

Apprenticeships and the twin green and digital transition: challenges and opportunities ahead

European Alliance for Apprenticeships

9-10 November 2020

On the first two days of the European Skills Week 2020 (EVSU), an online conference discussing green and digital skills in apprenticeships and vocational education and training (VET) took place, organised by the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA). The live-streamed event began with two live discussions, followed by a high-level event the next day that included a welcome from the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, panel discussions on the green and digital transitions and a welcoming session for EAfA newcomers. The two days brought together a record number of over 800 participants from across Europe.

LIVE DISCUSSIONS: SKILLS FOR THE GREEN ECONOMY & DIGITAL SKILLS IN APPRENTICESHIPS

Norbert Schöbel, European Commission, opened the first live discussion by highlighting the importance of the twin ecological and digital transitions as the EU adopts a COVID-19 exit strategy and moves towards a new normal. Norbert stressed the fact that the EAfA is discussing green skills for the first time so that its members can make an important contribution towards a greener European economy and society.

Stelina Chatzichristou, Cedefop, explained that green skills can be divided into two categories: job-specific skills that contribute to the production and operation of the green economy, and transversal skills that raise environmental awareness in society. **Barbara Archesso**, ENAIP NET, highlighted that green skills are acted rather than learnt, that they do not belong to any specific sector and must be mainstreamed through all organisations to shape citizens' behaviour. **Chiara Palazzetti**, FORMA.Azione, shared her experience from the Italian regional SME sector where it is important to have all actors on board when fostering a new mindset on sustainability and environment. **Richard Pond**, European Public Services Union (EPSU), spoke of the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining and highlighted how sectoral consultations and cross-sectorial coordination can serve as platforms for sharing green practices in apprenticeships.



'Thanks to the pledges of companies, and the social partners and organisations involved, we now count over 1 million pledged apprenticeships. It is a milestone, but it is not a mission accomplished. We have to keep working and make sure apprenticeships remain what they truly are – the high road to employment'

Nicolas Schmit,
Commissioner for Jobs and
Social Rights

Starting the second live discussion on digital skills, **Chiara Rioldino**, European Commission, highlighted the urgent need for up- and reskilling created by green and digital transitions. To meet this need and fill skills gaps, VET stakeholders are encouraged to make the most of the unprecedented levels of upcoming EU funding.

Cristina Romero, Inercia Digital, emphasised the value of going beyond curricular and academic criteria in training processes, to focus instead on professional skills that are pragmatic and problem-solving in nature. **Daniel Schrapp**, HessenChemie, shared successful regional digital initiatives and highlighted that digitalisation is not an end but a means to improved learning efficiency. **Safet Getxhaliu**, WB6 CIF, stressed the value of cooperation, dialogue and bringing actors together around digital issues, including data and data protection.

HIGH-LEVEL EVENT ON THE GREEN & DIGITAL TRANSITIONS

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, kicked off day two of the event by congratulating EAfA members and the social partners and organisations involved in reaching 1 million pledged EAfA apprenticeships. The Commissioner reminded the audience that apprenticeships have shaped our common European history, and that they will remain instrumental in the future. The green and digital transitions will have an impact on jobs, and apprentices on the front line will be affected. Continuing to offer quality apprenticeships gives young people strong life prospects and equips the European workforce with the necessary skilled workers of tomorrow.



European
Commission

As the first panellist of the panel discussion on green transitions, **Michel Fitzgerald**, Electricity Supply Board (ESB) Networks, stressed the major opportunities apprentices have in the green transition. To support the green transition, apprenticeships must enable a deepening of broad engineering skills through both the mainstreaming of environmental aspects and a focus on digital technologies. **Alexandre Grillat**, CFE-CGC ENERGIES, underlined the importance of anticipating the up-and reskilling needs and expressed hope that the digital transition would make the energy sector more attractive to young people. **Alfonso Balsamo**, Confindustria, highlighted Italy's structural labour market mismatch and the potential the Italian industry has, due to its large raw materials and electricity sectors, to make a meaningful contribution to the European green transition.

Setting the tone for the second panel discussion on the digital transition, **Matthäus Fandrejewski**, European Apprentices Network, focused on the importance of achieving a green transition that is socially fair, includes young people and ensures access to work and social protection for all. **Attila Szekely**, OpenClassrooms, explained how an all-online training model enables apprentices and companies to start a training programme whenever and wherever they wish, without the need to align with the annual school calendar or to be located in the same geographical area as the company. **Belén Sánchez-Rubio**, Empleando Digital, presented how digital skills can be mainstreamed in existing employment programmes and how vulnerable groups can benefit from courses in basic digital skills involving technologies such as virtual reality. **Markus Bell**, SAP, highlighted how surveying and market research across the IT sector can support apprenticeship providers to better reflect the needs of the labour market in their training.



'We all know that we are living through difficult times – but please – for young people – do everything to keep your VET and apprenticeship programmes alive!'

Matthäus Fandrejewski, European Apprentices Network



'The use of digital technology in apprenticeships can fundamentally change teaching and learning processes and make apprenticeships much more efficient and effective.'

Ashwani Aggarwal, International Labour Organisation

Following the panel discussion, **Ashwani Aggarwal**, International Labour Organisation, introduced an international perspective to the debate. He focused on the current work on global apprenticeship standards within the ILO, the role of the informal economy and the need to reduce the widening digital divide and give countries a tool to keep pace with emerging digital demands.

Norbert Schöbel presented the priorities of the renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships which includes a stronger focus on green and digital apprenticeships, and the [Action Plan 2020-2021](#).

The newcomer session saw 24 new EAfA members welcomed to the 'EAfA family'. Representing the group, three newcomers introduced themselves. **Giorgos Giorgakis**, Eurosuccess consulting, stressed that his company is strongly committed to promoting the mobility of apprentices. **Orhan Yazkhan**, TürkTraktör, presented his automotive industry company's commitment to creating new apprenticeship places in the agricultural machinery sector. **Bernadette Greco**, Department of Labour of Regione Puglia, highlighted that with the support of 'Your first EURES job' initiative, the region is committed to increasing the attractiveness of apprenticeships and mobility. the region's commitment to increasing awareness of apprenticeships among young people and employers. Finally, **Bart Vandewaetere**, Nestlé, a committed EAfA member, stressed the responsibility companies have towards young people. Nestlé and its 300 supply chain business partners of the Alliance for YOUth have offered more than 450 000 first opportunities (jobs and apprenticeships) in the last six years and have pledged to offer 300 000 more by 2025. With the newcomers' pledges and Nestlé's renewed pledge, Alliance members have now pledged to create 1 million apprenticeship places.

Closing the event, **Manuela Geleng**, Director of Skills at DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, thanked the participants and speakers, and reiterated the importance of EAfA reaching the milestone of 1 million pledged apprenticeships. Contributing to making the green and digital transitions fair and inclusive, the Commission has put several initiatives on the table including the Youth Employment Support Initiative, the updated European Skills Agenda and the recently announced Pact for Skills. Participants were reminded of the upcoming events including the webinar 'Role of employer organisations' on 25 November and the '4th benchlearning coordinators' meeting on 26 November. #DiscoverYourTalent #EUVocationalSkills

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