



European  
Commission



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# European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Action plan 2022

*Employment,  
Social Affairs  
and Inclusion*



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# 1.0 Introduction

In 2020, the EAfA published its [action plan for the period 2020-2021](#). The action plan detailed the six priorities set out for the [Renewed EAfA](#), outlined short- and medium-term objectives and presented the activities that would have been implemented until December 2021.

This document is the EAfA action plan for the year 2022. On the basis of EAfA's priorities and objectives, the action plan for 2022 was built on members' feedback and in close collaboration with EAfA stakeholders. The action plan is also aligned to key policy developments and other EU initiatives as the European Year of Youth taking place in 2022.

This document is structured in the following sections:

- EAfA activities in 2021
- Action plan
- What's new in 2022
- EAfA Calendar.

## 2.0 EAfA activities in 2021

In line with the [2021 EAfA action plan](#), a total of 18 activities were organised in 2021 by the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and the Apprenticeship Support Services (AppSS), bringing together about 2 500 attendees.

Events	Webinars	Online Training	Live discussions
<b>3 online events</b> <b>2 high level events</b> About 1200 attendees	<b>4 webinars</b> About 400 attendees	<b>3 modules</b> Used by more than 200 users and fully completed by at least 40	<b>6 live discussions</b> More than 800 attendees

The main highlights of 2021 have been the two high-level conferences organised by EAfA in collaboration with European and international partners.

The [High-level conference on Quality and effective apprenticeships and international labour standards on apprenticeships](#), co-organised with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), provided the occasion to assess the current state of play for both the European Union (EU) and ILO in setting quality standards for apprenticeships. It examined national apprenticeship reforms in countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe, and explored key priorities of the renewed EAfA, including how to foster apprenticeship coalitions and strengthen social dialogue. The event featured keynote speeches by Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, and the ILO's Director General, Guy Ryder.

The [High-level conference on the role of regions and cities in delivering high-quality apprenticeships for all](#) was co-organised by the European Commission (EC) and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) with the support of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL), the German delegation at the CoR, and the Basque Government. This conference was the culmination of a series of events on the role of regions and cities in fostering apprenticeships that took place between 2020 and 2021.

The other events organised were:

- [Online event: The role of regions and cities in supporting apprenticeships, upskilling, and reskilling in the health sector](#)
- [Online event: The role of regions and cities in the digital and green transitions](#)
- [Online event: Regional seminar for candidate countries](#)

EAfA collaborated with several high-level experts to organise four webinars and deliver cutting edge information to EAfA members on:

- [Financing apprenticeships in the EU](#)
- [Inter-company training centres and Centres of Vocational Excellence](#)
- [Going digital – Simulations and gaming in apprenticeships](#)

- [Apprenticeship coalitions – Experiences and advantages](#)

Leveraging on its wide network and the solid experience of its members, EAfA brought together practitioners and key stakeholders in six live discussions to present real life examples and good practices on:

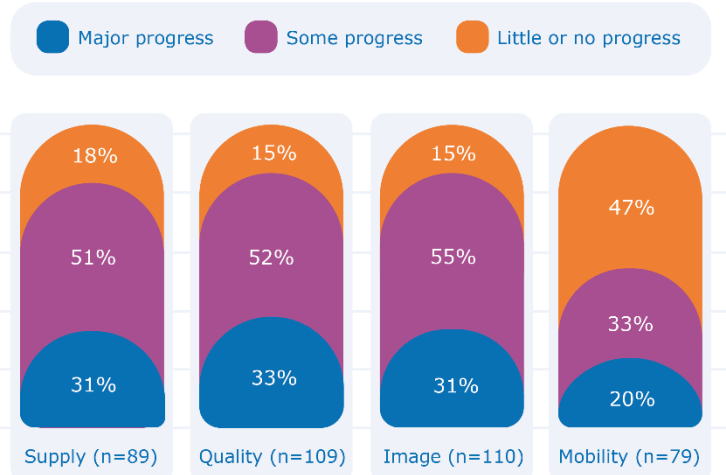
- [Pact for Skills – Mobilising all partners to invest in skills](#)
- [What does quality mean in practice? Integrating the apprentice’s perspective](#)
- [How can employers be encouraged to establish apprenticeships?](#)
- [Gender equality in apprenticeships – How can we close the gap in participation?](#)
- [How can apprenticeships be used as a tool for social inclusion?](#)
- [How can sectoral social partners collaborate to promote and develop apprenticeships in hospitality and construction?](#)

