

## The EU Pact for Skills – Regional Skills Partnerships for the twin transition of Thessaly Region (*TheSkills*)

Thessaly is located in Central Greece and comprises 4 *Regional Units*: Larissa, Magnesia (which includes the Northern Sporades islands of Skiathos, Skopelos, and Alonissos), Trikala, and Karditsa. The region consists of 25 *municipalities* and has a total population of approximately 690,000 *inhabitants*. Thessaly spans a total area of 14,037 *square kilometres*, with Larissa serving as both the administrative capital and the largest city in the region.

Thessaly is recognised as a predominantly rural region, often referred to as the agricultural heartland of Greece, due to its fertile plains and significant contribution to national agricultural production. Beyond agriculture, Thessaly boasts rich natural beauty and cultural heritage, making it an important destination for tourism. Key attractions include Mount Olympus, the Pelion Mountain, and Meteora, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as the beaches and islands along the Magnesia coast and the Northern Sporades.

### The challenge

The European Union is advancing an ambitious dual transformation, the twin transition, driven by the imperative to digitalise its economies and societies while achieving climate neutrality. This twin shift is reshaping the way people live and work, how businesses operate, and how regions evolve. While the transition offers extraordinary opportunities for innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable development, it also presents deep challenges, particularly for regions with structural vulnerabilities.

Not all European regions start from the same position. As highlighted by the European Committee of the Regions, disparities in economic development, industrial dependency, digital infrastructure, skills availability, and demographic resilience create highly uneven capacities to adapt<sup>1</sup>. Without targeted support, some territories risk being left behind, threatening the EU's foundational commitment to social and territorial cohesion. A just and inclusive transition requires policies that are place-based, participatory, and sensitive to each region's unique context. It demands strategic investments in upskilling and reskilling, inclusive innovation, and the empowerment of local and regional stakeholders in designing the future of their economies.

Within this European landscape, the Region of Thessaly stands at a critical crossroads. The Region of Thessaly is among the less developed regions of the EU, with GDP per capita at 51% of the EU-27 average (Eurostat 2022)., marking some of the highest unemployment rates in EU: 16,7% total unemployment rate, 33,3% youth unemployment and 9,1% long-term unemployment. Traditionally known as Greece's agricultural heartland, Thessaly is called upon to **transform itself into a resilient, forward-looking region that embraces green and digital innovation**, not only to sustain its economy, but to enhance social inclusion, economic diversification and environmental sustainability. The challenges are significant, yet so are the opportunities: from smart farming and clean energy to digital tourism, and circular production models.

In the aftermath of major natural disasters, such as the earthquake in Ellassona in March 2021 and the catastrophic "Daniel" floods in September 2023, the Region of Thessaly has intensified efforts to

---

<sup>1</sup> [Cohesion Report: digital cohesion, demography and brain drain are key to reduce territorial disparities | European Committee of the Regions](#)

build a more resilient and future-ready economy. The **Smart Specialisation Strategy of Thessaly (RIS3 2021–2027)**<sup>2</sup> forms the core strategic framework guiding the region’s response to the challenges and opportunities of the twin transition: digitalisation and decarbonisation. Developed within the broader national RIS3 process coordinated by the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI), the strategy aims to steer regional development through targeted investments in Research, Technology, and Innovation (RTI), closely aligned with both local assets and European policy priorities<sup>3</sup>. RIS3 is implemented at both national and regional levels through continuous coordination and interaction between stakeholders across governance tiers. For Thessaly, this strategy offers a roadmap to transform traditional sectors, support emerging industries, and enhance regional competitiveness and resilience.

### **The ambition**

The long-term ambition of our Thessaly Regional Skills Partnership (*TheSkills*) is to establish a future-ready skills ecosystem that **enables the region to fully embrace the green and digital transition**, while ensuring that no individual, sector, or area is left behind. Our vision is a Thessaly where every learner, worker, and enterprise has access to high-quality, inclusive, and forward-looking upskilling and reskilling opportunities, aligned with local economic priorities and global sustainability goals.

