



Webinar: Apprenticeships in the care sector and social economy

European Alliance for Apprenticeships | 4 May 2023

On 4 May 2023, a webinar was hosted by the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) to discuss how apprenticeships can contribute to the care sector in the European Union (EU) and help address today's challenges. The webinar also explored the role social economy actors can play to contribute to this effort. In the context of the [European Year of Skills](#), EAfA members put the spotlight on skills, sharing inspiring apprenticeship practices.

WELCOME BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THEMATIC INTRODUCTION BY ILIAS LIVANOS, SKILLS FORECAST LEADER, DEPARTMENT FOR VET AND SKILLS (CEDEFOP)

Ana Carrero, Deputy Head of Unit - Vocational Education and Training at DG EMPL, European Commission, welcomed the audience and highlighted the importance of apprenticeships to support the care and healthcare sectors in Europe, which are facing significant skills and labour market shortages. As the European population is ageing, and will increasingly require long-term care services, there is an urgent need to attract more workers to these sectors, equip them with the right skills, and improve their working conditions. The [European Care Strategy](#) and the [Proposal for a Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care](#) seek to address these challenges. In this context, social economy actors play a crucial role, as highlighted by the European Union's [Social Economy Action Plan](#). Social economy actors can help improve the working conditions in the care sector in line with their strong social mission and their commitment to put people at the centre of their work.



"Human health and social work is one of the sectors that will grow the most, in terms of employment, by 2035."

Ilias Livanos, Skills Forecast Leader, CEDEFOP

As the thematic expert of the event, **Ilias Livanos**, Skills Forecast Leader, Department for VET and Skills (CEDEFOP), set the scene by introducing the audience to the results of the [CEDEFOP 2023 Skills forecast](#), a unique database developed to estimate future skills demand across sectors. Ilias highlighted that there was a 20% growth in employment in these sectors between 2011 and 2021, and that an estimated **10 300 000 jobs will be needed by 2035** in the residential care and social work sectors.

PRESENTATION OF INSPIRING PRACTICES

Kicking off the first part of the panel discussion, **Alexander Hölbl**, Head of Department at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour and Economy (AT), introduced the audience to a newly-established **nursing apprenticeship programme** in Austria starting in September 2023. This initiative will help to meet the high demand for healthcare personnel in the country, where an estimated additional 75 000 workers will be needed by 2030. The new nursing apprenticeship programme features three qualification levels (Nursing Assistant, Advanced Nursing Assistant, and Certified Health and Nursing Care), complementing the existing tools and education pathways already in place in Austria. Through this programme, apprentices will receive an **income** and benefit from a **proven model of in-company training** to develop their skills.

The next panellist, **Elena Senís Herrero**, International Relations Office Coordinator at Institut Bonanova (ES), presented the dual education pathway offered by the Institute. Institut Bonanova offers **work-based learning** opportunities for apprentices in the healthcare sector as part of a wider health consortium composed of healthcare, education, and research centres. Thanks to a **fellowship collaboration agreement**, apprentices can benefit from training provided both by the Institute, and by a hospital. Elena highlighted the multiple benefits of this combination of study and work for apprentices, which include an income close to the interprofessional minimum wage, access to consortium resources, the acquisition of professional competences, and easier insertion into the labour market. The benefits are also important for the partner hospital, which can use apprenticeships to



“Apprenticeships are a way to break down the silos between the education world and the labour market.”

Anna Barbieri, referring to the EUVECA project's approach

improve its workers' qualifications, ease talent identification, and have a readily available pool of candidates to cover vacancies.

The contribution of social economy actors to the care sector was further presented by **Anna Maria Cazzato**, *Social Programme Coordinator at Consorzio Consolida (IT)*. The consortium consists of a network of 22 social enterprises in the care, social, education, and job-placement sectors in Lecco, Lombardy. It is involved in the coordination of youth policies, and supports **three types of apprenticeship practices** that target a wide audience, ranging from young students to NEETS facing multiple barriers to employment. Through its actions, the consortium seeks to facilitate and encourage the insertion of vulnerable groups into the local job market. In order to adapt to current needs and challenges, the Consorzio Consolida is **exploring new ways to attract young people to apprenticeships** (e.g. by better highlighting the benefits of apprenticeships)

Finally, **Anna Barbieri**, *Team Leader for Apprenticeships and Erasmus+, DG EMPL, European Commission*, introduced the audience to the **Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)**. CoVEs aim to create and strengthen VET institutions in order to adapt skills to the needs of the labour market. CoVEs are supported by the Erasmus+ programme, are strongly connected to local ecosystems tackling sectoral needs and/or wider horizontal challenges, such as social inclusion. Every year more than a dozen projects are implemented, with a budget of 4 million available per a four-year project. Anna then mentioned the example of the [European Platform for Vocational Excellence in Healthcare](#) project (EUVECA). The EUVECA project will contribute to the development of **innovative skills for the healthcare sector and the creation of vocational excellence hubs** in 7 regions, providing apprenticeships and internship opportunities for project partners.

Henriette Hanses, EUVECA Project Manager, offered further information on the project through a [video message](#).



TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the final part of the webinar, **Ilias Livanos** highlighted the role that apprenticeship programmes could play in filling in the shortage of workers in the care sector. **Alexander Hölbl** underlined opportunities to make use of existing national provisions and systems to go forward with new programmes targeted at the care sector. **Elena Senís Herrero** drew attention to the challenge faced by companies and receiving organisations in providing an income to apprentices, which can be a barrier to the creation of more apprenticeship placements. **Anna Maria Cazzato** recalled that apprenticeships are an opportunity to stay in the labour market for talented and competitive people, but also (and foremost) for fragile individuals. Finally, **Anna Barbieri** reiterated the decisive role that apprenticeships in the care sector and social economy can play in addressing today's skills shortages and increasing care needs.

CONCLUSION

The webinar explored different ways that apprenticeships can contribute to the care sector, and elaborated on the role social economy actors can play in this. Faced with major social and occupational changes, as well as demographic challenges, the EU needs strong tools to address the current and upcoming skills and labour shortages in the care sector. The collaboration and involvement of social economy actors will be decisive to meet the care needs of European citizens in the coming years. These actors, as well as VET providers and companies, have an opportunity to make an EAfA pledge to create apprenticeships in the care and healthcare sectors for the benefit of society as a whole.

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