



European  
Commission



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# European Year of Rail

The European Alliance for  
Apprentices on track!

9-10 June 2022 | Vienna Austria

Event report

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# Background

The high-level event 'European Alliances for Apprenticeships on track!' took place on 9 and 10 June 2022 in Vienna in a hybrid format. The event was organised in the context of the European Year of Rail (2021) and the European Year of Youth (2022) by the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) in close collaboration with the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK).

The event brought together relevant stakeholders from all over Europe to discuss the state of play in the rail sector, key challenges ahead and opportunities to seize in relation to vocational education and training, in particular apprenticeships. On-site participants were able to visit the ÖBB's training centre and took part in in-depth discussions during parallel workshops on three key themes:

- Just transitions: digital and green
- Gender equality in apprenticeships in the rail sector
- Mobility and transnational cooperation



**Day 1**

# 1.0 Introduction

On the first day of the conference the participants were welcomed in Vienna by the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) at their headquarters in Vienna. The afternoon was marked by a site visit of the ÖBB's newest training centre, followed by a dinner during which participants had the opportunity to get to know each other and exchange ideas on the topics of the conference. The enthusiasm of the apprentices and the flawless organisation of the day's activities by the ÖBB was much appreciated.



Source 1: Photo © Ecorys

During the second day, participants had the opportunity to hear from a range of stakeholders on the state of apprenticeships in Europe, and deep dive into three key themes: digital and green transitions; gender equality; and mobility and transnational cooperation aspects. During the afternoon, participants would also have the opportunity to discuss these themes in smaller groups.

The following sections summarise the main highlights and discussions that took place during the two-day conference.

For more information, please visit

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1147&eventsId=1988&furtherEvents=yes>

## 1.1 Site visit

The ÖBB is currently training over 2 000 apprentices in 9 training centres across Austria, offering a total of 27 apprenticeship professions. The biggest training site is the one the participants were invited to visit in Vienna, providing a learning spot for around 700 apprentices. The percentage of female apprentices currently stands at 20.3 % and the ÖBB is committed to attract more women to the sector. A third of the ÖBB's workforce will retire in the coming years. Therefore, attracting apprentices, offering them high quality and modern training, and ensuring that they stay with the company after finishing their training (currently 85 %) is crucial for ensuring a prosperous future for the company.

During the site visit, the participants were accompanied by apprentices and heard first-hand experiences from the students and trainers about their tasks at different stations. Their tasks range from manual (e.g. welding) to mechanical (e.g. setting up switches) operations to specific IT and digital operations, including the use of 3D printers and simulations of operations in stations thanks to augmented reality. The participants visited the following training stations:



Source 2: Photo © ÖBB

- Machine hall – turning, milling and CNC training
- Welding shop – cautious welding processes in training
- Laboratory – automation technology, programmable logic controllers
- Laboratory – robotics, pneumatics and hydraulics
- Future lab – virtual reality – project '100m Meilding', 3D printing and augmented reality
- Basic training mechatronics – assembly and set-up of a 3D printer



Source 3: Photo © ÖBB

# Day 2



## 2.0 Welcome and introductory remarks

The master of ceremony, **Ms Ana Carrero**, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission, opened proceedings by warmly thanking the ÖBB for hosting the event and DG MOVE for the close cooperation during the months prior to the event.

She briefly highlighted the agenda and encouraged participants to actively contribute to the days' discussions. She also thanked online participants who would be following the event online through the EU Social Youtube channel.

**Mr Nicolas Schmit**, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights addressed participants in a video message opening statement. The year 2021 marked the European Year of Rail. The railway sector is a major piece in the big puzzle of Europe's climate and neutrality goals under the European Green Deal. The year 2022 is dedicated to the European Year of Youth and aims to engage all young people in Europe's green, inclusive and digital post-pandemic recovery. Within this context, apprenticeships can provide a first-class entry for young people into the railway sector, which is in urgent need of new staff given a large share of the workforce is projected to retire in the next 10 years.

By boosting apprenticeships, the rail industry will attract young people with the right skills who will become fully qualified. It will also provide an opportunity to address gender stereotypes connected with some of the occupations in the sector. This in turn will also help tackle youth unemployment, which unfortunately remains double the general unemployment rate in the EU.

The European Commission actively promotes apprenticeships among companies and young people. The renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) brings together governments, social partners, businesses, new regions, youth organisations, VET and training providers and think tanks. It has been instrumental in mobilising over 1 million apprenticeship opportunities since its set-up in 2013. Alongside this, significant EU funding is available to support youth employment and education and training systems, including apprenticeships.

**Ms Silvia Angelo**, Member of the Board of Management, ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG welcomed participants and thanked the organisers of the event. She highlighted that the second day of the conference would address many important issues, including digitalisation, gender issues and climate change. The climate crisis and climate change require all our efforts. The ambitious goal set by the European Commission of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is very much welcomed. In Austria, ÖBB is one of the largest climate protection companies and is a reliable partner in the sustainable mobility transition. To make the transition a reality, efforts are needed for training with new digital skills, and develop new career and recruitment paths that add new 'green jobs', while being cautious about the inequalities that can arise.

