

The EU Pact for Skills – Regional Skills Partnership for Textile & Clothing in Central Slovenia

Part of the LSP for Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear Ecosystem (TCLF Skills Alliance)

The Challenge

The textile and clothing (TC) industries in Slovenia have been experiencing a sustained structural decline over the past decades. In 2025, the sector comprised approximately 340 companies and employs around 3,000 people in core textile production, while broader textile and clothing related activities account for an estimated 5,500 jobs across the value chain. Representing a significant contraction in both employment and production capacity compared to previous decades. The sector is characterised by a predominance of small and medium-sized enterprises, geographically dispersed operations, and a steadily ageing workforce, combined with a limited inflow of new talent and a declining number of dedicated educational and training programmes.

*In the Central Slovenia region, where a significant share of knowledge institutions and innovation actors are concentrated, the TC sector faces additional challenges related to **skills mismatches**, **limited sector visibility**, and **insufficient alignment between education provision and industry needs**. Despite the presence of relevant research and educational infrastructure, stronger coordination mechanisms are needed to effectively support sectoral transformation and workforce development at regional level.*

*The sector is simultaneously under increasing pressure to adapt to the **European Green Deal** and the EU's **digital transition** agenda. Companies are required to adopt more sustainable production processes, circular business models, and digital technologies (including automation, data-driven production, and advanced materials). Many enterprises, particularly SMEs face significant barriers in accessing the necessary skills, investment capacity, and innovation support to implement these transitions.*

Due to the relatively small size of the sector and the lack of critical mass, structured collaboration among stakeholders remains both challenging and essential. At the same time, the industry continues to face reputational challenges, including perceptions of low wages, limited career prospects, and low levels of innovation, which further constrain talent attraction and retention.

In response to these challenges, the Central Slovenia Regional Pact for Skills Development in the Textile and Clothing Industries aims to build a coordinated ecosystem connecting education, industry, research, and public stakeholders. Through targeted actions, it will strengthen skills, support the green and digital transition, improve sector attractiveness, and enhance long-term competitiveness and resilience at regional and national levels.

The Ambition

The Central Slovenia Regional Pact for Skills Development in the Textile and Clothing Industries aims to build a modern, inclusive, and resilient skills ecosystem that supports the green and digital transition and enhances the long-term competitiveness of the sector. The partnership brings together industry, education and training providers, research institutions, public authorities, and

other stakeholders to jointly address key challenges, including skills shortages, workforce ageing, and limited inflow of new talent.

Through coordinated action, the Pact commits to **strengthening cooperation between education and industry, promoting lifelong learning, and supporting the development of practical, future-oriented skills aligned with labour market needs**. Particular attention will be given to improving the **attractiveness** and **visibility** of the sector, as well as ensuring **better alignment** between education provision and industry demand.

The partnership also recognises the increasing importance of workforce inclusion. In cooperation with relevant institutions, including the Employment Service of Slovenia, it will support the integration of foreign workers and vulnerable groups by promoting access to language training and employment opportunities.

To achieve its ambition, the partnership focuses on three priority areas:

- Strengthening the transparency, accessibility, and visibility of lifelong learning opportunities, while promoting a culture of continuous skills development across all target groups.
- Improving cooperation and information flow between education and industry to support the development of future-oriented skills and facilitate the transfer of practical knowledge into education and training systems.
- Promoting inclusive access to employment and training opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups and foreign workers, including through targeted support measures and cooperation with relevant labour market institutions.

Initiative

The regional partnership is committed to implementing targeted actions that will directly contribute to the development of skills, knowledge, and the overall attractiveness of the textile and clothing sectors.

Our key commitments include:

1. Strengthening and promoting lifelong learning and training opportunities at formal and informal levels

The partnership commits to identifying skills and knowledge needs each year and, based on these findings, supporting and promoting the implementation of upskilling, reskilling, and micro-training programmes tailored to different target groups. These programmes will be delivered by various providers across Slovenia within the textile and clothing sectors. The goal is to increase awareness, accessibility, and transparency, while encouraging participation in training opportunities within these industries.

