



European Committee  
of the Regions

# The role of regions and cities in delivering high-quality apprenticeships for all

European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the European Committee of the Regions | 3-4 June 2021

Building on a series of online events exploring the different areas in which regions and cities play a pivotal role in fostering apprenticeships, this high-level conference brought together more than 35 speakers to discuss how apprenticeships can be an instrument of social inclusion and the main barriers and good practices. This online conference was organised by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Commission's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) in close cooperation with the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL), the German delegation at the CoR, and the Basque Government.

## HIGH LEVEL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, delivered a live keynote speech during the event. He highlighted the triple role that local and regional authorities play in increasing the supply of apprenticeships as employers, as authorities responsible for VET, and as catalysts encouraging employers to take on apprentices. Answering questions from the audience, the Commissioner shared his optimistic vision of the future of apprenticeships contributing to the digital and green transitions and providing learning opportunities abroad. He concluded that there is global awareness among Member States that vocational training can bring good quality jobs and positive employment prospects to young people.

**Anne Karjalainen**, Chair of the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC), stressed the urgency of resolving the unprecedented number of challenges exhibited by the pandemic. These range from the digital and green transitions and migration to those related to labour markets such as high youth unemployment. She highlighted that the territorial dimension must be taken into account when designing and implementing policies related to inclusive apprenticeships. Targeted approaches are needed to offer inclusive opportunities for people regardless of their social and educational backgrounds.

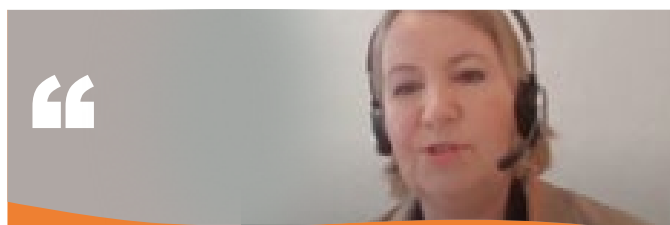
Opening the first panel on **Delivering high-quality apprenticeships for all**, **Jorge Arévalo**, Basque Regional Vice-Minister for VET, Ministry of Education, Basque Government, stressed the importance of placing the European human capital at the centre of the three major transformations we are witnessing:



“

“Our ability to adapt to changes will determine our future. To adapt we need skills and local and regional authorities have a huge responsibility as they are closer to the needs of people and of companies, especially SMEs, and therefore play a decisive role to make new opportunities out of those changes.”

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



“

“The biggest challenge we are faced with is matching the acquisition of new skills with the catalyst changes happening around us. When addressing the main challenges in work and employment European policymakers must first meet these challenges locally if they are then to be met at European level.”

**Anne Karjalainen**, Chair of SEDEC



**earlall**  
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL & LOCAL  
AUTHORITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING



technological and digital, energetic and environmental, and demographic and social. Through new training methods and collaborative practices, apprenticeships can be key to successfully addressing these challenges. **Daniela Ballico**, Mayor of Ciampino, Italy, and Member of the CoR, highlighted that switching to homeworking due to the pandemic showed that many jobs could be performed by people with disabilities, and apprenticeships should be used to train these people, ensuring their independence and inclusion in the labour market. **Stefan Enica**, Project Officer for Skills and Education, SGI Europe, emphasised the fundamental role of trainers and the need to constantly update their teaching methodologies, ensuring they are aligned with the industry's needs and are able to deliver the set of skills required by the green and digital transitions. **Cristina Grieco**, Special Advisor for Relations with the Regions, National Italian Ministry of Education, reported that a recent Italian reform aims to change the work-based learning paradigm, from something relegated to the VET sector to a method applicable along the whole education system. **Mark Weinmeister**, Secretary of State for European Affairs, Land of Hesse and Member of the CoR, showcased the region's good practices encompassing specific support for young people at risk of dropping out, training of low-skilled adults, the mobility of apprentices and trainers and teachers, and cross-country collaboration with partner regions.

