
3	**Partnerships work as translators:** They turn industry needs into competences, learning outcomes, training and assessment, and align what educators, students and employers expect.
4	**Sustainability needs planning from day one:** Open alliances beyond project funding and systematic follow-up turn single projects into lasting relationships.
5	**Assessment and recognition are the hardest parts to transfer:** Training content adapts easily across contexts; credentials need careful work and link to EU efforts on skills portability.

Interactive polls on partnerships for skills

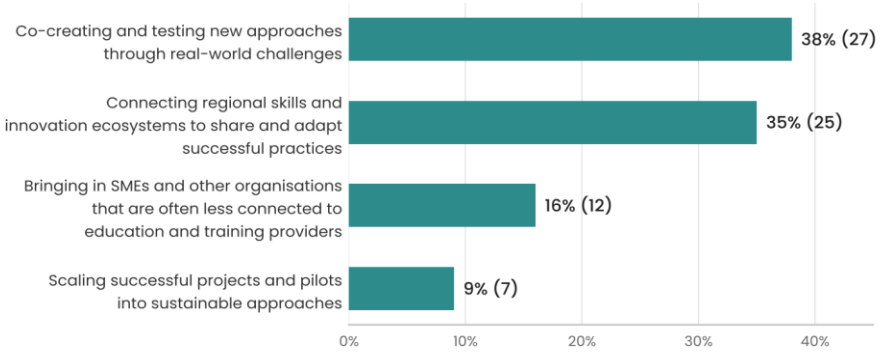
Two live polls captured participants' views during the webinar:

Poll 1: Where should cross-sector partnerships be strengthened most to support lifelong learning?



Note: Poll conducted through the Teams feature. 31 respondents made 58 selections; percentages show each option's share of all selections.

Poll 2: How can cross-sector partnerships best support innovation in education and training?



Note: Poll conducted through the Teams feature. 42 respondents could select up to two options, making 71 selections; percentages show each option's share of all selections.

Upcoming CEI activities

2 December 2026	**Webinar: Empowering Learners for Workforce Transitions** (10:30 CET).
Open now	**Call for Good Practices** on lifelong learning for an innovative workforce, and **CEI Semester Poll**, whose insights will inform the 2026-II Thematic Report.