



Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EU) and International Labour Standards on Apprenticeships (ILO) Joint EAfA-ILO High Level Conference

European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the International Labour Organization | 15-16 March 2021

On the three-year anniversary of the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) of the European Commission (EC) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) organised a high-level conference on Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and International Labour Standards on Apprenticeships. The livestreamed event gathered experts from Europe, Asia and Africa, and welcomed viewers from over 90 countries worldwide.

HIGH LEVEL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, speaking live, stressed that apprenticeships hold great potential to accelerate up-and reskilling and tackle youth unemployment. The Commissioner called for investing in quality jobs in the new world of work. He shared his optimistic vision for the future of apprenticeships and his commitment to strengthening the partnership with the ILO on apprenticeships.

Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO, stressed the urgency of resolving global challenges exacerbated by the pandemic such as the growing digital divide, precarious conditions for young and female workers, and low apprenticeship take-up in emerging sectors. He highlighted that the ILO is committed to addressing these challenges and looks forward to deepening its collaboration with key partners, including the European Commission.

DAY 1 – NATIONAL REFORMS OF APPRENTICESHIPS AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

Norbert Schöbel, Team Leader of VET, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning at the EC, highlighted that the Framework brings a crucial common European understanding of what ‘quality and effective’ apprenticeships represent. **Ashwani Aggarwal**, Team Leader in Work-based Learning, Apprenticeships, Recognition of Prior Learning, and Core Skills at the ILO, highlighted need to ensure that apprenticeships serve the future demands of the digital and knowledge economy.



“Apprenticeships are a great way for people to enter the job market or change sectors; and ideal for companies, who can train people according to their exact needs. I call that a win-win!”

Nicolas Schmit,
Commissioner for Jobs and
Social Rights, European
Commission



“When you look at apprenticeship systems around the world, the most important success factor is practically always social dialogue. Apprenticeships work because they link classroom and workplace training and because they tap [into] the knowledge of both employers and workers on what training is needed, and how to deliver it.”

Guy Ryder, Director
General,
International Labour
Organization

The first session on national reforms of apprenticeships was co-moderated by **Sangheon Lee**, Director of the Employment Policy Department at the ILO, **Chiara Rioldino**, Head of Unit for VET and Apprenticeships at the EC. Professor **Frank Baert**, Chairman of the Flemish Partnership on Dual Learning, Belgium presented a series of pilot projects that led to a new dual learning model, based on a shared responsibility between social partners and education providers. **Olga Kafetzopoulou**, Director for Vocational Education and Training and Lifelong Learning at the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, highlighted how the New Apprenticeship Scheme of 2016 paved the way for a generation of apprenticeships with less bureaucracy and improved certification processes. **Feng Tian**, Director of the Department of Vocational Capacity Building for the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, China, showcased China's nationwide enterprise-based apprenticeship scheme, which created 500 000 apprenticeships in 2020. **Shogo Mlozi**, CEO of the National College of Tourism, Tanzania, outlined how skills mismatches in the Tanzanian hospitality sector in 2014 led to the creation of three national programmes on apprenticeships, which created demand from emerging sectors, such as banking and insurance, thus helping many young people into work.

The second session on the involvement of social partners was kicked off by **Ludovic Voet**, Confederal Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation, who called for fair apprenticeships to be a right for all learners, including marginalised groups. **Maxime Cerutti**, Director of Social Affairs, Business Europe, stressed that comprehensive benchlearning activities are key to ensure quality apprenticeships. **Liliane Volozinskis**, Social Affairs and Training Policy Director for SME United, emphasised the critical role of social partners in making apprenticeships more responsive to the needs of employers and apprentices. **Maria Tsirantonaki**, from the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), added that trade union involvement remains limited in many countries, and that political will is a first step towards effective social dialogue. **Blaise Matthey**, Director General for the FER GENEVE International Organisation of Employers, presented the Swiss apprenticeship system, which, due to its demand-driven approach, stays relevant to employers and attracts two out of three young people

DAY 2 – NATIONAL ALLIANCES, COALITIONS AND NETWORKS, AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

On the second day of the conference, **Tamas Varnai**, Policy Officer for the EC, presented the first results of the EC-ILO survey on national apprenticeship coalitions, which identified 30

apprenticeship coalitions in 13 countries. The session, moderated by **Nazrene Mannie**, Executive Director of the Global Apprenticeships Network included input from **Clara Bassols**, Director of the Bertelsmann Foundation, Spain who shared advice on how to set up a national alliance by offering members practical support and a space to innovate. **Erik Hess**, from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany, outlined how the first national coalition was successfully set up to empower companies for the digital transition. **Shri Praveen Kumar**, Secretary of the Ministry



Thabo Mashongoane, National Skills Authority, South Africa

of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, India, highlighted the challenges of expanding apprenticeships in light of India's considerable informal economy and the fact that apprenticeships are seen as a second choice. **Thabo Mashongoane**, Chief Executive of the National Skills Authority, South Africa, outlined the apprenticeship strategy developed with support from the ILO, and highlighted that alliances aim to be inclusive by involving diverse communities.

Looking towards the future of apprenticeships, **Jürgen Siebel**, Executive Director of Cedefop, stressed that a systematic approach to quality apprenticeships based on strong partnerships is the way forward. **Cesare Onestini**, Director of the European Training Foundation, highlighted the importance of looking beyond the curve for future skills. **Borhene Chakroun**, Director of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems at UNESCO, highlighting that apprenticeship models need to be flexible, or even reinvented, to account for structural shifts on the labour market. Offering a learner's view, **Matthäus Fandřejewski** from the European Apprentices Network spoke of the urgency of resuming discontinued apprenticeship schemes. **Norbert Schöbel** welcomed 11 newcomers to EAFA, thanking them for their commitment to quality and effective apprenticeships.

Closing the event, **Manuela Geleng**, Director for Skills at the EC, shared that the lessons learned during the conference would feed into the EC report on the Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. **Srinivas Reddy**, Chief of the Skills and Employability Branch at the ILO, concluded with a summary of discussions and reiterated the calls for deepened EU-ILO collaboration in the future.

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