

## **PARTNERSHIPS FOR INNOVATION**

Partnerships for innovation support projects that aim at achieving systemic impact at European level by having the capacity to deploy the project outcomes on a European scale and/or by being able to transfer them into different thematic or geographical contexts. They focus on thematic areas that are strategic for Europe's growth and competitiveness and social cohesion. In 2021, the following action is comprised under this type of partnerships:

- Alliances for innovation

This action is managed by the Education Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

## ALLIANCES FOR INNOVATION

**Alliances for Innovation** aim to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by boosting innovation through **cooperation and flow of knowledge** among higher education, vocational education and training (both initial and continuous), and the broader socio-economic environment, including research.

They also aim to boost the provision of new skills and address skills mismatches by designing and creating new curricula **for higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET)**, supporting the development of a **sense of initiative** and **entrepreneurial mind-sets** in the EU.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTION

These partnerships shall implement a coherent and comprehensive set of **sectoral or cross-sectoral** activities, which should be adaptable to future knowledge developments across the EU.

To boost innovation, the focus will be on **digital skills** as they are increasingly important in all job profiles across the entire labour market. Also, the transition to a circular and greener economy needs to be underpinned by changes to qualifications and national education and training curricula to meet emerging professional needs for **green skills** and sustainable development.

The objectives of Alliances for Innovation can be achieved by applying to one or both of the following Lots (an organisation can be involved in several proposals):

#### **Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises**

Alliances for Education and Enterprises are transnational, structured and result-driven projects, in which partners share common goals and work together to foster innovation, new skills, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets.

They aim to foster innovation in higher education, vocational education and training, enterprises and the broader socio-economic environment. This includes confronting societal and economic challenges such as climate change, changing demographics, digitalisation, artificial intelligence and rapid employment changes through social innovation and community resilience, as well as labour market innovation.

Alliances for Education and Enterprises bring together enterprises and both higher education and vocational training providers to work together in partnership. Operating within one economic sector or several different economic sectors, they create reliable and sustainable relations and demonstrate their innovative and transnational character in all aspects. While each partnership must include at least one VET and one higher education organisation, they can address either both or one of these educational fields.

They intend to achieve one or more of the following aims:

- Fostering **new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning**: fostering innovation in education design and delivery, teaching methods, assessment techniques, learning environments and/or developing new skills;
- Fostering **corporate social responsibility** (e.g. equity, inclusion, climate change, environmental protection and

sustainable development);

- Stimulating a **sense of initiative** and **entrepreneurial attitudes, mind-sets and skills** in learners, educational staff and other workers, in line with the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp)<sup>139</sup>;
- Improving the **quality and relevance of skills** developed and certified through education and training systems (including new skills and tackling skills mismatches);
- Facilitating the **flow and co-creation of knowledge** between higher education and vocational education and training, research, the public sector and the business sector;
- Building and supporting effective and efficient higher education and vocational **education and training systems**, which are connected and inclusive, and contribute to innovation.

### **Lot 2: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the 'Blueprint'<sup>140</sup>)**

Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills aim to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions – both in the short and the medium term – in given economic sectors, or in areas implementing a major action of the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the **Pact for Skills**. The main objective of the Pact is to mobilise and incentivize all relevant stakeholders to take concrete actions for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, by pooling efforts and setting up partnerships, also at EU level addressing the needs of the labour market, supporting green and digital transitions as well as national, regional and local skills and growth strategies. Therefore, the deliverables of Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills, i.e. sectoral skills intelligence, skills strategies, occupational profiles, training programmes, and long-term planning, will be an important contribution to the work of the sectoral partnerships that have joined the Pact for Skills.

Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills seek to tackle skills gaps on the labour market that hamper growth, innovation and competitiveness in specific sectors or areas, aiming both at short term interventions and long term strategies. These Alliances will be implemented in the 14 industrial ecosystems identified in the New Industrial Strategy for Europe<sup>141</sup> (see eligibility criteria).

The Pact for Skills builds on and absorbs the Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills. Therefore, Alliances under Lot 2 will support the implementation of the Pact by developing a sectoral skills strategy. This strategy has to lead to systemic and structural impact on reducing skills shortages, gaps and mismatches, as well as ensuring appropriate quality and levels of skills. The sectoral skills strategy must include a clear set of activities, milestones and well-defined objectives with the goal to match demand and supply of skills to support the overall sector-specific growth strategy. The Alliances aim to build the base for the Pact for Skills and define the pathway that should be continued after the project is finalised.

Drawing on evidence regarding skills needs with regard to occupational profiles, Blueprint Alliances support the design and delivery of transnational education & training content, as well as teaching and training methodologies, for quick take-up at regional and local level and for new occupations that are emerging.

