

Mobility of Apprentices in Europe, 21–22 March 2019

A contribution to youth employment and competitiveness of businesses

The two-day event explored ways to promote and support the long-term mobility of apprentices across Europe. It brought together more than 180 participants from various stakeholder groups, such as Erasmus+ national agencies, representatives from the European Parliament pilot project on long-term mobility for apprentices, members of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), the European Apprentices Network, other youth representatives as well as European and national policy makers. Co-organised by the European Commission and the European Parliament, and opened by Jean Arthuis, Member of the European Parliament, and Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, the event provided an opportunity to share experiences and develop recommendations for the mobility of apprentices in Europe.

APPRENTICE MOBILITY: A SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS

Mobility is important as apprentices gain independence, learn new skills (particularly soft skills), foreign language skills through international work experience. The companies involved also benefit, as cultural exchange fosters creativity, reinforces the companies' skills base and attracts international talent. However, figures from the Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation indicate that relatively few apprentices have taken up apprenticeships in other Member States. In most cases, their cross-border mobility experience is limited to a period shorter than 3 months, while less than 1 % of apprentices spend more than 6 months abroad. The Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation illustrates that more than 90 % of apprentices are satisfied with their learning mobility

"To truly make VET a first choice, VET learners should have the same mobility opportunities as other students. That's why I'm particularly happy about ErasmusPRO, which will allow more and longer mobility opportunities for VET learners."
Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility



abroad. The event was an opportunity for learners to exchange their experiences and views with the audience and also during a joint meeting of apprentices.

"Mobility experiences give such a strong sense of European identity and the understanding of cultures and contributes to society as a whole"
Alina Gebhart, Apprentice

PILOT PROJECT ON LONG-TERM MOBILITY

The conference discussed the pilot project, launched by the European Parliament, to make long-term transnational mobility easier for apprentices. The project will identify obstacles preventing apprentices from carrying out longer-term work placements abroad. It will also help developing tools and the infrastructure to support stakeholders in putting in place longer-term mobility schemes (6–12 months). The project has a budget of EUR 4 million and will end in September 2019.





European
Commission

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

With a proposed budget of EUR 30 billion, the next Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027) will increase cross-border mobility opportunities for VET. By tripling the current figures, it would lead to opportunities abroad for up to 2 million learners and staff in VET. One of the programme's priorities will be to support the long-term mobility opportunities (3–12 months) for VET learners. It will build on the experience acquired through the ErasmusPRO initiative, launched in 2016, as well as on the lessons learnt from the European Parliament pilot project. By 2020 ErasmusPRO will have helped to provide long-term mobility experiences for some 50 000 apprentices. The next Erasmus+ programme emphasises the promotion and quality of VET through the development of international networks and partnerships among education and training organisations. In this context, transnational platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence will bring together VET providers, authorities, companies, social partners and other stakeholders. They will contribute to the design of vocational programmes and qualifications with a strong element of mobility experience abroad.

Participants indicated a number of challenges and recommendations:

Challenges

-  No single European model of apprenticeships
-  Uncertainty about the recognition of mobility as part of the qualifications
-  Existing language barriers and online courses not suited to the needs of apprentices
-  Practical insurance issues
-  Excessive paperwork
-  Companies' lack of awareness regarding sending and hosting apprentices
-  Gaps in information provided to apprentices (conditions, accommodation, regulations and models, national contact points in the host country, etc.)
-  VET seen as a second choice

Policy recommendations

-  Develop a system to recognise competences and skills acquired abroad
-  Provide effective language support, tailored to apprentices' needs
-  Develop a European-wide insurance scheme for apprentices
-  Simplify and harmonise the administrative processes
-  Invest more in communicating the benefits to companies of apprentice mobility, and develop guidance presenting the benefit of participating in mobility schemes
-  Develop a checklist to ensure apprentices, schools and intermediaries are aware of all practical and legal aspects concerning their mobility scheme
-  Develop a database of facilitators and VET schools

THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

The event was an opportunity to welcome new members of the Alliance (pictured, right). The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAFA) unites governments and key stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the quality, supply, and image of apprenticeships as well as mobility of apprentices across Europe. To date, 290 pledges have been submitted to the Alliance (and around one third of the pledges focus on mobility). EAFA members benefit from the Apprenticeship Support Services, which offer online resources and networking opportunities to connect, learn and act.

