



Inclusive REskilling and upSkilling Toward competitive Agrifood and veterinary sector: European agenda Strategy

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I-RESTART - PROJECT OVERVIEW

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The Pact for Skill roundtable raised several issues the Agrifood sector is facing and identified potential ways of overcoming them: upskilling and reskilling workers; intersectoral skill transfers; increased attractiveness of the sector to youth; digital transition; partnerships between learning institutions and companies.

The I-RESTART project aims at reskilling and upskilling the workforce in the agrifood and veterinary sectors, retrain the employees leaving the heavy industry to hire them in the agrifood sector, and engage some students that want to enter the agrifood labour market, to improve their digital skills and facilitate the transition to the Green Deal initiative. To reach the above-mentioned objectives, I-RESTART will facilitate the inter-sectoral and intergenerational skills transfers through the adoption of an innovative micro-credentials methodology and the work-based learning experiences that will provide inclusive, flexible and engaging work-based patterns with mentors while opening the ecosystem also to external workers.

The project, complementing the FIELDS Blueprint on agriculture and forestry, will provide the tools to tackle future challenges with the offering of 10 occupational profiles for a total of 3200 hours of training. In total 16 trainers and 200 trainees will benefit from the pilot training, and 40 students will complete the work-based learning scheme that also includes the advanced entrepreneurial skills. The 27 partners consortium from 11 countries will identify skills needed and gaps, create occupational profiles, detailed curricula, design European strategies and 10 country roadmaps to reflect the country's needs while keeping EU quality standards (ESCO, EQAVET) to address the mobility of learners through Europe. A strong connection will be established with the Pact for Skills initiative, in order to make useful content for the members that will implement the pact.



Coordinator

UNITO - Università degli Studi di Torino, Italy

Partners

Austria: ISEKI - Verein Iseki-food Europäische Gesellschaft Für Die Integration Der Lebensmittelwissenschaft Und – Technologie In Die Lebensmittelversorgungskette; Universitaet Hohenheim; LVA - Lebensmittelversuchsanstalt

Belgium: COPA-COGECA – Comité des Organisations Professionnelles Agricole de l'Union Européenne; EITFOOD - European Institute of Innovation and Technology; FDE - FoodDrinkEurope; EBVS - European Board of Veterinary Specialisation; EfVET - European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education And Training

Denmark: AU - Aarhus Universitet

France: ANIA - Association Nationale des Industries Alimentaires; CLITRAVI - Vereniging Centre de Liaison des Industries Transformatrices de Viandes de l'UE

Germany: ACEEU GmbH; UHOH - Universitaet Hohenheim

Greece: AKMI Katartisi Ekpaideysi Anonymi Etaireia; SEVT Syndesmos Ellinikon Viomichanion Trofimon Somateio

Italy: CONFAGRI - Confederazione Generale dell'Agricoltura Italiana; Università degli Studi Di Teramo; INFOR Elea; UNITE - Università degli Studi di Teramo; FEDER - Federazione Italiana dell'Industria Alimentare

Netherlands: WU - Wageningen University; Stichting Aeres Groep; AERES - Stichting Aeres Groep;

Portugal: CONFAGRI PT- Confederação Nacional das Cooperativas Agrícolas e do Credito Agrícola de Portugal Ccrl

Slovenia: GZS - Gospodarska Zbornica Slovenije

Spain: UMU - Universidad de Murcia; CTAEX - Centro Tecnológico Nacional Agroalimentario Extremadura; FIAB - Federación Española de Industrias de la Alimentación y Bebidas; SCOOP - Cooperativas Agro-Alimentarias De Espana U De Coop Sociedad Cooperativa

Duration

Start: 01/09/2022 – End: 31/08/2026

Funding body & program

Erasmus + Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (Implementing the Blueprint), European Commission

Website

<https://www.erasmus-i-restart.eu/>

University of Turin - Italy hosted the kick-off meeting of the Erasmus I-Restart 2022-2026

The first meeting of the partners to launch the project took place at the University of Turin, on the 1st and 2nd of September where, in addition to the 27 partners, including COPA-COGECA, the European Commission was also represented.