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<sup>139</sup> <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC101581/lfna27939enn.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>

<sup>141</sup> COM/2020/102 final: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0102>

Proposals should include the design of continuing vocational training programmes to address urgent skills needs of people in working age. Proposals should also include developments of emerging occupational profiles, related qualifications, which should cover upper and post-secondary VET levels (EQF levels 3 to 5) and tertiary levels (EQF levels 6 to 8). Furthermore, proposals should include the design of related core curricula and education and training programmes leading to those qualifications.

Each project must include among its partners both vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) organisations and labour market actors. Ideally they also involve policy bodies, certifying bodies as well as European sectoral associations and representatives of industry.

## WHICH ARE THE CRITERIA TO BE MET TO APPLY FOR PARTNERSHIPS FOR INNOVATION?

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In order to be eligible for an Erasmus+ grant, project proposals for **Lot 1 - Alliances for Education and Enterprises** must comply with the following criteria:

<b>Who can apply?</b>	Any full partner legally established in a <b>Programme Country</b> can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project.
<b>What types of organisations are eligible to participate in the project?</b>	<p>The following organisations can be involved as full partner, affiliated entity or associated partner under Lot 1 - Alliances for Education and Enterprises. They can be public or private organisations legally established in a <b>Programme Country</b> or in any <b>Partner Country</b> (see section "Eligible Countries" in Part A of this Guide).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher education institutions</li> <li>• VET providers</li> <li>• Networks of VET providers</li> <li>• Small and medium-sized or large enterprises (including social enterprises)</li> <li>• Research institutes</li> <li>• Non-governmental organisations</li> <li>• Public bodies at local, regional or national level</li> <li>• Organisations active in education, training and youth</li> <li>• Intermediaries that represent education, training or youth organisations or enterprises</li> <li>• Accreditation, certification, recognition or qualification bodies</li> <li>• Chambers of commerce, industry or labour, chambers of skilled crafts</li> <li>• European or national social partners</li> <li>• Hospitals or other care institutions, including long-term care</li> <li>• Authorities responsible for education, training or employment at regional or national level</li> <li>• Employment services</li> <li>• National statistics offices</li> <li>• Economic development agencies</li> <li>• Sectoral or professional associations</li> <li>• Sector skills councils</li> <li>• Bodies providing career guidance, professional counselling, information services and employment services</li> </ul> <p>Higher education institutions established in a <b>Programme Country</b> must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). An ECHE is not required for participating HEIs in partner countries.</p>

<b>Number and profile of participating organisations</b>	Alliances for Education and Enterprises must cover at least <b>4 Programme countries</b> , involving a minimum of <b>8 full partners</b> . The partnership must include at least <b>3 labour market actors</b> (enterprises or companies, or representative intermediary organisations, such as chambers, trade unions or trade associations) and at least <b>3 education and training providers</b> (VET and/or HEIs), as full partners. <b>There should be at least one HE institution and one VET provider involved as full partner in each proposal.</b>
<b>Duration of project</b>	2 or 3 years. The duration has to be chosen at application stage, based on the objective of the project and on the type of activities planned over time.
<b>Where to apply?</b>	To the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Call ID lot1: ERASMUS-EDU-2021-PI-ALL-INNO-EDU-ENTERP
<b>When to apply?</b>	Applicants have to submit their grant application by <b>7 September 2021 at 17:00:00</b> (Brussels time).

In order to be eligible for an Erasmus+ grant, project proposals for **Lot 2 - Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the “Blueprint”)** must comply with the following criteria:

<b>Who can submit an application?</b>	Any full partner legally established in a <b>Programme Country</b> can be the applicant. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project.
<b>What types of organisations are eligible to participate in the project?</b>	<p>The following organisations can be involved as full partner, affiliated entity or associated partner under Lot 2 - Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (Blueprint). They can be public or private organisations legally established in a <b>Programme Country</b> or in any <b>Partner Country</b> (see section "Eligible Countries" in Part A of this Guide).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher education institutions</li> <li>• VET providers</li> <li>• Networks of VET providers</li> <li>• Small and medium-sized or large enterprises (including social enterprises)</li> <li>• Research institutes</li> <li>• Non-governmental organisations</li> <li>• Public bodies at local, regional or national level</li> <li>• Organisations active in education, training and youth</li> <li>• Intermediaries that represent education, training or youth organisations or enterprises</li> <li>• Accreditation, certification, recognition or qualification bodies</li> <li>• Chambers of commerce, industry or labour, chambers of skilled crafts</li> <li>• European or national social partners</li> <li>• Hospitals or other care institutions, including long-term care</li> <li>• Authorities responsible for education, training or employment at regional or national level</li> <li>• Employment services</li> <li>• National statistics offices</li> <li>• Economic development agencies</li> <li>• Sectoral or professional associations</li> <li>• Sector skills councils</li> <li>• Bodies providing career guidance, professional counselling, information services and employment services</li> </ul> <p>Higher education institutions established in a <b>Programme Country</b> must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). An ECHE is not required for participating HEIs in Partner Countries.</p>

