



# Regional webinar for Candidate Countries and EAfA Partner Countries

European Alliance for Apprenticeships | 19 November 2021

This event marked the sixth regional webinar by the European Training Foundation (ETF) and European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) to discuss policy developments and various prevalent themes on work-based learning (WBL) in EU Candidate and EAfA Partner Countries.

## EU POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

**Cesare Onestini**, Director, ETF, opening the event, reaffirmed ETF's commitment in developing more and better apprenticeships by supporting candidate countries in the adoption and implementation of relevant measures. The evident progress made in recent years shows the results of this commitment.

**Ana Carrero**, Deputy Head of Unit at DG EMPL, presented the latest policy developments in the area of vocational education. Continuing the work specified in the Riga conclusions of 2015, the [Osnabrück Declaration](#) sets out the policy actions for the period 2021–2025 supporting the [EU's Council Recommendation on vocational education and training](#) (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience.

Three years into implementation of the [2018 Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships \(EFQEA\)](#), a Commission report shows that, while the seven criteria on learning and working conditions are in place in the majority of Member States, further progress is needed in implementing framework conditions.

The green and digital transitions are high on the EU political agenda. The updated [Digital Education Action Plan](#) sets out more ambitious targets for the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem.

Initiatives like the [SELFIE WBL tool](#) have also been developed to offer support to countries, schools, and companies with navigating the digital transition.

**Jasmina Poličnik**, Secretary at the Upper Secondary, Short-Cycle Higher Vocational and Adult Education Directorate in the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport of Slovenia, presented the **priorities of the Slovenian Presidency**, including renewal of the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

## FUNDING FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

**Neil Taylor**, Head of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in Kosovo\* (EBRD), presented how investments are used to support regional intergration in the Western Balkans. In particular, private sector investment (representing about 65% of the EBRD's overall investment) supports projects that stimulate the transition towards resilient green economies. The design of funding programmes must take into account vulnerable groups' needs, as well as skills demand. Partnerships are established with employers, businesses, and training sectors to create more synergies and better skills matches.

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

## NEW COUNTRIES WELCOMED INTO EAFA

The webinar provided an opportunity to welcome two new ETF Partner Countries into the Alliance, Israel and Moldova, demonstrating the continued growth of the community of active stakeholders, and in turn the growing commitment to collaboration.





*By joining the Alliance, we aim to encourage the development of more apprenticeships placements, to help citizens develop skills matching the needs of the labour market.*

**Nitzan Mimrod**, Head of the Bureau of Vocational Training and Manpower Development, Ministry of Economy and Industry of the State of Israel



*The EAFA represents a great opportunity to learn from experiences from other countries in Europe and best practices.*

**Silviu Gîncu**, Head of VET Department of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova

### Albania

Collaboration between schools and businesses has started following implementation of the WBL Regulation, and capacity building of liaison coordinators is being set up.

### North Macedonia

Since 2019, WBL has been fully implemented in North Macedonia. Recent developments to enhance WBL include adopting a new VET law bringing in new elements concerning dual education. Training mentors and capacity building of coordinators is also ongoing.

### Montenegro

Montenegro has seen steady growth in the number of VET students in recent years. The country is about to launch a pilot methodology for student tracking, improved cooperation between schools and employers, and further training of teachers.

### Serbia

A promotional video showcased practical learning and immediate employment opportunities following VET, which are key reasons underlying students' appreciation of WBL in Serbia. Despite being a challenge in the context of WBL, remote learning imposed by the pandemic has also encouraged the development of new digital approaches to WBL.

### Turkey

Turkey has a well-developed WBL thanks also to strong partnership with the private sector. A new programme for Vocational Training Centres has been developed in Turkey. This programme fosters the integration of practical training in companies with theoretical education in schools. The programme aims to prepare individuals with the skills needed for their future professions, and participation in it leads to acquisition of a journeyman's/master's certificate and diploma.

## PARTNER COUNTRIES' LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON WORK-BASED LEARNING AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Establishing a legal framework for apprenticeships in line with the EFQEA is a precondition for joining the EAFA. Representatives from the five Partner Countries that have joined the EAFA until now presented the latest developments in the introduction to WBL.

### LOOKING FORWARD TO 2022

The next ETF–EAFA event will take place in Belgrade in 2022. The event will provide an opportunity to discuss digitalisation in Candidate and Partner Countries, and how EU funds are being used for digital enhancement projects in VET. As 2022 is the European Year of Youth, the event will also explore policies and tools being developed which aim to support young people.

Participants were encouraged to share their input with ETF to shape the content of the next event.

### EAFA ACTION PLAN

The EAFA Action plan for next year will be published soon. Some key highlights mentioned by **Norbert Schoebel, DG EMPL** included the:

- **'EAFA on track!'** hybrid event, in collaboration with the Austrian Federal Railways (Vienna, March 2022)
- **'Relaunch of the EAN in the context of the European Year of Youth'** hybrid event, in collaboration with Fundació Bertelsmann and Generalitat de Catalunya (Barcelona, March 2022)
- **EAFA get together** in-person event (Brussels, June 2022)

In line with EAFA priorities and members' feedback, activities such as webinars and live discussions will be continued while new activities will also be introduced. In 2022, EAFA will develop a series of podcasts to discuss apprenticeships and the four main EAFA objectives. Discover the EAFA 2022 Action plan [here](#).

Find more information about EAFA's live discussions [here](#)

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