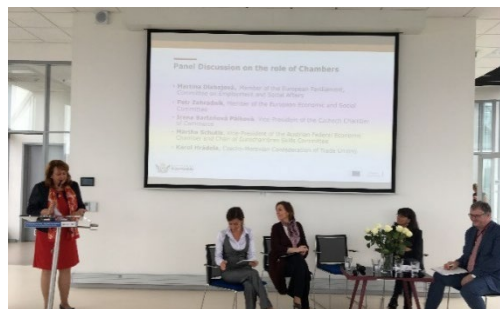


From School to Work – the Role of Chambers

A joint European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and Czech Chamber of Commerce event, 20 – 21 May 2019

The two-day event discussed how apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning are key in closing the skills gaps currently affecting the European labour market, with particular emphasis put on the role of chambers in the transition from school to work. Around 80 people from the Czech Republic and across Europe (representing governments, social partners, VET providers, chambers, businesses and other types of stakeholders) gathered in Prague and Mladá Boleslav to learn about best practices in the design and promotion of apprenticeships. The event represented an opportunity for dialogue between policymakers and other stakeholders. This included direct beneficiaries, and companies and apprentices from the Czech Republic and across Europe.



Panel discussion at the CIIRC on the role of the Chambers

"Digitalisation and robotisation are changing the way we work; our people need skills to get jobs, our companies need skilled staff to remain competitive."

Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

WELCOME FOR NEW EAFA MEMBERS

The event was also an opportunity to welcome new members to the Alliance. To date, about 300 pledges have been submitted to the Alliance. EAfA members benefit from Apprenticeship Support Services (AppSS) that offer online resources and networking opportunities, allowing them to connect, learn and act. Find out more [here](#).



New EAfA members welcome ceremony

THE RIGHT SKILLS FOR THE RIGHT COMPANY: THE ROLE OF CHAMBERS

The event was opened at the Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics (CIIRC). The introductory session included speeches by the Director of CIIRC, the President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce, policymakers from the Czech Republic and the European Commission. Innovation, digitalisation and robotisation are changing the way that businesses work, requiring new types of skills, and continuous training and skills upgrades. As a result, pressure is being put on the labour market. Around 40 % of employers do not find the right skillsets to fill their vacancies, whilst higher education graduates often experience difficulties in finding a job that matches their qualifications. This mismatch between offer and demand is detrimental to businesses, job seekers, the economy, and to society in general.

For the VET system to be able to anticipate market demand there is a requirement for strong dialogue between relevant stakeholders, such as VET providers, businesses and social partners.

A panel discussion on the role of chambers highlighted that due to their understanding of the market employers' present and future skills needs the chambers of commerce can play an important role in shaping VET curricula. The Czech Chamber of Commerce, for example, liaise directly with VET providers and schools to develop curricula adapted to the needs of companies; particularly those working in innovative sectors such as drones and aviation, cyber-security, virtual reality, smart homes and domotics.



European
Commission

FUTURISTIC WORKSHOPS AT SMÍCHOV HIGH SCHOOL

The Industrial and IT High School Smíchov hosted three workshops, presenting their innovative curricula and the types of skills that the students can learn.

Virtual reality

Apprentices at the school are involved in the development of software and video games based on virtual reality.

Headsets and controllers are used to navigate virtual space.



Cyber security

Digital security is of major concern in the world today. Apprentices at the Industrial and IT High School Smíchov learn key skills linked to cyber security, programming and coding.

Cyber-attack simulations are conducted, preparing the apprentices to answers threats in real time.

Smart houses and cities

Virtual assistants, smart lighting and smart heating promise to change the way we live. Harnessing the power of this technology requires special skills that apprentices are learning in the field. Within the school itself, they are equipping a real apartment with smart tech.

THE ŠKODA ACADEMY – AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Recognising the importance of apprenticeships and other forms of work based learning, and with a strong belief in passing down knowledge through generations, ŠKODA developed an in-company Academy to train their new technicians. The Academy is responsible for the development of skills and competences for ŠKODA AUTO employees. It includes a vocational school of mechanical engineering, with elements of dual education, connecting theory and practice. It provides apprentices with

access to 180 workplaces where they can learn their craft and test innovative

technologies. Mobility schemes are also in place, allowing apprentices to experience both short and long periods abroad at other ŠKODA sites. ŠKODA is also engaged in promoting apprenticeships and dual education among pupils and parents. The company invests in visits to schools, events and open days, as well as promoting apprenticeships through social media and advertisements in the press and on television.



