



**PACT FOR
SKILLS**

PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY – “ESTABLISHING REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIPS: LESSONS LEARNT AND SUCCESS STORIES”

Peer Learning Activity | 10 October 2024

The European Commission organised a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on 10 October 2024, as part of its ongoing efforts to create opportunities for Pact members to discuss and share ideas and practices within the Pact for Skills community. This event focused on Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) to highlight success stories and discuss the challenges and opportunities they present. The PLA provided a platform for members to learn from existing examples of regional cooperation and explore ways to upskilling and reskilling at the regional level.

Key messages

Existing challenges such as a shrinking working-age population, the economic migration of many young skilled workers, and a fast-changing labour market not only undermine Europe's overall competitiveness, but also risk affecting European regions disproportionately. Investing in concrete action to promote and sustain upskilling and reskilling at the regional level is therefore crucial to ensure more responsive strategies and policies and plans. Strengthening cooperation between regional stakeholders can play an essential role in driving skills development within and across European regions. Through its diverse membership, the Pact for Skills can provide a space for regional partnerships to thrive.

This PLA underscored the critical role of Regional Skills Partnerships and Large-Scale Skills Partnerships in addressing regional skills gaps and promoting economic resilience. Participants emphasized that the Pact provides a structured framework for collaboration, enabling members to leverage local strengths to address specific skills challenges effectively, and work together to access funding opportunities by building formalized partnerships.

Defining clear objectives and commitments and creating a space for mutual learning and collaboration among members stand out as key elements for partnerships under the Pact to have a tangible impact at the regional level. However, areas for further action include strengthening public authority and SME involvement to secure stronger partnerships and access funding; providing more opportunities for mutual learning, including between RSPs and LSPs; and further disseminating helpful tools and resources.

Is your organisation interested in setting up a Regional Skills Partnership?

You and/or your organization can reach out to the Pact for Skills Support Services either by sending an email to PacforSkillsPartnerships@ecorys.com or filling in the [open call for Expression of Interest to establish regional skills partnerships](#).

Boosting upskilling and reskilling at the regional level through the Pact for Skills

As the Pact for Skills membership brings together a wide range of stakeholders, partnership building is at the very core of the Pact. By promoting cooperation and coordination among public authorities and economic and social actors operating within key industrial ecosystems and/or within and across regions, the Pact for Skills acts as a catalyst for change, fostering concrete action at European, transnational, national, and regional level.

In this context, [Regional Skills Partnerships \(RSPs\)](#) under the Pact for Skills represent a useful tool to organise stakeholders around a common goal and direct the use of other European funding opportunities towards upskilling and reskilling. RSPs can be set up by a wide range of stakeholders, including public authorities, educational providers, individual companies, business associations or chambers of commerce. Acting as a 'coalition of the willing', RSPs constitute a **shared commitment by private and public organisations** to join forces to support upskilling and reskilling and provide opportunities for skills development across or within European regions. More specifically, RSPs can either:

- **Cover a single region within a Member State**, where different sectors cooperate within one region or municipality. Examples include the [Lombardy Region RSP](#) which covers the region of Lombardy in Italy or the upcoming RSP for the Municipality of Paris.
- **Include 'macro-regions' spanning across several Member States** that have a shared geographical or economic relationship, a cross-border cooperation, such as the [European Chemical Regions Network \(ECRN\) RSP](#).
- **Bring together different regions facing similar skills challenges** within the same EU Member State, to establish a network of regions that share socio-economic or geographical structures. An example is the [ProMIS RSP](#) tackles upskilling and reskilling in the health sector across Italy's 21 regions.

