

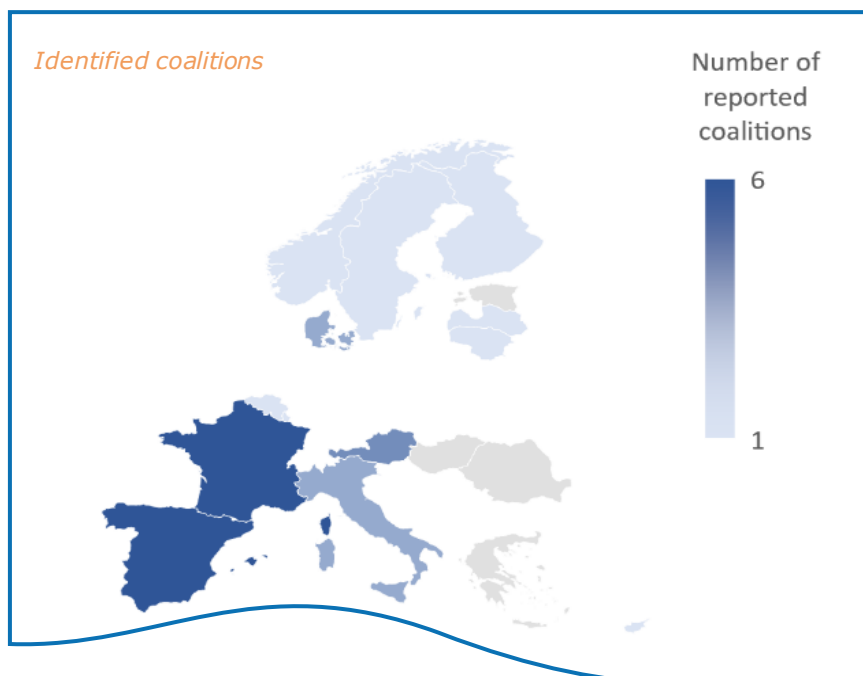
Apprenticeships coalition survey

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)

The purpose of this survey, conducted between 1 February 2021 and 3 March 2021, was to map existing apprenticeship coalitions, understand their main characteristics (e.g. composition, coordination structure, etc.) and identify key challenges to their development. The preliminary survey results were presented during the joint EAfA-ILO High Level Conference on quality and effective apprenticeships (EU) and international labour standards in apprenticeships (ILO) on 15–16 March 2021.

Overview of received responses

The survey received 20 completed answers from 17 countries: *Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Norway.*



Each respondent was given the opportunity to report on several coalitions as part of their contribution to the survey, and to describe the specific achievements and challenges of each of these coalitions individually.

A total of **30 coalitions were identified in 13 countries**. Respondents from Estonia, Greece, Hungary and Romania reported that there are no such coalitions in their respective country. The table below provides an overview of the coalitions identified.

Key characteristics

Name	MS	Level	Ministries and national authorities	Regional authorities	Local authorities	Employers' and business org.	Chambers of Commerce	Professional bodies and networks	Trade unions	Sectoral skills councils	Businesses	Education and training providers	Research institutes and think tanks	Non-profit/youth organisations	Coordination mechanisms	Key objectives
Zukunft.Lehre. Österreich (z.l.ö.)	AT	National				x	x		x		x	x			Not specified	Not specified
Zukunft Lehre jetzt	AT	Regional, local									x				Not specified	Not specified
Da will ich lernen! Initiative Lebensraum Ennstal	AT	Regional, local					x				x				Not specified	Not specified
Lehre mit Feinschliff	AT	Regional			x						x				Not specified	Not specified
Flemish Partnership for dual learning	BE	Regional	x	x		x	x	x	x			x			Technical secretariat funded by Flemish authority for education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribute to better alignment between the needs of the labour market and the apprenticeship training offer provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Apprenticeship Board	CY	National	x			x	x		x						Coordination body involving relevant stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribute to better alignment between the needs of the labour market and the apprenticeship training offer improve the quality of apprenticeships through performance monitoring and teacher/trainer training provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Advisory Council on the Initial Vocational Education and Training	DK	National	x	x		x		x	x			x			National council where all VET stakeholders are represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Professional committees	DK	Sectoral (all sectors)				x			x					x	Bipartite (employer and employee) committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribute to better alignment between the needs of the labour market and the apprenticeship training offer provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Local training committees	DK	Local			x	x	x		x		x	x		x	Representatives of the local business community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribute to better alignment between the needs of the labour market and the apprenticeship training offer provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Galician network for the dynamization of dual VET	ES	Regional		x	x						x	x			Coordinated by the regional authorities responsible for education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students foster cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders improve the quality of apprenticeships through performance monitoring and teacher/trainer training
Alliance for dual VET	ES	National			x	x	x				x	x			Technical secretary funded by the Bertelsmann	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students

															Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> foster cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
FP Empresa	ES	National												x	National management board on which all regions are represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students foster cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders
VET Council City Forum	ES	Local			x	x				x					Technical secretariat led by one of the city council members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students foster cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Regional Council for VET	ES	Regional		x	x	x									Each council is managed by a plenary board. Ad hoc monitoring committees and working groups are created when necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students foster cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders improve the quality of apprenticeships through performance monitoring and teacher/trainer training provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
General Council for VET	ES	National	x	x		x									Tripartite council chaired by the Ministry of Education and VET and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on a rotating basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the quality of apprenticeships through performance monitoring and teacher/trainer training provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy
Apprenticeship Experts in Finland Association	FI	National								x					Centralised coordination mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeship amongst businesses and students foster cooperation between VET and apprenticeship stakeholders
Convention de partenariat entre le Ministère de l'éducation, de la jeunesse et des sports, le Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur, de la recherche et de l'innovation et l'Opérateur de compétences Mobilités	FR	National	x	x	x	x				x	x				Centralised executive committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students improve the quality of apprenticeships through performance monitoring and teacher/trainer training
Convention de partenariat entre le Ministère de l'éducation, de la jeunesse et des sports avec le Comité de concertation et de coordination de l'apprentissage du bâtiment et des travaux publics	FR	National	Not specified											Not specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the quality of apprenticeships through performance monitoring and teacher/trainer training 	
Other agreements between the Ministry of Education and other sectoral partners ¹	FR	National	x	x	x	x				x	x				Not specified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote and improve the image of apprenticeships amongst businesses and students improve the quality of apprenticeships through

¹ This answer might indicate the existence of sectoral coalitions or partnerships.

Level of coalitions

Coalitions operating at national level were the most common type reported, accounting for 17 out of 30 reported coalitions. They were followed by regional coalitions (five) and local coalitions (three). In two countries, multiple sectoral coalitions exist, covering all sectors and with each sector having its own council.

Some coalitions seem to be active on several levels:

- One coalition in Sweden was reported to be national, regional and local.
- Two coalitions in Austria were reported as both regional and local.

No international coalitions were identified through the survey.

Size of coalitions and types of partner organisations

Although **on average coalitions count about four types of partners**, different compositions were reported, spanning from coalitions of only one type of stakeholder to up to eight different types of stakeholders.

Box 1. Single type of partner coalitions

Two of the three coalitions composed of a single type of stakeholder were coalitions of education and training providers. The third single type of partner coalition was of businesses (SMEs and large companies). All are located in different Member States (Austria, France and Spain):

