



Seminar for EAfA partner countries

European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), European Training Foundation (ETF),
Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
| 13–14 October 2022 | Belgrade, Serbia

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), in cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and with the support of the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, organised a high-level event aiming to strengthen the quality, supply, mobility and overall image of apprenticeships in neighbouring countries of the EU. The seminar took place in Belgrade (Serbia) and gathered over 90 participants onsite. On the first day, participants had the opportunity to attend three site visits organised at the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Qualifications Agency of Serbia and the Aviation Academy.

Welcome session

The event started with a welcome by the master of ceremonies of the first day **Ana Carrero**, Deputy Head of Unit at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) of the European Commission. **Branko Ružić**, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, presented the key progress achieved through the implementation of the 2017 Law on Dual Education. This introduced dual education into the Serbian formal education system as a model for the implementation of teaching in the system of vocational education and training (VET). The speaker expressed his pride for the fact that the first generation of students enrolled in dual education has now graduated from high school and has begun working for companies where they completed their dual education. **Martin Klaucke**, Head of Cooperation, Representative of EU Delegation to Serbia, praised the great progress achieved on the quality of apprenticeships in both formal and non-formal education, and reiterated the Commission's support for Serbia in its continuous development in education and training. **Georgios Zisimos**, Head of Policy Advice and EU Programming Unit at ETF, emphasised ETF's support to human capital development in countries outside of the EU. He highlighted the value of building partnerships and networks that are sustainable and enable mutual learning and the sharing of knowledge and ideas.



"Alliances are about creating partnerships, learning from each other, learn ideas and identify policies for the way forward."

Georgios Zisimos, Head of Policy Advice and EU Programming Unit, ETF

Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Associate Director, Access to Skill and Employment, Lead Inclusion Economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), provided the perspective of the investors and the private sector. She reiterated EBRD's commitment to promote the transition to market economies and the inclusion of youth and female participation, which are essential to ensuring the green and digital transition.

Objectives of the seminar

Stefan Thomas, Senior Human Capital Development Expert - Work Based Learning and Africa Team at ETF, introduced the objectives of the seminar which were to exchange ideas and learn from each other, more specifically from the host country, Serbia. Through the Bazaar sessions, partner countries could present the latest developments that could provide inspiration to other partners, whilst the two

thematic discussions would offer insights on digitalisation and lessons learned after the pandemic, as well as the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Finland and Italy in relation to traineeships and apprenticeships.

EAFa and latest developments

Kjerstin Torpmann-Hagen, DG EMPL, provided a short update on the latest developments regarding the EAfA and presented the results of the survey among EAfA members. The number of new EAfA members continued to increase, with 11 436 new apprenticeships places been created in 2022. She also welcomed the representative of Georgia, which has recently joined the Alliance and presented them with an EAfA certificate.

During this session, **Borka Visnic**, the Teachers' Union of Serbia (TUS) and an EAfA member since 2018, recognised the importance of VET legislation and the new Law on Dual Education in Serbia. As an EAfA member, TUS has been able to build institutional capacity and has become a recognised partner in international projects.

Tamar Kitiashvili, Director General of Skills Agency, represented the Alliance's newest member, Georgia. The country took important steps in the reforming of the skills sector with the creation of the Skills Agency, governed jointly by the government and the private sector.

Apprenticeship benchlearning

Athanasios Tsagakatakis, Head of Department, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs-General Secretariat for VET, LLL & Youth, Greece, presented the concept of benchlearning as a systematic process to facilitate improvement and support wider efforts to enhance the quality and supply of apprenticeships. The speaker praised Greece's benchlearning journey, which broadened knowledge on apprenticeships and facilitated the introduction of new reforms on apprenticeships. Following this intervention, **Stefan Thomas** announced that benchlearning was now open for partner countries, highlighted the benefits of participating in the process and shared how coordinators can access the support available.

Latest developments on WBL in Serbia: successes and challenges

The session was kicked off by **Gabrijela Grujić**, Assistant Minister for Dual Education, who renewed the Ministry's commitment to strengthening the VET system and empowering young people. She provided information on the decision taken in 2016 to create a dual education platform with the support of ETF, and the German-Swiss government and support to SMEs, which are the foundation of Serbia's autonomy. Research showed that 10 500 students were involved in dual education, 300 students completed dual education, 90 % of which are employed. 700 companies are involved in dual education and 150 schools with dual profiles created occupational profiles according to the labour market. **Mirjana Kovačević**, Head of the Centre for Education and Dual Education of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, provided statistics on the results achieved by Serbia through the implementation of the dual model of education. She highlighted the role of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in serving the needs of the economy and implementing a dual education model in line with the needs of different economic sectors.



