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GreenLift

Green Transition of the TCFL Industry

Social-responsive Upskilling and Reskilling Opportunities towards the Green Transition of the TCLF Industry

The GREEN-LIFT Framework for the Green Reskilling/Upskilling of the TCLF Workforce

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Abstract:

The GREEN-LIFT Framework for the Green Re- and Upskilling of the TCLF Workforce is a practical and human-centred framework developed to support the green transition of the Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector. Built on evidence gathered through the GREEN-LIFT needs analysis, the framework responds to identified skills gaps, organisational challenges, and the uneven impact of the transition on SMEs and vulnerable groups, including women, low-skilled workers, NEETs and in-transition workers. Rather than focusing only on technical upskilling, it promotes a holistic approach that combines career guidance, mentoring and coaching, psychosocial well-being, and inclusive support mechanisms.

The framework is structured around two complementary pillars: a Holistic Support Model Guide for supporting workers throughout transition processes, and a short, practice-oriented Training Programme for HR managers and support staff to strengthen organisational capacity. In

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	addition, it includes a Social Impact Assessment Toolkit to help organisations monitor and evaluate the social effects of transition measures. Overall, the framework aims to support a fair, inclusive and socially responsive green transition in the TCLF sector, ensuring that sustainability objectives are pursued alongside workforce resilience, employability and well-being.
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1. Introduction

The transition towards a more sustainable and circular economy is reshaping the Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector across Europe. This transformation is driven by regulatory developments, technological advancements and increasing societal expectations for environmentally and socially responsible practices. While these changes create new opportunities for innovation and growth, they also require significant adaptation at both organisational and workforce levels.

In this context, the GREEN-LIFT project responds to the need for a more inclusive and socially responsive approach to workforce development. Moving beyond a narrow focus on technical skills, it recognises that the green transition also involves complex human, organisational and behavioural dimensions. Workers are required not only to acquire new competences, but also to navigate uncertainty, adapt to evolving roles and remain engaged in continuous professional development.

The GREEN-LIFT Framework has been developed as a practical, evidence-based tool to support this transition. Grounded in transnational research and stakeholder engagement, it provides organisations, particularly SMEs, with structured guidance and adaptable tools to support their workforce holistically. By integrating career guidance, mentoring and psychosocial support alongside skills development, the Framework aims to ensure that the green transition is not only effective, but also fair, inclusive and sustainable for all.

1.1. The GREEN-LIFT Project

GREEN-LIFT *(Social-responsive Upskilling and Reskilling Opportunities towards the Green Transition of the TCLF Industry)* addresses the challenges of sustainability and social inclusion that the sector faces. It aims to equip its target groups (as these are being presented in the following) with the necessary green and digital skills for supporting sustainable development. Through tailored training programs, holistic support services and hands-on learning labs, the project enhances employability in the sector, promotes continuous professional development and supports innovation and resilience in alignment with EU priorities.

More specifically, the project's objectives can be summarized in the following:

- To address the transition towards a sustainable Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector by implementing a comprehensive framework for circular reskilling/upskilling.
- To support the reskilling/upskilling of the existing and future workforce of the sector by identifying their level of skills and providing them with tailored training programs to meet their needs.
- To foster social inclusion and the well-being of the workers via a holistic approach in skills development that utilises counselling and mentoring to

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ensure that reskilling/upskilling takes place in a supportive manner towards their psychosocial needs.

- To reinforce and leverage stakeholder collaboration (Higher Education Institutions (HEI), Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, Chambers of Commerce, and business associations) to enhance its impact on the sector and wider community.
- To promote hands-on experience for sectoral workers through the establishment of training and resource hubs, career guidance and counselling.
- To raise awareness among textile SMEs and relevant stakeholders via promotional activities about the socio-economic aspects of in-transition workers and vulnerable groups.

1.2. Our Target Groups

The GREEN-LIFT project aims to provide qualitative upskilling and reskilling training targeted at vulnerable groups and in-transition workers. It is primarily focused on:

- Textile workers (women) and in-transition workers
- Individuals, Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs), and unemployed low-skilled individuals
- Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and VET providers

Additionally, it aims to empower:

- Industry stakeholders (Chambers of Commerce, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), employers)
- Local communities and wider society

1.3. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to present the GREEN-LIFT Framework for the Green reskilling/upskilling of the TCLF workforce, developed under Work Package 2 (WP2) of the GREEN-LIFT project. The Framework is designed as a **practical and operational reference for HR managers, employers and support staff in the Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector** who are required to manage workforce transition in the context of the green transition.

Building on the evidence generated through the transnational needs assessment and stakeholder engagement activities, the Framework provides a structured, needs-based and human-centred approach to supporting the TCLF workforce throughout the green transition, with a strong focus on applicability in real organisational settings, particularly SMEs. More specifically, this document aims to:

- Translate the findings of the GREEN-LIFT needs analysis into a Holistic Support Model addressing not only skills development, but also career guidance, mentoring, well-being and social inclusion needs of workers in transition.

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- Provide hands-on guidance and ready-to-use tools to TCLF organisations, HR managers and support staff for the design and implementation of support mechanisms tailored to different workforce profiles, including vulnerable and under-represented groups.
- Outline a short, practice-oriented Training Programme for HR Managers and Support Staff, enabling organisations to operationalise the Holistic Support Model within their own contexts.
- Ensure clear complementarity with the GREEN-LIFT training pathways developed in subsequent Work Packages, while avoiding duplication with technical and vocational training provision.
- Contribute to a fair, inclusive and socially responsive green transition of the TCLF sector by strengthening organisational capacity, workforce resilience and long-term employability.

Ultimately, this document serves as a practical framework and decision-support tool for organisations and stakeholders involved in workforce transformation within the TCLF sector, supporting the implementation of sustainable practices while ensuring that no worker is left behind during the transition.

2. The GREEN-LIFT Framework: Background, Rationale and How to Use it

The GREEN-LIFT Framework has been developed as a structured, evidence-based response to the complex transformation currently taking place in the TCLF sector. Grounded in the findings of the project's needs analysis, it adopts a human-centred and practical approach that goes beyond traditional technical training, integrating career guidance, mentoring, and psychosocial support. The rationale behind the framework lies in the recognition that the green transition is not only a technological or regulatory shift, but also a profound workforce transformation requiring new skills, adaptive capacities, and inclusive support mechanisms. Therefore, the framework provides organisations, particularly SMEs, with clear guidance and tools to manage this transition in a holistic, inclusive and operational manner.

2.1 Challenges of the Green Transition in the TCLF Sector

The transition towards sustainability in the TCLF sector is driven by regulatory pressures, technological advancements and increasing market expectations, yet it presents significant challenges at both organisational and workforce levels. Companies are required to adopt new production models, integrate circular economic principles and comply with stricter environmental standards, while simultaneously adapting to digitalisation and automation processes. These changes create substantial skills gaps, redefine professional roles and generate uncertainty among workers, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women, low-skilled individuals and in-transition employees. At the same time, SMEs face limited financial and organisational capacity to respond effectively,

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leading to uneven readiness across the sector. As a result, the green transition is not only a technical challenge but a systemic one, requiring coordinated, inclusive and socially responsive approaches to ensure that workforce adaptation, well-being and long-term employability are effectively supported.

2.1.1. Structural Drivers of Green Transition

The TCLF sector is undergoing the most profound structural transformation in its history. A variety of key drivers characterise this shift:

a) Regulatory evolution at a national and European level

Regulatory frameworks existing at the EU and national levels support and protect the effective implementation of the green transition actions. Some of these frameworks are:

- The Circular Economy Action Plan
- The European Green Deal

b) Rising sustainability expectations

Sustainability has become a key competitiveness factor in the TCLF sector, driven by increased consumer awareness, stricter public policies and market pressure for transparency and responsible practices. Compliance with sustainability standards is increasingly a condition for market access, particularly for SMEs. This directly affects daily operations, as workers are required to apply sustainable practices, monitor environmental performance indicators and support certification and reporting processes.

c) Technological advancements

Technological progress is reshaping production and supply chains through digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, and advanced recycling solutions, improving efficiency and reducing environmental impact. At the same time, it generates new skills requirements and accelerates the green and digital transition of the sector. In practice, workers are increasingly involved in using digital tools, data-driven decision-making and adapting their roles to more complex, technology-enabled work environments. All these key drivers introduce to the sector advanced sustainability concepts such as:

- Waste prevention and resource efficiency
- Eco-design and lifecycle thinking
- Supply-chain transparency and traceability

All these changes are crucial for aligning the green transition with EU sustainability objectives, but they require specialised skills, strategic planning and organisational capacity. However, levels of readiness and organisational capacity vary significantly across the sector, creating uneven abilities among organisations to respond effectively to regulatory, technological and sustainability-driven demands.

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2.1.2. Implications for skills and professional roles

The green transition is reshaping skills needs and job roles across the TCLF sector in several significant ways. Several key implications[1] include:

A shift from linear to circular production models emphasising:

- Durability and repair
- Reuse and recycling
- Efficient resource management

Emergence of new/transformed job roles in:

- Sustainable and circular design
- Logistics and reverse logistics
- After-sales services, repair and reuse systems

Increasing skills mismatches where:

- Existing competencies no longer meet evolving job requirements

Technical skills are important in this transformation, but updating these is not enough. There's an imperative need for changing the mindset of stakeholders within the sector, which will allow them to embed sustainability, systems thinking and long-term value creation into day-to-day work activities.

2.1.3. Digitalisation and automation: Accelerators of change

Digitalisation and automation are key enablers of the green transition in the TCLF sector, acting as accelerators of change across production systems, business models and workforce structures. In this context, three core pillars are highlighted:

Automation of production processes	*Data-driven desicion making*	*Human-technology collaboration*

This selection is consistent with broader EU frameworks, such as the Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem and the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, which identify a wider range of transformation areas-including

[1] *EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles*, *Circular Economy Action Plan*, *Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem*, *CEDEFOP, 2021). Skills for green transition*, *OECD (2021). Skills for a Green Transition*, *International Labour Organization (2022), Skills for a greener future*

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circular design, sustainable materials, and new business models-but explicitly emphasise **digital technologies, automation and data systems** as key drivers enabling these changes. Within this broader landscape, the three selected pillars reflect the specific intersection between **digitalisation, automation and sustainability**, focusing on how technological systems reshape workflows, optimise resource use, and enhance transparency across value chains.

2.1.4. Uneven impact across SMEs and vulnerable groups

The impact of the green transition is deep in the TCLF sector. SMEs and vulnerable groups seem to experience its pressure unevenly compared to large-scale organisations.

- **SMEs**

Even though SMEs represent most enterprises in the TCLF sector, they are disproportionately affected by the transition. The main reasons for this are:

The inability of SMEs to enter the green transition smoothly leads to workforce transition efforts that are fragmented, informal or reactive.

- **Vulnerable groups**

As mentioned earlier, certain workforce groups within the sector face heightened risks of job displacement or redundancy:

- **Women**: They experience limited career progression and reskilling access and are mostly employed in automation-prone production roles.
- **Low-skilled workers**: They present low literacy, self-esteem and willingness to adapt to change, all factors that exclude them from reskilling/upskilling efforts.
- **NEETS**: this target group often lacks access to career opportunities, as they can't be provided with adequate information on the upcoming change.

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2.1.5. System-wide challenges requiring a socially responsive transition

Across the sector, a set of interrelated structural and human-centred challenges is increasingly evident[2]:

- Persistent skills mismatches
- Unequal access to structured and tailored upskilling, particularly for SMEs and vulnerable workers
- Widespread career uncertainty and anxiety about future employability
- Fear of replacement by automated systems
- Resistance to change driven by low self-esteem and lack of support

Evidence[3] indicates that while training initiatives are increasingly recognised, complementary support measures, such as guidance, mentoring and psychosocial support, are less systematically available, limiting their accessibility to workers, especially those in vulnerable.

2.1.6. Shaping an inclusive and Green Transition Framework

The identified challenges underline the need for a green transition approach that goes beyond technical upskilling. The sources of evidence of the sectoral challenges in terms of a socially responsive transition, as indicated above, show that there is a clear imperative for **integrated frameworks** that:

Link technical skills development with:

- Career guidance
- Organisational capacity building
- Psychosocial and well-being support

Promote:

- Inclusion
- Confidence building
- Workforce resilience

Ensure that sustainability transformation is:

- Human-centred
- Equitable
- Effective

[2] European Commission (2020). Circular Economy Action Plan., European Commission (2023). Transition Pathway for the Textiles Ecosystem, CEDEFOP (2021). Skills for a green transition, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2022). Psychosocial risks and mental health at work, International Labour Organization (2022). Skills for a greener future, OECD (2025), Employment and Skills Policies for the Green Transition: Review of International Good Practices, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f0c558fa-en

[3] CEDEFOP Green Employment and Skills Transformation Report, ILO Skills for a Greener Future, OECD Employment and Skills Policies for the Green Transition

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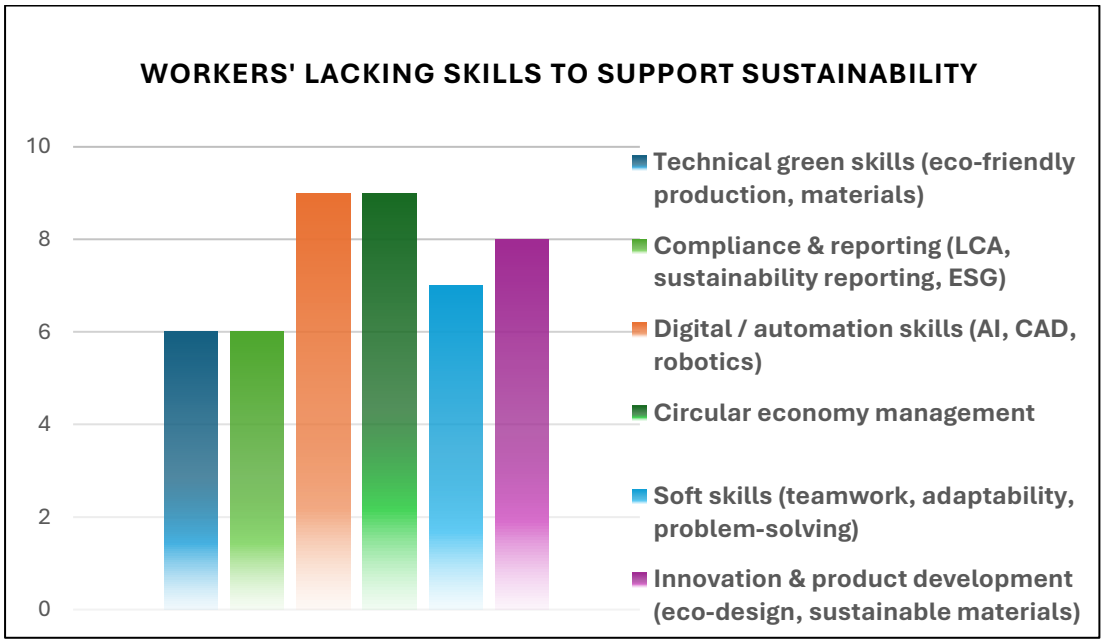
2.2 Evidence from the GREEN-LIFT Needs Analysis

The GREEN-LIFT Framework is built on the principles of fair reskilling and upskilling within a context of sustainability while paying attention to the workforce's well-being and professional excellence. It draws evidence from the transnational needs assessment conducted within the project and presented in the relevant report. This data provides a clear image of the existing skills gaps and obstacles to Green Transition, allowing the project to identify and develop best practices for implementing its deliverables successfully.

2.2.1. Workforce: lacking skills and training

The GREEN-LIFT transnational needs assessment provides a comprehensive overview of workforce skills, training gaps and barriers to participation in the TCLF sector, based on a total of **90** respondents across four countries (Sweden, Greece, Italy and Spain).

Before analysing the results presented in the following figures, it is important to emphasise that **reskilling is not only a technical process, but also a behavioural and organisational one**. Skills such as adaptability, problem-solving, teamwork and the ability to participate in continuous learning environments are essential for enabling workers to apply new knowledge, cope with change, and remain engaged throughout the transition process.



Number of respondents: 11

The data shows that workers and employers consistently identify digital and green technical skills (e.g. CAD, AI, circular economy processes, traceability systems) as key priorities. At the same time, transversal skills such as adaptability, teamwork and problem-solving are also recognised, particularly by employers who emphasise their importance for innovation and workplace transformation.

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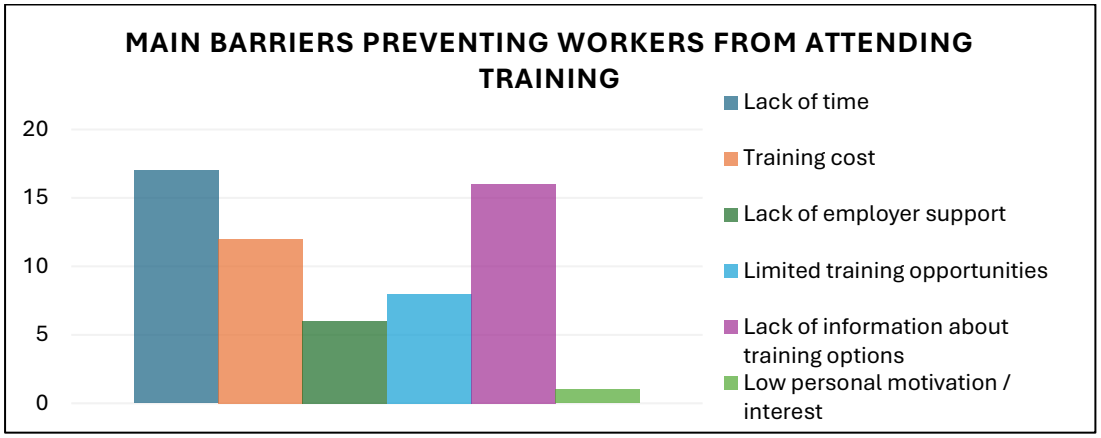
However, despite this recognition, the findings reveal a significant gap in practice. Less than half of the workers reported having participated in sustainability-related training, indicating limited access to structured reskilling opportunities. Barriers such as lack of time, cost of training, limited availability, and insufficient information further restrict participation.



Number of respondents: 40

This gap is particularly evident in SMEs, which dominate the TCLF sector. Due to limited resources and organisational capacity, SMEs tend to prioritise short-term, technical upskilling linked to immediate production needs, while supporting skills and structured guidance mechanisms remain underdeveloped or informal. As a result, workers may acquire technical knowledge without having the necessary support to:

- adapt to new roles,
- manage uncertainty,
- engage in continuous learning, or
- translating skills into sustainable practices.

This creates a critical bottleneck for the green transition.Therefore, the findings clearly indicate that effective reskilling/upskilling in the TCLF sector requires a social-responsive approach, where technical training is systematically complemented by:

- career guidance,
- mentoring and coaching,
- well-being and psychosocial support, and
- inclusive learning environments.

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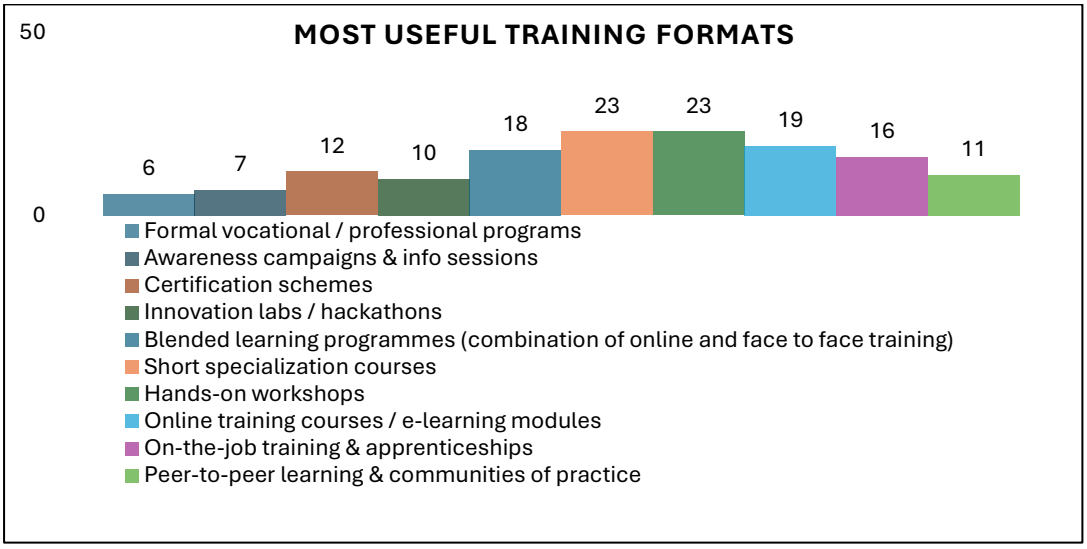
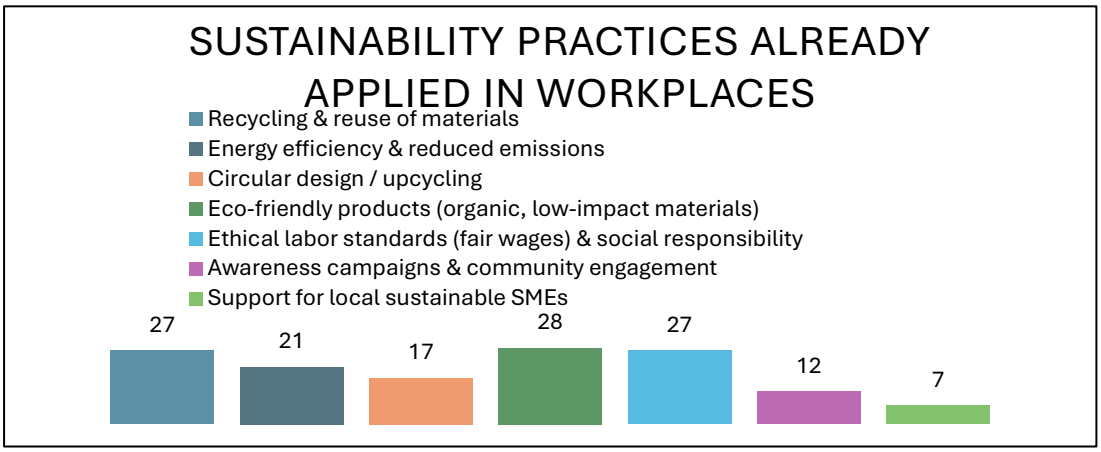


Number of respondents: 69

This interpretation provides the foundation for the development of the GREEN-LIFT Framework, as further elaborated in Section 2.4.

2.2.2. Sustainability in the TCLF sector

The needs assessment offers a transnational look at sustainability within the TCLF sector, synthesised from **90** stakeholder survey responses across all participating countries. While the data shows that sustainability is currently treated as a technical matter of compliance-prioritising materials and environmental metrics-the findings suggest that true progress is impossible without a simultaneous commitment to workforce development and capacity-building.



Number of respondents: 40

The findings show that organisations are increasingly adopting sustainability practices such as recycling, circular design, eco-friendly materials and ethical labour standards.

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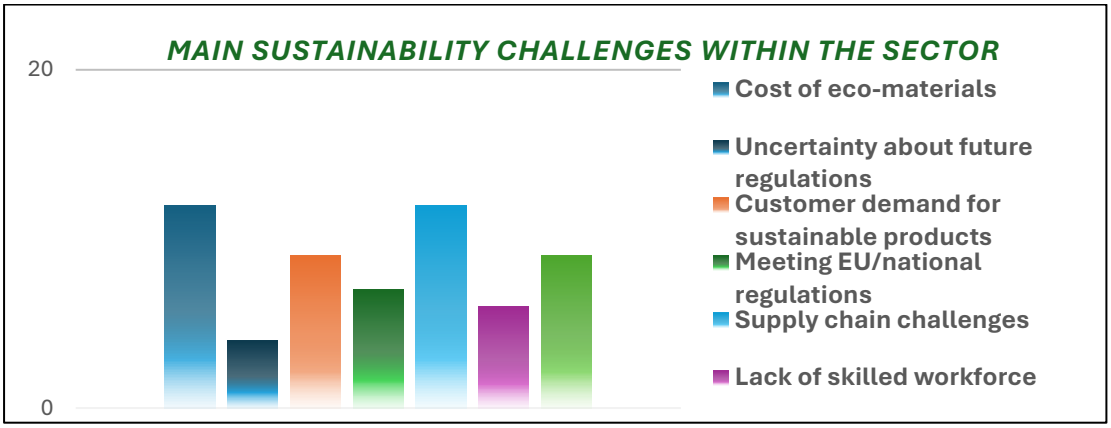
However, as indicated in the next diagram, the transition remains uneven, particularly among SMEs, which face significant structural barriers including high costs, limited funding, lack of access to training and weak institutional support.

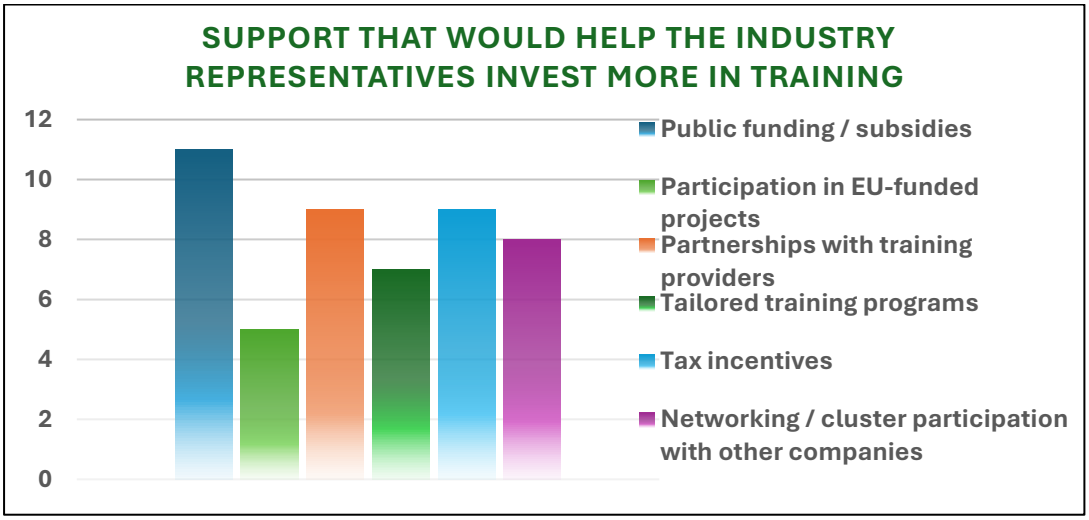


Number of respondents: 11

Through the research phase, it became evident that training of the workforce on sustainability practices from a holistic point of view (providing guidance and psychosocial support along with learning opportunities) would benefit the green transition of the sector to the maximum. Although organisations in the sector understand the importance of training, they often struggle with providing it due to a variety of reasons, but the main ones could be summarised as:

- Lack of financial capacity
- Poor networking
- Lack of proper training support

The needs analysis draws a clear image of the factors that could support the sector in the direction of becoming more sustainable through a holistic approach to learning and training:



Number of respondents: 11

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2.3 From Evidence to Framework Design

The development of the GREEN-LIFT Framework was informed by a transnational evidence-gathering process that combined stakeholder mapping, surveys and focus groups across the participating countries, as documented in the *GREEN-LIFT Transnational Needs Assessment Report* (2025). Rather than simply confirming known challenges, the analysis highlighted concrete gaps in how organisations currently support workers during the green transition, particularly beyond technical and digital training.

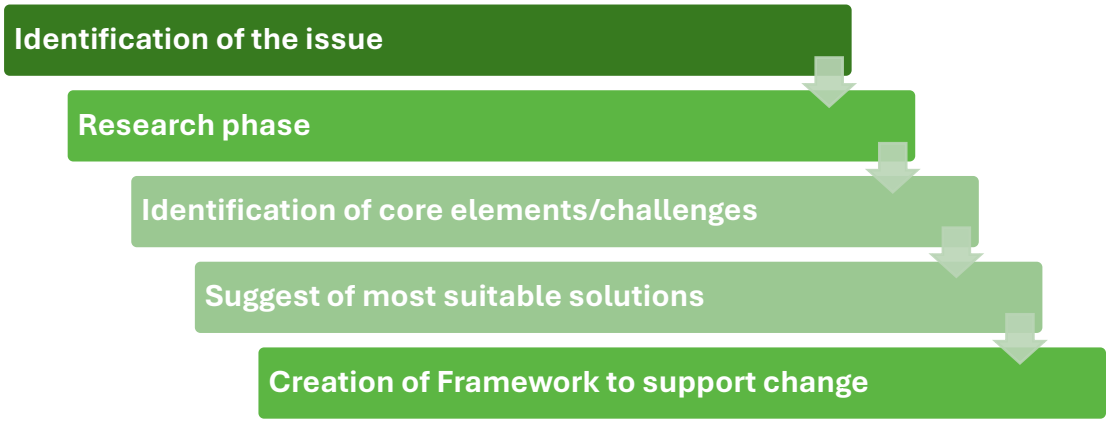
Findings showed that while sustainability and digital skills gaps are widely recognised across the TCLF sector in Sweden, Greece, Italy and Spain, organisations often lack structured mechanisms to help workers navigate role changes, career uncertainty and psychosocial pressure. This evidence directly informed the design choices of the Framework, leading to a deliberate emphasis on career guidance, mentoring/coaching and well-being support as core components, instead of a narrow focus on technical upskilling alone.

As a result, the Framework is structured around two complementary Pillars:

- The first defines what types of holistic support mechanisms are needed to accompany the green transition.
- The second focuses on how organisations can build the internal capacity to implement these mechanisms in practice.

In this way, the Framework translates evidence into a practical, human-centred model that responds directly to the realities identified during the analysis phase.

The GREEN-LIFT Framework is the product of a process that aims to analyse in a logical order the issue of smooth green transition of the TCLF sector.



The special feature of the Framework is the fact that it addresses the matter of sustainability shifting within the sector from a continuous professional development aspect, but with a holistic approach.

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Technical skills are a fundamental component of the green transition in the TCLF sector. However, for these skills to reach their full potential, they need to be supported by career guidance, mentoring and attention to workforce well-being. On this basis, the Framework adopts a holistic approach, recognising that technical upskilling alone may not be sufficient to enable workers to adapt successfully to change. Psychosocial resilience, inclusion and continuous support are equally important in helping individuals apply new competences, manage uncertainty and participate actively in ongoing professional development.