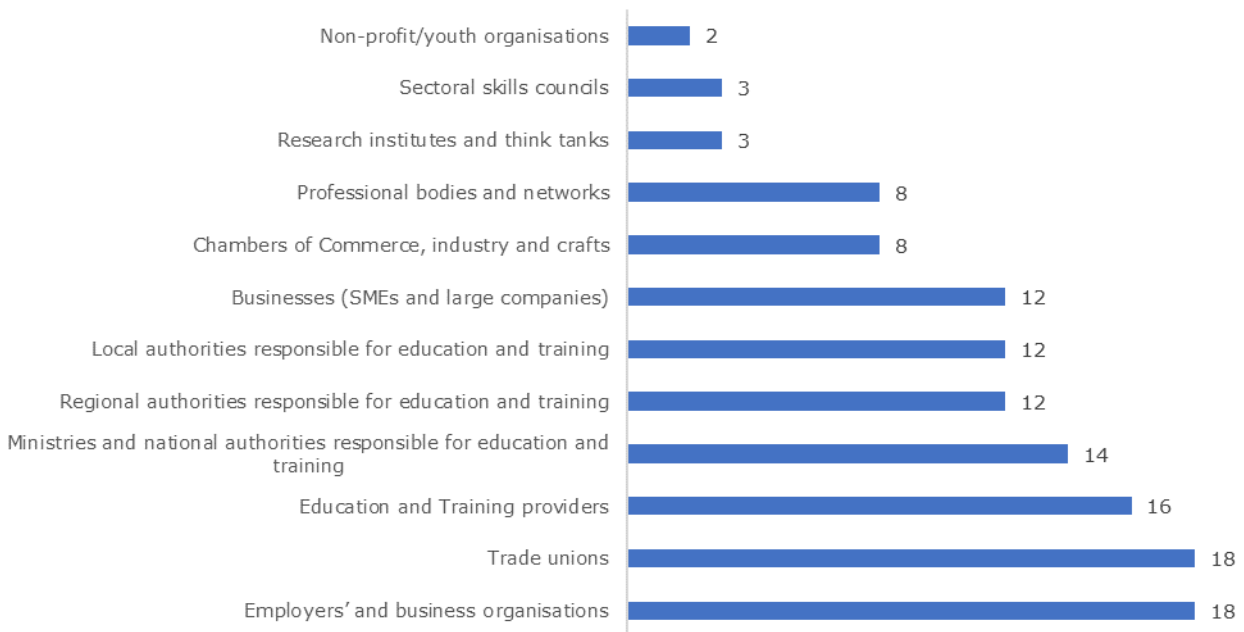
- In Austria, *Zukunft Lehre jetzt* is a coalition of businesses active at local and regional level.
- In France, the *National federation of regional associations of training centres directors (FNADIR)* brings together representatives of each regional directors' associations.
- In Spain, *FP EMPRESA* brings together VET providers from all 17 autonomous regions.

The majority of coalitions described involve at least an employer association and a trade union (17 coalitions out of 30). More than a third of the described coalitions (11) involved at least an employer association, a trade union and a ministry. Another frequent combination is an employer association, a trade union and an education and training provider (9). The table below provides an overview of the most frequent co-occurrences of different types of stakeholders as coalition partners:

Coalitions including at least the following types of stakeholders:	Count
Employer associations, trade unions	17
Employer associations, trade unions, ministries	11
Employer associations, trade unions, education and training providers	9
Businesses, employer associations, trade unions, education and training providers	5
Employer associations, trade unions, ministries, education providers	5
Employer associations, trade unions, education and training providers, ministries, regional authorities	3
Chambers of commerce, employer associations, trade unions, ministries	2

In line with the findings above, **the most cited coalition partners were trade unions and employer associations, with 18 citations each**, followed by education and training providers (16), ministries and national authorities responsible for education and training (14), and businesses (12).

Figure 1. Most cited coalition partners



Source: Ecorys survey of apprenticeship coalitions – N = 29

Coordination mechanisms

In the majority of cases, coalitions seem to be coordinated by a **multi-partite council serving as an executive board** and involving all coalition partners.

The nature and degree of sophistication of the coordinating body seems to reflect the level at which the coalition is active as well as the type of partners involved.

