

ANE's response to the EU Commission Pact for Skills - Stakeholders' survey

Summary

As a first flagship action of the European Skills Agenda and Industrial Strategy for Europe, the European Commission is proposing a Pact for Skills as a new engagement and model for skills that will help meet COVID-19 challenges and deliver on the ambitions of the recovery pathway, the EU Industrial Strategy and the green and digital transition. The objective is to mobilise and incentivize all stakeholders within different sectors to work together on a shared vision and to take concrete actions for the upskilling and reskilling of people of working age by setting up partnerships addressing the needs of the labour market while supporting green and digital transitions.

ANE is interested in joining the Pact for Skills, to be launched in November 2020, and contributing with its work in promoting the benefits of upskilling and reskilling for all professional categories of employees. In 2019 our organisation conducted a survey among our members – engineers – to investigate their general opinion on continuing professional development, CPD, and to identify barriers hindering access to the CPD opportunities. The findings can be found [here](#).

In October 2020, our organisation has published a policy paper highlighting Nordic frontrunners in the provision of lifelong learning courses to boost the digital transition. The policy paper outlines different initiatives that support lifelong learning based on strategic partnerships, namely different types of cooperation, engagement and communication with target groups, provision modes, as well as pedagogical and financial models. The [policy paper](#) outlines key opportunities and proposes 8 policy recommendations.

ANE believes that upskilling and reskilling needs to be a common project for the entire organisation. In that regard, it is very important that both employees and management on all levels are part of the effort. The skills of every employee must be considered essential in the organisation and each employee must be aware of the value and benefits of upskilling and reskilling. Employees must be incentivised and motivated to improve knowledge and skills constantly and be a part of developing the up- and reskilling schemes, which have to include guidance and career development support. A special attention must be put on up- and reskilling older workers and adults struggling with basic skills. The up- and reskilling schemes should be managed with a wide range of stakeholders, including training providers, public authorities, researchers, public or private employment services, social partners, and other sectoral organisations.

To ensure success, it is very important that the schemes are supported financially and from all management levels and subjected to regular quality assessment.

Upskilling and reskilling offers needs to be based on qualified assessments. To do so, supply and demand of skills must be monitored, and it must be anticipated which skills are going to be needed. Where relevant, the monitoring can be based on existing tools and measures to support this anticipation of skills needs. The skills demand must be communicated clearly to all individuals and stakeholders to ensure that the up- and reskilling offers are built on the identified skills

needs. When anticipating which skills will be in demand, the need to support the digital and green transitions and the consequences of demographic change must be considered.

Another very important aspect of the Pact of Skills is the access to up- and reskilling opportunities for everyone. Working against discrimination and for gender equality is one of ANEs core values, and it is essential that up- and reskilling offers do not discriminate based on age, gender, ethnic origin, religion, or background. Everyone should be recognized for their acquired skills. The up- and reskilling offers must be designed to accommodate the needs and capacities of individuals and, when possible, relevant tools (including digital tools) are to be used to enable access to disadvantaged individuals.

In the Pact for Skills, organisations should be obliged to describe their upskilling and reskilling commitments with key performance indicators to create a better overview of the different efforts. We find it very relevant to have a financial indicator such as investment in the up- and reskilling opportunities defined in EUR or percentage of annual turnover/revenue. Other very relevant indicators would be the share of individuals benefitting from the opportunities, the share of SMEs involved, and the share of regions covered by the upskilling/reskilling schemes.

To avoid duplication of work, ANE highly recommends creating better synergies with the EU Skills and Jobs Coalition. We also recommend mapping the existing offers and developing a kind of a European "Spotify" for lifelong learning.

Partnerships and working together are essential in the Pact for Skills to learn from each other's experiences and best practices. To support signatories of the Pact in their efforts, the European Commission will offer support services, and among these, the most useful for ANE would be a networking hub.

Based on ANEs work on lifelong learning, we have indicated several other crucial aspects to ensure quality upskilling and reskilling, and which should be included in the Pact of Skills:

- 1) Learning together - inspiration from the Nordic tradition of the folk high schools. A network of learners within the workplace or with learners with different experiences has a greater value
- 2) Digital leadership - digital transformation demands leadership to orchestrate the change
- 3) Role of alumni - the concept is like Hotel California: "You can check out, but you can never leave"; alumni will stay part of a learning community supported by research and innovation
- 4) Knowledge transfer - ensuring uptake of revolutionary research results
- 5) Put individuals at the centre and ensure access to diverse offers by supporting new and flexible learning paths
- 6) Role of HEI in the provision of lifelong learning courses is not fully exploited
- 7) Targeted funding, seed funding and long-term funding is needed to develop and sustain offers
- 8) Develop a platform - a one-stop-shop for employers and employees to access information about existing offers.