

A ROADMAP TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS (EAFA)

DGVT Meeting in Ireland 21-22 May 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

The societal consequences of the economic crisis are now tangible in many European countries. Unprecedented high youth unemployment rates underline the need for urgent action. This has drawn decision makers' attention to Vocational Education and Training (VET). Effective VET systems, in particular those that include a strong work-based learning component, appear to facilitate the transition of young people from education to work. Countries with strong, attractive VET systems, and especially those with well-established apprenticeship systems, tend to perform better in terms of youth employment, as table 1 below shows. Reforming VET systems can even in the short term bring results which help to tackle high youth unemployment, besides contributing to better skill matching and competitiveness in the longer term. A key issue in this respect is the integration of a high quality work-based learning component in all initial VET programmes as well as good links between VET, the labour market and the wider education system.

Table 1: Level of youth unemployment (4th quarter 2011) in relation to the share of students participating in work-based learning at ISCED 3 level programmes¹

Share of students in ISCED 3 level programmes including at least 25% of workbased learning	Youth unemployment rate		
	Below 15 %	15-25 %	Above 25 %
More than 30 % Participation	DK, DE, AT	CZ	-
Between 6 and 30 %	NL	FI,LU,FR,UK	SK,HU
Less than 6 %	-	BE,SI,SE	EL,PL,IE,PT ES IT, EE

Against that background, the European Council agreed in January 2012 that the Member States should increase *"substantially the number of apprenticeships and traineeships to ensure that they represent real opportunities for young people, in cooperation with social partners and where possible integrated into education programmes"*. This political commitment needs to be translated into action at national level.

Accordingly, the Council adopted several country specific recommendations relating to vocational education and training in July 2012. Most importantly, they highlight the need for reforms to connect VET and labour markets better, strengthen the relevance of VET and support better transitions from VET to work.

¹ Sources: For the share of work-based learning - OECD (2011) Education at Glance, adapted to include only EU countries. For youth unemployment and share of VET: Eurostat. OECD data not available for all Member States

The Communication "Rethinking Education" of 20 November 2012 stresses the importance of VET and of "dual systems" of vocational education and training as a key policy priority for the EU. It announces an alliance to take work forward with Member States and other stakeholders.

The Youth Employment Package of 5 December 2012 proposes to *"set up a European Alliance for Apprenticeships to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships and to promote national partnerships for dual vocational training systems"*.

The European Council of 7-8 February 2013 confirmed that the highest priority should be given to promoting youth employment and invited the Commission to establish the Alliance. It also announced the creation of a dedicated Youth Employment Initiative, open to regions with high youth unemployment rates, with financial support of EUR 6 bn.

2. OBJECTIVES

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) will bring together efforts of EU Member States, social partners, business, other relevant actors and the European Commission to develop high-quality apprenticeship-type training and excellence in work-based learning in VET.

EAfA will pool a series of practical, well-targeted cooperation and actions in order to:

1. Improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships (2) across the EU by setting up, reviving or modernising existing apprenticeship schemes, drawing on lessons from successful models and on transnational cooperation, including mobility, and by promoting national and transnational partnerships for developing and fostering work-based learning in companies.
2. Change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning by promoting the benefits of apprenticeship systems, in particular to companies, VET providers, students and parents.

Activities will be based around 3 pillars:

1. Improvement of apprenticeship-type systems across Europe through a federation of efforts for targeted knowledge transfer
2. Change of mind-sets through a spotlight on the benefits of apprenticeship systems
3. Smart use of EU resources to support apprenticeships, notably through the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and Lifelong Learning Programme/Erasmus for All

3. ACTIVITIES

Pillar 1 – Improvement of apprenticeship-type systems across Europe through a federation of efforts for targeted knowledge transfer

A. Promote **national partnerships** between business representatives, authorities responsible for education, employment and economic affairs, social partners, chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, VET providers, youth and student organisations, employment offices and ESF managing authorities for the development of apprenticeship schemes, leading to National Alliances for Apprenticeships.

