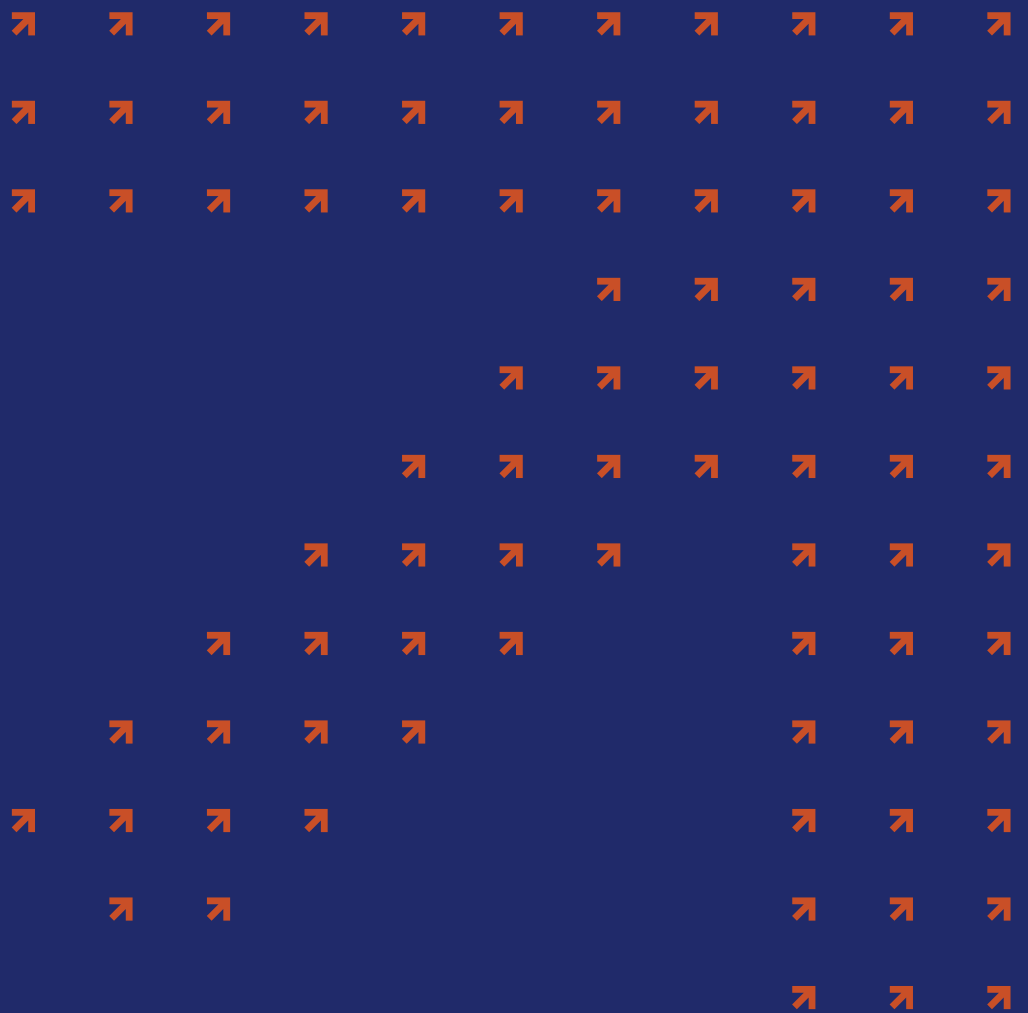




Plan for Sectoral Cooperation to Address Skills Needs in the Tourism Sector

Blueprint for Tourism Sectoral Skills

Partners



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Introduction

The Blueprint document is an output of the *Next Tourism Generation* (NTG) Alliance, a strategic and multi-layered collaborative partnership formed in 2018. Building on previous work by the European Commission and sectoral partners to address skills gaps in tourism, the NTG Alliance is one of the Sector Skills Alliances set up as part of the *Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills*. Each Sector Skills Alliance is funded by the Commission and was tasked with setting up a Blueprint. Thus, the NTG Alliance has developed the first Pan-European Skills Blueprint for the Tourism Industry, presented in this document. The Blueprint provides a roadmap for addressing digital, social and green skill needs in the tourism sector in Europe through transformational collaboration between industry, education, social partners and government.

1. Introduction (continued)

NTG is the first pan-European alliance striving to address skills gaps in the tourism sector. At the core of the alliance are 14 partners from industry and education in eight European countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom). Additionally, other education providers, industry organizations, social partners and government bodies have joined the alliance as associated or affiliated partners as shown in Figure 1.

NTG addresses five major sub-sectors of the tourism industry, as outlined in Figure 2, focusing on skills development in the areas of digital, green and social skills. These are all skills identified as fundamental to the future development and resilience of the tourism, travel and hospitality sector.

Addressing skills development is fundamental to promoting growth, innovation and competitiveness in the sector, generating employability and ensuring a quality level of skills for future generations. To support and promote skills needs, and to equip the sector's workforce for the challenges of the future, it is imperative that current gaps between government, education providers, social partners and industry stakeholders are bridged. The Collaborative Governance Framework outlined in this Blueprint provides guidance for bridging these gaps and a means of supporting collaborative initiatives to facilitate upskilling, reskilling and new skill acquisition. Additionally, the Blueprint integrates a range of instruments and strategies to address skill shortages and to support growth, innovation and competitiveness.

Figure 1.

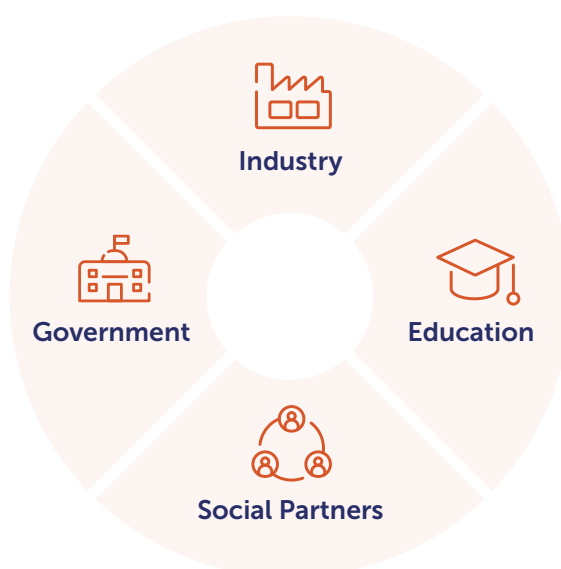
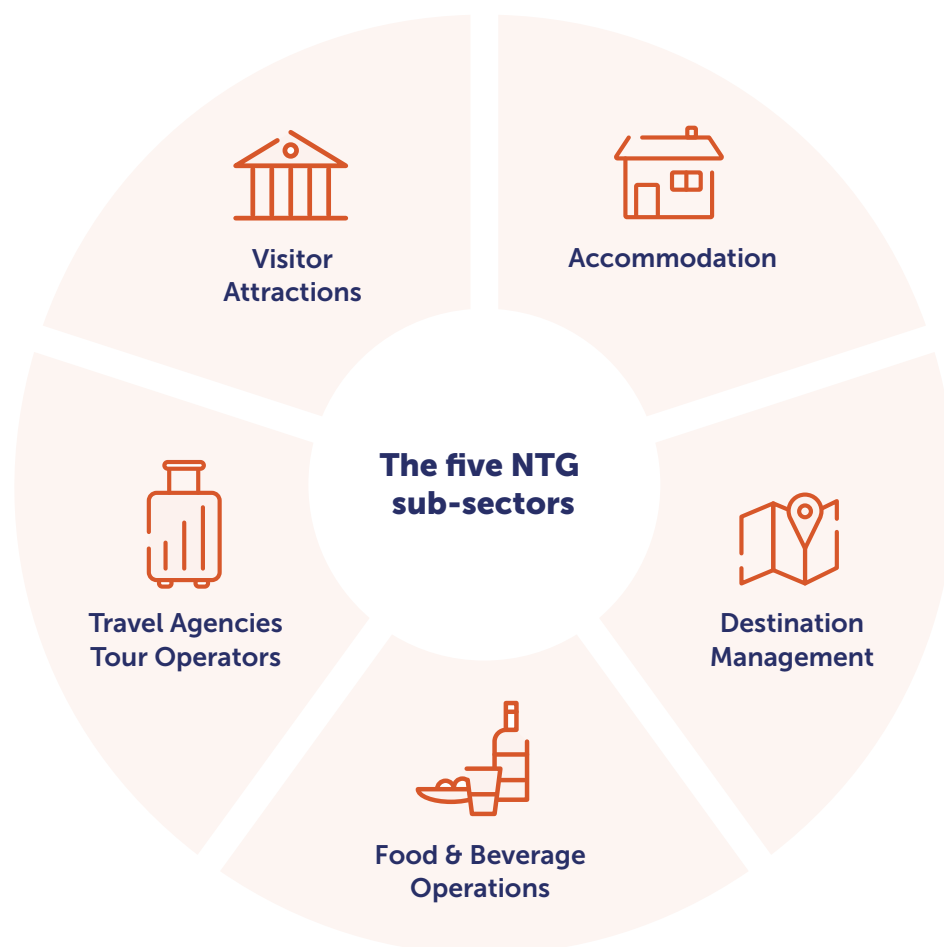


Figure 2: The five NTG sub-sectors

Responding to the skills needs of the tourism, travel and hospitality sector is particularly important in the context of the recovery of the industry post-COVID-19. Addressing the impacts of the COVID crisis on the tourism and hospitality sector calls for creative and unprecedented solutions and for finding opportunities for effecting lasting change at the systemic level. Putting that into practice requires radical changes in the way we educate, do business, shape policy, and organize the future of tourism and hospitality. The European Commission in policy documents and instruments such as the *European Skills Agenda* and the *Pact for Skills Charter* has identified collective action and collaboration as essential in achieving that goal. To that end, the Blueprint brings together the professional knowledge of numerous stakeholders and focuses on addressing skills gaps through encouraging transformational change at regional, national and European level. Furthermore, it underpins the *Pact for Skills* by providing a framework for building collaboration to support skills development for a sustainable future.

1. Introduction
(continued)

1.1 Stakeholders

The stakeholders listed in the table below were identified during the project as key stakeholders that should be involved in developing and implementing strategy to ensure the sustainability and resilience of the tourism sector. Stakeholders have been categorised for clarity.

There are two stakeholder groups named in the table and described later in this document as they are of prime importance in actions to address skills needs in the tourism sector.

Table 1

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholders included
EU	Government and Public Authorities at EU level i.e. European Commission, EU agencies, EU Directorate Generals (e.g. DG GROW and DG-EMPL).
National/Regional Government	Member States National Governments, Regional and Local Government Authorities, Public Authorities, Public Sector Employment Services.
Social Partners	Trade Unions and other Employee Representative Bodies, Groups representing future employees (e.g. students/unemployed). Employer Representative Organizations, Industry Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations.
Education & Training Providers	Academic Associations, Private and Public Education and Training Providers, Vocational Education and Training Providers, Higher Education Providers, Other Training Providers, Researchers, Education Quality Assurance Bodies.
Industry	Individual Businesses, Private Sector Employment Services.
Stakeholder Group	Details of stakeholder group
N/RSPs	National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs) exist in each of the eight NTG partner countries to bring together key stakeholders from each of the categories above. Using the NTG Collaborative Governance Framework to inform and support their collaborative activities, the N/RSPs have provided an important mechanism for delivery of the key benefits and outcomes arising from the NTG project.
Pact for Skills Ecosystem	The Tourism Pact for Skills is a Flagship Action under the European Skills agenda. It aims to support stakeholders to take concrete actions for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, building quality and inclusive skills initiatives and work for equal opportunities in the tourism sector. Sectoral Skills Alliances, such as NTG and PANTOUR support the implementation of the Pact for Skills. It is also supported by the European Commission.