Through the Azubi Car project, ŠKODA apprentices have the opportunity to design and build a car prototype testing their skills and exploring their creativity.



EAFa members visiting the ŠKODA Academy in Mladá Boleslav, Czech Republic

#ApprenEU
[Find more information about the event here](#)
[Join our LinkedIn Group](#)

Sign up to receive our quarterly EAFa newsletter here:

- [For EAFa members only](#)
- [For non-EAFa members](#)



From School to Work – the Role of Chambers: A joint European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and Czech Chamber of Commerce event

*In cooperation with ŠKODA Auto and the Czech
Institute of Informatics, Robotics and
Cybernetics*

Meeting report

20-21 May 2019

From School to Work – the Role of Chambers:

A joint European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA) and Czech Chamber of Commerce event

The event 'From School to Work – the Role of Chambers', organised by the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EaFA) in collaboration with the Czech Chamber of Commerce, took place in Prague and Mladá Boleslav on 20-21 May 2019. The conference discussed the role of chambers in supporting apprenticeships and the transition from school to work. Around 80 delegates participated in the event, including Czech and European policymakers, young apprentices, representatives from education institutions and businesses in the Czech Republic and members of the EaFA from across Europe. The two-day event was hosted at different venues, including site visits and workshops at the Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics (CIIRC), the Industrial and IT High School Smíchov and the ŠKODA Academy.

The meeting was broadcasted online through different social media channels and promoted through the hashtag [#ApprenEU](#). The presentations and the pictures from the event are available [here](#).

DAY 1 – 20 May 2019

1.0 Introduction and welcome

The event was opened at the CIIRC and moderated by **Michala Hergetová, Newscaster at Czech Television**. Next, **Vladimír Mařík, Scientific Director of CIIRC**, extended a warm welcome from the CIIRC to all participants.

In his opening speech, **Vladimír Dlouhý, President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce**, reiterated the engagement of the chamber toward the introduction of a dual educational system in the Czech Republic. To this end, the chamber is developing strategies to better address future skills needs, taking inspiration from existing models in other Member States such as Austria, Germany and Slovakia. The decision to join the EaFA in 2018 confirms the Czech Chamber of Commerce's commitment towards this change.

In a [video message](#) **Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility** highlighted the crucial role of chambers in delivering quality apprenticeships, identifying future skills needs, and as intermediaries between learners and companies. At the moment, 30 % of higher education graduates are working in jobs which do not need a university qualification while at the same time, 40 % of employers cannot find people with the right skills to fill their vacancies¹. The Commissioner emphasised that addressing skills mismatches is of paramount importance. **Norbert Schöbel, Team Leader, European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**, outlined the aims of the meeting: to discuss the role of chambers and to learn from the Czech experiences, emphasising the importance of building bridges between school and work.

Karel Havlíček, Minister of Industry and Trade, and **Jindřich Fryč, State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**, outlined the Czech Republic's

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1146>

commitment to creating the right environment for the transition from an industrial to a technologically and digitally-ready society, highlighting a strong interdisciplinary cooperation between the ministries, social and industrial partners, and academia.

2.0 Panel discussion on the role of chambers

Opening the session, the moderator invited the speakers to give brief introductory remarks.

Martina Dlabajová, Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, stressed the need for a stronger dialogue between employers, educators and policymakers to address the existing skills mismatch. In the Czech Republic, although 75 % of companies are involved in school initiatives, 62 % of companies believe that the current education system does not reflect the needs of the labour market. This highlights the need for a closer involvement of businesses and employers at the management level.

Taking the Czech Republic as an example, **Petr Zahradník, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee**, indicated three areas where chambers can play a key role. Firstly, as the voice of businesses, chambers can support the government to address the skills needs of Industry 4.0. Second, chambers can support a change in mind-set among companies, students and families, towards the recognition of VET as an economically viable path for companies and leading to interesting job opportunities for the learners. Finally, chambers can support the development of sustainable life-long learning models through a modernised business style that can help forge innovation ecosystems.

Irena Bartoňová Pálková, Vice-President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce, emphasised the need for the inclusion of work-based learning in curricula, coupled with 21st century skills and competences to match skills shortages in the Czech Republic. Reiterating previous speakers' remarks, she stressed the need for stronger partnerships among stakeholders.