Larger national coalitions or regional coalitions involving public authorities seem to have more structured and centralised coordination devices in place, often with **ministries and relevant national or regional authorities** being responsible for coordinating multi-stakeholder coalitions. In some cases, these authorities also preside over the coalition's coordinating body:

- In **Luxembourg**, the apprenticeship partnership between the state, the professional chambers and the employees' chamber is centrally coordinated by the Ministry of Education, but allows for stakeholder involvement at all levels of apprenticeship governance.
- In **Italy**, the regional network for apprenticeships of the Piedmont Region is centrally coordinated by the vocational training unit of the Regional Directorate for Education, Training and Labour.
- In **Sweden**, the Swedish National Agency for Education coordinates the seven regional and national apprenticeship networks.

At the same time, we found no striking commonalities between the coordination mechanisms of the few coalitions which are reported to be purely local, but this may be attributed to the small size of the sample:

- In **Denmark**, the local training committees consist of employers and employees, and representatives from the local business community.
- In **Austria**, the *Lehre mit Feinschliff* coalition is a platform coordinated by the village of Radentheim which aims to match the labour demand of local businesses with the demand for apprenticeship places.

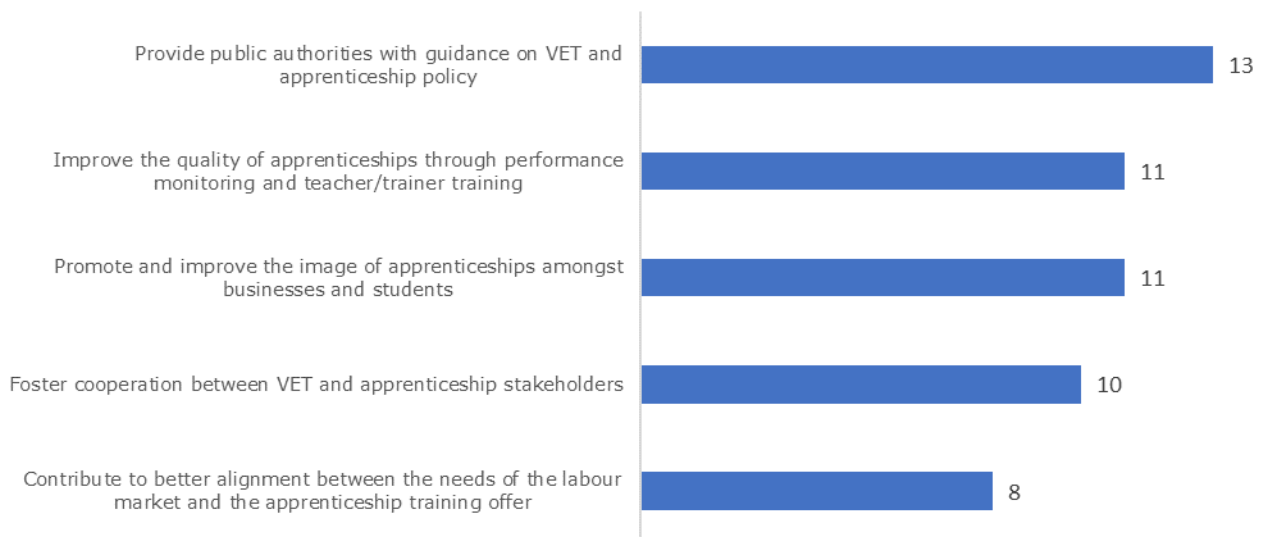
For some coalitions, coordination is **supported by a 'technical secretariat'** tasked with the management of daily executive affairs:

- In **Belgium (Flanders)**, the *Flemish Partnership* is supported by a team of secretaries seconded by the Flemish authority for education and training and the Flemish authority for employment.
- In **France**, the board of the *Réseau des CFA du BTP* (The Construction Learning Network) is assisted by a general secretariat composed of several technical departments.
- In **Spain**, la *Alianza para la Formación Profesional Dual* has a technical secretariat which coordinates its network. Its tasks include assuring the correct membership procedure through the Alliance's Platform, tracking members' development, responding to queries, clarifying issues raised by the members and channelling their proposals. The technical secretary is funded by Fundación Bertelsmann.