Context and Background

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the European Union is one of the largest tourism destinations in the world, and four-member states are among the world's top 10 destinations¹. Tourism has played a significant role in local and regional development and until 2019 tourism growth outpaced world economic growth, being a catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation. Sustainability has become an increasing concern in European Union policy in the past few years, as minimizing the adverse impacts of tourism and managing tourism for the benefit of all has become critical. Digitalization, innovation, and societal changes have also emerged as some of the main concerns of the industry and education providers. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic brought immense challenges to the tourism sector, reducing global travel by 80% in 2020 and affecting around two thirds of direct tourism jobs². To build recovery in the next five years and the future, key priority policies must involve response measures to maintain capacity in the tourism sector and address skills needs and gaps³. In addition, the importance of investing in reskilling and upskilling for tourism and hospitality recovery is fundamental. Digitalization continues to accelerate, with higher use of contactless payments, services, virtual experiences and real time information. Training and retaining employees, subsidizing training for tourism industry workers, supporting sustainability through greening and digitalization and investing in training service providers are all key actions to prepare for the future, to develop competitiveness and to build resilience.⁴ Keeping track of rapidly changing skills needs and bridging skills gaps, to cope with a world in constant flux, are all major challenges for tourism businesses, education providers, social partners and governmental bodies. This involves building collaboration to support not only the acquisition of new skills but also life-long education and continuous reskilling and upskilling.

1 UNWTO (2019). International Tourism Highlights, <<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421152>>

2 UNWTO (2020). *Worst year in tourism history with 1 billion fewer international arrivals*. <<https://www.unwto.org/news/2020-worst-year-in-tourism-history-with-1-billion-fewer-international-arrivals>>

3 World Bank Open Knowledge Repository (2020) *Rebuilding Tourism Competitiveness. Tourism response, recovery and resilience to the COVID-19 crisis*. 30-32. <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34348/Rebuilding-Tourism-Competitiveness-Tourism-response-recovery-and-resilience-to-the-COVID-19-crisis.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>>

4 ILO Sectoral Brief (2020) *ILO Report: The impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector*, p. 9. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_741468.pdf>

2. Context and Background (continued)

2.1 Policy Context

This Blueprint sets out a comprehensive methodology to respond to the need for a sectoral skills strategy that is innovative, relevant and responsive to the current and future skills scenario for the tourism sector. Importantly, it also builds on previous research such as the European Commission's Tourism Skills Mapping exercises and Panorama Skills in Tourism and work by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training⁵. The launching of the Pact for Skills in 2020 and the publishing of the Transition Pathway for Tourism in 2022, both represent recent and important initiatives regarding policy direction to support and progress tourism skills needs and development.

The Pact for Skills is an important landmark that aligns with this Blueprint. The Pact addresses the need to reskill and upskill workers, to prepare for a greener and digital future, and indicates that collaboration should be at the core of attempts to address skill needs. The *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework* presented in this report provides guidance on how to achieve this with National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs). Additionally, the actions presented in this Blueprint align with the Pact's objectives of increasing resilience, competitiveness and social fairness, promoting a culture of lifelong learning, building skills partnerships and building skills supply.⁶

This document also builds on other policies, which give direction from the European Parliament and European Commission to enable, support and increase, cooperation, exchange of good practices, networking and knowledge exchange skills supply for current and future gaps. Other policy alignment highlights the need for skills to support sustainability (including both environmental and social skill standards) in the sector and the development of new pathways to tourism professionalization, education and career progression. Due to the diversity of tourism skill requirements, a range of policy exists generally in education and training and more specifically, regarding tourism skills and highlights the impacts of COVID-19, skills gaps and upskilling and reskilling in the tourism sector. These include: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, launched in 2015 by the United Nations; the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills, launched by the European Commission in 2017; the European Skills Agenda from 2016 and updated in 2020; the Pact for Skills, launched in 2020; the Transition Pathway for Tourism in 2022; and the European Pillar of Social Rights, launched in 2017 and reaffirmed in the Porto Summit in March 2021.

5 European Commission (2016) <<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bb270d49-e042-11e5-8fea-01aa75ed71a1>>

6 European Commission (2020) *Pact for Skills and Charter*. European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. <<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9827>>

2. Context and Background
(continued)

Policy 1



Facilitating and Strengthening Cooperation and Exchange of Good Practices in the Tourism Sector

The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills was launched by the European Commission⁷ and emerged from the European Skills Agenda of 2016. The NTG is one of the Alliances set up as part of the first wave of Blueprint projects. The European Skills Agenda focused on a five-year plan to strengthen competitiveness, ensure social fairness and build resilience to react to crises. Updated in 2020, it builds on the actions set in 2016 and is important regarding the Recovery Plan for Europe. The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills developed goals for sustainability in the sector, with a focus on the facilitation of cooperation and exchange of good practices to support a thriving tourism industry. Bringing a new vision of skills collaboration and partnerships in tourism, the policy document highlights the skills strategies and actions that influence growth, innovation and competitiveness in the sector through national and European partnerships. This Blueprint for Tourism Sectoral Skills and the NTG Alliance actions, develop an important, integrated and innovative roadmap, aiming to achieve all five main aspects of the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills.

Related/concrete actions in this Blueprint:

[See section/page](#)

	NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)	5.1/p.32
	Quality Skills Standards Framework	6.2/p.40
	NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit	6.1/p.37
	NTG Skills Matrix	5.2/p.34
	NTG Skills LAB	5.3/p.35
	National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs)	4.1/p.17
	NTG Collaborative Governance Framework	4.2/p.18

⁷ European Commission (2018). Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills in a nutshell. < <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8164&furtherPubs=yes> >

2. Context and Background (continued)

Policy 2



Upskilling and Reskilling in the Tourism Sector, Promoting a Culture of Lifelong Learning for All

Anchored by the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Pact for Skills, officially launched in November 2020 by the European Commission, aims to support and take concrete actions to upskill and reskill people in Europe, promoting four key principles:

- Promoting a culture of lifelong learning for all
- Building strong skills partnerships
- Monitoring skills supply/demand and anticipating skills needs
- Working against discrimination and for gender equality and equal opportunities⁸

Aimed to be a shared engagement approach to skills development, the Pact for Skills set goals for the green and digital transformation, networking activities and industry development through skills partnerships. It also creates opportunities for knowledge sharing. Additionally, it creates a guidance and a resources hub, with access to information on relevant EU funding, guidance to identify financial possibilities and facilitation of exchange between the Pact and national and regional authorities. The Pact supports the long-term outcomes of the European Skills Agenda and the launch of the initiative encouraged education and training providers, public and private organizations, businesses and social partners, to join forces and make commitments to upskill and reskill workers in Europe. The Pact for Skills in Tourism was officially launched in 2022 and NTG Alliance members are partners. Additionally, National/Regional Skills Partnerships established as part of NTG activities, are key implementers of the Pact. The Pact for Skills is an important development and policy that builds on the themes of recognizing the digital economy, recalling the European Green Deal, unlocking opportunities for growth and competitiveness, laid out in the European Skills Agenda, and having a solid basis in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Identifying skills needs and supporting skills development is one of the pillars of the Pact, coherently addressed in this Blueprint and an essential part of its action plan.

Related/concrete actions in this Blueprint:

See section/page

	NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)	5.1/p.32
	Quality Skills Standards Framework	6.2/p.40
	NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit	6.1/p.37
	NTG Skills Matrix	5.2/p.34
	NTG Skills LAB	5.3/p.35
	National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs)	4.1/p.17
	NTG Collaborative Governance Framework	4.2/p.18

⁸ European Commission (2020) *Pact for Skills and Charter*. European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. < <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9827> >

2. Context and Background (continued)

Policy 3



Establishing a Tourism Strategy for the Recovery of the Sector, Supporting, Creating and Taking Concrete Steps Towards Sustainability and Resilience

The New Industrial Strategy for Europe, presented by the Commission in 2020 and 2021, responded to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and outlines support for industrial alliances, collaboration and the development of transition pathways, including Tourism. The Transition Pathway for Tourism, published in 2022, proposes strategies for addressing skills needs as well as providing concrete direction on collaborative governance, resilience and green and digital transitions.

The Statement from the Members of the Tourism Task Force of the European Parliament, on the European Tourism Convention in October 2020⁹, was a first step of the COVID-19 recovery strategy for the tourism industry. The principles within that statement which relate to this Blueprint are:

- To establish a dedicated long-term budget line towards implementing a common vision for sustainable tourism.
- To establish an EU Tourism Strategy for tourism sustainability, with a detailed action plan with short, medium and long-term objectives and result-oriented objectives.
- To establish governance in the tourism sector at EU level to measure sustainability criteria, based on structural and institutional cooperation among EU institutions.
- To establish a clear action plan to help the sector manage the transition to a digital and greener future, with a safety component.

Aiming to reconcile short and long-term goals, this strategy seeks to address the needs of the sector, focusing on the recovery and the resilience of tourism in the next 10 years.

Related/concrete actions in this Blueprint:

See section/page

	NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)	5.1/p.32
	Quality Skills Standards Framework	6.2/p.40
	NTG Collaborative Governance Framework	4.2/p.18

⁹ Committee of Transport and Tourism (2020), Statement from the Members of the Tourism Task Force of the European Parliament on the Occasion of the European Tourism Convention. < https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/212091/EP%20Tourism%20Task%20Force%20statement_%20European%20Tourism%20Convention_121020.pdf >

2. Context and Background (continued)



Policy 4



Education and Skills Development for Sustainability

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an important global development policy and aims for a future anchored in sustainability. It has 17 interlinked global goals to be achieved by 2030. Among the goals present in this document, are:

- The promotion of quality education, especially among the adult population, increasing the number of adults with relevant technical and vocational skills, and creating paths for employment and entrepreneurship (SDG 4).
- Promoting knowledge and skills development to support sustainability, promoting the appreciation of cultural diversity, working with soft and social skills and enabling gender equality, accessibility and the promotion of diversity (SDG 4.7).
- Promoting climate action, combating its impacts and developing knowledge on green jobs and sustainable tourism, improving education and awareness raising to climate change mitigation, and integrating climate change measures strategies and planning in the recovery of Europe (SDG 13).

Related/concrete actions in this Blueprint:

See section/page

	NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)	5.1/p.32
	Quality Skills Standards Framework	6.2/p.40
	NTG Skills Matrix	5.2/p.34
	NTG Skills LAB	5.3/p.35

2. Context and Background (continued)

Policy 5



Promoting Access to Education, Life-long Learning and Training in Tourism in Europe

The European Pillar of Social Rights, launched by the European parliament, the European Council and Commission in 2017, has 20 key principles to strengthen fairness and inclusiveness and to promote access to education, life-long learning and training in the European Union. In March 2021, at the Porto Summit¹⁰ the European Pillars were reaffirmed. They included instruments and an action plan to Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, and renewed the commitments to implement the social pillars. Among the actions proposed by the policy for 2030 that are addressed in this Blueprint are investments in education, training and life-long learning, bringing new opportunities to the workforce in the sector and building strategies for inclusiveness and a fair society. This Blueprint aims to develop opportunities in the sector by facilitating lifelong learning, employability and participation in the tourism sector. It addresses the transition to a green and digital future, setting a collaborative framework to enable the transformation for sustainable best practices, build transversal skills, generating employability and adapting the workforce for the needs of the industry.

The Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 also includes the European Digital Education Hub, supporting the development of a digital education ecosystem in Europe, and enhancing digital skills and competencies to address the digital transformation for all. The European Parliament 2021, Education and Training also sets five priorities, including support for digital and green transitions through education and training. Green and digital upskilling, reskilling and life-long learning all represent central themes of policy. Reskilling and upskilling are also important components proposed by the Commission, presented within its action plan. This would empower individuals to participate in training and learning, rethink their careers, and increase employability and career growth in the sector.

Related/concrete actions in this Blueprint:

See section/page

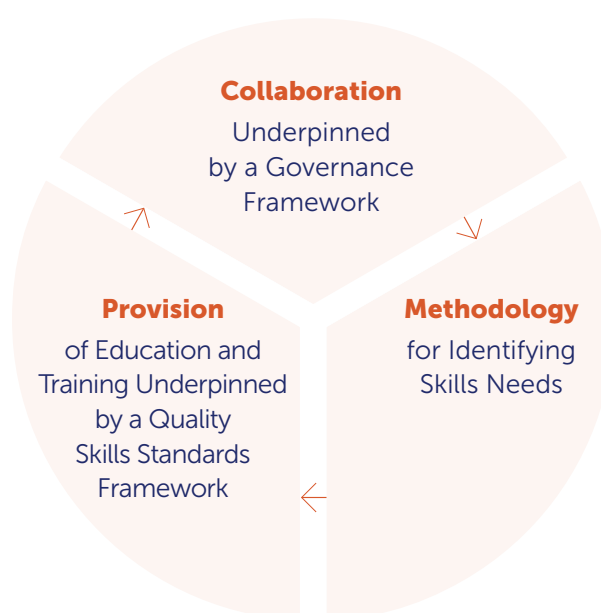
	Quality Skills Standards Framework	6.2/p.40
	NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit	6.1/p.37
	NTG Skills Matrix	5.2/p.34
	NTG Skills LAB	5.3/p.35

¹⁰ European Commission (2021). The European Pillar of Social Rights: turning principles into actions. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_820

Elements of the Blueprint

The Blueprint consists of a number of elements and associated tools illustrated in Figure 3 which are discussed in more detail in later sections in this document. The Blueprint takes a solutions-focused approach to addressing skills needs within the tourism industry in a coherent and coordinated way. Figure 4 illustrates how the NTG tools can be used to identify and address skills needs.

Figure 3: Key elements of the Blueprint



The Tools include:

See section/page

	The NTG Collaborative Governance Framework	4.2/p.18
	The NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)	5.1/p.32
	The NTG Skills Matrix	5.2/p.34
	The NTG Skills LAB	5.3/p.35
	The NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit	6.1/p.37
	Quality Skills Standards Framework	6.2/p.40

3. Elements of the Blueprint
(continued)

Figure 4: Using the tools to identify and address skills needs.



3. Elements of the Blueprint (continued)

The Blueprint responds to the need to address the rapid evolution of the tourism sector in the EU, to make strategic choices based on collaborative governance between industry, education, social partners and government and to meet the future skills needs of the tourism sector. It supports a future-proof tourism industry in the EU and the development of a dynamic workforce. The Blueprint is informed by a number of European policy initiatives including those outlined in section 2.1 of this report, it also includes an action plan for successful collaboration within the National/Regional Skills Partnerships.

3.1 Collaboration underpinned by a Collaborative Governance Framework

Research on barriers to addressing skills needs in the tourism and hospitality sector, undertaken by NTG partners, identified a lack of strategic coordination at international, national and regional level as a key barrier. Approaches are often uncoordinated and initiated without engagement with relevant stakeholders. Accordingly, addressing skills needs requires that the gap between key stakeholders, such as education and training institutions, government, industry, and social partners is overcome. Good governance is critical to success. Thus, the central element of the Blueprint focuses on collaboration, and the *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework* is the tool which should be used to strategically address future skills needs, using input from government, industry, education and the tourism workforce. The Collaborative Governance Framework is based on global best practice and feedback from key stakeholders and it has been tested at European, national and regional levels to ensure its adaptability at all levels.

Key elements of the Blueprint are National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs) to address current and future skills needs. N/RSPs have been set up in eight countries and have used the *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework* as guidance to support effective collaboration.

3. Elements of the Blueprint (continued)

3.2 Methodology for Identifying Skills Needs

Research undertaken by NTG partners indicated that there is a call for mapping skills needs at national or regional level. Thus, a structural mechanism is needed for the analysis of rapidly changing competencies and skills needs. A tool provided as part of the Blueprint is the *NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)* to continuously and longitudinally identify, assess, and monitor skills needs.

It can also be difficult to identify skills gaps at an individual or organizational level. The *NTG Skills Matrix*, is a flexible international careers platform and competency skills database. The technical version is available as the *Online Skills Matrix*, while the *NTG Skills LAB* builds on the Skills Matrix to create a wider series of practical functionalities to assess skills gaps for end-users including employers, employees, HR professionals, trainers, students, universities, local authorities and companies. The Matrix skills and competencies are also reflected in the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* via mapping templates and training resources to support learning of these skills and competencies.

3.3 Support for Education and Training Underpinned by a Quality Skills Standards Framework

When individuals or organizations identify skills gaps, they may not necessarily have the means to address them. Thus, the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* provides a practical tool for industry and education providers to offer innovative, flexible and relevant learning and training methods within the core skills areas and specialist sub-sectors. Widespread use of the Toolkit can help education and training providers to better deal with the fast changing and increasing gaps in digital, green and social skills sets.

Similarly, the *Quality Skills Standards Framework* illustrates the mechanism for integrating new skills into training & educational curricula. This will help stakeholders to recognize the key factors, which influence skills content and delivery.

The various elements of the Blueprint are described in more detail in the following sections.

4

Collaboration Underpinned by a Governance Framework

Addressing tourism skills needs requires collaboration between key stakeholders from education, training, social partners, government and industry and is a useful approach to bring knowledge and resources together from different fields of endeavour. However, successful collaboration is very difficult to achieve, especially in loose networks¹. This means that good governance is critical, and a governance framework must be structured enough to provide direction but fluid enough to allow for the complexity of external environments².

There is a need to emphasize the importance of the employer voice and business participation to support a dynamic level of agility in which the skills standards systems and qualification regulatory bodies can flexibly respond to ever-changing employer skills needs. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need for such agility in responding to new workplace challenges. At a national and regional level, facilitating communication through collaboration as emphasized in this Blueprint, can result in more industry awareness of the appropriate channels through which they can input into skills-related policy making and more awareness of the responsibilities of different governance bodies in skills development. Communicating with social partners can also facilitate policy makers and education and training providers to keep abreast of and address skills needs as they arise.

There is no single 'correct' collaborative governance model which dictates a specific balance of power between central, regional and local stakeholders. Additionally, growth and development are unevenly spread across the EU and as a result, regional development has been seen as a strategic priority in terms of economic competitiveness and social development.³ Thus, the Blueprint allows for different national, regional and local contexts.

1 Provan, K. G., and Kenis, P. (2008). Modes of network governance: Structure, management, and effectiveness. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(2), pp. 229-252.

2 Conforth et al. (2015) Nonprofit–public collaborations: understanding governance dynamics. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 44(4), pp. 775–795.

3 European Training Foundation (2014). Putting skills on the regional development agenda: a governance issue. *Inform*, 21, pp. 1-4.

4. Collaboration Underpinned by a Governance Framework (continued)

Collaborative efforts can address long or short-term aims. Short-term collaboration tends to focus on solving specific problems and long-term efforts are often focused on complex, multi-dimensional issues. While skills needs can be addressed on a short-term basis, long-term transformational change only occurs when underpinned by models focused on dialogue and participation of a range of stakeholders.

4.1 National/Regional Skills Partnerships

A key objective of the NTG project has been to promote discussion and collaboration between key stakeholders to identify and address skill needs within the tourism sector. To achieve this, *National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSPs)* were established in each of the eight NTG partner countries to bring together key stakeholders including education and training institutions, industry representative bodies, national and local government departments, public authorities, chambers of commerce, employee representative bodies, researchers, employment services etc. Using the *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework* to inform and support their collaborative activities, the *N/RSPs* have provided an important mechanism for delivery of the key benefits and outcomes arising from the NTG project, including, for example, opportunities for piloting outputs, access to primary research participants and evaluation of the collaborative framework. The *N/RSPs* have a key role to play in addressing tourism skills needs in many ways including:

- Building connections between industry, education and government stakeholders
- Addressing specific national/regional challenges
- Advocating for training and skills development
- Identifying skills needs
- Mapping existing education and training provision
- Providing information to government stakeholders
- Improving alignment between educational provision and industry needs
- Involvement in policy making regarding content and methods of implementation
- Directly linking to the Pact for Skills initiative
- Sharing knowledge
- Encouraging best practice
- Providing access to information about education, training, employment and funding opportunities

4.2 The Collaborative Governance Framework

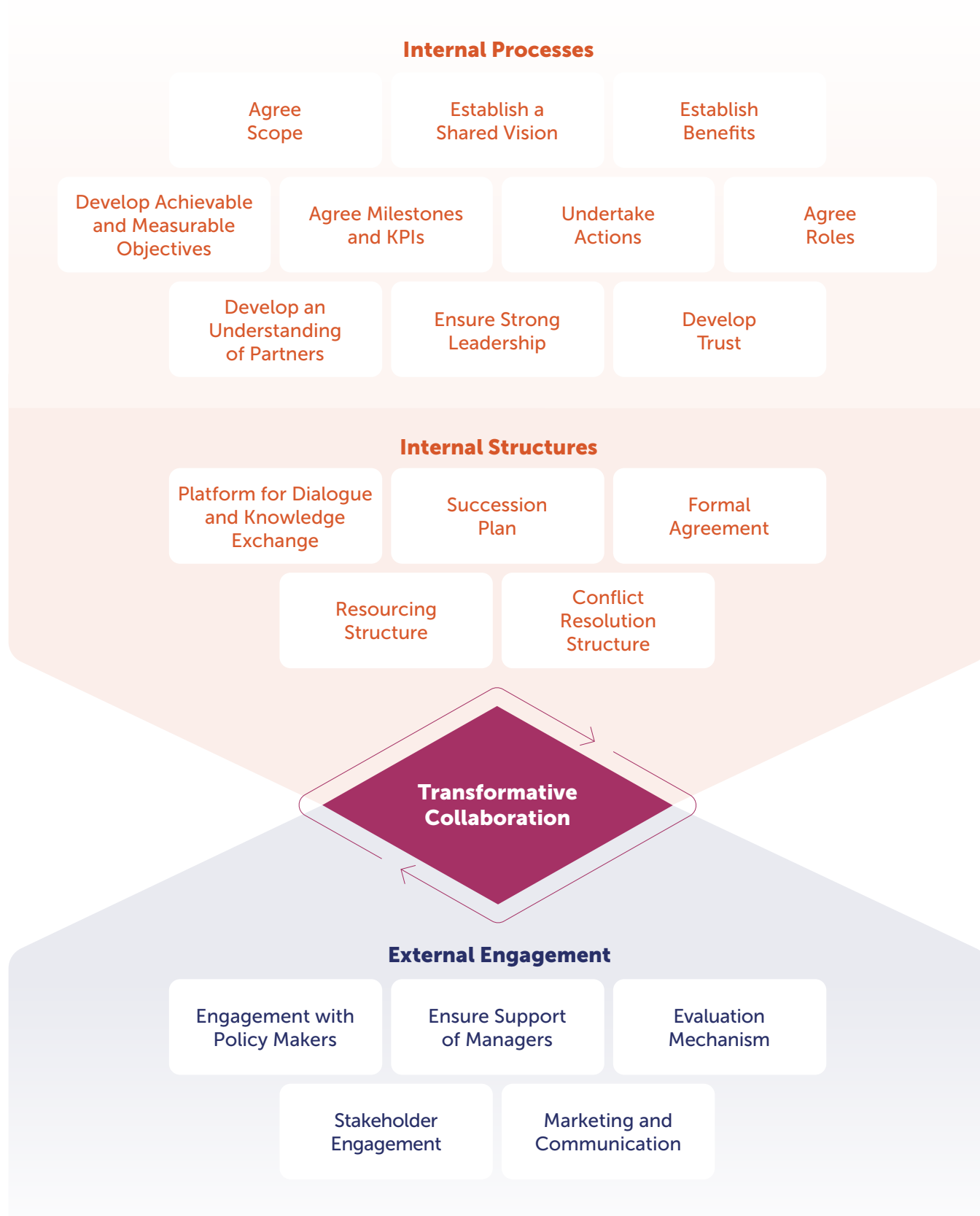
The *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework* (Figure 5) provides a transformative framework to facilitate tourism skills development. This framework, based on an extensive review of best practice from across the world, is adaptable to different national and regional contexts.

