



The voices of apprentices in the European Year of Youth 2022

European Alliance for Apprenticeships, Directorate-General for Vocational Education and Training of the Regional Government of Catalonia, Fundación Bertelsmann & European Apprenticeships Network | 7 April 2022

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Vocational Education and Training of the Regional Government of Catalonia, the Fundación Bertelsmann and the European Apprenticeships Network (EAN), organised a high-level event on the role and representation of apprentices in vocational education and training (VET). The hybrid event, with sessions taking place in Barcelona and livestreamed online, gathered around 150 participants on site and online, and received over 400 views on YouTube. The event was part of the European Year of Youth 2022.

DAY 1 – WELCOME SESSION

The event started with a welcome by the master of ceremonies **Matthäus Fandrejewski**, President of CESI-Youth. Then **Angel Luis Miguel**, General Director at the Directorate-General for Vocational Education and Training of the Regional Government of Catalonia, discussed the impact of VET and dual VET on the decreasing youth unemployment rates in Catalonia and on improving the relationship between businesses and schools. Angel stressed the need to place students' opinions and rights at the centre of dual VET. **Clara Bassols**, Director of the Fundación Bertelsmann, shared the commitment of Alianza FP Dual to providing quality apprenticeships, highlighting the importance of sharing apprentices' perspectives and promoting programmes that give apprentices a voice at EU and national level. **John Fortune**, Vice-President of the Union of Students in Ireland for the Southern Region, Ireland, stressed the need to ensure apprentices are empowered to share their voice and for institutions to facilitate this.

In a video message, **Nicolas Schmit**, the European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, stated that more than ever Europe needs the vision, engagement and participation of young people, who need to be offered prospects and hope for a prosperous future despite the current challenges. The Commissioner emphasised the important role EAN plays in ensuring that young apprentices contribute to policymaking by becoming a representative voice towards institutions and stakeholders at all levels.

THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF YOUTH

The first panel discussion of the event was moderated by **Chiara Riandino**, Head of Unit at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) of the European Commission. Chiara highlighted the negative impact of the pandemic on young people and provided an overview of the concrete support offered by the European Commission through the Youth Employment Initiative, the relaunch of EAfA, and the reinforced Youth Guarantee – all firmly anchored in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Caridad Alarcon Sanchez, Board Member of the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, opened the discussion by reiterating the importance of listening to apprentices' voices and enabling EAN to act as a bridge between apprentices and European



“Quality apprenticeships can make such a difference for people to enter the labour market; they create a win-win situation for both apprentices and companies. They provide people with real work experience and skills, becoming the fast-track to employment.”

Nicolas Schmit,
European Commissioner for Jobs
and Social Rights

institutions, allowing apprentices' problems and demands to be heard. **Michael Teutsch**, Head of Unit for Schools and Multilingualism at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, praised the solidarity shown across Europe of providing support to Ukrainian refugees. He also reaffirmed the aim of the European Year of Youth to listen to the solutions proposed by young people and provide opportunities in the context of the digital and green transition. **Markus Wright**, Committee Member of ETUC Youth, argued the need for a better narrative around vocational training, which is seen as less prestigious by young people, and emphasised the importance of quality and inclusive apprenticeships.

DUAL VET – THE SPANISH CASE

Moderated by Maria Pascual, International and Institutional Relations Officer at the Directorate-General for Vocational Education and Training of the Regional Government of Catalonia, the session was kicked off by a video message by **Clara Sanz**, Initial VET Secretary-General at the Ministry of Education of the Spanish Government. The Secretary-General introduced the new organic law on the organisation and integration of vocational training, which establishes a single, modular provision of vocational training as lifelong training, and establishes a permanent relationship of co-responsibility between companies and training providers. **Ignacio de Benito**, Senior Project Manager at Fundación Bertelsmann, presented the achievements and objectives of the apprentice network Somos FP Dual, which aims to empower youths, increase the quality of dual VET, and enhance its reputation. **José A. Andrés Villena**, Deputy Director for Vocational Education and Training of the Regional Government of Catalonia, discussed the key actions of the Catalan framework for dual VET, which strives to ensure quality and continuous assessment of apprenticeships, flexible training paths, and mobility in the dual system. **Richard Bellera Kirchoff**, representative of the Catalan social partners (CCOO, Foment and Pimec UGT), stressed the role of social partners in the Catalan vocational training system in facilitating the reach of consensus to adapt VET to the needs of workers and companies through social dialogue.



There is no vocational training without companies and companies without properly skilled professionals: this is why dual vocational training needs to be shared as co-responsibility between trainers and companies. This is what our country's employment and productivity will depend on!

Clara Sanz, Ministry of Education,
Spanish Government

REPRESENTATION OF APPRENTICES – THE NATIONAL DIMENSION

This third session moderated by **Ann Vanden Bulcke**, Country Desk Officer at the European Commission, explored national models of representation and the key challenges in ensuring apprentices are involved in decision-making. **Scott Kelly** discussed his involvement in the National Society of Apprentices representing the welfare of apprentices throughout the UK and the Parliament Bill supporting apprentices' mental health, for which he personally campaigned.