[Find out more!](#)



RESOURCES, SOCIAL MEDIA & FURTHER NEWS

[Webstream](#)
Social Media Links (to be added)
[#ApprenEU](#)



Mobility of Apprentices in Europe: A contribution to youth employment and competitiveness of businesses

European Parliament, PHS room 5.B1

Meeting report

21-22 March 2019

Mobility of Apprentices in Europe: A contribution to youth employment and competitiveness of businesses, 21–22 March 2019

On 21-22 March, the European Commission and European Parliament co-organised a two-day event, which brought together 180 participants from across the EU to exchange best practices and explore ways to support, promote and contribute to the long-term mobility of apprentices across Europe ([see Agenda](#)).

The meeting was [webstreamed](#) and promoted on social media using the hashtag [#ApprenEU](#). All presentations from the first day are available [here](#) and those from the second day are available [here](#).

DAY 1 – 21 March 2019

1.0 Introduction and welcome

Jean Arthuis, MEP, opened the conference by stressing the importance of boosting the mobility of apprentices within the EU's socio-political and economic context. He described the developments in vocational education and training (VET) policies since his proposal in 2015 for a pilot project to test the viability of setting up a European framework for long-term mobility of apprentices.

Martina Dlabajova, MEP and former rapporteur of the Report on The New Skills Agenda for Europe (2017), and **Catherine Fabre, Member of the French National Assembly**, welcomed the work done in collaboration with the European Commission to date and encouraged stakeholders' feedback on the barriers and recommendations to enable the long-term mobility of apprentices in Europe.

Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, concluded the introductory session by [describing the key policy measures](#) needed to make VET a first choice in Europe.

2.0 Long-term transnational mobility of apprentices: the European Parliament pilot project and the way forward

Jean Arthuis, MEP, facilitated the first session, which focused on the pilot project on the long-term mobility of apprentices launched by the European Parliament and implemented by the European Commission.

A short video was shown on the mobility of apprentices. The video was created by EuroApp, a consortium that benefited from financing in the context of the pilot project. **Stefaan Ceuppens, Policy Officer at DG EMPL**, explained that the Commission launched two calls for proposals, in 2016 and 2017, and selected 9 projects, which received financial support of almost EUR 4 million. These projects aim to identify obstacles preventing apprentices from carrying out long-term work placements abroad, identify and disseminate good practices and help create tools to support stakeholders in developing long-term mobility schemes, have inspired policy measures such as ErasmusPRO and will hopefully also inspire reforms at national level.

The promoters of the projects presented the outcomes of their exchanges held during a morning workshop. The spokespersons from different Member States (Croatia, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Spain) presented the barriers concerning mobility programmes for VET learners in Europe and policy recommendations to overcome such obstacles. Four apprentices also described their mobility experiences, both the important benefits gained and the obstacles they

encountered, as well as providing some recommendations for improving the experience for future mobile apprentices.

There was then an exchange of views between project promoters and policy makers, followed by a short Q&A session. The panel discussed the obstacles encountered in the implementation of mobility programmes for apprentices in different Member States. Among their recommendations, they emphasised the need for awareness raising campaigns targeted at companies, a simplification of administrative processes, increased linguistic support, an EU-wide insurance scheme, increased funding for the preparation phase, and the creation of stronger networks among stakeholders working in the field.