Martha Schultz, Vice-President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and Chair of Eurochambres Skills Committee, outlined the benefits of building a stronger network of chambers at the European level to support skills forecasting at the national level. She mentioned the Excelsior tool developed by Italian chambers that provides an outlook of labour demands in the country. However, she warned, having data at the national level is not sufficient, and in order to be truly effective, it is important to have comparable data across the EU. This data would help to upgrade the education curricula. Having this knowledge of the market and of future labour needs, chambers can provide support to young people through guidance and career development support, playing an intermediary function in the transition from education to work.

The **Q&A** session addressed issues such as the importance to build on existing good practices, e.g. through the implementation of European pilot projects at the national level, the need for stronger collaboration between stakeholders to break the silos between education and employment in the political debate, and the need for training people to increase the quality of VET and apprenticeships' attractiveness.

3.0 Best practices from schools and businesses in the Czech Republic

The session brought together different representatives from schools and businesses to discuss best practice examples in dual education in the Czech Republic:

- **Michael Kalista, student, Industrial and IT High School Smíchov, Prague**

The school promotes work-based learning by involving students in the management of their learning process. On top of developing key technical skills, students manage their own projects through the different existing partnerships between the school and companies like Microsoft and CISCO, amongst other.

- **Jiří Karpeta, Director, Robodrone**

Robodrone offers students the opportunity to develop technical skills in the field of unmanned aerial systems. Students are involved in all stages of the product development and exposure to the work environment allows them to acquire the soft skills and work attitude needed in their future workplace.

- **Lenka Lhotská, Professor, Czech Technical University in Prague**

The university runs different initiatives in collaboration with the Czech Chamber of Commerce, giving students a combination of theory and work-based learning. These include career development activities such as 'Children's University' summer camps aiding the transition between secondary and higher education, and summer internship experiences offering students work experience abroad.

- **Marek Ondroušek, Association for Virtual and Augmented Reality company (AVRAR)**

The company hosts a range of interactive seminars where students are able to learn about virtual reality's potential in different real-life applications. In addition, the company organises festivals to stimulate interest among students in this technology and VET paths.

During the panel discussion and **Q&A** session, participants mentioned that existing administrative requirements can slow down or hinder the curricula update. Considering how fast technology changes and the implication on the required skills, it is important to ensure that the existing legal framework allows stakeholders to promptly respond to these changes. In addition, it was mentioned that strong leadership based on innovation can create the right vision to incorporate work-based learning into standard teaching methods. For this transition to work, it is vital to build partnerships with employers to design programmes adapted to the skills needs of the industry.

4.0 The EAfA and newcomers

Norbert Schöbel, Team Leader, European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, presented the latest news concerning the EAfA and its upcoming activities. Three new members were welcomed into the EAfA:

- **Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)**, received by James Eustace, Apprenticeship Manager
- **Innovation Centre for Vocational Training of Aragon (CIFPA)**, received by Benjamín Luengo Torreblanca, Entrepreneurship Advisor
- **Community of Madrid**, received by Guillermo Gonzalez, Head of Co-Financed Learnings

5.0 The European Apprentices Network: state of play

Closing the morning's discussions, **Leonardo Miodrag, Representative of the European Apprentices Network (EAN)**, presented an overview of the EAN's latest developments. The EAN will soon launch an EU-wide questionnaire aiming to understand the state of play of apprenticeships in Europe. The questionnaire will be part of an EU-wide campaign – #AskTheApprentices – and will be promoted through a dedicated website (www.asktheapprentices.eu). The EAN will present the results of the survey and further developments during the 2019 European Vocational Skills Week meeting. The EAN also had an internal meeting in the framework of this event.

6.0 Site visits

During the afternoon, participants visited the CIIRC Testbed and also a high school:

1. CIIRC Testbed for Industry 4.0

The CIIRC, founded in 2013, is a university institute of the Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU) integrating cybernetic research and education, and supporting the transfer of know-how to the industry. The first extensive Testbed for Industry 4.0 is being developed at the centre, which will make it possible to pilot new solutions for smart factories through the combination of different technologies (such as manufacturing, robotic manipulation, collaborative robots, automated warehousing and more). The development of the Testbed for Industry 4.0 is supported by the national academic Board of Society 4.0, which aims to bring digital innovation to the education system in the wake of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

2. Industrial and IT High School Smíchov

Participants were welcomed to the Smíchov secondary technical school (SPSS) by **Radko Sáblík, Director of SPSS, Prague** and **Adam Skokan**, a student of the school. The SPSS prepares students for further study (for example, at a technical lyceum) or work in information technology. The school is home to more than 600 students and is among the top eight schools in the Czech Republic, with a 95.2 % success rate. Students are involved in national and international projects with other schools and companies; in this way, learners are not only trained to solve complex problems related to typical business activities, but also to develop other skills such as autonomy, creativity and entrepreneurship.

