



European Round Table for Industry

Mr Thierry Breton
EU Commissioner for Internal Market
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

25 February 2021

Dear Commissioner, dear Thierry,

I would like to thank you for our conversation this Tuesday (23 February) on strengthening Europe's place in the world by boosting the Single Market and solutions like 5/6G or cloud technologies, while addressing particular challenges in sectors like healthcare.

We agreed that to make both the green and digital transition a success, Europe needs people with the right skills. The very nature of work is changing and new jobs appear. About 100 million Europeans need some form of training in the next decade to stay employed or find a job. This challenge is huge both from an economic and a societal point of view. An inclusive Europe will transition smoother.

As you invited us to reach out to you personally, please find there my request below to see how we could accelerate our reskilling initiatives, not just at the Member State level, but with European ownership as well.

We are aware of the actions that the European Commission has launched to tackle the issue. I was honoured to have been invited to speak up about ERT's support for the Pact for Skills at its launch event in November 2020. Several ERT Member companies are also involved in your joint mission with Commissioner Schmit to define a Skills strategy at the ecosystem level. More recently, last week, I was also invited to speak at the EU Industry Days on the panel "Upskilling Europe: New Solutions and Partnerships".

As you know well, as large companies, we have a lot of experience in educating and training our employees and in providing opportunities to the communities in which we operate. We believe though that to tackle today's challenge we must mobilise all stakeholders – including SMEs and public authorities – in a cross-sectoral approach that connects the ecosystems.

Recently, we analysed 200+ reskilling initiatives across Europe and saw that the market for reskilling is still nascent and lacks scale. We need more initiatives that look at the entire reskilling value chain, supporting candidates with quality assessment, matching training, and job placement.

We have now partnered with McKinsey to assess the potential for piloting a reskilling initiative in Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and probably also France. These pilots are national platforms – open to local stakeholders – that match skills demand and supply in several occupations. With this initiative, we want to ensure an "End-to-End" approach with training based on an individuals' needs and directed towards a job in demand.

The reskilling initiatives have a strong European dimension as well. It creates economies of scale, such as a capacity to select the best training and learning technologies, while stimulating the exchange of best practice across borders.

Obviously, significant investment is required to launch such as the "Reskilling for Employment" initiative. Part of this investment will be earned back as people will find a job more quickly and thus depend less on social security.

We have been recommended to contact the national authorities to find out how such a project can be supported, which would mean that we have to negotiate with the public authorities in each of the countries in which we want to start a pilot.

To be able to address this growing challenge, and to kick-start our initiative still later this year, I am writing you for your advice on the availability of European funds for piloting this pan-European, cross-sectoral reskilling initiative of public interest in 3 to 4 countries.

Would it be possible to not only tackle this on a country-by-country basis, but to take some form of ownership within the Commission and European funds as well? Could a single contact point be created to access these funds?

If that would help, I suggest that our teams liaise to discuss in more detail.

Thank you so much for your response, and happy to see you in the near future,