<p><b>Number and profile of participating organisations</b></p>	<p>Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (Blueprint) must cover at least <b>8 Programme countries</b> and involve at least <b>12 full partners</b>. The partnership must include at least <b>5 labour market actors</b> (enterprises or companies, or representative intermediary organisations, such as chambers, trade unions or trade associations) and at least <b>5 education and training providers</b> (VET and/or HEIs) as full partners. <b>There should be at least one HE institution and one VET provider involved as full partner in each proposal.</b></p>
<p><b>Sectors or areas</b></p>	<p><b>The 14 industrial ecosystems as identified in the New Industrial Strategy for Europe<sup>142</sup>:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Tourism:</b> Passenger transport and travel; Hotels, short term accommodation; Restaurants and catering; Events, theme parks etc.</li> <li><b>2. Mobility-Transport-Automotive:</b> Production of motor vehicles, ships and trains, and accessories; Their repair and maintenance; Freight Transport etc.</li> <li><b>3. Aerospace &amp; Defence:</b> Aircraft and spacecraft production; Military and weapons; Satellites etc.</li> <li><b>4. Construction:</b> Building of residential and non-residential estates; Building of roads and railways; Building of utilities and civil engineering; Associated activities etc.</li> <li><b>5. Agri-food:</b> Plant and animal production; Processing of food; Veterinary activities etc.</li> <li><b>6. Low-carbon energy Intensive Industries:</b> Extraction of fossil fuels; Refining; Manufacturing of products with high environmental impact: plastics, chemicals, fertilisers, iron and steel, forest-based products, cement, rubber, non-ferrous metals, etc.</li> <li><b>7. Textile:</b> Production of textiles, wearing apparel, footwear, leather and jewellery etc.</li> <li><b>8. Creative &amp; Cultural Industries:</b> Newspapers, books and periodicals; Motion picture, video and television; Radio and music etc.</li> <li><b>9. Digital:</b> Telecommunications; Software and programming; Web portals; Manufacturing of computers and equipment etc.</li> <li><b>10. Renewable Energy:</b> Electric motors, engines and turbines; Electric power generation; Manufacturing and distribution of gas etc.</li> <li><b>11. Electronics:</b> Production of electronics etc.</li> <li><b>12. Retail:</b> Retail sales; Wholesale connected to consumers etc.</li> <li><b>13. Proximity &amp; Social Economy:</b> Social enterprises, associations and cooperatives aiming at generating a social impact etc.</li> </ol>

<sup>142</sup> COM/2020/102 final: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0102>

	<p><b>14. Health:</b> Pharmaceutical products and equipment; Hospitals, nursing homes, residential care etc.</p> <p>Alliances have to choose for their proposal the single industrial ecosystem which their project will address. Only one proposal per industrial ecosystem can be selected for funding. A proposal may concern an ecosystem that is not covered by an on-going Blueprint project or an ecosystem that has already an on-going Blueprint. In the latter case, the proposal must address fields and areas that are clearly different from those addressed by the on-going Blueprint project/s<sup>143</sup>.</p>
<b>Duration of project</b>	4 years
<b>Where to apply?</b>	To the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Call ID lot2: ERASMUS-EDU-2021-PI-ALL-INNO-BLUEPRINT
<b>When to apply?</b>	Applicants have to submit their grant application by <b>7 September 2021 at 17:00:00</b> (Brussels time).

Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant exclusion and selection criteria. For more information please consult Part C of this Guide.

## SETTING UP A PROJECT

Each Alliance shall implement a coherent, comprehensive and variable set of interconnected activities to enhance innovation in higher education, vocational education and training and enterprises (including large, small and medium-sized enterprises and social enterprises) and the broader socio economic environment.

### Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises

Activities supported include:

#### Boosting innovation

- Jointly developing and implementing new learning and teaching methods (like new multidisciplinary curricula, learner-centred and real problem-based teaching and learning, making greater use of micro-credentials);
- Developing and testing continuous education programmes and activities with and within enterprises;
- Developing and testing solutions to pressing social demands not addressed by the market and directed towards vulnerable groups in society; addressing societal challenges or relating to changes in attitudes and values, strategies and policies, organisational structures and processes, delivery systems and services;
- Developing solutions for challenging issues, product and process innovation (through the collaboration of students, professors and practitioners).

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<sup>143</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1415&langId=en>

### **Developing a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets, competences and skills**

- Developing new teaching methods and learning tools that incorporate transversal skills learning and application throughout higher education and VET programmes developed in cooperation with enterprises and aimed at strengthening employability, creativity and new professional pathways;
- Introducing wherever appropriate a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship in a given discipline, curriculum, course, etc. to provide students, researchers, staff and educators with the competences, skills and motivation to develop a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-set and to be able to confront various challenges in their educational, professional and private lives;
- Opening up new learning opportunities through the practical experiences and application of a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial competences and skills which can involve and/or lead to the launch of new services, products and prototypes, and the creation of start-ups and spin-offs;
- Introducing more "student-centred approaches" with students tailor-making their own educational pathways.