"We want young people to feel happy when they go to school, to experience joy and satisfaction, which is a crucial pillar of a high-quality level of education."

**Gabrijela Grujić,
Assistant Minister
for Dual Education,
Serbia**

Bazaar: learn and exchange

During the afternoon sessions, seven workstations with speakers from EAfA partner countries were set up. Representatives of Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Turkey, Israel, Moldova and Georgia presented the latest developments and achievements at the national level. Participants were able to move between workstations, which encouraged inspiring discussions and exchanges between countries in an informal setting.





"Apprenticeship needs to be made a contract of labour where a student is being employed as well as being in education, which would incentivise young people and grant them the standards they deserve and help to reduce youth unemployment."

Scott Kelly, EAN

Site visits

Participants had the opportunity to visit vocational training sites based in Belgrade, where they saw first-hand the latest developments on work-based learning. The first site visit was organised at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where participants learned about the implementation of Serbia's law on dual VET. The second visit was at the Qualifications Agency of Serbia, whilst a third group of participants visited the Serbia Aviation Academy, an innovative and unique state school.

Western Balkans Alliance for Work-Based Learning – recent activities and developments

Jelena Manic, Deputy Team Leader, Regional Challenge Fund, presented the objectives of the Fund of increasing youth employability, funding investment into skills development projects and promoting partnerships within the region.

Digitalisation and WBL

Ana Carrero, Deputy Head of Unit, DG EMPL, introduced the first thematic session by stressing the impact of the digital transformation on the labour market and society as a whole. During this session facilitated by **Lida Kita**, Senior Human Capital Development Expert, Country Liaison for Israel, Serbia and Turkey at ETF, participants reflected on the [digitalisation of the education system](#). **Tamar Kitiashvili**, Director General, National Skills Agency of Georgia, discussed how the pandemic accelerated the digitalisation of the economic sectors and learning systems in Georgia, and noted the importance of considering students' perspectives. **Michal Katznelson Levy**, Ministry of Economy and Industry, Business Development, VET Division, Israel, provided an overview of the government's efforts to reach the least engaged groups in the labour market and provide the basic digital skills to facilitate access to employment. **Karsten Frøhlich Hougaard**, Director, Production and Innovation, Danish Technological Institute, stresses the need to train teachers to use new technologies as well as support schools to implement digital strategies.

The European Apprentices Network (EAN): the learners' perspective

Scott Kelly, Representative of EAN, presented his apprenticeship journey, his work on ensuring the representation of apprentices in decision-making and shared good practices implemented in Scotland, such as Adopt an Apprentice scheme and modern apprenticeships for non-traditional sectors.

The Reinforced Youth Guarantee

Emmanuelle Roure, Team Leader, DG EMPL, facilitated this thematic session and introduced the aims and main developments regarding the Reinforced Youth Guarantee. **Ben Kinross**, Member of EAN and Baptiste Bouyer, from French National Association of Apprentices, kicked off the discussion through a dialogue sharing good practices of involving apprentices in the implementation of national policies. **Mladen Frckovski**, Labour Market Expert and Youth Guarantee Coordinator, Ministry of Labour, presented the good practice examples from North Macedonia and the positive results obtained through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. **Jani Lehto**, Senior Specialist at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, shared key insights from the development of Ohjaamo One-Stop Guidance Centres and the implementation of the regional pilot projects. Finally, **Tiziana Lang**, Senior Officer at the Minister of Labour, provided key labour market indicators for young people in Italy showing the positive impact of the Youth Guarantee on reducing youth unemployment and inactivity rates.

Closing remarks

Georgios Zisimos, Head of Policy Advice and EU Programming Unit at ETF, followed by **Ana Carrero**, Deputy Head of Unit, DG EMPL and **Gabrijela Grujić**, Assistant Minister for Dual Education in Serbia, took the stage to thank all speakers and participants for their valuable contributions and the best practices shared throughout the event.

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