Key objectives

The respondents were asked what the objectives of the coalition they described were. While the question was open-ended, qualitative analysis highlighted five main common objectives:

Figure 2. Most cited objectives



The response count corresponds to the number of coalitions by which each identified objective has been cited.

Source: Ecorys survey of apprenticeship coalitions – N = 25

For almost half of the coalitions described (13 in 30 coalitions), it was reported that the coalition aimed to **provide public authorities with guidance on VET and apprenticeship policy** in order to contribute to the development of a better regulatory framework.

- In **Denmark**, the Advisory Council on the Initial Vocational Education and Training 'advises the minister at a general level on the basic vocational education in the ministry's area'.
- In **Italy**, the national Technical Body for Apprenticeships aims to 'resolve issues of a regulatory and contractual nature, examining bureaucratic obstacles'.

In line with the objectives of the EAfA, **improving the quality of apprenticeships** and **improving the image of apprenticeships** were mentioned by about a third of the described coalitions (11).

- In **Lithuania**, the national cooperation network aims to 'support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and ensure the quality of apprenticeships'.
- In **Spain**, the Consejo Autonómico de la Formación Profesional (Regional Council for VET) aims to 'lend prestige to VET' and to 'establish a quality assurance system' designed to 'assess[...] existing actions and propose improvement measures'.

Performance monitoring as well as teacher and trainer training seem to be seen as key aspects of enhancing the quality of apprenticeships. Those focusing on the image seem to be focusing on promoting apprenticeships to companies and, in a smaller number, the wider society. Other objectives often mentioned fostering cooperation between apprenticeship stakeholders (10) and contributing to better alignment between the needs of the labour market and the apprenticeship training offer (8).

- In **Cyprus**, the Apprenticeship Board *'monitors the number of apprentices required and how to train them in order to ensure that there will be a satisfactory number of skilled workers to their required needs of the industry and makes recommendations regarding the ratio of technical work force in relation to the apprentices in industry'*.

Key challenges

When asked about the main challenges faced by the coalitions, respondents described a wide range of issues. Answers were provided for 19 coalitions.

The most cited challenge was the **lack of attractiveness of apprenticeships** (five coalitions) which are often seen as a second choice by students and their families.

'Whereas we see that enterprises and companies were prepared and willing to train youngsters amid their personnel, in Flanders the dual system does not attract many students who are willing to start a dual trajectory. It takes time to overcome the negative image around work-based learning, that is often associated with students at the bottom of the educational scale who arrived in these systems for lack of better options'. – Belgium (Flanders)

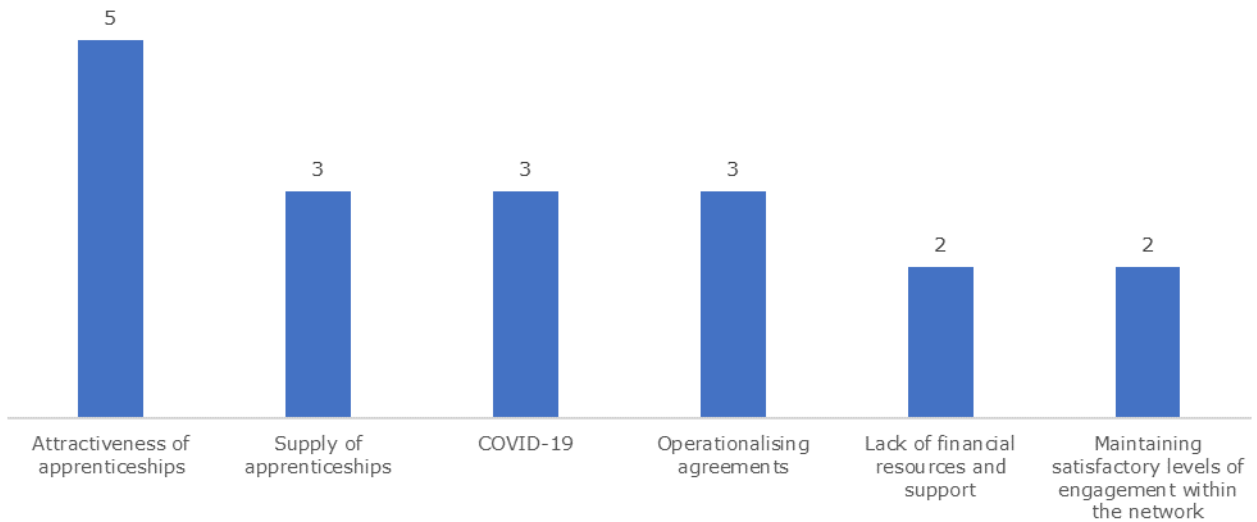
The second most cited challenge was **securing a sufficient supply of apprenticeships**, which was mentioned by three coalitions in Denmark, Italy and Norway. The aforementioned two challenges stress the relevance of the EAfA's objectives.

