



European
Commission

EAfa

The EAfa Get Together Event 2024

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfa)

18 June 2024 | Brussels, Belgium

The 2024 EAfa Get Together Event gathered around 70 EAfa members in Brussels. Taking place immediately after the [EAfa High-Level Event](#), the Get Together Event provided a forum for members to discuss common challenges and exchange good practices on apprenticeships surrounding the four key thematic areas covered by the [EAfa Communities](#).

Welcome and presentation on the four EAfa Communities

The programme began with a presentation on the achievements of the four **EAfa Communities**, which were launched a year ago during the EAfa High-Level Event and Get Together Event in 2023. These Communities aim to foster quality apprenticeships and represent EAfa members' commitment to identifying and addressing common challenges, sharing best practices, and enhancing stakeholder collaboration. Representatives from communities' leading organisations provided an overview of the work done to date and upcoming activities.



Luc Vernet, Euro App Mobility; **Maria Fabiani**, Metropolitan City of Rome; **Michael Fitzgerald**, ESB Networks; **Sergi Alegre Calero**, Fundació Catalana de l'Esplai

Community on the Learning Mobility of Apprentices

Led by **Euro App Mobility**, this Community hosted the first of its three thematic webinars planned for 2024 in May, focusing on the topic 'Overcoming Language Barriers to Foster VET Mobility.' Upcoming webinars will focus on building partnerships between VET centres, and on involving companies in VET mobility. Additionally, Euro App Mobility organised the second General Assembly on the Mobility of Apprentices to which all Community members were invited.

Community on the Green and Digital Transitions

Led by **ESB Networks**, this Community is organised around three sub-groups based on priority areas identified by members: lack of awareness, digital divide, and required skills. This year, the Community has focused on collecting best practice examples from its members. Each sub-group will review and compile these examples into a discussion paper by the end of 2024.

Community on the Role of Cities and Regions in Fostering Apprenticeships

This Community, jointly led by **the Metropolitan City of Rome**, **European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL)** and **Fundación Bertelsmann**, is conducting a survey to gather evidence on the key role played by cities and regions in enhancing the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU. The survey results will facilitate peer learning and networking through a series of upcoming online workshops and will also inform the preparation of an in-person conference in Rome in spring 2025.

Community on Social Inclusion and Gender Equality

The objectives and activities of this Community, co-led by the **Fundació Catalana de l'Esplai** and **IDEC S.A.**, include sharing good practices and initiatives that promote social inclusion and gender equality in apprenticeships. This is achieved through an online repository of best practices and regularly held Community meetings.

Employment,
Social Affairs
and Inclusion

First thematic parallel sessions

The first thematic parallel sessions featured presentations which were followed by group discussions among participants on two cross-cutting topics crucial for EAfA: social inclusion and gender balance in apprenticeships, and apprentices as agents of the green and digital transitions.

Social inclusion & gender equality in apprenticeships

Moderated by **Arja Krauchenberg** from the Lifelong Learning Platform, the session on social inclusion and gender equality highlighted an inspiring project example from IDEC S.A., presented by **Ersi Niaoti**. The [QSA4Disability](#) Erasmus+ project aims to promote the employment of hearing-impaired individuals through an inclusive (distance) apprenticeship programme and an extensive toolkit developed by partners. Participants discussed several barriers to social inclusion and gender equality, including the conceptual differences between Member States in understanding integration and inclusion, which can result in vastly different policies. Additionally, members mentioned that apprenticeship quota systems for gender equality and people with disabilities are not effectively implemented by companies, as they are often neither monitored nor incentivised. Participants agreed that to overcome social inclusion barriers in apprenticeships, a comprehensive ecosystem of apprenticeship providers need to be mobilised, starting with public authorities and encompassing social services, education providers, and companies.

Apprentices as agents of the green and digital transitions

The session on the green and digital transitions, moderated by **Michael Fitzgerald** from ESB Networks, included a presentation by **Athanasios Tsagatakis** from the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports on Greece's adult apprenticeship scheme. Mr Tsagatakis highlighted the scheme's efforts to enhance the appeal of vocational education and training in Greece and incorporate the green transition into the curricula to foster environmental awareness within the workforce and mitigate future skills shortages.