Within the framework, formal processes, which are the well-defined steps to support the internal workings of a collaboration along with the less formalized practices that support relationship building, are designated *Internal Processes*. Also central to the framework are *Internal Structures* that support the collaborative efforts of the partnerships. Activities that involve engaging with others outside the collaborative alliance, are designated *External Engagement*. Table 1 details each element of the framework, summarizes the evidence underpinning each and lists a set of key actions/steps related to each.

As collaborative partnerships can all too easily fail, the *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework* is underpinned by best practice and by lessons learned from previous attempts at collaboration. *National/Regional Skills Partnerships* should use the framework as a guide, to identify and address tourism skills needs at regional or national level.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

Figure 5: NTG Collaborative Governance Framework



4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

Table 2: Elements of the NTG Collaborative Governance Framework

Internal Processes

→ Agree Scope

Viewing skills needs from a regional perspective ensures that demand and supply of skills are matched more effectively, as local stakeholders have the best perspective on which skills are needed and how the needs might be met. However, involving regional and local stakeholders in policy making may be more difficult because of existing legal frameworks and may take more time. Taking a national perspective can ensure that collaborative and transformative skills development are highlighted as a policy priority and can ensure that skills policies are linked to other relevant national policies although it can be difficult to include all relevant stakeholders. Early identification and addition of missing representation is likely to increase the success of the collaboration.

Actions/steps

- Decide on the geographical scope of the *N/RSP* taking specific context into account.
- Identify the relevant stakeholders and ensure that there is representation in the *N/RSP* from across various sectors to address tourism skills needs e.g., industry and employee representative bodies, education and training providers, national or local government, public authorities, chambers of commerce, researchers, employment services etc.
- Even if a national approach is taken, discuss ways to ensure that local and regional stakeholders have some input into the initiative.
- Evaluate membership on a regular basis to determine:
 - Whether the scope should be broadened or narrowed.
 - Whether there are other potential partners that could contribute.
 - Whether all current organizations should continue as members into the future.
 - Whether and how other individuals from participating organizations can be included.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Establish a Shared Vision**

Goal congruity among all partners is a key determinant of collaborative performance. Shared strategic, organizational and cultural perspectives can explain why some collaborations work while others do not. A shared vision is key to successful collaboration.

Actions/steps

- Discuss and agree a shared vision. The Pact for Skills Charter provides a useful template.
- The aim/vision should be made very clear to new members in an induction process.
- Reiterate the shared vision to all partners on an ongoing basis e.g. in documentation and in meetings to ensure that it underpins all partnership activities.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to ensure that:
 - All members are aware of the vision.
 - The vision remains current and relevant.

→ **Establish Benefits**

It is important that individual partners see tangible benefits to engaging in collaboration. In some collaborative initiatives, there is an imbalance in the benefits accrued by different partners which can cause problems. Therefore, successful collaboration must support the missions and motivations of each partner and provide benefits for all. Examples of benefits include developing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the sector, developing a stronger working relationship with other group members, being kept abreast of initiatives and developments within the sector etc.

Actions/steps

- Identify the goals and objectives of all partners at an early stage.
- Ensure that all partners benefit from being members of the partnership in a fair and equitable manner.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
 - Revisit the goals/objectives of each partner.
 - Ensure that all members continue to benefit from engagement in the *N/RSP*.
 - If an evaluation highlights that some members are not benefiting, then membership or *N/RSP* aims/objectives may need revisiting.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Develop achievable and measurable objectives**

Different partners can have individual objectives, which are quite different from each other so key to successful collaboration is the building of common objectives and goals.

Actions/steps

- Develop and agree on a set of objectives. These can be focused anywhere within a broad range of tourism skills development activities e.g. identifying skills needs, supporting SME development, supporting employment initiatives, supporting collaboration between education and industry etc. A project management approach can be useful in this regard.
- When developing objectives, remind partners about the shared vision and the goals and needs of all partners.
- Build in some reasonably easily achievable objectives in the early stages of a collaborative project.
- Evaluate the objectives on a regular basis to:
 - Ensure relevance.
 - Identify which objectives have been achieved.
 - Develop new objectives when needed.
 - Adjust objectives where necessary.

→ **Agree milestones and KPIs**

Strong commitment and clear governance ensure that goals remain in focus. Establishing milestones/KPIs helps in that regard by ensuring that there is ongoing assessment of barriers experienced by stakeholders and that support plans are developed if needed.

Actions/steps

- Encourage partners to engage with data relating to the existing workforce.
- Encourage partners to engage with data relating to education/training provision.
- If relevant data does not exist, the N/RSP should develop a plan to collect the data.
- Discuss the most appropriate types of interventions needed to address skills needs.
- Develop Milestones and KPIs to support the strategy of the partnership. The Pact for Skills Charter provides a set of KPIs and Milestones that can be used directly or adjusted to reflect the Partnership's shared vision and national/ regional context.
- Evaluate the objectives on a regular basis to:
 - Identify which Milestones/KPIs have been achieved.
 - Adjust Milestones/KPIs when necessary.
 - Create new Milestones/KPIs for any new objectives.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Undertake actions**

Achieving 'quick wins' can support successful cycles of activity by helping cement a common vision and strategy, by supporting the identification of current weaknesses in the system and by building understanding of roles and responsibilities. Ongoing success also facilitates better collaboration (and vice versa).

Actions/steps

- Agree on a set of actions to address objectives, to achieve KPIs and to align with milestones.
- Consider using working groups to address individual objectives.
- Align actions with objectives and milestones.
- Use the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* and *NTG Skills Lab* to facilitate education and training provision.
- Use the *NTG Quality Standards Framework* to adopt relevant skills into training and education programmes.
- Evaluate actions on a regular basis to:
 - Ensure relevance.
 - Measure success and failures.
 - Identify lessons learned.
 - Identify if working groups are not used and determine if they are required.
 - Identify risks and put contingency plans in place where necessary.

→ **Agree roles**

Clearly defined roles will highlight how partners bring the different knowledge, experiences and skills that are beneficial to meeting the objectives of the group as a whole. Clearly defined roles also ensure that each partner is aware of how their input is being used and valued.

Actions/steps

- Specify and allocate roles and responsibilities early in the process.
- In ongoing communication within and outside the partnership highlight the value of individual partner input.
- Evaluate roles and responsibilities on a regular basis to:
 - Ensure that partners are aware of their role and responsibilities.
 - Adjust roles and responsibilities when necessary.
 - Explore whether partners are aware of the roles and responsibilities of others in the partnership and if not, improve communication on this topic.
 - Ensure that partner input is highlighted in communications.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Develop an understanding of partners**

The different perspectives of educational institutions, government agencies, social partners, and industry can create a significant barrier to effective collaboration as diversity in perspectives can make it difficult to achieve shared understanding. Therefore, it is important for each partner in a collaboration to develop an understanding and appreciation of the perspectives of other partners. Successful collaborations benefit from different perspectives as group members are exposed to new ideas and information, which promotes learning.

Actions/steps

- Engage in focused discussion to identify and learn about the different perspectives and knowledge that partners bring to the *N/RSP*.
- Each participating member should provide information to the partnership about their respective organization's activities on an ongoing basis. This is particularly important if membership changes.
- Identify the benefits of including multiple, different perspectives in the partnership.
- Encourage shared understanding and learning through exposure to different perspectives.
- Members should be cognizant of the fact that the terminology they use in meetings may not be comprehensible to all members and should avoid using jargon.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to ensure that:
 - Information on the relevant activities of partner organizations is being shared.
 - Partners feel that they are learning more about other organizations in the partnership.
 - Partners have identified the benefits of including multiple perspectives.
 - Partners provide explanations on an ongoing basis of any jargon they use.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Ensure strong leadership**

Transformational leadership is important in building interdependence between collaborative partners and minimizing conflict. There is no single leadership model that works better than others. If one partner assumes the leadership role, commitment by this partner to leadership is important. Alternatively, facilitation by an independent agency has been shown to work.

Actions/steps

- One partner should assume the leadership role. This role could be on a rotational basis. Alternatively, an external facilitator could be engaged. The partnership should ensure that the leader role is adequately resourced.
- The leader should ensure that contributions from all partners are encouraged and valued.
- The leader should ensure that evaluation occurs on an ongoing basis on:
 - All aspects of the partnership's processes and structures.
 - Effectiveness of the leadership of the partnership.

→ **Develop trust**

Trust is an important facilitator of successful collaboration. Ongoing contact between all partners is important in building trust. Communication is a key element in the development of trusting relations. Establishing aims, agreeing scope and building leadership also are important to build trust.

Actions/steps

- Create conditions for positive interactions so that relationships are strengthened, and trust develops. This could include working towards a common goal, agreeing and working on achievable objectives, celebrating success, engaging in effective and regular communication etc.
- Evaluate on an ongoing basis to:
 - Establish that trust exists/is developing.
 - Ensure that a safe and respectful environment for open communication exists.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

Internal Structures

→ Platform for Dialogue and Knowledge Exchange

It is important to have a platform in place which supports knowledge sharing. Knowledge exchange in collaborative efforts should not all go through the leader. Using platforms for dialogue which partners are already comfortable with, has been shown to be a successful approach.

Actions/steps

- Ensure that members are made aware that collaboration takes time. There should be an understanding from the beginning that progressive steps are needed, and that good communication and knowledge exchange is essential.
- Agree on and establish a platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange. This may, for example, be in the form of an online platform, such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive or Huddle. This will support knowledge exchange, improve productivity and help accelerate collaborative activities.
- Assign responsibility for setting up, updating, monitoring and sharing the platform (with new members for example).
- Agree structures and processes to facilitate communication for collaboration between individual partners, any subgroups and the entire group.
- Evaluate platforms on an ongoing basis to:
 - Measure appropriateness of current platforms.
 - Identify new or additional platforms to assist effective communication.
 - Ensure all members (particularly new members) are aware of, have access to, and are utilizing designated communication platforms.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Succession Plan**

Ensuring ongoing stability of a collaborative venture when members change can be difficult, and it is important that partner organizations take responsibility for effective succession planning.

