



Live Discussion: How can apprenticeships be used as a tool for social inclusion? Inspiring Practices that break stereotypes

European Alliance for Apprenticeships | 07 October 2021

The 10th Live Discussion hosted by the European Commission's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) explored the issue of how apprenticeships can be used as a tool for social inclusion. In this context, panelists across Europe representing academia, industry, the public, and non-governmental sectors came together to share how apprenticeships are used as a vehicle for social inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion on the labour market, and in society as a whole.

INTRODUCTION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG EMPL

Ann Vanden Bulcke, Policy Assistant at DG EMPL, opened the event by highlighting the ambitions of the European Skills Agenda to prepare the workforce of tomorrow, and leave no person or place behind. This ambition is in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) which emphasises that fostering social inclusion and combating poverty are core values of the European way of life. Ann stressed that good quality apprenticeships can promote these values and break stereotypes, and contribute to a fairer and more inclusive Europe. Apprentices can help individuals to obtain competences that can lead them to more rewarding and fulfilling careers. In parallel, they can help companies tap into a wider pool of talent and become more attractive workplaces. Looking forward, action is needed to tackle structural inequalities and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and gender that still persist.



'Social inclusion and equal opportunities for all are core values of the EU and the European way of life'

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

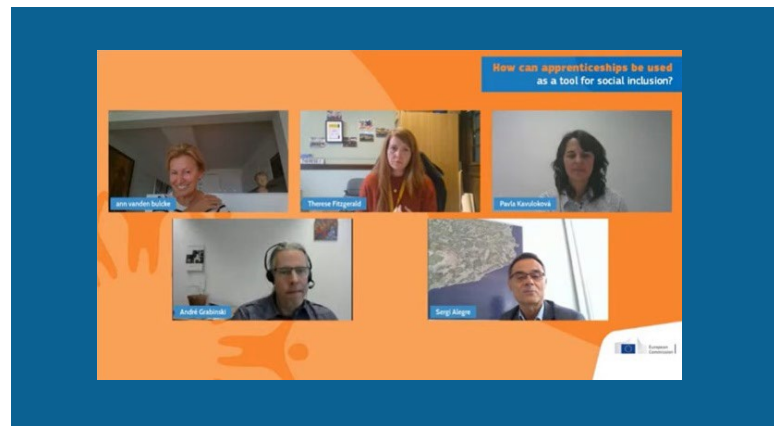
PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN APPRENTICESHIPS: EXAMPLES FROM EUROPE

Opening the plenary session, **Therese Fitzgerald**, Programme Officer at the Technological University Dublin, talked about the 'Access to Apprenticeships' programme', which runs for 12 weeks three times a year. During these periods, young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds get to develop skills relevant for a wide range of industries and improve their CVs, interview, and job-hunting skills. To promote social inclusion, the programme collaborates with local communities and employers, and runs targeted campaigns (e.g. for all-girls schools), which has resulted in an increase in female participation from 4% (2018) to 29% (2021). The programme also supports students after their apprenticeships have ended by, for example, providing an alumni network that is built on a trusting environment. **Pavla Kavuloková**, Coordinator of Professional Education and International Projects at Škoda Auto, Czechia, shared the work of Škoda Auto Vocational school aimed at supporting disabled apprentices by creating placement opportunities for them via the Erasmus+ programme. A reference was also made to Škoda's efforts to encourage female participation in VET.

Through the Girls' Day, the company offers girls the chance to visit the industrial plant and experiment with different tools, such as virtual painting, and interact with staff. **Sergi Alegare Calero**, Head of European Projects at Fundació Catalana de l'Esplai, Catalonia, presented the work of the initiative 'Youth with Value', which targets Catalonian youth not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET). The programme involves social services to help identify young vulnerable individuals, and immerses them in a dual, one-year programme. Throughout the programme, apprentices are offered a paid work placement, combined with studies that empower them with general competences demanded by the industry. Alongside the dual track, the initiative invests up to ten hours a week with each apprentice in a supportive environment where potential doubts, issues, or fears can be addressed. Finally, **André Grabinski**, Research Associate at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), Germany, gave an overview of the 'KAUSA' project, which guides companies owned by migrants to launch their own apprenticeship schemes. The project also supports young migrants directly in several ways by providing information in multiple languages regarding VET-opportunities, setting up online meetings with employers, referring migrants to youth job agencies and language support, and helping them to prepare job applications. KAUSA also offers a mentorship programme, where 75% of the mentors are migrants or refugees themselves allowing students to talk to someone who has been in their position and they can relate to. Initial results of the mentorship programme indicate that it has led to reduced drop-out rates.

CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN APPRENTICESHIPS

Achieving social inclusion through apprenticeships is associated with various barriers and obstacles. **André Grabinski** stressed that prejudice and discrimination still exist today. For example, in Germany, people with a Turkish surname often face more difficulties in the job-application process than people with a German one. **Therese Fitzgerald** elaborated that some students that she works with face homelessness or live in unstable conditions. Other students may not have proper IT equipment, internet access, or even a space to study at home. **Pavla Kavuloková** went on to highlight that some marginalised students may need additional support, such as those with learning difficulties or mental health issues, which became more common during the pandemic. **Sergi Alegare Calero** highlighted that a holistic approach is needed for every vulnerable student, which takes their specific home environment and family situation into account. Unfortunately, it can be challenging to convince early leavers from education who are living in poor conditions to go back into learning/training, as they often hold a pessimistic outlook on life.



A virtual group photo of the panellists and the moderator.

From the top left: *Ann Vanden Bulcke (Moderator), Therese Fitzgerald, Pavla Kavuloková, André Grabinski, Sergi Alegare Calero*

CONCLUSION AND THE UPCOMING LIVE DISCUSSION

In spite of the many challenges, the inspiring practices presented during the Live Discussion demonstrated that apprenticeships can contribute, in very tangible ways, to social inclusion across the EU. What all these practices have in common is their commitment to make apprenticeships work for everyone, and to make sure that no one is left behind – at school, on the labour market, and in society as a whole.

After hearing the panellists and the conclusion of the Live Discussion, the audience were cordially invited to the next Live Discussion, 'A focus on EU sectoral social dialogues – how sectoral social partners collaborate to promote and develop apprenticeships', which will take place on November 10. Registrations are available [here](#). Don't miss it!

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