



High-Level Live Discussion: Supporting Ukrainians in the EU through apprenticeships

European Alliance for Apprenticeships | 27 October 2022

On 27 October 2022, a High-Level Live Discussion was hosted by the European Commission's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) to examine how apprenticeships can be used as a tool to support Ukrainians displaced by the war, and to address their educational, employment and societal needs. The objectives of the event were twofold; 1) call for action by encouraging EAfA members to make a new pledge towards creating apprenticeships for Ukrainians and to encourage non-members to join the Alliance and make their first pledge, and; 2) expand awareness and maximise knowledge about how the apprenticeships community can support Ukrainians.

INTRODUCTION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION (DG EMPL)

Welcoming the audience, **Ana Carrero**, Deputy Head of Unit - Vocational Education and Training at DG EMPL, European Commission, highlighted the importance of supporting Ukraine in education and training. Apprenticeships can offer displaced Ukrainians a great way to continue, or embark on, their vocational education and training journey without putting their future on hold. Apprenticeships provide a direct pathway for integration into the labour market and wider society. They can also equip displaced Ukrainians with the practical skills they will need to rebuild their country.



'The future of Ukraine starts with education. Apprenticeships can play an essential role in educating young people – they are key tools to learn on the job and the employment prospects afterwards are excellent'

Nicolas Schmit, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

As the keynote speaker of the event, **Nicolas Schmit**, EU Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, set the scene by stressing that the future of Ukraine starts with education. As part of a larger response from the European Commission, Ukrainians in the EU have been provided basic assistance and access to the labour market as well as education and training systems. Examples of measures include a [Ukrainian version of the EU Skills Profile Tool](#), a [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe](#) and the new [EURES initiative EU Talent Pool](#). In view of the next year, 2023 – the European year of Skills – strengthening the skills of Ukrainians will be essential for the reconstruction of Ukraine and beyond. Finally, Commissioner Schmit called on the 400 members of the EAfA to encourage new pledges for more apprenticeships in the EU and especially for those who have fled the war.

Elaborating on the topic of the day, **Anatolii Garmash**, Senior specialist in qualifications, European Training foundation (ETF), shed light on how apprenticeships ease integration in the host country by allowing access to quality employment, offering opportunities for language training and providing significant opportunities to build a social network. Today, many displaced Ukrainians face uncertainty about the duration of their stay. Innovative solutions such as short and flexible training periods, and addressing cost-benefit concerns of employers, may be required. For Ukrainians intending to return to their home country one day, micro-credentials¹ were highlighted as a promising solution to facilitate recognition of individuals' skills, knowledge and competences.

¹ Micro-credentials help certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training. Read more [here](#).

EXPERIENCES OF UKRAINIANS AND WAYS TO SUPPORT

Kicking off the first part of the panel discussion, **Agnė Kudarauskiėnė**, *Vice-minister, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania*, emphasised that making apprenticeships available for Ukrainians is a key priority for Lithuania. Ukrainians are eligible to participate in the national VET-admission process to either continue their previous learning paths or start a new one. A good practice that may serve as an inspiration for VET-stakeholders around Europe is that one of Lithuania's largest manufacturers in the intersurgical industry has welcomed Ukrainian apprentices to carry out their work-placement.

Eldin Catovic, *Trainer at Bildungszentrum Handwerk Duisburg, Germany*, shared how his training institution offers Ukrainians basic German skills apprenticeships in attractive professions. It also supports them in their daily lives by providing meal-vouchers, free public transport and administrative support. **Oleksandra Telna**, *an apprentice at Handwerk Duisburg, Germany*, shared her personal story of how she and her family made their way from Ukraine to Germany by train and how she continued her vocational education as a restaurant cook in a new country. **Svitlana Dolholpolova**, *also an apprentice at Handwerk Duisburg, Germany*, enrolled in an apprenticeship to become a hairdresser. She stressed that the key to her integration had been the initial German language course, which empowered her with a new language and offered a pleasant and valuable social environment.

The last panellist, Iryna **Shumik**, *Director General of the Directorate of Vocational Education, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine*, reported directly from Ukraine. Despite the current difficult conditions, Ukraine was able to keep 85 % of its vocational schools open and welcomed more than 12 000 VET-students for the current school year. The country is continuing its VET-reform that began in 2018–2019, aiming to develop skills-clusters around local VET-schools to increase competitiveness and meet emerging labour market needs.



A virtual group photo of the panellists and the Moderator. From the top left: **Ana Carrero (Moderator)**, **Agnė Kudarauskiėnė**, **Eldin Catovic**, **Svitlana Dolholpolova**, **Oleksandra Telna**, **Anatolii Garmash**, and **Iryna Shumik**

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the final part of the Live Discussion, **Eldin Catovic** called for more psychological support, both offered in-person and online, for displaced Ukrainians who are often distressed long after arriving in the EU. **Agnė Kudarauskiėnė**, agreeing with this statement, highlighted how Lithuania offers arriving Ukrainian students an 'adaption period' to overcome stress caused by the war and the new environment. As part of their national plan within the [EU Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), Lithuania will have a component dedicated to quality apprenticeships, which is hoped to benefit Ukrainians as well. Lastly, **Iryna Shumik** shared how the Ukrainian government is working to relocate many schools and deal with the forced migration of students. Temporary solutions for these challenges are virtual apprenticeships and blended learning, offered today by the Ukrainian government via their national online VET platform.

CONCLUSION

The Live Discussion illustrated different facets of the war and its impact on VET – from how Ukraine response to meet education and training needs, and the views of a host country of displaced Ukrainians, to the personal stories of Ukrainian apprentices being forced to leave their home country. Ukrainian students in the EU face a number of challenges, including overcoming language barriers and emotional trauma, and having their qualifications recognised. VET-stakeholders have an opportunity to make an EAFA pledge to create apprenticeships for Ukrainians and help them better address the challenges they face.

CHALLENGES UKRAINIANS FACE IN APPRENTICESHIPS

Iryna Shumik opened the second part of the Live Discussion by explaining the upcoming challenge of reintegrating large numbers of Ukrainians who will return one day. Special qualification centres have already opened where foreign degrees can be recognised and where Ukrainians can receive national certificates corresponding to qualifications gained abroad. Offering the point of view of a host country, **Agnė Kudarauskiėnė** echoed the importance of facilitating recognition of qualifications across borders and highlighted that VET-systems need to be open and flexible when receiving Ukrainian students. As an apprentice, **Oleksandra Telna** shared that the main challenges she had to face were to adapt to her new host country, and, in particular, to deal with the trauma that remains from her experiences in Ukraine during the war.

Find more information about the event [here](#)

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