2 Due to the inexistence of a single and clear-cut definition of apprenticeships and given the diversity of vocational training systems in European countries, the term "apprenticeships" refers to "apprenticeship-type schemes", as used in the study "Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union", see "The concept of apprenticeship, page 21 in

http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/forum12/supply_en.pdf : "Apprenticeship-type schemes" are understood as those forms of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) that formally

combine and alternate company based training (periods of practical work experience at a workplace) with school based education (periods of theoretical/practical education followed in a school or training centre), and whose successful completion leads to nationally recognised initial VET qualifications."

➤ The Commission has contracted a service provider (Ecorys) to offer Technical Assistance, in particular via a helpdesk, in order to strengthen the role of apprenticeships in the Member State's labour market and education system. This should facilitate the effective use of national ESF allocations for the design and implementation of apprenticeship systems.

B. Work towards the signature of a **Memorandum**

➤ The Commission will invite social partners on both European and national levels and other key players to support the Alliance and commit to "capacity building" in their own constituencies, spreading experience and good practices to a wider audience.

➤ The Commission works towards the signature of a tripartite Declaration of Intent to be signed during the launch event of the Alliance, and of a Memorandum of Understanding at the end of 2013, including a commitment of the EU Presidency and EU Member States to the aims of the Alliance.

C. Broaden **bilateral technical cooperation at all levels** among the relevant stakeholders (Ministries, businesses, trade unions, chambers)

➤ The Commission will seek to facilitate contacts for bilateral cooperation between Member States with the need to strengthen their VET systems, as identified in the European Semester, and "mentor" countries.

D. Generate targeted guidance and cooperation by **peer learning/review to support policy reform of Member States**, in particular those with VET related country-specific recommendations.

➤ The Commission will establish an EAFa thematic working group (TWG) under the OMC process with support from Cedefop. The group will consist of representatives from governments (education, labour and economy), social partners and relevant experts and will focus on real exchanges between countries on the demand and on the supply side, monitoring developments and results of the different cooperation activities, to work on topics such as support for SMEs which train apprentices, profile of in-company trainers, quality assurance, and incentives for companies.

E. Transform the results of EU funded projects into a **user-friendly toolbox** covering issues such as business-VET schools cooperation, helping SMEs to host apprentices, improved vocational guidance, cooperation with social partners, and qualification of trainers of apprentices.

➤ The Commission will launch a restricted call for proposals for Lifelong Learning Programme National Agencies (LLP NAs), which will be managed by EAC's Executive Agency. The call will invite proposals for thematic networking at European level on the outcomes and results of projects on apprenticeships and work based learning undertaken under the Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus programmes. Thematic networking is designed to analyse and disseminate good practices developed in projects implemented under the programmes and may include events (conferences, seminars), reports, websites or publications.

Pillar 2 – Change of mind-sets through a spotlight on the benefits of apprenticeship systems

A. Advance analysis on the **costs and benefits** of apprenticeship schemes:

➤ The Commission will steer further work on the return on investment of apprenticeships. Based on a mapping of existing research on costs and benefits for firms to be performed by the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE) and a review of existing apprenticeship schemes, including an analysis of existing studies of success and cost effectiveness by the ESF Technical Assistance contractor, an extensive analytical report will be prepared in cooperation with the OECD and Cedefop.

B. Invite **key organisations in order to champion the EAfA**

➤ The Commission will approach key organisations to support the Alliance. One field to be explored could be to highlight companies that have committed to introduce new or to improve apprenticeship schemes in countries where work-based learning in companies and cooperation between enterprises and VET schools is not yet common practice.

➤ The Commission will also explore possibilities for targeted campaigns on career guidance by appropriate multipliers, such as the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, the Public Employment Services, European VET provider associations, chambers of commerce and industry, craft chambers and youth and parents' representatives giving young people and their parents the possibility to make informed choices in favour of taking up apprenticeships. Apprentices themselves could act as Ambassadors for Apprentices.

C. Ensure **visibility and high level events**; including EU support for a **VET excellence award**

➤ The Commission will use high level events, such as Worldskills and Euroskills as well as events addressing education and training reforms, youth employment, growth and jobs, etc to put a spotlight on apprenticeships. A dedicated website for the Alliance will be developed to gather all the relevant initiatives and a rolling agenda.