Actions/steps

- Establish a succession plan to ensure that if individuals change roles or leave, there are plans in place for their replacement.
- Examine membership terms of partners and decide on an appropriate length for their involvement. Where possible discuss and agree plans for their replacement in advance.
- Consider staggered rotation so that not all members rotate together, it is important to leave a mix of members to ensure continuity while also bringing fresh views to the collaboration.
- Ensure that there is a clear internal handover process in place if one member replaces another.
- Arrange an appropriate time for new members to be introduced to the team.
- Ensure new members are aware of their role, the role of others, and are updated on past and current activities.
- Provide new members with access to the communication platform.
- Evaluate the succession plan on an ongoing basis to:
 - Ensure all members have identified a replacement in their organization.
 - Measure the effectiveness of the handover process.
 - Ensure rotations are occurring seamlessly with an ongoing balanced pool of existing and new members in the partnership.
 - Ensure that all members are aware of their own role and the role of others.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Formal Agreement**

Contracts or collaboration strategies can create a formal framework to support collaboration. A benefit of setting up a more formalized structure is that it can provide a structure to facilitate two important aspects of good governance, namely, compliance by partners with shared agreements and accountability of partners in the process. However, too formal a structure can negatively impact responsiveness.

A formal structure based on a signed agreement and established rules is critical if an aim of the collaboration is inclusion in official processes such as consultations, receipt of funding, etc.

Actions/steps

- Partners should engage in joint decision making on how formal a structure is needed and develop a formal agreement establishing clear rules for the collaboration.
- Utilize a Memorandum of Understanding such as the NTG *N/RSP MOU* or create a more formal agreement, such as a contract, to support the development of the collaboration.
- If the collaboration aims to engage in official processes such as consultations/funding applications, a legal structure may be necessary. It should be defined according to national law and be easy to set up and manage.
- The development of statutes and/or acceptance of a formal “Charta” or similar may be useful.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to evaluate:
 - Whether formal agreement is appropriate for the needs of the partnership.
 - All members (particularly new members) are aware of what agreement is in place.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Resourcing Structure**

Collaborative effort must be adequately resourced from a financial and manpower perspective. Additionally, the collaboration process takes time. If a collaboration is not properly resourced or if results are only seen in the medium to long term, this can inhibit activities. Therefore, from the outset, partners must understand the commitment involved.

Actions/steps

- Ensure that partners understand from the outset that collaboration is a lengthy process. This is important in terms of increasing the likelihood of success, managing expectations and ensuring the continued support of partners.
- Members should agree from the outset on their commitment to the collaboration in terms of resources (time, human and financial resources).
- Seek financial resources, if needed, from partners or through external funding mechanisms (such as Government grant aid for example).
- Time spent on collaborative efforts by individuals from partner organizations should be acknowledged as part of their organizational role.
- If necessary, establish a core of dedicated staff/facilitators responsible for undertaking a significant proportion of the work.
- The need to financially resource the collaboration should be emphasized in key policy documents, to encourage government support.
- Evaluate resourcing structures on an ongoing basis to:
 - Ensure members are delivering on their resourcing commitments (time, human and financial resources).
 - Identify opportunities for financial support from government or other external sources.
 - Measure the allocation of resources across the partnership and the demands on individual members.
 - Ensure that there is an appropriately balanced distribution of workload.
 - Identify potential additional resource opportunities.
 - Ensure recognition is provided to all members for their collaborative efforts.
 - Ensure all partner organizations are appropriately acknowledged in external communication and marketing documents based on their resourcing commitments.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Conflict Resolution Structure**

Conflict can be a feature of many collaborations as partners have different perspectives and objectives. The key to successful collaboration is management of these conflicts. From a legal perspective, there can be conflicts over issues such as intellectual property and individual partner organization policies and procedures.

Actions/steps

- Develop a clear and fair conflict mediation process with the agreement of all partners.
- Identify the potential for conflicts over issues such as intellectual property for example and agree solutions early in the partnership.
- The lead partner or a facilitator should take on the important role of conflict mediator.
- Create a conflict resolution mechanism, ensuring that the lead partner or a named facilitator takes on their role of conflict mediator. Steps in the process could include for example:
 - 1) Identify the issues, be clear of what the problem is
 - 2) Understand everyone's interests/perspectives (including cultural differences)
 - 3) List possible solutions
 - 4) Evaluate different options
 - 5) Select an option partners can support
 - 6) Document the agreement
 - 7) Agree on contingencies, monitoring and evaluation
- Communicate the conflict resolution process with all partners.
- Evaluate on an ongoing basis to:
 - Ensure all members (particularly new members) are aware of the conflict resolution mechanism.
 - Examine the appropriateness of the conflict resolution process within the partnership.
 - Monitor and measure conflict issues to aid prevention.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

External Engagement

→ Engagement with Policy Makers

Government policy that addresses the need for collaborative approaches and encourages their formation is a key facilitator for collaborative efforts to address skills needs. Government can also provide appropriate incentives and disincentives. Additionally, collaborative initiatives at national or regional level, addressing macro issues such as skills needs, are more successful if they have direct access to policy makers or if policy makers are involved as partners.

Actions/steps

- Engage with policy makers for support and develop strong links with national and/or regional government stakeholders.
- Include national or local government representatives as part of the partnership as appropriate.
- Keep policy makers updated on partnership activities. Regular updates could occur through online meetings, newsletters, presentations or email.
- Encourage policy makers to develop policy to support collaborative efforts to address skills needs.
- Discuss policy suggestions and decisions within the partnership.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
 - Ascertain how well the partnership is engaging in two-way communication with policy makers and adjust the communication strategy if necessary.
 - Explore the role of policy makers in partnership activities and update if necessary.
 - Explore the effectiveness of the partnership in encouraging the development of supportive policy.
 - Ensure that information about new policy is provided to partners either in meetings or through shared written communication.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Ensure Support of Managers**

Involvement in collaborative initiatives requires significant commitment, underpinned by resources, from upper management in partner organizations.

Actions/steps

- Make partners aware that their representatives within the partnership should have the support of their managers, for example, ensuring that they have time to attend meetings, that their costs are covered and that there is a clear way of reporting activities.
- Engage with upper-level management by highlighting benefits of involvement at the outset and continue to communicate positive outcomes to them once activities are underway. This may be done via a website or with regular news updates, presentations, group emails or e-zines etc.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
 - Ensure that individual representatives are supported by their organizations. Organizations which cannot provide support should not be involved in the partnership.
 - Explore how well the partnership is communicating its activities and successes to management in individual partner organizations and update the communication plan if necessary.

→ **Evaluation Mechanism (this can be an external engagement OR an internal process)**

When the mission and objectives have been identified, a difficulty that can arise is deviation from them. Additionally, milestones and objectives may not be achieved as planned. An evaluation mechanism can identify issues and it can be internal to a collaborative partnership or can be developed and undertaken by an external evaluator.

Actions/steps

- Put an internal or external evaluation mechanism in place to ensure that the collaborative efforts remain focused on the vision, milestones and objectives.
- Evaluate all other aspects of the partnership on a regular basis as outlined in this tool.
- Use surveys, individual interviews, group reflection or other methods of gathering data when engaging in evaluation.
- Put contingency plans in place where necessary.
- The evaluation mechanism should be evaluated routinely to ensure that:
 - It is fit for purpose.
 - It identifies areas that require attention.
 - It allows contingency plans to be developed and actioned.

4. Collaboration Underpinned
by a Governance
Framework (continued)

→ **Stakeholder Engagement**

Engaging with a range of stakeholders from industry, education and government can ensure relevant and more robust policies and actions. The strategic, organizational and cultural 'fit' of the different stakeholders can impact the success of the collaboration, keeping them engaged in ongoing activities, and encouraging them to become involved, leads to a successful collaboration.

Actions/steps

- Seek out and include other stakeholders in individual actions when necessary.
- Network with other interested parties to ensure that all relevant perspectives are included.
- Evaluate on a regular basis to:
 - Ensure partners are informed of key successes to encourage engagement.
 - Actively research potential new stakeholders as the partnership evolves and the sector develops.

→ **Marketing and Communication**

Ongoing and targeted communication of activities, events, tools development, support materials, etc. can encourage others to become involved and keeps the topic of new skills and related actions alive in the minds of target audiences.

Actions/steps

- Create a detailed short-term and long-term marketing plan to ensure visibility and to highlight the work of the group to others.
- Create a working group to focus on marketing.
- Work towards long-term sustainability by developing a positive image through marketing and communications.
- Consider a website, social media, update emails, information meetings etc. as ways of engaging with all stakeholders and highlighting the work of the group.
- Evaluate marketing activities regularly to:
 - Measure the effectiveness of marketing plans and initiatives.
 - Identify specific areas of focus required by the partnership.
 - Maximize the audience reach of the partnership.
 - Examine levels of engagement with existing stakeholders and identify new stakeholders.

Methodology for Identifying Skills Needs

This Blueprint includes two tools to identify skills gaps at two different levels – national/regional and organization/individual. The first, the *Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)*, is included to provide guidance for *National/Regional Skills Partnerships (N/RSP)* working at a strategic level. The second, the *NTG Skills LAB*, which incorporates the *NTG Skills Matrix*, is designed to support individuals, businesses, education and training providers. The tools focus on the three NTG skills sets (digital, green and social skills) and the five NTG subsectors (accommodation, food & beverage, visitor attractions, tour operators & travel agents, and destination management).

5.1 The Skills Assessment Methodology

The *NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)* is a tool that has been designed to identify current and future workforce skills at a national or regional level. The *NTG SAM* was developed as a research-based, structural mechanism for the analysis of rapidly changing skills and skills needs in order to develop strategies for addressing skills gaps in the EU Tourism Sector.

The *NTG SAM* focuses on the skillsets necessary for the future of the workforce, specifically:

Digital skills: an increasingly-needed array of skills that will enable workers to address labour market digital needs, for example, data management, conducting online business, using augmented reality technologies, artificial intelligence and block chain technology.¹

Green skills: there is an increase in skills needs related to the natural environment and sustainable practices related to production, and consumption and services related to tourism and hospitality. Green skills connect to policies for resource management including, energy and water saving processes, waste management including recycling, plastic reduction and use of by-products etc.

Social skills: in an increasingly digitalized world, transversal skills will become ever more relevant for all and social skills are important for all future workers in all kinds of tourism. Examples include problem solving, entrepreneurship, creativity, socio-emotional, communicative, collaborative, gender equality, accessible tourism and multicultural awareness skills.