The Framework's design is further shaped by continuous input from the industry's stakeholders, the level of skills and competences of the labour market, as well as contributions from innovation and education ecosystems. Through the active involvement of a diverse range of TCLF sector stakeholders- including employers, workers, Chambers of Commerce, VET providers and social actors- during the needs assessment phase, the Framework's architecture was designed to accurately reflect the sector's realities, challenges and operational context: constraints in terms of organisational readiness, specific struggles of SMEs and labour market conditions per region. This is yet another indicator of the level of adaptability that the Framework has across diverse TCLF contexts.

2.4 Purpose and Scope of the GREEN-LIFT Framework

This section outlines the purpose and scope of the GREEN-LIFT Framework, clarifying its role as a practical tool to support organisations in managing workforce transition within the green transformation of the TCLF sector. It defines both the objectives the Framework aims to achieve and the boundaries within which it operates, with particular emphasis on its focus on organisational support mechanisms rather than technical training provision.

2.4.1. Purpose

The GREEN-LIFT Framework aims to support TCLF organisations in managing their green transition processes in a smooth and structured manner that takes into consideration inclusion and the specific psychosocial needs of its workforce, as these have been identified in the GREEN-LIFT needs analysis. It primarily seeks to bridge the organisational and human-centred gaps of the green transition and replenish the gaps left from the emphasis given previously, solely on the development of technical and digital skills.

support especially SMEs in navigating the transformation of their workforce by providing them with a robust and practical model to use as a reference before, during and after reskilling/upskilling processes.

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The need for such a model became evident in the evidence collected through stakeholder engagement, as many SMEs highlighted their lack of capacity to use appropriate tools or internal methods to guide their workforce during periods of change, such as the green transitioning phase that they are experiencing today.

In the same context, the Framework targets HR managers and SME owners, seeking to equip them with knowledge, tools and skills which will allow them to support the green transitioning of the workforce in a holistic approach.

Ultimately, the GREEN-LIFT Framework is designed to ensure that no worker is left behind in the green transition of the sector by placing as its core values concepts like inclusion, well-being and person-centred reskilling/upskilling.

2.4.2. Scope

The scope of the GREEN_LIFT Framework focuses on **enhancing support mechanisms rather than delivering technical training**.

Instead of replacing or supplementing any level of vocational training (vocational, technical, sector-specific), it acts proactively in a way. It addresses the barriers (non-technical ones) that prevent the sector's workforce from accessing reskilling and upskilling opportunities. Within this scope, it pays attention to strengthening organizational capacity-building rather than supporting individual VET learners in acquiring formal qualifications. More extensively, it reinforces the TCLF sector's capacity to identify gaps within the workforce's skills/ knowledge and accordingly organise internal processes and learning environments to facilitate and support continuous learning.

2.5. Framework's Target Groups

The GREEN_LIFT Framework primarily focuses on target groups that play a crucial role in managing, supporting and enabling the TCLF's sector workforce to transition towards sustainability:


HR managers and SME owners in the TCLF sector


Support staff, mentors and counsellors


TCLF manufacturing companies and clusters


Stakeholders supporting adult workforce transition

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2.6. Structure of the Framework

The structure of the Framework spins around **two basic pillars**, which are interlinked and complementary to each other:

- ***Pillar I: Needs-based holistic support Framework***

It primarily focuses on non-technical support mechanisms such as career guidance, mentoring/coaching and promotion of workers' well-being. The specific pillar is in direct relation to the evidence gathered during the needs assessment phase, which indicates that pure technical and green skills training without provision for inclusion, prevention and generally a more holistic approach is insufficient for a successful workforce transition.

- ***Pillar II: Training programme for HR managers and support staff***

Pilar II complements the Holistic Support Framework of the GREEN-LIFT project via a short, structured and practice-oriented approach of the necessary skills that HR managers and support staff need to strengthen the internal capacity building of SMEs. It works between the lines of the "training of the trainers" concept to ensure that TCLF sector organisations design, implement and sustain socially responsive, viable and holistically supportive actions of labour transition. In essence, Pillar I defines *what* type of support mechanisms are needed, while Pilar II is oriented towards *how* organisations of the sector can use these mechanisms effectively.

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2.7. How to Use the GREEN-LIFT Framework in Practice

The GREEN-LIFT Framework's architecture is based on the perception that it must be a practical and adaptable tool that responds effectively to the tailored needs of each target group of the TCLF sector. It comprises a step-by-step approach which allows for successful implementation, gradually:

Step 1: Workforce needs identification	Organisations use reflective practices and need assessment to identify skills gaps and psychosocial challenges affecting their workforce, and specifically the most vulnerable in-transition groups.
Step 2: Selection of appropriate support measures	After assessing needs, organisations use the findings to select targeted measures from the Holistic Support Framework, enabling tailored support rather than a general approach.
Step 3: Implementing guidance, mentoring and well-being actions	With external stakeholders, organisations implement the selected support mechanisms, focusing on structured yet flexible processes aligned with daily practices.
Step 4: Training HR and support staff	•HR managers and support staff actively participate in implementation to build capacity and ensure consistent internal adoption of support mechanisms.
Step 5: Linking support to upskilling pathways	Finally, support mechanisms are linked to existing upskilling/ reskilling pathways to ensure coherence and longevity of results.

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3. The GREENLift Pillars

This section presents the core pillars of the GREEN-LIFT Framework, which translates its overall approach into practical components for implementation. Each pillar addresses a distinct but complementary dimension of workforce support, combining conceptual guidance with actionable tools to assist organisations in managing the green transition in a structured and inclusive way.

Pillar I: A Holistic Support Model Guide

This Pillar provides **practical guidance and tools for HR managers, employers and support staff** on how to support workers throughout the green transition. Each of the sections below combines short explanatory content with concrete, ready-to-use support tools.

I. Career Guidance and Transition Pathways: How to support workers in planning their green transition

Career guidance is of imperative importance for the transition of the TCLF workforce, as it enhances workers' understanding of how sustainability, circular economy and Industry 5.0 affect roles in their professional environment. When they better comprehend these concepts, they can make informed decisions about reskilling, upskilling or job-transitioning. Specifically, SMEs combine career guidance with internal organisational practices to maximise results: strengthen workforce resilience, ensure equal professional development opportunities for all, and ensure that the green transition is fair. Although the green transition of the TCLF sector is already underway, workers continue to face a series of interconnected obstacles which should be understood as a direct continuation of the system-wide issues identified in Section 2.1.5.

In this context, the following challenges reflect how systemic gaps are experienced at the individual level by workers navigating transition processes:

Uncertainty about the future:

Digitalisation, new technologies, and sustainability shifts create uncertainty, leaving workers unclear about the future relevance of their roles.

Fear of change/lack of confidence:

Low-skilled and older workers may feel anxious about new technologies, resist training, and underestimate their transferable skills.

Lack of clear career pathways:

New green roles are poorly communicated, limiting workers' understanding and ability to envision themselves in these positions.

Lack of proper career guidance:

Especially in SMEs, career guidance is often lacking, leaving workers to make reskilling or transition decisions with limited information.

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These challenges can be addressed through the GREEN-LIFT Framework, as presented in Section 2.7. To support its practical implementation, the following section outlines key implementation phases for delivering career guidance in organisational settings.

1. Phase 1. Identifying workers in need of career guidance

HR managers and support staff must be proactive and can identify workers in need of additional guidance. Usually, these are:

- Workers whose role might be affected by new requirements for automation or sustainability.
- Low-skilled workers, and specifically those with limited digital competence, who lack the confidence to engage in training opportunities.
- Workers who feel overwhelmed by the transition and present resistance to change or are unwilling to participate due to building uncertainty.
- Women and in-transition workers who lack accessibility to occasions for development.

Identification of all the above should be subject to observation, use of simple profiling tools and conversational capacity of the HR managers and support staff. To support this process in a structured and consistent way, the following tool can be used to systematically capture key information about each worker's profile and needs:

Tool 1: Simple worker profiling template

Field	Information to be completed
Worker's name	
Current role/ department	
Key tasks/ responsibilities	
Years of experience	
Self-perceived strengths	
Challenges faced	
Interest in learning	
Notes from HR/supervisor	

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2. Phase 2. Supporting reflection and skills awareness

Once the workers in need of support have been identified, they should be encouraged to reflect on:

- Their current tasks and responsibilities and how these may evolve
- Their formal and informal skills developed over time
- Their transferable competences and their relevance to green and circular roles
- Their personal aspirations, motivations and potential barriers (e.g. low confidence)

This step helps workers build self-awareness and prepares them for informed decision-making.

To guide this reflection process and translate insights into actionable planning, the following tool supports the structuring of individual career development pathways:

Tool 2: Transition and career planning template

Field	Information to be completed
Worker's name	
Current role/ level of skills	
Roles of interest/ skills of interest	
Goals (6-12 months ahead)	
Goals (1-3 years ahead)	
Training/ support required to achieve goals	
Next steps	
Review date	

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3. Phase 3. Supporting informed career decision-making

To make informed decisions, workers need a clear understanding of how the green transition affects their roles. HR managers and employers can support them by:

- Explaining how professional roles are evolving within the sector
- Presenting available opportunities (reskilling, upskilling, internal mobility)
- Linking career goals with relevant training and development pathways
- Supporting the definition of realistic, step-by-step career goals

To ensure that career guidance discussions are structured, consistent and outcome-oriented, the following checklist can be used as a practical reference during the interaction between HR staff and workers:

Tool 3: Checklist for HR managers to support career discussions

Before the discussion	
The worker is adequately informed about the nature of the discussion and why it is taking place.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I am aware of the sectoral and organisational changes and therefore can support the worker effectively.	☐ Yes ☐ No
During the discussion	
I am actively listening to the workers' concerns and aspirations.	☐ Yes ☐ No
The worker's transferable skills have been identified and acknowledged.	☐ Yes ☐ No
All possible career options, training opportunities and future expectations have been presented and shared thoroughly.	☐ Yes ☐ No
After the discussion	
Next steps for the worker's development have been agreed on a mutual basis.	☐ Yes ☐ No
The worker has established a connection to relevant training and support mechanisms.	☐ Yes ☐ No
A follow-up discussion has been scheduled.	☐ Yes ☐ No

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II. Mentoring and Coaching Support: How to organise and deliver mentoring in practice

Introduction: Mentoring and Coaching as Support Mechanisms in Workforce Transition

Across Europe, industries are undergoing significant transformations driven by technological innovation, digitalisation, sustainability requirements and changing market conditions. These transformations are particularly visible in the TCLF sector, which is characterised by a high concentration of SMEs and a workforce that combines traditional craftsmanship with modern industrial practices.

As companies introduce new technologies, implement more sustainable production methods and respond to increasing global competition, workers are increasingly required to update their skills and adapt to new professional roles. Workforce transitions may involve the introduction of digital production tools, automation technologies, new materials or new organisational processes. As a result, employees must continuously develop new competencies while adapting their existing knowledge to evolving workplace environments.

Formal training programmes remain essential for supporting skills development. However, training alone may not always be sufficient to help workers successfully apply new knowledge in everyday work situations. Employees often need additional support to understand new processes, adapt to technological changes and build confidence when performing unfamiliar tasks.

In this context, mentoring and coaching have emerged as valuable mechanisms for supporting learning and professional development in the workplace. These approaches complement formal training by offering personalised guidance and opportunities for dialogue, reflection and knowledge exchange.

For SMEs in the TCLF sector, mentoring and coaching offer several practical advantages. They can be implemented directly in the workplace, allowing learning to take place in real production contexts and reducing the need for employees to be absent from their daily tasks. In addition, these approaches make use of existing internal expertise, enabling experienced workers to transfer knowledge without requiring extensive external training resources. This can be particularly relevant for SMEs, which often face constraints in terms of time, budget and access to formal training provision.

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They are flexible and adaptable to different organisational contexts
They require limited financial resources compared to formal training programmes
They support knowledge transfer between experienced and younger workers
They strengthen collaboration and internal learning cultures

In textile production, footwear manufacturing or leather craftsmanship, mentoring can play an important role in ensuring that professional expertise is effectively transferred across generations of workers.

This chapter provides practical guidance on how organisations, particularly SMEs, can organise and implement mentoring activities in the workplace. It explains the differences between mentoring, coaching and informal workplace support, outlines the steps for establishing mentoring schemes and presents practical elements that can help organisations manage mentoring activities effectively.

Mentoring, Coaching and Informal Support in TCLF Workplaces

Professional learning in organisations can take many forms. In addition to formal training programmes, employees frequently develop their competencies through collaboration with colleagues, supervisors and more experienced professionals.

Mentoring, coaching and informal workplace support are three complementary approaches that contribute to professional development and knowledge sharing within organisations. Although they share certain similarities, they differ in terms of their objectives, level of structure and the type of interaction they promote between employees.

Understanding these differences helps organisations design development strategies that respond more effectively to the needs of their workforce. In TCLF, practical experience and hands-on learning are central to professional competence. Combining different support mechanisms can significantly enhance learning outcomes.

- **Mentoring**

Mentoring is a developmental relationship between a more experienced professional (the mentor) and a less experienced colleague (the mentee). The mentor provides guidance, shares professional knowledge and supports the mentee in developing both skills and confidence in their work.

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Mentoring relationships usually focus on longer-term professional development, rather than on solving immediate operational problems. Through regular interaction, mentors help mentees reflect on workplace experiences, better understand organisational expectations, and gradually expand their competencies.

In the TCLF sector, mentoring can support several important workplace processes, particularly those that involve the transfer of practical knowledge and professional expertise. For example, mentoring may contribute to:

- Integrating new employees into production teams
- Transferring specialised technical knowledge or craftsmanship skills
- Supporting employees in learning new technologies or production tools
- Helping workers adapt to changes in production processes
- Preparing experienced employees for supervisory or coordination roles

Because many TCLF skills are developed through practice and observation, mentoring is particularly effective in transferring tacit knowledge, the practical know-how that experienced workers accumulate over many years. However, this learning environment also presents certain limitations. An overreliance on a senior mentor may restrict junior staff members' exposure to alternative learning methods and perspectives, potentially hindering their ability to independently reskill or upskill beyond the mentor's specific expertise. Therefore, while mentoring is valuable, it should ideally be complemented with other forms of learning to support more well-rounded professional development.

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➢ Coaching

Coaching is another important approach to professional development, although it differs from mentoring in several ways. While mentoring focuses on sharing experience and supporting long-term growth, coaching is usually more structured and focused on achieving specific objectives.

In a coaching relationship, the coach helps individuals analyse their own situations, identify potential solutions and define strategies for improvement. Rather than providing direct advice, the coach encourages reflection and supports individuals in developing their own problem-solving approaches.

Coaching processes often involve structured conversations that help individuals:

- Clarify professional goals
- Identify strengths and development needs
- Explore possible strategies for improvement
- Monitor progress towards defined objectives

Coaching can be particularly useful for developing transversal competencies such as:

- Leadership and team management
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Time management and organisation
- Adaptation to organisational change

Coaching relationships are generally shorter and more focused than mentoring relationships, often addressing specific challenges or performance goals.

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➢ Informal Support in the Workplace

In many SMEs, especially in production-oriented environments, a large proportion of learning takes place informally during everyday work activities. Employees often exchange knowledge spontaneously while collaborating on tasks or solving practical problems.

This type of learning is known as informal workplace learning. It is integrated into daily work routines and occurs naturally through interaction between colleagues.

Examples of informal workplace support include:

- asking colleagues for assistance when encountering a new task
- receiving spontaneous advice from supervisors or team leaders
- sharing practical tips during daily work routines

Informal learning offers several advantages. It is flexible, immediate and closely connected to real work situations. However, because it is unstructured, learning opportunities may not always be equally accessible to all employees.

For this reason, many organisations complement informal support with more structured mechanisms such as mentoring programmes. Structured mentoring provides clearer objectives, regular interaction and opportunities for reflection, helping ensure that knowledge transfer occurs more systematically.

	Mentoring	**Coaching**	**Informal Support**
Focus	Professional development and knowledge transfer	Performance improvement and goal achievement	Immediate assistance and problem solving
Structure	Semi-structured relationship	Highly structured process	Unstructured
Duration	Medium to long term	Short to medium term	Occasional
Relationship	Experienced mentor supports mentee	Coach facilitates reflection	Peer interaction
Main objective	Career development and knowledge sharing	Achieving specific goals	Solving day-to-day issues

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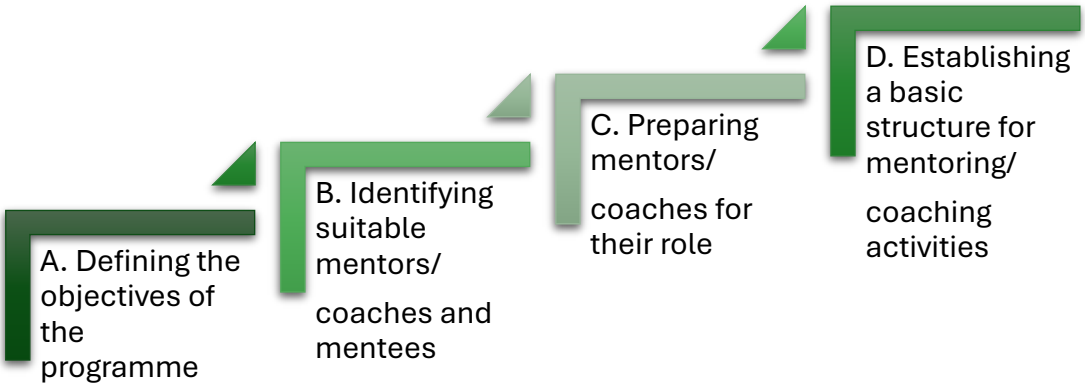
Setting Up a Mentoring/Coaching Scheme in SMEs

For many SMEs, establishing a mentoring or coaching programme may initially seem complex. However, these schemes can often be implemented using simple structures that rely on the knowledge and experience already present within the organisation. Mentoring and coaching programmes are particularly valuable in sectors like TCFL because they encourage collaboration between employees, facilitate the transfer of practical expertise, and support both personal and professional development. By creating opportunities for experienced workers to support colleagues, organisations can strengthen internal learning processes and build a culture of knowledge sharing.

Setting up a mentoring or coaching scheme generally involves several key steps:



Each of these steps contributes to creating mentoring relationships that are both productive and sustainable:

- **Step 1: Defining the Objectives of the Mentoring Programme**

Before implementing a mentoring scheme, organisations should clearly define the purpose of the programme. Well-defined objectives help ensure that mentoring activities contribute to organisational priorities and produce meaningful outcomes for participants. Clear objectives also help participants understand what the mentoring relationship aims to achieve and provide a reference point for evaluating the programme's effectiveness.

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Mentoring programmes may pursue several different objectives depending on organisational needs. For example, organisations may use mentoring to:

- Support the integration of new employees
- Facilitate knowledge transfer between experienced and younger workers
- Support workers during technological or organisational transitions
- Develop leadership potential among employees
- Strengthen collaboration and knowledge sharing within teams

By aligning mentoring objectives with organisational priorities, companies can ensure that the programme contributes to both employee development and organisational performance.

➢ **Step 2: Identifying Mentors and Mentees**

Selecting suitable participants is a crucial step in establishing a mentoring programme. Both mentors and mentees should be motivated to engage in the process and willing to invest time in building a productive relationship.

Mentors are typically experienced professionals who are willing to share their knowledge and support the development of colleagues. Effective mentors often demonstrate several key qualities:


Strong professional expertise


Good communication and interpersonal skills


Patience and empathy


Willingness to support the development of others

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Mentees are employees who can benefit from guidance and professional support. They may include:

- Newly recruited employees
- Workers learning new production techniques
- Employees transitioning to new roles
- Individuals preparing for career advancement

Participation should ideally be voluntary, as voluntary engagement tends to increase motivation and commitment to the mentoring process.

➢ **Step 3: Preparing Mentors**

Even though experienced employees possess valuable technical knowledge, mentoring also requires communication and interpersonal skills. Providing some basic preparation for mentors can significantly improve the quality of mentoring interactions.

Mentor preparation sessions can help participants understand the goals of the programme and develop effective mentoring practices. These sessions may introduce mentors to key skills such as:

- Active listening
- Effective communication techniques
- Asking open-ended questions
- Providing constructive feedback
- Helping mentees define realistic development goals

Such preparation does not need to be extensive. Even brief orientation sessions or guidance materials can help mentors feel more confident in their role and ensure that mentoring relationships develop in a constructive and supportive way.

➢ **Step 4: Establishing a Programme Structure**

Although mentoring relationships should remain flexible, it is useful to establish a basic structure that helps participants organise their interactions and maintain continuity throughout the programme. A mentoring programme structure may include several practical elements, such as:

Defining the duration of mentoring relationships (for example, three to six months)

Establishing the frequency of meetings (for example, monthly meetings)

Introducing simple documentation tools to track progress

Planning a final evaluation or feedback session

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Regular meetings help maintain momentum in the mentoring relationship and allow mentors and mentees to reflect on progress and address emerging challenges.

At the end of the mentoring cycle, organisations can collect feedback from participants to assess the effectiveness of the programme and identify opportunities for improvement.

Defining Mentor and Mentee Roles

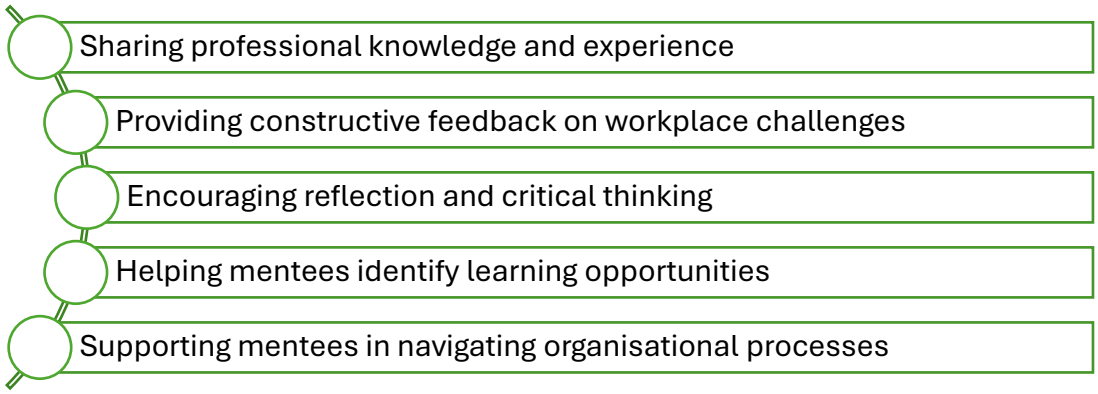
Clear roles and responsibilities are essential for establishing productive mentoring relationships. When both participants understand their role in the process, they can collaborate more effectively and focus on achieving shared development goals.

Mentoring relationships are based on mutual respect, open communication and a shared commitment to learning. Both mentors and mentees contribute actively to the success of the process.

- **Mentor Role**

Mentors act primarily as guides and facilitators of learning rather than as supervisors or evaluators. Their role is to support mentees in developing professional competencies while encouraging reflection and independent thinking.

Mentors typically contribute to the mentoring process by:



An important aspect of the mentor's role is creating a supportive environment where mentees feel comfortable discussing difficulties or uncertainties.Mentors should also respect several key principles:

- Maintaining confidentiality
- Respecting the mentee's autonomy
- Encouraging independent problem-solving

By adopting this supportive approach, mentors can help mentees develop both professional competence and confidence.

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➢ **Mentee Role**

While mentors provide guidance, mentees play an equally important role in ensuring that the mentoring relationship is productive. Successful mentoring requires active engagement and a willingness to learn.

Mentees are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and to use mentoring sessions as opportunities for reflection and discussion. To make the most of the mentoring relationship, mentees should:

By actively participating in the process, mentees can maximise the benefits of mentoring and accelerate their professional development.

Indicative Practical Support Tools

Implementing an effective mentoring programme requires more than just defining objectives and roles. Organisations also benefit from practical tools that facilitate structured mentoring interactions, track progress, and ensure both mentors and mentees are clear about their responsibilities. The following section outlines several key tools that can be included in a mentoring scheme, with guidance on how to use them effectively.

These tools are designed to be simple, adaptable and suitable for SMEs, particularly in the TCLF sector, where resources may be limited, but practical guidance is essential. They support both the organisational management of mentoring programmes and the day-to-day interactions between mentors and mentees.

➢ **Mentor–Mentee Matching Template**

A successful mentoring programme begins with an effective mentor–mentee matching process. Matching is not only based on technical expertise but also on compatibility in learning styles, career interests, availability, and personality traits. A structured matching template helps ensure a thoughtful and transparent process.

Purpose of the template:

- Identify key skills, experience and development needs of mentees
- Assess mentors' expertise, interests and availability
- Facilitate matches that maximise learning outcomes

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Example elements of a matching template:

Category	Mentor	Mentee	Notes / Considerations
Name	John Smith	Jane Doe	Mentor has experience in leather craftsmanship; mentee is transitioning to production role
Department / Role	Footwear Production	Junior Production Operator	Matching within production team for technical relevance
Skills / Expertise	Leather cutting, quality control	New production techniques, digital patterning	Identify overlap for mentoring focus
Learning Goals	–	Improve production efficiency, learn new tools	Goals to inform mentoring sessions
Availability	Weekly 1-hour sessions	Weekly 1-hour sessions	Schedule alignment
Additional Notes	Mentor has strong mentoring experience	Mentee prefers hands-on learning	Personality and learning style considerations

Usage guidance:

- HR or programme coordinators complete the template using input from mentors and mentees
- Review compatibility based on technical skills and development goals
- Update periodically if mentor or mentee responsibilities change

This template ensures structured matching rather than relying solely on informal assignments, helping maximise the effectiveness of mentoring relationships.

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➢ **Mentoring Session Guide**

Structured mentoring sessions are more productive when both parties understand the purpose and flow of the meeting. The mentoring session guide is a document that outlines a framework for discussion while allowing flexibility depending on the mentee's needs.

Purpose of the guide:

- Support mentors in planning and conducting sessions
- Help mentees prepare discussion points and goals
- Ensure consistency and clarity across all mentoring sessions

Example structure of a mentoring session guide:

Step	*Session Phase*	*Duration*	*Key Activities*
1	Welcome and Check-in	5'–10'	• Mentor and mentee briefly discuss current challenges and achievements • Establish a comfortable environment for open discussion
2	Review of Previous Session / Actions	5'–10'	• Discuss progress on tasks, goals or skills identified in previous meetings • Reflect on successes and areas for improvement
3	Focus Topic for the Session	20'–30'	• Discuss specific skills, projects or challenges • Mentor provides guidance, demonstrates techniques or asks reflective questions
4	Action Planning and Goal Setting	10'–15'	• Agree on practical actions to complete before the next session • Define measurable objectives and timelines
5	Feedback and Reflection	5'–10'	• Mentee reflects on what they have learned • Mentor provides constructive feedback and encouragement

Using a session guide helps maintain **productive and goal-oriented meetings**, ensuring both mentor and mentee stay aligned on development objectives.

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➢ Mentor Role Description and Checklist

Providing mentors with a **clear role description and checklist** helps set expectations and supports consistency across the programme. This ensures mentors understand their responsibilities and feel confident in guiding mentees.

Purpose:

- Define the scope of the mentor's responsibilities
- Clarify expected behaviours and practices
- Provide a practical tool for self-assessment and reflection

Example Mentor Role Description:

Category	Description
Key Responsibilities	• Provide guidance and share expertise with the mentee • Support mentee development in technical and professional skills • Encourage reflection, critical thinking and problem-solving • Maintain confidentiality and trust within the mentoring relationship • Monitor mentee progress and provide constructive feedback
Mentor Checklist (Before, During and After Sessions)	• Prepared for each session with topics or questions • Actively listens and responds to the mentee's needs • Encourages the mentee to set realistic goals • Provides examples from own experience without taking over • Maintains a safe and supportive environment • Records key discussion points and agreed actions • Reflects on own mentoring practice for continuous improvement

By providing mentors with a structured checklist, organisations help ensure that mentoring sessions remain **focused, supportive, and consistent**.

➢ Simple Monitoring Form to Track Mentoring Progress

Tracking the progress of mentoring relationships is essential for programme evaluation and continuous improvement. A simple monitoring form allows both mentors and programme coordinators to record activities, goals, achievements and challenges.

Purpose:

- Maintain a record of mentoring interactions
- Track progress toward development goals
- Identify areas for additional support or adjustment

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Example content for a monitoring form:

Session Date	Topics Discussed	Actions Agreed	Progress / Outcomes	Next Steps / Notes
01/03/2026	Leather patterning techniques	Practice new cutting method	Mentee completed first trial under supervision	Schedule review session
15/03/2026	Use of digital production tools	Apply digital layout to sample	Mentee confident in tool usage	Introduce efficiency metrics next session
01/04/2026	Team collaboration	Shadow senior operator	Observed best practices in workflow	Mentee to lead small team task next week

Usage guidance:

- Mentors fill out the form after each session
- Programme coordinators review forms periodically to evaluate overall progress
- Notes help inform adjustments to mentoring matches or session focus

A structured monitoring form provides **transparency and accountability** while supporting programme evaluation and reporting.

Summary

Practical support tools are essential components of an effective mentoring programme. The tools described above, mentor–mentee matching templates, mentoring session guides, mentor role descriptions and checklists, and simple monitoring forms, enable organisations to:

- ensure structured and productive mentoring relationships
- provide clarity for mentors and mentees
- track progress and evaluate programme effectiveness
- support consistency across multiple mentoring pairs

By incorporating these tools, SMEs in the TCFL sector can implement mentoring programmes that are **both practical and impactful**, helping employees develop new skills, adapt to workplace changes, and preserve valuable organisational knowledge.

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III. Well-being and Psychosocial Support: How to recognise and address psychosocial needs at work

Introduction: Well-being and Green Transition in the TCLF Sector

Automation, digitalisation, new materials and sustainability requirements are transforming production processes, supply chains, and skills demands in the TCLF sector (ILO, 2025). While these changes create opportunities for innovation and competitiveness, they also generate uncertainty, work intensification, and pressure on workers to continuously adapt.

Green jobs are expected to contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth. However, they must also provide safe, healthy, and decent working conditions to fulfil this promise (EU-OSHA, n.d.). When technological and environmental transitions outpace skills development, workers may be required to perform tasks they are not prepared for. This can increase both safety and psychosocial risks and potentially widen existing inequalities (ILO, 2025).

