



# Quality and effective apprenticeships and international labour standards on apprenticeships

European Alliance for Apprenticeships and  
International Labour Organisation joint online  
event

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Meeting report



International  
Labour  
Organization

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## DAY 1

### Opening Session: State of Play

#### The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

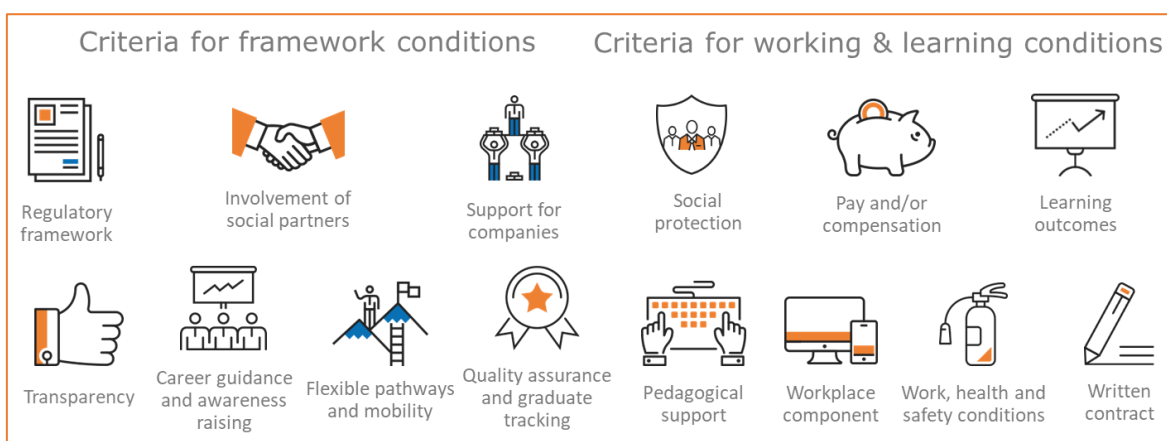
The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships was adopted on the 15 March 2018. On the third anniversary of its adoption, **Norbert Schöbel** from the European Commission opened the high-level conference with an overview of the Framework and its key criteria. Crucially, the Framework has provided a common understanding of apprenticeships across EU Member States.

#### What are apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships, as defined in the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships:

- combine learning in education and training institutions with substantial work-based-learning in companies and other workplaces;
- Lead to a nationally recognised qualification;
- Are based on an agreement defining the rights and obligations of the apprentice, the employer and, where appropriate, vocational education and training (VET) institutions
- Provide payment to the apprentice, or at least compensate the apprentice for the work-based component.

The Framework was developed with input from Member States, the social partners and the European Youth Forum and has established criteria for framework conditions and for working and learning conditions for apprenticeships. The European Commission is currently assessing the implementation of the Framework in Member States, with a report due to be published in June 2021.



#### The European Alliance for Apprenticeships

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) has been a key part of the European Commission's work on apprenticeships. It was launched in 2013 with clear objectives on the quality, supply, image and mobility of apprenticeships. The European Commission renewed the EAfA in 2020 as part of the Youth Employment Support package, giving it a new impetus to address the following six priorities:

- Encouraging commitment among Member States and companies to quality and effective apprenticeships by fostering national apprenticeship coalitions;
- Incentivising support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in providing a stable supply of quality and effective apprenticeships;
- 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;
- Proactively engaging European sectoral social dialogue committees on apprenticeships, with a view to obtaining agreement on joint sectoral pledges;
- Supporting the representation of apprentices in Member States by relaunching the European Apprentices Network (EAN).

### **The international dimension of EU work on apprenticeships**

The international dimension of the EU's work on apprenticeships and Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems is enshrined primarily in the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU under Article 166.3 which calls for cooperation with third countries and international organisations in the sphere of vocational training. The [Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience \(2020\)](#) as well as the [Osnabruck Declaration 2020](#) both highlight the importance of EU cooperation with third countries and international organisations in promoting and developing apprenticeship schemes worldwide.

### **Key challenges in establishing quality and effective apprenticeships**

The world of work has been rapidly transformed by global megatrends such as new technologies, demographic shifts, climate change and globalisation. These changes have caused significant job losses but also brought about new opportunities. Apprenticeships are widely recognised as a way of creating an agile workforce with the skills for adapting to a fast-changing labour market. However, many countries face challenges in establishing or expanding quality apprenticeships. **Ashwani Aggarwal** from the ILO explained that even in countries that have well-established apprenticeship systems, the number of participants are declining. Considering fast-changing skills needs in the future of work, countries are looking into using apprenticeships to serve the needs of the digital and knowledge economy. However, in many countries, apprenticeships remain synonymous with blue-collar jobs and there is a concern about whether the apprenticeship model can be used in higher education, given that typically it is used at secondary and post-secondary level. Lastly, as more and more adults require reskilling and upskilling, a question is being raised as to whether apprenticeships – which have traditionally targeted young people – can also support adult and lifelong learning effectively.