2. Building and strengthening partnerships between educational and study programmes, industry, and other stakeholders

The partnership is dedicated to connecting educational and study programmes, companies, the Employment Service of Slovenia, and other key stakeholders to create opportunities for industry visits for participants in educational programmes. This approach aims to provide direct insight into the Slovenian textile and clothing industries, encourage knowledge transfer, mentoring, collaboration, project-based learning, and the promotion of professional events. A special focus will also be placed on improving the flow of information regarding skills needs and available job opportunities within the textile and clothing sectors, to enhance the visibility of employment prospects.

3. Encouraging the inclusion of vulnerable groups and increasing the sector's attractiveness

The partnership commits to raising awareness, promoting, and informing the public about employment opportunities, access to language courses for foreigners, available national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes), and showcasing best practices and career opportunities within the sectors through coordinated communication among their members.

Activities

This chapter outlines the activities to be carried out under the Pact, specifying target groups, implementation methods, timelines, and methods for collecting information to compile a final report at the end of each year.

1. ANNUAL IDENTIFICATION OF LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (Promoting a culture of lifelong learning and inclusive participation)

Target groups

- **Direct target group:** Vocational and technical secondary schools (VET), higher vocational and higher education institutions (HEI), and the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI Slovenia)
- **Indirect target group:** General public, unemployed persons, older workers (50+), women, migrants/foreign workers, and other underrepresented groups in the textile and clothing sector

Implementation

A short annual online survey (up to 10 questions) will be conducted among VET and HEI institutions in Slovenia to collect up-to-date information on lifelong learning and formal education programmes in the textile and clothing (TC) sector. The survey will map the number and type of programmes offered, participation levels, and the extent to which training provision is accessible to different target groups, including vulnerable groups and foreign workers.

Participation in the survey will be voluntary but structured, ensuring a consistent yet flexible approach to data collection across institutions.

To strengthen the robustness and relevance of the findings, the survey will be complemented by qualitative data collection methods, including periodic semi-structured interviews and/or thematic focus groups with key stakeholders (education providers, employers, and relevant institutions). These qualitative inputs will provide deeper insight into skills needs, barriers to participation, employer engagement, and the accessibility of training opportunities, particularly for underrepresented groups.

To further support inclusiveness, the survey will also collect information on:

- participation of unemployed persons, older workers (50+), women, and migrants/foreign workers
- accessibility measures (e.g. flexible learning formats, entry-level training, language support)
- employer involvement in encouraging participation in lifelong learning

Promotion of lifelong learning opportunities and inclusive participation will be carried out continuously through communication channels of Pact coordinators and partners, with particular attention to reaching underrepresented groups.

Information collection includes

- *Overview of formal and non-formal education and training programmes in the TC sector*
- *Number of programmes and participants per year*
- *Participant profile (employed, unemployed, 50+, women/men, migrants/foreign workers where available)*
- *Accessibility features of programmes (flexible delivery formats, entry-level options, language support where relevant)*
- *New teaching tools, methodologies, and innovations in training delivery*
- *Employer engagement in promoting participation of vulnerable groups in lifelong learning*

Next steps

Collected data will be analysed and summarised in an annual report. Findings will be used to:

- *promote lifelong learning opportunities in TC sectors through coordinated communication channels*
- *inform industry and stakeholders about skills supply, participation trends, and accessibility gaps*
- *identify barriers to participation, particularly for vulnerable groups, and propose targeted improvements*
- *strengthen alignment between training provision, labour market needs, and inclusive skills development objectives*

Where appropriate, results from quantitative and qualitative data sources will be cross-validated to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of sectoral skills dynamics and to support evidence-based decision-making within the Pact.

