



**European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Seminar for Candidate Countries  
Tirana (Albania) – 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

***Background***

**The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)** is a platform managed by the European Commission in close cooperation with EU social partners that brings together governments with other key stakeholders, for instance business associations, individual companies, social partners, chambers, vocational education and training (VET) providers, regions, youth representatives or think tanks. The common goal is to strengthen the quality, supply, image and mobility of apprenticeships in Europe.

The EAfA has so far mobilised 36 countries, including 27 EU Member States, and 248 stakeholders to engage in quality apprenticeships. All five Candidate Countries - Albania, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey - joined the Alliance. The Alliance has facilitated networking, cooperation and sharing of good practices and Cedefop and the ETF have provided strategic expert support. The Alliance has equally contributed to raising awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships are a form of work-based learning that has great potential to ease the transition from education and training to work. Evidence suggests that countries with a strong VET and apprenticeship system have lower levels of youth unemployment.

Apprenticeships usually combine and alternate company-based training with school-based education and commonly lead to a nationally recognised qualification upon successful completion. In most cases, a contract of employment and training is signed and the learner is an employee and is paid a wage. In most countries, these arrangements have been supported by legislation or regulation.

***The EAfA and the European agenda on VET***

In June 2015, at the Riga summit, the Ministers responsible for Vocational Education and Training reaffirmed their efforts in raising the overall quality and status of VET in the context of the Copenhagen process, in order to meet the ET 2020 strategic objectives, as well as their support for the wider European growth and jobs agenda.

The EU Member States, the EU Candidate Countries, the European Social Partners (ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP) and the European Commission agreed on a new set of medium-term deliverables (MTD) for the period 2015 – 2020.

One of the five MTDs focuses on work-based learning in VET (MTD 1) and **highlights the importance of apprenticeships**:

“Promote work-based learning in all its forms, **with special attention to apprenticeships**, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.”

All Candidate Countries have chosen work-based learning as a priority MTD for ETF support. The Riga conclusions included the following concrete actions / policy options:

- mobilising initiatives at national level to boost the share of WBL in VET programmes in school-based programmes and those combining learning in schools and enterprises, as appropriate;
- mobilising actions to strengthen, review or introduce apprenticeships in the context of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), and integration of apprenticeships provided under Youth Guarantees in national VET systems;
- creating a clear regulatory framework (for WBL) taking into account existing regulations, industrial relations and education practices;
- setting up/enhancing institutionalised intermediary support structures with involvement of chamber, business and sector organisations to manage administration related to work-based learning in companies;
- assisting VET providers in finding training places for trainees and VET teachers and trainers in enterprises, and support SMEs in providing apprenticeship places (including incentives), etc.

On 15 March 2018 the Council of the European Union adopted a **Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships**, following the Commission’s proposal of October 2017.

The Framework sets out 14 criteria to define quality and effective apprenticeships, ensuring both the development of job-related skills and the personal development of apprentices. It takes into account the diversity of vocational education and training (VET) systems across the EU and respects the Member States’ competence in the area of VET.

**7 criteria for learning and working conditions:**

1. Written agreement
2. Learning outcomes
3. Pedagogical support
4. Workplace component
5. Pay or compensation
6. Social protection
7. Work, health and safety conditions

**7 criteria for framework conditions:**

1. Regulatory framework
2. Involvement of social partners
3. Support for companies
4. Flexible pathways and mobility
5. Career guidance and awareness raising
6. Transparency
7. Quality assurance and tracking of apprentices

As one of the follow-up actions to the Council Recommendation, an **Apprenticeship Support Services** will be launched by the end of 2018. The aim is to support Member States, Candidate Countries and EFTA members in their reform process improvement of apprenticeship systems. The Support Services will be built on three pillars:

- A knowledge-hub to share and access information relevant to apprenticeship design and delivery and to have a simplified access to apprenticeships related studies, evidence or statistical data;
- A networking hub to facilitate the exchange of ideas and the development of cooperation amongst stakeholders;
- Benchlearning (based on the PES benchlearning model combining benchmarking with peer learning) to provide a structured process and approach to mutual learning among Member States on improving their apprenticeship systems.

### ***The role of the ETF***

The ETF facilitates and supports the Candidate Countries' efforts to contribute actively to the EAfA. The Candidate Countries are encouraged to translate their commitments to concrete actions, including the submission of pledges from businesses and VET providers, and to learn from EAfA good practices and examples. Furthermore, the ETF assists Candidate Countries to implement the Riga medium term deliverables and supports the monitoring and analysis of progress for the period 2015 -2020. ETF continues to make available thematic expertise, to ensure existing measures, including ex-ante impact assessments of the policy options chosen by the Candidate Countries under MTD 1.

Candidate Countries are also encouraged to collaborate at cross-country level to exchange experiences and analysis. This entails collaboration among countries in the region but also with available EU member states and businesses.

### ***Purpose of the Seminar***

The main purpose of the Seminar is to enable learning and networking among Candidate Countries and EAfA members: Governments, individual employers and employers' associations, chambers and VET providers. The thematic focus of the seminar will be laid on the role of school – business liaison persons in work-based learning and on financing of work-based learning.

The seminar is organized by EAfA (led by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) in close co-operation with the ETF and will include site visits. It will take place in Tirana, Albania, on 24-25 September 2018.

Delegations comprise five members from each Candidate Country (25), having submitted a commitment for the EAfA. Additionally 15 participants from Albania and 25 guest speakers from EAfA/Member States have been invited. EU level institutions and relevant stakeholders will contribute with good practice examples on priority themes, responding to the challenges identified in the Candidate Countries. For the first time, around 15 young representatives

of the European Apprentices Network will participate in this regional seminar. Total participation, including the ETF and European Commission teams, will be about 90.

***Objectives of the Seminar:***

- To share the experience of Albania with regard to developing effective work-based learning/apprenticeship systems;
- To deepen the understanding of the challenges and opportunities of work-based learning/apprenticeship systems;
- To learn from EAfA good practices and examples;
- To explore partner countries' closer alignment with the EAfA;
- To consider the Riga work-based learning medium term deliverable (MTD 1) and implementation.