## 3.0 Setting the scene

The first session outlined the state of play of apprenticeship development in Europe in the rail sector. The master of ceremony invited speakers to comment on apprenticeship development, briefly highlighting its policy context, major trends, as well as challenges and opportunities for now and the future.

### Speakers:

- **Manuela Geleng**, Director, DG EMPL, European Commission
- **Kristian Schmidt**, Director, DG MOVE, European Commission
- **Sarah Bittner-Krautsack**, Interim Head of Mobility and Transport Technologies department, Austrian Ministry for Climate Action (BMK)

### 3.1 Attractiveness of apprenticeships in the railway sector in Europe

The rail sector will be key to make transport in the EU more sustainable and to help reach climate neutrality by 2050, in line with the European Green Deal. **Ms Manuela Geleng**, Director, DG EMPL, European Commission shared that within this context, innovation and digitalisation are key for the development of the rail sector. The industry is already changing into a more dynamic place of work. At the same time, the rail sector faces some challenges in the digitalisation transition due to the strong upskilling needed (35 % of EU workers have insufficient digital skills, EU citizens in general 43 %). Not tackling the digital divide will lead to growing inequality. Therefore, the apprenticeship sector has the opportunity to help close this divide. There is a need to promote the attractiveness of apprenticeships in the railway sector and reach out to new target groups – especially young women who make up only 21 % of the workforce. Moreover, the rail sector needs to be able to work seamlessly across borders and the mobility of apprenticeships and transnational cooperation can benefit towards this goal.

The European Commission aims for climate neutral companies in Europe and decarbonising transport. **Mr Kristian Schmidt**, Director, DG MOVE, European Commission, provided an overview of the policy context from DG MOVE. Rail is one of the cleanest modes with 0.4 % of transport related emissions; however, more could be done to promote the mode of transport through more competitive prices. There are many challenges ahead, including shortages in demanded skills (digital), a retiring workforce and automation of work. The visit to the ÖBB apprenticeship training centre is an excellent example to address these challenges by the skilling and re-skilling of apprenticeships. Ending his intervention, Mr Schmidt encouraged participants to learn from each other during the conference and work together in the future to promote the mobility of apprentices and promoting a good image and quality apprentices across Europe.

## 3.2 The case of Austria: the role of rail for climate action

**Ms Sarah Bittner-Krautsack**, Interim Head of Mobility and Transport Technologies department, Austrian Ministry for Climate Action (BMK), presented the research and innovation needs in Austria, sharing the latest findings from a study conducted on 'New occupational profiles in mobility in the context of automation and digitalization'.

Austria has an ambitious goal to achieve climate neutrality by 2040. To achieve this, BMK focuses on four research and innovation areas: energy transition; mobility transition; circular economy; and climate neutral cities. In the last years, there have been a number of studies and impact assessments on these issues.<sup>1</sup> Research findings show that young people long for meaningful jobs. An appealing concept to boost employment in the rail sector is that it offers opportunities to work in an international environment.

Overall, the European railway sector accounts for more than 1 million direct and 1.2 million indirect jobs in the EU, but it must become even more innovative in order to meet the expectations of the mobility transition. Digital technologies will transform the mobility sector for users and workers. Jobs in the mobility sector have a high risk of automation (over time). There is no agreement to the extent to which occupations will be replaced, but agreement exists on a shift towards more demanding activities, which require different sets of skills. As a result, training will need to be made significantly more flexible (towards lifelong learning) and the risk of social inequalities averted.

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<sup>1</sup> 2012: Study on 'Securing skilled workers for the RTI-oriented mobility sector'; 2018: R&D study on 'Tool for the consideration of gender aspects and perspectives within RTI projects and organisations in goods mobility' – [Final report available](#); 2018: Study on 'Job descriptions and opportunities for employment in an automated and digitised Austrian mobility sector 2040' – [Final report available](#); 2020-2021: R&D study on 'New job profiles in mobility in the context of automation and digitization' – [Final report available](#).

## 4.0 EAfA new members ceremony

**Ms Kjerstin Torpmann-Hagen**, DG EMPL, European Commission hosted the EAfA new members ceremony. She gave a brief update on the latest developments regarding EAfA which now has 377 members. The online community has been a big part of activities and was instrumental during the pandemic and online events. It now has almost 3 000 LinkedIn group members. Over the last four years, the EAfA has organised a range of events including webinars, online training modules, live discussions and most recently, podcasts. The EAfA annual survey is an important way to collect feedback from members on preferences of topics on apprenticeships in the coming years. Ms Torpmann-Hagen encouraged all participants to participate.

After the introduction, she thanked the newcomers for their commitments and welcomed the following new members to the Alliance:

- National Railway Company of Belgium - SNCB, Large company (Belgium)
- French National Railways - SNCF, Large company (France)
- International Union of Railways (UIC), Social Partners (France)
- Association of European Rail Rolling Stock Lessors (AERRL), Professional body and network (Belgium)
- Deutsche Bahn AG, Large company (Germany)
- The European Rail Supply Industry Association (UNIFE), Business organisation (Belgium)
- Turkish State Railways (TCDD and TCDD Taşımacılık A.Ş), Large company (Turkey) - online
- ProRail, Business - Large company (Netherlands)



Source 4: Photo © Elena Azzalini

## 5.0 Just transitions: Digital and Green

The first thematic session was moderated by **Mr Jörg Markowitsch** from 3s, a research consultancy specialising in lifelong learning. The moderator briefly introduced the topic and invited speakers to the discussion, which focused on the role of innovation and digitalisation to unlock new and better training and employment opportunities. In addition, it explored the challenges and best practices in addressing the digital and social divide through inclusive VET and apprenticeship programmes.