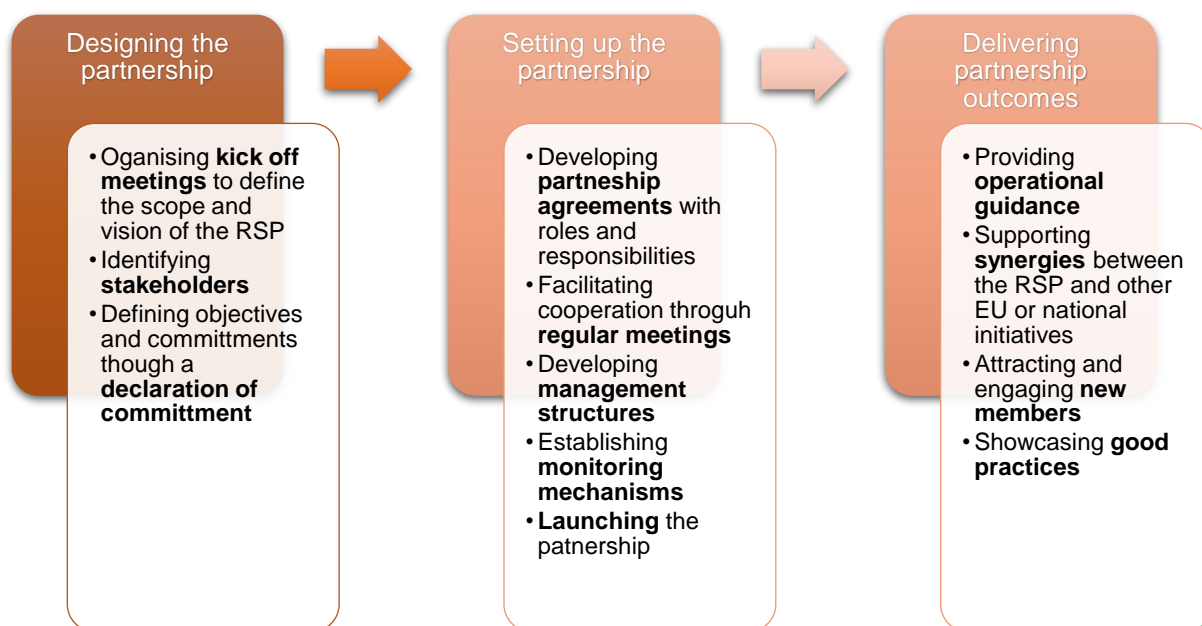
Currently, there seven RSPs have been established under the Pact for Skills. While each partnership has its own specific remit and set of commitments, they generally aim to support institutions and businesses through the green and digital transformations by promoting sustainability, enhancing digital competencies and green skills, and creating innovation and technological talent hubs. To this end, RSP members join forces to set up training frameworks and ensure ongoing, sustainable and systematic cooperation between partners. Furthermore, RSPs represent an opportunity for partners to showcase their work at the regional and local level through the Pact for Skills, by sharing good practices and promoting mutual learning within the Pact community.

To ensure RSP members work towards a common goal, and to provide a strong foundation to the partnerships, RSPs are set up through a 'declaration of commitment', to be with the European Commission. The declaration serves the purpose of identifying the objectives of the RSPs, stating their

commitment to operate within the framework of the Pact for Skills, as well as outlining the actions to be implemented to achieve the objectives of the RSP.

Although the commitments of an RSP are defined by its members, the Pact for Skills Support Services accompany the RSPs from their set up, to ensure continued impact and efficient governance, and provide opportunities for development and mutual learning. To ensure the **long term sustainability of the partnership**, the Pact for Skills Support Services can provide support throughout the life cycle of an RSP, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Support Services for RSPs



In particular, during the **design stage**, the Support Services can help RSPs identify the scope of the partnership, as well as potential Pact members to be involved, goals to work towards to, and actions to be undertaken to achieve the agreed objectives. In the **setting up stage**, the Support Services can help define roles and responsibilities within the partnership; facilitating the organisation of regular meetings; establishing management, decision-making, and monitoring/reporting mechanisms; and providing ongoing visibility. Lastly, in the **delivery stage**, the Support Services can provide guidance (e.g. tools, templates, best practices) for managing the partnership; help identify synergies with other EU or national level policy and funding initiatives; attract new members and showcase existing good practices.

Would you like to find out more about Regional Skills Partnerships?

You can find out more about what setting up an RSP entails by:

- Checking the [RSP page](#) on the Pact for Skills website to look up existing RSPs and get inspired.
- Consulting the [Handbook for new partnerships](#) which provides helpful information on the key steps to set up partnerships under the Pact.

Regional and Large-scale Skills Partnerships – examples from the ground

During the PLA, some examples from the work carried out to date by existing RSPs was presented. The [Beara More](#) (B-MORE) RSP for the 'Beara Peninsula, Marine and the potential for Offshore Renewable Energy' is an industry led, community focused partnership **addressing skills shortages in Ireland's marine and renewable energy sectors**. The need to build a regional partnership emerged after a decline in the fishing industry after Brexit, impacting the economic ecosystem and cultural identity of the Beara Peninsula. While the geographical isolation of the region represents a limitation as training opportunities are not widely available, the RSP has established consultation processes with relevant companies and stakeholders to develop a **skill strategy addressing the community demands for marine digital technology and renewable energy**. As part of this process, the RSP identified key initiatives to implement, including: conducting a comprehensive skills assessment to identify training needs; developing an education framework and training programs for local communities and businesses; and promoting regional smart specialization strategies. While the RSP is still facing some governance-related challenges as it is largely made up of local SMEs and does not currently have a coordinator, resulting in the partnership mainly relying on the voluntary efforts of its members, its work has benefitted from the region's expertise in marine engineering, aquaculture, and offshore renewable energy to create sustainable economic opportunities and combat depopulation. In the coming months and years, B-MORE will continue to support the establishment of tailored training programs to meet local skills needs, and the use of **regional strengths and smart specialization** to create economic opportunities.

