FLORES

Offshore Renewable Energies partnership in the Pact for Skills

D5.3: Overcoming barriers to the creation of the durable skills partnerships in the ORE

March 2025

Co-funded by the European Union

About this Report

Forward Looking at the Offshore Renewables is promoting the core activity of the Large-scale partnership launching the Pact for Skills in the Offshore Renewable Energies (ORE) sector. FLORES support the most committed stakeholders in the ORE, underpinning the success of the offshore renewable energy strategy with the stimulation of dedicated training offers. The partnership promotes the skilling process for the new jobs expected in the sector, estimated to account for 124.000 new workers in the EU by 2030 and contribute to improve upskilling opportunities in the field of the actual ORE workforce.

Project duration: January 2023 – March 2025 (27 months)
www.oreskills.eu

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Short description	Report on the barriers to the creation of durable partnerships and recommendations to recognise the efforts addressed to create collaborations
Next steps	Proposal of best practices to overcome the identified barriers, with a focus on promoting the creation of future mirror working groups within the LSP Pact for Skills in the ORE sector.
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Executive report

Context and Objectives

This report examines the barriers to establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships for skills development in the offshore renewable energy (ORE) sector, particularly within the framework of the Pact for Skills. A key focus is placed on recognizing and valuing the efforts required to foster collaboration between educational institutions, industry, and other relevant stakeholders.

Drawing from the activities of the FLORES project, this report identifies major obstacles to collaboration and provides targeted recommendations to improve engagement and ensure the sustainability of partnerships. The research contributes to advancing key recommendations from the MATES project, specifically those aimed at "Enhancing education-industry-policy makers' cooperation" and "Recognizing the efforts to increase industry-education collaboration."

This study is based on a combination of literature review, stakeholder engagement, and qualitative analysis of FLORES project activities. The key sources of input include bibliographic research on multi-stakeholder partnerships and skills development, and interactions with stakeholders held during the FLORES project, namely in the frame of the helpdesk, events and the Delphi exercise held to identify future trends.

By integrating these diverse inputs, the report presents a comprehensive overview of the barriers to collaboration in ORE skills development and provides actionable recommendations to address them.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The research identified four major challenges that hinder the creation and/or effectiveness of industry-education partnerships in vocational training:

- Communication gaps between industry and educational institutions.
- Diverging priorities and expectations among stakeholders.
- Lack of formal recognition for individuals fostering industry-education collaboration.
- Organizational barriers preventing structured coordination efforts.

A survey conducted as part of the research revealed that most educational institutions do not have a dedicated department for industry relations, despite making efforts to strengthen collaboration. Additionally, recognition practices remain inconsistent—many organizations do not formally acknowledge participation in industry-education initiatives, affecting motivation and engagement. Two-thirds of respondents were unsure whether their institution provides any recognition, suggesting that this issue has not been systematically addressed.

To enhance industry-education cooperation and ensure long-term sustainability, the following actions are recommended:

- Establish clear points of contact within organizations to oversee industry-education relations and ensure visibility across departments.

- Strengthen communication by creating dedicated units or specialized staff to facilitate engagement and align stakeholder expectations.
- Develop formal recognition mechanisms, prioritizing economic incentives and career advancement opportunities, as these are the most valued by stakeholders.
- Integrate industry collaboration efforts into official performance evaluations and promotion criteria, ensuring that contributions to multi-stakeholder partnerships are acknowledged and rewarded.

Conclusion

By addressing the identified barriers and implementing structured recognition mechanisms, institutions can foster more effective and sustainable industry-education partnerships. These collaborations are essential for aligning training programs with industry needs, ensuring a well-prepared workforce, and strengthening the ORE sector's long-term development.

1. Introduction

This report explores the barriers to creating multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at strengthening skills development in the offshore renewable energy sector, such as those established under the Pact for Skills.

It places particular emphasis on recognising efforts to foster collaboration between different stakeholders, such as the education community and the industry.