### **Stimulating the flow and exchange of knowledge between higher education, VET, enterprises and research**

- Building inclusive and connected HE, VET systems and enterprises through mutual trust, cross-border recognition and certification, flexible pathways between VET and HE and fostering the mobility for learners and workers;
- Apprenticeships and study field related activities in enterprises, which are fully embedded in the curriculum, recognised and credited; set-ups to trial and test innovative measures; exchanges of students, researchers, teaching staff and enterprise staff for a limited period; providing incentives for involvement of enterprise staff into teaching and research; analysis of research data.

### **Identifying resilience-related, market needs and emerging professions**

- Identifying market needs and emerging professions (demand side), enhancing the responsiveness of systems at all levels to labour market needs (supply side); adapting HE and VET provision to skills needs by designing and delivering transnational sector-wide curricula integrating work-based learning;
- Identifying those skills that are needed in the public domain to solve societal challenges (e.g. climate change, health) and encourage resilience at societal and community level, including via the cooperation of HEIs and VET providers with national, regional and local authorities as well as the private sector to contribute to designing and implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies in regions;
- Providing support to overcome the skills mismatch both for resilience and market needs.

### **Lot 2: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the "Blueprint")**

The following activities must be implemented:

#### **Developing a strategic approach to sectoral cooperation on skills**

- Setting up sustainable cooperation on skills development between key industry stakeholders including social partners, education and training providers, and public authorities (on national and regional level). The project will also aim at building cooperation between large companies and micro, small and medium companies (SMEs) throughout the value chain in a particular industrial ecosystem;
- Gathering skills intelligence on a continuous basis: delivering relevant EU and country and/or regional level qualitative evidence and quantitative data according to linked open data format; developing a common methodology for anticipating future skills needs as well as monitoring (on a yearly basis) progress and the evolution of the demand and supply of skills based on credible foresight scenarios, drawing on the EU Skills



Panorama and, where relevant, the work of the OECD, the World Economic Forum and existing Sector Skills Alliances;

- Mapping of existing upskilling and reskilling support available in the sector/ecosystem (provided by industry, public and private stakeholders) and identifying which of those actions could be upscaled to support companies in the value chains;
- Based on the skills intelligence, developing a skills strategy for the industrial ecosystem including priorities for actions to support the objectives of re- and upskilling the workforce of the industrial ecosystem and those who could join the sector (e.g. economically inactive). The strategy should detail how major trends, such as global, societal, and technological developments in the industrial ecosystem, are likely to affect jobs and skills needs. It should describe the expected timeline and give particular attention to the impact of digital and key enabling technologies. It should identify and define occupations and related skills that are likely to emerge in the sector (i.e. will be completely new). It should also identify key industrial players and stakeholders that should be involved in the implementation of the strategy. This strategy should be the one of the first key deliverable of the project, indicating a clear set of activities, milestones and well-defined outputs, as well as setting out concrete priority actions suggesting how to match future demand and supply of skills for these emerging occupations. The strategy should be used as a base for building the partnership under the Pact for Skills;
- Where relevant, ensuring that results of the project are available in open data format so that they can feed into the EU Skills Panorama and the European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO);
- Delivering relevant EU and country and/or regional level qualitative evidence and quantitative data according to linked open data format.

## Designing European sector-wide agreed ‘core’ curricula and training programmes

### ➤ *Within the first year of activity (reactive response)*

In parallel to the actions above, all projects should rapidly **address urgent skills needs in occupations in an industrial ecosystem resulting from the Covid-19 crisis and the digital and green transition** (evidence to be provided in the proposal):

- Drawing on, where available, the occupational profiles of the Classification of ESCO and existing competence frameworks<sup>144</sup>;
- Designing continuing vocational training programmes for up-skilling and re-skilling the labour force by innovative blended and work-based learning;
- Ensuring the good quality of the content and provision of the new training programmes by applying quality assurance methods in line with EQAVET and ESG (European Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education);
- Ensuring rapid uptake and use of the training programmes by reaching out to main players in value chains within the industrial ecosystem, to Centres of Vocational Excellence<sup>145</sup>, to regions implementing smart

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<sup>144</sup> E.g. the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework and the European e-Competence Framework (e-CF)

<sup>145</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1501>

specialisation strategies<sup>146</sup>, to European Cluster Partnerships<sup>147</sup> and to Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Technology (EIT)<sup>148</sup> that are active in the same industrial ecosystem.

➤ **Throughout the project (proactive response)**

Projects should then work on **developing training content for emerging occupational profiles**:

- On the basis of identified skills needs for emerging occupational profiles in an industrial ecosystem given economic sector, designing new modular VET curricula and related qualifications for initial education & training (E&T) (full curricula for integration in national education & training systems), and continuing vocational training programmes for up-skilling or re-skilling the people of working age (modules addressing emerging skills needs);
- These curricula and training programmes shall be composed of units of learning outcomes, in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) / National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and informed by ESCO; curricula should deliver job-specific skills as well as key competences<sup>149</sup>, that include notably transversal skills and STEAM disciplines<sup>150</sup>;
- Integrating periods of work-based learning into the new training content, including opportunities to apply knowledge in practical "real life" workplace situations, and embedding trans-national learning experience whenever possible;
- Applying quality management to the new training content either by applying the quality assurance principles of EQAVET and ESG or by using already existing quality assurance systems which, however, should be in line with EQAVET and ESG;
- Promoting relevant sectoral qualifications including trans-national joint programmes awarded by more than one E&T provider, thus facilitating cross-border certification, and building mutual trust, contributing to increased learner and professional mobility in the sector.