The [European Chemical Regions Network](#) RSP (ECRN) focuses on addressing skills gaps in the chemical industry through interregional cooperation. The chemical sector is the second largest in Europe in terms of direct jobs, but the **increasingly high demand for highly trained and skilled workers poses new challenges** in meeting labour market needs. The ECRN RSP was established to address existing skills gaps and support the sector to remain competitive. To achieve this, the RSP aims to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the chemical sector by **promoting the safe use of chemicals and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous learning**. To this end, key initiatives of the network include organising workshops and training sessions for industry professionals; facilitating knowledge exchange between regional administrations, companies, VET providers, EU policymakers and educational providers; and supporting the development of innovative skills. Despite challenges faced in coordinating a diverse membership and limited resources, achievements of the ECRN RSP to date include **building a trusted platform for interregional cooperation**, encouraging **participation in EU-funded projects** and events, **developing a skills strategy** that promotes continuous learning and innovation, and emphasizing the role of the chemical industry in the green and digital transition at a European level. Some of the EU-funded projects in which ECRN has participated include research towards training to address industry needs, the creation of skills and tools to promote circular economy processes in agriculture, the up- and re-skilling of workers in the Hydrogen industry, and a comprehensive training program to upskill chemical industry members on digital technology to improve the optimisation of resources.

[KSIGune](#) is the Basque Higher Education & Research Cluster for the Cultural and Creative Industries in the Basque Country. The partnership connects academia, business, and administration to foster

innovation and skills development in the cultural and creative sectors. Key initiatives include identifying relevant courses and programs for members, promoting collaboration between research, business, and creative entities, and supporting lifelong learning through reskilling and upskilling opportunities. KSIGune aims to position the Basque Country as a hub for cultural and creative excellence. KSIGune was established to respond to different Basque government strategies from the education and cultural linguistic departments with the aim to **create a cooperation model for academia, business and administration**. Among its key achievements, the KSIGune RSP consulted with 27 educational institutions to identify their capacities and the relevant courses for the cultural and creative industries, eventually funding more than 40 research projects and encouraging collaboration between more than 150 research groups and creative entities.

Lastly, the PLA offered a space to discuss how [Large-Scale Skills Partnerships](#) (LSPs) under the Pact can promote upskilling and reskilling at regional level within their respective ecosystem. The [Tourism LSP](#), which operates in the Tourism ecosystem and is composed of businesses, EU level organisations, social partners, VET providers, and regional local authorities, stems from the outcomes of the [NTG \(Next Tourism Generation Alliance\)](#) Blueprint project to address skills needs and overall higher qualification of the tourism workforce, and works towards skills transformation and post-COVID recovery of the sector. In parallel to its efforts to promote skills development within the tourism sector, the reach of this LSP extends to the regional level. The Tourism LSP has established **an ecosystem of partnerships in trade-relevant regions** to bring together local stakeholders and provide them with tools and frameworks that address tourism skills gaps effectively and transnationally. Although the LSP has had to overcome challenges related to working with a wide range of stakeholders who often have competing interests at the local level, the 9 existing regional partnerships continue to operate efficiently, demonstrating that the **focus on regional needs can support sustainability of results in the long term**. Success factors of the regional partnerships established under the Tourism LSP include strong and credible leadership, ensured by nominating coordinators (usually SMEs) that have no direct competition with other partners, and developing pragmatic action plans with concrete results to be reached as a tool to attract national or regional funding and secure financial viability.

Challenges and opportunities of promoting upskilling and reskilling at the regional level: the experience of Pact members

The PLA offered an opportunity for Pact for Skills members to **discuss challenges and opportunities** of engaging in partnerships (i.e. RSPs and LSPs) to enhance upskilling and reskilling at the regional level, and exchange views on the role of regions in promoting skills development.

Pact members shared insights on some of the obstacles faced when working at the regional level. For instance, **building sustainable spaces for cooperation remains a challenge** for many organisations. While examples of regional clusters (outside of the Pact) exist (e.g. [Clust-ER Emilia-Romagna](#), which gathers both public and private organisations to share ideas, tools and resources to support competitiveness in the Emilia-Romagna region, with a focus on smart specialization), these are not necessarily widespread. Linked to this, some Pact members noted **that public-private partnerships can be challenging** as engaging public authorities in more formal cooperation arrangements is not necessarily straightforward, and that **involving SMEs can prove difficult**. The Pact for Skills, however,

is seen both as a platform to build stronger collaboration among different stakeholders, and as a tool for member organisations to gain more credibility at the European and national level, increasing their legitimacy towards potential partners.