Finally, EAfA published three online training modules to provide its members with well-organised, comprehensive information on:

- [Involving social partners in apprenticeships](#)
- [Going digital in apprenticeships](#)
- [Apprenticeships: A first choice for all?](#)

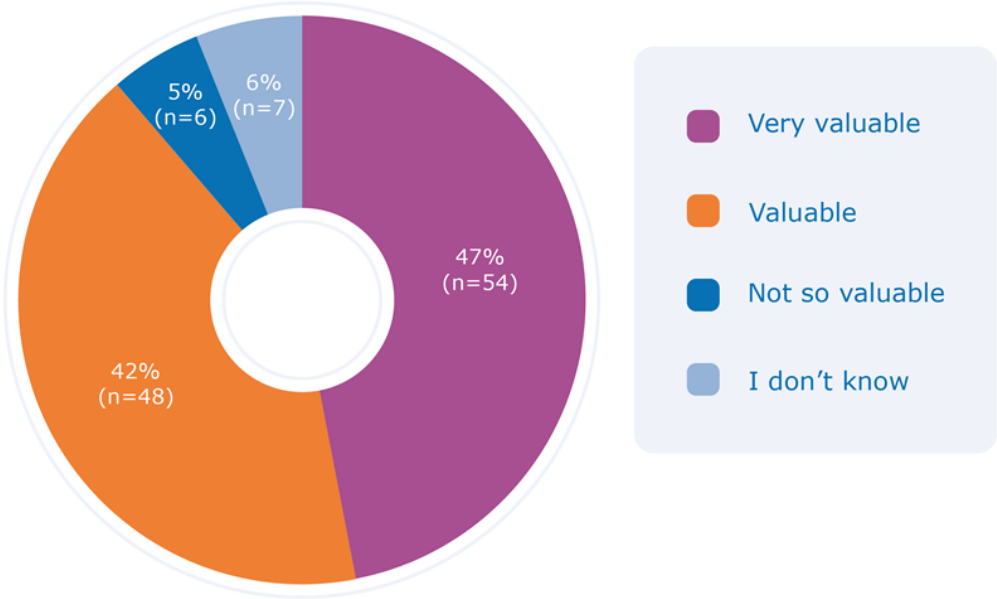
EAfA also took stock of members’ progress on the implementation of their pledges through the periodical monitoring survey. The survey was answered by 115 members and the [results](#) indicate good overall progress towards the EAfA objectives. In particular, members reported that at least 735 355 apprenticeship places were created by the respondent organisations in the 2019–2020 period, as well as at least 1 525 mobility experiences.

Figure 1. Progress toward EAfA objectives – Source: EAfA survey



The survey also highlighted that the large majority of EAfA members that responded to the survey consider EAfA very valuable or valuable as a platform to boost the quality, supply, image, and mobility of apprenticeships.

Figure 2. Respondents’ assessment of EAfA’s value as a multi-stakeholder platform to foster apprenticeships – Source: EAfA survey





## 3.0 Action plan 2022

### 3.1 Introduction

In July 2020, the European Commission launched the [renewed EAfA](#), setting six ambitious priorities. A calendar of EAfA activities was developed to ensure that through these activities, all of the priorities are covered.

The purpose of this Action plan is to provide a detailed, coherent, and tailored approach to how EAfA and AppSS can work towards these six priorities, including the activities that are best suited to support them, and the synergies that can be created.

### 3.2 Priority 1: Committing to quality and effective apprenticeships, and encouraging Member States and companies to do likewise, by fostering national apprenticeship coalitions

The first EAfA priority encompassed a number of areas of intervention, and can be achieved by strengthening the EAfA network through new pledges, providing the members with new knowledge, and encouraging them to take concrete actions to foster apprenticeships.