- **The role of psychosocial well-being in workforce transition**

Psychosocial well-being refers to how the organization, management, and experience of work affects workers' mental health, motivation, and engagement (EU-OSHA, 2014). Periods of organisational change are particularly high-risk moments for work-related stress (EU-OSHA, 2022a). Psychosocial well-being is therefore not only a health issue but a transition issue. Workers experiencing long-term stress are less likely to engage in upskilling, adopt new technologies, or participate actively in organisational change (APO, 2014). Chronic unmanaged stress can reduce confidence, increase capacity to learn, and affect long-term employability.

- **Well-being as a success factor for reskilling and upskilling**

Continuous reskilling and lifelong learning are essential for adapting to circular economic principles, eco-friendly manufacturing processes, and digital tools. However, workers who fear job loss, feel overwhelmed or lack confidence may disengage from training opportunities. Organisational measures such as clear communication, participatory change processes, and reasonable workload expectations can strengthen engagement and support effective learning (APO, 2014; Pijpker et al., 2019). Therefore, psychosocial well-being enables innovation, employability, and sustainable transformation.

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➢ **Specific relevance for the TCLF sector**

The TCLF sector has characteristics that increase psychosocial risks, including:

- Production pressure and tight deadlines linked to global competition (ILO, 2025);
- Physically demanding and repetitive tasks;
- Informal organisational structures in SMEs with limited HR capacity;
- Workforce segmentation and gender disparities (EIGE, 2025).

Rapid technological upgrading can reinforce existing inequalities if access to new roles and training is unevenly distributed. Digitalisation may also increase work intensity and blur boundaries between work and personal life if not properly managed, for example through constant connectivity, real-time monitoring and increased expectations of responsiveness (EU-OSHA, 2025).

➢ **Well-being, employability and organisational resilience**

Psychosocial well-being is closely linked to employability and organisational resilience. Workers who feel supported and informed are more likely to engage in learning and remain committed during transition processes (APO, 2014). Within the GreenLift framework, psychosocial well-being is understood as a foundational component of a fair and inclusive green transition. It supports:

Psychosocial Risks in TCLF Workplaces During Transition

➢ **Definition of psychosocial risks at work**

Psychosocial risks arise from the way work is designed, organised and managed, as well as the broader social and organisational context in which work takes place (EU-OSHA, 2014). They relate to:

- Work organisation (e.g. workload, pace, autonomy);
- Work environment (e.g. resources, safety conditions);
- Workplace culture (e.g. leadership, communication, organisational justice).

When not properly managed, these risks can lead to sustained stress, reduced engagement and burnout (EU-OSHA, 2022a). Psychosocial risks operate at individual, team and organisational levels. Effective prevention, therefore, requires multi-level integrated responses rather than isolated measures (APO, 2014).

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➢ **Transition-related psychosocial challenges**

Organisational transitions - including digitalisation, automation and the shift to sustainable production - are recognised as high-risk periods for psychosocial strain (EU-OSHA, 2016). In the TCLF sector, four risk patterns are particularly relevant:

Job insecurity and uncertainty

Technological upgrading and restructuring may create concerns about future roles and employability. Perceived job insecurity is associated with stress and reduced participation in training (Kersten et al., 2022; ILO, 2025).

Fear of skills obsolescence

Rapid technological change may generate anxiety among workers who perceive a gap between existing competencies and new requirements. This can lead to withdrawal from upskilling initiatives.

Increased workload and cognitive demands

Workers are often expected to maintain production targets while learning new systems or adapting to new processes. High workload combined with limited control increases psychosocial strain (APO, 2014).

Resistance to change and identity concerns

- In sectors with strong craft traditions, changes in processes may challenge established professional identities. Resistance may reflect uncertainty or perceived loss of competence rather than unwillingness.

Participation in change processes, clear communication and realistic workload expectations function as protective factors during transition.

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➢ **TCLF-specific risk factors**

While psychosocial risks occur across sectors, certain structural characteristics of TCLF workplaces can amplify them:

Production pressure and tight deadlines	Global competition and fast-changing demand can intensify workload, particularly during peak periods (ILO, 2025).
Physically demanding and repetitive tasks	Manual and repetitive work may combine physical fatigue with psychological strain, especially during adaptation to new processes.
Informal organisational structures in SMEs	Limited HR capacity and absence of structured well-being policies may delay recognition of psychosocial risks (EU-OSHA, 2023).
Precarious and segmented employment patterns	Non-standard contracts and workforce segmentation may increase insecurity and reduce access to structured support (ILO, 2025).

These sector-specific features can interact with transition-related pressures, increasing vulnerability during digital and sustainability shifts.

Gender-Sensitive and Inclusive Well-being Needs

Psychosocial risks do not affect all workers equally. Structural inequalities, employment patterns and social roles shape how workers experience stress, job insecurity and access to support. In the context of the green and digital transition, understanding these differentiated impacts is essential for ensuring a fair and inclusive transformation.

➢ **Gendered dimensions of psychosocial stress**

Gender inequalities remain visible across employment patterns, working conditions and access to career progression in the European labour market (EIGE, 2025). Women are more frequently concentrated in part-time, lower-paid and precarious roles, often linked to caregiving responsibilities. In the TCLF sector, these disparities are reflected in workforce segmentation. Women are often concentrated in lower-skilled production roles, while men are more likely to occupy technical and supervisory positions (ILO, 2025). Technological upgrading may reinforce these patterns if access to digital and higher-skilled roles is unevenly distributed.

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These structural patterns have psychosocial implications. Women may experience:

- Increased work–life conflict linked to unpaid care responsibilities;
- Reduced access to training where reskilling initiatives lack flexibility;
- Greater exposure to precarious work and job insecurity;
- Under-recognised emotional labour in team coordination roles.

Failure to address gendered exposure to risk can weaken organisational resilience and undermine inclusive transition goals.

➢ **Other vulnerable workforce profiles**

In addition to gender-related patterns, other groups may face heightened exposure to psychosocial strain during transition processes. Vulnerability often reflects accumulated structural disadvantages rather than individual weakness (Kersten et al., 2022).

In the TCLF context, this may include:

- Low-skilled workers with limited access to formal qualifications;
- Older workers facing anxiety linked to digital transformation;
- Migrant workers encountering language barriers or non-recognition of qualifications;
- Workers in non-standard or precarious employment arrangements (ILO, 2025).

These disadvantages can interact with transition-related pressures. For example:

- Fear of dismissal may be higher among precarious workers;
- Workers with limited digital literacy may withdraw from training;
- Migrant workers may hesitate to disclose stress due to perceived stigma.

Without targeted attention, transition processes risk reinforcing cumulative disadvantages.

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➢ **Principles for inclusive well-being support**

Inclusive psychosocial risk management does not require separate systems but an equity-based approach embedded within existing organisational practices.

Equity rather than uniformity

Equal treatment does not automatically produce equal outcomes. Identical training schedules, communication formats or workload expectations may unintentionally exclude workers with caregiving responsibilities, language barriers or limited digital literacy.

Psychological safety and dignity at work

Workers must feel able to raise concerns and admit difficulties without fear of negative consequences (APO, 2014). Fair decision-making and respectful treatment strengthen trust and engagement during transition.

Cultural sensitivity and non-stigmatising approaches

Organisations should use accessible language, frame stress as a manageable response to change and ensure confidentiality in conversations. Avoiding labelling and pathologising normal reactions to transition reduces barriers to early help-seeking (EU-OSHA, 2022a).

Integrating gender-sensitive and inclusive principles into psychosocial risk management helps prevent widening inequalities and supports a fair, green and digital transition in the TCLF sector.

Recognising Early Signs of Psychosocial Distress

Psychosocial strain rarely appears suddenly. If stressors remain unaddressed, workers may move from manageable stress to sustained strain and potential withdrawal (APO, 2014). Early recognition enables proportionate intervention and prevents escalation. Because many workers feel uncomfortable disclosing mental health concerns (EU-OSHA, 2022a), organisations should not rely solely on self-reporting. Instead, they should monitor patterns at individual, team, and organisational levels. Recognising early signs does not mean diagnosing conditions. It means identifying observable signals that work-related stress may be affecting performance, engagement, or well-being.

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- **Individual-level indicators**

Early signs often appear as changes in behaviour, performance, or physical condition.

Indicator	Signs
Behavioural changes	☐Withdrawal from colleagues or meetings ☐Irritability or heightened emotional reactions ☐Avoidance of new tasks or training
Reduced concentration and motivation	☐Decline in work quality ☐Reduced initiative ☐Slower decision-making
Absenteeism and presenteeism	☐Increased short-term absence ☐Frequent lateness ☐Being physically present but disengaged
Physical symptoms	☐Persistent fatigue or sleep disturbances ☐Stress-related headaches or discomfort
Physical and psychosomatic symptoms	☐Headaches, fatigue or sleep disturbances ☐Gastrointestinal issues ☐Increased musculoskeletal discomfort

- **Team-level indicators**

Psychosocial strain often affects team dynamics.

Warning signs may include:	Increased interpersonal conflict
	Reduced collaboration or knowledge sharing
	Resistance to training or innovation
	Withdrawal from meetings or discussions

Patterns of silence or disengagement during transition discussions may indicate reduced psychological safety, the ability to speak up without fear , is a protective factor for mental health and team effectiveness (APO, 2014). In periods of transition, resistance may signal cognitive overload, fear of obsolescence, or insufficient participation in decision-making (ILO, 2025).

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➢ Organisational-level warning signs

Organisations should also monitor broader trends:

- Dropout from upskilling programmes
- Rising turnover intentions
- Uneven participation in reskilling across workforce groups
- Persistent workload imbalance during transition

When signals recur across levels, organisational factors should be reviewed before problems escalate.

Reflection
Have you observed recurring behavioural changes in specific teams?
Are certain groups more likely to withdraw from training?
Has communication become more tense or silent during transition discussions?
Are workload demands realistic during reskilling phases?

If you answer "yes" to more than two of these questions, consider reviewing work organisation, communication practices and support mechanisms before problems escalate. Early recognition allows organisations to act preventively rather than reactively.

➢ Tool – Early Warning Signs Checklist

Purpose:

To support managers and HR staff in identifying early signs of psychosocial strain across different levels of the organisation.

When to use:

- During organisational change
- During or after reskilling initiatives
- When performance or engagement declines

Individual Level Signals	
Noticeable behavioural changes	☐ Yes ☐ No
Decline in concentration or motivation	☐ Yes ☐ No
Increased absenteeism or presenteeism	☐ Yes ☐ No

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Frequent physical complaints linked to stress	☐ Yes ☐ No
Team Level Signals	
Increased interpersonal conflict	☐ Yes ☐ No
Reduced collaboration or communication	☐ Yes ☐ No
Resistance to training or innovation	☐ Yes ☐ No
Withdrawal from meetings or discussions	☐ Yes ☐ No
Organizational Level Signals	
Dropout from training or upskilling	☐ Yes ☐ No
Rising turnover or intention to leave	☐ Yes ☐ No
Reduced participation in change initiatives	☐ Yes ☐ No
Patterns of silence or disengagement	☐ Yes ☐ No

Tip for SMEs

Focus on patterns, not isolated events, one difficult week is normal. Persistent or repeated signals across levels require attention

A **Worker Well-being Self-Check** can be used to support early reflection during periods of organisational change, reskilling or increased workload. The self-check tool invites workers to reflect on five domains:

- Energy and motivation
- Workload and perceived control
- Concentration and cognitive load
- Physical and emotional stress signals
- Communication and perceived support

The tool is intended to promote early awareness and constructive dialogue. It is not a diagnostic instrument. A full version of the Worker Well-being Self-Check Questionnaire, including structured items and interpretation guidance, is provided in **Module 4** for practical application during training and organisational workshops.

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Creating a Supportive and Psychologically Safe Working Environment

Recognising early warning signs (Section 4) is essential, but sustainable prevention requires proactive organisational action. Evidence shows that organisational-level measures - including work design, participatory change and supportive leadership - are more effective in preventing burnout than relying solely on individual coping strategies (APO, 2014; Pijpker et al., 2019).

In the TCLF sector, preventive well-being should be embedded into everyday management practices.

➢ Preventive well-being approaches in SMEs

SMEs form a significant part of the TCLF sector. While SMEs may have limited HR capacity, they often benefit from closer relationships between managers and workers. Preventive well-being approaches can be both practical and proportionate.

➢ Clear communication during periods of change

Poorly managed change increases psychosocial strain (EU-OSHA, 2016). Workers should understand:

- Why change is occurring
- How it affects their roles
- What support is available

Early and realistic communication reduces uncertainty and strengthens trust.

➢ Participation and reasonable workload expectations

During digital or sustainability shifts, workers are often required to learn while maintaining production targets. Adjusting expectations during reskilling phases and inviting employee feedback reduces overload and strengthens engagement (APO, 2014).

➢ Recognition of effort and fairness

Temporary performance fluctuations are common during learning periods. Recognising effort, adaptability and skill development - not only output - reduces stress and supports long-term adaptation.

Managers may periodically review:

Work Design	
Are workload expectations realistic during training phases?	☐ Yes ☐ No

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Do workers have sufficient autonomy in organising their tasks?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are rest periods and recovery time respected?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Participation & Communication	
Were employees informed early about planned changes?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Were workers invited to provide feedback or suggestions?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are communication channels clear and accessible?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I explained why the change is happening?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I acknowledged possible uncertainties?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do team members feel comfortable raising concerns?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do I respond without dismissing or minimising stress?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do I avoid public criticism or blame?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Recognition & Fairness	
Is effort in learning new skills recognised?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are decisions perceived as fair and transparent?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are opportunities for training accessible to all groups?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I adjusted expectations during reskilling phases?	☐ Yes ☐ No

- **Psychological safety in practice**

Psychological safety refers to a work environment in which employees feel able to raise concerns, ask questions, and admit difficulties without fear of negative

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consequences (APO, 2014). During transition periods, this becomes a critical protective factor against disengagement and withdrawal.

Supervisors strengthen psychological safety by:

- Inviting questions and feedback during change processes;
- Responding constructively to concerns;
- Acknowledging uncertainty openly;
- Avoiding dismissive or blame-oriented language;
- Framing stress as a normal and manageable response to transition.

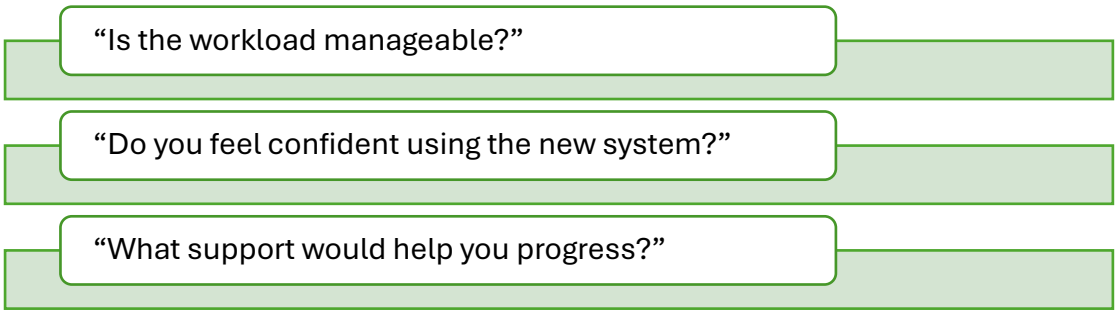
Supportive leadership does not require clinical expertise. It requires respectful communication, fair treatment, monitoring of workload distribution, and awareness of escalation pathways (Section 7). In both SMEs and larger organisations, line managers play a central role in shaping daily working conditions. By identifying early warning signs (Section 4), adjusting expectations where necessary and maintaining open dialogue, supervisors can reduce psychosocial strain before it escalates.

➢ **Integrating well-being into daily work practices**

Preventive well-being does not require separate programmes. It can be embedded into routine management practices, particularly during reskilling and organisational change.

➢ **Structured check-ins during transition phases**

Short, regular check-ins help identify overload early. Supervisors may ask:



Early dialogue enables proactive adjustment rather than reactive crisis management (APO, 2014).

➢ **Adjusting expectations during reskilling**

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Expecting full productivity while workers acquire new competencies can increase stress unnecessarily. Temporary flexibility in targets, task distribution, or timelines can strengthen long-term performance. Increased job control and flexibility are associated with better mental health outcomes (APO, 2014).

Such measures are particularly relevant in physically demanding and repetitive TCLF roles (ILO, 2025). Creating supportive and psychologically safe working conditions is not separate from production goals. It strengthens adaptability, participation, and organisational resilience during the green and digital transition.

Flexible work organisation where feasible Where organisationally possible, managers may consider:		
Adjusted scheduling during training periods	Redistribution of tasks during peak learning phases	Temporary task rotation to reduce cumulative strain

Peer Support and Internal Well-being Actions

In addition to organisational practices, peer relationships play an important role in psychosocial well-being. In many TCLF workplaces - particularly SMEs - informal trust-based collaboration is already strong. When structured appropriately, peer support can strengthen collective coping during periods of transition. Peer support does not replace managerial responsibility or professional services. It complements organisational prevention by reinforcing social support - a key protective factor against work-related stress (APO, 2014).

➢ The role of peer support in TCLF workplaces

During digital or sustainability transitions, structured peer support can:

- Reduce fear of skills obsolescence
- Encourage knowledge exchange on new tools
- Strengthen solidarity during uncertainty
- Prevent isolation among vulnerable workers

Peer support refers to colleagues providing emotional and practical assistance based on shared experiences (Peer Support Review, 2016). Group-based and participatory approaches are associated with increased confidence, resilience, and job retention (Peer Support Review, 2016; APO, 2014). In the TCLF sector, where informal skill transmission is common, structured peer mechanisms can formalise existing strengths

➢ Peer support formats

Peer support does not require complex programmes. Resource-light approaches are often sufficient.

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Buddy systems during reskilling	Group reflection moments	Informal safe dialogue spaces
Workers are paired to provide mutual support during training or technological adaptation. Pairings may combine complementary strengths to encourage reciprocal learning.	Short (20–30 minute) structured discussions allow teams to share challenges, identify practical solutions and provide feedback to management. These sessions should focus on work processes rather than personal counselling.	Time-limited sessions dedicated to discussing transition-related concerns. Clear purpose and agreed ground rules are essential.

➢ **Tool– Peer Support Quick Setup Guide**

Structured peer support mechanisms can be introduced progressively and adapted to organisational size and capacity.

In the framework context, peer support should:

☑	☑	☑	☑
Be voluntary	Focus on work-related transition challenges	Operate within clearly defined boundaries	Include awareness of escalation pathways

➢ **Conditions for effective peer support**

Peer support is most effective when:			
Participation is voluntary	Confidentiality is respected	Discussions remain work-focused and solution-oriented	Clear boundaries exist between peer dialogue and professional support

If serious or prolonged distress is observed, referral mechanisms should be activated. Structured peer support strengthens organisational-level prevention by reinforcing trust, communication, and collective resilience during the green and digital transition. A detailed Peer Support Setup Worksheet, including facilitation guidance and activation steps, is provided in **Module 4** to support practical implementation.

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Referral Pathways and External Support

Preventive measures and peer support mechanisms strengthen organisational resilience. However, some situations require professional intervention beyond the scope of workplace action. Clear referral pathways protect both workers and organisations by ensuring timely access to qualified support while maintaining ethical and legal boundaries.

➢ Understanding organisational limits

Organisations are responsible for preventing psychosocial risks and facilitating early help-seeking. They are not healthcare providers.

➢ Distinguishing workplace support from professional care

Workplace support may include:

- Adjusting workload or expectations
- Providing clear communication
- Offering peer support
- Holding supportive conversations
- Facilitating access to external services

Diagnosis and therapy must be delivered by qualified professionals. Managers should not attempt to assess or treat mental health conditions. Referral is appropriate when:

- Distress persists despite workplace adjustments
- Emotional reactions become intense or disruptive
- Severe withdrawal or prolonged absence occurs
- Performance decline is sustained and linked to psychological strain
- Expressions of crisis or hopelessness are observed

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Early referrals can prevent deterioration and long-term absence (APO, 2014).

➢ **Tool – Referral Red-Flag Checklist**

Purpose:

To help supervisors identify situations requiring professional support.

When to use:

- After supportive conversations
- When early warning signs persist (Section 4)
- When peer support is insufficient

Consider referral if you observe:	
Persistent emotional distress over several weeks	☐ Yes ☐ No
Severe withdrawal or inability to perform basic tasks	☐ Yes ☐ No
Repeated or long-term absence linked to stress	☐ Yes ☐ No
Expressions of hopelessness or crisis	☐ Yes ☐ No
Escalating conflict or breakdown in functioning	☐ Yes ☐ No

If concerns persist despite workplace adjustments, consult the designated internal contact and initiate referral.

➢ **Identifying and mapping external support services**

Referral systems should be established in advance rather than improvised during crises. Organisations should identify relevant external support options, which may include:

Occupational health or EAP services	• Occupational physicians • Workplace counselling • Employee Assistance Programmes
Public healthcare services	• Primary healthcare providers • Public mental health services
Community and specialised organisations	• Migrant support organisations • Gender equality or anti-discrimination bodies • Disability support associations

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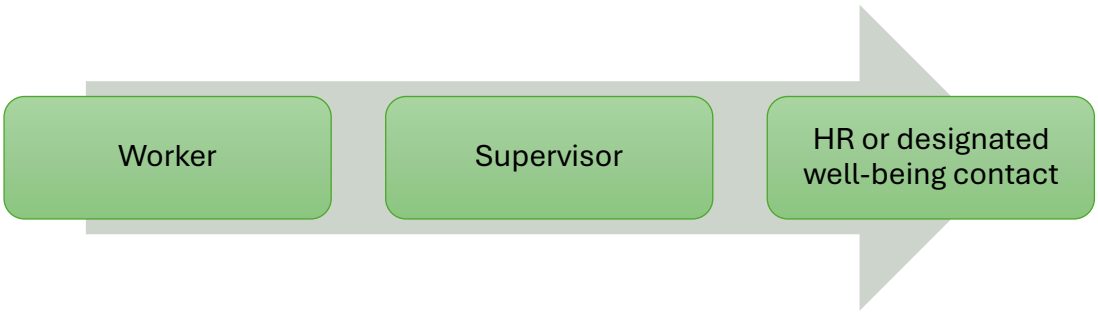
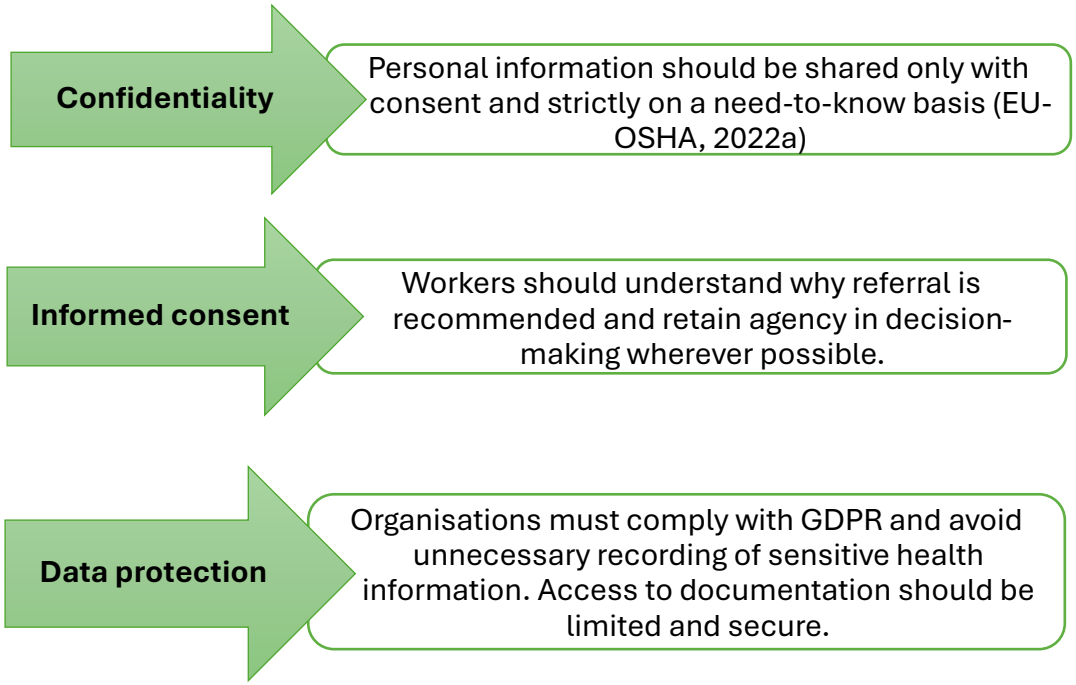
In addition, organisations should define a clear internal escalation route:



Referral procedures should be documented, accessible, and communicated clearly to staff. A detailed Referral Mapping Worksheet, including documentation fields and confidentiality checks, is provided in Module 4 to support operational implementation.

- **Ethical considerations**

Referral procedures must be grounded in data protection, confidentiality, and consent.



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Pillar II: Short Training Programme for HR Managers and Support Staff

This Pillar supports the implementation of the Holistic Support Model presented in Pillar I by strengthening the capacity of HR managers, employers, and support staff within TCLF organisations. It provides a short, practice-oriented training programme focused on enabling participants to apply career guidance, mentoring and well-being support mechanisms in real workplace contexts.

Module 1 – Understanding the Green Transition and Workforce Needs

Learning Objectives and Expected Outcomes

This module aims to help HR managers, employers and support staff of the TCLF sector to fully understand:

- The cornerstone pillars of the green transition foundations, as well as the implications they entail for the workforce.
- The challenges that workers face on a psychosocial, professional and personal competence level from the changes that the transition brings.
- The organisational responsibility that weighs on their shoulders in ensuring a fair and inclusive transition.

By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- Identify and explain key concepts of the green transition in the TCLF sector.
- Understand the ways that these concepts affect job roles in the sector, but also their well-being.
- Detect internal labour-related risks and support needs.
- Understand the expectations of the role of HR manager/ employer in supporting transition beyond the technical scope of training.

Key trends and challenges in the TCLF green transition

The shift that the TCLF sector is undergoing is one of the most significant ones in its history so far. It is driven by a variety of factors that relate to regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, and market changes. Policies such as the European Green Deal, the Circular Economy Action Plan, and the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles are pushing the TCLF sector to redesign its production models and strengthen its supply chains through greater resource efficiency, circular material use, traceability, waste reduction, and compliance with environmental and social sustainability standards.

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Flagship trends include:

- Adoption of production models that promote circular instead of linear production.
- A constantly increasing emphasis on eco-design, traceability and transparency.
- Adoption of Industry 5.0 through digitalisation, automation, and improved decision-making.
- Growing consumer and regulatory demand for sustainable production and products.

These trends aim to address environmental concerns while boosting competitiveness, but they have implications for the sector's labour force. They require robust financial and human capacity status, factors that many SMEs often lack. As a result, transition takes place in an ad hoc manner, the uncertainty among workers becomes widespread, and skills mismatches becomes a regular phenomenon.

Skills, career and psychosocial impacts on workers

The impact that the green transition has on workers extends beyond the scope of technical skills gaps. The shift taking place within the sector seems to fundamentally alter the skills landscape of workers. Existing competences no longer fully correspond to emerging job requirements as those have been shaped by the green transition trends mentioned earlier (digitalisation, circular economy systems, etc). On the contrary, they often seem to be replaced by competences related to eco-design, efficiency of resources, quality control, data monitoring and inter-organisational collaboration. There is a constantly increasing demand for:

- Green skills (e.g. waste reduction practices, use of sustainable materials)
- Digital skills (e.g. digital traceability tools, data collection and interpretation)
- Transversal skills (e.g. problem-solving, effective communication).

The fact remains that not all workers in the sector share the same level of skills. Low-skilled or older workers, for example, lack the confidence required to adapt to changes and participate in learning environments. In addition, not all workers have the same access to opportunities. For instance, in-transition workers or women employed in the sector often miss out on support mechanisms and learning chances. As a result, the gap in skills is getting wider.

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On a different scope, the green transition affects the way that workers view their future careers, as they lack clarity as to how their roles will evolve in the future or the alternative career pathways that they could follow. This is a result of poor communication of the green roles emerging in the sector and the concept that the transformation of the workforce is abstract or sometimes inaccessible.

Again, certain groups that are more vulnerable face severe challenges from this. Women who traditionally occupy production-oriented positions within the sector are disproportionately exposed to job displacement or task reduction. This, combined with the lack of clear transition pathways, often leads to women exiting the sector's workforce. In another case, many workers fail to link training opportunities with tangible career outcomes, resulting in them skipping engagement in reskilling or upskilling. The uncertainty of having poor skills, of not being certain of future career options, and of job loss has a tremendous impact on the psychosocial capacity of the labour force. Workers gradually withdraw from learning opportunities; they lack motivation and block all efforts for change. The longer the feeling of uncertainty persists, the bigger the impact becomes.

What does this mean for HR Managers and Employers

The green transition of the TCLF sector is not only a technical or regulatory challenge. It is a matter of transforming the workforce as a whole and improving the sector. It is now evident that companies that approach sustainability purely through regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, or training activities that provide sterile knowledge tend to fail, as they overlook a critical success factor: people.

What does this mean in practice, though?

Essentially, this means that HR managers and support staff need to step up their game and start taking action that is free of simple administrative roles or short-term decisions on staffing. They need to act proactively, use predictive models to anticipate shifts in skills needed, and thus be able to offer a type of support that is in alignment with a more holistic approach. In other words, they need to become strategic enablers of transition and align workforce development with sustainability objectives.

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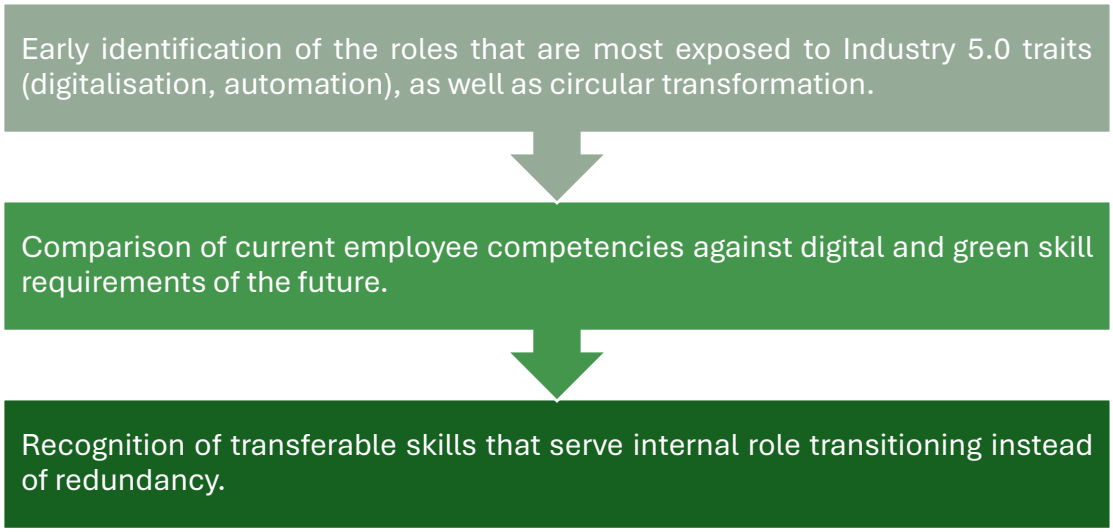
This proactive workforce planning includes actions such as:



Planning proactively should be followed by offering personalised training that can link real business needs to upskilling /reskilling.