2. CONNECTING SCHOOLS WITH INDUSTRY

(Building strong skills partnerships with Pact stakeholders)

Target group:

- *Direct target group: VET and HEI institutions, Textile and Clothing sector companies, Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ)*
- *Indirect target group: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (GZS) and Chamber of Crafts and Small Business of Slovenia, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation (MVZI), National Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Quality in Higher Education (NAKVIS), CPI.*

Implementation:

- *Establishing industrial connections: RSP coordinators (ZTS, ŠC Celje) provide schools with company contacts and support initial arrangements for industry visits.*
- *Conducting industry visits (Engagement of approximately 2-3 VET and HEI institutions actively participating, depending on sector capacity and willingness to participate) ± Schools organise logistics and scheduling according to the curriculum. Visits aim to showcase the company's work processes, professions, and sustainable and digital practices.*

- *Apprenticeship, mentorship, or employment:* The goal of linking schools and companies is to enable information flow regarding internships, student work, thesis mentorship, or employment opportunities.

Information collection includes:

- Number of industry visits conducted in the year, number of participants, and information on potential internships, student work, mentorship, or employment opportunities in visited companies

Next steps:

Based on the collected data, a short annual report will be prepared to:

- Promote successful partnership models
- Highlight employment opportunities
- Strengthen the attractiveness of the textile and clothing sectors

3. ROUNDTABLE – INVOLVING SCHOOLS, INDUSTRY, AND OTHER RELEVANT PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS

(Promotion of the TC sectors' attractiveness)

Target group:

- Direct target group: Schools (VET/HEI), textile and clothing companies, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ZRSZ, other private and public entities
- Indirect target group: General public

Implementation:

- The roundtable will be held once a year, online or in-person.
- It may be organised as a standalone event or integrated into other activities led by RSP leaders.
- The purpose is to collect best practices, monitor school and partnership achievements, and review the current state of the textile and clothing sectors and industry.

Discussion structure:

- School and partnership achievements: Number of students in internships, industry visits, project collaborations, new contacts, and partnerships with industry
- Workforce needs and foreign participation: ZRSZ data on job vacancies in the textile and clothing sectors, presence and inclusion of foreign workers, language courses, NPK programmes related to Textile and Clothing
- Promotion and a modern sector image: Presentation of relevant education centres and partner activities appealing to the public (e.g., fashion shows, exhibitions, international projects, project assignments)

Information collection includes:

- Continuous monitoring of key data on education centres, companies, and participants' collaboration; internships; visits; project partnerships; inclusion of migrants; and NPK and language course data
- Data is compiled and presented once a year at the roundtable to interested stakeholders

Next steps:

- Analyse and share key findings with stakeholders
- Plan future activities, practices, and promotional initiatives
- Strengthen lifelong learning in the textile and clothing sectors

Partnership Cooperation Agreements

The partnership is led by a coordinating duo (ZTS and ŠC Celje), which carries out the following tasks:

- Strategic guidance and monitoring of goal implementation
- Organisation of partner meetings
- Communication with the European TCLF large-scale partnership
- Coordination of annual activity plans (surveys, events, networking)
- Management of reporting and data collection

Types of organisations within the partnership:

The partnership brings together diverse actors from the Textile and Clothing ecosystem and the broader development environment, including:

- Educational institutions (VET, HEI): SIC- Strokovni izobraževalni center Ljubljana, Fakulteta za dizajn
- Companies and industrial associations: Beti d. o. o., Knof so. p.
- Employment Service of Slovenia (ZRSZ)
- Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)

Working methods and communication:

The partnership operates through a combination of online and in-person meetings and online correspondence, with clear responsibilities and transparent reporting:

- Operational meetings: implementation of concrete activities (surveys, networking, roundtables)
- Digital communication: email, shared platform/cloud, and shared documentation
- Coordinating organisation: responsible for minutes, task tracking, summaries, and partner updates

Management unit in charge of the Central Slovenia RSP coordination:

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Central Slovenia RSP members, directly involved in RSP actions:

Educational institutions from the Central Slovenia Region

Strokovni izobraževalni center Ljubljana
Srednja šola za logistiko in tekstilstvo



Fakulteta za dizajn



Public Services / National Bodies from the Central Slovenia Region:

Zavod za zaposlovanje, točka za tujce



Center Republike Slovenije za poklicno
izobraževanje



Companies from other regions:

BETI d. o. o.



Zavod Knof so. p.

knof