



European  
Commission

EAfA 10  
YEARS



# EAfA Get Together Event – European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)

27 June 2023 | Brussels, Belgium

The 2023 EAfA Get Together Event gathered more than 70 EAfA members in Brussels. Taking place immediately after the [EAfA High-Level Event](#) celebrating the **10th anniversary** of the Alliance, the Get Together Event allowed members to network, explore further into the themes discussed during the High-Level Event, present their work on apprenticeships, and exchange best practices.

## Welcome from DG EMPL and Main takeaways from the High-Level Event

**Ana Carrero** (DG EMPL) welcomed the event participants and announced the launch of four **EAfA Communities**. The communities represent an additional forum for EAfA members to network and collaborate on themes they are interested in with the ultimate goal to further foster quality apprenticeships.

**Noelia Cantero** (EARLALL) and **Michael Fitzgerald** (ESB Networks) reported on the key takeaways from the High-Level Event, emphasising the importance of cooperation between companies, training providers, public authorities at national, regional and local levels, and social partners in ensuring that labour market needs are met. They stressed that while the European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships (EFQEA) is alive and kicking, efforts towards its complete implementation need to continue.

## 1st thematic parallel sessions: Mobility and Social inclusion

The first thematic group sessions featured presentations on two topics of major importance for the EAfA: mobility of apprentices, and apprenticeships as a tool for social inclusion.



Moderated by **Hans Hjorth** (Aarhus Business College), the panel on **mobility** highlighted inspiring examples from EAfA members in enhancing the mobility of apprentices. **Bernadette Greco** (Regione Puglia) presented on the good cooperation between the Region and the EURES Network, whereas **Jean Arthuis** (Euro App Mobility - EAM) explained how EAM works to develop long-term international mobility opportunities for apprentices, which includes the creation of a network of 'mobility coaches' in training centres. **Ana Zacharian** (Albanian Skills) discussed the introduction of a real culture of learning mobility through the INTERVET project in the Western Balkans. Several challenges were discussed by the participants, including the difficulties encountered in accessing Erasmus + funding, associated administrative burden, and difference in apprenticeships systems in Member States. Nonetheless, participants agreed that the benefits of mobility outweigh the challenges, and that greater political will and action are needed to ensure that more mobility opportunities are offered to apprentices.



The panel on social inclusion

The panel on **social inclusion**, facilitated by **Richard Curtis** (Root of It), featured examples of apprenticeships as a concrete tool for the inclusion of vulnerable individuals in society. **Mihaela Sandu** (Hands Across Romania) presented her organisation's initiatives providing vocational counselling for Ukrainian refugees, while **Anna Cazzato** (Consorzio Consolida) discussed the consortium's tailored support offered to vulnerable individuals partaking in apprenticeships. **Jean Buffenoir** (European Committee of Coordination) introduced the work undertaken by the SKY project in developing short training courses and micro-credentials for the long-term unemployed. Finally, participants highlighted the key factors contributing to the sustainable inclusion of apprentices, such as pre-apprenticeship training measures in support of vulnerable individuals and the adoption of common and accessible language in relation to skills and learning content.

## 2nd thematic parallel sessions: Quality of apprenticeships and Apprenticeships as a means to secure skilled employees

The second thematic group sessions focused on two cross-cutting topics of crucial importance in the current context of increasing labour shortages and growing skills needs further exacerbated by the twin transition.

In the session on the **quality of apprenticeships**, moderated by **Sabine Weger** (CMA France), **Sergi Alegre** (Fundacio Catalana de l'Esplai) discussed the importance of NGOs and companies in developing quality apprenticeships, as quality also encompasses support to vulnerable groups such as NEETs. **Joaquim Santos** (Federação Nacional da Educação) argued that quality and effective apprenticeships should respond to unemployment, inequality, skills shortages and mismatches, reskilling and upskilling needs, in addition to the new challenges and opportunities raised by AI and machine learning. Finally, **Menno Bart** (Adecco Group) highlighted the need to ensure flexibility in the duration and design of apprenticeship schemes for host organisations, alongside support measures for businesses – as mentioned in [the recent ILO Recommendation](#). Members discussed the metrics that should be used to benchmark the quality of apprenticeships: apprentices' learning outcomes, remuneration, and the rate of employment within the hosting company, the sector and beyond.

The session on **Apprenticeship as a means to secure skilled employees**, facilitated by **Rosa Solanes** (PIMEC), included practical examples from **Bart Denys** (HotelSchool Ter Duinen), whose school offers tailored education pathways to learners across multiple age groups, and places high importance on the recognition of qualifications; **Susana Silvestre** (Lisbon City Council), who organises design thinking training through which apprentices develop transversal and soft skills as critical thinking and communicating effectively; and **Barbara Grau** (Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français – SNCF), who discussed the work of SNCF's apprentices training centre ('CFA Ferroviaire') in designing its apprenticeship programmes and training in response to the company's needs following dialogue among different stakeholders.



**Barbara Grau,**  
SNCF

## Concluding remarks

**Anna Barbieri** (DG EMPL) concluded the event by reflecting on the role of apprentices as part of the solution to current and future challenges. Apprenticeships are instrumental in securing skilled employees, reducing existing skills and labour shortages, advancing the green and digital transitions, and promoting equality and inclusion. Anna acknowledged the challenges faced but highlighted the importance of awareness about EU-level initiatives and tools, such as the opportunities for cooperation, joint content and mobility offered by Erasmus+, and the [ESCO classification](#) (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) common language of skills. The importance of dialogue with social partners and other stakeholders was also underlined.

## For continuous networking opportunities, join an EAfA Community!

Communities are a tool for EAfA members working in similar sectors or sharing similar interests to exchange knowledge, best practices and build strong collaborations.

- **Community on the Learning Mobility of Apprentices – Leading organisation:** Euro App Mobility
- **Community on Social Inclusion and Gender Equality – Leading organisation:** Fundacio Catalana de l'Esplai
- **Community on the Green and Digital Transitions – Leading organisations:** ESB Networks and the Association of European Rail Rolling stock Lessors (AERRL)
- **Community on the Role of Cities and Regions in fostering apprenticeship – Leading organisations:** European Association of Regional and Local Authorities For Lifelong Learning (EARLALL) and Fundación Bertelsmann

**If you would like to become a member of a newly created EAfA Community, you can fill in the following expression of interest [here](#)**