On the other hand, HR managers and employers need to understand that technical training alone, even when it is a fruit of proactive thinking, is not sufficient to achieve a smooth and successful green transition. To prepare workers for the shift, they need to pay equal attention to:

- Providing clear communication regarding organisational changes and desired sustainability goals.
- Enabling easy access to career guidance, which will help workers better understand their professional options (e.g. how their roles will evolve in the future) and thus make informed decisions.
- Offering working environments that are free from prejudice and allow concerns to be voiced and addressed constructively.

In SMEs, particularly, HR managers have a heavy duty in supporting the green transition as small and medium-sized enterprises dominate the TCLF sector. Yet, SMEs often lack structured HR departments, making it even more difficult for owners and managerial staff to support workers with the transition. In this context, HR managers and employers should:

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The goal here is to transform SMEs into training institutions, but with an emphasis on holistic practices rather than the transfer of isolated skills and knowledge.

Case Study: Implementing Circular Economy Practices in the TCLF Sector – The 3QUARTERS Example

Overview

3QUARTERS is an SME in Athens, Greece, designing and creating bags from upcycled urban materials such as discarded synthetic fabrics such as advertising banners and awnings. These fabrics would otherwise be destined for landfill or incineration but are now being turned into functional and stylish textile products, contributing to virgin resource protection and minimising the environmental impact.

Workforce and HR implications

As the company transitioned towards a circular and sustainable business model, it experienced a parallel transition of its workforce, as shown in the following table:

Area of change	*Observed workforce practices*	*Implications for HR managers and employers*
New skill sets and role adaptation	Employees built integrated technical, creative, and environmental skills, covering material assessment and sorting, adaptive patternmaking and production, and sustainability communication with customers.	HR managers and employers support cross-training, flexible roles, and multi-skilled profiles, reflecting that green transition roles integrate technical, creative, and sustainability skills.
Learning approach and skills development	Skills were developed informally through peer learning, mentoring, and hands-on problem solving, with workers progressively taking on greater responsibility for sustainability tasks.	SMEs can transform their workforce through low-cost, practice-based learning embedded in daily operations, without relying solely on formal training.
Employee engagement and market orientation	Employees engaged in customer interaction, circular practice promotion, and product design, deepening their identification with the company's sustainability mission.	HR managers and employers should value informal leaders and internal sustainability ambassadors as crucial for implementing green strategies and sustaining workforce engagement.

The case shows that Greek TCLF SMEs can support the green transition by embedding sustainability into daily work and job design, using flexible skills, informal learning, and strong employee engagement even with limited resources.

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Module 2 – Career Guidance and Transition Planning in Practice

Learning Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The module aims to reinforce the practical skills and methods that HR managers, support staff and employers use when supporting workers with planning their career transitions during the green transformation.

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

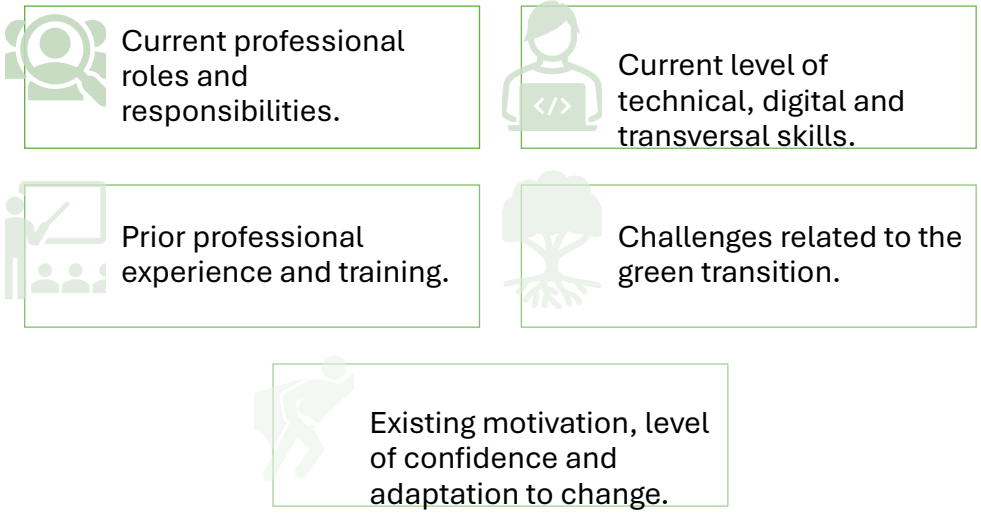
- Understand the importance of career guidance as a means of support during workforce transition.
- Use structured profiling techniques to identify the needs, concerns and aspirations of workers.
- Compare existing skills to emerging green and digital job requirements.
- Support workers in drafting realistic personal transition and career action plans.
- Link the processes required for successful career planning with sustainability goals set by the organisation.

Expected outcomes include:

- Stronger workforce engagement in continuous upskilling (employees see clear links between learning, sustainability goals and career development).
- Reduced resistance to change (new practices are introduced through inclusive, practice-based approaches rather than top-down directives).
- Emergence of clearer internal mobility pathways (multi-skilled roles and flexible job design enable employees to transition more easily across tasks and sustainability-related functions).

Profiling and needs assessment techniques

A clear understanding of the worker's profile and their needs is an essential element of effective career guidance, especially in the TCLF sector, which is characterised by diverse workforce backgrounds, different levels of competencies and a wide range of vulnerable groups. In this context, profiling and needs assessment must emphasise:



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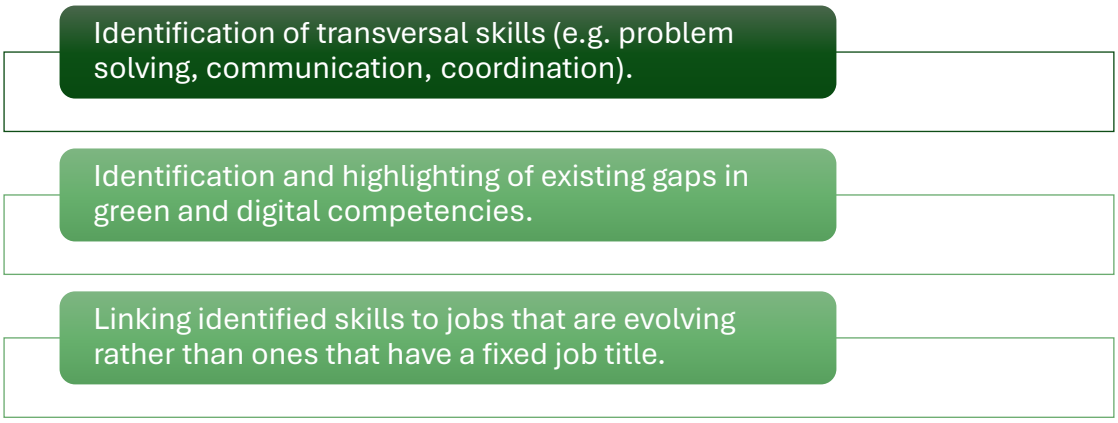
HR managers and employers should adopt simple and well-structured approaches: guided one-to-one discussions, short surveys, and assessments based on observation. The end goal is not a formal appraisal, but the reinforcement of understanding between the workforce and the company in terms of the needs for a successful transition. Attention should be focused on vulnerable groups like women, low-skilled workers, older workers and in-transition employees. These specific groups require extra guidance and support.

Skills mapping and career orientation

The next step of successful career guidance and transition planning is to aid workers in comprehending how their current skills relate to emerging roles and opportunities. This is, in essence, skills mapping, and it involves:



Once the skills mapping is complete, career orientation takes its turn with supporting workers to:

- Think about how their current role may evolve within the organisation.
- Explore alternative roles, in line with circularity, without sacrificing quality.
- Find realistic pathways for their upskilling/ reskilling.

The process described for skills mapping and career orientation makes career guidance more relevant to the green transition context. HR managers drift away from the concept of supporting workers to help them get promoted and lean towards helping them develop careers that require skills evolution, role transformation, personal well-being and growth. These elements guarantee a holistic transformation of the workforce, increase longevity of professional paths for individuals, and, of course, support the green transition of the TCLF sector.

Development of Individual Transition and Career Action Plans

An *Individual Transition and Career Action Plan* is a practical planning approach that helps HR managers, employers and workers translate career discussions and skills assessment into clear, achievable next steps.

- From the **workers' perspective**, such plans provide a clear image of the transition elements and certainty for their future within the sector. They get

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a better idea of how their role will evolve in the future and can make informed decisions.

- From the **HR managers and employers' perspective**, it serves as a means for aligning the development of the workforce with organisational sustainability objectives in a structured way.

To develop an effective Individual Transition and Career Action Plan, specific core components must be in place, as seen in the following table:

Core Component	Description
Short/medium-term career goals	How are these linked to evolving roles or emerging opportunities within the sector?
Skills that need to be further developed	Green, digital and transversal competencies that are relevant to future job requirements.
Training and development activities	Hands-on training, internal learning, external course, peer-learning.
Internal support mechanisms	Job shadowing, mentoring, and coaching.
Indicative timelines and milestones	Monitoring progress made without creating unnecessary pressure.
Review and follow-up	Ensuring that the plan remains relevant even when circumstances completely change.

In conclusion, the Individual Transition and Career Action Plan bridge the gaps between workforce aspirations and organisational goals, offering clarity, structure, and actionable steps for both employees and employers. By outlining career goals, required skills, training, support mechanisms, and timelines, it empowers workers to navigate change confidently while enabling organisations to align workforce development with sustainability and sector evolution. When implemented thoughtfully and regularly reviewed, such plans not only guide successful transitions but also foster a culture of continuous learning, adaptability, and long-term resilience.

Case Study: Supporting Skills Development for the Sustainability Transition – The Pepper Valley Example

Overview

Pepper Valley company is a Greek SME in Athens, Greece, producing high-quality knitted textiles with innovative and sustainable practices. Founded in 2011, the company is experiencing pressure from global competition, rising sustainability expectations and digitalisation challenges.

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Overcoming the challenges

To overcome these challenges, the company participated in initiatives such as the *EcoFashionEU* to build capacity for sustainability and integrate new practices into its internal processes.

The company followed a series of specific steps towards this direction:

1. Profiling of the workforce and needs assessment	• Assessment of current employee skills and the company's readiness for sustainable practices • Identification of skills gaps
2. Skills mapping and career orientation	• Linking existing skills to emerging sustainability and digital skills requirements • Guiding employees to understand how their roles could evolve in the future
3. Development of Individual Transition and Career Action Plans	• Creation of practical action plans, including skills goals, suggested training and support mechanisms. • Definition of timelines and progress mentoring methods.

Outcomes

Through the process followed, the company managed to:

- strengthen workforce engagement
- reduce workers' resistance to change
- support the evolution of internal mobility and existing roles

The success of the company's effort is evident through its longevity and commitment to change.

Module 3 – Mentoring and Coaching for Workforce Transition

Mentoring and Coaching as Support Mechanisms in Workforce Transition

Introduction

This module explores in depth how mentoring and coaching can support workforce transitions in sectors undergoing structural transformation. In periods of economic, technological, and environmental change, organisations must adapt their workforce strategies to ensure resilience, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. Mentoring and coaching are powerful mechanisms that facilitate this adaptation by supporting individual development while aligning with organisational objectives.

Attention is given to the TCLF sector, which is experiencing profound transformation. This sector faces increasing pressure to comply with sustainability standards, reduce environmental impact, integrate circular economic principles, and adopt digital technologies across production and supply chains. These changes require new competences, updated production

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models, and innovative management approaches. As a result, workers at all levels need opportunities to reskill and upskill to remain employable and to contribute effectively to organisational transition processes.

In this context, mentoring and coaching are not simply supportive activities, but strategic tools for change management. They help bridge skill gaps, encourage knowledge transfer between experienced and less experienced employees, and promote a culture of continuous learning. Through structured guidance and personalised support, mentoring enhances confidence, strengthens professional identity, and facilitates adaptation to new roles and responsibilities.

The module introduces the theoretical foundations of mentoring and coaching, including key concepts, principles, and distinctions between the two approaches. Participants will explore different mentoring models, such as formal and informal mentoring, peer mentoring, group mentoring, and cross-functional mentoring. Attention is also given to coaching methodologies, including goal-oriented coaching conversations, active listening techniques, reflective practice, and feedback strategies. Special emphasis is placed on approaches suitable for adult learners, recognising their prior experience, autonomy, professional background, and learning needs.

In addition to theory, the module provides practical guidance for designing and implementing mentoring programmes. This includes defining programme objectives, identifying target groups, selecting and preparing mentors, matching mentors and mentees, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, and creating monitoring mechanisms. Participants will learn how to integrate mentoring into broader organisational strategies related to sustainability, innovation, and human resource development.

Finally, the module addresses evaluation and impact assessment. Effective mentoring programmes require continuous monitoring to ensure quality and relevance. Participants will explore qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, such as feedback surveys, progress tracking tools, competence development indicators, and outcome-based assessment frameworks. Evaluating mentoring outcomes allows organisations to measure improvements in skills, job performance, employee engagement and career progression, as well as contributions to green transition objectives.

By the end of this module, participants will have the knowledge and practical tools needed to design, implement and evaluate mentoring and coaching initiatives that support workforce transitions, promote green skills development, and strengthen organisational capacity in changing economic and environmental contexts.

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Expected Outcomes

After completing this module, learners will be able to:

- **Design structured mentoring schemes** that effectively support workforce transition programmes, ensuring alignment with organisational objectives, sustainability priorities, and skills development strategies. Participants will be able to define programme goals, target groups, roles and responsibilities, and implementation steps.
- **Implement effective mentor–mentee matching strategies** based on identified skills, professional needs, learning goals, and experience levels. Learners will understand how to use transparent criteria and structured processes to ensure meaningful and productive mentoring relationships.
- **Apply coaching methodologies appropriate for adult learners**, considering principles of adult learning such as autonomy, prior experience, motivation, and goal-oriented development. Participants will be able to use active listening, powerful questioning, feedback techniques, and reflective practice to support individual growth.
- **Evaluate mentoring relationships and programme outcomes** using qualitative and quantitative assessment methods. Learners will be able to monitor progress, collect feedback, measure competence development, and assess the overall impact of mentoring interventions on professional development and organisational performance.
- **Identify and utilise practical tools and frameworks** that support the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of mentoring and coaching initiatives. This includes templates, guidelines, competency frameworks, evaluation tools, and continuous improvement mechanisms.

Mentoring schemes and governance models

➢ Understanding Mentoring in Workforce Transition

In contemporary labour markets, organisations and workers operate within environments characterised by rapid technological advancement, environmental transformation, global competition and evolving regulatory frameworks. These dynamics require continuous adaptation, lifelong learning, and flexible competence development strategies. Workforce transition processes, whether driven by digitalisation, sustainability requirements, restructuring or sectoral change, demand structured support mechanisms that facilitate both professional growth and organisational stability.

Mentoring emerges in this context as a strategic intervention rather than a simple supportive activity. It functions as a structured developmental process that connects experience with emerging competence needs. Through guided relationships, mentoring enables knowledge transfer, accelerates learning curves, and strengthens individual capacity to manage professional change. It also contributes to organisational resilience by ensuring continuity of expertise and fostering a culture of collaboration and learning.

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Mentoring in workforce transition is particularly important because change processes often generate uncertainty, skill gaps and reduced confidence among workers. A well-designed mentoring framework provides structured guidance, emotional support and professional orientation, helping individuals navigate transitions more effectively. At the same time, mentoring aligns personal development with institutional objectives, creating mutual benefits for both mentees and organisations.

Through mentoring interventions, individuals can strengthen adaptability, develop new competencies, improve employability, and build long-term career pathways aligned with evolving labour market demands. For organisations, mentoring supports innovation, knowledge retention and sustainable workforce development.

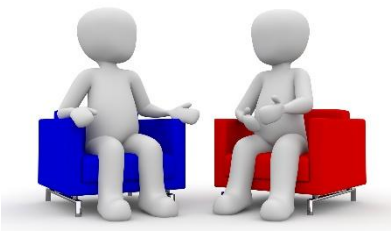
- **Types of Mentoring Schemes**

The design of a mentoring programme must reflect its strategic objectives, target groups, available resources and institutional context. Different mentoring models offer varying degrees of personalisation, scalability and collaboration. Selecting the appropriate scheme is a critical governance decision, as it directly influences programme outcomes, participant engagement, and overall effectiveness.

Mentoring schemes can be structured in multiple ways, ranging from highly individualised models to collective and reciprocal approaches. Each model responds to specific developmental needs and organisational priorities. Understanding these variations allows programe designers to align mentoring structures with workforce transition goals, competence development strategies and sustainability frameworks.

a) One-to-One Mentoring

One-to-one mentoring represents the most traditional and structured mentoring model. It is based on a direct relationship between a single mentor and a single mentee over a defined period. This format allows for personalised goal setting, tailored feedback and continuous progress monitoring.



This model is particularly suitable in workforce transition contexts where individuals face complex changes, require targeted competence development, or need confidential professional guidance. The intensity of the relationship enables deep reflection, trust building and customised learning pathways. One-to-one mentoring supports detailed development planning, enabling participants to define short- and long-term objectives, identify skill gaps and monitor achievements systematically.

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b) Group Mentoring

Group mentoring expands the mentoring relationship to multiple mentees supported by one mentor. This model is increasingly used in organisational and training environments where collective learning objectives are prioritised. Group mentoring promotes shared reflection, peer discussion and collaborative problem-solving. It creates a structured learning community in which participants benefit not only from the mentor's expertise but also from peer experience and perspectives.

This model is particularly effective in workforce transition programmes that aim to develop common competences, such as digital skills, sustainability awareness or transversal abilities. While it may offer less individualised attention than one-to-one mentoring, it enhances efficiency and fosters social learning dynamics. Effective group mentoring requires strong facilitation skills, clear session planning and well-defined thematic objectives to ensure balanced participation and meaningful outcomes.

c) Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is based on mutual support among individuals with similar levels of experience. Unlike hierarchical models, peer mentoring emphasises equality, collaboration and reciprocal learning. This approach is especially valuable in transition contexts where participants share similar challenges, such as entering a new sector, adapting to technological change, or developing new competencies. Peer mentoring fosters empathy, shared understanding and collective problem-solving. By reducing hierarchical barriers, peer mentoring promotes inclusive learning environments and strengthens communication skills. However, it benefits from structured frameworks to ensure clarity of objectives and continuity of engagement.

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d) Reverse Mentoring

Reverse mentoring represents an innovative governance approach in which less experienced individuals' mentor senior professionals, particularly in emerging domains such as digital transformation, sustainability practices or new technological tools. This model recognises that expertise is not exclusively determined by seniority. In rapidly evolving sectors, younger professionals may possess advanced knowledge in specific areas that are critical for organisational adaptation. Reverse mentoring promotes intergenerational dialogue, innovation and organisational learning. It contributes to reducing knowledge gaps, strengthening adaptability and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Its implementation requires openness, institutional support and a culture that values knowledge exchange in both directions.

e) Career Mentoring

Career mentoring focuses specifically on long-term professional development and career trajectory planning. Unlike models centered primarily on immediate skill acquisition, career mentoring supports individuals in defining, refining and pursuing broader career objectives in alignment with labour market developments and organisational opportunities. This model is particularly relevant in workforce transition contexts, where individuals may need to reposition themselves professionally, adapt to new sectors, or redefine their competencies in response to structural change. Career mentoring helps mentees identify transferable skills, explore alternative career pathways, and develop strategic plans for continuous professional growth. The mentor provides guidance on career decision-making, professional networking, competence mapping and personal branding. Through structured dialogue, reflection and goal setting, career mentoring enhances employability and strengthens long-term adaptability. It is especially valuable in environments characterised by digitalisation, green transitions and evolving qualification frameworks. From a governance perspective, career mentoring programmes require alignment with human resource strategies, transparent selection criteria, and clear outcome indicators to ensure coherence between individual aspirations and organisational development goals.

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f) E-Mentoring (Digital Mentoring)

E-mentoring, also known as digital mentoring, refers to mentoring relationships conducted partially or entirely through digital communication platforms. This model utilises tools such as video conferencing, collaborative platforms, messaging systems and learning management systems to facilitate interaction between mentors and mentees. E-mentoring has become increasingly significant in geographically dispersed organisations, international projects, remote work environments and large-scale workforce transition programmes. It enhances accessibility, flexibility and scalability, allowing participants to engage regardless of location or time constraints. This model is particularly suitable for digital competence development, remote collaboration skills and cross-border knowledge exchange. It can complement traditional mentoring formats or operate as a fully virtual scheme. Effective governance of e-mentoring requires attention to data protection, digital literacy, platform reliability and structured communication protocols. Clear guidelines regarding frequency of meetings, response times and documentation are essential to maintain engagement and program quality. When properly implemented, e-mentoring strengthens digital inclusion, expands participation opportunities and supports modern organisational transformation processes

g) Situational Mentoring

Situational mentoring is a flexible, short-term mentoring approach designed to provide experienced guidance for specific challenges, tasks, or transitional moments. Unlike long-term developmental mentoring, situational mentoring is initiated when a mentee requires targeted support from a mentor who can share expertise, insights, and practical advice related to a particular issue, project, or decision. This approach is particularly valuable during workforce transitions, where employees may face immediate professional challenges such as role changes, technology implementation, organisational restructuring, or project-based assignments. Situational mentoring maintains a **mentor-driven perspective**, with the mentor leveraging their experience to offer advice, suggest strategies, and support decision-making. It is characterised by its problem-focused structure, defined objectives, and limited duration, providing timely guidance without necessarily

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establishing a long-term mentoring relationship. From a program perspective, situational mentoring requires clear activation procedures, a defined scope of intervention, and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effectiveness. It can operate as a complementary element within broader mentoring initiatives, offering targeted support while maintaining alignment with overall mentoring objectives.

Governance Models for Mentoring Programmes

Governance structures are essential to ensure that mentoring programmes operate effectively, ethically, transparently, and sustainably. A well-defined governance framework provides strategic direction, operational clarity and quality assurance mechanisms. It also guarantees alignment between mentoring activities and broader organisational or institutional objectives, particularly in contexts of workforce transition and competence development. Effective governance not only supports programme implementation but also enhances credibility, accountability and long-term impact. It establishes clear decision-making processes, defines responsibilities, and ensures continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation.

Key Governance Elements

a) Programme Coordination

A designated programme coordinator plays a central role in the governance structure. This function may be assigned to an individual or a coordinating team, depending on the scale of the programme. The coordinator is responsible for:

- Designing the mentoring programme structure
- Recruiting and selecting mentors and mentees
- Organising training and orientation sessions
- Matching participants appropriately
- Monitoring progress throughout implementation
- Collecting data and evaluating outcomes

Programme coordination ensures consistency, quality control and alignment with strategic objectives. It also facilitates communication between stakeholders and resolves potential challenges during implementation.

b) Policies and Guidelines

Clear policies and operational guidelines form the regulatory foundation of mentoring programmes. These documents define:

- Programme objectives and expected outcomes
- Roles and responsibilities of mentors, mentees and coordinators
- Communication protocols and frequency of meetings
- Confidentiality and data protection rules
- Ethical standards and professional conduct
- Conflict resolution procedures

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Well-defined guidelines prevent misunderstandings, ensure transparency and promote trust between participants. They also provide a reference framework that supports consistent implementation across different contexts or cohorts.

c) Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms are fundamental components of effective governance. They allow programme managers to assess performance, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate impact.

Common evaluation tools include:

- Feedback surveys from mentors and mentees
- Progress tracking systems
- Periodic mentor reports
- Individual mentee development plans
- Outcome-based indicators (e.g., competence acquisition, employment transitions, career progression)

Evaluation processes ensure that mentoring programmes remain responsive to participants' needs and adaptable to changing organisational or labour market conditions. Continuous feedback loops contribute to quality assurance and strategic refinement.

d) Institutional Support

Sustainable mentoring initiatives require strong institutional backing. Governance models should therefore include mechanisms that guarantee structural and financial support, such as:

- Dedicated funding allocations
- Access to training resources for mentors
- Digital platforms for communication and documentation
- Recognition systems for mentors (certificates, incentives, career acknowledgement)
- Administrative support for coordination activities

Institutional commitment signals the strategic importance of mentoring within organisational development policies. It enhances programme stability and encourages long-term participation. Mentoring initiatives are often supported or implemented by organisations involved in workforce development, including training providers, employment services, universities, research institutions, public authorities and non-governmental organisations. These actors contribute to the integration of mentoring into broader competence development and labour market transition strategies.

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Mentor–mentee matching and role definition

Effective mentoring starts with carefully matching mentors and mentees based on skills, experience, and developmental goals. A structured matching process ensures productive relationships and clear expectations. Key considerations include:

- **Compatibility of expertise**: Align the mentor's professional experience with the mentee's development needs.
- **Personality and communication style**: Consider factors such as preferred interaction methods, availability, and learning style.
- **Development goals**: Ensure the mentor can provide guidance aligned with the mentee's short- and long-term objectives.

Once matched, you clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party. For mentors, this includes providing guidance, sharing knowledge, and supporting reflection. For mentees, this includes setting goals, preparing discussion points, and actively engaging in the learning process. A **Mentor–Mentee Agreement** template can help formalise expectations, confidentiality, and meeting frequency.

Case Study: Situational Mentoring in Career Transition

Background:

Jane is a project manager who has been recently promoted to lead a cross-functional team for the first time. She is enthusiastic about the new role but faces immediate challenges: coordinating team members from different departments, managing conflicting priorities, and making strategic decisions under tight deadlines.

Mentor Matching:

Jane is paired with Michael, an experienced leader in organizational development and cross-functional team management. The matching is based on:

- Michael's experience in leading diverse teams.
- Jane's need for guidance on leadership, communication, and decision-making.
- Compatible working styles and availability for short, focused mentoring sessions.

Situational Mentoring Process:

1. Initial Session (Goal Setting & Assessment):
    - Michael helps Jane identify immediate challenges and set short-term goals, such as improving team communication and clarifying project priorities.
    - They agree on a weekly one-hour session for six weeks.

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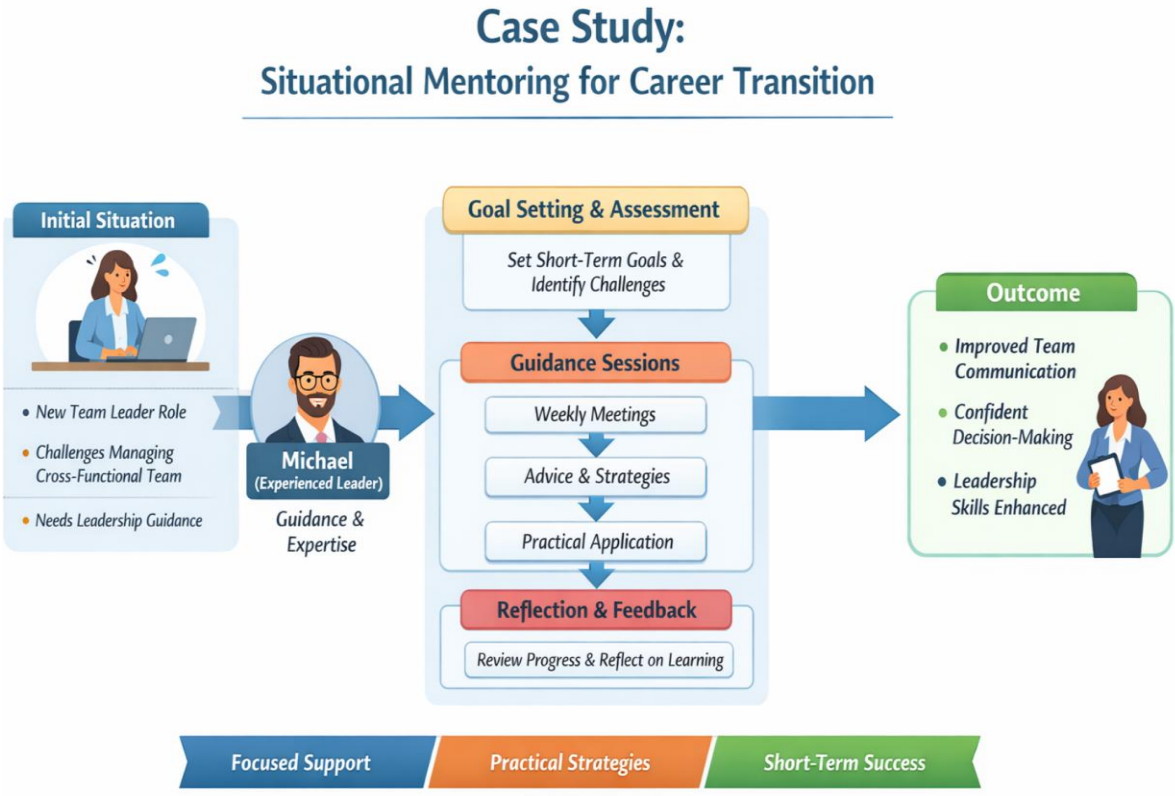
2. Focused Guidance Sessions:
    - Each session addresses specific challenges Jane is facing that week, e.g., resolving a scheduling conflict, facilitating a team meeting, or prioritizing tasks.
    - Michael shares relevant experiences, suggests strategies, and encourages Jane to reflect on outcomes.
    - Jane applies the advice to real situations and reports back on results in subsequent sessions.
3. Reflection & Feedback:
    - At the end of the mentoring cycle, Jane and Michael review progress.
    - Jane reflects on the strategies that worked, lessons learned, and areas needing ongoing attention.
    - Michael provides constructive feedback and highlights transferable skills Jane can use in future projects.



