



## A Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills

(Wave II)

**Steel**

Responding to skills  
mismatches at  
sectoral level

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

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Print	ISBN 978-92-79-80203-4	doi:10.2767/248677	KE-02-18-207-EN-C
PDF	ISBN 978-92-79-80204-1	doi:10.2767/735026	KE-02-18-207-EN-N

# Introduction

Globalisation and technological change are transforming our lives at unprecedented speed, creating a wealth of new opportunities for Europe's economy, businesses and citizens.

Countries can produce more for less by specialising in what they do best and exploiting economies of scale in global markets. And it is not only large companies that benefit from this process. 80 % of European exporters are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and every 1 billion euro of exports supports 14 000 jobs.

Nevertheless, these benefits are neither automatic nor evenly distributed. The costs are often localised and some industries and regions are especially affected.

The demand for skilled labour has increased but the number of jobs for those with lower level qualifications has shrunk, particularly in manufacturing. Displaced workers struggle to find jobs, especially when this means acquiring new skills.

The divide between more and less advanced regions risks widening, unless the necessary mechanisms are in place to promote high quality education, training and lifelong learning.

In 2016, the European Commission launched a New Skills Agenda for Europe to improve skills and keep pace with the changing needs of the labour market and society<sup>1</sup>.

The Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills brings together businesses, trade unions, education and training institutions and other stakeholders to develop skills strategies and solutions to help specific sectors grow, innovate, create high quality jobs and contribute to Europe's prosperity.

The initiative is well underway. Following a successful pilot phase launch in 2017, the selected projects started work in January 2018. The Commission is now going ahead with Wave II of the Blueprint and, based on proposals by sectoral services, has selected additional sectors. They are construction; steel; the paper-based value chain; green technology and renewable energy; additive manufacturing; and maritime shipping. In this report, we set out an updated process for developing a Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills and present challenges and opportunities facing the steel sector.



In a fast-changing, global economy, skills are key to boosting Europe's competitiveness and to ensuring fair and inclusive societies. As a key action of the New Skills Agenda for Europe, the Blueprint brings together businesses, trade unions, education and training institutions and other stakeholders to help close the skills gaps in their respective sectors. Having the workforce with the right skills will help us harness globalisation and technological progress. Together with my fellow Commissioners, I warmly invite other sectors to join this initiative in the future.



**Marianne Thyssen**  
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

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# Two steps to match skills to sectors' needs

The Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills fosters sustainable partnerships among stakeholders to translate a sector's growth agenda into a comprehensive skills strategy to address skills needs.

## Six sectors selected for Wave II



The Blueprint will be extended to additional sectors in future.

## 1. Launching an EU-wide partnership on skills

In this phase, the Commission supports the work of sectoral partnerships at European Union (EU) level.

Each partnership will develop a sectoral skills strategy to support the objectives of the overall growth strategy for the sector and match the demand and supply of skills. Partners will look into how major trends, such as global, societal, and technological developments, are likely to affect jobs and skills needs, as well as their potential impact on growth, competitiveness and employment in the sector (e.g. restructuring, hard-to-fill vacancies). Next, they identify priorities and milestones for action and develop concrete solutions.

The partnership will:

- Revise or create occupational profiles and the corresponding skills needs, drawing on the classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)<sup>2</sup> and existing competence frameworks;
- Update or create curricula while promoting sectoral qualifications and certifications;
- Promote the benefits of choosing a career in the sector and foster gender balance;
- Promote job-seeker and student mobility across Europe in the sector, capitalising on the use of existing EU tools<sup>3</sup>;
- Identify successful projects and best practices, including effective use of EU funding;
- Design an industry-led action plan for the long-term roll-out of the strategy and its results and ensure sustained cooperation among stakeholders at European, national and regional levels.

The platforms will build on European tools relating to skills and qualifications<sup>4</sup>.

## Funding the European partnership

After the European Commission decides to go ahead with the Blueprint in a particular sector, sectors can apply for funding to launch the EU-wide partnership on skills. The decision is based on reflection on how the sector is organised and takes previous work into account. For example, the Commission could launch calls for tender on sectoral studies. Or, sectoral stakeholders could apply for projects under Erasmus+ Sector Skills Alliances (E+ SSA) Lot 1. Alternatively, work could be taken forward within existing structures at EU level, such as high-level groups or sectoral dialogue committees.

On 25 October 2017, the Commission made available a specific opportunity for the six chosen sectors in Lot 3 of the Erasmus+ call for proposals on Sector Skills Alliances<sup>5</sup>. The call earmarks €4 million per sector to cover up to 80 % of eligible costs over a 4-year period. Only one European Alliance per sector will be supported. It must ensure good coverage of EU Member States and be representative of the sector. It must be led by representatives of the industry (e.g. companies, chambers or trade associations) and include education and training providers. The presence of social partners and public authorities is highly encouraged.

