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European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Assessment of progress and planning the future

Summary &
Case Study from
Malta

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Social
Europe

European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Assessment of progress and planning the future

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Explanatory note

This publication contains a summary of the study "European Alliance for Apprenticeships - Assessment of progress and planning the future", commissioned by the European Commission from the external contractor ICF. This study aims at demonstrating the achievements of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships as we are celebrating its 4th anniversary. It also contains recommendations on how to further develop the Alliance in the near future.

As part of the study, 9 case studies of successful implementation of pledges and commitments were identified, taking into account the variety of stakeholders and activities. These case studies come from the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Danish Construction Association, the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong learning (earlall), Apprenticeships in Scotland, Fundación Bertelsmann, The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), Carrefour Poland, the BMW and the Cedefop apprenticeship review in Malta. Each case study was analysed in order to demonstrate different ways of implementing pledges. This publication contains the case study on on-going reforms in Malta, published here in honour of the Maltese Presidency of the European Union.

The full version of the study, including all case studies, will be available on the web page of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

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Executive Summary

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships and this study

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) is an initiative launched in July 2013 by a joint declaration of the European Social Partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP), the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU. It seeks to engage governments, social partners and other key stakeholders¹ in pursuing common objectives of strengthening the supply, quality and image of apprenticeships and lately also the mobility of apprentices in Europe. The EAfA is a multi-stakeholder platform coordinated by the Commission with contributions on a voluntary basis. It operates without dedicated funding.

The activities of the EAfA are delivered in the context of national commitments made by governments of participating Member States, EFTA and Candidate Countries; and pledges² made by stakeholders. In May 2017, the total number of national commitments submitted to the EAfA stood at 35 (27 EU Member States, 3 EFTA countries, 5 candidate countries)³ and the total number of pledges stood at 174. The largest groups of pledgers by stakeholder type are businesses (62), followed by social partners (27), education and training providers (26) and professional bodies and networks (24). A substantial part of all pledges have been made by EU-wide organisations (36)⁴, Germany and the UK have the highest number of pledgers (58 and 21 respectively). Since its inception in 2013, the EAfA organises and coordinates a number of support activities for both governments and stakeholders⁵.

This report presents the findings of a study that was commissioned by the European Commission to assess progress with the EAfA, and support the planning of future EAfA activities. The study is primarily based on a qualitative enquiry on the achievements and impact of the EAfA at the level of the national commitments and the pledges as well as on the level of EAfA support activities. The study presents the key findings against a set of 21 evaluation questions built around four evaluation criteria – i.e. relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and added value. The study pursued three main objectives:

1. Evaluate the EAfA achievements and the impact of the EAfA in order to identify challenges and success factors;
2. Provide recommendations on how to further develop the EAfA to maximise its benefits; and

¹ Businesses, chambers of commerce/craft/industry and professional networks, vocational education and training (VET) providers, non-profit and youth organisations as well as national/regional authorities, research institutes and think tanks

² 'Pledge' is the overarching term used for all types of activities that stakeholders (see footnote 1) commit to, as opposed to 'National commitments', which are government initiatives.

³ May 2017: EU Member States: Only the United Kingdom has not submitted a national commitment (although UK has a high number of pledges). EFTA countries: Switzerland, Norway and Iceland have made a commitment, only Liechtenstein has not. All EU Candidate Countries have made a commitment.

⁴ Cf. EAfA website, January 2017: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1147&langId=en>

⁵ EAfA stakeholder meetings, EAfA related events, website, newsletter, a functional mailbox and information through social media – LinkedIn and Twitter (#ApprenEU). In this context, the EAfA has engaged with a variety of stakeholders, including businesses, social partners, professional bodies, vocational education providers, national/regional authorities, non-profit organisations, chambers of commerce/industry/craft, research institutes and think tanks.

3. Design a concrete methodology for the monitoring of the implementation of commitments and pledges under the EAfA.

The outcomes of the study are summarised below.

1. Evaluation of the EAfA achievements and the impact of the EAfA

The findings of the study show that the EAfA can be considered as a successful initiative. The number of commitments and pledges increased steadily since 2013, also due to the Commissions' and EAfA-stakeholders' efforts to promote apprenticeships and support the implementation of the national commitments and pledges. The objectives of the EAfA remain relevant to the EU Agenda as well as to participating governments' and stakeholders' policy priorities and needs. Governments and stakeholders reported progress with the national commitments and pledges. Relevant results have been achieved in relation to three EAfA priority topics, namely: increased supply of apprenticeship places, improved quality of apprenticeships, and a better image of apprenticeships. Many national commitments and pledges have also started to work to improve the availability of information on vocational education and training mobility to apprentices, and improve the quality of learner mobility.

Financial means provided at EU level seem to be used efficiently; yet do not seem sufficient to support the full diversity of activities relating to apprenticeships.

Although it is difficult to claim new/additional developments relating to apprenticeships on national level can be solely attributed to the EAfA, there is clear evidence that the EAfA has had a role to play in inspiring many countries and stakeholders in their apprenticeship initiatives and actions. The EAfA has also been instrumental in raising momentum and awareness for the topic throughout Europe, and has worked as a catalyst with regard to the engagement of key stakeholders. For governments and stakeholders, the main added value of the EAfA lies in its role as a platform for networking, peer-learning and information exchange – a key aspect they would like to see further strengthened in the future.