**Delivering the 'core' curricula and training programmes**

- Developing delivery methodologies for the curricula and training programmes, that are adapted to the various target groups, using innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including the provision of work-based learning, the use of ICTs (e.g. blended learning, simulators, augmented reality, etc.), virtual/blended mobility solutions for learners and staff, and open educational resources (e.g. AI-enhanced learning, MOOC's<sup>151</sup>);
- Developing actions to facilitate inter-generational transfer of professional knowledge;
- Describing the ways in which assessment methodologies and procedures can cover all forms of learning, including work-based learning, and facilitate the validation of skills and competences acquired prior to training;

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<sup>146</sup> <https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu>

<sup>148</sup> <https://eit.europa.eu/>

<sup>149</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC)

<sup>150</sup> Science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics

<sup>151</sup> MOOC is a Massive Open Online Course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions among students, professors, and teaching assistants.

- Building on established contacts and on new contacts established with the skills demand side during the skills intelligence phase, reaching out to providers of employment opportunities, such as private and public employers and employment services, for potential matching with training graduates;
- Identifying adequate measures to track learners after completing their training in order to provide "feedback loops"<sup>152</sup>. These tracking and feedback systems can build on information from companies, learners/employees, as well as public information resources and labour market stakeholders;
- Proposing the appropriate measures for the formal recognition of the new or adapted vocational VET and HE curricula and qualifications in the countries where partners are located and in the industrial ecosystem covered.

#### **Designing a long term action plan for the progressive roll-out of project deliverables after the project has finished**

- This plan shall be based on sustained partnerships between education and training providers, key industry stakeholders and public authorities (regional or national) at the appropriate level to facilitate/strengthen multi-stakeholder skills partnerships under the Pact for Skills for re- and upskilling the workforce. It should include the identification of appropriate governance structures, as well as plans for scalability and financial sustainability;
- The plan shall ensure the appropriate visibility and wide dissemination of the results, including at EU and national/regional political level and include details on how the roll-out will be implemented at national and/or regional levels with relevant public authorities;
- The plan shall foresee how the deliverables of the project, in particular the skills intelligence, the strategy and the training programmes, will be updated following the end of the 4 year duration of the project, including by foreseeing its future sources of funding;
- The plan shall indicate how EU funding opportunities (e.g. recovery and resilience facility (RRF), EU multi-annual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027, including European Structural Funds, InvestEU, Erasmus+), as well as private investment and national/regional funding can support skills strategies. This should take into account Smart Specialisation Strategies, European cluster partnerships, the platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence and the Innovation Communities of the EIT.

#### **Under both Lots (Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises and Lot 2: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the "Blueprint")**

Alliances for Innovation are required to apply EU wide instruments and tools, such as the EQF, ESCO, Europass, EQAVET and ESG, whenever relevant.

To try and test new curricula or new training and learning methods, Alliances for Innovation may organise learning mobility activities of students, teachers, researchers and staff in so far as they support/complement the main activities of the partnerships and bring added value in the implementation of the project's objectives.

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<sup>152</sup> See Medium-term deliverable 2 (MTD2), in 2015 Riga Conclusions: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/200c516d-b8de-4c2a-a233-218671296c8d/language-en>

## EXPECTED IMPACT

Alliances for Innovation will be anchored in strategic and sustainable cooperation among vocational education and training, higher education and enterprises working together to boost the innovation capacity of Europe. They will considerably strengthen the synergies between both educational fields in fostering innovation, new skills, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets. These Alliances among HE, VET and the enterprises are expected to contribute to the development of regional eco-systems and directly provide a valuable input to the economy, integrating work-based learning. While universities have research knowledge and data that allows them to directly provide input to small and medium sized enterprises to boost local economies, VET providers supply skills needed by enterprises and they are able to foster growth in the local economy.

At a larger scale, Alliances for Innovation are expected to target societal and economic challenges, both in education and employment, and take into account key areas such as innovation challenges, skills provision, climate change, green economy, demography, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. Benefits can also be drawn from cooperation with large enterprises. The Alliances for Innovation will focus on the need of citizens and accelerate the modernization of HE and VET.

The Pact for Skills will not only establish a framework for the implementation of the other actions of the updated Skills Agenda, but also for the dissemination and exploitation of the project results of the Alliances for Innovation. In particular the results of the Blueprint Alliances for sectoral cooperation on skills will be used as a basis for the Pact for Skills sectoral large-scale partnerships.