#### Pledges and membership

EAfA has more than 360 members, and it is committed toward increasing its membership base.

#### EAfA objectives

EAfA will aim to increase stakeholders' awareness of the Alliance and its benefits, contributing to enlarging its membership base.

#### Actions to support EAfA meeting its objective

EAfA can count on the support of a large number of stakeholder organisations at EU and national levels. These organisations are capable of mobilising their members and promoting EAfA and their activities. EAfA will reach out to these organisations, inviting them to actively promote the Alliance.

In early 2022, EAfA will launch an outreach activity to mobilise its members. EAfA could run a multiplier-focused promotion activity, leveraging existing EAfA members to act as ambassadors, following the recent confirmation that 90% of EAfA members that answered the EAfA member survey are willing to promote EAfA.

Leveraging on the main in-person events, EAfA will run promotional activities aimed at gathering new members, including organising a number of info sessions to raise awareness of the Alliance (as per calendar of activities below). Online activities, as the newly introduced podcasts, will also be promoted as a means of enlarging the membership base. Tailored visuals, slogans, and hashtags will be used across social media prior to the info sessions (including via ads), as well as shared during virtual events, and other channels. Podcasts will be promoted widely on social media, including with advertisement.

## Knowledge sharing

EaFA members have shown increased interest in activities aimed at creating and disseminating knowledge. Webinars and training modules register a constant level of participation and have the potential to be repurposed and re-proposed to the EaFA audience.

### EaFA objectives

EaFA will keep providing members with in-depth information relevant to implementing apprenticeships and improving their quality, focusing on topics directly linked to the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships (EFQEA) and not covered by already developed material.

### Actions to support EaFA meeting its objective

EaFA will develop a number of new webinars, live discussions, and training modules. Topics for these include:

- Mobility of apprentices
- Curriculum and learning outcomes:
  - Green mindset as transversal aspect
  - Key/transversal skills learning in apprenticeships
- Apprenticeships and permeability
- Higher apprenticeships and apprenticeships at Higher Education

On top of conducting new webinars, EaFA will support full exploitation of the resources already created. To date, 16 webinars, 9 live discussions, and 7 online training modules have been created. These will be promoted again among members and the wider apprenticeship community, and used as a promotional means for EaFA. A curated selection of materials will be re-promoted through both the newsletter and social media calendar.

## 3.3 Priority 2: Incentivising support to SMEs in providing a stable supply of quality and effective apprenticeships

Although EaFA counts some small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within its members, these represent a difficult stakeholder to engage. SMEs are faced with a number of challenges that prevent them from becoming engaged with apprenticeships and EaFA. These include limited capacity, lack of employees dedicated to training and apprenticeships, and language barriers.

### EaFA objectives

In order to foster support for SMEs, EaFA will target those stakeholders that work with them on a daily basis (i.e. vocational education and training (VET) providers, social partners, national and regional sectoral networks, local and regional authorities, and larger companies) providing them with information, good practices, and inputs to more effectively reach out and engage with SMEs.

### Actions to support EaFA meeting its objective

EaFA will develop a series of resources on key strategies and actions that each stakeholder type can implement to engage and support SMEs. These resources could include infographics, live discussions (to share good practices), and targeted podcasts. Depending on the needs of the participating countries, benchlearning could also provide a platform for fostering support for SMEs.

### **3.4 Priority 3: Mobilising local and regional authorities as catalysts for apprenticeships within the local business environment**

EaFA acknowledges the fruitful cooperation and successful activities that have been implemented under this priority between 2020 and 2021 in collaboration with the CoR and EaFA regional and local authority members, notably:

- Exchanges and dialogue regarding the local and regional dimensions of the Skills Agenda and Pact for Skills (including the organisation of several webinars and online events showcasing local and regional experiences and successful responses to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Support for the creation of the Cities4Apprenticeships network spearheaded by the Metropolitan City of Rome

#### **EaFA objectives**

As regions and cities remain pivotal stakeholders to involve in EaFA activities, EaFA will explore new cooperation topics that will be built on the success of previous experiences and aligned with the Pact for Skills, in which EaFA is embedded, and the rest of EaFA's priorities.