By 2030, our partnership aims to:

- Equip the regional workforce with the green and digital skills needed in sectors such as smart agriculture, renewable energy, eco-tourism, and digital logistics.
- Reduce structural unemployment by fostering skills matching and inclusive training pathways, particularly for young people, women, long-term unemployed, and rural populations.
- Position Thessaly as **a regional model of skills-based economic transformation**, grounded in its Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) and in synergy with national and European policies such as the European Green Deal, the Digital Decade, and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The Thessaly RSP will act as a permanent collaboration platform, aligning education and training provision with real economic needs and ensuring that skills intelligence, innovation, and partnerships are central to the region’s sustainable development.

### **The proposal**

As part of the Pact for Skills, the Thessaly Regional Skills Partnership commits to a focused and collaborative effort to equip the region’s workforce with the skills required to drive and sustain the twin transition. These commitments reflect the shared priorities of our member organisations and align with the RIS3 Thessaly strategy, national recovery plans, and the broader European skills agenda.

***Commitment 1: Designing and delivering upskilling and reskilling programmes tailored to the region’s green and digital priorities.***

The partnership will offer at least 25 new modular training programmes by 2030, focusing not only on strategic RIS3 sectors such as agri-food innovation, renewable energy, digital tourism, and sustainable logistics, but also additional sectors, according to the large-scale survey results. These programmes will prioritise accessibility for youth, women, and rural populations.

---

<sup>2</sup> [RIS3 Thessaly - Περιφέρεια Θεσσαλίας](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Research & Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialization \(RIS3\) – General Secretariat for Research and Innovation \(GSRI\): Official website](#)

***Commitment 2: Establishing a regional skills intelligence mechanism to guide evidence-based training and policy.***

The partnership will set up a dedicated skills observatory by 2027 to conduct foresight studies, monitor labour market trends, and map skills gaps across the priority sectors. This observatory will feed into the design of curricula, career guidance tools, and workforce planning.

***Commitment 3: Building a robust ecosystem of cooperation to strengthen training capacity and visibility.***

We will convene the bi-annual Thessaly Summit, a flagship regional forum designed to foster structured and strategic cooperation among VET providers, SMEs, large employers, chambers of commerce, public authorities, and civil society. The Summit will serve as a catalyst for knowledge exchange, innovation, and skills matching, while positioning Thessaly as a proactive player in the twin transition and EU cooperation.

Key elements of the Thessaly Summit:

- Roundtables and thematic dialogues with European and national stakeholders on key topics such as micro-credentials, mentoring schemes, skills intelligence, and funding mobilisation (ESF+, Erasmus+, Interreg, etc.).
- Invited participation of European partners from existing and emerging EU networks to promote transnational collaboration and project partnerships.
- Interactive booths and exhibitions to facilitate:
- Employer–employee matching, especially for youth and NEETs
- Showcasing of VET projects and EU cooperation opportunities
- Promotion of local products and sustainable businesses, strengthening regional identity and green entrepreneurship.
- Communities of practice and working groups, set up to continue structured collaboration throughout the year.

The Summit will be conducted on 9th of May, which has been established as the **Europe Day**<sup>4</sup>.

In alternate years, a virtual Thessaly Skills e-Forum will be held to maintain engagement, present ongoing initiatives, and foster new project development and network activity across the ecosystem.

These commitments aim not only to build training capacity and visibility, but also to embed Thessaly into the European learning and innovation ecosystem, strengthening its social and economic resilience, increasing labour market inclusion, and ensuring alignment with EU objectives such as the Digital Decade targets, the European Education Area, and the Green Deal.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Europe Day – May 9 | European Union](#)

## Activities

To fulfil the commitments of the Thessaly Regional Skills Partnership and address the region's green and digital skills challenges, we will implement a coordinated programme of actions, jointly delivered by all participating members. These include:

### **1. Coordination of our Regional Skills Partnership**

A permanent steering and coordination structure will be established, supported by:

- Online meetings of the Steering Committee held every four months.
- Sectoral working groups involving public, private and training actors.
- Joint monitoring and progress tracking mechanism aligned with KPIs.