Concretely, the key findings of the study built around four evaluation criteria are the following:

Relevance of the EAfA

The EAfA's goal of strengthening the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships in Europe remains relevant to the current EU policy agenda; especially in relation to tackling the challenge of youth unemployment.

- The EAfA objectives are in line with the New Skills Agenda for Europe⁶ and the Communication on Investing in Youth.⁷ They are also aligned with the Riga

⁶ European Commission (2016) A New Skills Agenda for Europe - Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=958>

⁷ Investing in Europe's Youth Communication. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-4165_en.htm

Conclusions⁸, which identify apprenticeships as an important means to ensure smooth transition between education and training and labour market.

- While youth employment rates have overall increased across Europe, youth unemployment remains a challenge in many countries. Hence, the original rationale for the EAfA remains valid.

The commitments of the Member States, EFTA, Candidate Countries and the stakeholders' pledges are relevant to the needs of the stakeholders and beneficiaries as well as to the objectives of the EAfA.

- National commitments and pledges include ambitious, but realistic actions that are tailored to the means and the needs of the participating governments and the pledgers.
- Governments report that the original objectives set out in their national commitments are still in their national reform agendas. However, policy priorities may have changed or evolved, and new focus points may have been set since the national commitment was made. This is not reported back to the EAfA as no reporting duties are currently connected to the national commitments.
- All pledge holders report that the original objectives set out in their pledges remain relevant for them. A large majority of them reported that they have been actively working on at least one of the three objectives of the EAfA during the past year, with as many as 60% working on more than one objective. However, activities of some of the pledges have already finalised; or, for individual reasons, stakeholders may have not been able to follow through with their pledges. This is currently not reported back to the EAfA as no reporting duties/mechanisms are connected to the pledges.
- A small number of government representatives and a slightly higher number of stakeholders consider it relevant to include certain new priority themes (e.g. entrepreneurship) and new priority target groups (migrants/refugees, early school leavers) in the framework of the EAfA.
- When looking at the articulation between commitments and pledges in specific countries, it can be noted that – although made independently from each other - and at different points in time – commitments and pledges usually address the same issues, and complement each other well.

Effectiveness of the EAfA

The Member States, EFTA and the Candidate Countries, and the EAfA pledge holders have made progress with regard to the actions foreseen in their commitments and pledges.

- All countries report progress with the activities related to their national commitment. Most of them have worked to improve quality and supply. Some countries seem to have worked on more objectives than originally included in their national commitment.
- Almost all pledge holders report that they have made progress in relation to the EAfA objectives. Pledge holders have focused more on improving the image, quality and supply of apprenticeships and more recently on mobility.
- There is strong convergence between the activities related to supply, quality, image and mobility. As such, specific activities relating to the four objectives can fall under several headlines, or can be attributed differently by governments and stakeholders.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/2015-riga-conclusions_en.pdf

The actions included in the commitments and pledges have produced results that make a difference in relation to the EAfA objectives (Supply, quality, image, and mobility).

- Supply: The national commitments and pledges have helped to increase the supply of apprenticeship places. It is difficult to quantify the contribution of EAfA on the supply exactly, due to the different baselines (absolute figures/relative figures, different periods, different types of activities (apprenticeships, traineeships, entry jobs). However, the case studies prepared for this study show that commitments and pledges succeeded to create new apprenticeship places. Based on the information presented in the pledge documents, as of December 2016, the European Commission estimated that EAfA members had pledged to provide 506,000 apprenticeships and training opportunities;⁹
- Quality: The commitments and pledges have helped to enhance the quality of apprenticeships, e.g. by ensuring they respond to skills needs according to labour market requirements, developing a regulatory framework; promoting employers' participation in funding apprenticeships, etc.;
- Image: The commitments and pledges have helped to improve the image and attractiveness of apprenticeships: numerous image campaigns targeting learners, parents, employers were carried out. Moreover, governments and stakeholders have implemented reforms to improve the image of apprenticeships, e.g. updating existing and/or preparing new training programmes to ensure the quality of the qualifications gained through apprenticeships, improving working conditions for apprentices etc.
- Mobility: The commitments and pledges have helped to raise awareness for VET mobility, e.g. by providing more or better information about learner mobility and improving services for learners and VET providers to find places/partners abroad. They have also contributed to improving the quality of VET mobility, e.g. by ensuring the recognition of learning outcomes gained through learner mobility.

The EAfA support activities have raised interest about the Alliance and led to new commitments and pledges.

- Stakeholders report that their main motivation to submit a pledge – besides their interest in VET- and apprenticeship-related issues – is their interest in participating in an EU-level network. The EAfA is seen as good means to network with stakeholders at European level; to increase the visibility of initiatives and good practices; and to meet new partners for EU projects. It also empowers stakeholders to participate in discussions and raise issues at national level.
- By May 2017, almost all Member States, EFTA and Candidate Countries had made a national commitment.¹⁰ Since the start of the EAfA in 2013, the number of pledges has increased steadily by an average of 40-50 per year and stands at 174 in May 2017.
- Stakeholders are highly appreciative of the informal, supportive and open nature of the EAfA and encourage a continuation of this approach in the future.

⁹ As of December 2016, the European Commission estimated that the pledge holders had committed to provide 506,000 youth opportunities in total, including apprenticeships, traineeships and entry-level jobs. It is noted that whilst some pledgers assign specific timeframes to the pledged offers, others do not..