### **A new International Labour Standard on apprenticeships**

The International Labour Organisation has been promoting quality apprenticeships for many decades, starting with the Apprenticeship Recommendation 1939 (No. 60) and the Vocational Training Recommendation, 1962 (No. 117). However, after the juridical replacement of these two instruments, apprenticeships were not comprehensively addressed under subsequent ILO instruments. With many countries worldwide increasing their focus on apprenticeships to address youth unemployment and provide reskilling and upskilling opportunities, in 2018, a standard-setting item related to apprenticeships was

placed on the agenda of the [110<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference](#) to address the regulatory gap in this field.

This process is underway, yet there are important issues to consider. Apprenticeships are understood differently in many countries, with different models of apprenticeships existing even within the same country. A challenge in setting an international labour standard is thus how to define apprenticeships in the first place. In some countries, apprentices have the same legal status as a regular employee, but in others, they do not have the same rights as other employees. Any new international instrument on apprenticeships would need to find the optimal balance between working and learning conditions for apprentices. As countries struggle to scale up apprenticeship schemes, efforts to improve the attractiveness of apprenticeships for both employers and potential apprentices must also be increased. One way to encourage greater participation in apprenticeships is through cost sharing. In many countries, enterprises typically cover the costs of taking on apprentices. However, given the growing recognition of the importance of apprenticeships, government can also play an active role in providing support – both financial and non-financial – in the form of services and subsidies. The engagement of social partners in the consultation process is also crucial to enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of apprenticeship systems. Furthermore, as some countries have large informal economies where apprenticeship quality is typically low, how to upgrade apprenticeships in the informal economy is also a key consideration.

One of the key initiatives of the ILO in promoting apprenticeships include the development of two volumes of the [ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships](#) to guide policymakers and practitioners in developing quality apprenticeship systems and programmes. Additionally, in 2020, the first edition of the [Massive Open Online Course on Quality Apprenticeships](#) was launched, which attracted the participation of policymakers and practitioners from over 120 countries. More recently, the ILO has also launched a project – Apprenticeship Development for Universal Lifelong Learning and Training – which aims to generate new ideas and policy options to modernise apprenticeships so that they meet the challenges of a fast-changing world of work.

## Session 1: National Reforms on Apprenticeships

### The Flemish Partnership for Dual Learning

Speaker: **Frank Baert**, Chairman of the Flemish Partnership for Dual Learning

The former Flemish government agreed to implement a system of Dual Learning with shared competence between two policy domains, education and work. Between 2014 and 2019 a series of pilot projects experimented with the concept, examining issues such as screening, guidance, and the relation between schools and the labour market. One of these pilots focused on implementation of Dual Learning in secondary education and following an evaluation, a legislative framework to upscale implementation was adopted, with full-scale implementation beginning in September 2019.

### The Partnership

The Partnership was set up to follow implementation of Dual Learning from the start through shared responsibility between the policy areas of education and work. The Partnership puts education and training providers, work authorities and social partners at the centre of the Dual Learning governance system. They are co-responsible for legislation, governance, curriculum design, informing learners and companies and for quality assurance of the system. The Partnership has a key role in actively advising the government on matters concerning Dual Learning, for example, last September publishing advice on strengthening the Dual Learning system during the COVID-19 crisis. The Partnership cooperates closely with sectoral partnerships – of which there are currently 18

– and has delegated some competences to them, including recognition of companies and ensuring the quality of the learning environment in the workplace.

### **Achievements**

The Partnership has succeeded in effectively bringing all actors to the same table to talk about mutual problems and find joint solutions. By bringing the worlds of education and the labour market closer together, the Partnership is ensuring that students are prepared with the skills needed for the labour market of today and tomorrow.

See [here](#) for more information on the Flemish Partnership for Dual Learning.

### **Apprenticeships reform in Greece**

Speaker: **Olga Kafetzopoulou**, Director for VET and Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece

#### **The New Apprenticeship scheme 2016**

The Post-graduate apprenticeship scheme is an adult scheme, regulated by law in 2016. Apprentices are vocational school graduates at National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 4 and undertake 1 day of learning and 4 days of training on the job per week. All apprenticeships in Greece must follow a common quality framework which meets the major criteria of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeship. For example, all apprentices have a contract with a defined work-based curriculum and receive remuneration at 75% of the national daily wage. At the end of the scheme, apprentices sit national certification exams to obtain an NQF Level 5 qualification. The scheme is funded by the European Social Fund.

The scheme has steadily grown since its launch in 2016 from 24 apprentices in two pilot classes to 3244 apprentices in 376 classes in 2020. The scheme continues to have a low drop-out rate (2%) due to measures taken by the Ministry of Education such as financial support to apprentices, extension of apprenticeship contracts and increased time spent in the laboratory or the workplace.

#### **The New Apprenticeship Law, December 2020**

To highlight the importance of VET and address some challenges identified through implementation of the New Apprenticeship scheme, a new law on VET reform was adopted in December 2020 in Greece. This has set up new governance structures for apprenticeships at national, regional and sectoral level and has introduced measures to ensure that apprenticeships are fully adapted to labour market needs. The reform also means that social partners will be involved not only in the governance of apprenticeship schemes but also in their design, implementation, and evaluation. Remuneration of apprentices has been increased to 95% of the daily wage, more teaching staff have been enlisted, and provisions for distance learning have been put in place following lessons learned from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reform has also reduced bureaucracy and improved certification procedures.