Source 5: Photo © Elena Azzalini

### Speakers:

- **Dr. Bojan Jovanovski**, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of International Management at FH JOANNEUM, GreenoVET-Project (CoVE)
- **Carole Coune**, Secretary General of the Association of European Rail Rolling Stock Lessors (AERRL)
- **Meryem Belhaj-Clot**, Deputy HR Director at the International Union of Railways (UIC)

### 5.1 GreenoVET-Project

The GreenoVET-Project (CoVE) fosters the development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Excellence in Green Innovation across Europe. The initiative aims to create 100 centres with one important goal – to interconnect the skills ecosystem and create the skills we need in the future. The project started in 2020 and will last four years. There are four regions involved: Styria (Austria); Vaasa (Finland); Leiria

(Portugal); and Skopje (North Macedonia). In every region there is at least one representative from VET education institutions as well as companies and businesses, and representatives from governmental institutions and NGO's.

The four CoVEs have different structures and different governing systems but share a common goal. The goal of the centres is not to fill the skills gap of today, but to analyse what we need in the future. Based on this forecast, the centres aim to develop the skills of the educators so that they can provide and teach the future skills of the market. This has been challenging due to different regional strategies. Nevertheless, the regions also have some things in common. For example, all regions aim to integrate green and environmental concepts focusing on aspects of digital technologies, energy technologies and food and health care industry. Dr. Jovanovski finished his presentation encouraging participants to get in touch to share more on this work which could potentially transfer to other regions.

## **5.2 The Association of European Rail Rolling Stock Lessors (AERRL) – establishing the conditions to create apprenticeship places**

The Association of European Rail Rolling Stock Lessors (AERRL) is a representative body of the railway sector at EU level. It meets regularly with European Commission and EU-level partners and works to promote interoperable and safe European rail rolling stock. The sector is currently digitalised with its backbone being the ECM (Entity in Charge of Maintenance) function which should be fully deployed in 2040 with some already planned in 2030. Currently, 40 % of locomotives are already deployed with ECM. Workshops are being held with a focus on the skills needed for ECM and the sector. There is a focus on maintenance management functions and maintenance delivery function where there are many more technicians needed with a combination of technical skills (hardware and software) together with social skills (e.g. communication).

As a new member of the EAfA, AERRL's pledge aims to increase the number of apprenticeship places and raise awareness about the benefits of the mobility of apprenticeships. In total, the aim is to have 1 000 new places in 5 years' time. To achieve this commitment, AERRL has set up an Expert Committee to establish the conditions needed to meet the target, including: good partnerships between VET, universities and companies for both technical and human skills required; and harmonisation of apprenticeships to allow apprenticeship mobility in the EU.

## **5.3 International railway union – developing educational and training programmes**

The International Union of Railways (UIC) celebrates its 100-year anniversary. The UIC consists of a forum of 240 members from 100 countries that work together sharing experiences and seeking solutions to boost railway efficiency and facilitate the creation of international rail links. The UIC helps the railway sector prepare for the future by investing in innovation, new technologies and digitalisation, as well as

developing educational and training programmes. Another objective of the UIC is to support its members to achieve their goals and identify new skills through UIC projects financed by members or the EU Commission. As an employer, UIC also hires apprentices and interns, providing them with career plans and job opportunities at UIC and with members. Apprentices are working on main strategic topics of UIC, such as predictive maintenance, climate change and adaption, noise and sustainable land use.

## 6.0 Gender equality in apprenticeships in the rail sector

The second thematic session on 'Gender equality in apprenticeships in the rail sector' was moderated by **Ms Vicki Donlevy**, Technical Director (Ecorys). The session covered the attractiveness of apprenticeships, the quality of VET and gender equality/women in the rail sector in different countries and offered insight into challenges and good practices.



Source 6: Photo © Elena Azzalini

### Speakers:

- **Jedde Hollewijn**, Policy Officer for Railways, European Transport Workers' Federation Representative
- **Heather Waugh**, Train Driver, Women in Rail
- **Katrien Joye**, Internship Coordinator, SNCB
- **Ursula Bazant**, Head of Department for Education & Training, ÖBB

### 6.1 The role of social partners

The binding Women in Rail – EU Social Partner Agreement<sup>2</sup> aims at promoting employment of women in the sector. The agreement was signed by the **European Transport Workers' Federation** (ETF), representing railway workers, and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), representing railway sector employers. The policy covers a wide range of areas such as setting quantifiable targets, ways to attract more women to the sector, reconciliation of work and private life, promotion and career development, equal pay, health and safety and work environment, as well as prevention of sexual harassment and sexism.