Drawing from the analysis of FLORES project activities, the report presents a set of recommendations to overcome these challenges and identifies the key stakeholders involved in the process.

This research intends to provide further information to better address the recommendations from the MATES project; in particular those proposing "Enhancing education-industry-policy makers' cooperation" and "Recognising the efforts to increase Industry-education collaboration", addressed to all groups of stakeholders identified in the maritime technologies skills strategy[1].

These recommendations identify the lack of recognition as an important barrier for the sustainability of the multi-stakeholder partnerships, as the necessary efforts dedicate to approach different structures – namely from industry and education, but not only – are usually not resulting in a better position for the people involved, as they are not recognized in the progression of their careers.

1.1 Objectives

1. Identify the barriers that hinder the creation of partnerships between academia and the industry.
2. Analyse the challenges related to the mutual recognition of efforts dedicated to establishing collaboration.
3. Develop a set of recommendations to overcome the identified obstacles.

[1] Fraga, L., Soto, A., & Bastón, S. (2022). Maritime Technologies Skills Strategy: Shipbuilding and Offshore Renewable Energy sector (1.0). Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6676557

2. Methodology

This report is based on an analysis of multiple sources of input gathered throughout the FLORES project. We conducted a bibliographic research and examined the outcomes of meetings conducted as part of the helpdesk activity, as well as the results of efforts undertaken to engage new partners in the FLORES community. Additionally, two key activities provided further insights:

1 - Analysis of future trends in the ORE occupations (D2.3) - A Delphi survey was conducted. In the second round of the survey, additional questions were included to gather experts' input on specific departments usually involved in multi-stakeholder activities aimed at bridging the gap between the education community and the industry. The survey also explored whether these efforts were recognized, how they were valued, and gathered proposals for improving such a recognition.

2 - Stakeholder Discussions at GoInterhub 2024 – During the Careers and Partnerships Working Groups meeting of the ORESkills LSP at the 2024 GoInterhub event, FLORES partners and other participating organizations reviewed the project's findings. Participants also provided feedback by responding to the same questions posed in the Delphi survey, further enriching the analysis.

By effectively integrating these diverse inputs, the present report aims to present a comprehensive overview of the barriers to multi-stakeholder collaboration in ORE skills development and propose actionable recommendations.

2.1 Questions

To gain deeper insights into the dynamics of industry-training provider relations and the recognition of efforts within organizations, a set of targeted questions was developed.

Q1. Is there any specialized department in your organization to address industry-training provider's relations?
If Y: Can you indicate which department or area is in charge for this?
Q2. Are you contributing in your organization to strengthen industry-training provider's relations?
If Y: Which is your department?
Q3. Is there any recognition of efforts?
Q4. Do you receive any career recognition for your efforts in promoting industry-training providers relations?

- Economic
- Recognition for promotional purposes/ access to position
- Informal recognition
- Logistic advantages (i.e. flexibility in time schedules…)
- Certificates or diploma (others)

Q5. Would you like to propose another type of recognition, or specify a specific characteristic?

For the analyses regarding the industry-training provider relations, a significant number of 'N/A' (Not Available) responses were observed across various questions. Responses with more than two 'N/A' answers were excluded from the analysis.

These exclusions were made from the quantitative analysis to ensure a more accurate interpretation of active and relevant feedback. This approach facilitated clearer insights into the perspectives of organizations directly involved in these initiatives

3. Results

As multi-stakeholders partnerships are increasingly promoted to align training programs with industry demand, more research is assessing their effectiveness and identifying key barriers that hinder their effectiveness. Building on previous research and integrating qualitative insights from various case studies, Mariah et al. (2025)[2] identified five major barriers to effective industry-education collaboration in vocational training. These challenges primarily stem from the difficulty of balancing educational objectives with industry expectations and range from communication barriers to conflicting priorities. Table 1 recaps the main barriers reported affecting communication and participants' expectations of the industry-education partnerships.