In addition, the Alliances will help to implement the EU Communication on the Renewed Agenda for Higher Education<sup>153</sup> and contribute to the creation of a European Education Area<sup>154</sup>. They will also contribute to implement the EU Industrial and SMEs strategies (2021).

The Alliances for Innovation will also take into account the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals<sup>155</sup> and the Paris Declaration on Climate Change<sup>156</sup> as overarching parameters of the action, thus helping the European Commission to implement its new Green Deal<sup>157</sup> and the Europe Recovery Plan<sup>158</sup>.

Alliances for Innovation are meant to have a short and long term impact on the wider range of stakeholders involved, at individual, organisational and systemic level. This impact is expected to go beyond the project's lifetime and beyond the organisations involved in the partnerships. It is expected that partnership and activities persist. For that, results/deliverables might not be stand-alone but be linked to/integrated into existing undertakings, schemes, projects, platforms, ventures etc.

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<sup>153</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0247>

<sup>154</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en)

<sup>155</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>156</sup> <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

<sup>157</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf)

<sup>158</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en)

## AWARD CRITERIA

The following award criteria apply for **Lot 1 - Alliances for Education and Enterprises**:

<p><b>Relevance of the project</b> <b>(maximum score 25 points)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Link to EU policy and initiatives:</b> the proposal takes into account and contributes to achieving the European objectives in the fields of VET and higher education; the proposal takes into account and contributes to giving visibility to existing EU tools and initiatives for skills development;</li> <li>• <b>Purpose:</b> the proposal is relevant to the objectives and activities of the Action;</li> <li>• <b>Consistency:</b> the objectives are based on a sound needs analysis; they are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the Action;</li> <li>• <b>Innovation:</b> the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to project-specific innovative results and solutions;</li> <li>• <b>European added value:</b> the proposal demonstrates clearly the added value generated through its trans-nationality and potential transferability;</li> <li>• <b>Education &amp; training representation:</b> the Alliance includes partners that adequately represent education &amp; training providers;</li> <li>• <b>Digital skills:</b> extent to which the proposal integrates digital skills in the training content for one, or several related occupational profiles;</li> <li>• <b>Green skills:</b> the proposal integrates skills linked to the transition to a circular and greener economy in the training content for one, or several related occupational profiles;</li> <li>• <b>Resilience skills:</b> extent to which the proposal integrates skills linked to the capacity to adapt, manage change, and care for each other as a community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Quality of the project design and implementation</b> <b>(maximum score 30 points)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coherence:</b> the overall project design ensures consistency between project objectives, methodology, activities and budget proposed. The proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate activities to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results;</li> <li>• <b>Structure:</b> the work programme is clear and intelligible, and covers all phases (preparation, implementation, exploitation, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination);</li> <li>• <b>Methodology:</b> the proposal makes use of EU instruments and tools related to skills and occupations whenever relevant, such as EQF, ESCO, Europass, EQAVET, ESG;</li> <li>• <b>Management:</b> solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity;</li> <li>• <b>Work plan:</b> quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including the extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables;</li> <li>• <b>Quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of qualifications:</b> in line with European transparency and recognition tools and principles, including for micro-credentials;</li> <li>• <b>Budget:</b> the budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated;</li> <li>• <b>Financial and quality control:</b> control measures (continuous quality evaluation, peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient. Challenges/risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are planned as an integral part of the project. The Alliance work programme includes an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements</b></p> <p><b>(maximum score 25 points)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Configuration:</b> the composition of the partnership is in line with the action and project objectives; it brings together an appropriate mix of relevant organisations, including vocational education and training, higher education and enterprises with the necessary profiles, skills, experience, expertise and management support required for the successful implementation of the project; the Alliance includes partners that adequately represent the sector or cross-sectoral approach concerned;</li> <li>• <b>Commitment:</b> the contributions from partners are significant, pertinent and complementary; the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear, appropriate, and demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity;</li> <li>• <b>Tasks:</b> the coordinator shows high quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment. Individual tasks are allocated on the basis of the specific know-how of each partner;</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration/Team spirit:</b> an effective mechanism is proposed to ensure an efficient coordination, conflict resolution, decision-making and communication between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder;</li> <li>• <b>Reward:</b> the Alliance provides clear added value and benefits to each partner organisation;</li> <li>• <b>Involvement of Partner Countries:</b> if applicable, the involvement of participating organisations from Partner Countries brings an essential added value to the Alliance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p><b>(maximum score 20 points)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exploitation:</b> the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the Alliance will be used by the partners and other stakeholders. It provides means to measure exploitation within the project lifetime and after;</li> <li>• <b>Dissemination:</b> the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate activities and their timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to the stakeholders and non-participating audience within and after the project's lifetime;</li> <li>• <b>Impact:</b> the proposal shows societal and economic relevance and outreach. It ensures an impact at local, national and European level on the target groups and relevant stakeholders with a significant role in the sector concerned including in education and training. It includes measures as well as targets and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short-and long-term);</li> <li>• <b>Open access:</b> If relevant, the proposal describes how the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licences and does not contain disproportionate limitations;</li> <li>• <b>Sustainability:</b> the proposal explains how the action plan for the roll-out at national and regional levels will be developed. The proposal includes appropriate measures and the identification of financial resources (European, national and private) to ensure that the results and benefits achieved will be sustained beyond the project lifetime.</li> </ul>