The COVID-19 pandemic was also mentioned (three coalitions) as a factor undermining the further development of recent coalitions (two coalitions) and creating gaps in in-company training (one coalition):

- In **Cyprus**, *'the pandemic has created a gap in the in-company training as many apprentices had to stop working due to health and safety measures enforced by the government since March 2020. The coalition needs to address the effects of this prolonged period and act upon finding solutions and creating a support network both for companies/employers and apprentices'*.
- In **Spain**, the Galician network for the dynamisation of dual VET is *'quite recent and the COVID-19 crisis has been a significant challenge for the development of the action in the first year of implementation of measures and evaluation of results, even though the initiative has proved to be successful'*.

Ensuring sufficient financial resources was also one of the key challenges mentioned (two coalitions).

Figure 3. Most cited challenges



The response count corresponds to the number of coalitions by which each identified challenge has been cited.

Source: Ecorys survey of apprenticeship coalitions – N = 19

Key achievements

Respondents were asked about the main achievements of the described coalition to date and answers were provided for 21 coalitions.

The **achievements reported echo the previously cited objectives** potentially indicating that these coalitions have been somewhat successful in meeting their goals. Most responses mentioned that the coalitions managed to **provide a framework for cooperation between apprenticeship stakeholders** (10 coalitions).

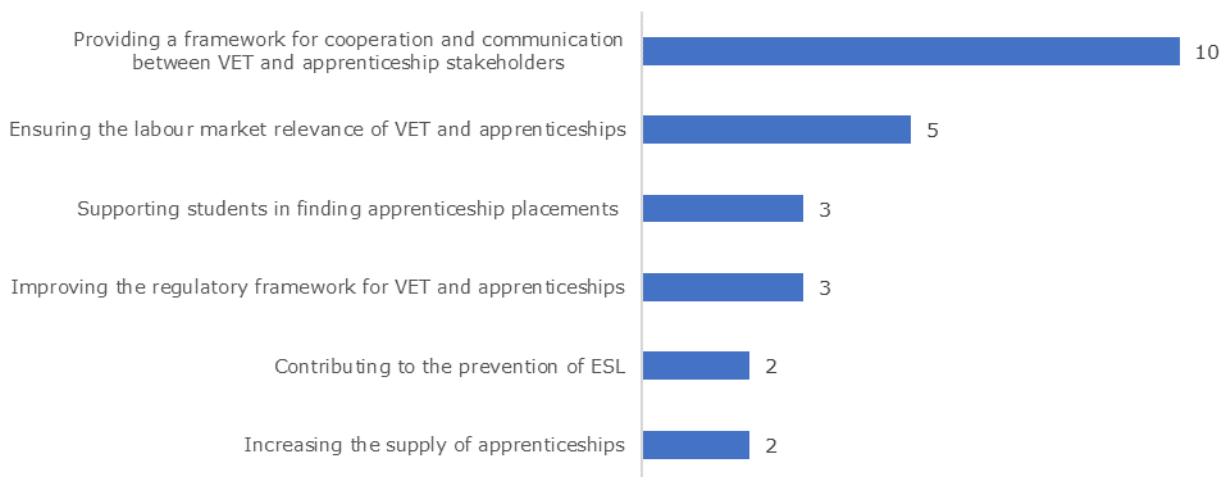
- In **Spain**, FP Empresa has '*contributed to creating a network where VET providers, either public or private, can foster relations with the business sector and share experiences and projects to promote VET in Spain*'.