EaFA plans to keep working with the Cities4Apprenticeships and support the creation of national cities alliances.

#### **Actions to support EaFA meeting its objective**

EaFA will repurpose and promote the activities conducted in the previous year and keep liaising with the CoR, EARLALL, and the rest of EaFA's members that are regional and local authorities, as well as the Cities4Apprenticeships network. Finally, EaFA will continue to explore the role of regions and cities in developing and implementing apprenticeships through online activities.

### **3.5 Priority 4: Strengthening social dialogue through a more active involvement of national social partner organisations**

Experiences in many EU Member States demonstrate how pivotal social partners are to the effective implementation of apprenticeships. EaFA has already implemented a number of activities to share these experiences and support a stronger role for social partners in designing and implementing apprenticeships:

- Three webinars focusing on employers' organisations, trade unions, and chambers of commerce
- An online training module on the role of social partners

Furthermore, social partners are invited to most EAfA events to share their perspectives and experiences.

### **EAfA objective**

At national level, a framework for effective involvement of social partners may be lacking, or social partners may not have the capacity to contribute to the apprenticeship discourse in the country. EAfA will try to encourage and support Member States to create the conditions for further involvement of social partners.

On top of lacking capacity, national social partners might not have the competence and knowledge required to work on apprenticeships. EAfA aims to reach out to national social partners (through targeted communication activities timed in line with relevant activities as per calendar below and EU level social partners) to encourage them to join the Alliance and develop material (or put together resources that have already been created) to support them.

### **Actions to support EAfA meeting its objective**

EAfA will support Member States through the benchlearning process, facilitating peer-learning between policymakers and involving social partners in the exchanges.

EAfA will aim to reach out to national social partners through communication activities. In mid-2022, building on the activities and material already developed, EAfA will also assemble a toolbox for social partners to increase their awareness and knowledge of apprenticeships. This toolbox will be an easy to share one-pager presenting apprenticeships and the work of EAfA and link to existing resources presenting what social partners can do to foster apprenticeships and improve their quality:

- [First online training: Understanding apprenticeships in the EU](#)
- [Fifth online training: Involving social partners in apprenticeships](#)
- [Webinar: The role of employer organisations in apprenticeships](#)
- [Webinar: Role of Chambers in fostering apprenticeships in Europe](#)
- [Webinar: Trade Unions and the Development of Apprenticeship Training in Europe.](#)

## **3.6 Priority 5: Proactively engaging European sectoral social dialogue committees in apprenticeships, with a view to agree on joint sectoral pledges**

Out of the 40 sectoral European social dialogue committees, only 9 have submitted a joint sectoral pledge under EAfA.

### **EAfA's objective**

EAfA aims to convince social partners at sectoral level to join the Alliance with a joint pledge, and to include activities related to apprenticeships in their joint work programme.

### **Actions to support EAfA meeting its objective**

To achieve this, EAfA will:

- Organise activities focusing on specific sectors to act as a catalyst to catch the attention of key stakeholders and create momentum for further actions by them;
- Inform social sectoral committees on relevant EAfA activities and encourage them to take an active role in the Alliance;
- Encourage key stakeholders to take the lead in developing partnerships offering to support the process (e.g. through support letters, contacts, running targeted campaigns, and organising showcasing events).

### **3.7 Priority 6: Supporting the representation of apprentices in Member States by relaunching the European Apprentices Network**

In 2017, EAfA supported the creation of the EAN, and has been providing the network with a platform to reach out to new members and share their messages ever since.

#### **EAfA objective**

EAfA aims to contribute to the work of the EAN and ensure it can grow, develop its member base, and establish itself as an encompassing and inclusive representative organisation of apprentices across the EU.

#### **Actions to support EAfA meeting its objective**

EAfA will continue to support EAN and its growth through provision of a high-level platform which they can use to disseminate their views and interact with relevant stakeholders.

AppSS and EAfA will continue to provide support to the relaunched EAN, where required.

### **3.8 Transversal issues**

EAfA set three transversal issues that should inform and be discussed in all Alliance activities:

- Gender
- Social inclusion
- Internationalisation

#### **EAfA objectives**

EAfA will continue to ensure that attention paid to these issues remains high.