Following a presentation from the school, students hosted three workshops, giving participants the opportunity to experience the applications of its more innovative technology:

- **Workshop 1: Cybernetic polygon**

The cybersecurity programme was launched two years ago, and the SPSS is the only school in the country to teach this programme, which is being developed as a four-year course together with leading companies in the field. Apprentices learn about cyber security and have the chance to test their skills through cyber-attack simulations and pilot training.

- **Workshop 2: Virtual Reality Lab**

The programme teaches apprentices the technical skills required to work with virtual reality technology. As part of their training, they are currently developing educational software and video games exploiting the potential of virtual reality.

- **Workshop 3: Internet of Things Laboratory**

The programme teaches apprentices about the latest smart technology to transform houses and cities. Students enrolled in this programme are building a real smart house equipped with temperature and humidity sensors and smart lighting.

DAY 2 – 21 May 2019

The second day gathered participants at the ŠKODA AUTO in the city of Mladá Boleslav. The site visit offered participants the opportunity to hear from ŠKODA managers and learn about best practices in dual education developed by ŠKODA in collaboration with regional authorities.

1.0 Introduction and Welcome

Irena Bartoňová Pálková, Vice-President, Czech Chamber of Commerce, opened the second day of the event, followed by **Carsten Brandes, Head of ŠKODA Academy**, who extended a warm welcome to all participants.

There were introductory remarks from the following speakers:

- **Martin Herman, Deputy of the Central Bohemian Region**
- **Petr Bannert, Director, Vocational and Further Education section, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports**
- **Eduard Muříčský, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade**
- **Manuela Geleng, Director, European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**

The speakers highlighted the strong political commitment of the Czech Republic towards the promotion of apprenticeships, as demonstrated by their commitment to the EAfA since 2013. To this end, partnerships are established at different levels. In the Czech Republic, chambers are seen as a driver of innovation for the development of more technologically advanced and work-based education systems, able to respond to the demands of the 21st century. The European Commission further highlighted the importance of the EAfA in providing a support framework for social partners at the European level.

2.0 EAfA newcomers

Norbert Schöbel, Team Leader, and **Manuela Geleng, Director, European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**, welcomed another new EAfA member:

- **ŠKODA AUTO a.s., The Vocational School of Mechanical Engineering** – Carsten Brandes, Head of SKDA Academy

The event was also an opportunity to engage more Czech organisations to join the EAfA. The Central Bohemian Region was one of these organisations.

3.0 The ŠKODA Academy and site visit

The ŠKODA Academy was presented by the following speakers:

- **Carsten Brandes, Head of ŠKODA Academy**

- **Bohdan Wojnar, Member of the Board of Management for Human Resources Management, ŠKODA Auto**
- **Pavla Kavulokova, Marketing Specialist, ŠKODA Academy**

The ŠKODA Academy, founded in 2000, is the only company university in Czech Republic offering secondary vocational education in engineering. Recognising the importance of apprenticeships and practice-based learning, in 2013, ŠKODA AUTO developed an in-company academy to train their new technicians.

The academy offers technical training with elements of dual education, connecting theory and practice. It provides apprentices with access to 180 workplaces to learn their craft and test innovative technologies. Mobility schemes are also in place to allow apprentices to experience short or long periods abroad in ŠKODA's other sites. Furthermore, ŠKODA is engaged in promoting apprenticeships and dual education among pupils and parents. The company invests in visits to schools, events and open days. It also promotes apprenticeships through social media and advertisements in the press and on television. The academy values the development of entrepreneurship competences in its apprentices and encourages them to get involved in the management of the school, for example, by contributing to its marketing strategy. In addition, ŠKODA AUTO run every year the Azubi Car project enabling apprentices to design and build a car prototype. Through participation in this project, the apprentices develop key technical, entrepreneurial and project management skills.

The two-day conference ended with a site visit where apprentices at the academy gave the participants a tour of the ŠKODA premises.