Another challenge identified by Pact members relates to **securing funding to implement concrete actions** at the regional level. Partnership building, while crucial, often requires external funding for projects and initiatives to be implemented on the ground, which can create tensions among partners. However, systematic cooperation through the Pact for Skills, and through **formalised partnerships** such as RSPs and LSPs, was seen as a **facilitating factor to access financial support**, as it provides a structure that can act as a ready-made consortium when applying for funding opportunities, particularly at EU level. In turn, new funding streams can help unlock untapped potential from existing partnerships by allowing for more human resources to be allocated to implementing initiatives on the ground, which is often challenging as a large portion of existing human capacity is invested in the day to day management of LSPs and RSPs.

Lastly, **knowledge sharing** was highlighted as a strong need. On the one hand, this relates to promoting skills intelligence to identify skills needs that can be best addressed at regional level. To this end, regional partnerships can provide a space for knowledge sharing among relevant stakeholders. On the other hand, this challenge relates to the need to exchange ideas, access resources, learn from good practices, and discuss the benefits of engaging in cooperation across partnerships and sectors. In this context, the role of the **Pact for Skills as a catalyst for mutual learning** was highlighted, as the initiative can provide opportunities both for individual members to learn from established partnerships, and for RSPs and LSPs to learn from each other). Examples of possible resources to be shared include a repository of KPIs for existing and new partnerships to draw inspiration from; education and training resources in different languages to be replicated in relevant contexts; examples of monitoring frameworks and targets to assess progress at partnership level.

Lastly, the need to create **more opportunities for cooperation between LSPs and RSPs** to enhance upskilling and reskilling at the regional level was stressed by Pact members. In this context, participants noted that RSPs offer larger LSPs the chance to get more action done on the ground and relieve some of the effort spent coordinating sector-wide partnerships. However, **safeguarding the autonomy of RSPs**, including those established under the LSP umbrella was deemed crucial.

The Talent Booster Mechanism: new opportunities to support regions to tackle skills gaps

While the Pact for Skills represents a key initiative to promote upskilling and reskilling and tackle skills needs at the regional level, the EU has put in place other initiatives to support skills development within and across regions. The recently launched [Talent Booster Mechanism](#) supports regions in training, retaining, and attracting skilled individuals to address regional disparities caused by demographic shifts.

More specifically, the Talent Booster aims to help European regions to develop and implement skill strategies, invest in talent development, and promote mutual learning. To this end, the mechanism first identifies regions in a “talent development trap” (i.e. regions either already facing or at risk of suffering

from a shrinking of working age population), and then promotes the need for place-based approaches to improve governance, policymaking, and planning. The mechanism is targeted at various territorial levels to unlock investments and reforms across a range of intervention sectors, including testing skills solutions linked to a demographic transition, increasing access to essential services to inform policy making and governance, and encouraging better planning for shrinking territories.

Key pillars of the mechanism include:

- **Pilot projects** in 11 regions providing **expert support**;
- [Interregional innovation investments](#) to stimulate **high-skill job opportunities**;
- Support on the ground via the [Technical Support Instrument \(TSI\)](#) providing multiple **calls for Member States, regions, and cities** to apply for assistance in the form of expert support, reforms, engaging stakeholders, and financial assistance.
- **Expert support for attracting and retaining talent**, adapting to demographic changes, and fostering innovation under the '[European Urban Initiative](#)'.
- Analytical knowledge to support **evidence-based policies** on regional development and [migration](#).

By engaging in the Talent Booster Mechanism, stakeholders can leverage available resources to enhance skills development, job creation, and overall regional resilience, ensuring long-term viability and tangible results in tackling demographic challenges.

For Pact for Skills members, the Talent Booster Mechanism offers a strategic framework to address specific regional needs in cooperation with other members. For instance, **Pact members can exchange experiences and disseminate good practices** by joining the [Working Groups](#) set up through the [Harnessing Talent Platform](#). This represents an important space for mutual learning and knowledge sharing, focusing on addressing specific professional or territorial challenges. Currently, **four Working Groups have been set up under the mechanism** with a focus on the following key themes: Digital, Health, R&I, and Territorial. These Working Groups, which will continue to operate until May 2026, bring together around 80 members representing different stakeholder groups (e.g. national and regional authorities, research and academia entities, business representatives, NGOs) and hold three meetings per year to discuss progress and encourage cross-collaboration.

Would you like to find out more about the Talent Booster Mechanism?

More information about this EU initiative can be found at the following links:

- [Papers](#) detailing the thematic focus of the **four Working Groups**.
- [Inforegio - Knowledge Hub \(europa.eu\)](#) a library of policy documents, studies, and case studies providing information on how different European regions are harnessing talent.

Furthermore, you can subscribe to the relevant newsletter [here](#).