#### **Actions to support EAfA meeting its objective**

EAfA will create opportunities for key stakeholders to discuss these topics and make sure that relevant issues are embedded in all the activities implemented.

## 4.0 What's new in 2022

As the EAfA network grows, the needs of its members also change, requiring further diversification of the activities offered. In order to meet different needs and requirements, EAfA is planning to introduce new activities and revamp existing ones.

In particular, the following main changes will be implemented in 2022:

- Annual EAfA member survey,
- Podcasts,
- Interactive online networking,
- Info sessions,
- Strengthened dissemination.

In-person events are also set to resume in 2022 and existing activities (i.e. webinar, live discussions, etc.) will continue.

### 4.1 Annual EAfA member survey

Originally conceived to be conducted every two years, the EAfA member survey is a fundamental tool to communicate with the members, collect their views on current issues, and understand their needs and perceptions of EAfA. The survey will therefore become a more regular exercise taking place every year. Furthermore, the survey will be aligned to the school year going from September to August.

### 4.2 Podcasts

The current set of activities seems to have been well received by EAfA members, as shown by their steady participation in activities and afterwards through recording of their views. As in-person activities resume all across Europe, however, it is expected that EAfA members will have less time to spend on their computers. In order to adapt to this changing context, EAfA is introducing podcasts.

Podcasts are flexible and agile audio-only recordings that can be published and listened to by EAfA members at the time most convenient for them, typically on their smartphones.

The provision of an activity accessible through smartphones has the potential to enlarge the audience, reaching users that prefer to use their phones to consume media.

In 2022, EAfA is planning to publish a series of four podcasts in the form of interviews with key stakeholders covering the four EAfA objectives:

- Increase the supply of apprenticeships
- Strengthen the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships
- Improve the overall image and attractiveness of apprenticeships across Europe
- Promote the mobility of apprentices.

### 4.3 Interactive online networking

Creating networking opportunities for members is one of the key objectives of EAfA. Networking allows members to exchange ideas and develop projects together. However, the lack of in-person events due to COVID-19 restrictions (sensibly) reduced EAfA's capacity to bring together members. Although the implementation of vaccination programmes and the consequent lowering of social distancing measures should allow in-person events to resume, uncertainty remains high. Travelling requirements could change, not all members may feel comfortable travelling and, in any case, participation in in-person events remains limited to a fraction of EAfA members.

In order to expand the opportunity for networking within the apprenticeship community, EAfA proposes putting an online platform for networking at members' disposal, allowing them to organise online opportunities for group and individual networking. Participants will be able to fill in a 'virtual business card', and a search function will allow them to find stakeholders they would like to interact with.

Online networking opportunities will be integrated in hybrid events.

The agenda below is an example of a potential structure for online networking events.

Duration	Section	Description
5 mins	Virtual registration	Participants join the networking event and fill in the virtual business card
15 mins	Welcome and presentation of the tool	Plenary session DG EMPL welcome the participants AppSS team explains the tool and how to use it
30 mins	Breaking the ice	Participants are divided into randomised breakout rooms Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves Once their time is up, participants are mixed again and re-allocated to another randomised breakout room
60 mins	One-to-one networking	Participants are free to search for networking partners and invite them to chat on the platform
5 mins	Goodbye	Plenary session Participants re-join the plenary for a final goodbye from DG EMPL

## 4.4 Info sessions

EaFA is aiming to increase the number of new members. Following the recent info sessions held in July and September 2021, info sessions will become a more regular occurrence for potential new members. They will be widely advertised online, and act as an additional and effective promotional tool to engage with new stakeholders and widen the EaFA network.

Info sessions will either be open to everyone, or targeted to specific types of stakeholders, sectors, and countries.

## 4.5 Strengthened dissemination

Info sessions, podcasts, and networking activities are intended to contribute to widening of the EaFA network. These activities will, however, require adequate dissemination in order to reach their objectives, however.