One critical, common issue is that all these challenges require significant additional effort from those involved in these networks. The need to bridge gaps in language, expectations, and timelines between educators and industry representatives places a burden on participants. This supplementary effort, if not formally recognized, can jeopardize career progression for those engaged in these partnerships. Since time and energy spent on facilitating collaboration may not be acknowledged within standard performance metrics—whether in academia or industry—participants risk diverting resources away from activities that are more directly valued in their respective fields.

Table 1 summarizes the main barriers reported, particularly those affecting communication and participants' expectations within industry-education partnerships.

[2] Siti Mariah, Anggri Sekar Sari, Alfat Kaharsyah, Prihatin Saraswati (2025), The Role of Industry Partnerships in Advancing Vocational Training Programs: Challenges and Opportunities. The Journal of Academic Science Vol2 N°22025 E-ISSN2997-7258 journal homepage: https://thejoas.com/index.php

Table 1: main barriers encountered affecting and participant's) expectations of the industry-education partnerships, (adapted from Mariah et al, 2025 and own research)

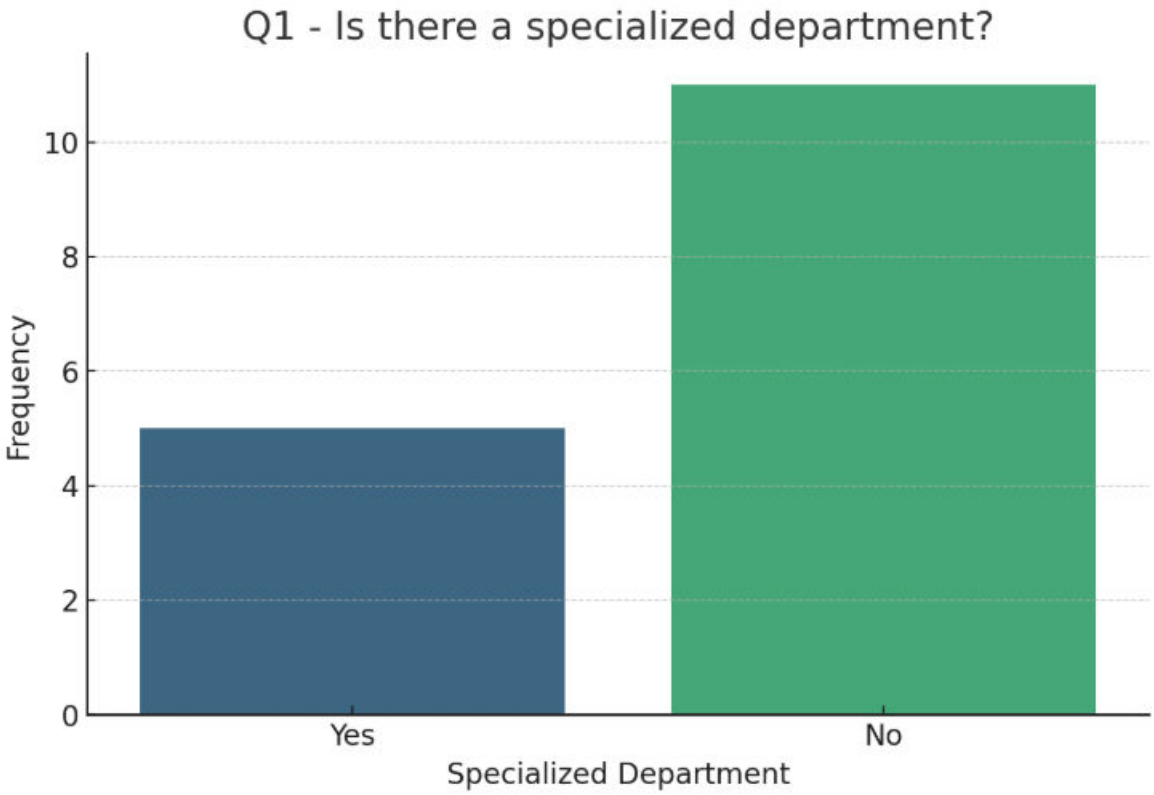
Barrier	Description	Impact on Collaboration
Differing Priorities	Educational institutions often prioritize long-term learning outcomes, while industry focuses on immediate skill application.	Creates a disconnect that can lead to frustration and misaligned goals.
Terminology Differences	Each sector uses distinct terminologies that can lead to misunderstandings.	Results in confusion during discussions, making it difficult to establish common goals.
Lack of Structured Communication	Meetings between stakeholders often lack a clear agenda or structure, leading to vague discussions.	Causes inefficiencies and missed opportunities for collaboration.
Limited Understanding of Each Sector	Educators and industry representatives may not fully understand each other's roles and challenges.	Hinders the ability to find common ground and collaborate effectively.
Insufficient Feedback Mechanisms	Lack of formal channels for feedback can prevent necessary adjustments to programs.	Leads to stagnation in curriculum development and misalignment with industry needs.
Mismatches in the preferred periods to coordinate joint activities	The scholar calendar constraint the activity for the educational community, while the periods available for the industry may vary from sectors.	Produces difficulties in organizing joint activities, or keeping a smooth communication
Lack of official recognition within standard performance metrics	Participants engaged in the networks are not usually acknowledged for their activity.	Participants risk diverting resources away from activities that are more directly valued in their respective fields