1 OECD Tourism Trends and Policies (2020). *Preparing tourism businesses for the digital future* <<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f528d444-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/f528d444-en>>

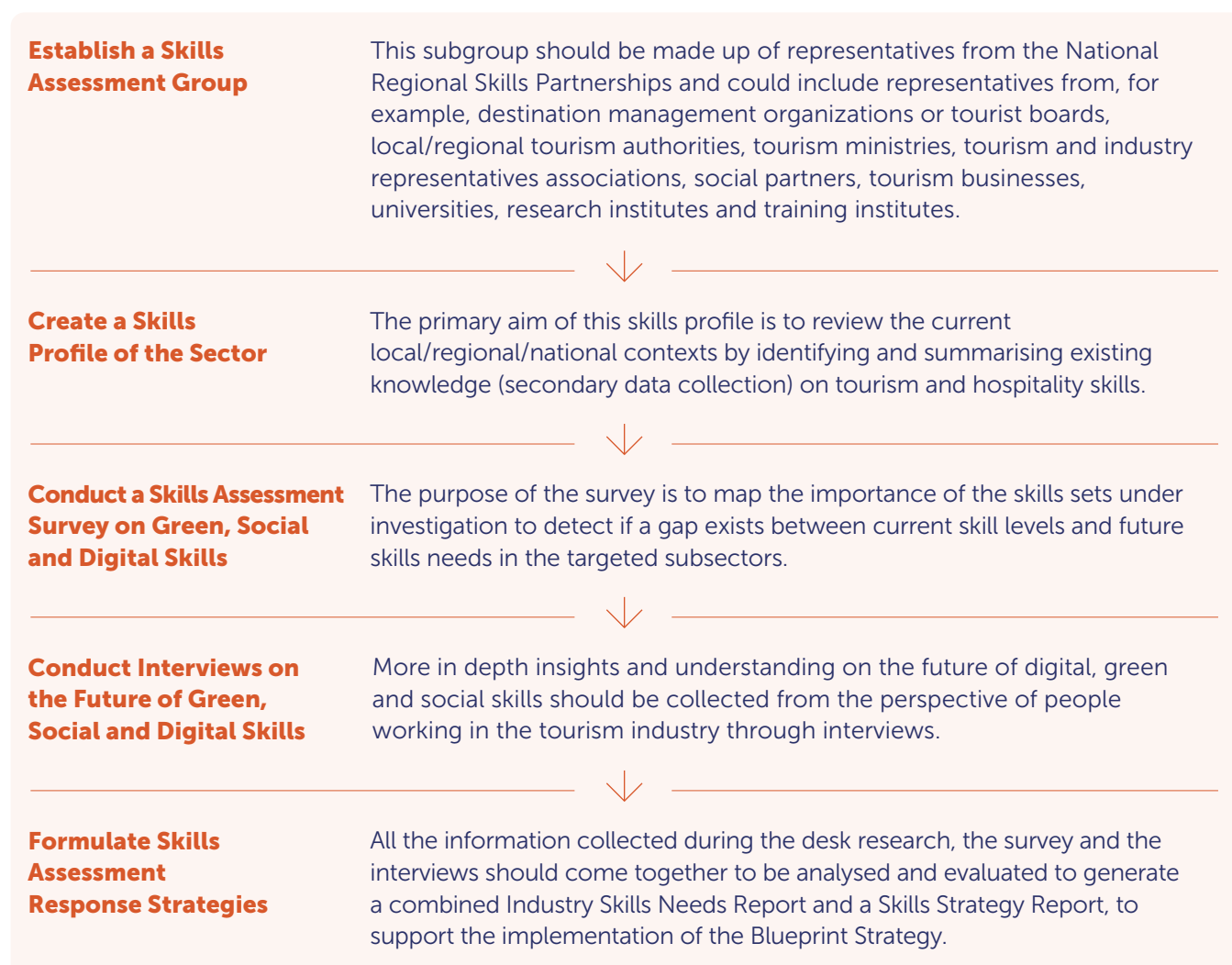
5. Methodology for Identifying Skills Needs (continued)

The benefit of the *NTG SAM* is that it can be used at multiple levels: regional, national or international, adding flexibility and improving feasibility. It assesses and identifies changing skills needs along the tourism value chain, ensuring that education and training systems are responsive to the evolving labour market needs. It does not set any fixed standards, nor does it provides any certification. Although it was developed for assessing digital, green and social skills needs in five tourism subsectors; it can, however, be easily expanded and used to address skills needs in other tourism ecosystems.

Actions/Strategies:

Once an *N/RSP* or other collaborative partnership has been set up (using the *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework*), a subgroup to explore skills needs, led by a Skills Assessment Project Coordinator, can be established. This could be a representative from one of the organizations involved or an external expert. Through a step-by-step guide, stakeholders are provided with a process for strategic analysis of rapidly changing skills, skills needs and skills gaps.

Figure 6: A guide to the implementation of the Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)



5. Methodology for Identifying Skills Needs (continued)

5.2 The NTG Skills Matrix

The *NTG Skills Matrix* explains and presents the different digital, green and social skills, entry levels and opportunities for training. The objective of the matrix is to provide a structure to clearly present information for job seekers, students, businesses, employees, training providers and public authorities. This tool qualifies a range of skills and competencies following the EQF (European Qualification Framework) system that can be applied to different job positions, providing a standardized checklist that stakeholders can use to identify green, digital, social skills and competencies required for each job position.

The production of the *NTG Skills Matrix* involved a comprehensive and complex process of identification of key competencies and skills to support the Next Tourism Generation as new digital trends and technology emerge for the tourism and hospitality sector, while sustainability becomes a key concern for society at large. The *NTG Skills Matrix*, provides information with a clear understanding of opportunities to develop skills sets in green, social and digital skills.

The NTG Skills Matrix:

- Provides the target audience with an understanding of how to develop digital, green and social skill sets.
- Provides information for job seekers to demonstrate how new skill sets and competencies are integrated into existing jobs.
- Enhances the European and national occupational profile systems, such as the ESCO system (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations), by identifying additional competencies and skills which were not apparent and visible to much of the European job market in tourism and hospitality².
- Has the potential to be used within the workplace for reviewing and updating documentation and resources including occupational profiling, recruitment and selection processes and procedures, job advertisements, person specifications and performance reviews.

The *NTG Skills LAB* is an additional tool which can be used by individuals and organizations. The tool aims to provide functionalities to enhance some features of the *NTG Skills Matrix*.

² The matrix identifies a number of new skills that had not previously been included in the European Standards and Classification of Occupations (ESCO). As a result of NTG Alliance engagement with the European Commission, 21 Next Tourism Generation digital and sustainability (environmental and social) skills and associated competencies, that comply with ESCO standards and homogeneity within the classification, have been approved and adopted for ESCO. NTG competences similar to ESCO skills and knowledge, but with some differences have been further analysed and included within ESCO skills and knowledge, to enrich what is already in the ESCO classification and ensure the ESCO content is up-to-date.

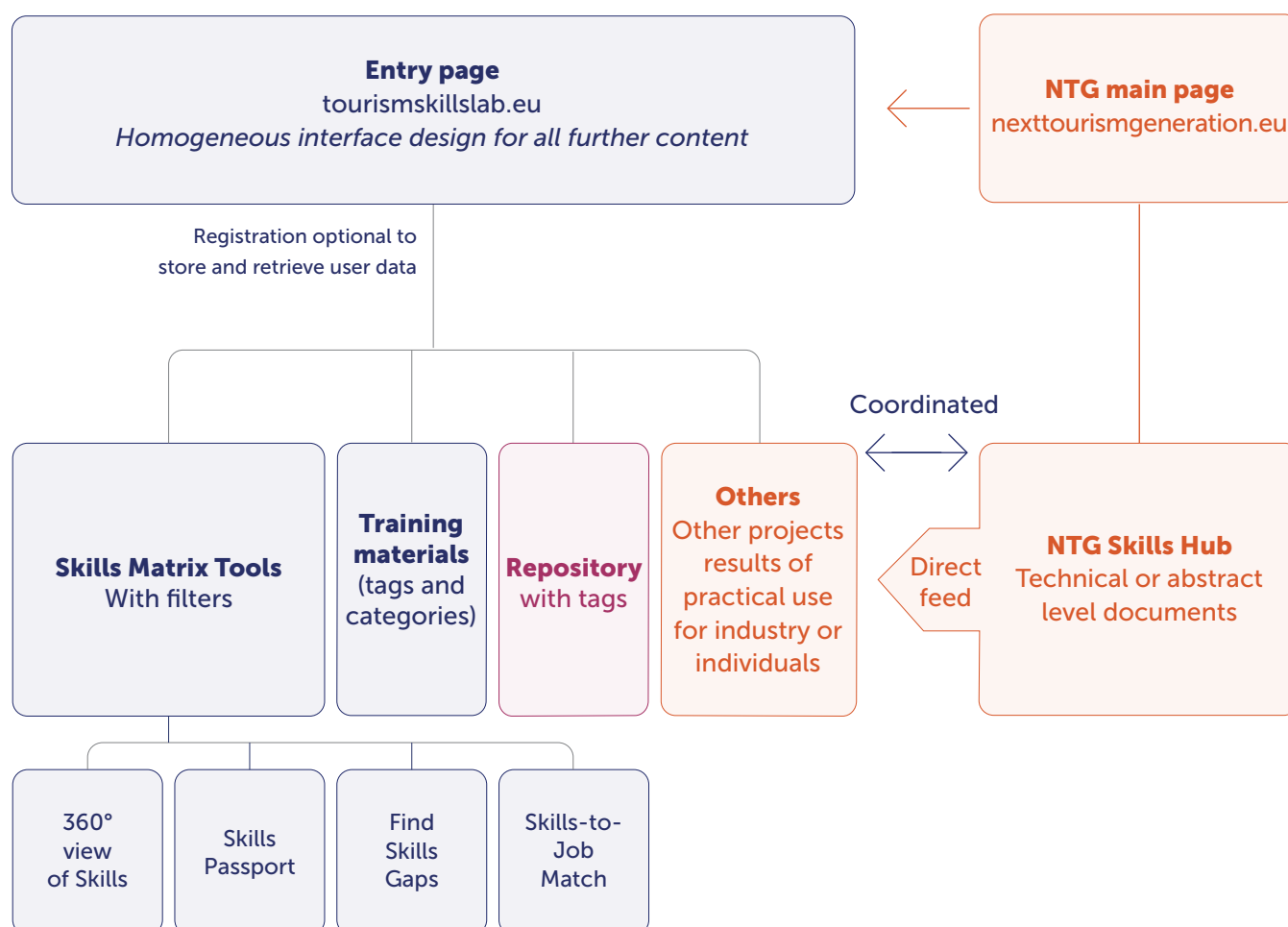
5. Methodology for Identifying Skills Needs (continued)

5.3 The NTG Skills Lab

The *NTG Skills LAB* facilitates the practical implementation of the skills instruments by a wide variety of end-users from the target groups of employees, students, SMEs, or education and training institutions. It presents practical results from different NTG deliverables such as the *NTG Skills Matrix*, training materials and repositories in an intuitive format that is based on optimizing the user experience. It integrates the *NTG Skills Matrix* into a set of extensive and dynamic skills matrix tools; adds new functionalities to address skills gaps, future skills needs (skills assessment) and job reviews; and links to other results of NTG such as training materials (Figure 7).



Figure 7. NTG Skills Lab



5. Methodology for Identifying Skills Needs (continued)

The following four tools and features as part of the *NTG Skills LAB*, are implemented as a combination of the Skills Matrix, Toolkit and online repository of digital platform functionalities:

- Skills Tools with four sub-tools:
 - **360° View on Skills** (self-assessment/job review)

Workers and jobseekers can compile their own skills profile and based on this, receive suggestions for professions and positions that match their skills and/or suggestions for relevant training and education.

— Find Skills Gap

Jobseekers and workers can match their skills profile with a wide series of jobs available in the tourism sector. Skills gaps and areas for improvement are identified.

— Skills to Job Match

The skills to job match allows employees to view what jobs in the tourism sector best matches their current skills. Jobs and positions that match the skills profile are identified.