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<sup>2</sup> Women in Rail – EU Social Partner Agreement, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5745>



To ensure the implementation of their recommendation on the integration of women in the railway sector, the ETF is regularly carrying out surveys. The results demonstrate the underrepresentation of youth and women in the sector – only one in five rail employees is a woman. To address underrepresentation of youth within the sector as well as the specific workplace challenges faced by a young workforce, the ETF has established a Youth Committee. The Committee works to improve the situation of young transport workers in the labour market, and to better integrate young activists into trade union structures and activities. From a trade union perspective, desirable job prospects with fair wages and good work conditions are the most effective measure to attract more apprentices and to ensure a balanced workforce.

## 6.2 A woman traindriver's perspective

**Ms Heather Waugh** shared her personal experience of being Scotland's only woman freight train driver. Heather drove passenger trains for 15 years before switching to Freightliner, her present employer, in 2019. In her presentation she reflected on how the misperception of freight held her back from entering the sector sooner. To her own surprise, Heather felt welcomed and accepted by her colleagues and expressed her pride and contentment with her work. With public appearances, Heather continues to encourage other women to question preconceived ideas, which might also lead them to pursue a different career path.

For the industry to attract and retain women, it is essential that they are given a seat at a decision-making table. It is instrumental to highlight and address the physical barriers to a female workforce, such as uniforms and personal protective equipment designed only for men or lack of adequate facilities. To achieve diversity at the workplace it is important to address the difference between it being a box-ticking exercise versus a genuine attempt to create and benefit from a diverse workforce. Equality and diversity is not about treating everyone the same, but rather about understanding and addressing the different needs that everyone has. To conclude, Heather approaches the question of equality and inclusiveness personally when decisions are made and policies are designed with the same care that we have for our closest relatives.

## 6.3 Promoting gender equality at company level

The **Belgian National Railways, SNCB** are committed to gender equality, which is reflected more and more in the figures every year. However, women still make up less than 20 % of the total workforce. The proportion of women is particularly low in business units that are traditionally male dominated, namely Technics (4.6 %) and Transport Operations (7 %). The struggle to recruit women is linked with the challenges to attract female apprentices to the VET school. The percentage of women in senior management positions is higher than other areas (25 %), but still not the desired equality of 50 %. Diversity & Inclusion is an integral part of SNCB job site and candidate experience, from using gender inclusive language in job descriptions and listing a limited number of requirements to delivering promotional gender

equality campaigns that challenge gender stereotypes. Moving forward the goals are to further investigate the pay gap, to improve the facilities such as breastfeeding rooms, as well as to address unwanted behavior – namely sexual harassment.

The **ÖBB** is actively tackling the skills shortage of trained and talented employees in the rail sector through investing in the training of apprentices. Moreover, gender equality in Training and Education and in the ÖBB group is seen as a fundamental part of their values and corporate culture, as well as economical investment. Young people, especially young women, appreciate being given the opportunity to get more insight into what the different professions entail and to trial them before making a career decision. A successful example is presenting apprentices as role models for advertising the jobs. Female role models inspire applicants to see what is possible in a technical career and to aspire to what have traditionally been seen as male-dominated roles. Diversity measures taken in the apprenticeship programme include an ombudsperson for girls in training workshops, available resources, inclusive language and visuals, clear goals, increased number of female trainers, recruitment and informational campaigns, as well as representation in the events.

## 7.0 Mobility and transnational cooperation

The third and last thematic discussion was moderated by **Leonardo Dongiovanni, DG MOVE, European Commission**. Transnational cooperation and mobility of apprentices can have a win-win-win effect for apprentices, hosting and sending companies. The panel was dedicated to the discussion of the challenges and opportunities of mobility and transnational cooperation, and the insights gained from ongoing projects and cross-border cooperation of different stakeholders.



Source 7: Photo © Elena Azzalini

### Speakers:

- **Eckhard Voss**, Senior Advisor and Management Partner, wmp consul, Hamburg, STAFFER
- **Ignacio Ferrer**, XABEC Vocational Training Centre
- **Olivia Janisch**, Member of the Works Council and the Supervisory Board of the ÖBB-Holding AG, Vice-Chair of Austrian Transport Workers Union (vida)

## 7.1 The STAFFER blueprint project

The STAFFER blueprint project<sup>3</sup> aims to support sectoral skills strategy and develop concrete actions to address short- and medium-term skills needs. It started in 2021 and has a four-year duration. During phase one future skills and competence needs were identified. The focus of the second phase will lie in the development of concrete programmes in the field of cross-border mobility. The third phase, which will start by the end of this year, will develop a long-term action plan for skills for the whole sector. The project is coordinated by the University of Genoa and brings together a comprehensive consortium of over 30 partners, including rail operators, infrastructure managers and rail supplier industry, European level social partners, education institutions, as well as 14 associated partners from 13 countries.

There is a strong trend and need to have increased cross-border activities both in rail freight and passenger transport. However, the railway sector is characterised by national rail traffic safety management and signalling, a large diversity of railway operating and infrastructure management companies and different security and control systems, which translates into specific railway education and training systems. At the same time, the lack of international and cross-border skills was identified through the survey. The survey participants stressed the need for more action in the field of cross-border mobility and exchange.

Further work is needed to foster apprenticeship mobility, e.g. developing a sector-specific mobility scheme that supports companies in making more active use of funds like Erasmus + would be very helpful.