3.1 Data analysis

In the Delphi survey, 7 individuals responded to the relevant questions, while 26 responses were collected during the GoInterhub event. Of all these responses, 17 were considered valid based on the number of questions completed.

3.1.1 Q1 - Is there a specialized department or team that addresses industry-training provider relations?

Most institutions do not have a specialized department for managing industry-academia relations. Only a few (five organizations) indicated that they do have one.

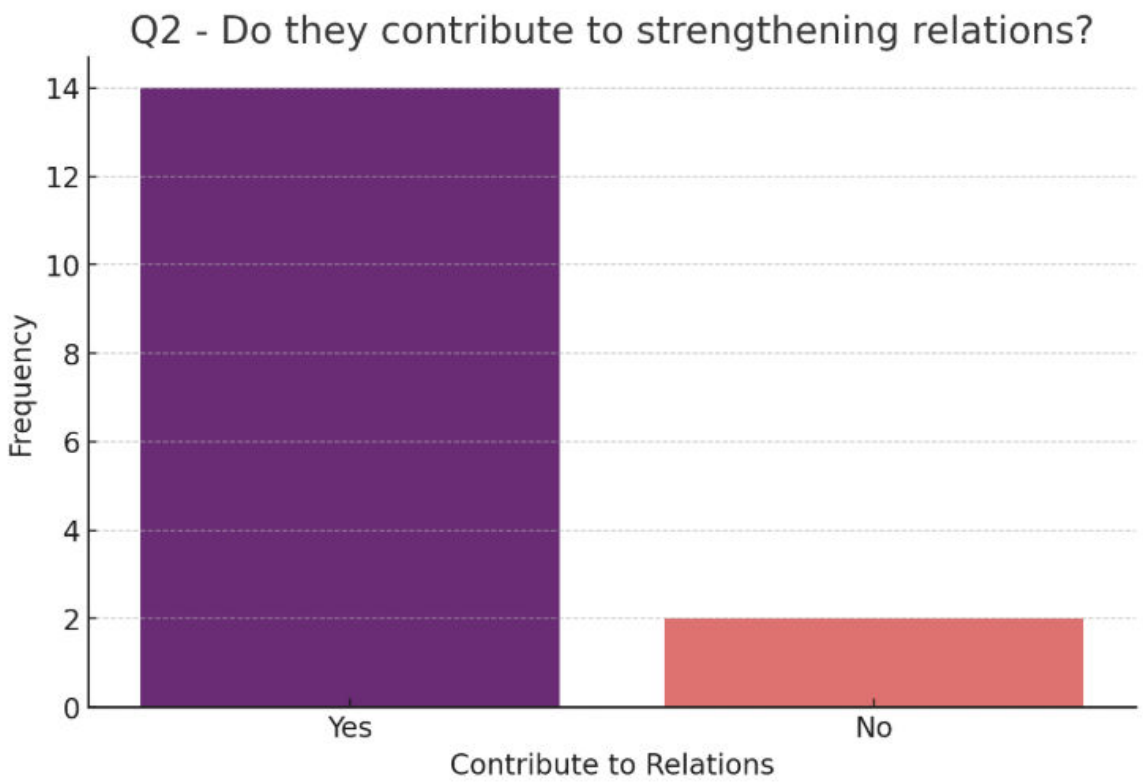


Which department do they belong to?