**Question from the audience: "How did Greece's New Apprenticeship scheme reach 3244 apprentices in a couple of years? What are the main success factors?"**

"The main success factors for the rapid evolution of the new Apprenticeship Scheme in Greece (2016) were:

- The existence of a National Strategic Plan for VET and Apprenticeships
- The specific regulating framework, as well as continuous amendments to address specific problems
- The Quality Framework for Apprenticeship
- The organisation of the scheme at national and regional level
- Acceptance of the scheme by the educational community
- Interest of students and their parents
- Strict rules concerning the work-based learning component of the apprenticeship i.e.: contract, remuneration, rights and obligations
- The need for VET students to enter gradually the labour market
- The first graduates of the scheme, who acted as "ambassadors", as some of them were hired by their previous employers
- VET teachers who took the initiative to reach out to future employers, thus helping to find many apprenticeship placements
- The planning of many events with the participation of all stakeholders"

**-Olga Kafetzopoulou**, Director for VET and Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece

See [here](#) for more information on Greek apprenticeship schemes.

### **New enterprise-based apprenticeships in China**

Speaker: **Feng Tian**, Director of the Department of Vocational Capacity Building, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, China.

China has recognised the value of quality and effective apprenticeships. In 2016, the government launched a new enterprise-based apprenticeship programme nationwide, learning from good practices in the EU. The programme was designed with active involvement of social partners and other stakeholders. Apprenticeship training is targeted at new recruits and transfers to skilled positions. The programme is a dual learning system where enterprises and schools work together to integrate the working and learning of the apprentice.

#### **The role of enterprises**

Enterprises play a leading role in the apprenticeship programmes. They are responsible for rigorously developing training for skilled workers through formulating training plans, organising pre-job, on-the-job and post-job training, carrying out skills competitions and online learning. They work closely with Technical VET (TVET) institutions. Teachers are from both enterprises and schools and alternate training. Enterprise and apprentices sign a training agreement which outlines the objectives, content and duration of the apprenticeship, and quality standards. If the enterprise entrusts a TVET institution to undertake part of training tasks of apprentices, they sign a cooperation agreement to clarify the specifics of the training method, contents, duration, cost, and responsibilities of both parties, to ensure that apprentices can participate in systematic and targeted learning for specific professional knowledge.

### **The role of the government**

The Government plays an active role in the apprenticeship programme. All levels of government are involved in devising the programme, making action plans, enhancing financial support, and formulating quality assurance standards. The government also encourages enterprises to take part through financial support. Local departments of human resources and social security, in cooperation with local departments of finance, provide vocational training subsidies to participating enterprises. The subsidy standard is set locally but in principle, is no less than 4,000 CNY (approximately €515) per apprentice, annually.

The apprenticeship programme has been boosted by strengthening the national qualification system. Between 2019 and 2021, national vocational skills action plans were implemented to ensure the effectiveness of training and improvement of vocational skills gained. Upon the completion of their training period, apprentices participate in the vocational skills appraisals or graduation assessment. Those who pass obtain corresponding vocational qualification certificates.

### **Remaining challenges**

Challenges that remain in the implementation of the apprenticeship programme in China include how to attract more apprentices and how to increase the quality, effectiveness and flexibility of apprenticeships to make them more sustainable. COVID-19 has accelerated the digital and green transition in China and forced the expansion of e-learning in apprenticeships. Finding a way to combine theoretical online learning, with crucial practical training offline is crucial.

### **Apprenticeship Programme in Tanzania**

Speaker: **Shogo Mlozi**, CEO for National College of Tourism, Tanzania

The discussion on apprenticeships in Tanzania started in 2013, at the height of skills mismatch issue in the hospitality sector, as well as a growing youth population in need of skills for the labour market. The programme started as a pilot with the National College of Tourism and has since grown to include organisations from the banking and insurance sector. The programme is certified by the National Council for Technical Education that is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the provision of technical education and training, including monitoring implementation, curriculum development, training dissemination, and assessment to certification.

### **Achievements and success factors**

To date a total of 222 apprentices have graduated from the programme, with a further 413 currently in training. The programme has been successful in addressing skills mismatches in the Tanzanian hospitality sector, has produced skilled graduates ready for the labour market, and shortened the school to work transition. Many apprentices secure employment even before their training has been completed. As a result of the success of the programme, national guidelines for apprenticeships were developed and launched in 2017. The training regulator recommends the programme to institutions from other sectors, with interest currently from the Ministry of Water. A key success factor is the high-level strategic partnerships that underpin the apprenticeship programme and involve government, education and training institutions as well as social partners at the highest level. This has ensured buy-in and helped support the sustainability of the programme whilst also strengthening tripartite relationships in general in the country.



## Experience of Barnaba, an apprentice in the programme



Barnaba's family could not afford higher education fees

So he helped to support his family by selling fish on the streets of Dar es Salaam

He joined the National College of Tourism Apprenticeship Programme which changed his life

Now he dreams of opening his own academy of chefs

## Key challenges for apprenticeship reform in Europe and internationally

- Improving the attractiveness of VET in general remains an issue in many countries.
- Creating systems that are flexible enough to adapt to the emerging labour market is even more important now than ever before.
- Supporting a change of culture in the education community and the labour market takes time and requires strong collaboration across a range of actors – which is not always easy.
- Recovering from the impact of COVID-19 is an ongoing challenge and requires finding the right balance between online learning and practical training face-to-face, as well as flexible training approaches that can adapt.
- Whilst dual learning in secondary education is well underway, dual learning in adult education and in higher education is still not well developed in many countries, even though it is crucial for future labour market needs.