The speakers on the panel included:

- **Vanessa Duval, Head of the International Department of Les Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France**
 - **Tommi Raivio, Project Manager, CSR Europe**
 - **Iwona von Polentz, Managing Director, Gesellschaft fur Europabildung**
 - **Klaus Fahle, Director, Federal Institute for VET, Germany**
 - **Mika Saarinen, Counsellor of Education and Head of Section, Finnish National Agency for Education**
- Patrick Toulmet, Interministerial Delegate for Education, France**

3.0 Erasmus+: the next generation of the European mobility programme

This session was facilitated by **Joao Santos, Deputy Head of Unit, DG EMPL, European Commission.**

Ramona Carmen David Craescu, Expert at Cedefop, presented the findings of an ongoing study consisting of a cross-nation overview of apprenticeship schemes in European countries.¹ The study has helped shape the European database on apprenticeship schemes. The [database](#) is currently being revised and updated.

There was then an exchange of views with representatives from the **European Apprentices Network, the EuroApprentices Network** and the **Erasmus Student Network**. Together, they provided the learners' perspective highlighting the benefits of cross-border mobility as well as the key challenges that apprentices still face when going abroad.

Table 1: Challenges and policy recommendations identified during the event

Challenges	Policy recommendations
⚠ No single European model of apprenticeships	✔ Develop a system to recognise competences and skills acquired abroad
⚠ Uncertainty about the recognition of mobility as part of the qualifications	✔ Provide effective language support, tailored to apprentices' needs
⚠ Existing language barriers and online courses not suited to the needs of apprentices	✔ Develop a European-wide insurance scheme for apprentices
⚠ Practical insurance issues	✔ Simplify and harmonise the administrative processes
⚠ Excessive paperwork	✔ Invest more in communicating the benefits to companies of apprentice mobility, and develop guidance presenting the benefit of participating in mobility schemes
⚠ Companies' lack of awareness regarding sending and hosting apprentices	✔ Develop a checklist to ensure apprentices, schools and intermediaries are aware of all practical and legal aspects concerning their mobility scheme
⚠ Gaps in information provided to apprentices (conditions, accommodation, regulations and models, national contact points in the host country, etc.)	✔ Develop a database of facilitators and VET schools
⚠ VET seen as a second choice	

¹ See [Apprenticeship schemes in European countries: A Cross-Nation Overview](#)

Setting the scene – Policy drives

Michael Teutsch, Head of Unit, DG EAC, opened the session by presenting the findings from the 2017 mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+. Figures indicate that relatively few apprentices have taken up long-term apprenticeships in other Member States. In most cases, their cross-border mobility experience is limited to a period shorter than 3 months, while less than 1 % of apprentices spend more than 6 months abroad. The Erasmus+ mid-term evaluation illustrates that more than 90 % of apprentices are satisfied with their mobility learning schemes abroad.

Dana-Carmen Bachmann, Head of Unit, DG EMPL, then presented ErasmusPRO, the Commission's new initiative aimed at increasing the average duration of apprenticeship mobility schemes. **Stephanie Oberheidt, Lead Managing Consultant for education and training at ICF**, presented an ICF study on VET mobility in Europe commissioned by DG EMPL. The study aims to strengthen the knowledge base on existing VET mobility initiatives in the form of non-Erasmus+ funded schemes across 33 Erasmus+ countries.

Closing the session, **Claire Morel, Head of Unit, DG EAC**, presented the new pilot project on VET international mobility which was launched in February 2019. The [new initiative](#) will enable VET providers in the EU to set up student and staff exchange programmes with providers in the Western Balkans, Turkey and Africa.

The presentations were followed by a short Q&A session.

The next generation of the European mobility programme

With a proposed budget of EUR 30 billion, the next Erasmus+ programme (2021–2027) will increase cross-border mobility opportunities for VET. By tripling the current figures, it will create opportunities abroad for up to 2 million learners and staff in VET. One of the programme's priorities will be to support long-term mobility opportunities (3–12 months) for VET learners. It will build on the experience acquired through the ErasmusPRO initiative, launched in 2016, as well as on the lessons learnt from the European Parliament pilot project. By 2020, ErasmusPRO will have helped to provide long-term mobility experiences for some 50 000 apprentices. The next Erasmus+ programme emphasises the need to promote VET through the development of international networks and partnerships among education and training organisations. In this context, the Centres of Vocational Excellence, acting as transnational platforms, will bring together VET providers, authorities, companies, social partners and other stakeholders. They will contribute to the design of vocational programmes and qualifications with a strong emphasis on promoting the experience gained abroad.