## 7.2 The role of VET centres and teachers for transnational cooperation

Vocational Education and Training (VET) centres play a key role in fostering apprenticeship mobility and transnational cooperation between different stakeholders. The Erasmus+ KA116 - 'Technicians on the move' project offers various opportunities for apprentices to spend short mobility spells abroad, including opportunities in the railway sector. Mobility and transnational experiences are equally important for VET teachers. They play a crucial role when it comes to the qualification of students, promoting mobility and innovation. Through the collaboration with CAF, a Spanish company operating locomotives and trams, teachers were able to participate in workshops in Hungary, which served as a base for further projects.

A key success factor for transnational cooperation is establishing networks between VET colleges in the field of industry and transport and international companies in the rail sector. The rail sector is an international sector, in need of talent and VET students interested to work abroad. Mobility and transnational cooperation also have a positive impact on VET schools, leading to new innovative ways of teaching and

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.railstaffer.eu/>

engaging students. This is exemplified by the development of international e-learning courses and the transformation of face-to-face courses in virtual reality courses for apprentices that want to go abroad. Establishing a foundation of trust between these networks is crucial for the collaboration and the successful implementation of apprenticeship mobility spells, which will benefit companies, students and VET institutions.

### 7.3 The role of social partners

The involvement of social partners at all levels is crucial for progress in the sector. An important success story for European social dialogue is the Women in Rail agreement, which aims to attract more women to the railway sector by offering equal opportunities and creating an appealing work environment for both women and men.<sup>4</sup> It is a binding agreement and includes the duty to monitor the measures implemented at company level all over Europe. During the European Year of Rail, Austria's social partners concluded a national collective agreement which focused on apprentices. The agreement aims to address challenges related to digitalisation, the green transition, automation, as well as challenges related to inflation and the remuneration of apprenticeships, which is a crucial element for their attractiveness. Social partners' involvement can also help to create a predictable and attractive career path in the sector, with programmes and processes in place to support the transition from apprenticeship to employment. Finally, an effective social partnership at the workplace level based on cooperation and dialogue can be a driver for progress and improvement.

The Austrian Transport Workers Union has started collaboration with a sister trade union in Germany involving youth representatives, which regularly express their interest in transnational exchanges and learning opportunities. Another successful example mentioned was a past exchange programme between the ÖBB and the SNCF. Such initiatives could be expanded to other countries, considering that it is easier in the case of shared language or similar VET systems. From a trade union perspective related to social insurance of apprentices spending time abroad, safety and quality standards and social dumping need to be addressed to pave the way for a bright future for youth in the railway sector.

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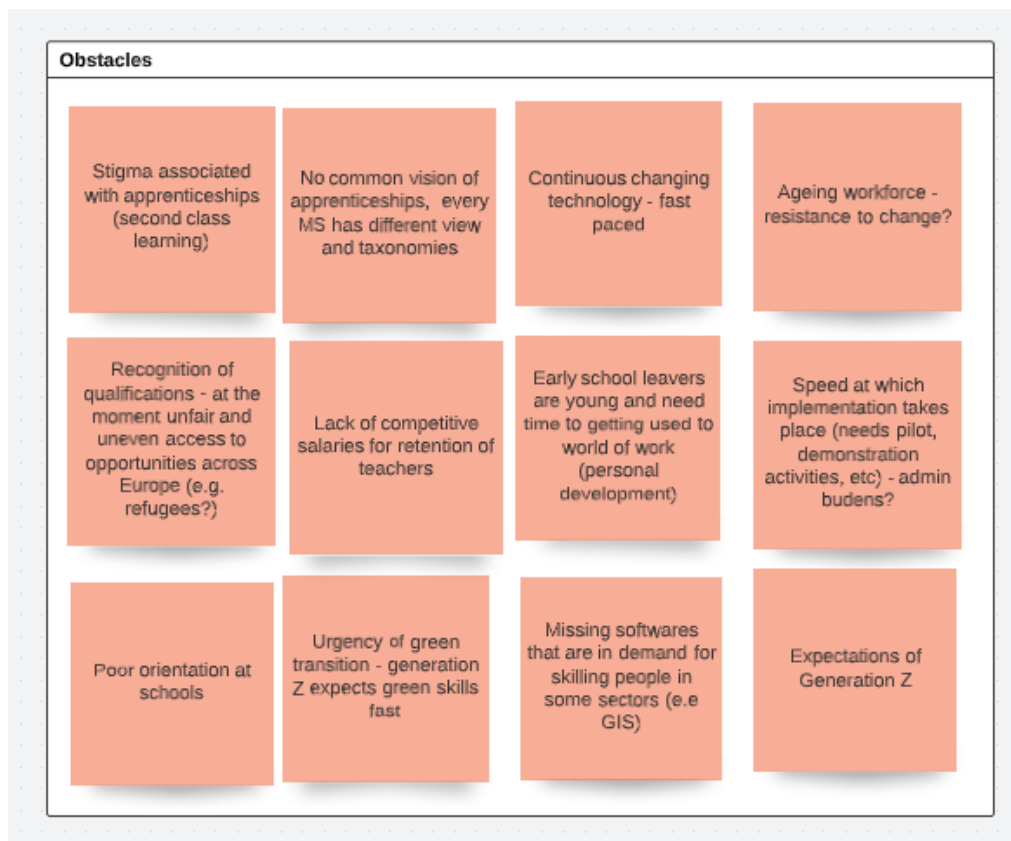
<sup>4</sup> Women in Rail – EU Social Partner Agreement, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5745>

## 8.0 Parallel round table discussions

During the parallel round table discussions, the participants of the event had the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions on the topics explored during the morning sessions. During each session three main questions were addressed, with the following takeaways presented in the figures below.