## Session 2: The Involvement of Social Partners

Speakers: **Ludovic Voet**, Confederal Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation, **Maxime Cerutti**, Director of Social Affairs, Business Europe, **Liliane Volozinskis**, Social Affairs and Training Policy Director, SME United, **Maria Tsirantonaki**, Equality, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), **Blaise Matthey**, Director General, FER GENEVE, International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

### Role of social partners in apprenticeship development

Social partners have a key role to play in designing and implementing quality and effective apprenticeships. Social partners can design the professional profiles and standards defining the content of apprenticeships. This includes defining the duration, the content of the curricula, time spent in the company, the modalities of delivering the training and the negotiation of contracts between the apprentice and the company. This standard should serve as the basis for the part of the curriculum delivered by the school and the training centre.

Employer organisations have a role to play in supporting companies, especially small businesses with capacity building and financial support to establish apprenticeship schemes. This is even more important now, in the COVID-19 crisis. Employer organisations

can help to ensure that professional standards inform and guide businesses on the training they deliver and on the learning outcomes to achieve.

Trade union involvement can ensure that apprenticeships correspond to the needs of the labour market but also of the learners. Trade unions can provide guidance to apprentices through trade union representatives and Work Councils. Through involvement in designing and implementing apprenticeship schemes, trade unions can help ensure apprenticeships are balanced in addressing interests of employers and learners, are inclusive of all learners and allow for a real learning experience, linked to a future career path.

## Key social partner concerns

### European Trade Union Confederation

- Apprenticeships need to adapt so that they can develop green and digital skills which are increasingly on demand on the labour market.
- Apprenticeships are not only for young people. They can provide important up- and reskilling to other vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, and people with low qualifications and must be inclusive.
- Full implementation of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships is crucial and must be placed within effective national VET policies and agreed through social dialogue. Capacity-building support from the European Commission to Member States is key.
- The COVID-19 impact on apprenticeships has been vast. VET systems were not ready for the transition to distance learning and 98% of work-based learning globally was disrupted. Ensuring that apprentices are paid and continue to have opportunities to learn as the pandemic continues is a key concern that must be addressed by governments worldwide.

### International Trade Union Confederation

- Trade unions are not always involved in the governance of apprenticeship systems and are often not involved at all in implementation. In many countries, trade union involvement often does not go beyond consultation, which is not enough. Political will for social dialogue is essential in addressing this.
- Collective bargaining is a crucial tool in ensuring quality apprenticeships. Collective bargaining agreements can promote investments in training on the job, develop cost-sharing arrangements and set fix apprentice wages. In some countries, collective bargaining agreements do focus on apprenticeship issues but there is scope to increase this, to better ensure quality and effective apprenticeships.

### Business Europe

- Apprenticeships need to be looked at in the context of youth unemployment, as they are a great way of speeding up the school to work transition.
- Providing subsidies to employers is crucial to make it possible for employers, particularly SMEs, to provide apprenticeship placements.
- The [benchlearning process on apprenticeships](#) that is undertaken at the EU level is key and must be expanded and linked to the benchlearning of Public Employment Services, which are important institutions in apprenticeship development too.

### SME United

- Apprenticeships are a win-win situation: they offer employers an opportunity to train and recruit well-prepared young people and develop future entrepreneurs whilst also

offering learners a chance to enhance their employment prospects. For this reason, employers should consider apprenticeships an investment, not a cost.

- Given their crucial role in creating skilled workforces, apprenticeships need to be demand driven and costs must be shared between employers and government.
- Whilst social partners have a key role to play in the development of apprenticeships, a prerequisite for this is the political will of governments to delegate authority to and share responsibility with social partners.

### **International Organisation of Employers**

- From the view of IOE, whilst an international standard on apprenticeships might be an important tool to hold governments accountable, a more useful tool for employers would be a Recommendation of best practice around the world.
- It is crucial that tripartism remains of the essence in any initiatives on apprenticeships at the international level. Employers must continue working with the education sector and trade unions to co-define the content of apprenticeships.

## **DAY 2**

### **Opening session: High-level interventions**

Setting the scene for the second day of the high-level conference, **Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, began by highlighting the precarious situation that many young people are in during the pandemic. Today, 18% of young people are without employment across the EU and in some Member States the share is as high as 40%. Apprenticeships can help tackle youth unemployment by serving as a gateway into the labour market. 10 years after the previous crisis, the stakes are high and Europe cannot afford a new 'lost generation'. In times of crisis, companies should increase or at least maintain their current apprenticeship schemes to ensure that the workers of the future will have the necessary skills.

Apprenticeships hold great potential to support Europe in modernising its economy. They can reduce the skills gap found in the labour force as the green and digital transitions accelerate. In an agile Europe, learners of all ages should be offered the opportunity to up- and reskill themselves. The European Commission has put in place the [Pact for Skills](#), a flagship action under the [European Skills Agenda](#), aiming to mobilise and incentivise all relevant labour market stakeholders to take concrete commitments to upskill and reskill people of working age.