¹⁰ May 2017: EU Member States: Only the United Kingdom has not submitted a national commitment (although UK has a high number of pledges). EFTA countries: Switzerland, Norway and Iceland have made a commitment, only Liechtenstein has not. All EU Candidate Countries have made a commitment.

- Some stakeholders comment that guidance on how to formulate a national commitment or set up a pledge could be improved: For them, the existing template and instructions are not sufficiently clear and detailed.

The EAfA online communication channels and tools are popular and seem adequate for informing and engaging with EAfA stakeholders.

- Stakeholders are overall satisfied or very satisfied with the EAfA communication channels and tools, including the level of engagement that these offer. The EAfA newsletter and EAfA website are by far the most popular communication channels used by stakeholders.
- A few stakeholders are interested in becoming more involved in the development of content for the EAfA newsletter and website.

Efficiency of the EAfA

The EAfA has helped to raise awareness for apprenticeships and has worked as a catalyst with regard to the engagement of key stakeholders.

- Due to preceding policy initiatives on European and national level,¹¹ most Member States were already in the process of taking action with regard to improving the supply, quality, and image of apprenticeships when the EAfA was launched. Consequently, most national commitments reflect the national policy activities that were already ongoing in the countries, to add them to the EAfA platform. While government representatives reported that participation in the EAfA did not immediately lead to new or additional activities, EAfA helped to raise additional awareness for the topic on national level. Moreover, Member States became aware of the strong emphasis on apprenticeships on EU level. To that end, EAfA - together with other EU initiatives - had a positive, even though limited, impact on shaping the concrete activities of governments with relation to apprenticeships.
- It is a particular achievement of the EAfA that it succeeded to work as a catalyst with regard to the engagement of key stakeholders. A great number of European stakeholders in education and training used the pledges to give apprenticeships a greater focus in their work.¹² Moreover, EAfA also helped to engage SMEs and other small organisations on national level which are otherwise not directly engaged in European level activities.¹³ Furthermore, it has helped to raise awareness for apprenticeships and activities related to them and have developed a certain pull-effect with regard to the engagement of stakeholders.

¹¹ The Copenhagen Process started in 2002 entailed many initiatives related to European VET policy, cf: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy_en; and the 'Youth Guarantee', which was launched in 2013 in parallel to EAfA, also touched upon VET policy and apprenticeships. Cf: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

¹² 104 of the 174 the pledgers (May 2017) are social partners, professional bodies and networks, education and training providers, non-profit/youth organisations or Chambers of Commerce/Industry/Crafts

¹³ 62 out of 174 pledgers (May 2017) are businesses.

In the absence of earmarked funding for the EAfA, the current funding mechanisms provided at EU level seem inadequate to support the high diversity of activities carried out by pledgers under the EAfA. Additional funds are deemed useful for communication campaigns and to disseminate project results and best practices.

- 63% of pledge holders consulted consider the funding as insufficient compared to the high diversity of needs in the context of establishing apprenticeship schemes.
- 20% of pledge holders consulted were not aware of existing EU funding opportunities. Others have not yet used such funds as they experienced difficulties accessing them.

Added Value of the EAfA

The main added value of the EAfA lies in its role as a networking, learning and information exchange platform between Commission, social partners, government representatives and pledge holders.

- Government representatives consulted under the framework of this study felt that the added value of the EAfA lies primarily in the increased awareness regarding apprenticeships. EAfA emphasises the prominent place of apprenticeships on the EU policy Agenda.
- Sharing of experiences, networking, and peer-learning are considered the most attractive EAfA support activities. Stakeholders see added value in the EAfA's role of disseminating good practices, outputs and tools, support to communication campaigns and assistance in partner search. This aspect should be strengthened: Participating governments and EAfA stakeholders would appreciate further mutual learning activities. There is less support amongst stakeholders for benchmarking and comparative performance reviews.

2. Recommendations on how to further develop the EAfA

Based on the key findings, the following key actions are recommended to further develop the EAfA and maximise its benefits with relation to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and added value of the EAfA.

(i) EAfA Relevance: Regularly discuss and update EAfA goals, priorities and objectives

1. It is recommended that the EAfA goals are complemented by thematic priorities that are re-examined and defined on an annual or multi-annual basis, reflecting the evolving policy context (e.g. apprenticeships for migrants and refugees, mobility for apprentices, entrepreneurship education for apprentices etc.). It is recommended to involve the EAfA stakeholders in defining such priorities, identified during the annual monitoring process. They should be discussed and validated (for the next period) through consultation with stakeholders e.g. written consultation, EAfA Stakeholder meetings, related EAfA events.
2. It is recommended that mobility should be recognised as one of the 'official' objectives of the EAfA.

(ii) EAfA Effectiveness: Introduce a monitoring framework for the EAfA.