Participants underscored the need for increased support for apprenticeships to accelerate the twin transition over the next few years. They highlighted the importance of enhancing practical understanding of the green and digital transitions among company leadership and acknowledged the significance of appreciating apprentices' innovative contributions within company operations. Moreover, participants proposed integrating mandatory green practices into apprenticeship curricula and training programmes for teachers. They advocated for improved collaboration across stakeholders by forging connections between education providers and the job market, fostering new partnerships between schools and enterprises, and defining critical green and digital skills for each sector.

Second thematic parallel sessions

The second thematic parallel sessions focused on two other highly relevant topics addressed by the EAfA Communities: the learning mobility of apprentices and the role of cities and regions in fostering apprenticeships.

Learning mobility of apprentices

The session on apprentice learning mobility, moderated by **Antonio Gennarelli** from the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB), began with a presentation by **Béatrice Bellet** from MUNDUS on the [SAAM](#) pilot project. Funded by the European Union and the African Union, the project has 30 partners from eight EU countries and 16 African countries. The project aimed to pilot an action of educational mobility of students and professionals in the field of VET and implemented activities such as expert and peer mobilities, capacity training of African staff, and international mobility of African students. The project resulted in almost 600 mobilities, a report on VET in Africa, guidelines for intercontinental mobility and an intercultural handbook, among others.

During the ensuing discussion, participants emphasised the value of apprenticeship mobility experiences for social inclusion and soft skills development. They identified several key barriers hindering mobility, including curriculum differences across countries, differing legal statuses of apprentices, and companies' reluctance to release apprentices for mobility opportunities. To address these challenges, participants suggested developing common curricula and leveraging short-term mobility programmes.



Arja Krauchenberg, Lifelong Learning Platform



Michael Fitzgerald, moderating the small group discussion on the green and digital transitions



Béatrice Bellet, MUNDUS

They highlighted the crucial role of company trainers and tutors in facilitating mobility opportunities. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of persuading employers about the benefits of mobility to mitigate future skill shortages, recommending the creation of a European-level tool to enhance the potential for and support of apprenticeship mobility initiatives. Overall, the session underscored the potential of apprenticeship mobility while highlighting the practical steps needed to overcome existing barriers and maximise its benefits.

The role of cities and regions in fostering apprenticeships

The session on the role of cities and regions in fostering apprenticeships, moderated by **Noelia Cantero** from EARLALL, sparked an insightful discussion on addressing challenges related to apprenticeships at a regional level. **Lotta Naglitsch** from *Lärningsutvecklarna i Sverige AB* presented the Swedish government's recent proposal for adult apprenticeships, which advocates for paid apprenticeships and involves companies in the apprentices' selection. The Western Götaland region is preparing to launch a pilot project based on this proposal. Following the presentation, participants engaged in a productive dialogue about the difficulties encountered by cities and regions and potential solutions. Designing and implementing apprenticeship programmes at the regional level requires aligning the varied interests of stakeholders and clearly defining the programme's objectives. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a shared vision among businesses, education providers, and public authorities, with the latter group often needing to assume a leading role. Effective strategies discussed include establishing collaborative platforms, defining specific roles and ensuring rigorous quality assurance measures. An inspiring example was provided by the Metropolitan City of Rome, which successfully initiated a pilot project to develop apprenticeship schemes in strategic economic sectors through partnerships with employers, families, and teachers. This initiative highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts to foster apprenticeships that meet regional needs and enhance local economies.



Lotta Naglitsch, Lärningsutvecklarna i Sverige AB

Concluding remarks

Anna Barbieri from DG EMPL concluded the event by expressing gratitude to the members and communities for their ongoing dedication to EAfA. She underscored the pivotal role of apprenticeships in tackling pressing issues like skills gaps, advancing the green and digital transitions, and promoting equality and inclusion. Despite recognising the challenges each EAfA member faces in relation to apprenticeships, Ms. Barbieri stressed that active collaboration among relevant stakeholders is the key to overcome them, and EAfA is an example of a platform for effective and engaged cooperation. She pointed to the good practice examples presented during the event as evidence of effective strategies and encouraged continued cooperation, also with a step by step problem solving approach, to drive positive change in VET across Europe.



Anna Barbieri, DG EMPL, European Commission

For continuous networking opportunities, join an EAfA Community!

If you would like to become a member of one of the existing EAfA Communities, or to express your interest in joining or leading a new Community, you can fill in this [form](#) or scan the QR code below.

If you are not an EAfA member yet, you can join the Alliance by completing the [EAfA pledge application form](#).