Looking forward, the new economy must be built on a better foundation where the cornerstones are quality jobs and quality apprenticeships. The pandemic has highlighted Europe's need for social protection and labour standards - reducing these standards would be a mistake. Europe must instead accelerate its ambitions to be a global leader in providing quality jobs. The [NextGenerationEU](#) coupled with EU's long-term budget offer concrete opportunities. The historic recovery package will support both young people through a reinforced Youth Guarantee, and businesses through financing opportunities and technical support. Beyond Europe, the Commission will work closely with the European Training Foundation and support the ILO in its endeavour to achieve decent work across the globe.

### **The ILO perspective: Implementing international labour standards and achieving a human centred future of work**

The second high-level intervention was delivered by **Guy Ryder**, Director-General of the International Labour Organization. From a global outlook, the world of work has been massively disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the strength and endurance of

societies and economies have been tested like never before in a time of peace. The ILO estimates that compared to 2019 there was an 8.8% loss in global working hours in 2020, equivalent to 255 million full time jobs. Perhaps even more worrying is that this damage is not being shared equally as women and young workers are bearing the brunt. A global survey conducted by the ILO found that nearly 85% of apprentices and interns have had their training interrupted in ways that are detrimental to their long-term employment prospects. Nearly half of enterprises and organisations surveyed had stopped paying stipends and wages to their apprentices, and over half reported that they intended to cut investments in staff training.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries supported a rapid transition to digital learning. This has further widened the digital divide and the digital skills gap. In this context, a human centred approach to future of work is more important than ever, and how to implement it is a key question. The ILO's [Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#) is a roadmap towards this. The human-centred approach to the future of work focuses on three pillars of action: increasing investment in people's capabilities; increasing investment in the institutions of work and increasing investment in decent and sustainable work. The Declaration calls for ILO member states to:

- Ensure all people benefit from the changing world of work
- Ensure the continued relevance of the employment relationship
- Ensure adequate protection for all workers
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment and decent work

The ongoing efforts to develop an international labour standard on apprenticeships are key in delivering the Centenary Declaration. However, there is still a lot of work to be done: today, some countries do not even have an apprenticeship system. Moreover, in many countries apprenticeships do not offer access to higher education nor cover emerging sectors such as technologies and services sectors, nor do they allow for the reskilling and upskilling of adult and older workers. Consequently, apprenticeship programmes are sometimes seen as old-fashioned, inflexible and 'second best' means of skills development. The ILO is determined to address these challenges together with its constituents and partners through developing a new international labour standard on apprenticeships. In this endeavour, the ILO is looking forward to strengthening the collaboration with its key partner, the European Commission.

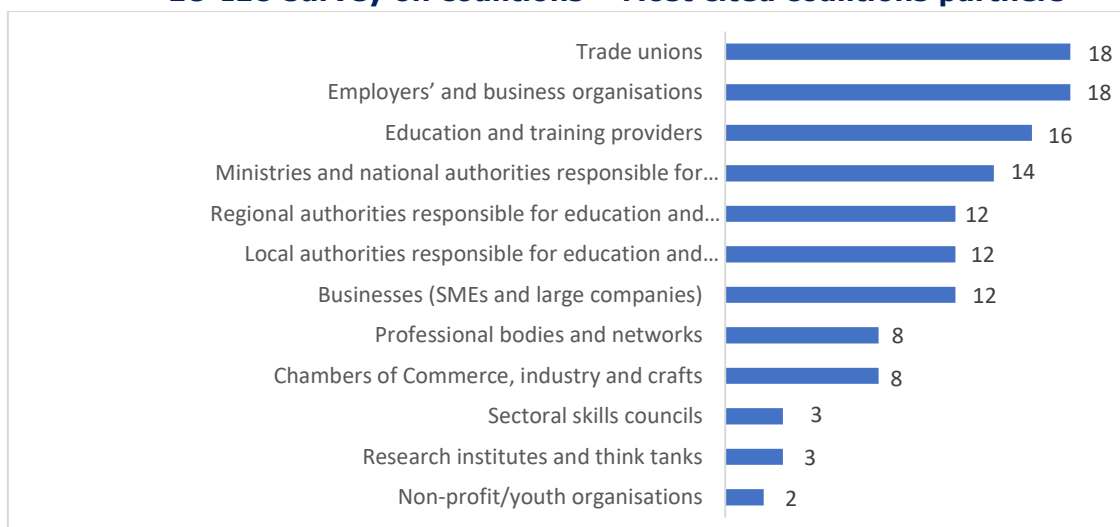
### **Session 3: National Alliances, Coalitions and Networks**

#### **Preliminary findings from the apprenticeship coalitions survey**

A joint EU-ILO survey was carried out to better understand stakeholder cooperation within national coalitions. As one of six priorities under the [renewed EAfA](#), national coalitions are essential to build a workforce that is future-ready and prepare workers for the increasing number of jobs that require in-demand skills. The purpose of the survey was to map apprenticeship coalitions and their objectives, achievements, and challenges. 34 responses were collected from 17 countries, with most coalitions found in France, Austria, Spain, Italy and Denmark.