3. The effectiveness of the EAfA is reflected in progress and results from the commitments and pledges. By the time this study was commissioned, the European Commission had little data about progress and achievements of the commitments and

pledges. As the initiative is growing and developing, the European Commission needs good quality data on commitments and pledges, to be able to report about effectiveness of the EAfA as such. Hence, it is recommended to introduce an annual monitoring for the EAfA, which enables the Commission to collect data about progress and results of the commitments and pledges on an ongoing basis (see section 3).¹⁴

(iii) EAfA Efficiency: Further develop the coordinating role of the EAfA in mobilising partnerships, encouraging synergies and recognising contributions to the EAfA

4. Recognising the role of the EAfA in mobilising, coordinating and supporting partnerships between governments and stakeholders, it is recommended to further develop the coordinating role of the EAfA as an EU level platform for exchange, learning and support.
5. It is recommended that the EAfA maintains its open character of engagement through individual national commitments and pledges. This allows for a broad range of voluntary activities to be pursued under the umbrella of the EAfA without setting centralised targets vis-à-vis specific geographic regions, sectors or stakeholders (beyond those that are already defined as part of the Riga Conclusions or existing EU and national regulatory frameworks).
6. Governments and stakeholders may need an incentive to become more active in the EAfA or to update their national commitments and pledges. Enhanced efforts to promote the benefits of being a member of the EAfA are recommended. Consideration to introducing a 'quality label' to acknowledge members' participation in the EAfA is recommended.
7. To every extent possible, the EAfA participating governments and stakeholders should be given full credit for their achievements in the areas promoted by the EAfA - thus valuing their contribution to date and encouraging further engagement. Continued support for the EAfA Awards (launched in December 2016) to recognise achievements of employers and apprentices is therefore highly recommended.
8. Efforts to enhance complementarities and synergies between the EAfA and other initiatives promoting objectives similar to the EAfA are recommended. Linked to the planned support services and through dialogue taking place during stakeholders' meetings and planned peer learning activities, this includes:
 - a. Improved information sharing between EAfA stakeholders, within countries and in relation to other European initiatives/Working Groups (e.g. ET2020 Working Groups);
 - b. Enhanced communication and dissemination of the EAfA outcomes by disseminating them through other Alliances, national and European networks (e.g. the Cedefop ReferNet network).

(iv) EAfA Added value: Further develop EAfA support activities and opportunities for peer-learning

9. It is recommended to continue improving the relevance of the EAfA peer-learning activities by ensuring that the content of meetings is concise, dynamic; inspiring and engaging. This could be achieved by:

¹⁴ A methodology for annual monitoring of the EAfA commitments and pledges has been developed in the framework of this study (see Annex 5 of the main study report).

- a. Early dissemination of information and stronger involvement of governments and stakeholders in the preparation of these events;
- b. Developing a stronger thematic focus and seeking to produce more operational outcomes of meetings;
- c. Further improvements to the structure and format of meetings, tailoring the content of particular sessions to the needs of specific groups of stakeholders (e.g. focus on 'shared challenges');
- d. Enhancing opportunities for peer learning between stakeholders and government representatives of different countries - including through thematic activities hosted by particular countries or stakeholders. This should be linked to the activities of the planned support services.
- e. While there is less support for benchmarking and comparative performance reviews, opportunities for 'bench-learning' – mutual learning to achieve jointly agreed benchmarks in relation to quality, supply, and image of apprenticeships - could be considered further.¹⁵

10. It is recommended to consider greater engagement of government representatives and stakeholders in the organisation and delivery of the EAfA support activities. Enhanced government involvement may generate interest in organising EAfA meetings in their respective countries - thus covering/contributing to the costs of organising and coordinating meetings.

11. Resources are required to communicate the results of support activities – for example, to publish key conclusions and action points more visibly on the EAfA website and newsletters.

(v) EAfA Added value: Enhance the role of the EAfA in disseminating information and results

12. It is recommended that the EAfA clarifies, strengthens and enhances its role in reinforcing and enhancing the dissemination of the results achieved on a national, regional, or organisational level. This may be especially important for those stakeholders that have limited resources for dissemination of their achievements.

13. It is recommended that all EAfA communication channels and existing tools (including EAfA social media tools such as the LinkedIn group and Twitter (#ApprenEU)) should be preserved with focused efforts on promoting the use of these tools. Communication activities should be tailored to meet stakeholder needs, while seeking to identify issues of common interest to particular groups of pledge holders, representatives of governments or both, based on common challenges or areas of intervention. The planned support service could further enhance interaction between stakeholders and European/national representatives including online. Encouraging progressively greater stakeholders' engagement in EAfA communication and dissemination is highly recommended. Communication activities could be used to explore whether the EAfA would benefit from a unique visual identity - which could be developed by the planned support service in the future.

14. In relation to funding mechanisms, it is recommended that communication material:

- a. clarifies the nature of the EAfA as an umbrella for activities funded through other sources;

¹⁵ The European Network of Public Employment Services implements a bench-learning concept: http://www.pesboard.eu/EN/pesboard/Benchlearning/benchlearning_node.html

- b. continues to provide clear information about what relevant EU funding is available (including links to the programmes);
- c. specifically promotes the long-term mobility strand for apprentices 'ErasmusPro' which was proposed to be integrated in the Erasmus+ programme in December 2016,¹⁶ and
- d. provide clear guidance and examples on how EU funding can be used to support *all* goals of the EAfA¹⁷.

3. Suggested methodology for the monitoring of the national commitments and pledges under the EAfA

National commitments and pledges in their current format do not provide a comprehensive overview of what they are expected to achieve. Monitoring progress with their implementation is therefore problematic. It is recommended that the information provided with the existing national commitments and pledges are updated on a yearly basis through a bespoke monitoring framework.

