

NON-PAPER

A ROADMAP TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS (EAFA)

WHY

Strong partnerships bringing together employment and education sectors are crucial for successful apprenticeship schemes. Stakeholders need to work together to deliver high-quality training within a clear regulatory framework which defines respective roles and responsibilities. The European Alliance for Apprenticeships will bring together stakeholders from public authorities, social partners, business, vocational education and training (VET) providers, youth representatives and other key actors, such as chambers as appropriate, with a view to coordinate and upscale different initiatives for successful apprenticeship type schemes.

"The key to make this initiative a success is to work across different policy areas, gather all stakeholders and join our forces to achieve the best outcomes for young people," highlights President Barroso.

In March 2013, 5.7 million young persons were unemployed in the EU-27. At European level a comprehensive emergency package is proposed to help Member States tackle youth unemployment by giving young people offers of jobs, education and training. One of the proposed measures is the set-up of a European Alliance for Apprenticeships¹ to **increase the quality and supply** of apprenticeships across Europe, which would facilitate a smoother transition of young people from education to work.

On 29 May 2013, the Commission issued proposals for Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) for sixteen Member States drawing attention to the need to reform VET systems in order to include a stronger work-based learning component, including specific references to apprenticeship type schemes. In response to the alarming youth unemployment rate and following up also on last year's CSRs, many EU Member States have already started reviewing their regulatory frameworks with a view to introducing apprenticeship type schemes or expanding them. These reforms will also contribute to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee at national level with apprenticeships being one of the four elements of the Guarantee. The Alliance will have a central role in delivering on these different initiatives.

WHAT

The Alliance for Apprenticeships is a multi-stakeholder initiative with two broader aims:

- i) to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU
- ii) to change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning.

It will do so by a set of more specific objectives: helping to set up, revive or modernise existing apprenticeship schemes, drawing on lessons from successful models and on transnational cooperation, including mobility, by promoting national and transnational partnerships for developing and fostering work-

¹ Apprenticeships are understood for the purposes of the Alliance as those forms of initial vocational education and training that formally combine or alternate company based training with school based education and whose successful completion leads to nationally recognised initial VET qualifications.

based learning in companies, and by promoting the benefits of apprenticeship systems, in particular to companies, VET providers, students and parents.

Through joint efforts of all stakeholders, it is expected that the following **results** will be achieved:

- ⇒ Reform of national VET systems for setting up or strengthening apprenticeship type schemes
- ⇒ Easier transition from education to work for learners enrolled in apprenticeship type schemes
- ⇒ Increased quality and net supply of apprenticeships
- ⇒ Strong partnerships at all governance levels between public authorities, social partners, businesses, VET providers, youth representatives, employment services and where appropriate chambers for effective design and functioning of apprenticeship schemes
- ⇒ Leverage of public and private funding to support the set up and functioning of apprenticeship type schemes
- ⇒ Improved image of apprenticeships through an increased awareness by businesses and the general public about the benefits and functioning of this type of training

HOW

The Alliance is structured around three pillars:

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

The focus of this Pillar is to support the initiatives which many Member States have taken and are taking to introduce more apprenticeships and work-based learning in their VET systems. This will be achieved by facilitating peer learning and the transfer of knowledge between countries and by promoting national level partnerships between the key stakeholders involved in the delivery of apprenticeship-type training. European on-the-job mobility of VET staff and VET students will contribute to sharing best practices and knowledge exchange at the level of practical VET delivery.

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

The second Pillar focuses on promoting the benefits of apprenticeships and increase the attractiveness of VET in general, which even in countries with well-functioning VET systems is often seen as "second choice education". This will be achieved through increasing the evidence-base on the benefits of apprenticeships, by rallying businesses and organisations representing them to commit to the objectives of the Alliance and by ensuring high-level political visibility of the Alliance. Awareness raising and promotional activities and events, involving businesses, schools/education and training institutions, young people and their parents, as well as other interested stakeholders will be organised.

3. Smart use of EU resources to support apprenticeships

Support for achieving the mutually reinforcing objectives of Pillars 1 and 2 will be provided through Pillar 3, which details how different EU funding resources could be smartly used as leverage by all stakeholders to support the objectives pursued by the Alliance.

WHO

The Alliance relies on the active engagement of all stakeholders. The European Commission can kick-start the process and facilitate interactions, monitor developments and provide some financial support, but it cannot drive the Alliance alone.

Member States have already committed through the European Council Conclusions of January 2012 to 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" and have reconfirmed this commitment in February 2013 by inviting the Commission to establish the Alliance. In the context of the Alliance, Member States will be called upon to continue and reinforce work on introducing or strengthening apprenticeships in their VET systems, as appropriate, participate in peer-learning with other Member States, set up strong national partnerships for dual learning and make smart use of available European and national resources in support of apprenticeships.

Stakeholders participating in the delivery of apprenticeships, including VET providers, business, social partners, chambers, employment offices, local authorities etc. will be called upon to explore new and enhance existing models of delivering apprenticeships and to use European, national and private resources to enhance the quality and supply of apprenticeships and work-based learning. All relevant stakeholders, including also youth and student organisations, will be called upon to actively promote the benefits of apprenticeship systems and provide information so that students and parents can take informed decisions about apprenticeships as a possible education pathway.

Businesses, social partners, chambers, VET providers, sectoral organisations, youth organisations and other relevant actors are invited to make pledges indicating the concrete actions that they are taking that contribute to strengthening the quality, supply and /or image of apprenticeships. A joint declaration between the European Social Partners, the European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU is further underpinning the commitment to the Alliance.

For further details:

The Alliance website: http://ec.europa.eu/education/apprenticeship/index_en.htm

Or email: eaafa@ec.europa.eu