The first thematic discussion on **Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling** was moderated by **Lidia Salvatore**, Adult Learning and Continuing Vocational Training Expert, Cedefop. **Emil Boc**, Mayor of Cluj Napoca, and Member of the CoR started the discussion by presenting the Cluj Education Cluster and the 'Cluj- future of work' project, which, through a bottom-up approach at local level, aims to develop the skills required by the increasing automatisisation and digitalisation.



**Emil Boc**, Mayor of Cluj Napoca, former Prime Minister of Romania

**Csaba Borboly**, President of Harghita County Council, Member of the CoR, mentioned the role of upskilling and reskilling in transforming brain drain into brain gain and contributing to reducing unemployment. **Jochen Kriesten**, Head of the Department of Education and Trainee Programmes in the Aus-und Fortbildungszentrum für den bremischen öffentlichen Dienst (AFZ), shared his insights from a successful training programme for refugees which provides training and job prospects to 15 000 young refugees in the city of Bremen.

The second discussion focused on **Promoting the international dimension** was moderated by **Karen Maguire**, Head of Division, Local Employment, Skills and Social Innovation, OECD. Highlighting factors that facilitate mobility, **Ben Bruyndonckx**, Coordinator of International Mobility Projects in VET, Connectief, Flanders, stressed the importance of having institutional partnerships built on trust and involving young people by allowing them to share their ideas at managerial level. Agreeing on the value of inclusiveness, **Gillian Coughlan**, Member of Cork County Council and the CoR, drew attention to the mixed impacts of the accelerated digital transition, the growing need for up- and reskilling, and how an increasingly mobile labour force requires a greater degree of mutual recognition between the EU and third countries. Bringing insights from this area, **Cesare Onestini**, Director at the European Training Foundation, explained that building mobility schemes is about bridging common interests and that a key challenge is establishing partnerships with institutions lacking apprenticeship and student mobility tradition.



**Chiara Riondino**, Head of Unit, DG EMPL

Setting the scene for the second day of the high-level conference, **Anne Karjalainen**, Rapporteur on 'The implementation of the EPSR from a local and regional perspective', began by presenting the Committee's opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights which included a call to find solutions for up- and reskilling adults, paying special attention to vulnerable groups and older unemployed workers. In line with this call, **Chiara Riondino**, Head of Unit, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion,

highlighted the importance of the three measurable targets proposed in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan related to employment, adult training and poverty, endorsed in the Porto Social Summit Declaration. She also stressed the key role of local and regional authorities in delivering green and inclusive services to citizens.

A third thematic discussion on **Mobilising local and regional actors** was moderated by **Maria Fabiani**, Advisor of the Metropolitan City of Rome. **Georgette Bréard**, Vice President in charge of training, learning and guidance, Brittany region, France, showcased the strategy for inclusive deployment of digital measures implemented in Brittany. **Anders Carlberg**, Head of the Department of Research, Development and Education, Västra Götaland, remarked that, while in the past apprenticeships have not been widely used in the region, they are now seen as a powerful tool for social inclusion, particularly for young people at risk of exclusion from the labour market and society. **Rasmus Flick**, Chamber of Commerce, Västra Götaland, presented a new project through which companies are preliminarily consulted in order to understand what tasks the apprentice will perform, allowing work tasks to be linked to specific learning outcomes and increasing companies' engagement in apprenticeships. **Teresa Maria Zotta**, Deputy Mayor, Metropolitan City of Rome, Italy, stressed the role that cities and metropolitan cities in particular can play in developing private-public partnerships for the deployment of apprenticeships and described Rome's work to create such partnerships.



**Teresa Maria Zotta**,  
Deputy Mayor, Metropolitan  
City of Rome



**Noelia Cantero**, Director,  
European Association  
of Regional and Local  
Authorities for Lifelong  
Learning (EARLALL)

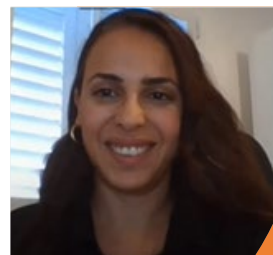
**Rikardo Lamadrid Intxaurrega**, Director General for New Technologies and Advanced Learning, Ministry of Education, Basque Government, highlighted the collaborative approach adopted in the Basque country, while **Iñigo Araiztegui Arraiz**, Director of Internationalisation, TKNIKA, provided a concrete example of collaboration beyond regional borders developed through the creation of a centre of vocational excellence that allows Basque VET centres to interconnect with stakeholders across Europe.