Outcome:

- Jane successfully implements improved workflows and clearer communication strategies.
- She gains confidence in her decision-making and team leadership.
- The situational mentoring relationship concludes after six weeks, with Jane equipped with actionable tools and strategies for ongoing development.

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Key Takeaways:

- Situational mentoring is effective for short-term, targeted support during transitions.
- Clear goal setting, structured sessions, and active reflection are critical for success.
- Mentors play a pivotal role by sharing experience, guiding decisions, and fostering confidence, while mentees take ownership of applying guidance in practice.

Module 4 – Well-being and Psychosocial Support in TCLF Workplaces

This module translates the Pillar I framework into practical workplace applications. It supports HR managers, supervisors and trainers in recognising psychosocial risks and responding early by embedding inclusive well-being practices during the green and digital transition.

The TCLF sector is undergoing rapid technological and sustainability transformation. While these changes create opportunities, they also generate skills gaps, production pressure and increased strain on workers. Many companies in the sector are SMEs with limited HR capacity and few structured well-being procedures. Without adequate support during reskilling and organisational change, workers may experience heightened stress and disengagement.

Learning Objectives and Expected Outcomes

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify key psychosocial risks affecting TCLF workers during the green transition
- Distinguish between short-term stress and sustained psychosocial strain
- Recognise individual, team and organisational warning signs
- Apply gender-sensitive and inclusive well-being practices
- Activate peer support mechanisms appropriately
- Initiate referral pathways ethically and responsibly

Identifying Psychosocial Risks and Stress Factors

Organisational transitions can create several psychosocial risk triggers. In TCLF workplaces, these may include restructuring, digitalisation, sustainability compliance requirements, and changes to roles or responsibilities. Automation and restructuring may create uncertainty about job security. Workers may fear redundancy, lack clarity about future roles, or feel excluded from new skills pathways.

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Discussion Prompt
How transparent is your organisation about future workforce plans?

Technological change can also generate anxiety about skills obsolescence. Workers may question the relevance of their existing skills, particularly when digital competencies become more important. Older workers may worry about adapting to new technologies, while low-skilled workers may avoid training due to fear of failure.

Because workers may hesitate to raise these concerns directly, supervisors should watch for early signals such as:

- Reluctance to attend training
- Self-deprecating comments about ability
- Withdrawal from innovation discussions
- Negative framing of digitalisation
- Statements such as “This is how we’ve always done it”
- Passive disengagement or silence during meetings

Workload may also increase during transition periods. Workers are often expected to maintain production targets while learning new systems, particularly when old and new processes operate in parallel. Sustainability reporting requirements may add to further administrative tasks. These pressures are intensified when job control is low, performance expectations remain unchanged during training, or workers are not involved in planning processes. Resistance to change often reflects uncertainty or concerns about professional identity rather than unwillingness to adapt. Exploring these underlying concerns is essential before interpreting behaviour as resistance.

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TCLF workplace-specific stressors

While psychosocial stressors exist in all workplaces, certain characteristics of the TCLF sector can intensify them. Production pressure and tight deadlines are common due to fast fashion cycles, compressed delivery timelines, seasonal peaks and global supply chain dependencies.

Reflection
Do workload spikes coincide with specific training, production, or annual periods?

Work in the TCLF sector is also frequently physically demanding and repetitive. When new technologies or processes are introduced, workers may experience both physical fatigue and increased cognitive load, creating combined physical and psychological strain. Many TCLF companies are owner-managed SMEs with informal organisational structures. Close supervisor–worker relationships can be beneficial, but the absence of formal HR roles or documented well-being procedures may mean that psychosocial risks are addressed reactively rather than preventively. Limited HR capacity can also restrict access to occupational health support, structured training systems and systematic monitoring of psychosocial indicators.

Reflection

Who in your organisation is responsible for monitoring well-being?

Practical Exercise – Psychosocial Risk Mapping

Objective: Identify transition-related psychosocial risks in your organisation.

Define transition phase

Define Transition Phase	
Before Upskilling	
During Upskilling	
After Upskilling	

Identify risks

Transition Phase	Level	Risks observed	Who is most affected	Current preventative measures
Before	Individual			
	Team			
	Organisational			
During	Individual			
	Team			
	Organisational			
After	Individual			

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	Team			
	Organisational			

Identify triggers

☐ New digital tools
☐ Sustainability compliance
☐ Increased production targets
☐ Role restructuring
☐ Limited training time
☐ Informal HR structures

Prioritise

Select the top three risks that:

- Affect multiple workers
- Affect vulnerable groups
- Increase during transition
- Can be reduced through organisational adjustment

Facilitator reflection

- Which risks are structural?
- Which relate to workload or communication?
- Are some groups disproportionately affected?

Tool – Worker Well-being Self-Check Questionnaire

Purpose

To help workers reflect on their current well-being during periods of organisational change, reskilling or increased workload.

When to use

- During digital or sustainability transitions
- When starting a training programme
- If feeling persistently stressed or overwhelmed
- As part of periodic well-being check-ins

This tool is not a diagnostic instrument. It is designed to encourage early awareness and constructive conversation.

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Work Experience in the Past 2–4 Weeks

For each statement, select the option that best reflects your experience:

0 = Not at all

1 = Occasionally

2 = Frequently

3 = Almost always

Energy & Motiviation	
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the workday.	
I feel less motivated than usual about my tasks.	
I doubt my ability to meet new work expectations.	
Workload & Control	
My workload feels difficult to manage.	
I have limited control over how I organise my work.	
I feel pressure to maintain performance while learning new tasks.	
Concentration & Focus	
I find it harder to concentrate than usual.	
I make more mistakes than I normally would.	
I feel mentally overloaded during the workday.	
Physical & Emotional Signs	
I experience sleep disturbances related to work concerns.	
I feel tense, anxious or irritable at work.	
I experience physical discomfort (e.g. headaches, fatigue) linked to stress.	
Support & Communication	
I feel comfortable discussing workload concerns with my supervisor.	
I feel informed about organisational changes affecting my role.	
I feel supported by colleagues during transition periods.	

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Interpretation Guidance

This questionnaire is intended as a reflection tool.

Step 1 – Notice Patterns

- If several items are marked as "Frequently" or "Almost always," this may indicate sustained strain.
- If most responses are "Not at all" or "Occasionally," stress levels may be manageable.

Step 2 – Identify Areas of Concern

Pay particular attention if:

- You feel persistently exhausted and less effective (possible early burnout indicators; EU-OSHA, 2022b).
- Workload feels unmanageable and control is low (a known risk factor; APO, 2014).
- You feel unable to discuss concerns with your supervisor (EU-OSHA, 2022a).

Step 3 – Consider Action

If you identify ongoing strain:

- Discuss workload or expectations with your supervisor.
- Use peer support mechanisms.
- Request clarification during change processes.
- Consult HR or designated contact if stress persists.

Important Note
This tool does not replace professional medical advice. Early conversation is a preventive action, not a sign of weakness.

Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Well-being Practices

➢ Unequal Exposure to Psychosocial Risks

Psychosocial risks do not affect all workers equally. Exposure often varies according to employment status, role, gender, migration background, age and skill level. During organisational transitions, these differences can increase vulnerability to stress and exclusion.

➢ Gendered Dimensions of Stress in TCLF Workplaces

The TCLF sector employs many women globally, yet women are often concentrated in lower-paid production roles rather than managerial or technical positions. Work–life balance pressures can further influence their participation in training and career progression.

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Women are more likely to carry unpaid care responsibilities outside the workplace, which can limit their ability to attend training sessions scheduled outside working hours or take on additional responsibilities during transition periods. As a result, they are more frequently represented in part-time or precarious employment arrangements and may have less access to structured support. Women may also perform a disproportionate share of informal emotional labour, such as supporting colleagues during organisational change or managing interpersonal tensions within teams.

- **Additional Barriers Faced by Vulnerable Worker Profiles**

Other workforce groups may also face increased psychosocial strain during transition:

Low-skilled workers may feel intimidated by training environments due to previous negative educational experiences or low digital literacy.

Older workers may experience anxiety about adapting to new technologies and fear being marginalised during digital transformation.

Migrant workers may encounter language barriers, fear discrimination, or hesitate to disclose stress due to stigma.

Without targeted attention, these factors can reduce participation in reskilling and increase psychosocial strain.

Reflection
Which groups in your organisation may be disproportionately exposed to transition-related stress? Who participates least in reskilling initiatives?

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Psychological Safety and Dignity at Work

Psychological safety refers to a work environment in which employees feel comfortable asking questions, raising concerns and admitting difficulties without fear of negative consequences. This is particularly important during periods of organisational change, when uncertainty and learning demands are high. Supervisors play a key role in creating psychologically safe environments by:

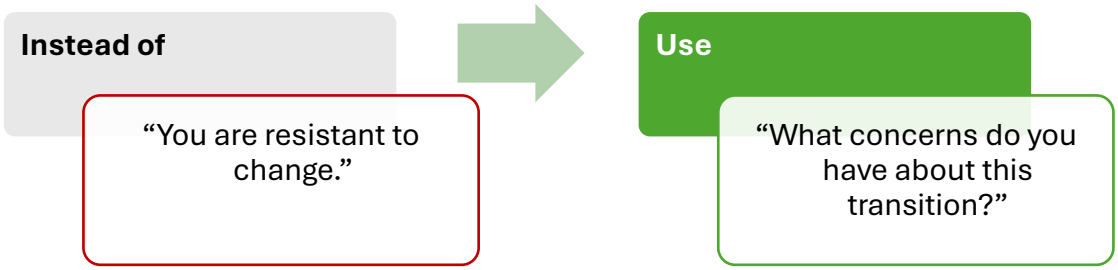
- Practising active listening
- Acknowledging uncertainty during transition
- Avoiding dismissive language or public criticism
- Encouraging questions and feedback
- Accepting mistakes as part of the learning process

Communication style also affects inclusion. Language that is clear, respectful and accessible can help reduce barriers for workers with different educational or cultural backgrounds.

Good practice includes:

- Using clear, jargon-free language
- Translating key materials where possible
- Allowing time for clarification and questions
- Avoiding culturally specific expressions that may exclude participants

When addressing psychosocial concerns, it is important to avoid stigmatising language. For example:



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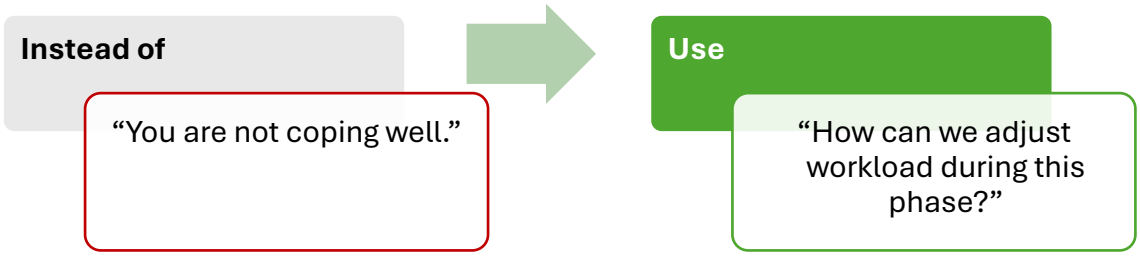

➢ **Equity-Based Support (Adapting to Needs)**

Inclusive well-being practices should focus on **equity rather than identical treatment**. Equal rules do not always produce equal outcomes when workers begin from different circumstances.

For example:

- Workers with care responsibilities may benefit from flexible training schedules.
- Migrant workers or those with lower digital literacy may benefit from simplified training materials.
- Workers with lower confidence may benefit from additional coaching or mentoring.

Key Question
Are we expecting identical performance despite unequal starting conditions?

Tool – Inclusive Well-being Response Checklist

Purpose

Support supervisors and HR staff in responding inclusively to psychosocial risks.

Exposure Awareness	
Have I considered whether certain groups are more exposed to this risk?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are women or part-time workers disproportionately affected?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are migrant or low-skilled workers withdrawing from training?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Communication Check	
Is my language neutral and non-stigmatising?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I invited feedback from quieter participants?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I clarified expectations during transition?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Adjustment Options	
Can workload expectations be temporarily adjusted?	☐ Yes

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	☐ No
Can training format be modified (timing, language, pacing)?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Can peer support be activated?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Escalation Awareness	
Does this situation require referral pathway consideration?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Am I staying within my role (support ≠ therapy)?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Peer-support mechanisms and referral pathways

➢ Role of Peer Support in TCLF Workplaces

Peer support can be particularly effective in TCLF workplaces, where informal collaboration, craft-based learning traditions and close supervisor–worker relationships are common. Workers often share similar skills and experiences, which can make peer-based learning and support especially valuable during periods of transition.

Structured peer support can help reduce feelings of isolation, normalise learning challenges and encourage shared problem-solving during reskilling and organisational change.

In SMEs, peer support is also a **low-cost and practical approach** to strengthening workplace well-being. For example:

Buddy systems during reskilling, pairing digitally confident workers with colleagues learning new systems, can support practical problem-solving through short weekly check-ins.

Structured discussion sessions (20–30 minutes) during transition periods can allow workers to discuss operational challenges and identify practical solutions. These discussions should focus on work processes rather than personal counselling.

Group reflection moments during training cycles can help teams identify what is working well and what adjustments may be needed.

Effective peer support should include:

- voluntary participation
- respect for confidentiality
- clear boundaries between peer support and counselling
- awareness of escalation pathways when additional support is required

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Peer support complements organisational well-being practices but does not replace managerial responsibility or professional support services.

Reflection
Where do informal support networks already exist in your organisation?

Tool – Peer Support Setup Guide

Purpose

To help organisations introduce simple peer support mechanisms during transition.

When to use

- During digital or sustainability transformation
- When early signs of strain emerge (Section 4)
- During reskilling programmes

Step 1 – Choose the format
☐ Buddy pairing ☐ Small group reflection (4–8 participants) ☐ Informal dialogue session
Step 2 – Clarify purpose
☐ Focus on work-related challenges ☐ Encourage shared problem-solving ☐ Identify practical improvements Avoid positioning the group as a counselling session.
Step 3 – Set ground rules
☐ Participation is voluntary ☐ Discussions remain confidential ☐ Respectful communication is mandatory ☐ Escalation procedures are known (see subsection 7)
Step 4 – Monitor and adjust
☐ Are participants engaged? ☐ Are sessions solution-oriented? ☐ Are emerging concerns communicated to management appropriately?

Tip for SMEs: Even monthly 20-minute sessions during transition periods can strengthen team cohesion.

Pathways and Organisational Limits

Not all psychosocial strain can be resolved internally. Managers are not therapists and clear referral reduces risk for workers and the organization while early escalation prevents crisis situations.

Let's distinguish organizational support from professional care. Organisational support inculdes adjusting workload, flexible scheduling during training, peer support activation, supervisor check-ins, and clarifying expectations.

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Professional mental health care includes clinical diagnosis, therapy or counselling, medical treatment and crisis intervention Remember, do not diagnose, do not attempt counselling, and refer when needed.

Referral should be considered if:
☐ Distress persists despite workplace adjustments
☐ Severe emotional reactions are visible
☐ Significant withdrawal from work activities
☐ Repeated absence linked to psychological strain
☐ Expressions of hopelessness or crisis
☐ Inability to perform essential tasks

If functioning is significantly impaired, escalate.

Tool – Peer Support and Referral Decision Tool

Purpose

To help supervisors, HR staff and trainers decide when to:

- Activate peer support mechanisms, and
- Escalate to formal referral pathways when professional support may be needed.

This tool supports early and responsible intervention during periods of organisational change, reskilling or increased workload.

Step 1 – Assess the Situation

Tick the statements that best describe the situation you are observing.

Indicators Suitable for Peer Support
☐ Stress linked to workload or learning new systems
☐ Temporary frustration or uncertainty during transition
☐ Worker remains engaged in tasks but appears overwhelmed
☐ Worker expresses difficulty adapting to new processes
☐ Issue relates to organisational change rather than personal crisis

If most boxes above are ticked → Peer support may be an appropriate first response

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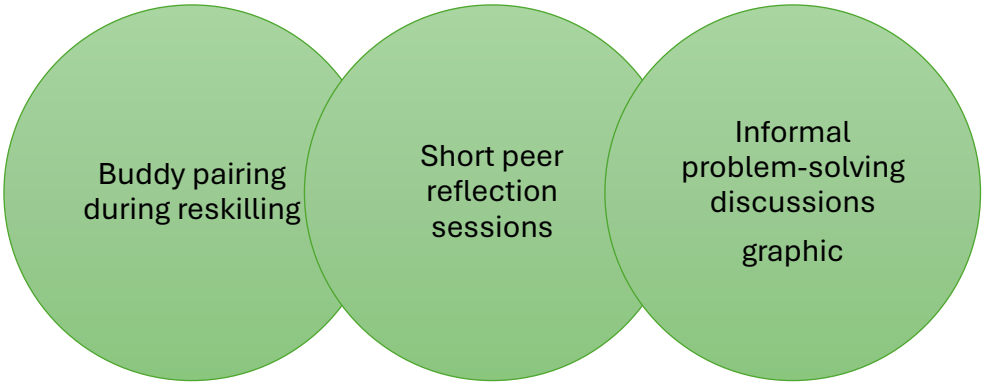
Possible actions:



Red flags requiring escalation
☐ Persistent withdrawal from colleagues or activities ☐ Severe emotional distress or visible breakdown ☐ Repeated absence linked to psychological strain ☐ Expressions of hopelessness or crisis ☐ Significant decline in ability to perform essential tasks

If two or more red flags are observed → Consider initiating a referral pathway

Supervisors should not attempt to diagnose or provide counselling.

Step 2 – Internal Escalation Pathway

Identify the appropriate internal contact points. In SMEs without HR departments, a designated manager should coordinate referrals.

Escalation Level	Responsible Person	Notes
First contact	Supervisor / Team Leader	Initial supportive conversation
Second level	HR or Well-being Contact	Review adjustments or support options
Final internal escalation	Senior management / designated coordinator	Authorise referral if needed

Step 3 – Identify External Support Options

Organisations should pre-identify external services that workers can access. Pre-mapping services reduce response time and uncertainty during difficult situations.

Type of Service	Contact / Organization	Notes
Occupational health provider		
Employee assistance program		

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Public healthcare or mental health services		
Community NGO or support organizations		
Other local services		

Step 4 – Decision Check Before Referral

Before activating a referral pathway, consider:	
Has a supportive conversation taken place with the worker?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have reasonable workplace adjustments been considered?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are the workers aware of available support options?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Has confidentiality been respected?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Has consent for referral been discussed where possible?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Key Principle:

Peer support and referral pathways serve different purposes:

- Peer support helps workers cope with transition-related stress and learning challenges.
- Referral pathways ensure access to professional care when distress exceeds what the workplace can manage.

Both mechanisms contribute to responsible psychosocial risk management in TCLF workplaces.

Module 5 – Inclusion and Support for Vulnerable Groups

Module Purpose

- Strengthening inclusion during the green and digital transition
- Identify structural barriers affecting vulnerable workers
- Adapt well-being and transition support measures
- Prevent exclusion from reskilling and upskilling pathways

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify vulnerable worker profiles within TCLF workplaces
- Recognise structural and organisational barriers to inclusion
- Apply inclusive HR and well-being adjustments
- Adapt transition and reskilling processes to diverse needs
- Monitor inclusion and prevent unintended exclusion

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Barriers faced by low-skilled workers, women and other vulnerable profiles

Who are "vulnerable groups" in the TCLF sector

In the context of workplace transition, vulnerability is not an individual characteristic. Instead, it reflects structural factors related to employment conditions, access to training and social inequalities. Within the TCLF sector, several workforce groups may face increased barriers during the green and digital transition, including:

- Low-skilled or low-qualified workers
- Women concentrated in segmented or precarious roles
- Older workers facing pressure to adapt to new technologies
- Migrant workers or workers facing language barriers
- NEETs and long-term unemployed individuals entering the sector

These groups may experience additional challenges when adapting to organisational change, particularly when reskilling and digital transformation occur rapidly. Understanding which workers may be more exposed to these barriers allows organisations to design more inclusive transition strategies.

Common Barriers During Green Transition

Several barriers may limit participation in training, career development and transition opportunities for vulnerable groups.

Access to training Workers may face obstacles to participating in upskilling initiatives due to:				
limited digital literacy	language barriers	scheduling conflicts related to care responsibilities	fear or discomfort in formal learning environments	low confidence linked to previous negative educational experiences

These barriers can discourage participation in reskilling programmes and reduce confidence in adapting to new roles.

Employment stability Employment conditions can also affect access to transition opportunities. Workers in temporary or precarious roles may experience:		
limited access to training opportunities	reduced visibility in career progression pathways	time constraints linked to multiple jobs or care responsibilities

Such factors may reduce motivation to engage in long-term reskilling initiatives.

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Organisational culture				
Workplace culture can unintentionally reinforce inequalities during transition processes. Potential issues include:				
lack of representation of certain groups in leadership roles	stereotypes influencing task allocation	unequal access to technical or supervisory roles	communication barriers linked to language or digital skills	silence or disengagement during change discussions

Reflection
Which groups in your organisation participate least in training programmes? Are there visible patterns linked to gender, age or migration background?

Link with Psychosocial Risks

Several barriers may limit participation in training, career development and transition opportunities for vulnerable groups. When workers face persistent barriers to participation or advancement, this can create **psychosocial strain**, including stress, reduced motivation, feelings of exclusion, and decreased confidence during organisational change.

- **Risk of Exclusion from Training and Reskilling Pathways**

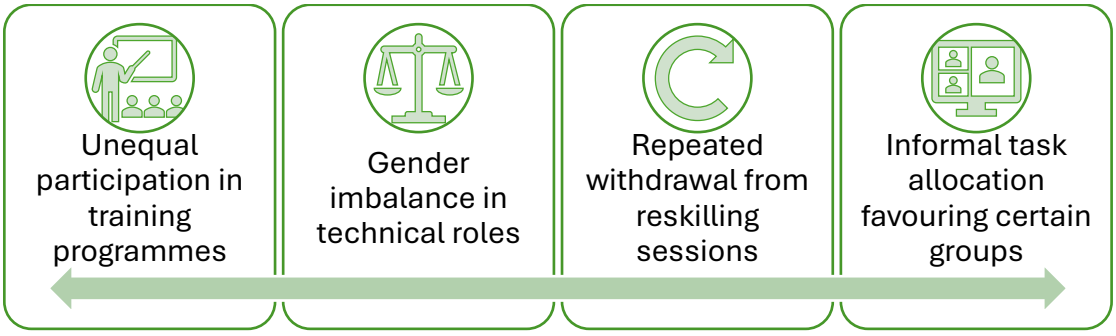
Without targeted attention, vulnerable groups may withdraw from training programmes or avoid digital learning opportunities altogether. This can lead to:

lower participation in advanced roles

concentration in repetitive or lower-paid tasks

reduced long-term employability

Early warning signs of potential exclusion may include:



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➢ Cumulative Disadvantage During Transition Processes

Transition can intensify existing inequalities through a cycle of cumulative disadvantage:

- Pre-existing structural barriers
- Increased stress during change
- Reduced participation in training
- Limited progression opportunities
- Reinforced insecurity

Reflection
Which group in my organisation may face both high stress and limited access to training? What small adjustment could prevent exclusion at this stage?

Tool – Vulnerable Group Mapping Worksheet

Purpose

Identify which groups may face barriers during transition.

Step 1 – Workforce Overview

Workforce Group	Workforce Group	Representation in Organisation	Participation in Training (High / Medium / Low)	Identified Barriers
Women				
Migrant workers				
Older workers				
Low-skilled workers				
Other				

Step 2 – Risk Indicators

Check if the following risk indicators are observed.

Risk Indicators	
Dropout from training	☐ Yes ☐ No
Low participation in digital roles	☐ Yes ☐ No
Concentration in precarious contracts	☐ Yes ☐ No
Dropout from training	☐ Yes ☐ No
Low participation in digital roles	☐ Yes ☐ No

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Concentration in precarious contracts	☐ Yes ☐ No
Silence during change processes	☐ Yes ☐ No
Limited progression opportunities	☐ Yes ☐ No

Inclusive Guidance Principles

After identifying the barriers faced by vulnerable workers in TCLF workplaces, the next step is to adopt organisational practices that ensure transition processes remain inclusive. Inclusive guidance focuses on removing structural barriers, supporting participation and preventing exclusion during periods of organisational change. Inclusive guidance is particularly important during technological and environmental transitions, where new skills requirements may unintentionally disadvantage workers who begin from different starting points. Rather than applying identical measures to all workers, organisations should recognise that workers begin from different starting points and may require different forms of support during reskilling and transition processes.

From "One-Size-Fits-All" to Needs-Based Support

Uniform workplace policies can unintentionally reinforce exclusion when workers face different constraints or starting conditions. Training schedules, communication formats or performance expectations that appear neutral may disadvantage workers with caregiving responsibilities, limited digital experience or language barriers.

For example:

- Fixed training schedules may exclude workers with care responsibilities.
- Complex digital platforms may disadvantage workers with limited digital literacy.
- Rapid learning expectations may create pressure for workers adapting to new technologies.

Inclusive transition strategies require an equity-based approach, where support is adapted to workers' needs rather than applied identically to all. The distinction between equality and equity is particularly relevant during reskilling processes.

Equality	Equity
Same training schedule for all	Adjusted schedules where needed
Same communication format for all	Accessible communication formats
Identical performance expectations	Temporary flexibility during transition
Uniform learning pace	Targeted coaching where necessary

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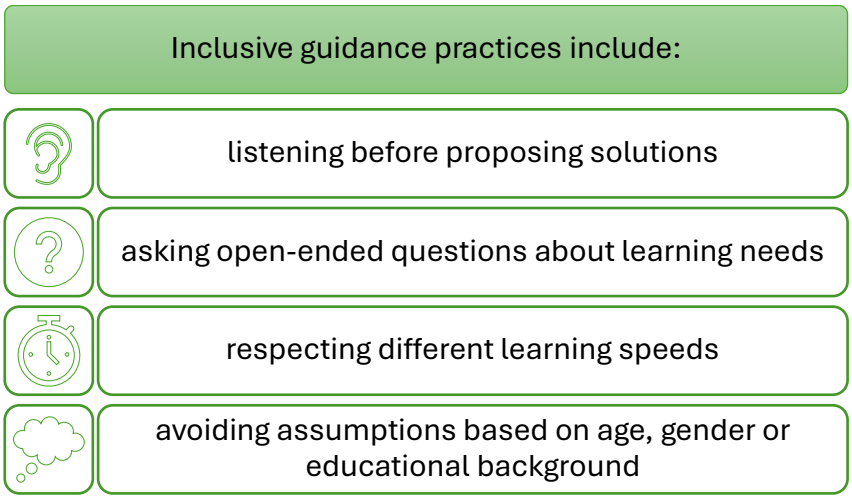
Four Core Principles of Inclusive Guidance

1) Individualised and Respectful Approaches

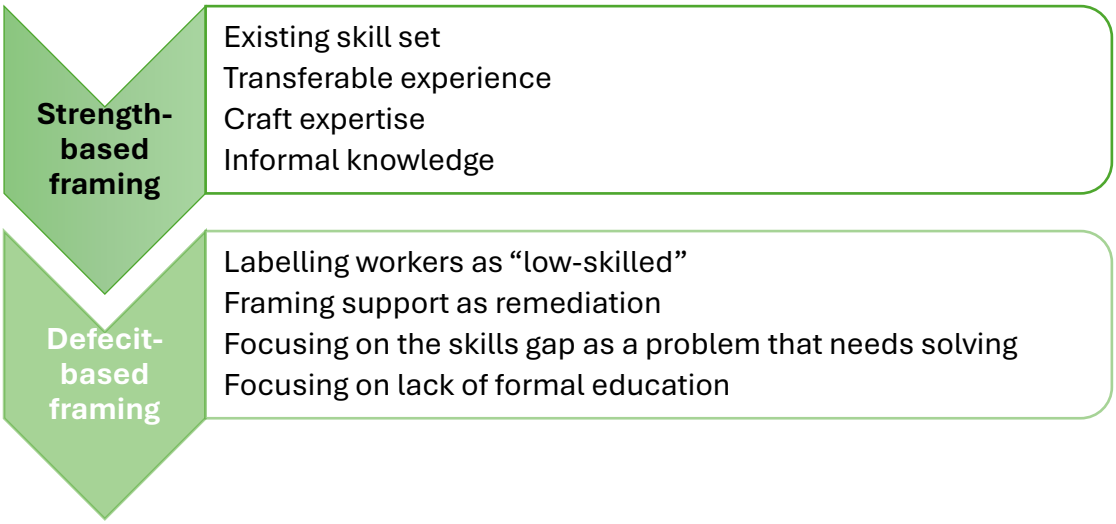
Workers adapt to change at different speeds and may require different forms of support. Supervisors and HR staff should prioritise open dialogue and avoid assumptions about competence or motivation.



This approach strengthens trust and encourages workers to seek support when needed.

2) Strength-Based Framing

Workers bring valuable knowledge and experience to the transition processes. Inclusive guidance should emphasise existing strengths and transferable skills rather than focusing only on skill gaps. Strength-based framing helps build confidence and motivation during reskilling.



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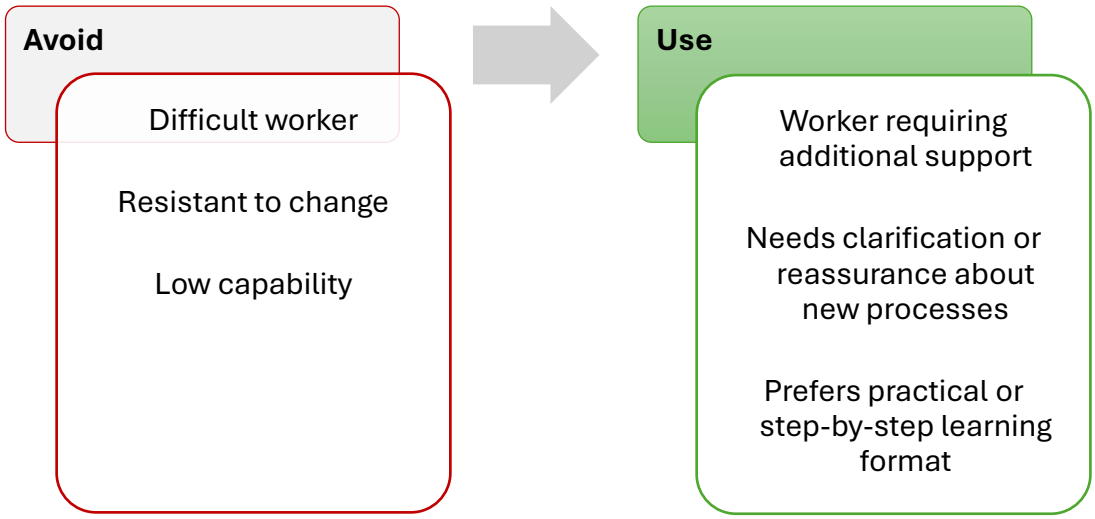
Avoiding deficit-based language

Language influences how workers perceive organisational support. Labelling workers as “resistant” or “low capability” can reinforce stigma and discourage participation.