These frameworks for cooperation seem to have led to more or less tangible cooperative outcomes, ranging from mere dialogue to more structured coordinated activities or formal agreements between the parties involved. Some coalitions contributed to ensuring a better match between **apprenticeships and labour market needs** (five coalitions).

- In **Denmark**, the main achievement of professional committees is to have '*established themselves as key players in developing VET programmes that match the labour market needs at the same time as they develop the students' transversal skills and their ability to act as active citizens*'.

Others **helped apprentices in securing apprenticeship** placements (three coalitions) or **contributed to improving the regulatory framework for apprenticeships** (three coalitions).

Figure 4. Most cited achievements



The response count corresponds to the number of coalitions by which the identified achievement has been cited.

Source: Ecorys survey of apprenticeship coalitions – N = 21

Support for coalitions

Respondents were asked how the EAfA could support them, and what kind of additional technical, material or financial support (and at what level) would facilitate the establishment of apprenticeship coalitions at different levels.

The question about possible EAfA support received comparatively few answers compared to previous questions, with only 10 out of 20 respondents providing a valid answer. Respondents pointed out two main types of support activities: **knowledge transfer through best-practice sharing** and **further promotion of existing initiatives and activities to increase the visibility of apprenticeships**. A few respondents also indicated that **financial support** supplementing dedicated national resources could be useful, perhaps through targeted EU-funded activities (two respondents).

Future plans

Out of 20 respondents, 14 provided a valid answer to the survey question about the described coalition's future plans. Most of these answers indicate that the most pressing goal is to **strengthen and/or grow the coalition through reinforced cooperation and/or enlarging the membership base** (10 coalitions).

- In **Spain**, the Alianza para la FP Dual will keep scaling the network's activities and ensure their sustainability: *'this means working with key actors that have impact in the field [...] For instance, instead of visiting and contacting each company, business associations, clusters and intermediate bodies are the key target in order to multiply its effect and actively engage with its associated SMEs and companies all at once'*.

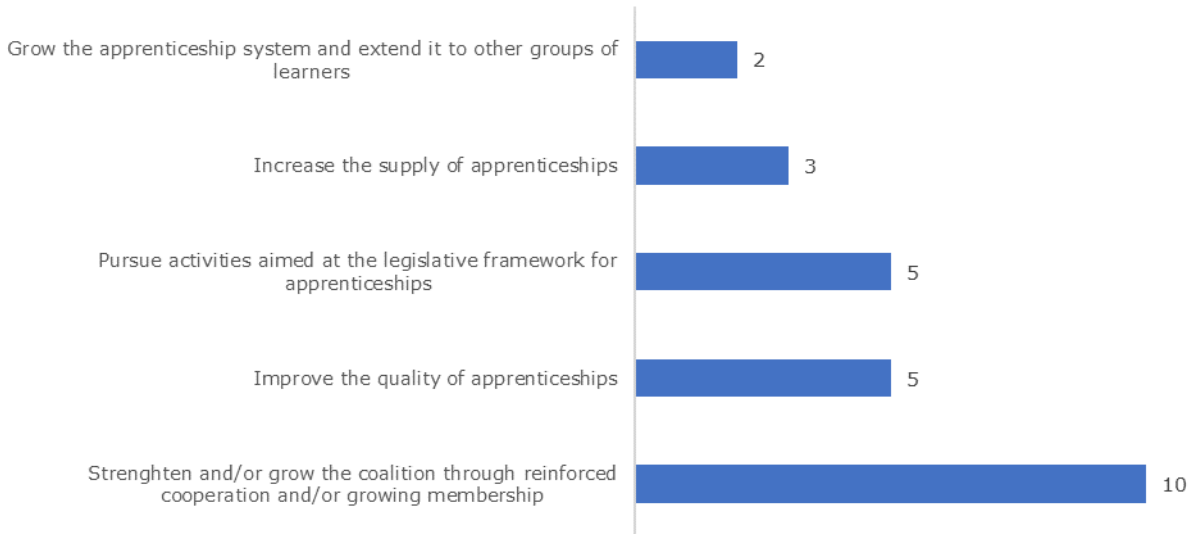
Other future plans described are in line with the key objectives outlined above. In particular, they plan to implement activities designed to **improve the quality of apprenticeships** (five coalitions) and the **legislative framework** for apprenticeships (five coalitions).