A methodology for annual monitoring of the EAfA commitments and pledges has been developed in the framework of this study. A baseline situation in relation to submitted national commitments and pledges will be established with the first monitoring cycle starting in 2018 and will enable annual assessment of progress towards the EAfA goals achieved through the implementation of national commitments and pledges. Quality examples of good practices in the implementation of national commitments and pledges will also be collected through the EAfA monitoring framework. Procedures aimed at re-engaging non-active members have also been incorporated into the EAfA monitoring framework.

¹⁶ As part of the '[Investing in Youth](#)' initiative

¹⁷ While it is broadly known that Erasmus+ can be used to fund learner mobility, other Erasmus+ funding opportunities (e.g. Key Action 3) that can be used to support other EAfA goals (e.g. image and quality) are less well known.

Case Study

Apprenticeship review and reform in Malta

January 2017

1 Introduction

This case study describes progress with the Maltese National commitment, drafted by the Malta's main VET provider, MCAST (Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology), on behalf of the Maltese government; and the Maltese pledge, made by the Maltese Union of Teachers (MUT) since 2013.

Both pledge and commitment were connected to a comprehensive process of policy review and reform of the apprenticeship system that was initiated by the Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment. Being part of the National Reform Programme in 2014, review and reform were seen as a means to address the problem of skills mismatch in Malta.¹

To support the reform, a systematic review of the existing structures and practices of apprenticeships in Malta was carried out. This review was explicitly seen as an activity to support the European Alliance of Apprenticeships,² and was led jointly by Cedefop and an ad-hoc steering group at national level. The review consulted in a comprehensive report that contains a thorough analysis of the Maltese apprenticeship system and a number of recommendations as to how to proceed. The recommendations include suggestions for

- Revisions to programmes and courses, to ensure more qualifications are offered as apprenticeships;
- Changes to the qualifications system to ensure apprenticeships lead to a diploma that is pegged to the MQF;
- Revisions to the collaboration structure between stakeholders, e.g. to ensure a greater involvement of employers;
- A new legal framework to ensure the legal and contractual status of apprentices and regulate the articulation between theoretical and practical learning;
- Revision to the governance, quality assurance and monitoring of apprenticeships.

As a result of this process, comprehensive changes to programmes were carried out. A broad range of qualifications (50 in total) is now offered as apprenticeships; and the number of places on offer doubled each year.

For the administration of the places, a new department at MCAST, the Apprenticeship and Work-based learning Department, was installed, which liaises directly with employers. In collaboration with the pledge holder MUT, the role of teachers and trainers was clarified and strengthened. Moreover, to underpin the reform, new legal regulations regarding implementation and governance are under way:

- A new education act will be issued, which will integrate apprenticeships into the qualification system. The act also regulates the share of work-based learning in apprenticeship qualifications.
- Another regulation clarifies questions with relation to contractual aspects and ensures that apprentices benefit from the same rights in relation to social security and injury at the workplace as other employees.
- Moreover, a dedicated regulatory act, and standalone acts governing education and training providers will be launched. This ensures that a neutral

¹ Malta's National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy, http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/nrp2014_malta_en.pdf

² The review took place from 2014-2015; parallel to a similar exercise in Lithuania. In 2015, reviews in Italy, Greece, and Slovenia were initiated; following the same method.

body will take over regulatory functions that were previously assigned to the VET providers.

Consequently, it can be stated considerable efforts were undertaken to progress with both commitment and pledge, and improve the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships in Malta. The Maltese youth unemployment rate went further down and, in September 2016, was the lowest in all Europe. Impact on skills supply and demand cannot be measured yet.

2 Country context

While Malta's youth unemployment rate has always been comparatively low, the country identified a problem in supplying enough skilled workers to the labour market. Skills shortages are experienced because of ageing population and strong economic growth driven by the tourism and trade sector. Moreover, high-skill sectors such as i-gaming, financial services, legal and accounting services and aircraft maintenance emerge in Malta. Employers face difficulties recruiting skilled workers and tend to rely on foreign workers to meet their needs.³ Young people are found to lack the necessary skills to meet job standards, which leads to mismatch between the supply of jobs and the availability of labour.⁴ The National Reform Programme 2014 for Malta identified apprenticeships as a means to address these skills shortages.⁵

Consequently, Malta's National Commitment aims to increase the quantity, quality and supply of apprenticeships. The Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (MCAST), which submitted the pledge on behalf of the Ministry of education and employment in 2013, commits to developing a reform of the apprenticeship system in a manner that brings apprenticeship training to the core of local industry. Aim was to root the reform in collaborative practice between MCAST and local industry; to increase the number of vocational pathways offered on apprenticeship while also increasing the quality of work-based training and learning. The intention was also to base the reform on greater collaboration with both local and international stakeholders which have impact on education and the economy.

The Malta Union of Teachers was involved in the process from the beginning. Their pledge was made in parallel to the National Commitment and aimed to promote quality apprenticeships among VET teachers and trainers, and help to improve quality teaching. Moreover, it aimed to work around the legal status of apprentices, to ensure a safe working environment. No legal framework existed to ensure the safety of (under-age) apprentices who are not regular workers and need special protection. Apprenticeships were governed by an old regulation from the 60ties than was developed when Malta was still part of the Commonwealth realm.⁶

3 Brief description of pledge and national commitment

Both pledge and national commitment were made in 2013. Malta's National Commitment was submitted by the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (MCAST), on behalf of the Ministry of education and employment, and aimed to increase the quantity, quality and supply of apprenticeships. The pledge by the Maltese Union of Teachers addresses quality and awareness.

