



# Green and digital transition

## The role of regions and cities

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) | 26 January 2021

The European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission's European Alliance of Apprenticeships (EAfA) organised a joint online event, the second in a series of roadmap events leading to a high-level conference on apprenticeships. The event was supported by the German Delegation of the Committee of the Regions, the European Association of Regional & Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL) and the Basque Government. The live-streamed event explored emerging opportunities in relation to apprenticeships for regional and local authorities at a time when the green and digital transitions are accelerating across Europe.

Setting the scene, **Norbert Schöbel**, Team Leader at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, began by reminding the audience of the profound impact the green and digital transitions will have on work, education and the way Europeans live. By 2030, one million jobs are estimated to be created by the decarbonisation process in industries and services. As new jobs emerge and some professions become obsolete, apprenticeships have the potential to reduce the skills gap by equipping individuals with the right skills, including green and digital competences. Regions and cities can become catalysts by anticipating the skills needed and facilitating European cooperation by getting involved in EU-funded projects, monitoring and disseminating information, and contributing expertise.

### GREEN TRANSITION – THE FIRST PANEL DISCUSSION

Opening up the floor, **Anne Karjalainen**, Chair of the SEDEC Commission, Member of Kerava Municipal Council and CoR Rapporteur on “A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions”, highlighted that the green transition should not be a top-down exercise, but instead a multi-level governance endeavour with the full involvement of local and regional authorities. In the coming years, low-skilled and old workers will likely face difficulties in coping with the transitions. European initiatives including the Just Transition Fund, the European Pillar of Social Rights and the new Skills Agenda must ensure that no people and no places are left behind. Well placed to tackle emerging challenges, local and regional authorities are familiar with the realities on the ground as they provide public services and supply for public needs.

**Francesco Pisanu**, Head of the Office for the Evaluation of Educational Policies, Department of Education and Culture, Autonomous Province of Trento, provided an overview of innovative regional green education practices that are firmly rooted in the latest research and contribute to the goals of Agenda 2030. Trento's education model offers schooling that integrates



Education is the most powerful tool to change the world. Today, we must plant the seeds for a sustainable future – it is time to act.

**Mari Jose Barriola**, Head of Unit Biosciences and sustainability, TKNIKA-Basque VET Applied Research Center, Basque Government

education on environmental sustainability by equipping students with skills and tools to become active citizens in a green society. With a focus on non-cognitive skills, known as life skills, students learn to integrate knowledge of science and technology into their daily lives. Empowered by both soft skills and hard knowledge, the schooling supports students in developing social identity, behaviour and civic engagement.

**Rikardo Lamadrid**, Director of Technology and Advanced Learning, Basque Government Regional Education Minister, highlighted how his region placed the green transition at the centre of the Basque VET system, introducing green skills in curricula and accelerating VET projects that have a green perspective and a deep green impact at regional and local levels. **Mari Jose Barriola**, Head of Unit Biosciences and Sustainability, TKNIKA- Basque VET Applied Research Center, (Centres of Vocational Excellence) Basque Government, presented the leading VET centre, TKNIKA, which has achieved outstanding results in developing its three main green modules:

agri-food and the natural and ocean environment, smart building and sustainable construction, and environmental health and sustainable bioscience.

## DIGITAL TRANSITION – THE SECOND PANEL DISCUSSION

Kicking off the second panel discussion, **Emil Boc**, Member of the CoR, Mayor of Cluj-Napoca, CoR Rapporteur on “Achieving the European Education Area by 2025” and former Prime Minister of Romania, stressed how digitalisation represents a revolution in how Europeans live, teach, learn, work and communicate. To stand ready in the digital era, teachers and trainers must be immediately supported in transferring new skills demanded by the labour market and society. Looking ahead, digitalisation holds the potential to become an inclusive process where, for example, generations can come together to learn and strengthen their skills.



Digital literacy is a must, and even more so in the post COVID-19 Europe. All sectors will require some form of digital skills. Inclusion is the solution for the digital gap and the digital divide.

**Emil Boc**, Member of the CoR, Mayor of Cluj-Napoca,  
CoR Rapporteur



**Ralph Burghart**, Mayor for Education, Youth, Social Affairs, Culture and Sport in the city of Chemnitz, presented how the vocational education sector in his city has adopted the national digitalisation strategy DigitalPakt by introducing Vocational Education 4.0 and LernSax which introduce new electronic learning platforms. When launching the new learning framework, a skills gap was identified between teachers who are used to digital technology and those who find the new tools challenging. To reduce the gap, a way forward is to allow all teachers to practice in safe environments where they feel comfortable exploring the advantages of new modes of teaching.

**Päivi Korhonen**, Director of Communication and Marketing at OMNIA, The Joint Authority of Education in the Espoo Region, highlighted how her city Espoo was named the ‘most intelligent community’ by the Intelligence Community Forum (ICF) thanks to its inclusive approach and capacity to engage its citizens in each policy aspect. In particular, inclusion, cooperation and co-creation are keywords in Espoo in relation to education and apprenticeships, where schools work together with companies to combine pedagogical excellence and new technologies. Despite this innovative approach and the generally high up-take of vocational education in Finland, Espoo still has a relatively low number of apprentices, while about 50% of its population have a university degree. The challenge for the city is to further raise awareness about the opportunities of pursuing VET qualifications.

Find more information about the event [here](#)

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