The last thematic discussion on Encouraging cross-border cooperation was moderated by **Noelia Cantero**, Director, EARLALL. **Petra Jendrich**, Head of Department, Vocational Schools and Securing the Supply of Skilled Workers in the Ministry of Education in Rhineland-Palatinate, shared how European schools in her region prepare young apprentices for living, working and studying across the continent and highlighted that language skills are fundamental for successful cross-border cooperation.

**Iliaria Mascitti**, Public Officer and Project Manager of the DUALPLUS project, and **Francesco Pisanu**, Head of Evaluation, Educational Policies Office, Autonomous Province of Trento, presented two projects: Dual+ aims to increase the attractiveness of dual education in the alpine territories, and Learning Atelier in Trentino offers workshops where dual education stakeholders creatively engage in knowledge-sharing. **Mart Veliste**, Thematic Expert on SME competitiveness, Interreg Europe, Policy Learning Platform, presented the Policy Learning Platform, a peer learning and expert learning platform open to all and that offers free services to local and regional authorities.

Kicking off the second panel on **Good practices that will remain**, **Norbert Schöbel**, Team Leader, Vocational Education and Training, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning, DG EMPL, offered the panellists an opportunity to reflect on the key messages over the course of the conference. **Vlassis Korovilos**, Expert, Department for Learning and Employability, Cedefop, highlighted that policy interventions should be based on the economic situation of a specific region or municipality, and that an agile local mechanism that gathers data can help local decision-makers to identify needs at early stages. **Denis Leamy**, Chief Executive, Cork Education and Training Board and Chair of the OECD Local Employment and Economic Development Directing Committee, highlighted that hybrid learning practices are likely to stay and praised local apprenticeship leaders around Europe who demonstrate the value of apprenticeships for employers and students daily. **Maria Fabiani**, Advisor of the Metropolitan City of Rome, stressed the importance of helping the most vulnerable groups at regional and local level, and highlighted the good practice implemented by some municipalities of requiring businesses to offer apprenticeships in order to participate in public procurement. Offering a wealth of good practices, **Mart Veliste** explained that the Interreg Policy Learning Platform also supports cross-border projects such as the Dutch Export Development Programme where students are matched with companies to support their export strategies.

**Kjerstin Torpmann-Hagen**, Policy Officer, Vocational Education and Training, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning, DG EMPL, presented the EAfA monitoring survey results which found inter alia that the majority of the respondents from 24 different countries made progress on improving the supply, quality and image of apprenticeships and mobility of apprentices. To reach these goals, 89% of the respondents considered the EAfA to be very valuable. Three new EAfA members representing regional



**Tair Ifergan**, Acting Director  
General of Labour and Head  
of the National Institute for  
Technological Education and  
Training, Israel

and local authorities were then welcomed. As the EAfA is opening up to candidate countries, Eastern Partnership and Neighbourhood South countries, Israel was welcomed as the first EAfA partner country to join the EAfA. **Tair Ifergan**, Acting Director General of Labour and Head of the National Institute for Technological Education and Training, Israel, highlighted the need to better align supply and demand on the Israeli labour market and that improving the quality of the national VET system can contribute to improved labour productivity and higher wages, especially among those from a weaker socio-economic background.

Closing the event, **Thomas Wobben**, Director for Legislative Works, CoR, thanked all speakers and organisers, and reiterated the importance of promoting recovery, social cohesion, competitiveness and cooperation in the future.

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

Join our LinkedIn group [here](#)

Sign up to receive our quarterly EAfA newsletter:

For EAfA members only [here](#)

For non-EAfA members [here](#)

# #ApprenEU