Among the most cited objectives were promoting and improving the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students, contributing to better alignment between the needs of the labour market and the apprenticeship training offer, and fostering cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders. The survey revealed that social partners are usually a part of coalitions (in 18 out of 30 coalitions that responded). Employers' and business organisations as well as education and training providers are also frequently members of coalitions.

### EU-ILO survey on coalitions – Most cited coalitions partners



The most frequently reported key achievements of coalitions included improving the regulatory framework for VET and apprenticeships, providing a framework for cooperation and communication between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders, and contributing to the prevention of early school leaving. In addition, the main challenges faced by surveyed coalitions in apprenticeship development were ensuring the attractiveness of apprenticeships, guaranteeing a supply of placements, and coping with the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Creating the Alianza para la FP Dial – a Spanish success story

Speaker: **Clara Bassols**, Director, Bertelsmann Foundation, Spain

#### Growing the alliance and enabling innovation

*Alianza para la FP Dial* ('the Alianza') is a network of the Bertelsmann Foundation, Spain, that brings together companies, VET schools and other organisations committed to developing high-quality dual VET. The Alianza was created in 2015 and has since grown to include 1400 members among which half are companies, 400 VET schools, and the remaining are business, school associations, trade unions, research institutes and universities. Unlike many national alliances, the Alianza is not a national coalition created by a governmental body. Instead, it is a creation of two organisations linked to the world of companies, namely the Spanish Chamber of Commerce and the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisations, as well as two smaller foundations aiming to improve employment conditions for young people.

The Alianza is focused on quality and serves as an innovation laboratory to test new ideas for apprenticeship development with upscaling potential. For example, Alianza has set up a network of dual VET advisors that provides support to companies and VET schools in their first dual VET project. The advisors offer practical support to ensure that quality standards are met while contributing to the overall success of the project. The network has done so well that similar networks have been introduced in other parts of Spain, and today can be found in nine out of 13 Spanish regions.

#### The greatest challenge for the alliance

With a truly diverse membership, the most significant challenge of Alianza is to keep its members active and interested. To stay attractive, Alianza provides added value by offering its members visibility and practical support including guidance, studies, trainings and communication. A priority is always how to energise the network and create a feeling of community.

**Question from the audience: "In the Alianza, do you liaise with Higher Education Institutions? It would give opportunities to apprentices to continue their studies and train in higher levels."**

"In Spain we have two levels of VET, the higher level is included in the tertiary education. Dual VET in Spain is developed in both levels, but to a greater extent at the higher level. In this sense, Fundacion Bertelsmann and the Alianza para la FP Dual do regularly collaborate with Higher Education Institutions offering higher Dual Vet. However, we are specifically focused on Dual VET, and for this reason we are not actively promoting dual bachelors or dual post-graduate studies in Spanish universities until today. However, we are aware that there is an increasing interest about it."

- **Clara Bassols**, Director, Bertelsmann Foundation, Spain

For further information, go to the Bertelsmann Foundation, Spain [website](#) or contact [info@fundacionbertelsmann.org](mailto:info@fundacionbertelsmann.org)

## **Apprenticeships in Germany – adapting to the changing world of work**

Speaker: **Erik Hess**, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany

### **How does the German VET-model stay relevant?**

Germany considers its VET model to be vital to for economic prosperity and global competitiveness, but also for achieving social inclusion. An essential part of the German VET model is close cooperation between the regional governments of the Länder and the social partners, where each actor has a clearly assigned role. Thousands of businesses, in particular, SMEs, act as training institutions in cooperation with VET schools, for which the Länder are responsible. Meanwhile, employer organisations and trade unions act as drivers by upgrading and creating new training relations and occupational profiles. The German model remains sustainable because it is constantly modernised to equip companies with a skilled workforce and offers individuals attractive career paths. The model is regulated and supported by legislation through the national [Vocational Training Act](#), which recently introduced a minimum allowance, and a wider range of funding schemes, programmes and institutes.

### **The Alliance for Initial and Further Training**

In December 2014, the German federal government launched the [Alliance for Initial and Further Training](#), originally intended to run 2015-2018, and later extended to the end of 2021. The Alliance is a soft governance structure that offers a platform to generate agreement and ownership of apprenticeship developments, and a space to exchange and share approaches. In cooperation with Ministries of employment and education, the Alliance aims to respond to challenges on the training market including an unfavourable demographic trend, a shortage of skilled staff, and more young people choosing higher education over vocational education. The Alliance agrees on common objectives and measures to take to tackle these challenges and meet emerging demands. The German government has adopted a national skills strategy with the aim to empower companies and individuals for the digital transition, and amended the national Vocational Training Act to accommodate for training at higher levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

## **Apprenticeships in India – an evolving tradition**

Speaker: **Shri Praveen Kumar**, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, India

### **Apprenticeship coalitions in India**

As an ancient country, India has an old tradition of apprenticeships stemming from the master-disciple tradition. In modern times, apprenticeships were formalised in 1961 through the [Apprenticeship Act](#) of the National Parliament, which has since seen several revisions based on new demands of the labour market. The Act was last revised in 2014.