A number of measures will be put in place to increase awareness of apprenticeships and EaFA, and to support the implementation of these activities. In particular, EaFA will:

- Mobilise members: Members are the main asset of EaFA. They contribute to moving the network forward and can help to grow EaFA by promoting it within their networks. About 90% (n=103) of respondents to the 2021 EaFA member survey indicated availability to promote EaFA within their network. Available members will be mobilised by developing material or repackaging existing material that can be easily shared, such as presentations and infographics.
- Promote info sessions and podcasts: Both these activities have the potential to inspire new stakeholders to join EaFA, their wide promotion will support this potential.
- Promote existing activities: EaFA has produced a large number of activities (webinars, live discussions, etc.) in the past three years. Given the high quality of these resources, it will be important to ensure they are still exploited and used by members.

## 4.6 Hybrid events and online activities

After more than a year of halt of in-person events, EaFA is finally resuming this highly sought-after activity.<sup>1</sup> Several events are set to take place in 2022:

- High-level event: The European Alliance for Apprenticeships on track!<sup>1</sup> in collaboration with Austrian Federal Railways and the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology,

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<sup>1</sup> *In-person events will comply with the health and safety guidelines and potential travel restrictions of the host country, and depending on potential future mission constraints imposed by the Commission. If the conditions for hosting an in-person event are not favourable, the hybrid event will be postponed, held online only, or cancelled.*



Vienna (February/March 2022). It will be possible to participate online on the second day of the event.

- High level hybrid event: Relaunch of the European Apprentices Network in the European Year of Youth in collaboration with Fundacion Bertelsmann and Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona (March 2022).
- EAfA get together event, (only in-person), Brussels (June 2022);
- Joint hybrid EAfA-ETF Regional seminar with Candidate Countries and EAfA Partner Countries, Belgrade (September 2022).

Webinars, Live discussions and Online training modules register continued interest and high satisfaction rates from EAfA members. EAfA will continue delivering these online activities covering new topics and ensuring transversal issues as gender balance and social inclusions are embedded in each activity.

## 4.7 Overview of EAfA activities

Overall, the EAfA and the Apprenticeship Support Services have prepared a varied offer for the members and supporters of the Alliance encompassing a total of 19 activities over 2022.

Events	Online networking		Info sessions
4 in-person events	2 online networking events		2 info sessions
Podcasts	Webinars	Online Training	Live discussions
4 podcasts	2 webinars	2 modules	3 live discussions

# 5.0 EAfA Calendar 2022

	In-person/ hybrid events	Online activities	EAfA priorities						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
			Quality	SMEs	Regions and cities	Social dialogue	Sectoral social dialogue	Apprentices' representation	Transversal
January		<b>EAfA info session – Meet the partners</b> <b>Podcast:</b> Supply of apprenticeships	√						
February	<b>High-level event: The European Alliance for Apprenticeships on track!</b> in collaboration with Austrian Federal Railways and the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation, and Technology (Vienna)	<b>Webinar:</b> Apprenticeships and permeability	√						
March	<b>High level event: Relaunch of the European Apprentices Network in the European Year of Youth</b> in collaboration with Fundacion Bertelsmann and Generalitat de Catalunya (Barcelona)	<b>Podcast:</b> Mobility of apprentices					√	√	√
April		<b>Live discussion:</b> Assistive technologies and accessible digital learning environment for persons with disabilities – Experience and good practices from regions	√						√
May		<b>Webinar:</b> Apprenticeships in higher VET <b>Online training module:</b> Green apprenticeships: taxonomy and competence framework	√		√				
June	<b>EAfA get together</b> (Brussels)	<b>Live discussion:</b> How social partners can support apprenticeships in harnessing the digital and green transition		√					
July/August	<i>Summer break</i>								
September	<b>Joint EAfA-ETF Regional seminar with Candidate Countries and EAfA Partner Countries</b> (Belgrade)	<b>EAfA info session</b> <b>Podcast:</b> Attractiveness of apprenticeships	√						
October		<b>Live discussion:</b> Cooperative practices to support SMEs in participating in apprenticeships				√			
November		<b>Online training module:</b> Communicating apprenticeships							
December		<b>Podcast:</b> Quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships				√			