### **2. Large-Scale Needs Analysis and Skills Mapping**

We will conduct annual, large-scale, quantitative online surveys across the Region of Thessaly to analyse current and future skills needs in key sectors such as agri-food, sustainable tourism, energy, logistics, health, and digital services. The surveys will include a combination of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice items, and ranking exercises, designed to capture both existing workforce competencies and anticipated future demands.

In addition to sectoral skills intelligence, the surveys will also include indicators to assess social and economic resilience and labour market inclusion, especially among underrepresented groups. This will help measure perceptions of adaptability to the twin transition, confidence in accessing training, and engagement in upskilling opportunities.

The skills mapping will focus on:

- Specific green and digital skills required for the twin transition.
- Regional skills mismatches and gaps.
- Profiles of potential learners to guide training design and outreach.

A strong emphasis will be placed on inclusion. We will specifically target youth (aged 16–30), women (especially those inactive or underemployed), and residents of rural or remote areas (based on official territorial classifications). Survey dissemination will be tailored to reach these groups, using local networks, education providers, and community organisations to maximise participation and representation.

The findings will inform the Annual RSP Observatory, accessible via a dedicated website, and will support evidence-based planning of regional upskilling and reskilling initiatives, while also tracking the partnership's contribution to inclusion and resilience over time.

### **3. Co-Design and Delivery of Training Programmes**

Based on the analysis, we will design and implement targeted upskilling and reskilling programmes. These will include:

- Short-term, modular training schemes co-created with VET providers and employers.
- Delivery through flexible formats (blended learning, microcredentials, distance learning).
- Focus on inclusion (rural workers, women, youth, long-term unemployed).

Co-production of the programs will be continuously fostered through initiatives such as peer-to-peer learning schemes, digital co-design tools and collaborative and mentorship and knowledge hubs, also developing through joint funding incentives.

#### **4. Awareness-Raising, Visibility and Member Engagement**

A strategic communication and outreach plan will be rolled out, featuring:

- Branding (logo and communication templates), dissemination material (e-leaflets, banners, etc.) and the launch of a dedicated website and social media.
- Regional campaign through social media, local press and community events.
- Annual Thessaly Summit, as presented above. In the framework of Commitment 3, our aim is not only to convene a high-profile Thessaly Summit but to activate a permanent ecosystem, the RSP, which will empower its members to increase their individual and collective impact. The Thessaly Skills Forum will act as an operational pillar of the RSP, structured to provide targeted networking schemes (e.g. peer-to-peer exchanges, sector-specific matchmaking, thematic working circles) to connect employers, VET providers, employees, NGOs, and policymakers.
- In alternate years without a physical Summit, a virtual Thessaly Skills e-Forum will be organised to sustain engagement, support collaboration, and showcase new initiatives and project opportunities across the ecosystem.

#### **5. Sustainability and Funding Roadmap**

To ensure long-term impact, the RSP will develop a Sustainability and Funding Mechanism, including:

- Mapping of EU and national funding (e.g. Erasmus+, ESF+, RRF).
- Development of joint proposals for calls supporting green/digital skills.
- Engagement of private sector actors for co-investment and sponsorship.

This mechanism will be also operationalised through the Thessaly Skills Forum, which will act as a permanent collaboration platform, supporting members in jointly mobilising resources, scaling innovation, and amplifying their individual and collective impact.