In India, apprenticeship coalitions can be found mainly at a government level, at both central and the regional level. The Apprenticeship Act established a Central Apprenticeship Council which is a tripartite body advising the central government on policy related to standards in apprenticeship training. At regional level, apprenticeships councils have an advisory role where all relevant stakeholders are represented, such as the private and public sector, academia, and student organisations. In-depth stakeholder consultations take place at regional level to inform the next revision of the Apprenticeship Act.

### **Enhancing the image of apprenticeship – an Indian view**

India is still facing challenges in establishing apprenticeships as an education path. Apprenticeships continue to be seen as a second choice in comparison to other education and training opportunities. For example, industrial and training institutes educate around 1.4 million people on an annual basis, compared to only 350 000 apprenticeships. One of the key challenges of promoting apprenticeships is that the Indian economy is still mainly informal. In the formal economy, SMEs are common and their appetite for taking on apprentices is low. Even in larger enterprises, the advantage of apprentices is not widely appreciated, despite studies proving apprenticeships to be efficient. To change the reluctance to embrace apprenticeships, the central government focuses on turning informal apprenticeships into formal, and on raising awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships. To enhance the image further, the government aims to enable apprentices to obtain an undergraduate degree.

## **National alliances and coalitions in South Africa**

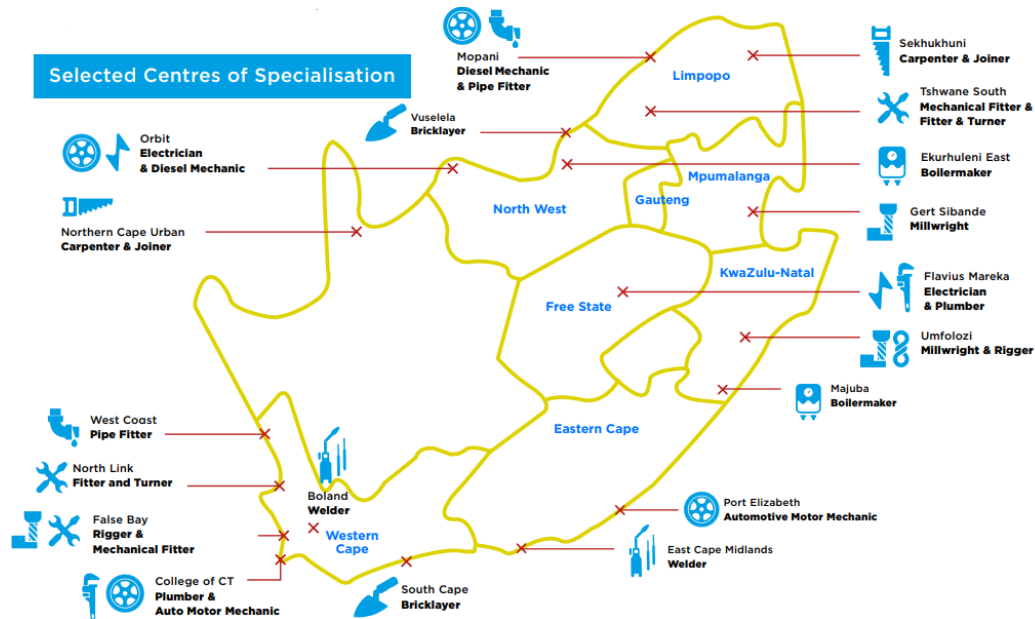
Speaker: **Thabo Mashongoane**, Chief Executive, National Skills Authority, South Africa

### **Apprenticeships and social inclusion – top priorities of South Africa**

Apprenticeship development is mandated to several South African public institutions who represent national alliances and coalitions at national and provincial levels. The Human Resource Development Council, for instance, led by the President of the country, ensures that all stakeholders such as ministers, principals and captains of industry and trade unions prioritise apprenticeships. National alliances and coalitions have a common objective of ensuring inclusivity and representativeness of all important stakeholders ranging from government to community constituents. As part of their apprenticeship schemes, South Africa is committed to mainstreaming gender issues and to ensure a involvement of diverse communities, including disabled people.

## Centres of specialisation

One of the South African apprenticeship flagship programmes is the 'Centres of Specialisation' which mobilise 26 campuses at TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) colleges across all 9 provinces and involve 1000 apprentices. A campus is selected to coordinate all national learning and teaching processes for a specific occupation. With 'employers in the driver's seat', the programme is demand-led and aims to train a skilled workforce that will support inclusive economic growth throughout the country. The programme is designed according to a dual apprenticeship system where technical education at a TVET college is combined with authentic work experience.



### Top three tips for setting up an apprenticeship coalition

- 1. Get strong umbrella organisations onboard** from the very beginning, ideally as founding members. From the experience of Alianza para la FP Dual, set up by of the Spanish Fundacion Bertelsmann, it is crucial to have an early involvement of strong umbrella institutions who are closely linked to companies.
- 2. Start bottom-up** and provide practical support to members. By doing so, new members are attracted, and the coalition may experience rapid growth. Providing support at the ground also gives credibility when collaborating with policy makers regarding policy proposals concerning how to improve quality.
- 3. Be bold.** An apprenticeship coalition is a perfect place to test out different, far-reaching, and innovative solution. Allow it to become an innovation space to test solutions that have the potential to improve and transform dual VET.

