



**PACT FOR  
SKILLS**

# **BUILDING SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE PACT FOR SKILLS AND THE EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS**

Webinar | 25 June 2024

The European Commission organised its third webinar in 2024 as part of a series of events designed for Pact for Skills members, with the goal to facilitate their commitments for upskilling and reskilling under the Pact. This webinar explored the potential and existing synergies between the Pact for Skills and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), providing participants the opportunity to learn about each other's projects and practices, and inspire coordination and experience sharing on challenges and success factors.

## Key messages

Both the [Pact for Skills](#) and the [European Alliance for Apprenticeships \(EAfA\)](#) represent flagship EU initiatives aimed at boosting investment in training, specifically upskilling and reskilling through apprenticeships. They encourage stakeholder cooperation across ecosystems and regions in Europe, with the overarching goal of enhancing collaboration on the ground. Policies and practices under these initiatives not only focus on upskilling and reskilling but also on influencing and changing policy in practice. Through this webinar, Pact for Skills members gained insights into the work of EAfA and explored potential synergies between the two initiatives. Synergies can lead to more effective outcomes by maximizing existing opportunities and developing new ones.

While the EU has been taking action to foster innovation and concrete action to upskill and reskill the European workforce through both policy (e.g. [EU Skills Agenda](#)) and funding (e.g. the [European Social Fund Plus](#) and [Erasmus+](#)), it is platforms like the Pact for Skills and the EAfA that provide regular opportunities for stakeholders to share ideas and experiences, influencing policy change and implementation on the ground.

During the webinar, opportunities to enhance synergies between the Pact for Skills (PfS) and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) were discussed. Both initiatives share a similar **membership structure**, including public authorities, VET providers, businesses, and social partners. They encourage stakeholders to make commitments and pledges to support upskilling, reskilling, and work-based learning. Both Pact and EafA aim to strengthen **collaboration** across sectors and regions, supporting their members through **knowledge sharing**. Both initiatives also contribute to achieving **broader EU goals**, such as supporting the green and digital transitions, fostering gender equality, and promoting social inclusion. Examples of these synergies include cross-promoting each other's social media channels and hosting dedicated knowledge events like this webinar. Currently, nearly 100 stakeholders are members of both the Pact and EAfA, with this number steadily growing.

### Are you interested in joining the Pact and the EAfA? Check these links!

- If you are interested in joining the EAfA, you can fill out the [pledge application form](#).
- If you are interested in joining the Pact, you can find out more information [here](#).

# Introducing the European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Launched in 2013, the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** is a multi-stakeholder platform aimed to enhance the supply, quality, and image of apprenticeships and as well as promoting apprentice mobility. Indeed, apprenticeships represent a key tool for bridging the current skills gap and ensuring that the skillset of the European workforce matches evolving labour market needs. Vocational education and training boost competitiveness and innovation, with 81% of recent graduates and 85% of apprentices finding jobs quickly due to high demand for technical skills<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, **apprenticeships are relevant not only for young people but also for adult learners**, who can have access to learning on the job opportunities, which can be helpful to upskill and reskill to respond to labour market changes like those driven by the COVID-19 pandemic or the green and digital transitions.

The EAfA benefits from a wide membership, including **nearly 450 members** from EU, EFTA, candidate, and partner countries, representing primarily businesses and VET providers, but also public authorities, social partners and civil society organisations. Together, EafA members have helped create over 2.5 million apprenticeship opportunities. Through the EafA, members benefit from access to relevant policy information, networking opportunities, and numerous in-person events in Brussels and partner countries. Furthermore, EAfA members also have **access to a wealth of resources**, including:

- The **[Apprenticeships Online Library](#)**: a single point of **access to resources, practical tools and guidance** freely available to stakeholders interested in designing and delivering quality and effective apprenticeships. The library currently includes over 650 materials.
- **EAfA factsheets and toolkits**: These materials aim to support EAfA members to gain a better understanding of and increase their expertise in selected topics. The first **[EAfA Toolkit on Mobility of Apprentices](#)** was launched in December 2023, and offers guidance on mobility of apprentices, from how to engage in mobility opportunities to how to access the mobility lifecycle, providing good-practice examples and self-assessment tools.

The EAfA also aims to strengthen and support close cooperation among its members and the broader community of stakeholders interested in the topic of quality apprenticeships. The **[EAfA Communities](#)** provide an opportunity for EAfA members to reflect and collaborate on transversal key themes for apprenticeships, and represent a tool to exchange knowledge and best practices, creating networking opportunities and further engaging members in the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1147&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10813>

## Looking to learn more about apprenticeships and get engaged? Check other opportunities available on the EAfA webpage!

- Interested in following EafA events? Check out the [EAfA Activities Hub](#) for a comprehensive roadmap of the activities and topics for 2024.
- The [EAfA LinkedIn group](#), open to all interested stakeholders, serves as the main source for news and updates on events, resources, polls and the welcoming of members, promoting a collaborative, interactive environment amongst members.

## The work of EAfA and Pact Members to support skills development

At the webinar, participants had the opportunity to hear directly from EAfA and Pact members, find out more about their work and involvement in these initiatives, explore synergies between the Pact and the EAfA.