On the agenda, one point that will mark the development of the partnership: the governance structure of the Pact for Skills.



What are the main objectives of the project work?

The purposes of I-RESTART are:

1. Retraining and upgrading agricultural and veterinary workers.
2. Enthusiasm of students to work in the agri-food sector
3. Retrain heavy industry workers so that they can find work in the agri-food and veterinary sector.
4. Improving the transfer of knowledge and skills across sectors, but also from old (experienced) to young (inexperienced) people.
5. Offer inclusive, flexible and engaging learning-work pathways.
6. Design of an EU Monitor for “Agri-Food Employment Challenges” (OAF).

The project will start by identifying what skills are needed and will be in the future. Subsequently, training programmes, curricula and specific training with learning-work pathways will be developed. This training will be tested and adjusted, after which it will be made available to organizations in the sector.

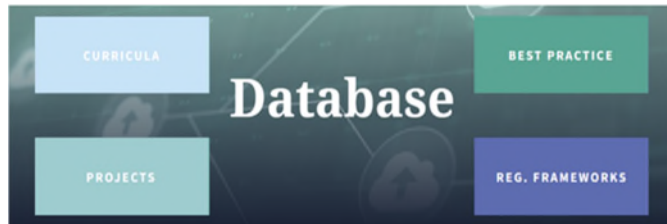
Skill needs identification has started with databases update and the organisation of focus groups

Valentina Mayer, Luis Mayor, Ana Ramalho (ISEKI-Food Association)

March, 2023

One of the main objectives of [I-RESTART](#) is to identify skill needs in the animal production, veterinary, and food industry sectors, and the work package 3 “Skill needs identification” (led by the [ISEKI-Food Association](#)) is fully dedicated to this purpose.

Work package activities have started with the design of an overall methodology to fulfil this objective. Then, information about existing curricula, best practices, relevant projects and regulatory frameworks has been collected by all partners and shared in a database initially established by the FIELDS Project. The [database](#) is open to public and available on the FIELDS project [website](#). Besides, target groups identification and classification for project activities and their reach by partner have been carried out.



Other important activity of the work package is the organisation of focus groups. In this discussion groups, different actors of the agrifood chain (farmers, cooperatives, food companies, veterinarians, education providers, professional associations...) will meet to debate about the current and future skill and training needs in the aforementioned sectors, in topics such as:



- Sustainability and bioeconomy
- Digitalisation
- Business, entrepreneurship and innovation
- Soft skills
- One health
- Sector specific skill needs

10 national focus groups in Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Greece, France, Slovenia, Denmark, and Portugal, will run during March 2023. An additional focus group at European level, more focused on policy aspects, will gather European representatives of the three sectors, as well as education representatives, policy makers and the special involvement of [“Pact for skills”](#) members.

For a stronger future of the agri-food sector

We look forward to showing in next newsletters the outcomes of these focus groups, and the advance in other work package activities, such as a European survey and a scenario analysis on skill needs.

The Pact for Skills: A Skills Partnership for the Agri-Food Ecosystem

Jonas Lazaro Mojica (Food Drink Europe), Manuel Delgado (Copa-Cogeca), Daniel Rossi (Confagricoltura), Remigio Berruto (Turin University) and Melisa Duman (E.C. DG Grow).

The Pact for Skills represents an opportunity to upskill and reskill the current workforce and make the agrifood ecosystem more attractive to young people, while providing a career and life-long learning perspective to both employers and workers. To achieve this, the partnership aims to set a joint strategy to design and implement a sectoral education, training, upskilling and reskilling framework, maximising competitiveness of all the actors involved, with the aim to enhance job retention and job attractiveness of the agri-food ecosystem within the context of the Pact for Skills.

The launch event of the Agri-food Pact4Skills has been held in February 2022 and last update was presented during the annual event in Brussels the 16th of December 2022: the “Observatory on Agrifood Job Challenges” was partially and piloting incorporated in the I-Restart Erasmus Blueprint EU project. The Pact for Skills is an action of the European Commission under the European Skills Agenda. It was launched on the 10th of November 2020. In its updated version of the New Industrial Strategy (2021), the Commission has identified 14 industrial “ecosystems”, one of them being agri-food. The food sector also includes the drink sector.

