

High-level expert discussion on the renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) – High-Level Expert Live Discussion

15 July 2020 online event

The High-Level Expert Live Discussion event took place on 15 July 2020, symbolically on the World Youth Skills Day. Hosted by **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, the event marked the launch of a renewed Alliance to drive forward apprenticeships in Europe. The online event was moderated by **Andrew McCoshan**. A diverse panel of high-level speakers commented on what the renewed EAfA means through different perspectives.

A renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Nicolas Schmit opened the event stressing the strategic importance of equipping people with skills adapted to a new economic context deeply impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. He presented how the renewed Alliance for Apprenticeships, announced in the Commission's Youth Employment Support package of 1 July 2020, marks an important step in this direction. Making it fit current labour market trends, the renewed EAfA calls for new commitments related to digital and green apprenticeships, focusing on the economic sectors that will be at the forefront of the transition to a climate-neutral Europe. The Alliance will also continue to address important horizontal issues such as gender equality and social inclusion in apprenticeships and the internationalisation of vocational education and training (VET). Closing his speech, the Commissioner encouraged members to continue their work through renewed pledges addressing these issues and extended a special welcome to new members.



"Sustainable investment in the future of the next generation of apprentices for the social cohesion of our societies and in the competitiveness of our Union within the green and digital transitions." –
Nicolas Schmit,
European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Welcoming the Commission's proposal, **Anja Karliczek**, Federal Minister for Education and Research, Germany, and **Hubertus Heil**, Federal Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Germany, emphasised the commitment of the current German Council Presidency in this area. The German Presidency will address education and training as a key labour market policy response in a context of digital and environmental structural changes. The ministers particularly highlighted the role of VET to prepare the workforces of the future, stressing the need to expand the availability of digital education and training in order to make VET more accessible and widespread.

The renewed EAfA's six priorities

By bringing together governments, social partners, businesses, chambers, regions, youth organisations, vocational education and training (VET) providers and think tanks, the renewed EAfA will unlock decisive actions by all actors. In particular, it will involve:

-  Encouraging commitment among Member States and companies to quality and effective apprenticeships, by fostering national apprenticeship coalitions;
-  Supporting the representation of apprentices in the Member States by relaunching the European Apprentices Network.
-  Incentivising support to small and medium-sized enterprises providing a stable supply of quality and effective apprenticeships;
-  Proactively engaging European sectoral social dialogue committees on apprenticeships, with a view to obtaining agreement on joint sectoral pledges;
-  Mobilising local and regional authorities as catalysts for apprenticeships within the local business environment;
-  Strengthening social dialogue through more active involvement by national social partner organisations;

The EAfA and its members

The event was an opportunity to hear the views of different actors. Three panels explored the roles of different stakeholder groups in building quality apprenticeships in Europe. Overall, the speaker's welcomed the European Commission's proposal for a renewed Alliance, which was seen as an additional step towards unleashing the full potential of apprenticeships.



European
Commission

Role of businesses and apprentices

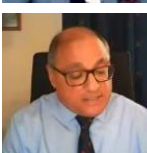
Panelists:

- **Neda Radanović**, CEO, Radanović Construction, member of the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK)
- **Bicca Olin**, Board Member of OBESSU, member of the European Apprentices Network
- **Marco Settembri**, CEO Nestlé Europe, Middle East and North Africa

Opening the session, **Neda Radanović** highlighted the potential to use modern-age digital technologies for practice-based learning in schools. She stated that more partnerships between educators and businesses could ensure the exchange of knowledge and best-practices. In particular, businesses can provide mentorship to develop school curricula that is more practical and better addresses the needs of the labour market. As an apprentice herself, **Bicca Olin** pointed to some of the challenges faced by learners that have been accentuated during the COVID-19 crisis including access to digital tools, especially in vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds. She called for inclusion to remain high on the apprenticeship's agenda. **Marco Settembri** stressed the importance of creating alliances among actors, highlighting the experience of Nestlé in the provision of apprenticeship schemes in Europe through the Alliance for Youth initiative.



Role of regions, chambers and VET providers



Regional authorities, chambers and VET providers are key actors in developing and implementing apprenticeships. **Cristina Grieco** showed how regional authorities coordinate actions at local level by giving an example of an information campaign that promoted the attractiveness of VET in the region. **Aigars Rostovskis** emphasized the importance of work-based learning (WBL) to prepare people for the labour market and discussed the role of the Chambers of Commerce as enablers of more collaborative actions to create opportunities in this area. He also highlighted the need for more investment to address digitalisation and the green agenda. **James Calleja** stressed the need to increase opportunities for all learners and for a stronger focus on inclusion. He also called for more efforts to foster the cross-border mobility of apprentices, making it as seamless as it is for other students. VET providers should continue to be a strong partner in this process.

Panelists

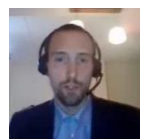
- **Cristina Grieco**, Regional Minister of Education and Training, Tuscany; Vice-President of EARLALL
- **Aigars Rostovskis**, President of the Latvian Chamber of Commerce; Chair, Skills Committee, Eurochambres
- **James Calleja**, President, EFVET

Role of social partners

Panelists

- **Ludovic Voet**, Confederal Secretary, ETUC
- **Maxime Cerutti**, Director of Social Affairs, BusinessEurope
- **Liliane Volozinskis**, Director Social Affairs and Training, SMEUnited

Ludovic Voet highlighted the importance of the European Pillar of Social Rights. He emphasized the need to continue to work on quality apprenticeships as a result of collective bargaining. He also pointed out that apprenticeships are an important tool for adults and help low-qualified people to integrate to the labour market. Moreover, as Maxime Cerutti put it, having the relevant skills is the best social protection for young people. He highlighted the need to make progress on the image of apprenticeships, so that they become more attractive for the employers to invest. Liliane Volozinskis also discussed the role apprenticeships have as a bridge between education and jobs. Social partners will have a key role to play as enablers of the key actions promoted through a renewed alliance. She concluded that policy makers should particularly support SMEs financially and non-financially.



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