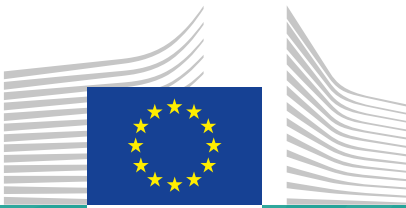




EAfa 10 YEARS



European Commission



Webinar

Apprenticeships in Construction

Driving the green transition in the EU through the Renovation Wave

29 November 2023

On 29 November 2023, a webinar was hosted by the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) to discuss how apprenticeships can contribute to – and accelerate – the green transition in the construction sector. The webinar was part of the [2023 European Year of Skills](#), and represented an opportunity for EAfA members to share inspiring apprenticeship practices.

Welcome by the European Commission (DG EMPL) and Thematic Introduction by Cedefop

Ana Carrero, Deputy Head of Unit - Vocational Education and Training at DG EMPL, European Commission, welcomed the audience and highlighted the crucial role that construction plays both economically and environmentally, making up approximately 6 % of the EU's GDP¹. Initiatives such as the [Renovation Wave](#) and the [New European Bauhaus](#), feeding into the [European Green Deal](#), seek to transform the sector to focus more on energy efficiency, carbon reduction and the adoption of eco-friendly materials. In this context, apprenticeships can be a key instrument to boost up-and reskilling required for new green competences and aligning the workforce towards sustainability goals.

Setting the scene for the webinar, **Stelina Chatzichristou**, Expert in Skills intelligence CEDEFOP, introduced the audience to the results of the [CEDEFOP forecast](#), which estimates that in 2021-2035 there will be around 7 million job openings within the construction sector. Stelina highlighted that these employment demands will require more highly skilled workers, encouraging the industry to engage more in "green" skills anticipation to identify skills for the green transition. Initiatives on reskilling and upskilling, adjusted to learners' needs, should be coupled with more high-quality jobs to improve the sector's attractiveness.



Beyond front-line and green-tech jobs, dedicated professionals such as HR specialists and sustainability trainers are key for making the green transition happen

Stelina Chatzichristou,
Expert in Skills intelligence (CEDEFOP)

Presentation of inspiring practices

Kicking off the first part of the panel discussion, **Rolf Gehring**, Political Secretary at the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), informed the audience about the [Renovation Wave](#) – a multifaceted process aiming to reduce emissions and create green jobs, among other objectives. In the European construction sector, it is a complex task to coordinate initiatives across horizontal levels (EU, national, sectoral and company levels) and vertical dimensions (labour market policy, vocational education and training (VET) systems, legal frameworks, etc.). European-level social partners can offer support in bridging these aspects and support the development of key areas, including curriculum development, enhancing sector appeal, fostering collaboration among training providers, integrating new technologies and optimising work organisation.

¹The greening of the EU construction sector | CEDEFOP (europa.eu).

The next panellist, **Carmen Devesa**, Director of Innovation at AEICE Efficient Construction (ES), presented the Habitable Erasmus+ project, one of the [Centres of Vocational Excellence \(CoVE\)](#), which aims to establish a successful apprenticeship training ecosystem by addressing various company demands, including challenges related to supporting gender balance and integrating workers with a migrant background in the construction sector. Centres of Vocational excellence are partnerships that bring together a variety of stakeholders from education and training and the world of work to develop skills ecosystems at regional and local levels, and ensure VET provision is innovative and relevant. The Habitable Erasmus+ project also envisions the introduction of innovation hubs between training centres and companies to facilitate training opportunities for the teaching staff.

Angela Martina, Vocational Education and Training Chair at the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) presented challenges surrounding the labour shortages in the construction industry and the need for skilled workers to boost the Renovation Wave. In Italy, apprentices between 25-29 years old make up a sizeable share (17 %) of the workforce, and various educational qualifications and innovative programmes aim to enhance the attraction of the construction sector in the eyes of young people. There is a need for additional efforts to improve and innovate the sector, particularly in promoting the mobility of apprentices and introducing apprenticeships for adults to facilitate the green and digital transitions.

The final panellist, **Marcel Deravet**, Project Manager at the Institute for Training in Construction Sector (IFSB) (LU), introduced his organisation – a Luxembourg-based training institute specialising in equipping apprentices with relevant skills for sustainable construction. The institute aims to enhance the appeal of the construction sector by implementing innovative training programmes and promoting the necessary competences for the twin transition. One noteworthy programme within this framework is an ESF-funded training course focusing on carbon footprint and new environmental regulations. This programme also offers the flexibility to incorporate additional modules addressing sustainability in energy, water, indoor air quality, and more. Overall, these training initiatives facilitate the reskilling and upskilling of workers, equipping them to meet needs that emerge in sustainable construction practices.

Discussion on challenges and take-away messages

In the final part of the webinar, **Ana Carrero** invited the panellists to elaborate on challenges present in the construction sector and to shed light on what apprenticeships bring compared to other learning pathways. **Rolf Gehring** stressed the significance of broadening apprenticeships in this sector to include interdisciplinary skills, such as knowledge of materials and understanding of diverse building standards and regulations across the construction industry. **Carmen Devesa** then drew attention to the need of officially recognising [micro-credentials](#) across the EU to facilitate knowledge transfers and worker mobility. **Angela Martina** highlighted the challenge of improving the appeal of the construction sector and the need to enhance its image to attract more workers. Echoing the previous speaker, **Marcel Deravet** stressed the critical challenge of recruiting to fill apprenticeship vacancies and to meet a growing demand for labour in the construction sector.

Conclusion

This webinar explored the vital role that apprenticeships can play in the greening of the European construction sector. The panellists showcased initiatives at various levels of governance and in different countries, underlining how important apprenticeships are in filling current skills gaps and equipping workers for the future in a green economy. Panellists called for fostering interdisciplinary skills, easier certification of learning outcomes, and making the sector more attractive – particularly for female workers and those with migrant backgrounds. Towards the end of the webinar, the audience, comprised of VET providers, training centres and companies and other stakeholders, were cordially invited to [submit a pledge to EAfA](#) to promote apprenticeship in construction and in other sectors.

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