



# EaFA Info Session 2022

European Alliance for Apprenticeships | 26 January 2022

The European Commission's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAFA) held its first event of the year to introduce the Action Plan for 2022 and highlight forthcoming events and activities. A select group of EAFA members joined the event to discuss the Alliance's six priorities and share good practices. They also discussed how the Alliance has aided them in reaching their objectives and meeting potential project partners. The upcoming EAFA awards ceremony was also discussed during this information session.

## INTRODUCTION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DG EMPL

**Norbert Schöbel**, Team Leader at DG EMPL's Vocational Education and Training Unit, delivered an introduction to the event, explaining what it is all about and what the audience may anticipate from the event. He also spoke briefly on the Alliance's six primary priorities, and how the planned activities align with the Alliance's priorities.

## EaFA AWARDS 2022

**Bilal Balci**, Trainee at DG EMPL's Vocational Education and Training Unit shared some essential details about the EAFA Awards 2022. The EAFA Awards was established in 2016 to allow members to acknowledge outstanding achievements and best practices in the promotion of apprenticeships. This year, there will be two categories: one for apprentices and the other for Enterprises, both SMEs and big enterprises. The award ceremony is to be held in Brussels. The audience were encouraged to visit [this page](#) to learn more about EAFA awards, including eligibility criteria and deadlines.

## ABOUT EAFA BY ECORYS

**Vicki Donlevy**, Director, Ecorys, outlined the Alliance's core objectives as well as the types of members that can join, including large and small businesses, education and training providers, and social partners. She also talked about how EAFA helps its members through several activities (such as networking opportunities, news, and updates), all of which fall into three pillars:

- 1. Knowledge-sharing** pillar focuses on disseminating information on apprenticeship and what is currently being done. Webinars, live discussions, modules, podcasts, and so forth are some examples.
- 2. The Networking Pillar** comprises in-person, online, and hybrid events, as well as online networking possibilities via the [EAFA LinkedIn group](#), [newsletter](#), and other means.
- 3. Benchlearning**, focuses on providing targeted support to Member States based on their requirements, as well as mutual learning opportunities.



*'We participate in the benchlearning process of the EAFA to implement the European framework on quality and effective apprenticeships since the role of social partners at all levels is crucial for successful apprenticeships'*

**Liliane Volozinskis**, SMEUnited

In essence, Vicki emphasised on the Alliance's on-going efforts in making further improvements in the areas needed. In 2022, there are 13 Online and 4 Hybrid events scheduled; more information on each of these activities can be found on the [EAfa activities hub](#).

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Eight guest speakers representing eight different stakeholders spoke at this Info Session. As outlined above, the presenters discussed how their respective organisations' actions coincide with the EAfA's six priorities. The guest speakers discussed a variety of topics surrounding apprenticeships, including the following: presented the work of the initiative 'Youth with Value', which targets Catalonian

### 1. Shortage of apprentices

Some speakers cited a shortage of apprentices in the workforce as a concern. **Anu Haapasalo**, Vice Chairman of Association of Apprenticeship Experts, and **Delphine Rudelli**, Director General of Ceemet - European Tech & Industry Employers, both spoke on how their respective associations are working to tackle this. Furthermore, **Agnes Roman**, Senior Policy Coordinator at ETUC, stated that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in the greatest number of dropouts in VET schools, and urged that a research study be conducted at the EU level to determine how the impact of COVID-19 compares in Europe.

### 2. Differences between the countries

The benefits of exchanging relevant information on apprentices with other countries through EAfA were stressed by the speakers. Echoing Agnes Roman, **Luc Triangle**, General Secretary of industriAll European Trade Union pointed out that apprenticeship systems differ across Europe, and that a well-developed, adaptable system would be beneficial. **Delphine Rudelli** made a similar point about how certain countries have the right framework in place, while others do not. She also went on to say that social partners could have a bigger role to play in narrowing disparities in countries. Likewise, **Liliane Volozinskis**, Policy Director at SME United, underlined the role of social partners, particularly in assisting apprenticeships in a variety of areas, including adjusting to new changes, digital, and green transition.

“Through European Alliance for Apprenticeships, we get a good glimpse of what's happening in rest of the Europe”

**Anu Haapasalo**, Association of Apprenticeship Experts

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, these two quotes from the guest speakers perfectly capture the essence of the event.

“EAfA plays a crucial role in supporting regional and local authorities, to face future trends and challenges in apprenticeships such as digital transition and international mobility” - **Noella Cantero**, EARLALL.

“We absolutely support the EAfA. We are happy with the work done and we believe this is absolutely crucial for the future of the industry” - **Luc Triangle**, General Secretary, industriAll Europe

### 3. The importance of research studies

Some speakers emphasized the significance of undertaking research studies in the field of apprenticeships. **Silvia Miró**, Director at PIMEC, gave an example of a previous study PIMEC conducted to understand the challenges faced by both SMEs and VET schools that do not participate in apprenticeship programs. This led them to initiate a Joint-Mentoring programme for SMEs and they are highly appreciative of the support that EAfA in implementing this initiative. **Liliane Volozinskis** gave an example of a project undertaken by SME United to better understand the cost vs. benefit of apprenticeships, which led to the conclusion that apprenticeships should be viewed as a long-term investment.

“EAfA has aided PIMEC in all of its actions and initiatives by providing resources, networking opportunities, and support”

**Silvia Miró**, Director of PIMEC

### 4. EAfA's role in addressing trends and challenges

**Luc Triangle** made a similar point about how apprenticeships should be viewed as a long-term investment and as an entry point for quality employment for young individuals. **Noelia Cantero**, Director at EARLALL, echoed this sentiment and also mentioned a few trends in the apprenticeship field, including digital apprenticeship support and apprenticeship diversification, both of which can be a challenge and an opportunity. Finally, **Ben Kinross** of the European Apprentices Network spoke about the importance of hybrid and blended learning, as well as how apprentices have benefited from the EAfA's networking opportunities.

“The thing that has benefitted apprentices the most about EAfA is the fact that it has given the network opportunities in connecting with each other”

**Ben Kinross**, EAN

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