### 8.1 Just transitions: Digital and Green

1. What are the main challenges and obstacles faced by apprenticeships to address the demand for green and digital skills? How can a green and digital divide be avoided in apprenticeship training while meeting future skills demands?



Source 8: © Ecorys, 2022

2. What role do you think VET and apprenticeships can play to help boost the digital and green transition? Do you have examples of **good practices in this area?**

Good practices				
Creative pathways needed to teach entrepreneurial competences - allowing appren to adapt (digital and green)	Sector exchanges to develop skills	Project based learning for green ecosystems projects	Access to apprenticeships to disadvantaged backgrounds	Industry creates appren programmes that fit their needs and are versatile/can adapt to future needs
Developing relationships between schools and companies	Awareness raising, sharing stories about apprenticeships	Engaging students from different backgrounds in conversations about skills development	Reverse mentoring - apprentices can be change agents	Green skills cooperation networks at local level
High quality software training and skills (e.g. GSI)	Gamification of learning - allos instant feedback	CPD (Continuous professional development for trainers and workers	Innovation via apprentices exchange	Social partners getting together to work on sustainable goals - Coalition 2030

Source 9: © Ecorys, 2022

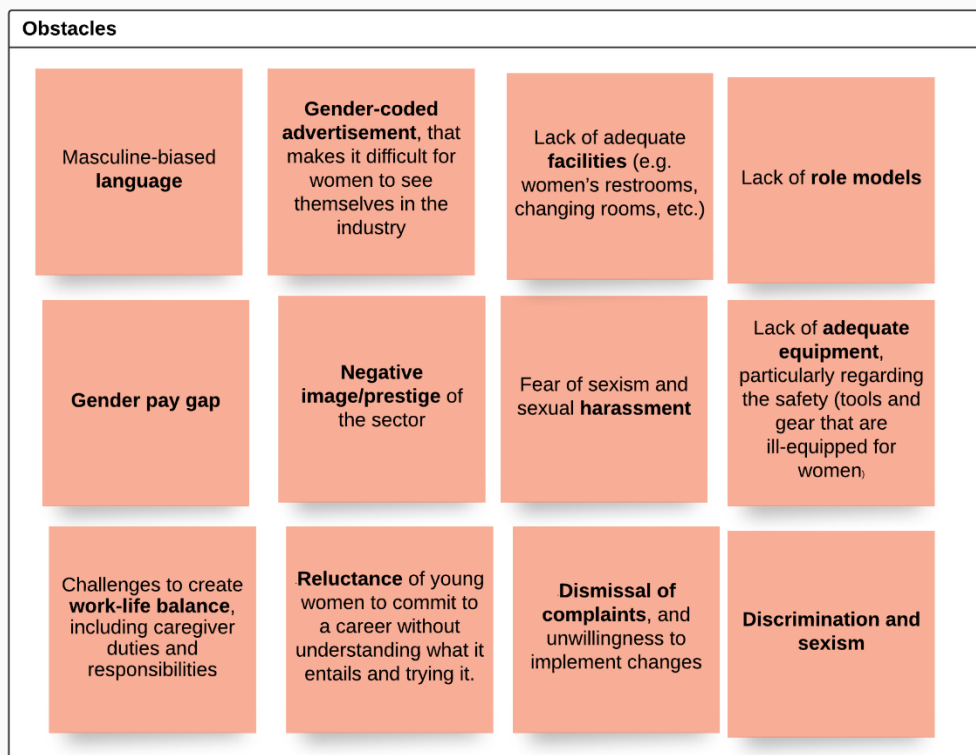
3. What would be your **recommendations** to meet future skill demands and to avoid social inequalities in the digital and green transition?

Recommendations				
Train the trainer to have broader set of methods matching deamnds of more heterogenic apprentices (race, diversity)	Increase open access to information	Broaden language skills to include programming	Renovate teachers' role to match characteristics of apprentices	Public policies in support of quality apprentices
Scholarships to increase access from social disadvantage backgrounds	European Bolgna for Apprenticeships - the right to be recognised!	Increasing accessibility to infrastructures (e.g. internet connection)	Include educators and industry in discussions about skills	Develop qualifications including workbased and lifelong learning
Develop "GreenCompt" similar to Digicompt - Broaden knowledge to be able to consider green solutions	LLL to make sure we are innovation ready	Just remunerations for teachers/ trainers	Promote social dialogue and intersector collaboration	Include soft skills in qualifications to face future challenges

Source 10: © Ecorys, 2022

## 8.2 Gender equality in apprenticeships in the rail sector

1. What are the main **challenges and obstacles** which discourage women from taking up apprenticeships? What specific challenges exist in typically male-dominated sectors such as the rail sector?