➤ The Commission will also explore the introduction of a VET excellence award on company level for innovative approaches/change: e.g. the company has introduced innovative apprenticeship training methods or materials; the company is a newcomer in training for apprentices.

Pillar 3 - Smart use of EU resources to support apprenticeships, notably through the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment Initiative and Lifelong Learning Programme/Erasmus for All

A. Ensure the **best use of EU funds** for support for apprenticeships, ranging from support for systems level development, to learning content and also mobility of staff and learners. Programmes most obviously concerned are the European Social Fund (and in that context the Youth Employment Initiative) and the Lifelong Learning/Erasmus for All programme. Other programmes may also be of relevance.

➤ **European Social Fund (ESF):** The Commission works towards ensuring that the ESF can be fully utilised for the setting up and improvement of quality apprenticeship schemes. Specifically, the proposed ESF Regulation for the next programming period 2014-2020 includes a dedicated ESF investment priority targeting the sustainable labour market integration of **young people not in employment, education or training ("NEETs")**.

Another investment priority relates to employment and education and training, more specifically increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems. In this context, Member States, facing high youth unemployment rates and the need to enhance the quality and attractiveness of VET systems, are expected to focus their Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for the period 2014-2020 on actions to facilitate school-to-work transitions, including support to apprenticeships and the possibility to introduce Youth Guarantee schemes, with a view to the labour market integration of young people. Success factors for apprenticeships such as those mentioned in the Youth Employment Package will be guiding principles for funding.

In this context, the recently launched ESF Technical Assistance Programme at EU level for the establishment of apprenticeship and traineeship schemes in the Member States will provide ad hoc tailor made assistance through a helpdesk to national and regional authorities that wish to establish or modernise apprenticeship schemes.

Furthermore, the programme will include tailor made training courses on demand, a conference in Brussels to exchange best practices on apprenticeships and traineeships, a seminar on the evaluation of existing programmes, an online shared space for exchanges among stakeholders and a website.

B. Youth Employment Initiative (YEI): The Commission will endeavour to ensure that the European Council's Youth Employment Initiative(3) for the period 2014-2020 is also used for the objectives pursued by the Alliance.

C. Erasmus For All (E4A): The Commission aims to secure funds in Erasmus for All, the proposed new Education and Training programme for 2014-2020, for the increase of learning and training periods abroad for VET students, including apprentices. Transnational support facilitating knowledge transfer from well-established dual system countries towards countries seeking the introduction /revival of the apprenticeship system will be provided through mobility for in-company trainers and other VET professionals. Strategic Partnerships allow VET providers and other VET stakeholders, notably social partners, to develop and transfer innovative practices. The E4A Sector Skills Alliances (SSA) may work on common curricula for apprenticeship programmes to provide up to date, innovative and relevant skills. International experience of reforming VET systems can feed into Strategic Partnerships and Alliances through non-Member State participation. Policy reform support ("prospective initiatives") in areas challenging for a cluster of countries, such as apprenticeships, will complement Strategic Partnerships and the use of structural funds.

D. Other EU resources: The Commission will explore the support of the Alliance by funds of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI), as well as the involvement of the European Job Mobility Portal (EURES) in the Alliance.

4. CONTACT FOR FOLLOW UP

Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Mr Wilhelm VUKOVICH

Unit B2 Vocational training and adult education; Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig

B-1049 BRUXELLES

Tel. +(32) 2 29 51122

E-mail: wilhelm.vukovich@ec.europa.eu

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Ms Ulrike STOROST

Unit C2 Sectorial Employment Challenges, Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

B-1049 Brussels/Belgium

Tel. +(32) 2 29 89435

E-mail: ulrike.storost@ec.europa.eu

3 Initiative announced by the European Council on 7 and 8 February 2013. The budget of € 6 billion is composed of € 3 billion from targeted ESF investment and € 3 billion from a dedicated Youth Employment budget line. It targets actions for individuals only, and is meant to be open to all regions (NUTS level 2) with levels of youth unemployment above 25%.