- In **Cyprus**, the *Apprenticeship Board* will contribute to finalising the update of the Apprenticeship Legislation of the Law of 1966.
- In **Norway**, the tripartite coalition will continue to give advice on how to develop VET in the best possible way.

For three coalitions based in Denmark, **increasing the supply of apprenticeships** was cited as a future plan. Two responses received from Belgium (Flanders) and Italy mentioned **growing the apprenticeship system to extend it to adult learners**. Other answers included: conducting a study on telework and

apprenticeships, simplifying access to apprenticeships and ensuring the continued labour market relevance of apprenticeships.

Figure 5. Most cited future plans



The response count corresponds to the number of coalitions by which the future plan has been cited.

Source: Ecorys survey of apprenticeship coalitions – N = 18

Countries with no coalitions reported

Respondents from Estonia, Greece, Hungary and Romania reported that there are no apprenticeship coalitions in their respective countries.

Key obstacles

In Estonia and Hungary, no challenges to the development of apprenticeship coalitions were identified.

The response from Estonia seems to indicate that there might not be an urgent need for the development of apprenticeship coalitions, since 'all vocational schools have councils of advisers, representing professional associations and employers, as well as local governments'.

The contribution from Hungary indicates that instead of apprenticeship coalitions, the country seems to have multiple partnership forums between sectoral skills councils and the Vocational Education and Training Innovation Council. However, their scope of activity is more broadly vocational educational and training rather than apprenticeships specifically.

In Greece, the main challenges are (a lack of) **involvement of social partners**, low attractiveness of VET, financial problems of SMEs due to COVID-19, a lack of investment in the training of in-company trainers, low participation of adults in LLL and a lack of awareness of the added value of apprenticeship coalitions in human resource development.

In Romania, **involving social partners** was also mentioned as a key challenge leading to the lack of unitary actions at sector level to signal changes in competence needs in the labour market.

Support required

The responses received from Estonia, Greece, Hungary and Romania all cited **knowledge-sharing initiatives** such as webinars or peer-learning activities as examples of how the EAfA could support the development of apprenticeship coalitions in their respective countries:

- Estonia: 'with good examples and supporting seminars. For example, how to involve small businesses in apprenticeships, how do organised coalitions work, etc.';

- Greece: *'EAfA could provide best practices in different thematic aspects, organise webinars for peer-learning in specific sectors (based on national priorities), and design study visits to countries/regions with experience in apprenticeship partnerships/networks'*;
- Hungary: *'We would like to hear about good practices already in place in other countries'*;
- Romania: *'By inviting employers and social partners from a certain sector to different sectoral events – fostering the exchange of good practices'*.

Other suggestions for technical, material and financial support include:

- Greece: technical support to ministries responsible for apprenticeship schemes to support the planning of apprenticeship coalitions, material support to social partners to raise awareness of apprenticeships, and financial support to companies to incentivise support for apprenticeship partnerships;
- Romania: financing specific sectoral projects with vocational training providers, employers, social partners and possibly the public employment service.