To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least **70 points** taking into account the necessary minimum pass score for each of the four award criteria: minimum 13 points for the “relevance of the project” category; 16 points for “quality of the project design and implementation”, 13 points for “quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements” and 11 points for “impact”.

The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion “relevance” and then “impact”.

The following award criteria apply for **Lot 2 - Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation (implementing the “Blueprint”)**:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Relevance of the project</b>  (maximum score 25 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Link to EU policy and initiatives:</b> the proposal takes into account and contributes to achieving the European objectives in the field of HE and VET and sectoral EU policies relevant for chosen industrial ecosystem, contributes to the Pact for Skills and the European Skills Agenda and takes into account EU tools. A proposal addressing an industrial ecosystem in which a Blueprint Alliance is already ongoing in that ecosystem must clearly be complementary, i.e. cover a clearly different field, and must specify what results of ongoing Blueprint project/s it will build on; there must not be any overlaps in scope, outputs and activities. At equal quality, a proposal covering an ecosystem or part of an ecosystem that is not covered by an ongoing Blueprint Alliance will be more relevant;</li> <li>• <b>Purpose:</b> the proposal is relevant to the objectives and activities of the Action. In particular, the proposal includes developments on a highly relevant set of emerging occupational profiles, and designs the related qualifications, organised in units of learning outcomes, at both, EQF levels 3 to 5 and EQF levels 6 to 8. The proposal includes the design, test and initial provision of the related education and training programmes, conceived and delivered as modular, flexible, accessible learning opportunities, taking into account the validation of previously acquired skills;</li> <li>• <b>Consistency:</b> the objectives are based on a sound needs analysis; they are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations and to the action;</li> <li>• <b>Innovation:</b> the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions;</li> <li>• <b>European added value:</b> the proposal demonstrates clearly the added value generated through its transnationality;</li> <li>• <b>Education &amp; training representation:</b> the Alliance includes partners that adequately represent education &amp; training providers;</li> <li>• <b>Sector/area representation:</b> the Alliance includes partners that adequately represent the industrial ecosystem concerned;</li> <li>• <b>Digital and key-enabling technologies (KETs), including Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills:</b> extent to which the proposal addresses these skills in the project design for one, or several related occupational profiles;</li> <li>• <b>Green skills:</b> the proposal integrates skills linked to the transition to a circular and greener economy in the training content for one, or several related occupational profiles.</li> </ul>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Quality of the project design and implementation</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(maximum score 30 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coherence:</b> The proposal presents a coherent and comprehensive set of appropriate, concrete and practical activities to meet the identified needs and lead to the expected results;</li> <li>• <b>Structure:</b> the work programme is clear and intelligible, and covers all phases (preparation, implementation, exploitation, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination);</li> <li>• <b>Methodology:</b> the proposal makes use of EU instruments and tools related to skills and occupations whenever relevant, such as EQF, ESCO, Europass, EQAVET, ESG;</li> <li>• <b>Management:</b> solid management arrangements are foreseen. Timelines, organisation, tasks and responsibilities are well defined and realistic. The proposal allocates appropriate resources to each activity;</li> <li>• <b>Work plan:</b> quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including the extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables;</li> <li>• <b>Quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of qualifications:</b> in line with European transparency and recognition tools and principles;</li> <li>• <b>Budget:</b> the budget provides for appropriate resources necessary for success, it is neither overestimated nor underestimated and is proportionate to the scope of the proposal; a proposal for an industrial ecosystem in which a Blueprint Alliance is already ongoing is expected to submit a budget demonstrating clearly that double funding will be prevented, since it will complement and build on the work already done by the on-going Blueprint;</li> <li>• <b>Financial and quality control:</b> control measures (continuous quality evaluation, expert peer reviews, benchmarking activities, etc.) and quality indicators ensure that the project implementation is of high quality and cost-efficient. Challenges/risks of the project are clearly identified and mitigating actions properly addressed. Expert review processes are planned as an integral part of the project. The Alliance work programme includes an independent external quality assessment at mid-term and at the end of the project.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(maximum score 25 points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Configuration:</b> the composition of the partnership is in line with the action and project objectives; it brings together an appropriate mix of relevant organisations, including vocational education and training, higher education and industry, including SMEs, with the necessary profiles, skills, experience, expertise and management support required for successful implementation of the project. The Alliance ensures adequate representativeness of the industrial ecosystem: the representativeness and expertise of the partners in the industrial ecosystem concerned and at national and European level is convincingly demonstrated. The participation of European social partners and/or national social partners in the countries covered by the Alliance is highly relevant. The geographical spread and representativeness of relevant partners over the Programme Countries and regions involved in the Alliance should be such that the Alliance has high implementation capacity in the countries and regions covered (e.g. through the participation of a European sector organisation and/or European social partners);</li> <li>• <b>Commitment:</b> the contributions from partners are significant, pertinent and complementary; the distribution of responsibilities and tasks is clear, appropriate, and demonstrates the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations in relation to their specific expertise and capacity;</li> <li>• <b>Tasks:</b> the coordinator shows high quality management and coordination of transnational networks and leadership in complex environment. Individual tasks are allocated on the basis of the specific know-how of each partner;</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration/Team spirit:</b> an effective mechanism is proposed to ensure a good coordination, decision-making and communication between the participating organisations, participants and any other relevant stakeholder;</li> <li>• <b>Reward:</b> the Alliance provides clear added value and benefits to each partner organisation;</li> <li>• <b>Involvement of Partner Countries:</b> if applicable, the involvement of participating organisations from Partner Countries brings an essential added value to the Alliance.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p><b>(maximum score 20 points)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exploitation:</b> the proposal demonstrates how the outcomes of the Alliance will be rolled out in the participating countries in line with the objectives of the Pact for Skills;</li> <li>• <b>Dissemination:</b> the proposal provides a clear plan for the dissemination of results, and includes appropriate activities and their timing, tools and channels to ensure that the results and benefits will be spread effectively to stakeholders;</li> <li>• <b>Impact:</b> the proposal shows societal and economic relevance and outreach. It ensures an impact at local, national and European level on the target groups and relevant stakeholders with a significant role in the sector concerned including in education and training, such as those that have joined the Pact for Skills. It includes measures as well as targets and indicators to monitor progress and assess the expected impact (short-and long-term);</li> <li>• <b>Open access:</b> if relevant, the proposal describes how the materials, documents and media produced will be made freely available and promoted through open licenses and in linked open data format, and does not contain disproportionate limitations;</li> <li>• <b>Sustainability:</b> the proposal explains how the action plan for the roll-out at national and regional levels will be developed. The proposal includes appropriate measures and the identification of financial resources (European, national and private) to ensure that the results and benefits achieved by the Alliance will be sustained beyond the project lifetime.</li> </ul>
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**For Lot 2 only 1 proposal per ecosystem can be funded.**