Most of the organizations that participated in the survey either did not respond or were represented by training or human resources departments. The lack of responses to this question suggests that many organizations either do not have a specialized department or are unaware of its existence.

3.1.2 Q2 - Do the responders contribute to strengthening relations?

The vast majority believe that their activities significantly contribute to strengthening industry-education relations, showing a high level of engagement with the productive sector.



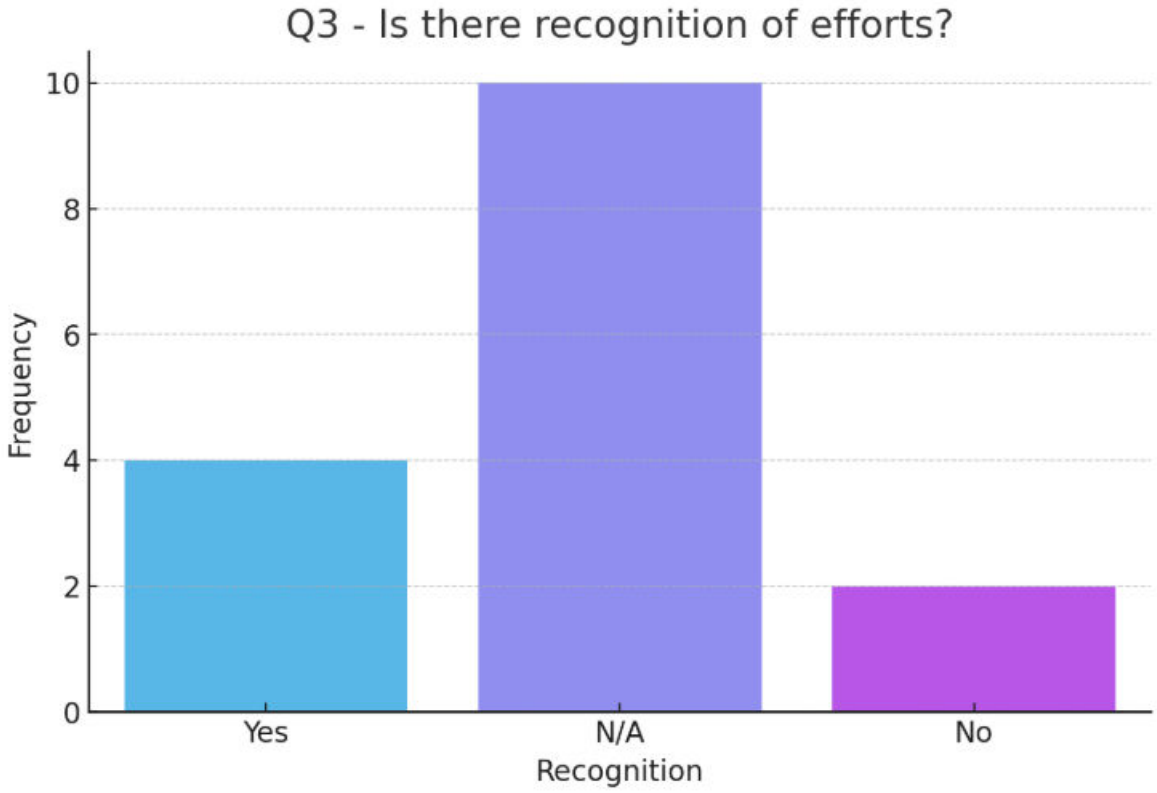
Which department do they belong to?