### *Promoting cooperation across sectors and regions*

**ESB Networks** – Ireland’s electrical network operators - presented its work as the coordinating organisation for the **EAfA Community of Practice on the Green and Digital Transitions**. ESB Networks has a long history of promoting work-based learning: from launching its first apprenticeships programme 80 years ago, to welcoming an average of 100 apprentices per year, ESB Networks recognises the **critical role of work-based learning** in promoting quality transitions. Furthermore, the company prioritizes continuous upskilling and career-long learning for its 3,700 staff, facilitated by a dedicated state-of-the-art Training Centre with over 60 full-time technical trainers and a 25-hectare live field facility replicating the network.

ESB Networks is active in the EAfA, having received an EU Large Company Award for Technical Training in 2018. ESB Networks coordinates the work of over 70 members from 22 countries as part of the **EAfA Community of Practice for the Green and Digital Transitions**, launched in October 2023. The Community brings together Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, public authorities, companies and other stakeholders, to work around three key themes to support apprenticeships in the context of the green and digital transition: **awareness enhancement in apprentices, digital divide mitigation, and skills identification for apprentices**. Furthermore, the Community plans to enhance the use of innovative learning tools such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and game-based learning to support skill development. To this end, best practices identified by Community members are captured and uploaded onto a **shared repository**. Moreover, future plans include developing a **discussion paper** on work-based learning support for the green and digital transitions by the end of 2024.

**KSIGune** is the Basque Cluster for Higher Education and Research for Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and focuses on promoting a learning ecosystem for professionals in the sector in the Basque Country that is relevant, accessible and affordable. Recognised as a [Regional Skills Partnership \(RSP\)](#) under the Pact for Skills, KSIGune works to address regional skills gaps in the Basque country by connecting industrial ecosystems and providing a space for stakeholders to exchange knowledge and best practices to better address regional challenges and skills gaps. Led by the Basque ministries of culture and education, the KSIGune RSP aims to analyse the needs of higher education and vocational

training as part of the Basque cultural and creative industries sector, and contribute to the development and delivery of a comprehensive training plan for upskilling and reskilling, with a focus on digital, green, innovation and entrepreneurial skills. To this end, the RSP will deliver activities across three main areas: skills intelligence, up- and reskilling opportunities, and communication and awareness raising. Training plans developed by the RSP will be delivered by accredited education institutions through lifelong learning, postgraduate programmes, in-house training, to support skills development for future professionals and the current workforce.

### *Experiences from engaging with both the Pact and the EAfA*

**EARLALL** - a network promoting regions and local authorities' role in designing and implementing strategies for lifelong learning - leads the **EAfA Community of Practice on the Role of Cities and Regions**. EARLALL's strategic priorities **align with EAfA's goals**, particularly mobilizing local and regional authorities as catalysts for apprenticeships within the local business environment while addressing the green and digital transitions, gender, social inclusion, mobility, and the internationalization of vocational education and training. As a long-standing EAfA member, EARLALL co-leads the Community of Practice on the Role of Cities and Regions in partnership with the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital and the Bertelsmann Foundation. Launched in December 2023 and currently comprising of 26 members, the Community has already launched a survey reflecting on the role of regions and cities in apprenticeships, building on an in-person event in Rome in spring 2024 and is currently organising a peer-learning activity that will focus on transnational, global cooperation for autumn 2024. Furthermore, since 2020, EARLALL is also an active **member of the Pact for Skills**, and is currently leading the work for the potential set up of a **Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) for Lifelong Mobility**.

As a long-standing member of both the EAfA and the Pact, EARLALL highlighted that being involved in these EU level initiatives allows for better coordination across stakeholders and countries to address joint challenges and achieve common goals, including promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Furthermore, active participation in the EAfA and the Pact allows members to increase their outreach, and strengthen their technical capacity on key topics (e.g. the green and digital transitions), with positive ripple effects on their day to day work.

**SoftwareOne**, a global IT provider, represents another example of a company that is actively engaged both in the EAfA and the Pact. After joining the EAfA in 2022, *SoftwareOne* has actively engaged in initiatives to enhance the quality of apprenticeships and has made efforts to provide apprenticeship opportunities to a larger number of learners. SoftwareOne currently supports 80 apprenticeships in Europe through its **SoftwareOne Academy**, the company's corporate university which handles all apprenticeship-related activities within the company. The Academy uses knowledge resources from EAfA and the Pact to develop apprenticeship programmes, deliver quality training, provide continuous upskilling and reskilling opportunities to both young and older workers in the rapidly changing IT sector. SoftwareOne highlighted the EAfA online library and LinkedIn group as particularly valuable for accessing key resources and user-friendly information around relevant policy developments and

stressed the importance of engaging in Pact for Skills events as networking opportunities to connect with a wide range of stakeholders.

## Partnership building within the EAfA and the Pact for Skills

The EAfA and the Pact promote partnership building and stakeholder cooperation for like-minded individuals to **connect, learn and act**. Collaboration opportunities include:

- Pact for Skills **Large-scale Skills Partnerships** and **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)** bringing key stakeholders together to implement upskilling and reskilling actions within sectors or (economic/geographical) regions. You can learn more about these partnerships [here](#).
- **EAfA Communities of Practice** bring stakeholders together to cooperate on a wide range of topics related to quality apprenticeships. If you are interested in joining, please reach out to [EAfAmembers@ecorys.com](mailto:EAfAmembers@ecorys.com)