³ Cedefop (2017). Spotlight on VET Malta. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8106?src=email&freq=weekly>

⁴ Apprenticeship Review: Malta. Cedefop 2015. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4139>

⁵ National Reform Programme 2014 for Malta, http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/nrp2014_malta_en.pdf

⁶ As stated in an interview with ICF in December 2016.

Although many employers in Malta offer apprenticeship places, there are no pledges from employers or employer representatives from Malta. This reflects the fact that employers' involvement on structural level so far is very low.

3.1 Main objectives of pledge and national commitment

The table below (table 3.1) gives an overview on the objectives of national commitment and pledge against the EAFA priorities.

Table 3.1 Objectives of pledge and national commitment against EAFA priorities

EAFA priority	Commitment (MCAST)	Pledge (MUT)
Quality	<p>MCAST commits to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus the reform of apprenticeship, in a manner that brings apprenticeship training to the core of local industry; ■ Root the reform in collaborative practice between MCAST and local industry which provides apprentices with high-quality underpinning knowledge indispensable for the growth of the local industry and economy ■ Increase the exposure of apprentices within industry through a multidisciplinary approach in which companies benefit from engagement of apprentices from training courses not traditionally offered on apprenticeship 	<p>MUT pledges to promote the following quality criteria among VET teachers and trainers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To ensure quality apprenticeship places in the enterprises; ■ To ensure a safe working environment during apprenticeship since such students may be more vulnerable or more subject to accident or ill health; ■ To improve quality teaching in VET.
Supply	<p>Increase the number of vocational pathways offered on apprenticeship while also increasing the quality of work-based training and learning through formal accreditation of work-based modules.</p>	<p>Supply is not an objective of the pledge</p>
Awareness	<p>Base the reform on greater collaboration with both local and international stakeholders which have impact on education and the economy.</p>	<p>MUT will raise awareness about the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and campaign to work towards more quality, accessible and fair apprenticeships in Malta. MUT is also supporting ETUCE and other European teacher trade unions' actions to improve apprenticeship. MUT will raise awareness about the initiative and will disseminate the Joint declaration of the European Alliance for Apprenticeship among its members through our communication channels.</p>
Mobility	<p>Mobility is not an objective of the commitment.</p>	<p>Mobility is not an objective of the pledge.</p>

The table shows that commitment and pledge complement and reinforce each other. While the national commitment focuses on reforming apprenticeship courses and programmes, and improving collaboration between the education and training side and employers; the pledge focuses on improving the legal status of apprentices, and on ensuring quality teaching. Furthermore, the pledge made by the social partner reinforces the national commitment's objective of 'greater collaboration between stakeholders'.

3.2 Beneficiaries of the activities

As both commitment and pledge have a very broad focus, a broad range of stakeholders and target groups benefit from the activities related to them and the outcomes: Learners, training providers, employers, social partners, as well as the governing institutions on system level.

3.3 Other stakeholders involved

To support the development of the reform, a systematic review of the existing structures and practices of apprenticeships in Malta was carried out. The review was carried out between May 2014 and April 2015. It was led jointly by Cedefop and an ad hoc steering group set up at national level which validated the project findings.

During the review, a broad range of relevant stakeholders were interviewed as part of the data collection exercise to understand the workings of the system, its strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, the close involvement of stakeholders in the process as steering committee also aimed to facilitate greater engagement with the topic, explore new ways of collaboration, and enhance their motivation to initiate the necessary reforms to increase quality of apprenticeships, attract higher numbers of companies and learners, and improve responsiveness to the needs of the labour market.

3.4 Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the pledge and national commitment are multifold and address both the level of VET providers and the Maltese VET system.

- On provider level, pledge and national commitment aim to revise programmes and courses, to ensure more qualifications are offered as apprenticeships and more places are on offer.
- On system level, pledge and national commitment aim to
 - Improve the collaboration between stakeholders, e.g. to ensure a greater involvement of employers and social partners
 - Ensure the legal and contractual status of apprentices and regulate the articulation between theoretical and practical learning.

In the long run, these changes are expected to improve skills match on the labour market, so that employers find qualified staff for their vacancies.

3.5 Financial and other resources

The Ministry of Education and Employment, MCAST and MUT dedicated staff working time to the review and reform. In addition, Cedefop (supported by a

contractor) dedicated financial resources to carrying out the country review on apprenticeships over a year's time (May 2014 and April 2015).⁷

4 Progress, outputs, results and impact

The Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) and MCAST used the thematic country review - led by Cedefop and a national steering group - to explore the best way forward. To collect data on strengths and weaknesses of the current system, the review entailed a series of interviews with stakeholders. Outcome of the review is a comprehensive report that contains a thorough analysis of the Maltese apprenticeship system and a number of recommendations as to how to proceed. The table below (table 4.1) gives an overview on key issues identified, cause for these issues, and suggested actions.