Source 11: © Ecorys, 2022



2. What **actions** are needed to overcome these challenges (e.g. awareness-raising, marketing/outreach, accompanying measures, etc.)? How can VET and apprenticeships boost gender equality in the rail sector or other sectors? Do you know of any **good practices** in the rail sector or other sectors which could serve as inspiration?

Good practices					
Using <b>gender sensitive language</b>	Dedicated person for <b>support</b> (e.g. social worker, psychologist, someone that female employees would feel safe to talk to)	Gender diverse <b>role models</b>	<b>Wider definition of gender</b> , that is not based on cisgender female and cisgender male	Increased <b>pay</b> and support regarding the <b>career plans</b>	<b>Site visits and 'girls days'</b> to allow girls engage with companies before young people choose the career path
Engaging parents, create a better understanding of <b>VET options</b>	<b>Pay transparency</b> and clear strategies to close gender pay gap	Informational <b>campaigns</b> to introduce and attract people to the industry	Offering appropriate <b>working environment</b> , facilities, equipment, hygiene products, etc.	<b>Raise awareness</b> on professions in the sector - engage children and young people in early education, schools and universities	Establishing and encouraging <b>networking and cooperation</b> in early education

Source 12: © Ecorys, 2022

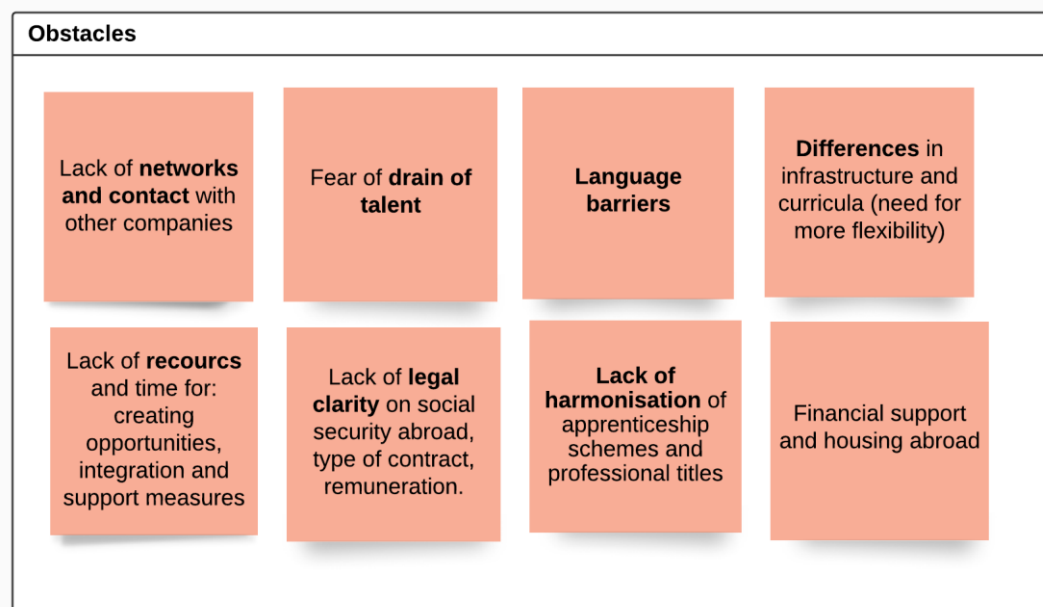
3. What would be your **key recommendations** to improve the gender balance in apprenticeships in the rail sector? At which level (e.g. EU/national policymakers, sectors, employers, social partners, etc.)?

Recommendations				
<b>Inclusive education</b> (from an early age)	Increase <b>visibility</b> of women, allow their voices to be heard	Ensure that apprentices receive the equivalent full-time <b>employment rights</b>	Support young women with <b>career choice</b> (e.g. 'try before you buy' approach)	Break <b>stereotypes</b> and overcome <b>stigma</b>
Increase the number of female <b>teachers and trainers</b>	Engage female <b>role models</b>	Include <b>men</b> in to the <b>discussions</b> on gender equality	Ensure the <b>recognition</b> of VET education as equal to university education	Include <b>apprentices in the decision-making</b> process, hearing their experiences
Provide <b>gender diversity training</b>	Continue <b>networking activities</b> following EYR conference	Mutual recognition of <b>VET qualifications</b> in different countries	<b>Visits</b> to training centers and VET schools (including parents)	Improve <b>maternity leave</b> for apprentices

Source 13: © Ecorys, 2022

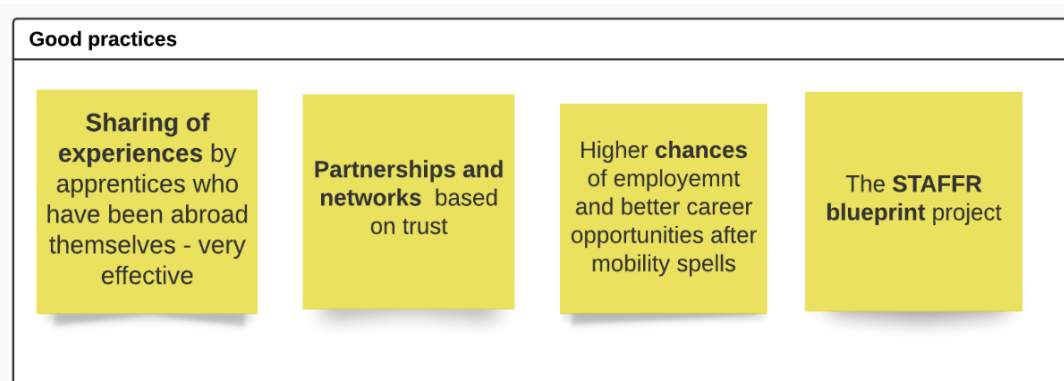
## 8.3 Mobility and transnational cooperation