## 2. Roll-out at national and regional level

**Building on the results achieved at EU level, the Blueprint will be rolled out at national and regional level, in cooperation with national and regional authorities and stakeholders.**

The members of the EU partnerships and the Commission will engage in awareness raising activities to rally all interested national and regional stakeholders and ensure widespread involvement.

The main tasks of national/regional partnerships will be to:

- Implement the EU-level sectoral skills strategy and action plan recommendations, while adapting them to national contexts and priorities;
- Raise awareness and share results widely to influence EU, national and regional policies, initiatives and intelligence tools.
- Implement business-education-research partnerships on the ground, including in the context of smart specialisation<sup>6</sup>;

### Funding the roll-out at national and regional level

The roll-out needs to be financed at national and regional level. EU Structural and Investment Funds<sup>7</sup> (ESIF) could support Step 2 of the Blueprint, but this would require a decision by the relevant managing authorities. The EU partnerships will look into replicable models to facilitate the use of EU funding to support this step. Other public and private funding should also be used.

### When is a sector ready for a Blueprint?

In order to be supported, sectors must demonstrate all partners' commitment to the project. They must also have a mature sectoral growth strategy in place, with a clear link to EU policy priorities.

# Blueprint projects from the pilot phase

In 2017, the following five Blueprint projects were selected for EU co-funding, with a budget of nearly €20 million.



## Automotive sector

Development and Research on Innovative Vocational Education Skills (DRIVES)

The project will deliver human capital growth solutions for the automotive industry, covering all levels of the value chain. It will build on the GEAR 2030 project and create tools to reduce future skills gaps and shortages, enhance the recognition of formal and informal automotive education and adapt the apprenticeship marketplace to the sector's needs.

Coordinator: Vysoka Skola Banska - Technicka Univerzita Ostrava

**Find out more:**

<http://europa.eu/lkf94Fc>



## Maritime technology sector

Maritime Alliance for fostering the European Blue economy through a Marine Technology Skilling Strategy (MATES)

The project will assist the maritime sector to cope with change, with a new strategy to tackle skills shortages and increase labour market resilience. The strategy will build on a series of pilot case studies, as a platform for a long-term action. Although the project will focus primarily on shipbuilding and offshore energy value chains, the variety of stakeholders and activities affected demand a broad, inclusive approach. Combined efforts by education, science and industry bodies will widen perspectives on knowledge and skills, and contribute to improved maritime career opportunities.

Coordinator: Centro Tecnologico Del Mar - Fundacion Cetmar

**Find out more:**

<http://europa.eu/lVc74JV>



## Space data (geo information) sector

Towards an innovative strategy for skills development and capacity building in the space (geo information) sector supporting Copernicus User Uptake (EO4GEO)

The EO4GEO Sector Skills Alliance will help to reduce the skills gap between the supply of and demand for education and training in the geospatial sector. The project fosters the adoption and integration of geospatial data and services in end-user applications. The Alliance will develop innovative multidisciplinary solutions for education and training to respond to the needs of students, professionals and business representatives and to maximise the integration of Copernicus data in services for government, businesses and citizens.

Coordinator: Gisig Geographical Information Systems International Group Associazione

**Find out more:**

<http://europa.eu/Br87RR>



## Textile/clothing/leather/footwear (TCLF) sector

Skills 4 Smart TCLF Industries 2030 (S4TCLF)

The Skills4Smart TCLF 2030 project constitutes the first step towards a new, dynamic sustainable community of diverse private and public organisations, committed to skills development and employment opportunities in the textile, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) sector. The project will develop an industry-led "TCLF Skills Strategy" which will be followed by the creation of new TCLF job profiles and new training opportunities. The project will bring together networks of training providers and EU Regions who will continue the activities beyond the project. Skills4Smart TCLF aims to attract young people to the sector by providing clear guidance on study and employment options.

Coordinator: European Apparel and Textile Confederation

**Find out more:**

<http://europa.eu/!fp86Jq>



## Tourism sector

The Next Tourism Generation Alliance (NGT)

The Next Tourism Generation Alliance project will provide skills development products and tools to strengthen links between industry and education providers. The project will deliver products for professionals, trainers, students, university tourism departments, regional and local authorities, and companies to respond to changing sector skills needs. A new long-term human resource strategy will offer flexible training scenarios for businesses and provide clearly structured career pathways. The Tourism Skills Toolkit will provide stakeholders with a suite of skills assessment and profiling tools and new learning resources.

Coordinator: Federturismo Confindustria

**Find out more:**

<http://europa.eu/!mY79cW>



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## THE STEEL SECTOR



# Why a Blueprint for cooperation on skills in the steel sector?

**Steel is central to modern economies and is synonymous with growth and progress.**

Europe's reconciliation after World War II was built on unified coal and steel industries. A robust industrial base is therefore essential for Europe's economic growth, for preserving sustainable jobs and for the EU's competitiveness in global markets. The steel sector represents about 1.3 % of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP) and directly provides more than 300 000 jobs, with an even greater number of dependent jobs. The EU is the second largest producer of steel in the world after China, accounting for approximately 10 % of global output. Steel also forms part of a number of industrial value chains and is closely linked to other industrial sectors such as automotive, construction, electronics, mechanical and electrical engineering. Steel has a significant cross-border dimension too. With 500 production sites split between 23 Member States, it is a truly European industry.