Instead, organisations should use neutral and supportive language.



3) Cultural and Gender Sensitivity

Workplace communication and guidance practices should consider cultural diversity and gender dynamics. Inclusive practices may include:

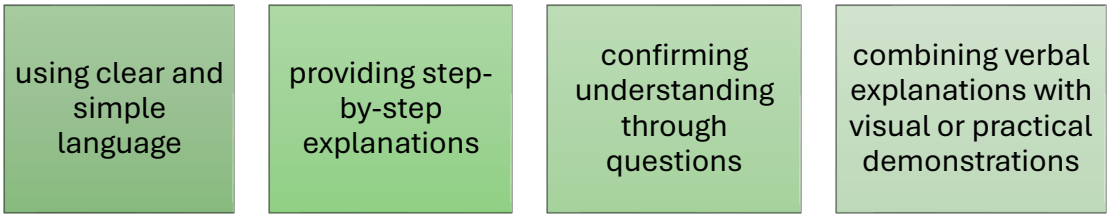
- encouraging participation from underrepresented voices
- recognising gendered task allocation patterns
- avoiding stereotypes when assigning tasks or training opportunities
- ensuring that communication styles are respectful and accessible

Cultural sensitivity strengthens participation and reduces barriers to learning.

4) Clear, Accessible Communication

Communication plays a central role in inclusive transition processes. Complex language, technical jargon or unclear instructions may unintentionally exclude workers with different educational backgrounds or language skills.

Good practices include:



Accessible communication improves learning outcomes and helps ensure that all workers can participate effectively in transition processes.

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Role of HR managers and support staff

HR managers, trainers and supervisors play an important role in ensuring that transition processes remain inclusive. Their role should focus on facilitating participation rather than controlling access to opportunities.

Facilitators Facilitators support workforce participation by:	removing structural barriers to training
	encouraging participation in reskilling programmes
	identifying reasonable adjustments where needed
	connecting workers to learning opportunities and support mechanisms

Gatekeepers By contrast, organisations may unintentionally act as gatekeepers when:	access to training is restricted based on assumptions about capability
	rigid selection criteria exclude workers with lower confidence or experience
	efficiency is prioritised over inclusion during transition

Discussion Prompt
Are current training selection processes unintentionally excluding certain groups from reskilling opportunities?

- **Building Trust and Motivation**

Workers are more likely to participate in transition processes when they feel respected and supported. Inclusive guidance practices contribute to psychosocial well-being and workforce participation.

Trust tends to increase when:

- workers feel heard and involved in decision-making
- organisational expectations are transparent
- adjustments are possible when needed
- mistakes are accepted as part of the learning process

Motivation increases when:

- existing skills are recognised
- progress during training is acknowledged
- career pathways are visible and accessible

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Tool – Inclusive Guidance Self-Assessment Checklist

Purpose:

Support HR and supervisors in evaluating whether their guidance approach is inclusive.

Communication Style	
Do I use clear and accessible language?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do I check understanding rather than assume it?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do I avoid deficit-based labels?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Participation	
Have I considered flexible options?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I encouraged quieter participants to engage?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are the selection criteria transparent?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Equity Lens	
Could this policy disadvantage certain groups?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Have I reviewed participation data by gender/age/migration background?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Am I adjusting expectations during transition phases?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Strength-Based Approach	
Do I recognise existing competencies?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do I build on transferable skills?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Do I frame adaptation as development, not deficiency?	☐ Yes ☐ No

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Practical Learning Activity

Scenario Analysis: Inclusive or Exclusionary?

Participants review short cases and decide:

Scenario 1 – Rigid Training Schedule	
Digital upskilling is scheduled from 18:00–20:00 for all staff.	
Questions	**Responses**
Who may be excluded?	
Is this equality or equity?	
What adjustment is feasible?	

Scenario 2 – Digital Selection Criteria	
Only workers already confident with digital tools are selected for advanced training.	
Questions	**Responses**
Does this reinforce inequality?	
How could mentoring support inclusion?	

Scenario 3 – Language Barrier	
The supervisor provides a technical explanation using complex terminology.	
Questions	**Responses**
Is communication accessible?	
What alternative approach could be used?	

Adapting support measures to individual needs

This section integrates psychosocial support (module 4) with inclusion strategies, translating inclusion principles into concrete adaptations to prevent exclusion during reskilling and transition periods.

- **Adapting Well-being and Psychosocial Support**

Not all workers benefit from the same format of support. **Tailoring peer support Formats** with simple adaptations can be more effective for unique individual needs. Low-confidence participants may prefer smaller peer groups or a One-to-one buddy instead of group reflection. Migrant and foreign workers may feel more comfortable sharing and speaking up in a language-matched peer pairing. Female workers may find the experience more enriching if they are able to share and receive support from other female workers who have shared similar experiences in gender-sensitive mentoring pairs.

It is also important to adjust pace and expectations in training During transition phases allow gradual exposure to digital tools and extend learning timelines where feasible making sure to provide practice time without productivity

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pressure, allowing for less stress with skill acquisition. Separate learning from performance evaluation.

Warning
If performance expectations remain unchanged during reskilling, stress may increase disproportionately for vulnerable workers who are already under stress from other factors.

Ensuring psychological safety for vulnerable workers, supervisors should:

Encourage questions without embarrassment	Avoid public comparison of learning speed	Recognise progress, not only outcomes	Address exclusionary comments immediately

- **Adapting career guidance and mentoring**

Simplified and Supported Career Planning

Some workers may need:

- Step-by-step explanation of career pathways
- Visual progression maps
- Clarification of qualification requirements
- One-to-one guidance sessions

Avoid:

- Overly abstract career frameworks
- Technical jargon without explanation

Mentoring for Confidence-Building

Mentoring can:	Mentoring should:
• Reinforce self-efficacy • Reduce fear of transition • Support gradual skill acquisition • Strengthen organisational belonging	• Be voluntary • Be time-limited with clear goals • Focus on development, not correction

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Gradual Exposure to Change and New Roles

Instead of immediate role shift:

1. Introduce hybrid tasks (old + new responsibilities)
2. Allow shadowing opportunities
3. Provide trial periods
4. Build confidence progressively graphic

Key Principle
Adaptation speed may differ across workers.

- **Avoiding stigmatisation**

Adaptation must not label workers as "problematic" and must not single out individuals publicly. Non-stigmatising adaptation efforts are rooted in voluntary participation. Peer support is optional: mentoring should not be imposed on someone who does not want it.

When handling a worker's personal information, especially as it regards their needs for adaptive measures, it must remain confidential so as not to compromise their privacy. To do so, information should be shared only on a need-to-know basis, and personal vulnerabilities should be documented only following internal data protection protocols. One of the most effective ways to avoid stigmatising workers who receive adaptations is framing adaptations as good practice for all, offering flexible learning options to all staff, rather than special arrangements for specific workers based on special needs**.** This reduces stigma and normalises adaptation.

Tool – Adapted Support Planning Template

Purpose:

Help participants design an adapted measure for a specific vulnerable profile.

Step 1 – Identify Worker Profile

Profile Example
☐ Older production worker ☐ Migrant worker ☐ Woman with care responsibilities ☐ Low-skilled worker ☐ Other: _____

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Step 2 – Identify Barrier

Barrier Observed:
This Barrier is: ☐ Structural ☐ Communication-related ☐ Training-related ☐ Confidence-related

Step 3 – Design Adaptation

Possible Adaptations
☐ Adjusted schedule ☐ Peer mentoring ☐ Simplified training material ☐ Gradual task exposure ☐ Workload adjustment ☐ Alternative communication format ☐ Other: _____

Step 4 – Define Implementation

Responsible person	
Timeline	
Mentoring method	
How will stigma be avoided?	

Practical Learning Activity

Action Planning Exercise

Objective

- Translate theory into one concrete action
- Encourage realistic SME implementation
- Strengthen ownership

Step 1 – Individual Work (5–10 minutes)

Participants complete the Adapted Support Planning Template (5.3.4 Tool)

Step 2 – Pair Discussion

Participants Share
☐ Identified barrier ☐ Proposed adaptation ☐ Expected impact

Step 3 – Group Reflection

Facilitator Asks
☐ Is the adaptation feasible? ☐ Does it reinforce equity? ☐ Does it reduce psychosocial risk? ☐ Does it avoid stigmatisation?

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Module 6 – Linking Support Mechanisms to Upskilling and Training Pathways

The transition towards a sustainable, circular, and digitally enabled Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector is driving significant changes in work, skills requirements, and organisational structures. Across Europe, this transformation is closely linked to broader economic priorities, particularly the green and digital transitions. As highlighted by the European Commission, these shifts are increasing the demand for new technical, digital, and transversal skills, while at the same time revealing important gaps in the current workforce.

However, the challenge is not limited to the provision of training. Many workers face a combination of structural and individual barriers that limit their participation in learning opportunities. A considerable proportion of adults in Europe still lack basic competencies in literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, which reduces their ability to engage in further training and increases their vulnerability in the labour market.

In addition to these structural barriers, workers frequently experience personal and organisational challenges. These include uncertainty about future job roles, lack of confidence in their ability to adapt to change, limited awareness of available training opportunities, and psychosocial stress linked to organisational restructuring.

For this reason, there is growing recognition of the importance of integrating support mechanisms into lifelong learning systems. Career guidance, mentoring, coaching, and well-being support play a crucial role in helping individuals identify their development needs, navigate available opportunities, and remain engaged throughout the learning process. Rather than being complementary, these mechanisms should be understood as essential components of effective workforce development strategies.

This integrated perspective is reflected in the concept of "*Upskilling Pathways*," which promotes a structured approach based on skills assessment, tailored learning opportunities, and validation of competencies. The objective is not only to provide access to training, but also to ensure that individuals are supported throughout their entire learning journey, particularly those with lower levels of qualification. More broadly, European policies on skills emphasise the need to

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make lifelong learning systems more inclusive, flexible, and responsive to labour market needs.

In the context of SMEs in the TCLF sector, the integration of support mechanisms and upskilling pathways should also be understood as part of the company's broader human resources strategy, linked to processes of organisational adaptation and transition. While employers play a key role in identifying skills needs and ensuring the continuous development of their workforce, training initiatives may emerge both from the organisation itself typically through HR functions and from individual workers seeking to improve their employability and adapt to changing job requirements. In this sense, fostering a shared responsibility for learning becomes essential.

Building on this policy context, this module focuses on how organisations, particularly SMEs in the TCLF sector, can move from fragmented approaches to more coherent systems that effectively link support mechanisms with structured training pathways, ensuring that workforce development is both inclusive and sustainable.

From Support to Skills Development

➢ Conceptual Framework: From Support to Competence Acquisition

Workforce development in the context of the green transition requires a holistic and systemic approach that goes beyond fragmented interventions. As labour markets evolve due to climate policies, technological innovation, and sustainability demands, workers are increasingly required to adapt not only by acquiring new technical skills but also by developing transversal competences such as adaptability, problem-solving, and continuous learning capacity. In this context, support mechanisms and training opportunities should not be treated as independents elements but interconnected components within a structured development pathway.

This conceptual framework proposes a shift from a linear understanding of training provision towards a dynamic and cyclical model of competence acquisition. The pathway is structured around four key stages:

- needs identification.
- activation and engagement.
- skills development.
- application and consolidation.

Each of these stages is supported by targeted mechanisms that ensure individuals are not only able to access training opportunities but are also prepared, motivated, and supported throughout the entire process.

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The first stage: identification of needs.

Crucial in aligning individual capabilities with labour market demands. This involves comprehensive guidance and assessment processes, including career counselling, skills profiling, and labour market intelligence. Effective support at this stage enables individuals to better understand their existing competences, identify gaps, and make informed decisions about their learning pathways. It also ensures that training provision is demand-driven and relevant to emerging green occupations.

The second stage: activation and engagement.

Focuses on motivating individuals to participate in training and development activities. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups or workers in transition, who may face psychological, social, or economic barriers to engagement. Mentoring and coaching play a central role in this phase by providing personalised support, building confidence, and fostering a sense of direction. These mechanisms help individuals overcome inertia and take proactive steps towards upskilling or reskilling.

The third stage: skills development.

Encompasses the actual acquisition of knowledge and competences through formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities. From a pedagogical perspective, this stage can be linked to Bloom's Taxonomy, which conceptualises learning as a progression from lower-order cognitive skills, such as remembering and understanding, to higher-order processes such as applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. In the context of the green transition, effective training should not be limited to knowledge acquisition but should support learners in reaching these higher levels of cognitive engagement, enabling them to apply and adapt their competences in complex and evolving work environments. However, participation in training alone is not sufficient to guarantee successful outcomes. Psychosocial support mechanisms are essential to ensure persistence, especially in cases where learners may encounter difficulties balancing training with other responsibilities or face challenges related to self-efficacy. Providing a supportive learning environment enhances completion rates and improves the overall effectiveness of training programmes.

The fourth stage: application and consolidation.

Emphasises the importance of transferring acquired skills into real work contexts. Workplace mentoring, on-the-job training, and follow-up support are key elements in this phase. These mechanisms facilitate the practical application of knowledge, reinforce learning outcomes, and support long-term retention of competences. Without this stage, there is a risk that newly acquired skills remain underutilised or are not fully integrated into professional practice.

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This framework should not be understood as strictly sequential. In practice, individuals may move back and forth between stages, requiring continuous support at different points in their development journey. For instance, the application of skills may reveal new learning needs, prompting a return to the identification stage. This highlights the importance of flexible and responsive systems that can adapt to individual trajectories.

Support mechanisms, therefore, play a transversal role across all stages of the pathway. Different types of support correspond to each stage: career guidance and profiling in the initial stage; mentoring and coaching during engagement; psychosocial support during training; and workplace mentoring during skills application. Together, these mechanisms create an enabling environment that enhances both access to and outcomes of training.

This integrated perspective is aligned with the approach advocated by CEDEFOP, which emphasises the need for coherent skills systems that connect guidance, learning, and validation processes. According to CEDEFOP, effective workforce development depends on the ability to create seamless pathways that support individuals throughout their learning and career transitions, particularly in times of structural change such as the green transition.

The Enabling Role of Support Mechanisms

Support mechanisms play a crucial role as enablers of learning, particularly for workers who may face barriers to participation. These barriers can include limited time, uncertainty about their abilities, lack of information, or resistance to change. In this context, support mechanisms do not merely accompany learning; they enable access and participation in learning.

- **Career Guidance**

Career guidance is a key tool for helping individuals better understand their own skills and potential pathways. It identifies personal skills, interests, and career aspirations, enabling more informed decision-making. It also ensures that training choices align with labour market needs, increasing the relevance and impact of learning. In essence, career guidance acts as a bridge between the individual and available opportunities.

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- **Mentoring and Coaching**

Mentoring and coaching processes significantly support both personal and professional development. They strengthen motivation and confidence, which are essential for sustaining the effort required for continuous learning. They also facilitate knowledge transfer, particularly practical or experiential knowledge, and help learners apply skills in real workplace contexts, enhancing the effectiveness of training.

- **Well-being and Psychosocial Support**

Learning, especially for adults, is not only a cognitive process but also an emotional one. Factors such as stress, anxiety, or fear of change can negatively impact readiness to learn. Psychosocial support addresses these challenges, creating a more favourable environment for learning. It improves learners' preparedness to engage in training and reduces the risk of dropping out, which is critical for achieving sustainable outcomes.

The effective implementation of these support mechanisms depends on the coordinated involvement of multiple actors. In the context of SMEs and workforce development systems, responsibility is typically shared between employers, training providers, and public employment services. Companies, often through their human resources functions, play a central role in identifying skills needs, facilitating access to support measures, and integrating learning into organisational processes. Training providers contribute by embedding guidance, mentoring, and psychosocial support within learning programmes, ensuring that training is learner-centred and responsive to individual needs. Public employment services and other intermediary organisations can further support this ecosystem by offering career guidance, funding opportunities, and outreach to vulnerable groups. The effectiveness of support mechanisms, therefore, relies not only on their availability but also on the degree of coordination between these actors, ensuring a coherent and accessible system for individuals.

Together, these mechanisms do not just support learning; they amplify it. According to the OECD, participation in adult learning increases significantly when combined with personalised guidance and tailored support. This demonstrates that the success of adult education policies depends not only on the availability of training but also on the resources that facilitate access, retention, and successful completion.

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Skills Development in the Green Transition Context

The **Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF)** sector is undergoing a significant transformation driven by multiple sustainability forces:

Circular economic principles, which prioritise resource efficiency, reuse, and recycling across value chains.

Sustainable materials and production processes that reduce environmental impact and support long-term ecological goals.

Digitalisation and automation, which enable smarter manufacturing, data-driven optimisation, and improved resource management.

As a result, this transformation creates **new demand for diverse skills** across technical, cross-cutting, and green-specific domains:

1) Technical Skills

To enable real change, workers need specialised expertise such as:

- Eco-design and sustainable product development
- Sustainable material management and circular production techniques
- Proficiency in digital production tools and technologies (e.g., automation, data analytics, digital supply chains)

These technical capabilities are essential for operating within a greener and more resource-efficient industrial model.

2) Transversal Skills

Alongside technical know-how, there is a growing need for transferable soft skills that support adaptability and innovation in evolving work environments:

- Adaptability and continuous learning
- Problem-solving and critical thinking
- Collaboration and cross-disciplinary communication

OECD research highlights those transversal skills, such as problem-solving and active learning, are especially valuable in emerging green roles, as they help workers adapt to new technologies and changing job demands.

3) Green Competences

These are competencies directly linked to sustainability outcomes and environmental awareness, such as:

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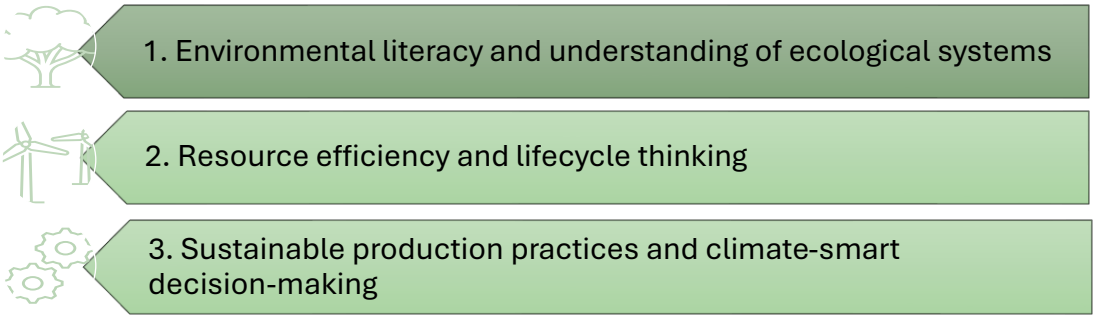

Green competence enables individuals to integrate sustainability principles into everyday work and contribute meaningfully to climate goals.

4) Policy and International Perspectives

Major international organisations stress the importance of integrated approaches to skills development in the transition to a green economy:

- The **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** emphasises that effective green transitions require reskilling strategies that integrate both technical and social dimensions of work, ensuring that workers are equipped not just with technical skills, but also with the human and social competences needed for the future of work.
- According to wider **OECD policy research**, successful green skills strategies combine technical, transversal, and sustainability competencies to enable workers to thrive and support structural changes across sectors.

These references illustrate that building skills for the green transition isn't just a technical challenge, it's a comprehensive educational and labour policy priority that integrates sustainability, lifelong learning, and workforce readiness across sectors and occupations.

Barriers to Effective Skills Development

Although a wide range of training opportunities exist, many workers do not take part in them or fail to complete training programmes. The barriers to effective skills development are complex and can be classified into individual-level, organisational-level, and systemic barriers. Understanding these obstacles is essential for designing interventions that enhance participation and learning outcomes.

a) Individual-level barriers

At the individual level, personal characteristics and circumstances often influence the decision to engage in training. A lack of confidence or motivation can prevent workers from enrolling in courses, even when these are freely available. For instance, employees who have previously struggled in learning environments may doubt their ability to succeed, leading to avoidance of new training opportunities. Similarly, limited digital literacy can create significant challenges, particularly as many training programmes are now delivered online.

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Workers who are unfamiliar with digital tools or online learning platforms may feel overwhelmed or discouraged. Additionally, fear of change can act as a strong deterrent. Individuals may worry about new responsibilities or fear that acquiring new skills could expose gaps in their current competence, making them hesitant to participate.

b) Organisational-level barriers

Organisations themselves can inadvertently limit employees' access to skill development. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in particular, often face constraints in human resources capacity, leaving limited time or expertise to plan and implement effective training programmes. In many cases, structured training strategies are absent, and training is provided on an ad hoc basis, reducing its overall effectiveness. Time constraints are another common barrier; employees may struggle to balance training with existing workloads, especially if training is not integrated into their regular work schedule or supported by management. Without a supportive organisational environment, even highly motivated individuals may find it difficult to participate in skills development initiatives.

c) Systemic barriers

Beyond individuals and organisations, broader systemic factors also affect access to training. Fragmented training provision is a key challenge: courses and programmes are often scattered across multiple providers with varying quality standards, making it difficult for workers to identify suitable opportunities. Additionally, weak alignment between training programmes and actual labour market needs can result in courses that are irrelevant or poorly targeted, diminishing their value to both employees and employers. Inequalities in access to education further exacerbate these issues, with certain demographic groups, such as low-income individuals or those in rural areas facing greater obstacles in reaching quality training opportunities.

<u>Overcoming Barriers to Effective Skills Development</u>

Support mechanisms play a crucial role in mitigating these barriers. Personalised assistance, such as mentorship, career counselling, or guidance on digital skills, can help individuals overcome confidence or literacy challenges. Continuous engagement strategies, including follow-up sessions, peer networks, and structured feedback, help sustain motivation and encourage completion of training programmes. At the organisational level, support mechanisms may involve leadership commitment, flexible scheduling, or targeted investment in staff development. Finally, systemic interventions, such as coordinated training networks and stronger links between education providers

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and the labour market, ensure that training opportunities are accessible, relevant, and equitable.

Barriers to effective skills development are multifaceted, involving personal, organisational, and systemic dimensions. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that combines individual support, organisational commitment, and systemic coordination. By understanding and tackling these obstacles, policymakers, educators, and employers can enhance participation in training programmes, improve skill acquisition, and ultimately strengthen workforce capability and adaptability in an evolving economic environment.

Towards Integrated Upskilling Pathways

The concept of integrated upskilling pathways is increasingly recognised as a strategic approach to workforce development. Rather than offering isolated or ad hoc training opportunities, integrated pathways provide a structured framework that guides learners through the entire process of skills acquisition, from identifying needs to validating outcomes. By linking assessment, support, training, and validation, this approach ensures that upskilling efforts are coherent, sustainable, and aligned with both individual aspirations and labour market requirements.

a) Assessment: Identifying Needs

The first stage in an integrated upskilling pathway is assessment. This involves identifying the skills gaps of employees or learners, as well as the demands of the current and future labour market. Comprehensive assessment can include self-evaluation, manager feedback, performance reviews, or skills audits conducted by external experts. By accurately mapping needs, organisations and individuals can prioritise training efforts, avoiding irrelevant courses and focusing resources on areas that will have the greatest impact. Assessment also helps learners gain awareness of their own strengths and development areas, fostering a sense of ownership and motivation.

b) Support: Guidance and Mentoring

Once needs have been identified, targeted support becomes essential. Guidance and mentoring help individuals navigate the training process, offering personalised advice, motivation, and practical assistance. Mentors or career advisors can provide feedback, suggest suitable learning paths, and assist with overcoming personal or organisational barriers, such as time constraints or limited digital literacy. Continuous support throughout the learning journey is critical for ensuring engagement, maintaining confidence, and encouraging completion of training programmes.

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c) Training: Formal and Informal Learning

Training is the central component of an upskilling pathway, encompassing both formal and informal learning opportunities. Formal learning may include structured courses, workshops, or certifications, while informal learning can take the form of on-the-job experiences, peer learning, or digital tutorials. Integrating both types of learning allows for flexibility, accommodates different learning styles, and ensures that knowledge is applied in practical contexts. By combining theory and practice, integrated training strengthens skill acquisition and improves the overall effectiveness of upskilling initiatives.

d) Validation: Recognition of Skills

Validation is the final step in the pathway, providing recognition for the skills and competencies that have been acquired. This can take the form of certificates, qualifications, badges, or endorsements recognised by employers or professional bodies. Validation not only motivates learners by acknowledging their achievements but also facilitates career progression and mobility. It ensures that the skills gained are formally recognised and transferable, bridging the gap between learning and tangible professional outcomes.

Benefits of Integrated Pathways

Integrated upskilling pathways offer several key benefits. By ensuring that training is relevant, accessible, effective, and inclusive, this approach maximises both individual and organisational outcomes. Relevance is achieved through careful assessment and alignment with labour market needs. Accessibility is promoted through personalised support and flexible learning formats. Effectiveness is enhanced by combining formal and informal learning with practical applications. Finally, inclusivity is addressed by considering the diverse needs, backgrounds, and abilities of learners, reducing barriers and fostering equitable opportunities for development.

In summary, integrated upskilling pathways provide a comprehensive framework that connects assessment, support, training, and validation into a coherent process. This approach not only improves the quality and impact of training programmes but also strengthens workforce resilience and adaptability in an evolving economic environment. By embracing integrated pathways, organisations and policymakers can create a culture of continuous learning, ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills they need to succeed both today and in the future.

Referring Workers to Appropriate Training Opportunities

Effective referral of workers to relevant training opportunities is a critical component of workforce development. It acts as the operational bridge between support mechanisms, such as guidance, mentoring, and skills assessment, and the training provision itself. Well-designed referral systems not only help workers access the most suitable courses but also enhance engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes.

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The Importance of Structured Referral Systems

Referral systems are essential for ensuring that workers are directed to training that meets their specific needs. Without structured processes, workers may struggle to identify suitable programmes, select inappropriate courses, or disengage from learning altogether. For example, a worker might enroll in a course that does not match their skill level or career goals, leading to frustration, wasting time, and missed opportunities.

A structured referral system provides several key advantages:

Clarity and transparency

Workers clearly understand the options available and the steps required to access training.

Alignment with individual needs

Training recommendations are tailored to the worker's current skills, career aspirations, and personal circumstances.

Efficient use of training resources

Organisational and public training resources are optimally allocated, reducing redundancies and increasing the impact of learning investments.

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Mapping Training Ecosystems

To make effective referrals, organisations need a comprehensive understanding of the training ecosystem. This includes both local and regional opportunities and online platforms, ensuring a diverse portfolio of learning options. Key components of mapping the training landscape include:

Local and regional VET providers

Vocational education and training providers offer practical, sector-specific skills.

Online learning platforms

Digital courses provide flexible access, accommodating different schedules and learning styles.

Sector-specific training programmes

Industry-aligned programmes ensure skills are relevant to current and emerging labour market demands.

Public employment services

Government-supported initiatives often provide free or subsidised training and career guidance.

Tools such as **ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations)** support the classification of skills and help align training with labour market needs, providing a structured reference point for referral systems.

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Designing Effective Referral Pathways

An effective referral pathway involves a series of structured steps that guide workers from assessment to enrolment and beyond:

Step 1: Worker Profiling

- Conducting skills assessments to understand current capabilities.
- Identifying career aspirations to ensure training supports professional growth.
- Considering personal circumstances, such as work schedules or family commitments, to tailor recommendations.

Step 2: Identification of Training Needs

- Performing a skills gap analysis to determine priority areas for development.
- Highlighting skills that are essential for the worker's career progression or labour market relevance.

Step 3: Training Matching

- Selecting programmes that best align with the worker's profile and identified needs.
- Considering accessibility, including location, timing, delivery format, and any potential financial constraints.

Step 4: Referral and Enrolment

- Providing guidance on the application process, including necessary documentation.
- Offering administrative support to reduce barriers to enrolment.

Step 5: Follow-up

- Monitoring participation and progress to ensure the worker remains engaged.
- Providing ongoing support, such as mentorship or troubleshooting, to maximise completion rates and learning outcomes.

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Role of Stakeholders in Referral Systems

Referral systems rely on collaboration between multiple stakeholders. Each has a complementary role in ensuring effective and efficient pathways:

- **Employers**: Provide insights into skills requirements and support employee participation.
- **Training providers**: Offer relevant and high-quality learning programmes.
- **Public employment services:** Facilitate access to resources, funding, and guidance.
- **Local authorities**: Coordinate local initiatives, support outreach, and address community-specific barriers.

The **European Training Foundation** highlights that coordinated systems linking education and labour markets are essential for achieving sustainable skills development outcomes.

Beyond the definition of roles, the effectiveness of referral systems depends on the establishment of clear coordination mechanisms between stakeholders. This includes the definition of shared responsibilities, communication channels, and referral protocols that ensure individuals can move smoothly between services. For instance, employers and training providers should collaborate to align training content with real workplace needs, while public employment services can act as intermediaries, guiding individuals and facilitating access to appropriate programmes.

Local authorities can support this coordination by fostering local partnerships and ensuring that services are adapted to regional contexts. In this sense, referral systems should be understood as structured ecosystems rather than isolated interventions, where cooperation, information-sharing, and joint planning are essential to ensure coherent and efficient pathways for individuals.

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Inclusive Referral Strategies

To maximise participation and equity, referral systems must be inclusive and adaptable. Key practices include:

Simplified communication

Using clear, jargon-free language to ensure all workers can understand available options.

Flexible learning options

Offering online, modular, or part-time courses to accommodate diverse needs.

Financial support mechanisms

Providing subsidies, scholarships, or grants to remove cost-related barriers.

Targeted outreach to vulnerable groups

Actively engaging low-income workers, minorities, or those with limited prior education to ensure equitable access to training opportunities.

Inclusive referral strategies not only broaden access but also contribute to stronger workforce participation and reduced skills gaps, ensuring that no worker is left behind in the transition to a more dynamic labour market.