Table 4.1 Outcomes from the apprenticeship country review: Issues, causes and suggested actions

Issues	Causes (identified by review)	Suggestions for Action
There is mismatch between apprenticeship offer and labour market needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No involvement of labour market representatives in defining the apprenticeship offer. ■ No mechanism for strategic labour market response. ■ No estimation of numbers of apprenticeship placements. ■ Sector fragmentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The governance structure should formally invest the labour market side with such responsibility, in addition to the education side. ■ Strategy design needs to rely on input from the labour market. ■ Appropriate mechanisms need to be put in place.
Apprenticeship programmes follow a non-integrated approach.	Non-holistic approach to apprenticeship.	There should be one distinct curriculum for apprenticeship which includes learning at school and learning at the company
Apprentices do not benefit from rights in relation to social security and injury at the workplace.	Inconsistency in two legal acts in Malta.	Consultation with trade unions and revision of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act.
Apprentices undergo two assessments and receive two certificates.	Non-integrated/ non-holistic approach to apprenticeship.	There should be one single certificate linked to the MQF.
There is an accumulation of functions on the education side: strategy, provision, administration, assessment, certification.	The governance structure is weak.	Strategy, provision and quality assurance should function autonomously and interdependently.

Source: Cedefop⁸

⁷ Order 2014-062, implementing Framework contract No EAC 02-2010, Lot 1 'Thematic country reviews in Malta and Lithuania', total contract value: 250.000 EUR, 50% of which were allocated to the review in Malta. Contractor: ICF

The recommendations were used to decide on follow-up actions on system level. As a consequence, several changes were implemented on provider level and on system level.

4.1 Assessment of progress made

Important steps have been taken towards the realisation of the objectives of both the pledge and the commitment.

4.2 Main outputs of pledge and national commitment

On provider level, training programmes and courses were revised as to their structure. Work-based vocational competences are also being developed to mirror industry demands and help all those involved understand better what skills and competences need to be acquired by the apprentice during the on-the-job experience. MCAST increased the number of qualifications that are on offer as apprenticeships from 10 in the academic year 2014/2015 to 50 in the academic year 2016/2017. For the administration of the places, a new department at MCAST was installed, which liaises directly with employers. In collaboration with the pledge holder MUT, the role of teachers and trainers was clarified and strengthened: they are now responsible for the coordination between the two learning venues.

On system level, the legal status of apprenticeships and their role in the system was clarified. The revised EQF referencing report pegs apprenticeships to EQF level 3 and 4 (post-secondary level). The share of work-based learning was defined (35% in EQF 3 apprenticeships, 45% in EQF 4 apprenticeships).⁹

Reforms regarding apprenticeship governance and the legal framework for apprenticeships are under way:

- A new education act will be issued, which will integrate apprenticeships more into the VET system (incl. share of work-based learning).
- Another regulation clarifies questions with relation to apprenticeship contracts and ensures that apprentices benefit from the same rights in relation to social security and injury at the workplace as other employees
- Moreover, a dedicated regulatory act, and standalone acts governing education and training providers will be launched. This ensures that a neutral body (National Commission for Further and Higher Education, NCFHE) will take over regulatory functions that were previously assigned to the VET providers.¹⁰

This new set of regulations is seen as a major achievement of the reform.

A regulation on the involvement of stakeholders was discussed as well, especially with regard to employers and other labour market stakeholders - e.g. through establishing a stakeholder board. Yet it was found that the labour law already clearly defines the role of stakeholders by granting the independence of the education and training sector. Hence a legal regulation that ensures stronger

⁸ Apprenticeship Review: Malta. Cedefop 2015, pp 14-15. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4139>.

⁹ National Commission for Further and Higher Education (2016). Referencing report: referencing the Malta qualifications framework (MQF) to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF/EHEA). Fourth revised edition. <https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Referencing%20Report/Referencing%20Report%202016.pdf>

¹⁰ Cedefop (2017). Spotlight on VET Malta. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8106?src=email&freq=weekly>

involvement of industry is not possible - it is up to the labour market representatives to decide how much they want to get involved. However, the activities related to the review and reform of the apprenticeship system had a strong awareness-raising function and acted as a catalyst for stronger stakeholder involvement. The parties involved state that dialogue will be continued.¹¹

4.3 Evidence on key results and impact

As stated above the numbers of apprenticeship programmes increased rapidly. 50 programmes are now on offer, including 15 at MQF level 3 and 35 at MQF level 4. Numbers of apprentices grew by factor 2 from 2013-2014, and again from 2015-2016. In September 2016, Malta had the lowest number of unemployed youth in all Europe.¹² Impact on skills supply and demand cannot be measured yet.

4.4 Added value of pledge and national commitment and extent to which this can be attributed to the EAfA

The driver of the activities was the identified skills mismatch on the labour market. However, several parties involved in the process state that indeed the national commitment and pledge formed a catalyst to get things in motion. Moreover, Malta had the opportunity to benefit from the engagement of Cedefop, which is seen as an invaluable opportunity that brought about great added value. The review process led by Cedefop not only revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the system and identified possible actions points, it also facilitated greater stakeholder dialogue and awareness.¹³

5 Success factors

Maltese players state that the close collaboration between all relevant stakeholders is the biggest success factor that led to the comprehensive reform and modernisation of the Maltese apprenticeship system. The dialogue-based process led to a new structure that puts the learner in the centre and has clearly defined that are transparent to everyone.

The involvement of a neutral third party (Cedefop) that carried out a thorough review that led to evidence-based suggestions obviously contributed strongly to the success of the initiative as well.