Unfortunately, Europe's competitive position in the steel market has deteriorated in the last few years. Since 2014, the global economic slowdown has negatively impacted demand. Global over capacity is another phenomenon, which weakens the sector's competitiveness.

In its Communication "Steel: Preserving sustainable jobs and growth in Europe" of March 2016<sup>8</sup>, the European Commission addressed these challenges and called for a comprehensive, accelerated response by industry, Member States and EU institutions. The Communication underlined that Europe cannot compete on the basis of low wages or deteriorating working conditions and social standards. Rather, it needs to compete on innovation, technology and quality, which can only be delivered by highly skilled people. That is why a highly trained workforce is essential to building, running and maintaining a modern and competitive steel industry.

The sector faces several challenges. First, it runs the risk of losing the expertise of experienced staff due to knowledge-transfer problems and difficulties in recruiting skilled workers (partly as a result of the sector's image problem). Secondly, the steel industry's rapidly evolving knowledge and skills needs pose a major challenge. Furthermore, there is only a fragmented understanding of the necessary resources adjustments in the sector, which may stand in the way of change.



The Commission actively supports the efforts to ensure that European industries can recruit people with the right skills. Millions of jobs in Europe will be affected by new technologies and industrial transformation. We need to prepare our citizens for the 'future of work'. We need a massive upskilling and reorientation of our workforce, bearing in mind that better skills mean higher wages and better jobs. The Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills in Europe is a key component of the New Skills Agenda for Europe. I strongly count on its results, from both the 2017 pilot sectors and the six new ones envisaged for 2018!



**Elżbieta Bieńkowska**

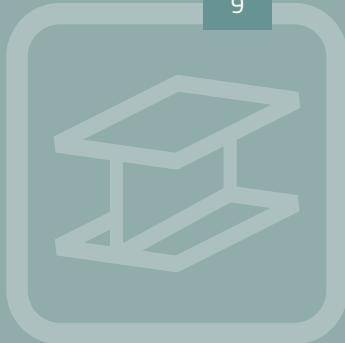
European Commissioner for Internal Market,  
Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs



### Find out more

**European Commission initiatives on the steel sector:**

[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/raw-materials/industries/metals/steel\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/raw-materials/industries/metals/steel_en)



## What can the Blueprint achieve?

The Blueprint provides a platform for cooperation among stakeholders, research institutes, education, qualification and training providers, as well as public authorities at national and regional levels to:

- Assess the current situation of the workforce and address critical aspects relating to, for example, knowledge transfer, skills shortages/mismatches, the sector's image and related recruitment difficulties;
- Improve the image of the steel sector;
- Establish long-term cooperation beyond the life of the project.
- Assess the current situation of the different national VET systems, deliver new curricula at national and regional level to address future skills mismatches in the steel sector;

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### Links to other related projects and initiatives

The European Steel Technology Platform (ESTEP)<sup>9</sup> has focused its agenda around education and training to ensure skills needs are met and to secure the industry's long-term competitiveness. Since 2006, through the Sectorial Social Dialogue Committee, social partners (IndustriAll and EUROFER) have developed a common understanding of challenges facing companies and workers in the sector.

The Greening Technical Vocational Education and Training (GT VET) project, supported in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, has explored how vocational education and training (VET) pathways meet environmental and health & safety skills needs, which are drivers of global competitiveness and sustainability.

# Endnotes

- 1 New Skills Agenda for Europe:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>
- 2 European Skills, Competences, Occupations, and Qualifications (ESCO):  
<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>
- 3 Examples of EU employability and mobility tools: Erasmus+, EURES, Drop'Pin, European Alliance for Apprenticeships
- 4 Examples of EU skills and qualifications tools: European Qualifications Framework, ESCO, Europass, ECVET and EQAVET
- 5 Erasmus+ Sector Skills Alliances:  
[https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills-alliances\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills-alliances_en)
- 6 Smart Specialisation Map:  
<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/map>
- 7 EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF):  
[http://ec.europa.eu/contracts\\_grants/funds\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/contracts_grants/funds_en.htm)
- 8 European Commission Communication 'Steel: Preserving sustainable jobs and growth in Europe', COM(2016)155:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-155-EN-F1-1.PDF>
- 9 European Steel Technology Platform (ESTEP):  
<https://www.estep.eu>

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The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills is a framework for strategic cooperation to address short and medium-term skills needs in a given economic sector. This is the second wave of the Blueprint, which focuses on six sectors: additive manufacturing, green technology and renewable energy, construction, maritime shipping, the paper-based value chain, and steel.

This publication focuses specifically on steel and shows how stakeholders (businesses, trade unions, public authorities, research, education and training institutions etc.) can apply the framework to address challenges, illustrating the steps towards delivering sector-specific skills solutions through sectoral partnerships.

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