Baptiste Bouyer, Head of Representation and Institutions Relations Department at ANAF France, addresses the lack of representation for apprentices across France, which led to the creation of ANAF and its work on promoting the benefits of apprenticeships in order to remove the stigma among students. **Melissa Luck**, representing dbb Jugend, followed up with a good practice example from Germany, where the election of apprentices is held regularly and representatives' role is to advocate for better conditions and promote apprentices' interests. **Uliana Musakina**, Member of SAKKI ry, Finland, presented the types of apprentices and practical training in Finland, and highlighted the importance of monitoring throughout the apprenticeship process. **Trine Johannses**, International Officer in the EEO, Denmark, concluded this session by advocating for raising apprentices' wages and working conditions, ensuring quality education and safe work environments. Trine also underlined the importance of attracting great teachers and investing in education and technologies.



"I hope that with the relaunch of EAN and with the help of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, we can create more positive and interconnected collectives of apprentices throughout Europe, striving to share best practice and improve apprenticeships throughout the continent."

Scott Kelly, National Society
of Apprentices, UK

WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

The first EAfA hybrid event since 2020 welcomed 14 organisations covering 18 countries, which pledged to create 661 apprenticeship places. **Norbert Schöbel**, Team Leader at DG EMPL, welcomed the representatives of 11 organisations attending the event physically and presented them with an EAfA certificate for their commitment to support the objectives of the Alliance.

PARALLEL BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Within the first session, **The voice of apprentices: a new strategic approach**, moderated by Giuseppina Tucci and Ben Kinross, representatives of EAN, apprentices and experts discussed possible areas of focus for EAN, such as apprentices' mental health, the accommodation crisis and their impact on learning. The second session, moderated by Alexia Carrasco, Project Manager at the Fundación Bertelsmann, focused on the **challenges in supply and quality of apprenticeships**. Participants stressed that in Spain, European Qualifications Framework criteria, such as pedagogical support, social partners engagement, support from companies and raising societal awareness about apprentices, are fundamental but still far from being achieved. EAfA participants were invited to take part in the third session focused on **embedding the voice of apprenticeships decision-making**, which was moderated by Norbert Schöbel. The solutions identified included creating an environment which enables apprentices to voice their opinions, offering training to apprentices to develop their soft skills, providing coaching, and raising awareness of the importance of involving learners in decision-making. Online participants discussed ways of **making apprenticeships more attractive to youth** as part of a session moderated by **Ana Carrero**, Deputy Head at DG EMPL. The discussion focused on increasing the prestige of apprenticeships and addressing gender stereotypes. It highlighted the importance of cooperation and exchange between different stakeholders, improving working conditions, and increasing the flexibility of apprenticeship programmes.

PRESENTATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

The final session, moderated by **Guillem Salvans** from Fundación Bertelsmann, introduced five good practices from across Europe. **Arja Krauchenberg**, Vice-President of the LifeLong Learning Platform, Austria, presented an initiative in Vorarlberg, where an association has been created by apprentices to facilitate matchmaking between companies and apprentices and virtual visits to businesses, and to organise various activities for apprentices. **Michael Fitzgerald** delivered a presentation on the ESB Networks' apprenticeship models, their innovative and engaging training, and their approach to giving apprentices a voice. **Recep Atar**, Project Expert from HAK-IS Trade Union Confederation, provided an overview of their policies to support apprentices in bridging the skills gap between education and employment and to ensure quality apprenticeships. **Joan Daniel Subirats Armengol**, Dual Coordinator and vocational school teacher at INS Comte de Rius in Tarragona, described a good practice example from the host country on the BASF's dual vocational training course, while **Joan Carles Ballesté Coma**, vocational school teacher and tutor, presented the advanced vocational qualification Laboratory of Analysis and Quality Control, taught through project-based learning.

In her closing remarks, **Chiara Riandino** invited participants to adopt good practices learnt during the conference with the goal of opening meaningful discussions and achieving change in terms of apprentices' representation across Europe.

EVENING PROGRAMME

A cultural visit of the Sant Pau Recinte Modernista complex was organised at the end of the first day. This modernist complex is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

During the **official launch event of the renewed EAN**, **Matthäus Fandrejewski** and **Baptiste Bouyer** reflected on the history of EAN, its seven priorities and the difficulties faced by apprentices in gaining recognition as equal partners in the discussions around their work, education and contribution to society.

DAY 2 – SITE VISITS AND PRESENTATION OF VET PROJECTS

On the second day of the event, participants visited the **Bonanova Institute**, a public centre specialised in health education and healthcare in vocational training. Participants learnt about the innovative methodologies used for training future healthcare professionals. During the visit of the **INS Escola del Treball**, participants had the opportunity to attend several workshops in electrics, carpentry, electronics, chemistry, construction and graphic design.

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