Among those who indicated that they have a specialized department, there is significant variety. In training centers, it may fall under communication or other technical departments. In companies, it is sometimes part of projects, sometimes under innovation, and only a few (three) mentioned training or a specific area of expertise

3.1.3 Q3 - Is there any recognition of efforts?

A significant number of institutions do not formally recognize the efforts of their employees in this area. However, some do, revealing inconsistency in recognition practices.

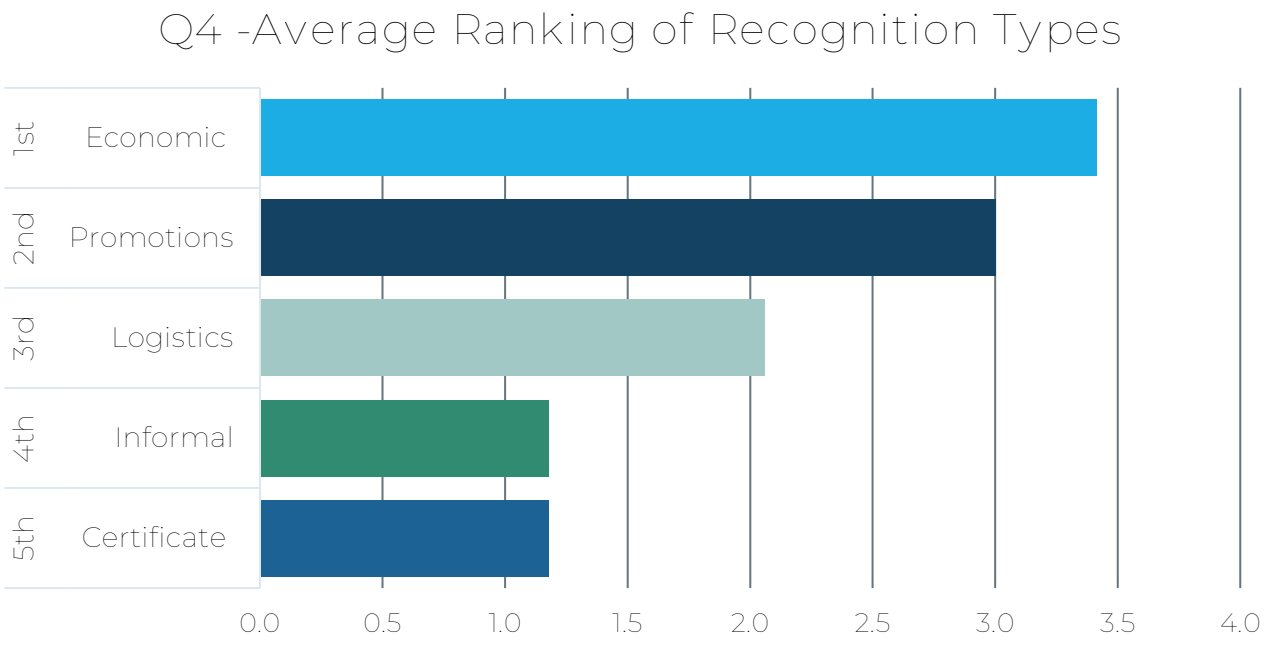
It is also possible that some respondents are unaware of the existence of certificates or other forms of recognition. In many cases, participants in the workshops were unsure whether their efforts are acknowledged, which may indicate that this aspect has not been adequately addressed or communicated.



Type of recognition

Most of the responders stated that they either receive no recognition at all or only receive certificates/diplomas as a form of recognition. Recognition for promotional purposes appears to be particularly uncommon.

3.1.4 Q4 - Ranking of Recognition Types



The most highly regarded form of recognition is economic compensation, followed by recognition for promotional purposes and logistic advantages (such as flexibility in time

schedules). The least valued types of recognition are informal recognition and certification/diplomas.