To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least **70 points**, taking into account the necessary minimum pass score for each of the four award criteria: minimum 13 points for the relevance of the project category; 16 points for quality of the project design and implementation, 13 points for quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements and 11 points for impact.

#### **WHAT ARE THE FUNDING RULES?**

This action follows a lump sum funding model. The amount of the single lump sum contribution will be determined for each grant based on the estimated budget of the action proposed by the applicant. The granting authority will fix the lump sum of each grant based on the proposal, evaluation result, funding rates and the maximum grant amount set in the call.

**The maximum EU grant per project is as follows:**

- **Lot 1- Alliances for Education and Enterprises**
  - 1 million euros (**2 years** project)
  - 1,5 million euros (**3 years** project)
- **Lot 2 - ALLIANCES FOR SECTORAL COOPERATION ON SKILLS (IMPLEMENTING THE “BLUEPRINT”):**
  - **4 million euros (4 years project)** - only one proposal per industrial ecosystem can be selected for funding. At equal quality, a proposal covering an ecosystem that is not at all covered by an ongoing Blueprint Alliance will be assessed as more relevant.

#### **How is the project lump sum determined?**

Applicants must fill in a detailed budget table according to the application form, taking into account the following points:

- a) The budget should be detailed as necessary by beneficiary/-ies and organized in coherent work packages (for example divided into 'project management', 'training', 'organization of events', 'mobility preparation and implementation', 'communication and dissemination', 'quality assurance', etc.);
- b) The proposal must describe the activities covered by each work package;
- c) Applicants must provide in their proposal a breakdown of the estimated costs showing the share per work package (and, within each work package, the share assigned to each beneficiary and affiliated entity);
- d) Costs described can cover staff costs, travel and subsistence costs, equipment costs and subcontracting as well as other costs (such as dissemination of information, publishing or translation).

Proposals will be evaluated according to the standard evaluation procedures with the help of internal and/or external experts. The experts will assess the quality of the proposals against the requirements defined in the call and the expected impact, quality and efficiency of the action. The lump sum value will be limited to a maximum of 80% of the estimated budget determined after evaluation

Following the proposal evaluation, the authorising officer will establish the amount of the lump sum, taking into account the findings of the assessment carried out.

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement.

The project achievements will be evaluated on the outcomes completed. The funding scheme would allow putting focus on the outputs rather than the inputs, thereby placing emphasis on the quality and level of achievement of measurable objectives.

More details are described in the model Grant Agreement available in the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).