



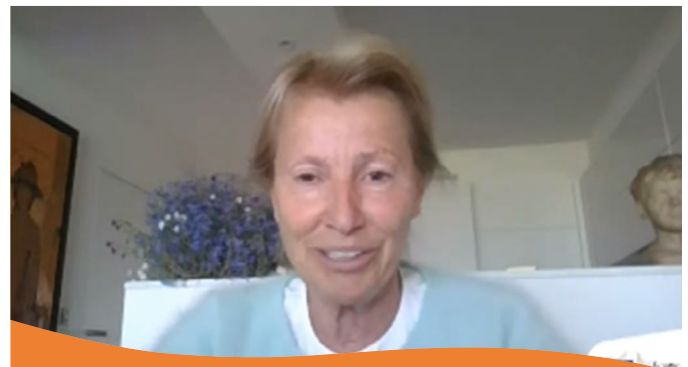
Live Discussion: Gender equality in apprenticeships- How can we close the gap in participation?

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) | 24 June 2021

The ninth Live Discussion hosted by the European Commission's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) explored how we can close the gap in participation between women and men in apprenticeships and encourage young people to take up career paths, irrespective of gender stereotypes. To this end, panellists from across Europe, representing the public and private sectors, came together to share their experiences on how we can enable women and men to realise their full potential through apprenticeships and across a range of occupations.

INTRODUCTION BY THE DIRECTORATE- GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION (DG EMPL), EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ann Vanden Bulcke, Policy Assistant at DG EMPL, opened the event by highlighting the importance and timeliness of discussing gender inequalities in apprenticeships and, more broadly, in employment. Ann mentioned that while several steps have been taken, there is still gender inequality in the labour market. She highlighted how women are still over-represented in low-paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making. Ann also highlighted the European Union's actions, including the von der Leyen Commission's EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, which aims for a Union where people, irrespective of their gender, are free to follow their chosen pathway and have equal opportunities to grow, participate in, and lead European society. To the same end, organisations such as the European Apprentices Network are advocating for a holistic approach to tackle gender stereotypes at the EU, national and local levels.



'Promoting apprenticeships should be paired with efforts to address gender stereotypes based on traditional social roles.'

Ann Vanden Bulcke, Policy Assistant,
DG EMPL, European Commission

ROLE OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

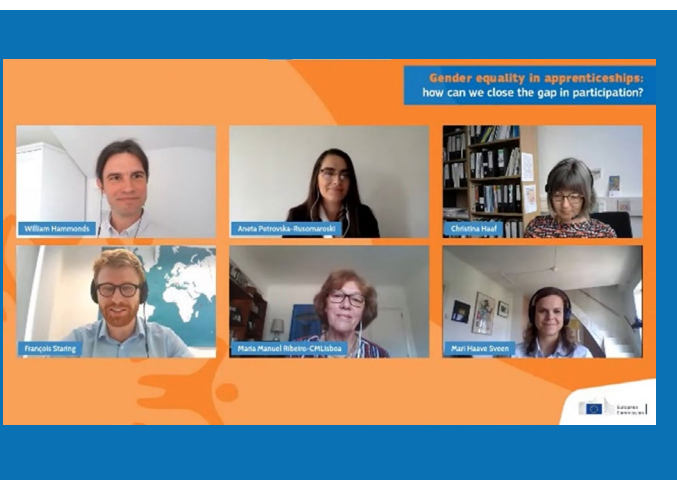
Kicking off, **Mari Haave Sveen**, Chief Adviser in Responsible Business Conduct at Oslo's Municipal Undertaking for Cultural and Sports Facilities, talked about the city's 'PRIM' project. 'PRIM' is part of the rebuilding of Tøyenbadet, a popular swimming facility in the city. Through the project, Oslo's municipality aims to recruit and retain women apprentices, and create an inclusive and diverse workplace, with the goal of at least 20% of the working hours worked by women apprentices. Following Mari, **Christina Haaf**, Head of International Cooperation at the Competence Center Technology-Diversity-Equal Opportunities, presented one of Germany's biggest career orientation programmes, 'Girls Day'. The programme has now been running for over 20 years, and it enables girls to visit workplaces, encouraging them to think about careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The programme has seen an increasing number of companies joining the initiative and high publicity, with support from leaders such as the Chancellor Angela Merkel also supporting it. Moving on, **Maria Manuel Ribeiro**, International Internships Coordinator at Lisbon City Council, described the municipality's efforts to address gender inequalities through its Qualification Centre, which supports women and men via education and training activities. The municipality's commitment to gender balance is also reflected in its leadership, with 56,4% of the municipal leaders being women. Finally, **Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarski**, Head of Human Resources and Organisation at EVN Macedonia, a power distribution and supply company in North Macedonia, talked about the numerous ways through which her company is addressing gender inequalities at the workplace. Activities have included school visits, career fairs and workshops, promotion of female role models, and training opportunities to help female employees advance their careers in the energy sector.

Aneta also gave an interesting example of how her company organised 'Take Your Daughter to Work Day' to get its employees' daughters into the company and inspire them to pursue a career in the energy sector.

In addition, the Live Discussion introduced the findings of the EU study 'Gender behaviour and its impact on education outcomes (with a special focus on the performance of boys and young men)', commissioned by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. **François Staring**, Senior Research Manager at Ecorys, presented findings that examined the relationship between education outcomes and the career choices of boys and girls. François highlighted how stereotypes across many layers of society, including an association between masculinity and certain economic sectors, contribute to differences in participation between men and women in apprenticeships.

BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN APPRENTICESHIPS



A virtual group photo of the panellists and the moderator.

*From the top left: **William Hammonds** (moderator), **Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarski** and **Christina Haaf***

*From the bottom left: **François Staring**, **Maria Manuel Ribeiro** and **Mari Haave Sveen***

Secondly, panellists emphasised the need to **intervene early to challenge gender stereotypes** limiting young people's educational and employment choices. The panel also highlighted the importance of concrete actions to **reform workplaces and practices** to ensure that they are welcoming for all genders.

Finally, the audience was reminded that this was the last Live Discussion for the summer, with the next discussion in late September. Until then, a range of training modules are available in EAFA's [Online Library](#), including the most recent module on digitalisation in apprenticeships and the 2021–2027 Digital Education Plan.

The panel highlighted how the problem of gender inequality has multiple layers. Speakers noted practical barriers, such as lack of separate facilities on construction sites as well as discriminatory practices like occupational segregation and salary gaps. Aneta noted that women, despite representing half of the population, account only for a quarter of the employees in the energy sector, with few in senior and managerial roles. Speakers all highlighted the issue of gender stereotypes in employment, which are deeply rooted in our societies and, often, in the advice given to apprentices by career advisors and families, and further amplified by mainstream and social media.

LOOKING FORWARD

The panellists highlighted the importance of addressing gender equality for society as well as the practical benefits for employers. So, how can we address gender equality in apprenticeships? Firstly, they identified the need for a **multi-stakeholder approach** throughout the whole value chain (including employer organisations, career guidance professionals, teachers, vocational education and training organisations, governmental agencies, and employers) to ensure that all play a role in addressing the gender gaps.

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