Ensuring Continuity Between Support and Upskilling Actions

Continuity between support mechanisms and training programmes is a critical factor in achieving sustainable learning outcomes. Skills development is not just about attending a course; it is about ensuring that the learning experience translates into practical competence, career progression, and long-term employability. Discontinuities between support and training often undermine these goals, leading to high dropout rates, poor retention of newly acquired skills, and limited impact on employment opportunities.

Continuity as a Success Factor

A continuous and coordinated approach ensures that workers are supported before, during, and after training. Without this continuity, learners may feel isolated or overwhelmed, resulting in disengagement. For example, a worker who receives guidance in identifying a skills gap but is not supported through the enrolment and training process may drop out early. Similarly, without post-training reinforcement, newly acquired skills can fade, reducing their impact on employability. Continuous support acts as a bridge, connecting each stage of the learning journey and enhancing the overall effectiveness of upskilling initiatives.

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a) Pre-Training Phase

The pre-training phase focuses on preparing workers to fully engage in learning. Support mechanisms at this stage aim to:

Build motivation

Encourage workers to commit to training by demonstrating its relevance to career growth or personal development.

Address fears

Helping learners overcome anxiety related to new responsibilities, technology use, or unfamiliar content.

Clarify expectations

Ensuring that workers understand what the training entails, the skills to be acquired, and the commitment required time.

b) Training Phase

During training, ongoing support is essential to maintain engagement and reinforce learning. Key actions include:

Maintaining engagement

Regular check-ins, encouragement, and creating a supportive learning environment help prevent learners from losing interest.

Addressing learning difficulties

Providing tutoring, peer support, or additional resources for workers struggling with complex concepts.

Reinforcing confidence

Recognising progress, offering constructive feedback, and celebrating small successes help learners remain motivated and persistent.

Effective support during this phase ensures that workers are not only attending training but actively acquiring and internalising new skills.

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c) Post-Training Phase

Support does not end when training finishes. Post-training mechanisms are crucial to ensure that skills are applied, career opportunities are pursued, and long-term impact is achieved. Post-training support includes:

Application of skills

Guidance on integrating new knowledge and techniques into daily work tasks.

Career progression

Advising on opportunities to leverage newly acquired skills for promotions, job changes, or professional development.

Long-term impact

Monitoring outcomes and providing follow-up coaching to ensure that learning translates into sustainable employability benefits.

According to the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, post-training support significantly enhances employment outcomes, increasing the likelihood of successful job placements and career advancement.

Organisational Integration

For continuity to be effective, support and training must be embedded within organisational structures. Strategies include:

Integrating support and training into HR strate	Ensuring that upskilling is part of broader workforce development plans.
Assigning coordination roles	Designating individuals or teams responsible for guiding workers through the training process and providing ongoing support.
Using monitoring tools	Tracking participation, progress, and outcomes to identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability.
Promoting a learning culture	Encouraging continuous learning, recognising achievements, and fostering an environment where skill development is valued and supported.

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Case Study: Integrated Workforce Development in a TCLF SME

A medium-sized footwear company (TCLF SME) implemented a structured workforce development approach to enhance both employee skills and organisational performance. The initiative was designed to address gaps in digital capabilities, strengthen technical and transversal skills, and ensure sustainable outcomes through continuous support and follow-up. The programme illustrates how integrated upskilling pathways and referral systems can be applied effectively in practice.

a) Phase 1: Diagnosis

The first phase focused on understanding the workforce's current skills and identifying areas for development. Activities included:

Workforce Skills Assessment

Employees underwent comprehensive evaluations to measure technical competencies, digital literacy, and other relevant skills.

Identification of Digital Skill Gaps

The assessment revealed a need for stronger proficiency in digital manufacturing tools and software commonly used in modern footwear production.

This diagnostic phase ensured that subsequent training and support activities would be relevant and tailored to the specific needs of both the employees and the organisation.

b) Phase 2: Support Activation

Once gaps were identified, the company implemented support mechanisms to prepare workers for learning and ensure engagement:

Mentoring Programme

Experienced employees and external mentors guided participants, helping them navigate learning challenges and providing practical advice for applying new skills.

Career Guidance Sessions

One-on-one sessions addressed individual career aspirations, helping workers understand how training could contribute to professional growth and long-term employability.

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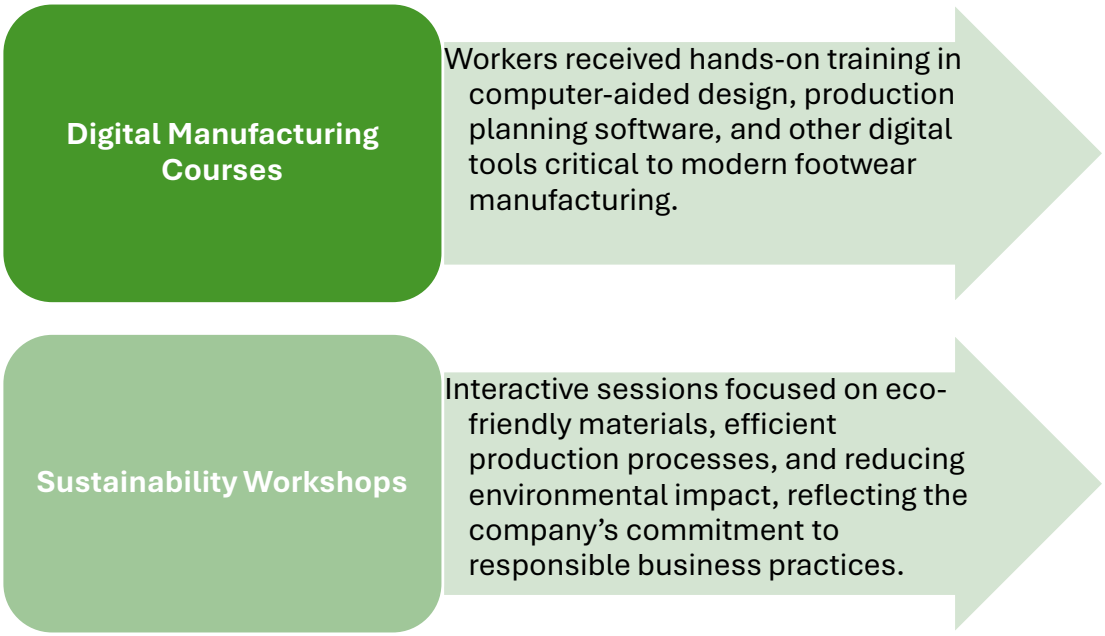
These support measures addressed common barriers to training participation, such as fear of change, lack of confidence, and uncertainty about the relevance of new skills.

c) Phase 3: Training

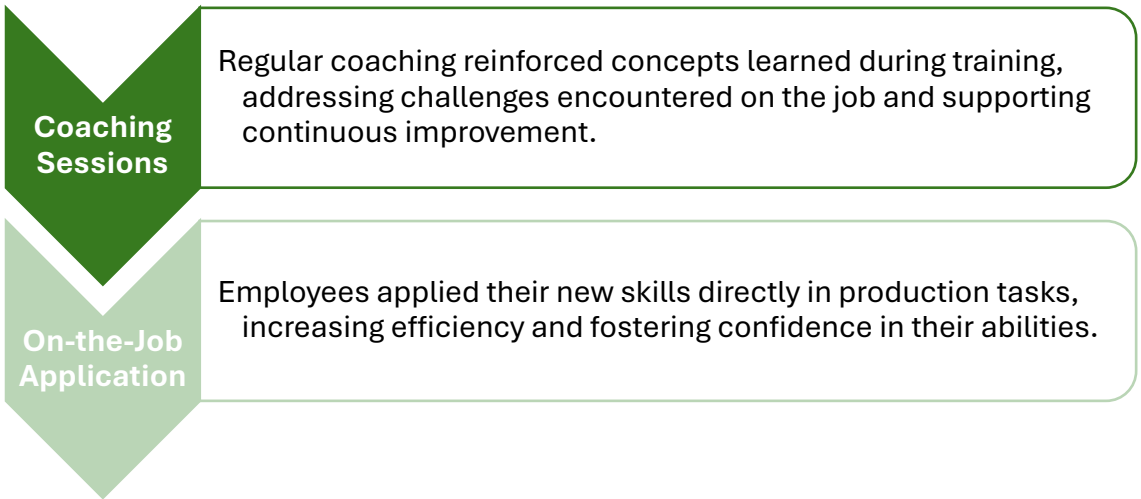
The training phase combined formal and informal learning, focusing on both technical and sustainability skills:



Training was delivered in a modular and flexible format, allowing workers to balance learning with regular production schedules. Ongoing support during this phase ensured that engagement remained high and learning difficulties were addressed promptly.

d) Phase 4: Follow-up

Post-training support ensured that skills were applied and learning translated into measurable outcomes:



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This follow-up phase was critical in bridging the gap between training and practical implementation, promoting skill retention, and encouraging long-term professional growth.

Results

The structured approach led to tangible benefits for both employees and the organisation:

Increased Productivity

Workers were able to utilise digital tools more effectively, streamlining production processes and reducing errors.

Improved Worker Satisfaction

Engagement in structured support and training enhanced motivation and job satisfaction.

Reduced Turnover

Employees were more likely to remain with the company, seeing clear pathways for development and career progression.

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4. Social Impact Assessment Toolkit

4.1. Purpose and Scope of the Toolkit

4.1.1. The TCLF Sector: Social Challenges of Green Transition

The Textile, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sector occupies a distinctive position in the European economy: it is simultaneously a bearer of regional identity and craft heritage, a significant employer of vulnerable workforce groups, and one of the industries facing the most complex social restructuring as it transitions towards sustainable production. Understanding these structural features is not peripheral to the development of a social impact assessment toolkit; it is the starting point.

The GREEN-LIFT consortium brings to this task a grounded perspective. With partners spanning textile engineering, environmental science, and social research, the consortium has direct institutional knowledge of the TCLF sector and its workforce dynamics across the partner countries.

In Greece alone, approximately **80,000 workers** are employed in the broader textile and apparel industry (*Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2023*), concentrated primarily in Central Macedonia and Attica, with a significant proportion working in SMEs and micro-enterprises that lack the HR infrastructure typical of larger manufacturers.
This institutional knowledge was directly activated during the GREEN-LIFT stakeholder engagement phase. For instance, during the stakeholder engagement activities in Greece (September 2025), meetings with local TCLF sector representatives engaged a deliberately diverse range of actors: Kraft Paints R&D Department (industrial manufacturing), Thrace Nonwovens and Geosynthetics S.A. (large-scale technical textiles). This breadth of engagement, spanning industry, education, and the creative sector, reflects the cross-sector approach that underpins the Community Engagement dimension of this Toolkit.

- **Structural Fragmentation and the SME Challenge**

Across Europe, the TCLF sector is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, family businesses, and regional artisan networks. These entities face a structural paradox during the green transition: they are simultaneously the organisations most affected by new environmental regulations and least equipped to absorb their costs. Large fashion brands routinely impose sustainability requirements on their supply chains whilst retaining the commercial benefits, leaving smaller subcontractors to shoulder financial risk without corresponding support. This pattern was documented consistently across all four GREEN-LIFT partner countries in the Transnational Needs Assessment (D2.1), with Italian stakeholders raising particular concern about the treatment of migrant and subcontracted workers within these dynamics.

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The same structural challenge was articulated directly during the project's stakeholder engagement phase. For example, Athanasia Tsiakiri of Tsiakiris Silk House, a traditional silk production SME in Soufli, Greece, described the difficulties small enterprises face in adopting sustainable practices, noting that the costs and complexity of the green transition can feel disproportionate for businesses rooted in centuries-old craft traditions. This tension between cultural heritage and environmental compliance characterises a significant segment of the TCLF landscape across all partner countries, where artisan and family-owned businesses carry irreplaceable tacit knowledge but operate with limited financial and institutional capacity.

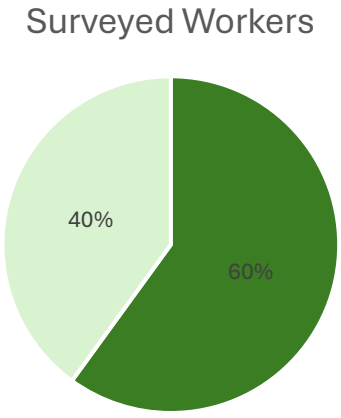
- **Workforce Vulnerability and the Risk of Exclusion**

The workforce profile of the TCLF sector compounds these structural challenges. Women represent a significant majority of production workers across the sector, a pattern observed consistently in all four partner countries, whilst the sector

> youth and NEETs, women, migrants, and older workers were identified as priority groups requiring targeted support in all four partner countries.

simultaneously struggles with an ageing workforce declining attractiveness to young professionals, and a persistent reliance on migrant labour in the most precarious roles. Each of these groups faces distinct risks of exclusion if the green transition is managed without deliberate social safeguards. The findings of the GREEN-LIFT Needs Assessment are unambiguous on this point:

A striking data point from the Needs Assessment underscores the urgency:



60% of the 40 workers surveyed did not attend any sustainability-related training in the TCLF sector. At the same time, employers rated the impact of sustainability on their future competitiveness at **4.28 out of 5**. The gap between management-level urgency and worker-level access to training is not merely a skills problem; it is a social justice problem, and one that this Toolkit is designed to help address.

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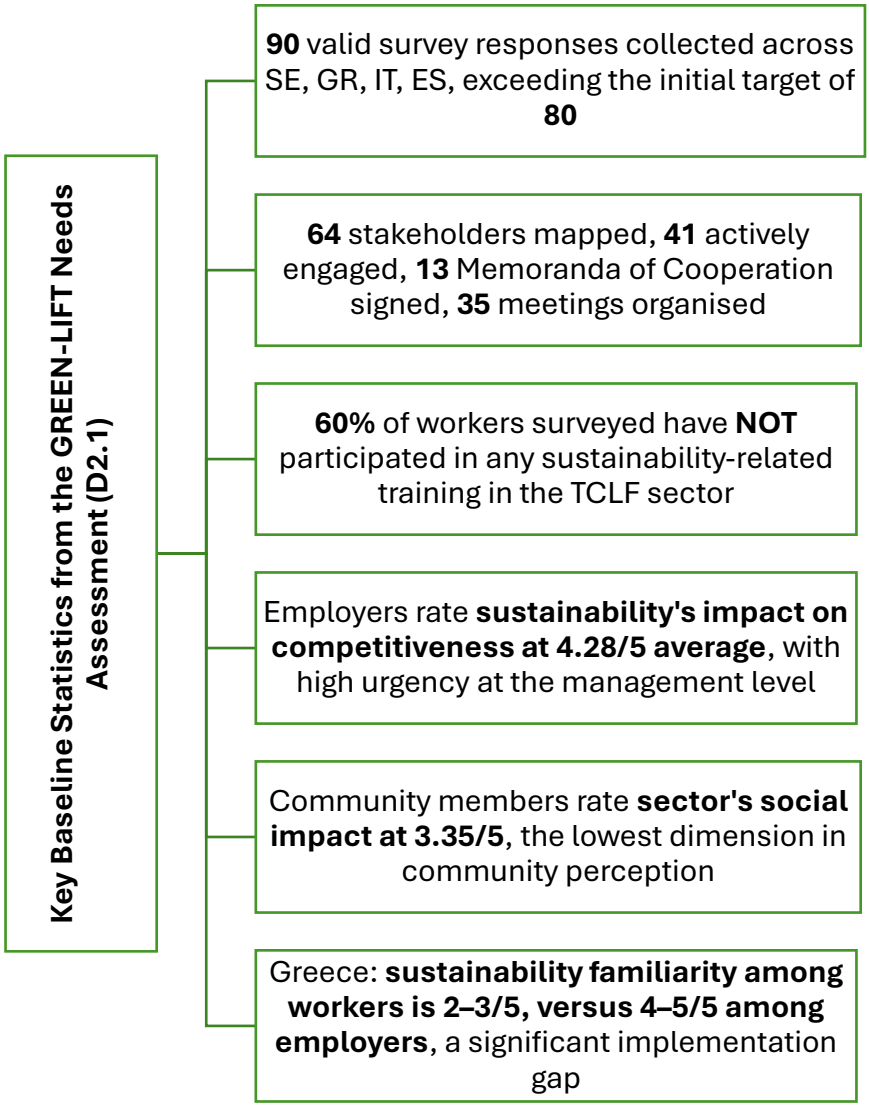
4.1.2. Why a Social Impact Assessment Toolkit - and Why Now

The GREEN-LIFT Transnational Needs Assessment Report (D2.1) confirmed what practitioners in the sector have long observed: robust frameworks for monitoring environmental impact in TCLF exist and are gaining regulatory force (ESG reporting, Life Cycle Assessment, Digital Product Passport requirements), but equivalent frameworks for monitoring social impact remain underdeveloped, particularly at the SME level. The report explicitly identifies this gap, pointing to the need for practical, sector-specific tools that translate broad social themes, ethical labour standards, value chain equity, and worker well-being into measurable, actionable indicators.

This is precisely the mandate of the Social Impact Assessment Toolkit. It does not attempt to replicate or replace the macro-level frameworks identified in the Needs Assessment. Rather, it operationalises their social dimensions into instruments that an SME owner, an HR manager, or a community stakeholder can realistically use without specialist expertise. In doing so, it provides the GREEN-LIFT consortium and the wider TCLF sector with a practical foundation for evidence-based social reporting.



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4.1.3. How the Toolkit Fits within the GREEN-LIFT Framework

Three pillars structure the GREEN-LIFT Framework for the Green Re- and Upskilling of the TCLF Workforce. This Toolkit constitutes the third. Its relationship with the other two is not merely complementary; it is functional. Pillar I deliver holistic support to workers. Pillar II trains HR managers and employees. Without a systematic means of measuring whether these interventions are producing real social outcomes, neither Pillar can be held accountable or improved over time.

Pillar I (Holistic Support Model Guide)	The Toolkit measures the social outcomes of mentoring, career guidance, and psychosocial support. Tool 1 results on dimensions WB and IE directly indicate whether Pillar I interventions are reducing stress, improving well-being, and reaching the workers who need them most.
Pillar II (HR Training Programme)	The Toolkit measures whether HR training translates into observable changes in organisational practice. Tool 2 is designed to capture exactly this, the shift from intention to action at the employer level.
D2.1 Needs Assessment	The Needs Assessment provides the starting conditions. The Toolkit measures movement from those conditions over time, creating a before-and-after evidence base for GREEN-LIFT's social impact.
WP4 GREEN-LIFT Labs	During the piloting phase, the project partners will apply this Toolkit during the piloting phase to generate the real-world social impact data that will underpin D4.1 and D4.2.

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4.1.4. Scope: What this Toolkit Covers

The Toolkit addresses social impact across four dimensions: Job Quality, Worker Well-being, Inclusion and Equality, and Community and Stakeholder Engagement. These dimensions were selected based on the T2.4 task description in the Grant Agreement, the priority themes identified in the Needs Assessment, and alignment with the Eurofound Job Quality Framework (2016). The Toolkit provides three data collection instruments, a scoring and interpretation framework, and GDPR-compliant ethical guidelines.

4.1.5. What This Toolkit Is, and Is Not

This Toolkit **IS**...	This Toolkit **IS NOT**...
A practical measurement instrument for the social outcomes of green reskilling	A training programme or curriculum that is the remit of WP3
Grounded in evidence from the GREEN-LIFT Needs Assessment (D2.1)	A standalone document, it functions within the broader D2.2 Framework
Designed for SMEs and partner institutions without specialist evaluation expertise	A legal compliance or audit tool
Applicable across all four partner countries with country-specific baselines	A replacement for qualitative dialogue with workers and stakeholders
Aligned with EU Just Transition principles and ESG reporting frameworks	A one-time exercise, it is designed for repeated use across baseline, mid-point, and follow-up

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4.2. Social Impact Dimensions Addressed

Four dimensions organise the assessment framework of this Toolkit. They are not independent categories; they overlap, reinforce one another, and together constitute what a genuinely just green transition looks like in practice. Each dimension is grounded in evidence from the GREEN-LIFT Needs Assessment, calibrated to the structural realities of the TCLF sector, and operationalised through measurable indicators in Section 3.

1. **Dimension 1: Job Quality**

Job quality, as defined by the Eurofound Sixth European Working Conditions Survey (2016), encompasses employment security, physical and psychosocial working conditions, fair remuneration, and the long-term sustainability of roles. In the TCLF sector, each of these elements is under strain during the green transition. Firms must simultaneously comply with new environmental standards, absorb costly new technologies, and maintain stable, fair employment, a combination that is genuinely difficult for SMEs operating on thin margins and under competitive pressure from non-EU imports.

The national context in each partner country adds specific dimensions to this challenge. National collective labour agreements (e.g., the EGSSE in Greece) set minimum standards, but enforcement in informal employment relationships remains a persistent challenge, particularly for migrant workers and those in subcontracted roles. Labour inspectorates (e.g., SEPE in Greece) consistently identify the clothing and textile sector among those with higher rates of undeclared work, a structural reality that any job quality assessment in this context must acknowledge rather than assume away.

Evidence from the Needs Assessment - Job Quality

- **Ethical labour standards** (fair wages, safe conditions) are among the most widely reported current sustainability practices, yet community members rate the sector's social impact at only 3.35/5, signalling a significant gap between aspiration and reality.
- **Health and safety in sustainable workplaces** were ranked as a critical competency by workers across Sweden, Greece, and Spain. New green production processes introduce occupational risks that existing H&S frameworks may not yet cover.
    - Italy highlights how sustainability costs fall disproportionately on smaller subcontractors and migrant workers, whilst large brands capture the reputational benefit, a pattern also observed in other partner country supply chains.
    - Spain and Greece both report acute concern about ageing workforces: experienced workers are retiring, and their tacit knowledge is not being transferred, widening the skills gap at precisely the moment when green reskilling is most needed.

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- All employers across Greece, Italy, and Spain rated sustainability as '4' or '5' out of 5 for future competitiveness, confirming high management-level urgency, but this urgency has not yet translated into systematic workforce transition planning.

Assessment Focus Areas

Formal employment contracts, wage levels, and job security provisions, with specific attention to subcontracted and migrant workers.

Health and safety protocols updated to cover green and circular production methods and technologies.

Access to training for workers in roles undergoing the most significant change or decline.

Age-inclusive workforce planning and succession measures that preserve tacit knowledge.

Equitable distribution of sustainability transition costs across the supply chain.

2. Dimension 2: Worker Well-being

Well-being extends beyond the absence of physical harm. Psychosocial health, the experience of meaning, control, and support in work, is a recognised determinant of both individual outcomes and organisational performance (Eurofound, 2021). The green transition creates specific psychosocial pressures: workers face uncertainty about the future relevance of their skills, increased demands without commensurate support, and often the sense that decisions are being made above them and imposed upon them.

<u>Evidence from the Needs Assessment - Worker Well-being</u>

- Lack of time is the single most frequently cited barrier to training participation across all four countries. Workers are already at or near capacity, and reskilling demands add pressure rather than remove it.
- **60%** of the **40** workers surveyed have not participated in any sustainability training, despite the high urgency reported at the employer level; this gap is driven by capacity constraints, not lack of interest.
- Adaptability, problem-solving, and teamwork were consistently identified as critical competencies for navigating transition, competencies that require psychological safety and time to develop, not just technical instruction.

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- Stakeholders across all countries emphasised that the well-being of workers must be treated as a project objective, not as a secondary concern subordinate to productivity targets.
- Sweden's comparatively high sustainability familiarity scores (4.5/5) suggest that early, sustained, and supported engagement with green themes reduces anxiety, a relevant model for partners in Greece, Italy, and Spain.

Assessment Focus Areas

Reported workload and time availability for training, the practical precondition for any upskilling to take place.

Access to and uptake of psychosocial support mechanisms, including the mentoring and counselling services delivered through Pillar I.

Reported stress and anxiety related to the transition, measured before and after the GREEN-LIFT intervention to capture change over time.

Development of adaptability and soft skills assessed as self-reported competence growth.

Perceived quality of employer support, a direct measure of whether Pillar II HR training is changing day-to-day management behaviour.

3. Dimension 3: Inclusion and Equality

A just transition is, by definition, an inclusive one. The principle of 'no worker left behind', embedded in both the EU Just Transition Mechanism and the stated objectives of the GREEN-LIFT project, requires active, measurable commitment to equitable access. It is not sufficient to offer training; the question is whether the training reaches those who need it most and whether the design of support mechanisms removes, rather than reproduces, existing barriers.

This dimension is particularly salient across all partner countries. Women represent a significant majority of production workers in the TCLF sector. The NEET rate among young people remains a concern across Southern European partner countries. Migrant workers, many without formal qualifications, fill a significant proportion of production roles in Italy, Spain, and Greece. Each of these groups requires a tailored approach that generic training provision does not provide.

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Evidence from the Needs Assessment, Inclusion and Equality

- Youth/NEETs, women, migrants, and older workers were identified as priority groups requiring targeted support in all four partner countries, a consensus finding that crosses national context.
- Formal certification in green and digital skills was identified as the most impactful pathway for low-skilled workers, not just to gain competencies, but to have those competencies recognised and rewarded.
- Italian stakeholders highlighted migrant and subcontracted workers as facing the most precarious conditions and the greatest risk of exclusion from transition support structures.
- Women's organisations, social enterprises, and NGOs play a critical role in both advocating for gender-responsive approaches and practically enabling access; their involvement in delivery is a prerequisite, not an optional extra.
- Stakeholders in both Greece and Italy repeatedly stressed the social justice imperative: the green transition must not deepen existing inequalities, even if managing it equitably is more complex and more costly.

Assessment Focus Areas

Participation rates of priority groups (women, NEETs, migrants, older workers) in GREEN-LIFT training, disaggregated, not averaged.

Perceived accessibility of training for different worker profiles, including language, scheduling, and cost barriers.

Uptake of formal certification pathways, particularly among low-skilled and migrant workers.

Employer practices in training allocation, and whether equal opportunity principles are applied in practice.

Involvement of civil society, women's organisations, and NGOs in training delivery and social impact monitoring.

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4. Dimension 4: Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Green transition cannot be achieved by individual firms acting in isolation. The evidence from the Needs Assessment is clear: what the sector needs is architecture, networks, clusters, partnerships, and governance structures that enable knowledge exchange, shared investment, and collective accountability. Without this architecture, even the best-designed training programmes will reach a fraction of their potential audience and generate limited systemic change.

Evidence from the Needs Assessment, Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- **64** stakeholders were mapped across four countries, **41** are actively engaged, and **13** Memoranda of Cooperation have been signed, a solid foundation, but one in which industry and business actors account for **64.1%** of stakeholders, whilst community and civil society represent only **10.9%.**
- A **'triple helix'** model, bringing together industry, education providers, and government, is universally endorsed as the necessary governance architecture but remains largely aspirational in current practice across all partner countries.
- Italy's Prato textile district is repeatedly cited as a model: its dense regional cluster has enabled advanced circularity and textile recycling at a scale that individual firms could not achieve alone.
- Community members rate the sector's environmental impact at only 2.9/5, the lowest perception score in the entire Needs Assessment, whilst the sector's economic contribution scores considerably higher.
- SMEs specifically need facilitated access to peer learning, joint pilots, and shared resources; the GREEN-LIFT network itself represents the kind of infrastructure the sector needs to develop permanently.

Assessment Focus Areas

Number and diversity of active Memoranda of Cooperation, tracking both quantity and balance across stakeholder types.
Evidence of 'triple helix' collaboration in practice, with particular attention to whether government and public bodies are genuinely involved.
SME participation in joint activities, networks, and peer learning, beyond attendance at one-off events.
Community awareness activities and their reach, with attention to consumer behaviour change as a long-term indicator.
Balance of stakeholder engagement: ensuring that civil society and community voices are not crowded out by industry representation.

The 19 indicators presented in this section were developed to fill a gap identified explicitly in the GREEN-LIFT Needs Assessment: the sector lacks specific, ready-to-use social impact metrics. Existing macro-frameworks, ESG reporting, LCA,

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DPP provide the regulatory horizon towards which the sector is moving, but do not provide the practical measurement instruments that an SME can deploy today without specialist expertise.

Selection criteria for the indicators below were direct grounding in the Needs Assessment evidence base, measurability within GREEN-LIFT project timelines, applicability to SMEs without advanced HR infrastructure and alignment with Eurofound job quality dimensions and EU Transition guidelines. Each indicator is presented with its rationale, measurement approach, and a note on SME-specific application.

1. **Dimension 1: Job Quality Indicators (JQ1–JQ5)**

JQ1 ***Job Quality***	**Proportion of the workforce on formal employment contracts** *Type*: Quantitative Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment *Measurement*: HR records review percentage of total workforce on formal (permanent or fixed term) contracts, disaggregated by full-time, part-time, temporary, and subcontracted *Rationale*: Formal contract coverage is the most fundamental measure of employment quality. The Needs Assessment confirmed widespread concern about precarious conditions for subcontracted and migrant workers across all partner countries. Labour inspectorates (e.g., SEPE in Greece) consistently identify the TCLF sector among those with higher rates of informal work, making this indicator particularly relevant across the consortium. *SME application*: Applicable to all employers with payroll records. Requires no advanced HR system; a headcount by contract type is sufficient.
JQ2 ***Job Quality***	**Compliance with applicable national minimum wage requirements** *Type*: Quantitative Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment *Measurement*: Wage data comparison with applicable national legal minimums, binary compliance status, plus narrative on pay scales for the lowest-paid roles in the organization. *Rationale*: Fair wages were identified as the most fundamental ethical labour standard across all four countries. National collective labour agreements (e.g., the EGSSE in Greece) set minimum standards, but stakeholders note that subcontractors and migrant workers face the greatest exposure to underpayment because of supply chain pressure from larger brands. *SME application*: Self-reported by HR manager or owner. Does not require wage benchmarking expertise; it simply confirms compliance with applicable national law in each partner country.