## Session 4: Looking to the Future of Apprenticeships

Speakers: **Jürgen Siebel**, Executive Director, Cedefop, **Cesare Onestini**, Director, European Training Foundation, **Borhene Chakroun**, Director of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO



## Challenges for the future

### Challenge #1 – achieving a common approach to apprenticeships

To better assess the future of apprenticeships and predict the labour market, an improved understanding of current conditions needs to be established. Such an understanding is not easily developed considering that there is an ambiguity of what apprenticeships are in Europe and across the globe. Diversity and a lack of common understanding of apprenticeships at a regional, national and international level make apprenticeships difficult to compare and analyse.<sup>1</sup>

### Challenge #2 – green, digital and societal transitions

Profound change lies ahead as the digital and green transition unfold and the post-pandemic recovery begins. The pandemic has exacerbated global challenges such as poverty and unemployment and impeded the goals of the UN [Sustainable Development Agenda](#). In parallel, there are indications of labour market polarisation between high and low-end occupations, with many professions likely to disappear or drastically change in the next few years. In the meantime, investment in apprenticeships is dropping and although progress has been reached with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, there is still a way to go before quality apprenticeships in Europe and across the globe have been achieved.

### Challenge #3 – adapting apprenticeships beyond Europe

Outside Europe, countries often face challenges when implementing apprenticeship schemes because of large informal sectors and lack of engagement among stakeholders in the qualification system. Building capacity at a public level can be challenging under conditions of strained budgets and weak coordination between different institutions. Meanwhile, the private sector tends to be relatively weak and unorganised and often lack resources to engage in issues related to education and training.<sup>2</sup> These difficulties have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the growing global digital divide.

## Opportunities for the future

### Opportunity #1 – a systematic approach

A systematic approach to apprenticeship design and provision allows for a common understanding of apprenticeships and less ambiguity. Rather than jeopardising flexibility, a systematic approach provides a unique point of reference and a solid basis for it. With a strong common approach, apprenticeships can also be more effectively promoted as a career path for learners and their parents, and as a long-term investment for companies. Consequently, a systematic approach to apprenticeships has the potential to bring harmonisation between countries and to facilitate data collection and knowledge-sharing.

### Opportunity #2 – apprenticeships: a pill for every ill?<sup>3</sup>

Apprenticeships hold untapped potential to make economies and societies more resilient by protecting millions of young people from the economic consequences of future crises. Following this pandemic, necessary investments in apprenticeships are needed for a job rich recovery. In parallel, apprenticeship models need to integrate job specific skills including digital skills, entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking and communication, and move from a transmission to a co-construction of skills.

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<sup>1</sup> According to a new [Cedefop report](#) 'comparable data offering a solid estimate of activity levels in apprenticeships in Europe is desperately needed'.

<sup>2</sup> [Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks](#). UNESCO, ETF.

<sup>3</sup> This is also the name of a recent [CEDEFOP report](#).

### Opportunity #3 – a growing global interest for apprenticeship

Around the world there is an increasing interest in establishing apprenticeship programmes and to take part in mutual learning internationally. Neighbouring the EU, Serbia and Montenegro, for example, have moved down the path of developing dual education systems and several other countries have taken steps to adopt similar approaches. In general, the role of government remains central since it can provide the necessary legal framework and increase the cost-benefit awareness among different stakeholders.

#### The future of apprenticeships – what is important to young apprentices?

Speaker: **Matthäus Fandrejewski**, European Apprentices Network

The pandemic has hit apprentices and young people particularly hard. In the wake of the pandemic, top priorities must involve resuming interrupted placements and ensuring remuneration for all apprentices. Important future issues for young apprentices are the promotion of active citizenship, social inclusion of people from all backgrounds, and speeding up the green transition. To ensure quality in apprenticeships, apprentices should be represented at decision-making levels in companies, but also in policymaking at the European and international levels.

### Closing session

**Manuela Geleng**, Director for Skills, DG EMPL, European Commission, praised the forward-looking reforms presented throughout the conference and highlighted the importance of fully implementing the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. To boost economic recovery, the European Commission has made unprecedented levels of funding available to EU stakeholders at Member State level. Looking beyond Europe's borders, the European Commission looks forward to deepening its collaboration with Cedefop, ETF, UNESCO, the ILO and other key partners in order to promote quality apprenticeships internationally.

**Srinivas Reddy**, Chief of Skills and Employability Branch, ILO, concluded the final session by summarising some of the key issues discussed during the conference. Involving social partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeship programmes is essential for successful apprenticeships, and additional support should be given to SMEs. Achieving a systematic approach to apprenticeships within and across countries is necessary for providing more insightful comparative data and for promoting more effective knowledge sharing. Given the rapid transformation in the world of work, countries should take actions to modernise apprenticeships and enhance their flexibility and relevance to the future of work. It is particularly important to expand apprenticeship schemes into emerging sectors (e.g. green and digital) and use them as a means to promote lifelong learning, not only for young people but also for adults and older workers. Efforts should also be made to improve the image of apprenticeships and attract more young people to participate in apprenticeship programmes, thereby building a more agile workforce and crisis-resilient societies in the future. Strengthened cooperation between the EU and the ILO holds great promise to achieve decent jobs for all through quality apprenticeships, in Europe and around the world.