6 Challenges and lessons learnt

The stakeholders involved emphasise that the review and reform process was long, complicated and resource-intensive. Changes were required on all levels: system level, provider level, and legal framework. The help of a neutral third party (Cedefop) was beneficial and added momentum.

One of the objectives of the reform, a stronger involvement of the employer side (e.g. in qualification design and review), possibly regulated by law, was

¹¹ As stated in an interview with ICF in December 2016.

¹² As presented by MCAST during an EAfA meeting in September 2016.

¹³ As stated in interviews with ICF in December 2016 and January 2017

discussed. Yet it was found that the role of stakeholders is firmly embedded (and restricted) in the labour law. Hence a legal regulation that ensures stronger involvement of industry could not be facilitated. Labour market representatives are however free to decide on a stronger engagement voluntarily, e.g. through participating in committees and working groups.

7 Methodological approach to monitoring progress and outcomes of the pledge and national commitment

There were no monitoring arrangements in place to follow up the development of pledge and commitment as such. Yet, as pledge and commitment refer to a comprehensive systemic reform, the monitoring arrangements of the apprenticeship system as such were part of the discussion.

The review brought to light the old system's accumulation of functions on the education side: strategy, provision, administration, assessment, and certification were all carried out by the education and training providers. It was stated that strategy, provision and quality assurance should function autonomously and interdependently.

As part of the new legal regulation, a dedicated regulatory act, and standalone acts governing education and training providers, will be adopted. This ensures that a neutral body (the National Commission for Further and Higher Education, NCFHE¹⁴) will take over regulatory functions that were previously assigned to the VET providers.

8 Summary and conclusions

Malta has taken important steps towards attaining the objectives of both the pledge and the commitment, and beyond. A comprehensive review led to reforms on both system and provider level.

The table below (table 8.1) gives an overview of the main outcomes of the activities related to the pledge and national commitment in Malta against the four EAFA priority areas.

¹⁴ <https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/default.aspx>

Table 8.1 Main outcomes of pledge and national commitment against EAFA priorities

EAFA priority	Commitment (MCAST) objectives	Outcomes	Pledge (MUT)	Outcomes
Quality	<p>MCAST commits to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus the reform of apprenticeship in a manner that brings apprenticeship training to the core of local industry; Root the reform in collaborative practice between MCAST and local industry which provides apprentices with high-quality underpinning knowledge indispensable for the growth of the local industry and economy Increase the exposure of apprentices in industry through a multidisciplinary approach in which companies benefit from apprentices engaging in training courses not traditionally offered through apprenticeship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major efforts were undertaken to carry out a thorough review of the apprenticeship system which led to suggestions for the reform. A stakeholder committee including LM actors was involved in the review, and hence worked to decide on a system that responds to the needs of the industry. For the administration of the places, a new department at MCAST was installed, which liaises directly with employers. 	<p>MUT pledges to promote the following quality criteria among VET teachers and trainers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure quality apprenticeship places in the enterprises; To ensure a safe working environment during apprenticeship since such students may be more vulnerable or more subject to accident or ill health; To improve quality teaching in VET. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with the pledge holder MUT, the role of teachers and trainers was clarified and strengthened. Moreover, to underpin the reform, a new draft legislation is under way which clarifies questions with relation to apprenticeship contracts and ensures that apprentices benefit from the same rights in relation to social security and injury at the workplace as other employees.
Supply	<p>Increase the number of vocational pathways offered on apprenticeship while also increasing the quality of work-based training and learning through formal accreditation of work-based modules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCAST has significantly increased the number of qualifications that are on offer as apprenticeships. In the academic year 2016/2017, there were 50 programmes on offer (5 times more than two years earlier). All apprenticeship programmes are part of accredited training programmes either at MQF level 3 or at MQF level 4. 	<p>Supply is not an objective of the pledge</p>	<p>n/a</p>

EAfA priority	Commitment (MCAST) objectives	Outcomes	Pledge (MUT)	Outcomes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of apprentices doubled each year since the academic year 2014 (when the reform started). 		
Awareness	Base the reform on greater collaboration with both local and international stakeholders which have impact on education and the economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and reform were carried out as a collaborative exercise, all relevant national stakeholders were involved. Cedefop, as an external stakeholder, invested in the review and reform in Malta. Labour law prevents a structural involvement of LM actors. However, awareness was raised and collaboration was structured and clarified. Dialogue will be continued. 	MUT will raise awareness about the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and campaign to work towards more quality, accessible and fair apprenticeships in Malta. MUT is also supporting ETUCE and other European teacher trade unions' actions to improve apprenticeship. MUT will raise awareness about the initiative and will disseminate the Joint declaration of the European Alliance for Apprenticeship among its members through their communication channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MUT has participated closely in the process of review and reform of the system. MUT has also communicated the changes in the role of teachers and trainers to their members, who accepted the enhanced responsibility, as it enhances clarity and improves quality.
Mobility	Mobility is not an objective of the commitment.	n/a	Mobility is not an objective of the pledge.	n/a

ANNEXES

Annex 1 Interview list

- Therese Camilleri, Apprenticeship coordinator, MCAST, 29 September 2016
- Kevin Bonello, MUT, 12 December 2016
- Jonathan Ferrito, Apprenticeship Coordinator, Playmobil Malta, 11 January 2017
- Richard Curmi, MCAST, 18 January 2017

Annex 2 References and links to further information

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