1. In your or your organisation's experience, what do you see as the main **challenges and obstacles** limiting the mobility of apprentices in the rail sector? Can you please share specific examples and highlight what added-value transnational cooperation can bring?



Source 14: © Ecorys, 2022

2. Do you have any **examples of successful practices** of transnational cooperation that have helped increase the mobility of apprentices in the sector?



Source 15: © Ecorys, 2022

3. What would be your **key recommendations** to boost the mobility of apprentices in the rail sector and increase the number of learning opportunities abroad?

Recommendations				
Strong <b>commitment to mobility</b> at company management level	<b>Set expectations</b> for VET students on how to behave and for supervisors on how to mentor	Reduce the <b>administrative burden</b> for companies and schools	Clear rules and procedures - companies need to know when they are <b>complying</b> with the law	Promote apprenticeship mobility beyond the EAfA
Encourage <b>international</b> job fairs the creation of international networks	Reward system for learning <b>languages</b>	Mobility of <b>VET teachers</b>	Expand the <b>Erasmus+</b> programme	Provision of <b>integrational support</b> during the time abroad (internet, healthcare, emergencies)
<b>Preparation courses</b> (including language) prior to exchange programme	Lobbying with enterprises	<b>Better funding</b> for apprenticeship mobility and accomodation	Raise awareness on the importance of <b>internationalisation</b>	Create a <b>networking platform</b> for companies and VET providers

Source 16: © Ecorys, 2022

## 9.0 The perspective of the apprentice

In the spirit of the European Year of Youth, the final session provided a space for apprentices active in the rail sector to share their views and the outcome of the preparatory discussions to this event held with the **European Apprentices Network (EAN)**. EAN plays a crucial role in creating a bridge between apprentices and European institutions to make sure that their ideas and concerns are heard by policymakers, whilst boosting the representation of apprentices at national and local level. **Ben Kinross, Coordinator of the EAN** introduced the apprentices on the panel and focused on the topics of automation, gender, mobility and a just green and digital transition.

### Speakers:

- **Ferre Vandenberghe**, SNCB – New EafA members apprentice
- **Laura Pantone**, EAN
- **Lorenzi Franzoni**, Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC) – New EafA members apprentice
- **Simon Hawthorn**, EAN
- **Haiet Ben Akremi Ritchie**, Work-study and Vocational Training Officer, SNCF - New EafA members apprentice
- **Uliana Musakina**, SAKKI ry/EAN

The **potential of apprenticeships** is huge. They provide great on-the-job learning opportunities and pertinent skills. Against this backdrop, it is important to change the narrative around apprenticeships and allow apprentices to fully participate in their organisations with innovative ideas so they can help shape the future and reach their full potential.

The apprentices agree that the rail sector plays an important role in building a sustainable society. Furthermore, **sustainability** is a core value of future apprentices and consumers. Consumers and institutions are putting a growing emphasis on the sustainability performance of companies. This translates into the need for qualified young professionals to fill the present skills gap in the sector and specific programmes training them in green skills. A horizontal and holistic approach to skills is crucial for achieving these wider goals, as well as collaboration across countries to share best practises and improve the mutual recognition of skills. A platform to share learning experiences from projects was proposed, as well as the creation of a system of shared recognition of VET training to foster exchanges and mobility. Finally, apprentices should be included in the process of decarbonisation and innovation of the industry.

Over the coming years automatic trains will become more and more frequently used. Ensuring a just and fair transition for **occupations affected by automation**, such as train drivers, is crucial and should include considerations relating to job-reallocation, re-skilling and how to guarantee salary levels and job security. Furthermore, it is important to resolve liability issues related to driving automated trains. Ensuring a safe and promising future for occupations in the railway sector will be instrumental to retain qualified staff and to attracting young professionals and apprentices to the sector.

**International and European mobility** for apprentices offer valuable learning opportunities abroad, can boost self-confidence, and create a space of shared learning and culture and promoting European values. More effort is needed to allow apprentices to increasingly benefit from mobility opportunities. This can be achieved by reducing the administrative burden for companies and VET schools, training tutors to welcome apprentices and creating platforms to foster transnational cooperation.

Another key objective to be achieved is **gender equality and inclusivity** going beyond quotas and including all people. Key actions to achieve this objective include changing the language in the company, ensuring representation, making the workplace accessible to everyone, providing the right equipment and infrastructure, and designating a person responsible to create an inclusive and appealing workplace. A key takeaway for all topics is to include apprentices in the process and to use their potential to bring about positive change.



Source 16: Photo © Elena Azzalini