This disparity indicates a clear mismatch between the recognition participants consider most appropriate, and the types of recognition they actually receive. While economic compensation is most desired, it is rarely offered, with certificates being a more common, yet less appreciated, alternative.

3.1.5 Q5. Would you like to propose another type of recognition, or specify a specific characteristic?

Most participants do not feel the need for additional recognition methods, as indicated by their "No" or "N/A" responses. Some participants mentioned that activities are certified upon request or rewarded through economic benefits. However, a small group suggested formal recognition through certifications and diplomas, particularly for trainers, organizations, or inclusion in curricula. While economic incentives were briefly mentioned, they were not a widespread suggestion.

4. Recommendations for strengthening industry-education collaboration

1. Identify and Strengthen Key Contact Points

- Clearly define the departments and individuals responsible for fostering and managing industry-education relations.
- Large organizations as universities usually have an industry relations department, but multiple other departments may also play a role: Creating maps or lists of departments and individuals involved in industry collaboration would improve coordination and accessibility.
- Ensure that information about these departments and individuals is widely disseminated so that all members of the organization are well aware of the key contacts for industry collaboration.

2. Promote Specialization in Industry-Education Communication

- Encourage the professionalization and specialization of departments responsible for industry-academia engagement.
- Place particular emphasis on improving communication and aligning the expectations of different stakeholders.

3. Develop Recognition and Reward Systems

- Establish formal protocols to recognize and reward individuals and organizations for their efforts in fostering collaborations between academia, industry, and policymakers.
- Economic rewards are the most preferred form of recognition:
    - In public organizations, financial incentives linked to career progression could be explored, similar to how contributions to scientific outreach are acknowledged in Spain.
- Other forms of recognition should also be considered:

- Career advancement: Recognition for promotions is the second most preferred type of award, supporting professional development in multi-stakeholder networks.
- Logistical advantages: Providing administrative or logistical advantages is a well-received form of recognition, particularly in public institutions with limited capacity to modify remuneration structures.
- Certificates and informal recognition: While these can serve as an initial step, they are currently perceived as less relevant compared to financial and career-based incentives.

4. Institutionalize Recognition within Official Schemes

- Efforts dedicated to fostering collaborations between academia, industry, and policymakers should be formally integrated into official evaluation and recognition frameworks.