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JQ3 ***Job Quality***	**Coverage of health and safety training adapted to green production** *Type*: Quantitative Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment *Measurement:* Percentage of the workforce who have received updated H&S training covering green or circular production methods in the past 12 months *Rationale:* Health and safety in sustainable workplaces were ranked among the most critical competency areas by workers across Sweden, Greece, and Spain. Green technologies (chemical substitution, recycling machinery, digital production systems) introduce new occupational risks that standard H&S frameworks may not address. *SME application:* Trackable via training attendance records. Applicable to firms of any size across all partner countries.
JQ4 ***Job Quality***	**Workers' perceived sense of job security during the green transition** *Type*: Qualitative Tool: Tool 1 – Worker Questionnaire *Measurement*: 5-point Likert scale pre/post comparison open narrative on specific security concerns *Rationale:* Perceived insecurity, even when objective employment conditions are stable, directly undermines engagement with training and erodes organisational trust. The Needs Assessment documented job security anxiety in Spain and Greece in particular, where workforce ageing and skills gaps create genuine uncertainty about career continuity. *SME application:* Simple self-report. Pre/post comparison is the primary measure of GREEN-LIFT's impact on worker confidence.
JQ5 ***Job Quality***	**Evidence of a formal workforce transition or succession plan** *Type*: Mixed Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment *Measurement:* Binary (Yes/No/In development) plus qualitative description of plan scope; particular attention to provisions for older workers and roles undergoing significant change *Rationale:* All four partner countries flagged concern about ageing workforces and knowledge loss as experienced workers retire. A formal transition plan — even a basic one — signals that the organisation has moved from reactive to proactive management of this challenge. *SME application*: Adapted for SMEs: a written record of the organisation's transition intentions qualifies. A full HR strategy document is not required.

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2. Dimension 2: Worker Well-being Indicators (WB1-WB5)

WB1 ***Worker Well-being***	**Perceived workload and time availability for training** *Type*: Qualitative Tool: Tool 1 – Worker Questionnaire *Measurement*: 5-point Likert scale on time availability for training, open question on specific workload barriers, pre/post comparison *Rationale*: Time pressure was the most frequently cited barrier to training participation across all four countries. Unless this indicator is tracked, GREEN-LIFT interventions risk being designed for an idealised worker with discretionary time, rather than for the actual workers the project serves. *SME application*: Fully self-reported. Requires no data from the employer.
WB2 ***Worker Well-being***	**Access to and uptake of psychosocial support and mentoring** *Type*: Mixed Tool: Tools 1 and 2 *Measurement:* Binary availability (Yes/No) from HR self-assessment satisfaction rating (1–5) and uptake confirmation from worker questionnaire *Rationale*: Counselling and mentoring were identified as essential support mechanisms in all partner countries. National employment services (e.g., DYPA in Greece) offer counselling and career guidance services that GREEN-LIFT delivery should connect with; this indicator tracks whether such services are reaching workers in practice across all partner countries. *SME application*: Relevant to all organisations delivering GREEN-LIFT support. Can be tracked with brief sign-in records or satisfaction forms.
WB3 **Worker Well-being**	**Reported stress and anxiety related to the green transition** *Type:* Qualitative Tool: Tool 1 – Worker Questionnaire *Measurement*: 5-point Likert scale (1 = no stress, 5 = high stress), open question on specific concerns, pre/post comparison *Rationale*: Anxiety about future job relevance is a consistent theme across the Needs Assessment, particularly for workers in roles undergoing significant change. Sweden's comparatively high familiarity scores suggest that sustained, well-supported engagement with sustainability reduces anxiety over time; this indicator tests whether GREEN-LIFT is achieving that effect. *SME application:* Simple self-report. Pre/post change is the most meaningful measure of GREEN-LIFT's contribution to worker confidence.

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WB4 ***Worker Well-being***	**Self-assessed development of adaptability and soft skills** *Type:* Mixed Tool: Tool 1 – Worker Questionnaire *Measurement:* Self-rated competence in adaptability, problem-solving, and teamwork (1–5 scale) pre/post comparison, open narrative on perceived growth *Rationale:* Adaptability and interpersonal competencies were identified across all countries as the critical skills for navigating transition. These competencies are not developed through technical training alone; they require the kind of supported, reflective learning environment that GREEN-LIFT's holistic approach is designed to provide. *SME application:* Self-reported competence growth requires no formal assessment infrastructure.
WB5 ***Worker Well-being***	**Perceived quality of employer support during the transition** *Type*: Qualitative Tool: Tool 1 – Worker Questionnaire *Measurement:* 5-point Likert scale open question on specific support experiences pre/post comparison *Rationale:* A just transition requires active employer commitment, not only the provision of training places. This indicator captures whether Pillar II HR training is changing how managers behave towards workers during the transition period. It is arguably the most direct measure of Pillar II's social impact. *SME application:* Direct feedback mechanism from workers to the programme. Low scores trigger a review of HR training content.

3. Dimension 3: Inclusion and Equality Indicators (IE1–IE5)

IE1 **Inclusion and Equality**	**Participation rate of priority groups in GREEN-LIFT training** *Type:* Quantitative Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment Measurement: Percentage breakdown of training participants by gender, age group, NEET status, and migration background, compared against the total workforce composition *Rationale:* Without active monitoring of participation by demographic groups, training provision defaults to reach those already most accessible. Women represent most production workers in the TCLF sector across all partner countries, whilst Migrants fill many of the most vulnerable roles, making disaggregated tracking essential to verify that GREEN-LIFT is living up to its inclusion commitments. *SME application*: Consistent with standard Erasmus+ monitoring requirements. Requires basic demographic data on training participants.

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IE2 **Inclusion and Equality**	**Perceived accessibility of training for diverse worker profiles** *Type*: Qualitative Tool: Tool 1 – Worker Questionnaire *Measurement:* 5-point Likert scale on perceived equal access, open question on experienced barriers (language, scheduling, location, cost) analysis disaggregated by demographic group *Rationale:* Structural barriers to training access are often invisible to those who do not face them. This indicator makes them visible by asking workers directly. Language barriers for migrant workers and inflexible scheduling for workers with care responsibilities are the most reported structural obstacles across partner countries. *SME application*: Disaggregated analysis by worker background reveals which groups need additional targeted support.
IE3 **Inclusion and Equality**	**Uptake of formal certification among low-skilled and migrant workers** *Type*: Quantitative Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment *Measurement*: Number and percentage of workers from priority groups who complete a recognised certification pathway tracked across data collection points *Rationale:* Formal certification was identified in the Needs Assessment as the single most impactful pathway for low-skilled workers to secure livelihoods in the green economy. For migrant workers, many of whom hold skills that are informally practised but formally unrecognised, certification represents a transformative step. *SME application*: Tracks certifications already being pursued through GREEN-LIFT or other programmes. Requires no additional HR infrastructure.
IE4 **Inclusion and Equality**	**Organisational equal opportunity practices in training allocation** *Type*: Mixed Tool: Tool 2 – HR Self-Assessment *Measurement:* Review of written equal opportunity policy (Yes/No/In development), narrative description of allocation practice, evidence of proactive outreach to under-represented groups *Rationale:* Structural inequality in training access frequently reflects organisational culture rather than deliberate exclusion. This indicator invites HR managers to reflect on their allocation practices and identify whether any groups are systematically missing out, a reflective practice dimension that complements the quantitative data from IE1. *SME application*: Adapted for SMEs: a written allocation principle, even if informal, qualifies as evidence. The narrative is as valuable as the binary response.

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IE5 **Inclusion and Equality**	**Involvement of civil society and NGOs in training or monitoring** *Type*: Qualitative Tool: Tool 3 – Community Checklist *Measurement:* Presence and quality of formal or informal partnerships with civil society organisations, qualitative assessment of their role in inclusion outcomes *Rationale*: Women's organisations, social enterprises, and community-based NGOs were consistently identified as essential partners for reaching the most vulnerable workers. National trade unions (e.g., GSEE in Greece) and sectoral unions play a significant role in advocating for equitable working conditions across all partner countries. *SME application*: Documents existing civil society collaborations that may not yet be formally recorded as partnerships.

4. Dimension 4: Community and Stakeholder Engagement Indicators (CE1–CE4)

CE1 ***Community Engagement***	**Number and diversity of active Memoranda of Cooperation** *Type*: Quantitative Tool: Tool 3 – Community Checklist *Measurement:* Count of signed/active MoCs per partner country diversity assessment across stakeholder types (industry, education, government, NGO, community) *Rationale*: The Needs Assessment mapped 64 stakeholders and achieved 13 MoCs. However, industry actors account for 64.1% of this total, whilst community and civil society represent only 10.9%. This imbalance means that MoC count alone is insufficient; diversity of partnership type is an equally important indicator of genuine community engagement. *SME application*: Directly tracks the WP2 KPI of 10 MoCs minimum across the consortium.

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CE2 ***Community Engagement***	**Evidence of cross-sector triple helix collaboration** *Type*: Mixed Tool: Tool 3 – Community Checklist *Measurement:* Stakeholder mapping confirming presence of industry, education, and government actors, evidence of joint activities, qualitative assessment of collaboration quality and depth *Rationale:* The triple helix model was endorsed across all four countries as the necessary architecture for a sustainable green transition, yet it remains largely aspirational. In each partner country, this means active involvement of VET providers, national employment services (e.g., DYPA in Greece), local Chambers of Commerce (such as ESEE in Greece) and regional development agencies alongside the industry actors who currently dominate stakeholder engagement. *SME application*: Applicable at the individual partner level. Documents exist in cross-sector relationships and identify structural gaps.
CE3 ***Community Engagement***	**SME participation in joint pilots, networks, and peer learning** *Type:* Quantitative Tool: Tool 3 – Community Checklist *Measurement*: Count of SME participants in joint activities, qualitative assessment of nature and continuity of engagement, evidence of ongoing involvement beyond one-off events *Rationale:* The Needs Assessment confirmed that SMEs cannot innovate in isolation; they need the facilitated infrastructure that networks and clusters provide. GREEN-LIFT itself represents precisely this kind of infrastructure. This indicator measures whether the project is catalysing lasting collaborative habits, not just short-term participation. *SME application:* Tracks joint activities already being organised by the consortium. Distinguishes between one-off attendance and ongoing engagement.
CE4 ***Community Engagement***	**Community awareness activities and estimated reach** *Type:* Mixed Tool: Tool 3 – Community Checklist *Measurement:* Count of awareness events and campaigns, estimated community members reached, qualitative assessment of content alignment with green transition themes *Rationale:* Community members currently rate the sector's environmental impact at only 2.9/5, the lowest perception score in the entire Needs Assessment. Closing the gap between the sector's sustainability efforts and community perception requires deliberate, sustained communication across all partner countries. *SME application*: Includes any public-facing activity: events, workshops, social media campaigns, school outreach, or cluster meetings open to the public.

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Nº	Indicator	Dimension	Unit	Data Source	Frequency
JQ1	Formal employment contracts	Job Quality	%	HR Records (Tool 2)	Annual
JQ2	Minimum wage compliance	Job Quality	Binary (Yes/No)	HR Records (Tool 2)	Annual
JQ3	Health & Safety training coverage	Job Quality	%	HR Records (Tool 2)	Annual
JQ4	Perceived job security	Job Quality	Scale (1–5)	Survey (Tool 1)	6 months
JQ5	Formal transition plan	Job Quality	Binary (Yes/No)	HR Records (Tool 2)	Annual
WB1	Time availability for training	Well-being	Scale (1–5)	Survey (Tool 1)	6 months
WB2	Access to psychosocial support	Well-being	Binary / Scale	HR & Survey (Tools 1, 2)	6 months
WB3	Stress and anxiety levels	Well-being	Scale (1–5)	Survey (Tool 1)	6 months
WB4	Adaptability and soft skills	Well-being	Scale (1–5)	Survey (Tool 1)	6 months
WB5	Quality of employer support	Well-being	Scale (1–5)	Survey (Tool 1)	6 months
IE1	Priority groups participation rate	Inclusion	%	HR Records (Tool 2)	Quarterly
IE2	Perceived training accessibility	Inclusion	Scale (1–5)	Survey (Tool 1)	6 months
IE3	Formal certification uptake	Inclusion	Count / %	HR Records (Tool 2)	Annual
IE4	Equal opportunity practices	Inclusion	Binary (Yes/No)	HR Records (Tool 2)	Annual
IE5	NGO / Civil society involvement	Inclusion	Qualitative	Community Checklist (Tool 3)	Annual
CE1	Active MoCs	Community	Count	Community Checklist (Tool 3)	Annual
CE2	Triple helix collaboration	Community	Qualitative	Community Checklist (Tool 3)	Annual
CE3	SME participation in pilots/networks	Community	Count	Community Checklist (Tool 3)	Annual
CE4	Community awareness reach	Community	Count	Community Checklist (Tool 3)	Quarterly

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4.3. Data Collection

4.3.1. Data Collection Tools

The three instruments presented in this section are designed to be practical, accessible, and meaningful. Practical: they can be completed without specialist expertise, within realistic time commitment, by workers and HR managers in SMEs. Accessible: they will be translated into all six consortium languages under T2.6, and alternative oral administration is available where literacy challenges exist. Meaningful: every question maps directly to one of the 19 indicators in Section 3.

All tools are administered at three time points, baseline, mid-point, and follow-up, to enable before-and-after comparison. All data collection is subject to the GDPR, and ethical safeguards set out in Section 7.

Tool 1: Worker Social Impact Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Target respondents: Workers participating in GREEN-LIFT support and training activities. Completion time: 15–20 minutes. Format: Paper or digital. Important: HR managers and employees must not be present during completion.

Instructions for workers: This questionnaire is completely anonymous. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer honestly based on your own experience. Your responses will help us improve the support and training available to you and your colleagues.

Section A: Background (anonymous)

	Question	Response Format
A1	What is your age group?	Under 25 / 26–35 / 36–50 / Over 50
A2	What is your gender?	Female / Male / Non-binary / Prefer not to say
A3	What is your current employment status?	Full-time permanent / Part-time / Temporary / Subcontracted / Other
A4	How long have you worked in the TCFL sector?	Less than 1 year / 1–5 years / 6–10 years / Over 10 years
A5	Are you a migrant worker or from a minority background? (optional)	Yes / No / Prefer not to say

Section B: Job Quality

	Statement	Scale
B1	I feel my job in this organisation is secure.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
B2	My working conditions meet health and safety standards.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)

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B3	I receive fair pay for the work that I do.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
B4	I feel that the pressures of the green transition are shared fairly in my organisation.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
B5	What, if anything, concerns you most about your working conditions? (open)	Open text

Section C: Well-being and Training Access

	Statement	Scale
C1	I have enough time in my working day to participate in training and upskilling.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
C2	I feel well-supported by my employer during this period of change.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
C3	I feel confident in my ability to adapt to new green working practices.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
C4	The green transition causes me stress or anxiety about my professional future.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
C5	What one change would most improve your well-being at work right now? (open)	Open text

Section D: Inclusion and Equal Access

	Statement	**Scale**
D1	Training opportunities are equally available to all workers in my organisation.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
D2	I am aware of certification pathways I could pursue to develop my green skills.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
D3	I feel that my personal needs are taken into account when training or support is offered.	Yes / Partly / No
D4	Are there groups of workers in your organisation who have less access to training? (open)	Open text

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Section E: Community Awareness

	Statement	Scale
E1	I am aware of sustainability initiatives happening in my sector or region.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
E2	I believe the green transition in our sector is being managed in a socially fair way.	1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (Strongly agree)
E3	Please describe any positive changes you have noticed in your organisation since joining GREEN-LIFT. (open)	Open text

Tool 2: HR / Employer Social Impact Self-Assessment

Target respondents: HR managers, SME owners, or senior operational staff responsible for workforce management. Completion time: 20–30 minutes. Format: Paper or digital. To be completed at baseline and follow-up.

Instructions: This assessment asks you to reflect on your organisation's current practices and policies. Please answer honestly; there are no pass or fail outcomes. The results will help identify areas where GREEN-LIFT support can be most effective.

Section A: Workforce Profile

	Question	Response Format
A1	Total number of employees:	Number
A2	Percentage of workforce on formal employment contracts (%):	Percentage
A3	Percentage of workforce who are women (%):	Percentage
A4	Percentage of workforce aged 50 or above (%):	Percentage
A5	Percentage of workforce who are migrants or from minority backgrounds (%):	Percentage

Section B: Job Quality and Training Practices

	Statement	Response Format
B1	Our organisation complies fully with applicable minimum wage requirements.	Yes / No / Under review
B2	We have updated health and safety protocols for green or circular production.	Yes / No / In progress
B3	We actively target women, NEETs, migrants, and older workers in our training provision.	1 (Not at all) – 5 (Systematically)

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B4	We offer or facilitate access to formal certification for low-skilled workers.	Yes / No / Planned
B5	What is the most significant challenge your organisation faces in ensuring fair access to training? (open)	Open text

Section C: Community Engagement

	Statement	**Response Format**
C1	Number of active Memoranda of Cooperation with community stakeholders:	Number
C2	We participate in regional networks, clusters, or green industry platforms.	Yes / No, if yes, please specify:
C3	We have engaged civil society organisations or NGOs in our training and support delivery.	Yes / No, if yes, please name them:
C4	We have an equal opportunity policy for the allocation of training within our organisation.	Yes / No / In development
C5	Describe one concrete example of your organisation's community engagement on sustainability in the past 12 months. (open)	Open text

Tool 3: Community and Stakeholder Engagement Checklist

This tool serves two functions. *Internally, it is completed by the respective partner team to verify compliance* with WP2 engagement KPIs and document the evidence base for reporting. Externally, a light version (Part D) can be shared with Chambers of Commerce, regional clusters, NGOs, and local actors to capture their independent perspective on sector-level social impact.

Part A: Stakeholder Engagement Evidence

Code	**Evidence Item**	**Status**
SM1	Stakeholder mapping completed and submitted to KAINOTOMIA	Yes / No / Partial
SM2	Minimum 5 stakeholder meetings organised (evidence archived)	Yes / No , number held:
SM3	Meeting evidence uploaded to WP2 shared folder (photos, attendance lists)	Yes / No
SM4	At least 1 MoC signed (contributing to the consortium total of 10 minimum)	Yes / No , number signed:
SM5	Stakeholders include a balanced mix: industry, education, government, NGOs, and community	Yes / No / Partial

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SM6	Civil society and community actors are explicitly included in engagement activities	Yes / No / Partial

Part B: Needs Assessment Evidence

Code	Evidence Item	Status
NA1	Survey completed with minimum 20 responses from national TCFL stakeholders	Yes / No , actual number:
NA2	Focus Group conducted with 8–12 participants	Yes / No , actual number:
NA3	Focus Group report submitted to KAINOTOMIA using the standard template	Yes / No
NA4	Consent forms, attendance lists, and photographic evidence were archived	Yes / No

Part C: SIA Implementation Tracking

Code	Evidence Item	Status
SI1	Tool 1 administered at baseline, minimum 5 respondents	Yes / No , number:
SI2	Tool 2 completed by at least 2 organisations at baseline	Yes / No , number:
SI3	Tool 3 was completed at baseline by the project team	Yes / No
SI4	Mid-point data collection conducted	Yes / No , date:
SI5	Aggregated findings shared with KAINOTOMIA for D2.2 integration	Yes / No , date:

Part D: Light Version for External Partners

The following brief checklist may be shared with external community stakeholders, Chambers of Commerce, regional cluster organisations, national employment services, NGOs, and community associations, to capture their perspective independently of project partners.

Code	Question	Response
EX1	Does your organisation collaborate with TCFL sector actors on green transition initiatives?	Yes / No / Occasionally
EX2	Have you participated in any GREEN-LIFT activities or information sessions?	Yes / No

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EX3	How well does the TCLF sector address the social needs of its workers and community? (1–5)	1 (Very poorly) – 5 (Very well)
EX4	What is the single most important social improvement you would like to see in the sector? (open)	Open text
EX5	Would your organisation be interested in signing a Memorandum of Cooperation with a GREEN-LIFT partner?	Yes / No / Already signed

4.3.2. Data Collection Schedule

Time Point	When	Tools	Purpose
Baseline	Start of GREEN-LIFT intervention at partner site	Tools 1, 2, 3	Establish starting conditions and set benchmarks for all 19 indicators
Mid-point	Approximately 6 months after baseline	Tools 1 and 2	Monitor progress, identify emerging issues, and adjust Pillar I and II delivery
Follow-up	12+ months after baseline	Tools 1, 2, 3	Assess medium-term outcomes, evidence of sustained change
Final evaluation	End of WP4 piloting (M36)	All tools + stakeholder review	Comprehensive impact assessment for consortium reporting

4.4. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility	Tool(s)
Workers	Complete self-assessment voluntarily and anonymously	Tool 1
HR Managers / SME Owners	Complete HR self-assessment, maintain payroll and training records	Tool 2
External community actors	Complete light version of the community checklist (optional)	Tool 3 – Part D

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Each implementing partner team	Administer all tools locally, aggregate and analyse data, report to KAINOTOMIA	All tools
KAINOTOMIA (WP2 lead)	Integrate aggregated findings into D2.2 framework document	Receives summary reports
External evaluator (MEUS)	Independent review of social impact findings at the final evaluation stage	All tools

4.5. Scoring the Worker Questionnaire

Likert-scale items are scored 1–5 directly.

Binary items (Yes/No/In Development) are converted to numerical scores as follows: Yes = 5, In Development / Partly = 3, No = 1.

Aggregation Methodology

Scores are aggregated in three steps:

Step 1 - Indicator Score: The score for each indicator is the arithmetic mean of all questionnaire items that map to that indicator.

Step 2 - Dimension Score: The score for each dimension (Job Quality, Worker Well-being, Inclusion and Equality, Community Engagement) is the arithmetic mean of all indicator scores within that dimension.

Step 3 -Overall Toolkit Score: The overall Toolkit score is the unweighted arithmetic mean of the four dimension scores. No dimension is weighted more heavily than another, reflecting the equal importance of all four social impact areas within the GREEN-LIFT framework.

Interpretation of Scores

The thresholds below reflect the Needs Assessment baseline context. In countries where baseline familiarity and confidence are lower, initial scores below 3.0 are expected and should not be treated as programme failure. The meaningful metric is changed over time (Δ score), not the absolute level.

Mean Score Range	Interpretation	Recommended Action
1.0 – 1.9	Critical concern requires immediate attention	Escalate to HR and project management, consider individual support referral
2.0 – 2.9	High concern, significant issues present	Targeted intervention prioritise in Pillar I support planning

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3.0 – 3.9	Moderate, issues present but manageable	Monitor closely include in coaching priorities
Mean Score Range	**Interpretation**	**Recommended Action**
4.0 – 4.4	Satisfactory, broadly positive with identifiable gaps	Maintain current support, address specific gaps
4.5 – 5.0	Exemplary, strong social impact	Document as good practice to share across the consortium

4.6. Country-Level Baseline Context

Partner teams should interpret their Tool 1 baseline scores in light of the national context established by the Needs Assessment:

Country Baseline Context	Implication for Score Interpretation
Greece: workers scored sustainability familiarity at 2–3/5, community rated social impact 3.3/5	Expect lower baseline scores on WB3 and IE2; improvement trajectory is the key measure
Spain: workers scored 4.5/5 on familiarity, but the community rated social impact at 3.0/5	The gap between individual awareness and systemic change, CE indicators show the highest improvement potential
Italy: 40% community respondents, social impact rated 3.6/5	Tool 3 community checklist is likely to generate richer data than other countries
Sweden: highest familiarity (4.5/5) across all groups	Higher baselines are expected to focus measurement on CE indicators where the community score was lowest
Transnational: 60% of workers had no sustainability training	Tool 1 Section C scores below 3.0 at baseline are expected in most contexts

4.7. How Findings Feed Back into Pillars I and II

Social impact data has value only if it leads to action. The table below sets out the direct feedback pathway from Toolkit findings to the operational Pillars, reviewed at each data collection point by the UNIWA team in coordination with KAINOTOMIA:

Toolkit Finding	Feeds Into	Recommended Adjustment
Workers report high stress (WB3 < 2.5) or low employer support (WB5 < 2.5)	Pillar I – Holistic Support	Intensify mentoring and counselling review workload

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		management guidance
Low inclusion scores for women or NEETs (IE1, IE2)	Pillar I – Holistic Support	Add targeted outreach, flexible scheduling, and language support to support offer
HR managers' report no transition plan (JQ5 = No)	Pillar II – HR Training	Include succession planning content in HR training modules
Workers feel unsupported by the employer (WB5 low)	Pillar II – HR Training	Strengthening communication and empathy content in HR training
Weak community engagement (CE1–CE4 low)	Both Pillars	Expand stakeholder mapping, and integrate community actors into training delivery
Low certification uptake among low-skilled workers (IE3 low)	Pillar I + Pillar II	Embed micro-credential pathways into support offer and HR guidance

4.8. Alignment with Broader Social Reporting Frameworks

The GREEN-LIFT Needs Assessment identified a critical challenge: the TCLF sector is being asked to adopt ESG reporting, Life Cycle Assessment, and Digital Product Passport frameworks without yet having the skills, data infrastructure, or practical tools to do so. This Toolkit does not attempt to replicate these macro-frameworks; it operates at a different level of granularity, designed for immediate SME use. What it does is build the internal practices and data habits that prepare organisations to engage with these frameworks progressively.

ESG Reporting Alignment

Under the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD, Directive 2022/2464/EU), large undertakings are required to report on their social impact, including workforce conditions, supply chain human rights, and community engagement. Whilst most TCLF SMEs across partner countries currently fall outside the initial CSRD scope (enterprises under 250 employees), they face growing indirect pressure through their supply chains as larger clients begin

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demanding ESG-aligned data from their suppliers. The GREEN-LIFT SIA Toolkit provides SMEs with a practical entry point into social pillar ESG reporting through accessible, non-specialist instruments.

ESG Social Pillar Theme	Corresponding GREEN-LIFT SIA Indicator(s)
Decent work and employment quality	JQ1 (formal contracts), JQ2 (fair wages), JQ3 (H&S training)
Worker health, safety, and well-being	JQ3, WB1, WB2, WB3
Equal opportunities and non-discrimination	IE1, IE2, IE4
Training and skills development	WB4, IE3
Community engagement and social responsibility	CE1, CE2, CE3, CE4
Supply chain social standards	JQ1, JQ2, JQ5

EU Policy Alignment

EU Policy / Instrument	Alignment with SIA Toolkit
EU Just Transition Mechanism	All four dimensions operationalise Just Transition principles, 'no worker left behind' is the governing logic of the IE dimension
CSRD (Directive 2022/2464/EU)	Social pillar indicators aligned with CSRD S1 (own workforce) and S3 (affected communities) standards
EU Supply Chain Due Diligence Directive	JQ1, JQ2, and CE2 address supply chain transparency and labour standards monitoring
Eurofound Job Quality Framework (2016)	JQ dimension indicators directly operationalise Eurofound's core job quality dimensions
GDPR Regulation (EU) 2016/679	Section 7 provides a full compliance framework applicable under EU law and national implementing legislation in all partner countries

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4.9. Ethical Considerations and Data Protection

All data collection under this Toolkit must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, Regulation EU 2016/679) and its national implementing legislation in each partner country, including, for example, Greek Law 4624/2019 (Government Gazette A' 137/29.08.2019) in Greece. Each implementing partner holds primary responsibility for GDPR compliance in all data collection activities associated with this Toolkit within their respective jurisdictions.

4.9.1. Core Data Protection Principles

Principle	Application in the GREEN-LIFT SIA Toolkit
Voluntary participation	Completion of all tools is strictly voluntary. No worker or stakeholder may be pressured or incentivised to respond. This must be communicated clearly, in the respondent's language, before each tool is administered.
Informed consent	All respondents receive written information, in their own language, on the purpose of data collection, how data will be used and stored, their right to withdraw without consequence and the contact details of the respective national partner's data protection lead.
Anonymity	Tool 1 collects no names or individual identifiers. Demographic data (age group, gender, background) is collected solely to enable group-level disaggregated analysis, not to identify individuals.
Data minimisation	Only data directly relevant to the 19 social impact indicators is collected. No personal information beyond what is necessary for analysis is requested at any stage.
Purpose limitation	Data is used solely for the GREEN-LIFT project monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. It is not shared with third parties outside the consortium without explicit additional consent.
Storage and security	All data is stored within the project's password-protected digital infrastructure. Access is restricted to authorised project team members
Right of access and erasure	Respondents may request access to their responses, correction of errors, or deletion of their data at any time by contacting the project team, in accordance with Articles 15–17 of the GDPR and applicable national legislation.

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4.9.2. Special Safeguards for Vulnerable Groups

The GREEN-LIFT target population includes workers in precarious employment, migrants, temporary workers, NEETs, and subcontracted workers, who may have heightened concerns about identification and consequences. In some partner country contexts, the presence of undeclared workers in the TCLF sector creates additional sensitivity around data collection. The following safeguards are mandatory across all partner countries:

- All tools must be available in respondents' native language wherever possible.
- HR managers and employers must not be present during workers' completion of Tool 1 to eliminate perceived coercion or retaliation risk.
- Informed consent documentation must be written in plain, accessible language, free from technical or legal terminology.
- Where literacy challenges exist, oral administration by a neutral facilitator (with no management relationship to the respondent) is permitted.
- Aggregated data shared with KAINOTOMIA must contain no personally identifiable information. The minimum group size for reporting is five respondents per demographic category.
- All consent documentation must be archived securely and made available upon request to the Quality Assurance Board.

4.9.3. Data Governance within the Consortium

Each implementing partner collects and stores raw anonymised data within their secure project infrastructure. Aggregated summary reports, containing no individual-level data, are submitted to KAINOTOMIA for integration into D2.2 and project reporting. These aggregated findings are shared with UB and UPV for peer review, and with MEUS in the context of the project's evaluation process. Any use of social impact data beyond the GREEN-LIFT project reporting requires approval by the respective partner's data protection lead and, where applicable, the consortium Steering Committee.

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5. Conclusions and Next Steps

The GREEN-LIFT Framework shows that the green transition in the TCLF sector is not only a matter of environmental compliance and new technical skills, but also a process of workforce adaptation. As the findings of this document demonstrate, many organisations, especially SMEs, are not fully prepared to support workers through this change in a structured, inclusive and socially responsive way. For this reason, the Framework offers a practical model that combines career guidance, mentoring, well-being support and organisational capacity-building.

A key conclusion is that reskilling and upskilling efforts are more effective when they are accompanied by support mechanisms that address workers' real needs. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups, including women, low-skilled workers and individuals at risk of exclusion during the transition. By focusing on both organisational readiness and worker well-being, the Framework helps ensure that the green transition is fair as well as sustainable.

The next step is to apply the Framework in practice through simple, adaptable actions within organisations. Employers, HR managers and support staff can use the tools and guidance provided to identify needs, strengthen support systems and connect workers with suitable training opportunities. At the same time, the Social Impact Assessment Toolkit can help organisations monitor results and improve their approach over time.

Overall, the GREEN-LIFT project provides a strong basis for supporting a greener, more inclusive and more resilient TCLF sector. Its long-term value will depend on how effectively it is used, adapted and promoted across different organisational and regional contexts.

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