— Skills Profile (skills needs for employees and employers)

The Skills Profile allows employees to determine their value on the labour market and to orient themselves on the next steps in their career and what training is associated with this. This is relevant for all kinds of professional groups and functional areas because the market will change rapidly, as well as skills learned. A profile/passport with overview of skills is created in the Skills Profile that includes knowledge and skills for employees. In addition, it gives employers a better insight into the match between the job profile and the employee profile:

- Online repository of networks, thematic platforms, use of Erasmus+ mobility for entrepreneurs and staff, and similar.
- Selection of training materials produced for the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit*. This function may be extended to a wider list of training offers to support the skills gaps.
- Other content fed directly from the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* at the project website.
- As a dynamic, responsive and intuitive platform, the *NTG Skills LAB* provides practical and easy-to-implement advice for different users, target groups and stakeholders. It supports a European tourism skills ecosystem ensuring a quality level of skills for future generations and enhanced collaboration between stakeholders. The *NTG Skills LAB* supports the actions of the N/ RSPs and will facilitate the sustainability of NTG tools and supports for the tourism industry in the phase of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

6

Provision of Education and Training Underpinned by a Quality Skills Standards Framework

Among many challenges faced by the workforce are access to training through universities, colleges or training centres, especially for micro and small businesses. On a regional scale, the gap between the skills required and new workforce training is even larger, producing a strong need to upskill the workforce to maintain market competitiveness. This is partly reflected in the need to assure the fast and quick adoption of new skills required by the workforce matched with the quality standard processes required to bring new skills into training curricula.

The need to upskill and reskill for a sustainable and digital future must be addressed with learning modules and educational projects. Governments at local and national levels should also reinforce access to digital education, as we face a future of challenges for the industry because of COVID-19. Providing access to training should be a target of *National/Regional Skills Partnerships*. A skills development tool, the *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* with evidence-based content that can be integrated into education and training programmes, is included in this Blueprint.

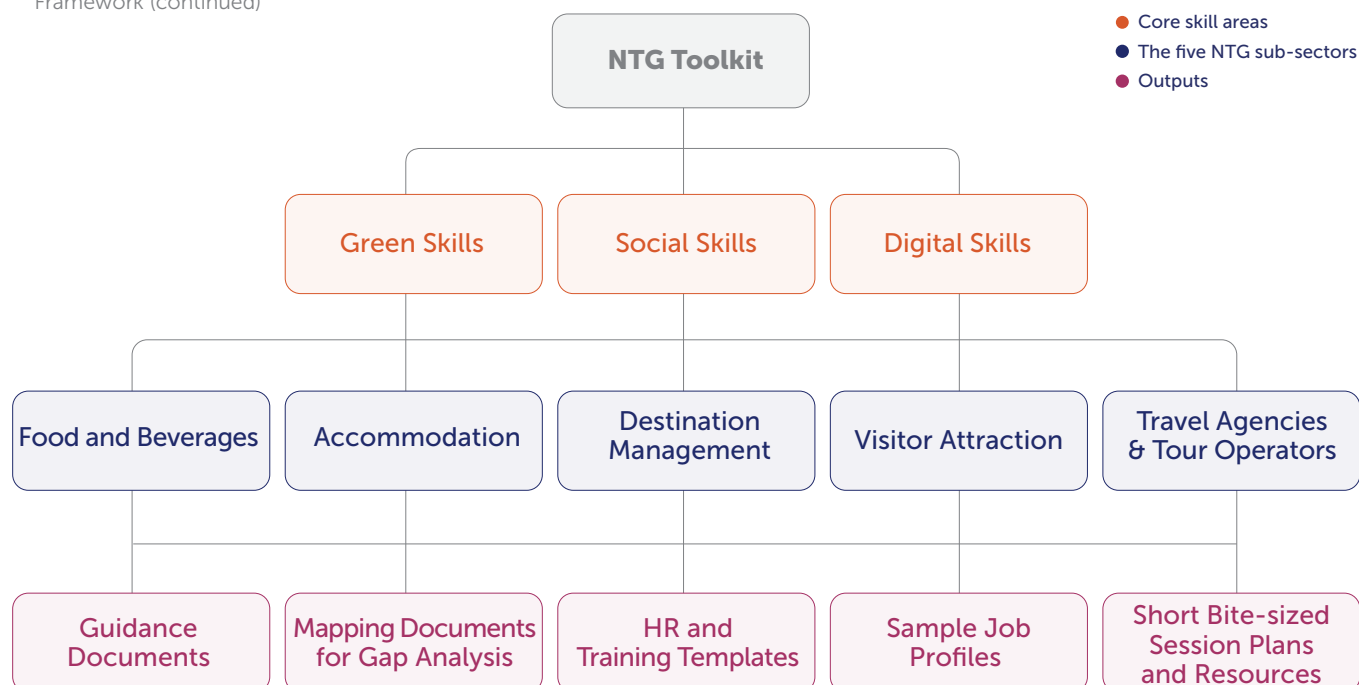
6.1 The NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit

The *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* fills the gap between the needs for training, especially in life-long learning, giving importance to upskilling and reskilling through a number of tools. The toolkit is a set of resources, with guidance notes on how they can be used by educational establishments, training providers, employers, social partners, government departments and individuals to enable them to address the green, social and digital requirements within the hospitality and tourism sector. The toolkit supports stakeholders in developing and/or updating their resources including priorities, strategies and tools to create productive business and education alliances which can support new skills products both within the industry and the education system (see Figure 8)

The *NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit* has been piloted by universities, colleges and private training providers located in project partner countries and Greece, as well as a broader evaluation by a range of stakeholder organizations across Europe. Overall, it was acknowledged as a comprehensive and useful tool to support the development of digital, green, and social skills in and for the tourism industry.

6. Provision of Education and Training Underpinned by a Quality Skills Standards Framework (continued)

Figure 8: An Overview of the NTG Tourism Sector Skills Toolkit



Actions/Strategies

The guidance toolkits have been designed in conjunction with the *NTG Skills Matrix* and are incorporated into the database allowing all users to access and use them as they see fit. The guidance toolkits have been developed around the three core skills areas: green, digital and social skills and each has comprehensive examples of:

- Lesson plans, presentations and training resources
- Assessments and marking schemes
- Blended learning approaches
- Skills checkers
- Job profiles
- Skills mapping templates
- Case studies
- Examples of best practice

Each guidance tool identifies the skills and competencies needed within each of the three core skills areas (green digital and social skills) broken down to reflect EQF levels. These include basic (operational), higher (supervisory and management) and executive levels across the five sectors (Accommodation, Food & Beverage, Travel Agencies and Tour Operators, Destination Management and Visitor Attractions) and the functional areas (e.g., front office, housekeeping, maintenance etc).

6. Provision of Education and Training Underpinned by a Quality Skills Standards Framework (continued)

Table 3: Examples of Stakeholder Application of the Toolkit

Stakeholders	To map against:	In order to:
Government/ Local Authorities	• Current training provision in locality.	→ Review present qualifications/ courses to identify gaps and plan learning.
Training Providers/ Educational Establishments	• Current courses. • Current training provision.	→ Review present qualifications/ courses to identify gaps and plan learning. → Create education and training courses (online/classroom/ blended).
Employers/ HR Departments	• Training provision. • Job profiles. • Recruitment profiles. • Target setting.	→ Identify training needs and create training courses , to build job profiles and person specifications to aid recruitment, performance management and progression, to feed into CPD and set environmental, digital and social targets.

The *NTG Tourism Sector Skills toolkit* supports organizations to help skills mapping, identifying skills gaps and developing new training curricula. This assists upskilling or reskilling of current and future employees and helps to revise training delivery as well as human resource frameworks:

6. Provision of Education and Training Underpinned by a Quality Skills Standards Framework (continued)

Mapping Templates

- Compare existing knowledge and skills within standards, HR documentation and/or curriculum to identify gaps.
- Use the gap analysis to develop and/or adapt standards, curriculum and HR documents

Developing Curriculum

- Use the toolkit and associated resources to revise and develop training plans, programmes and learning content.
- Use the toolkit and associated resources to inform and develop training strategies, full programmes and qualifications.

Developing a Human Resource Framework

- Use the toolkit to revise and develop job/occupational profiles.
- Use the matrix to revise and develop HR documentation.

Therefore, the toolkit provides tools and suggests actions to improve continuing education and training in tourism and hospitality, raising awareness of the importance of training for the sector. It also brings together in one digital platform, up-to-date and accessible initiatives to facilitate upskilling and reskilling in Europe that could be used at local, regional and national levels.

6.2 The Quality Skills Standards Framework

The *Quality Skills Standard Framework (QSSF)* builds recommendations to improve integration between industry and education and to adopt relevant skills into training and education programmes. Education and training are not separate to innovation, resilience and post Covid-19 recovery of the tourism and hospitality sector. The three are intricately intertwined. In order to achieve a just, resilient, and truly agile sector, the NTG Alliance advocates a regenerative approach, enhancing the underlying capacity of individuals, professional workforces and educational (eco)systems to be future oriented and fulfil their potential.

The process of development of skills and competencies with quality assurance in higher education tourism and hospitality programmes is relatively generic across Europe and includes the following primary processes: quality course management, industry and higher education collaboration and external examiners. On the other hand, there is a wide variety of skills standards mechanisms led by private and public sectors training organizations to support VET from EQF levels 1-5. Each country has their respective government institutions to support the regulation, monitoring and evaluation of the VET sector.

6. Provision of Education and Training Underpinned by a Quality Skills Standards Framework (continued)

All countries have national governmental organizations, which have the authority to influence decisions about which skills, and competencies are delivered in VET provision. Public and private organizations in the tourism sector can directly influence the incorporation of new skills in professional training programs. Several opportunities for influence are identified:

- University education and training programmes (official and specific to each university).
- In-house education and training programmes developed on behalf of private training entities, by university and college business schools.
- Specialized private or in-house education and training programmes, created by tourist companies, trade associations or suppliers of the tourist sector (for example, technological companies) to train professionals and future professionals of tourism.

The QSSF was developed to identify the steps and processes needed in order to incorporate new skills and competencies at a national level in four distinct skills delivery areas across Europe. There are four key sections:

1. Higher Education Institutions (EQF levels 4-8).
2. College and Further Education (EQF Levels 1-5).
3. Major national professional industry associations and private training provision (EQF or equivalent Levels 1-7).
4. EU Skills organizations that influence educational and training content at national and EU-wide levels.

A quality skills standards systems approach is particularly relevant to advocate concrete steps towards establishing a broad, EU-wide Strategy on Tourism Skills. *Visual Quality Skill Standards Frameworks (VQSF)* provide a number of national examples which are available on the NTG Alliance Website and highlight the relevant legal, institutional and industry frameworks to support skills development in education and industry. This allows an understanding of how new NTG skills products, such as the *NTG Skills Assessment Methodology (SAM)*, the *NTG Skills Matrix* and *NTG Toolkit* can be integrated into national statutory training and skills standards and quality mechanisms. The Quality Skill Standards Frameworks also demonstrate how new skills derived in other formats, by other organizations, could feed into national skills development mechanisms. The visual frameworks also identify the routes that would support validation, accreditation, evaluation and monitoring. The organizations, which have the most influence in updating skills and setting standards, are clearly identified.

In addition, key issues and barriers to the integration of new skills and competencies into qualifications and training content are recognized and recommendations provided to improve integration between industry and education in adopting relevant NTG skills training and education.