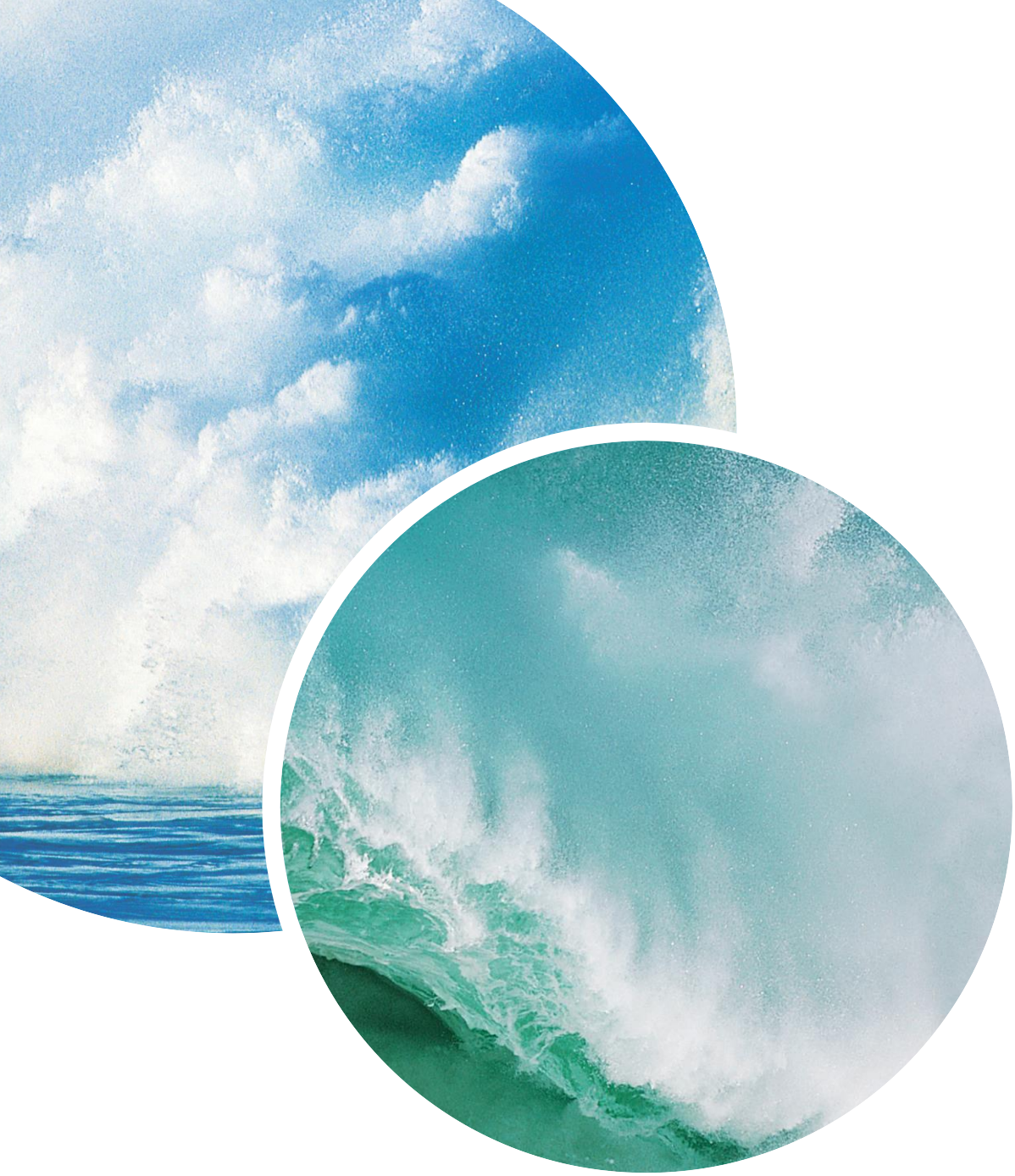
5. Conclusions

The alignment between education and industry needs is increasingly recognized as essential for workforce development, yet multiple barriers hinder effective collaboration. Research and case studies highlight five major challenges affecting industry-education networks: communication gaps between stakeholders; differences in priorities; the absence of formal recognition for those engaging in collaboration; and organisational differences within institutions that limit coordination and dedicated resources.

Findings from the 17 survey responses reinforce these challenges. Most institutions do not have a dedicated department for industry relations, yet they still make efforts to strengthen these connections. However, recognition practices are inconsistent, with many institutions offering no formal acknowledgment of such efforts, which may impact motivation and engagement. Notably, two-thirds of respondents were unsure whether their organization provides any form of recognition, suggesting that the issue has not been formally addressed. Economic compensation and promotions are seen as the most effective incentives, while certificates and informal acknowledgments are considered less impactful.

To improve industry-education collaboration, institutions should prioritize identifying and promoting clear points of contact responsible for industry relations, ensuring these roles are visible and easily accessible. Additionally, communication between stakeholders must be strengthened by supporting specialized departments or personnel dedicated to industry-academia engagement, while also providing training to align expectations.
Recognition mechanisms should be developed to formally acknowledge the efforts invested in fostering these partnerships, with a particular emphasis on economic rewards and career progression opportunities, as these are the most valued forms of recognition. In public institutions with lower capacity to modify the remuneration schemes, logistical support can serve as an alternative form of encouragement.
Finally, it is essential to integrate industry collaboration efforts into official performance evaluations and career advancement frameworks, ensuring that staff contributions to industry-education partnerships are valued and do not jeopardize their professional growth.

By addressing these structural and motivational barriers, institutions can foster more effective and sustainable industry-education partnerships, ultimately benefiting both workforce development and economic growth.



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