Panel discussion on quality mobility of apprenticeships

The panel discussed the quality of mobility of apprenticeships through different stakeholder perspectives. The panel was composed of the following representatives:

- **Sofia Fernandes, Senior Research Fellow at the Jacques Delors Institute**, presented the European dimension of apprenticeship mobility – the ErasmusPRO initiative.
- **Mika Saarinen, Counsellor of Education and Head of Section at the Finnish National Agency for Education**, addressed international mobility as a strategic priority for VET modernisation.
- **Lars Moller Bentsen, Special Consultant/International Adviser of International Education Programmes at the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science**, provided an overview of the Danish Praktik I

Udlandet (PIU) Programme (*practical training abroad for apprentices programme*).

Hugues Pouzin, President of NETINVET, provided an overview of transnational sectoral cooperation in the accreditation of mobility schemes.

4.0 Final statements

Viviane Hoffman, Deputy Director-General, DG EAC, and **Joost Korte, Director-General, DG EMPL**, closed the first day of the event by emphasising the need to set higher ambitions towards a higher quantity and quality of apprenticeships as well as towards the global mobility of VET staff, learners and adults. "*The political objective is to make VET more accessible and more inclusive, and to become a driving actor for European values*" (Viviane Hoffman, Deputy Director-General, DG EAC).

DAY 2 – 22 March 2019

5.0 The European Alliance for Apprenticeships and its contribution to the mobility of apprentices

The second day was facilitated by **Norbert Schöbel, Team Leader at DG EMPL**. The day was organised around two panel discussions which brought together different members of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) who shared their experiences and perspectives on the promotion of the long-term mobility of apprentices. **Dana-Carmen Bachmann, Head of Unit at DG EMPL**, also presented EAfA's aims and objectives of the EAfA together with the findings of a recent survey conducted among the members of the Alliance.

The first panel discussion explored some of the initiatives carried out by the EAfA members in relation to cross-border mobility in Germany, Albania, and Italy. The panel also discussed the important role played by parents and families in steering educational choices and potential initiatives to involve them in the promotion of VET. The panel was composed of the following EAfA members:

- **Gertrud Hirtreiter, Head of Unit of Vocational Education and Training, German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses (ZDH)**
- **Ana Zacharian, CEO, Albanian Skills**
- **Francesca Drago, Responsible for Mobility Projects, Scuola Centrale Formazione**
- **Arja Krauchenberg, President, European Parents' Association**

Following the panel discussion, the **European Apprentices Network (EAN)** staged a role-play to present administrative challenges that apprentices face when living and working abroad. This engaging performance highlighted a number of key recommendations to improve access to long-term cross-country mobility in apprenticeships.

The second panel discussion explored ways to promote the mobility of apprentices in the future and the potential role of the EAfA. The speakers provided recommendations to reduce the obstacles to the long-term mobility of apprentices such as improving communication between educational institutions and the business sector, promoting the involvement of additional national stakeholders, and focusing on enhancing the quality of the apprenticeships. The panel was composed of the following EAfA members:

- **Daniel Wisniewski, General Secretary, European Federation of Education Employers**

- **Ana Stojanovic, Head of Department, Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry**
 - **Andrea Lombardi, CEO, Uniser**
- Angeliki Filippidou, Principal 2nd VET School of Thessaloniki, Greek Manpower Employments Organisation (OAED)**

6.0 EAfA newcomer closing ceremony

The two-day conference ended with the EAfA newcomer ceremony, which welcomed the following new EAfA members:

- **DM drogerie markt**
- **Espace Formation PME (efp)**
- **Fundatia Ecologica Green (F.E.G.)**
- **Asociación Mundus**
- **StartNet**
- **Cosvitec S.C. a R.L.**
- **Confindustria**
- **IPC - Association Connecting Electronics Industries**
- **PostEurop**