Sustainability and Action Plan

7.1 Introduction

The aim of the Blueprint Action Plan is to provide a roadmap for supporting, creating and taking concrete steps towards sustainability and resilience of the tourism sector. The previous sections of this Blueprint document provided an overview of links to tools which have been developed and used by the NTG Alliance to address digital, green and social skills needs at a strategic and operational level. As highlighted in Figure 4, the Blueprint contains the *NTG Skills Assessment Methodology* to identify skills needs at a strategic level, the *NTG Skills Matrix* and *NTG Skills Lab* to support organizations and individuals to identify skills needs at an operational level, the *NTG Skills Toolkit* to address skills needs at an operational level and the *NTG Quality Skills Standards Framework* to support industry and education/training providers to address skills from a quality assurance perspective. Vital to all of these activities is transformative collaboration at European, national and regional level, which is underpinned by the *NTG Collaborative Governance Framework*. The Framework is a strategic tool that is based on best practice and provides the roadmap and key actions to enable successful collaboration. As such it should underpin activities and priorities at all levels and should be used in conjunction with the action plan presented in section 7.3.

7.2 Priorities and Actions

Six priorities with associated actions, key actors and timelines are provided. Please refer to Table 1 (p.4) for details of Key Actors.

7. Sustainability and Action Plan
(continued)

Priority 1

Facilitating and strengthening cooperation and exchange of good practices
in the tourism sector at EU level

Suggested actions	Key Actors	Timeline
→ Support the sector to assess current skills gaps and develop strategic actions related to future skills needs by providing strategic direction for collaboration between relevant stakeholders through EU policy and instruments, such as the Pact for Skills initiative.	• EU • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing
→ Encourage transnational cooperation, developing infrastructures (e.g., Strategic alliances and partnerships) for knowledge sharing.	• EU • National/Regional Government • Industry • Education & Training providers • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing
→ Take account of the fragmented nature of the tourism sector by involving a broad range of stakeholders in informing European policy development.	• EU • National/Regional Government • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Maintain and continue to develop EU level funding strategies, to strengthen collaboration, build stronger partnerships and support tourism skills-development.	• EU	Ongoing
→ Utilize initiatives such as the Pact for Skills to create linkages and further collaboration and sharing of best practice between National/Regional Skills Partnerships.	• EU • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Immediate



7. Sustainability and Action Plan
(continued)

Priority 2

To improve partnerships at national and regional level, between all relevant stakeholders including industry, education and training providers, social partners and national and regional governments.

Suggested actions	Key Actors	Timeline
→ Provide strategic direction at national and regional level through policy development, to support collaboration and address current and future skills needs in the tourism sector.	 • National and Regional Government • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Ensure all relevant stakeholders have a voice in national and regional policy development through the N/RSPs or other strategic mechanisms.	• National and Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Social Partners • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Ensure that collaboration between stakeholders is underpinned by an effective collaborative governance framework such as the NTG Collaborative Governance Framework.	 • National and Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Social Partners • Industry • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Engage with and support the activities of existing partnerships such as National/Regional Skills Partnerships.	• National and Regional Government • Education and Training Providers • Social Partners • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing

7. Sustainability and Action
Plan (continued)

Suggested actions	Key Actors	Timeline
→ Support the set-up of new National/Regional Skills Partnerships.	• National and Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Social Partners • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing
→ Provide support and funding for the establishment and operation of partnerships such as the National/Regional Skills Partnerships.	• National and Regional Government	Ongoing
→ Support networking for shared practices, through activities that bring visibility to joined actions.	• National and Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Social Partners • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing
→ Identify and avail of funding opportunities at national and regional level.	• N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Ensure effective collaboration by undertaking the actions listed in the NTG Collaborative Governance Framework related to 'Internal Processes', 'Internal Structure' and 'External Engagement'.	 • N/RSPs • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing



7. Sustainability and Action Plan
(continued)

Priority 3

Promoting a culture of lifelong learning, and access to tourism education and training in Europe

Suggested actions	Key Actors	Timeline
→ Create awareness of skills development and promote learning and career development opportunities within the tourism sector.	• EU • National/Regional Government • Industry • Education & Training Providers • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Ensure that flexible and accessible tourism education and training is available for all.	 • EU • National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Ensure accessibility to education and training for entrepreneurs and employees in tourism SMEs.	• EU • National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers	Ongoing
→ Continually identify and develop innovative learning solutions, e.g., digital platforms and digital learning modules.	• National/Regional Government • Public and Private Education & Training Providers	Ongoing
→ Continue to encourage cross-border mobility to support access to tourism education opportunities e.g., through Erasmus+ and other initiatives.	• EU • National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers	Ongoing

7. Sustainability and Action Plan
(continued)

Priority 4

Promoting high quality education and training to ensure upskilling, reskilling and new skills acquisition for a more sustainable tourism industry

Suggested actions		Key Actors	Timeline
→ Collaborate to continuously identify emerging skills needs, detect skills profiles and define actions to address them.	 	• EU • National/Regional Government • Industry • Education & Training Providers • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Evaluate education and training curricula through a collaborative approach, to ensure that existing and emerging skills needs are being addressed.		• National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • Industry • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Respond to the skills needs of the tourism ecosystem offering concrete, innovative skills solutions.	 	• Education & Training Providers • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing
→ Recognize the large array of stakeholders involved in influencing the development and provision of education and identify the steps and processes needed to incorporate new skills and competencies.		• EU • National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Immediate
→ Support the professionalization of the industry through recognition of previous work experience staff development, professional qualifications and life-long learning and education.		• National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Industry	Immediate
→ Actively promote synergies between public and private sectors, unlocking opportunities for further investment in skills training and development.		• EU • National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Continuous Skills Intelligence to detect new and changing skills profiles, occupational profiles, skills gaps, skills standards and define actions to cover them.		• National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing

7. Sustainability and Action Plan
(continued)

Priority 5

To contribute to post-COVID recovery through immediate, short and long-term actions

Suggested actions		Key Actors	Timeline
→ Continue to support post-COVID-19 tourism recovery across Europe through dedicated and comprehensive funding mechanisms.		• EU • National/Regional Government	Ongoing
→ Develop and implement plans and initiatives to address skills and staffing shortages in the European tourism sector as a result of COVID-19.		• EU • National/Regional Government • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Map urgent skills needs and occupational profiles emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular green, digital and social skills.	 	• Education & Training Providers • Social Partners (Employer Representative Bodies) • National/Regional Government • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Immediate
→ Restore and reactivate tourism in a more sustainable form that promotes digitalization and addresses environmental and social challenges in destinations.	  	• EU • National/Regional Government • Education & Training Providers • Industry • Pact for Skills Ecosystem	Ongoing
→ Retain and develop existing talent post-COVID-19, through facilitating reskilling, upskilling and new skills acquisition.		• Education & Training Providers • National/Regional Government • Industry	Immediate
→ Enhance and promote the image and attractiveness of the sector to create more sustainable employment.		• EU • National/Regional Government • Industry • Social Partners (Employer Representative bodies) • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Immediate
→ Explore opportunities for cross border mobility to attract talent and address skills and staffing shortages.		• EU • National and Regional Government	Ongoing
→ Develop a more resilient tourism industry and workforce to safeguard against future crises through collaboratively identifying and addressing future tourism skills needs.	  	• EU • National/Regional Government • Industry • Social Partners • Education & Training Providers • Pact for Skills Ecosystem • N/RSPs	Ongoing

7. Sustainability and Action Plan
(continued)

Priority 6

Foster a more attractive and inclusive tourism ecosystem for current and future employees.

Suggested actions	Key Actors	Timeline
→ Develop and launch marketing campaigns to highlight the positive aspects of working in the tourism industry, to attract and retain talent.	- National/Regional Government - Employee Representative Bodies - N/RSPs	Immediate
→ Actively establish and promote talent attraction, retention, and development initiatives to reduce job insecurity and increase job attractiveness in the tourism sector.	- National/Regional Government - Industry - Social Partners - Pact for Skills Ecosystem - N/RSPs	Immediate
→ Promote best practice by collaborating to work against any form of discrimination and inequality to support equal opportunities for all (including gender, disability, race and religion).	 - EU - National/Regional Government - Industry - Social Partners - Education & Training Providers - Pact for Skills Ecosystem - N/RSPs	Ongoing
→ Launch awareness campaigns and education/training initiatives to highlight and address inequality in the industry.	- Industry - Education & Training Providers - Pact for Skills Ecosystem - N/RSPs - Social Partners	Ongoing
→ Enable access for disadvantaged groups to tourism education and training in Europe.	- EU - National/Regional Government - Education & Training Providers - Social Partners	Ongoing
→ Support tourism entrepreneurs, and micro, small and medium enterprises through funding and other initiatives.	- EU - National/Regional Government	Ongoing



7. Sustainability and Action Plan (continued)

7.3 Conclusion

The COVID-19 health emergency brought severe challenges to the tourism industry, which has been one of the hardest hit sectors. Although tourism has seen an improvement in tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2022, as compared to 2021 figures, numbers are still at around half of pre-pandemic levels¹ and around 13 million workers have been impacted.

In light of the profound COVID-19 related impacts on the sector, during the 2020 European Tourism Convention the European Parliament launched the Statement from the Members of the Tourism Task Force.² The statement establishes concrete steps towards establishing an EU-wide strategy plan for the tourism sector, summarising new urgent actions for its recovery. A COVID-19 response investment fund has been established and targeted instruments have been added to the EU budget, supporting tourism recovery. These efforts have been helpful. However, continuing efforts by all stakeholders are still required.

As the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted, ensuring resilience and sustainability of the tourism sector is a key consideration. This is not the first destabilizing force to have an impact on the tourism sector and is unlikely to be the last as natural disasters, economic crises and conflict can all have catastrophic impacts on tourism at local, national or international levels. One of the most effective ways to achieve resilience of the sector is through the development of the skills profile of the tourism workforce.

The NTG Alliance has, over the past four years, delivered a series of tools and outputs with a practical focus to support upskilling, reskilling and acquisition of new digital, green and social skills within the tourism sector, pivoting as required, to take the impact of COVID-19 and other external forces on tourism into account. As we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis into a recovery phase, the alliance will continue to support skills development through addressing priorities and supporting actions. The NTG tools described in this blueprint will play a key role in these activities. Throughout the project the NTG partnership actively supported the European Commission in the implementation of the Pact for Skills in the tourism sector. This included participation in the process of engaging key stakeholders, and in defining the Pact's key performance indicators, thereby ensuring the exploitation of the wealth of knowledge, methodologies and operational tools developed by the NTG project. Additionally, eight of the NTG's project partners are part of the PANTOUR consortium, tasked with implementing the Blueprint for tourism skills development for the sector over the next four years. The PANTOUR project will build on the substantial collaborations, achievements and outputs of the NTG project, ensuring that skills shortages, gaps and future needs of the tourism sector in the European Union, particularly in the area of digitalization and sustainability, continue to be addressed.

1 19 UNWTO (2022). Tourism Enjoys Strong Start to 2022 while Facing New Uncertainties. <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourism-enjoys-strong-start-to-2022-while-facing-new-uncertainties>

2 Committee of Transport and Tourism (2020), Statement from the Members of the Tourism Task Force of the European Parliament on the Occasion of the European Tourism Convention. www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/212091/EP%20Tourism%20Task%20Force%20statement_%20European%20Tourism%20Convention_121020.pdf