The initiative Pact for Skills brings together all types and sizes of stakeholders, including EU social partners, EU umbrella organisations, companies, vocational and education training providers and public authorities. Its objective is ensuring the highest quality possible of vocational education and training, and up- and reskilling of the European workforce in all the ecosystems of the EU Industrial Strategy, including the agri-food ecosystem.

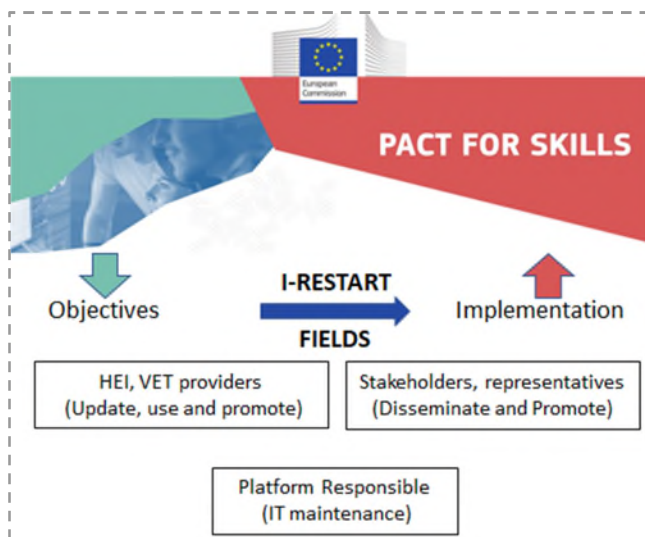


This effort is undertaken with the aim of meeting the objectives of the twin green and digital transition, as well as attracting and retaining the workforce and improving working conditions. The agriculture and food sectors, brought together in the agri-food ecosystem, are the largest producing and manufacturing sectors in Europe. More than 11 million farms and 22.000 Agrifood cooperatives in the EU create jobs for 22 million workers in rural areas, whilst 289.000 food processing companies provide jobs for a further 4.5 million people. Overall, the agri-food ecosystem is one of the largest employment sectors in Europe and has a significant impact on rural and urban communities. As an aggregated ecosystem it includes more than 99% of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The agri-food ecosystem is facing major challenges such as globalisation, climate change, urbanisation, changing consumer demands, generational renewal and strong competition from EU third countries. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine have accelerated these challenges and created new ones, disrupting the dynamism of the agri-food value chain.

However, in addition to the above general challenges, the ecosystem also faces specific skills-related shortages. Workers in the agri-food ecosystem are often low skilled, ageing workers or third-country nationals, sometimes with lower qualification levels. The ecosystem is also dependant on mobile workers, such as cross-border or seasonal workers. The adequate STEM skills and the attractiveness of rural areas to workers is also vital.

There is an increasing need for high skilled workers such as agronomists, machinery, biochemistry, bio-economists and contact material specialists, sustainability, circular and biotech experts, food scientists, food technologists, and high craftsmanship in the different sub-sectors. There is often a skills gap between the curricula offered by universities and other vocational schools and the skill requirements of the ecosystems that needs to be addressed, while also ensuring commitments from companies to support and train apprentices. In addition, it is crucial to consider the specificities of SMEs in the Pact for Skills, which often require training on soft skills (e.g., business management).



It shall consider the different existing systems, particularly those driven, developed and implemented by social partners. The partnership will develop a roadmap towards this ambition. For support, it will use resources from concluded Erasmus+ projects such as Food-STA and ASKFOOD, from active projects such as the Erasmus+ projects FIELDS and I-RESTART, and current initiatives such as EIT-Food activities. It will also benefit from support services provided by the science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

It will aim to use the social dialogue framework to develop and implement the strategy at all levels. The purpose is to reach all the relevant stakeholders in the agri-food ecosystem: from farmers, agri-food cooperatives, food processors, and relevant associations, to education and training organisations. The Pact for Skills partnerships, through their Observatories, shall provide actions, accompanied by KPIs to assess its impact.



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