### **Tracking your impact**

To monitor progress and demonstrate the added value of the Thessaly Regional Skills Partnership, we define the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Each KPI includes clear targets and milestones to ensure ongoing alignment with our commitments and long-term vision:

<b>KPI</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Timeframe for achievement</b>	<b>Key Milestones</b>
Number of members of the partnership	20	By 2030	- 10 members by 2026 - 15 members by 2028 - 20 members by 2030
Large Scale Surveys implemented	5	By 2030	- 1 Survey by 2026 - 2 Surveys by 2027 - 3 Surveys by 2028 - 4 Surveys by 2029 - 5 Surveys by 2030
Participants in the Large Scale Surveys	250	By 2030	- 50 participants by 2026 - 100 participants by 2027 - 150 participants by 2028 - 200 participants by 2029 - 250 participants by 2030

Percentage of stakeholders reporting a positive impact of the Thessaly RSP on labour market inclusion and regional resilience	70	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 50% by 2026</li> <li>- 60% by 2028</li> <li>- 70% by 2030</li> </ul>
Number of training opportunities delivered by the partnership collectively	25	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 trainings by 2026</li> <li>- 10 trainings by 2027</li> <li>- 15 trainings by 2028</li> <li>- 20 trainings by 2029</li> <li>- 25 trainings by 2030</li> </ul>
Number of workforce reskilled or upskilled	1250	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 250 trainees by 2026</li> <li>- 500 trainees by 2027</li> <li>- 750 trainees by 2028</li> <li>- 1000 trainees by 2029</li> <li>- 1250 trainees by 2030</li> </ul>
Percentage of total Region's workforce trained due to the Partnership's direct contribution <sup>5</sup>	>7%	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- &gt;5% by 2028</li> <li>- &gt;10% by 2030</li> </ul>
Number of media created	3	By 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LinkedIn Account by December 2025</li> <li>- Youtube Channel by June 2026</li> <li>- Dedicated Website by September 2026</li> </ul>
Number of Thessaly Summits	3	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 Event by 2026</li> <li>- 2 Events by 2028</li> <li>- 3 Events by 2030</li> </ul>
Number of participants in the Summits	200	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 50 participants on 2026</li> <li>- 100 participants on 2028</li> <li>- 150 participants on 2030</li> </ul>
Number of Online Events	2	By 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 Event by 2027</li> <li>- 2 Events by 2029</li> </ul>
Number of participants in the online events	200	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 70 participants on 2027</li> <li>- 130 participants on 2030</li> </ul>
Number of funding opportunities pursued for supporting our activities	5	By 2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1 Proposal by 2026</li> <li>- 2 Proposals by 2027</li> <li>- 3 Proposals by 2028</li> <li>- 4 Proposals by 2029</li> <li>- 5 Proposals by 2030</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Note this KPI refers specifically to the share of the Thessaly workforce directly trained through activities of the Regional Skills Partnership. It therefore measures only the Partnership's direct contribution, and not the overall training participation rate in the Region.

## **Partnership arrangements**

**Coordinating organisation:** KAINOTOMIA Lifelong Learning Centre

### **Types of organisations in the membership**

- Governmental Bodies
- Public Authorities
- Regional Development Agencies
- Industry Associations
- Large Enterprises
- SMEs
- Universities
- Educational / VET providers

### **Cooperation Mechanism**

- Use of Emails and Calls
- An online Cooperation Platform (e.g. dedicated MS Teams/Basecamp space) to enable continuous communication, document sharing, joint planning and real-time collaboration among all partners
- Quarterly Partnership Meetings
- Bilateral Meetings, when needed

**Supported by:**

**Coordinator**



**RSP Members** (*not finalised*)

*Industry*



**Supporters** (*to be added*)

---

Contact and more information:

Mike Triantafillou  
KAINOTOMIA Lifelong Learning Centre  
[mtriantafillou@kainotomia.com.gr](mailto:mtriantafillou@kainotomia.com.gr)  
+302410555590  
Web: <https://kainotomia.com.gr/en/>