



## **European Alliance for Apprenticeships**

### **Declaration of the European Social Partners, the European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

Acknowledging the aims of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU and to change mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning through a broad partnership bringing together key stakeholders from the employment and education sectors,

Recognising the value and benefits of apprenticeships for youth employment, social inclusion, skills matching and economic competitiveness,

Stressing that apprenticeships are one of the main elements of a Youth Guarantee<sup>1</sup> scheme,

We engage ourselves<sup>2</sup> to:

1. Consider our common commitment and mutual trust as a precondition for the launch of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.
2. Contribute to the access to, supply, quality and attractiveness of apprenticeships across the EU by encouraging the setting up, reviving or modernising of apprenticeship schemes that follow the following principles:
  - a. effective partnerships between education and training institutions and enterprises, and the recognition of their respective roles;
  - b. involvement of social partners, and, as appropriate, intermediary bodies such as chambers of commerce, industry and crafts, professional organisations, sectoral organisations in the governance of apprenticeship systems;
  - c. high quality of the qualifications and learning process;
  - d. integration of apprenticeship schemes into national/regional education and training systems and a clear regulatory framework, clarifying the responsibilities, rights and obligations of each party involved, in the context of national practices, laws and collective agreements.
3. Contribute to changing mind-sets towards apprenticeship-type learning by promoting the benefits of apprenticeship systems.

Taking into account that efficient apprenticeship systems need strong partnerships with many stakeholders at all appropriate levels, we call for an inclusive process in order to achieve systemic change and pave the way to national partnerships for developing and fostering apprenticeships and work-based learning in enterprises. We invite relevant stakeholders to join this process by committing through pledges to concrete activities that support the aims of the Alliance.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01)

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the Lithuanian Presidency, subject to the necessary support and/or agreement by the Member States.

We acknowledge the specific role that chambers of commerce, industry and crafts have in the functioning of apprenticeships systems, depending on national systems, including the registration of apprenticeship contracts, supervision of company-based training, assessment of suitability of training firms, and/or overseeing final exams and we welcome their pledges.

### The European Social Partners

will channel their contribution through actions to be undertaken by national social partners in the context of their follow-up of the Framework of Actions on youth employment,<sup>3</sup> including specific actions on apprenticeships and the Youth Guarantee.

At European level, they agree to focus their efforts within the next 6 months on the following fields of action:

- a. Undertaking "capacity building" in their own constituencies, spreading experience and good practice among the national member organisations.
- b. Motivating, advising and challenging member organisations to support the aims of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships by getting involved in the establishment and improvement of apprenticeship systems, for example:
  - i. in the development and improvement of curricula, to ensure that apprenticeships remain attuned to skills needs of the labour market;
  - ii. in quality assurance and assessment of apprenticeships and working conditions, where appropriate;
  - iii. in cooperating with schools and employment services to give young people and their parents the opportunity to make informed choices about apprenticeships as an educational pathway;
  - iv. in supporting the learning processes of apprentices in the workplace through adequate measures, such as training of in-company mentors and coaching of apprentices.
- c. Motivating, advising and challenging enterprises to support the aims of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, for example by:
  - i. building upon the improved framework conditions in order to increase the supply and quality of apprenticeship positions in their own enterprise and supply chain;
  - ii. sharing experience and support with other enterprises;
  - iii. promoting role models showing the career opportunities that apprentices bring individuals.
- d. Raising awareness of employers and of young people of the benefits of apprenticeships.
- e. Disseminating information and support social partner action in ensuring more attractive conditions for enterprises and apprentices and proper use of apprenticeships in compliance with applicable rights and obligations.
- f. Promoting the use of the EU funds, in particular the European Social Fund, to introduce or improve Member States' dual-learning apprenticeship systems.
- g. At the end of 2013, reporting on the implementation of their commitments and announcing the follow up in 2014 and beyond.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.etuc.org/a/11280>; [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/201306\\_Framework\\_of\\_Actions\\_Youth\\_Employment\\_final.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/201306_Framework_of_Actions_Youth_Employment_final.pdf)

## The European Commission

agrees to focus its efforts within the next 6 months on specific actions for steering the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, in particular:

- a. Advancing comparative analysis and policy guidance on the costs, benefits and functioning of apprenticeship schemes in different settings, with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.
- b. Generating targeted guidance and cooperation by peer learning/review to support policy reform in Member States, in particular those with VET-related country-specific recommendations.
- c. Transforming the results of EU-funded projects, as well as the results of the analyses 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 intermediary bodies, and qualifications of trainers of apprentices.
- d. Ensuring the best use of EU funds for contributing to the objectives of the Alliance, ranging from support for systems-level development, to learning content and also mobility of staff and learners.
- e. Taking forward the work required on exploring the inclusion of apprenticeships in the EURES network, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, and report back at appropriate level by the end of the year.
- f. Inviting Eurochambres and other relevant stakeholders to pledge concrete activities supporting the Alliance, contributing to the development and concrete delivery of the Alliance.
- g. At the end of 2013, inviting all stakeholders to report back on the implementation of their pledges and commitments. The Commission will report back to the relevant Council formations and announcing the follow up in 2014 and beyond.

## The Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

will aim to focus its efforts in this field on the following actions:

- a. Ensuring a high visibility for the role of apprenticeships in facilitating school-to-work transitions and contributing to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, notably by taking it up as a subject of discussion and exchange of information at the relevant Council formations in the field of employment and education.
- b. Preparing a draft Council Declaration, with an input from the responsible Working Parties for employment and education for later adoption by the EPSCO Council, addressing the subject-matter of apprenticeship schemes. In this Council Declaration, Member States could highlight the importance of apprenticeship schemes by, for example, referring to:
  - i. Initiating or continuing reforms to involve social partners - and intermediary bodies according to national practices - in the design, implementation and governance of apprenticeship systems;
  - ii. Initiating or continuing steps to ensure that apprenticeships are an attractive educational pathway, notably by ensuring that the qualification gained and the learning process of apprenticeships is of high quality, and that this model is recognised as a valuable learning

- pathway, transferable across borders, and opening up the route to high-skilled jobs;
- iii. Ensuring that apprenticeships are well integrated within the national or regional education and training system;
  - iv. Ensuring that regulatory frameworks clarify the responsibilities, rights and obligations of each party involved;
  - v. Considering the appropriate incentives for employers to provide sufficient apprenticeship places;
  - vi. Ensuring appropriate guidance and support for young people to undertake apprenticeships.
  - vii. Encouraging Member States to introduce apprenticeship schemes or to improve existing ones, where relevant with the use of EU funds, and on the basis of concrete targets and indicators.
- c. At the end of 2013, reporting back to the relevant Council formations, and seeking possible follow up by the next Presidencies.

**The undersigned**

**For ETUC**

**For BusinessEurope**

**For UEAPME**

**For CEEP**

**For the European Commission**

**For the EU Presidency**

Commissioner for Employment,  
Social Affairs and Inclusion

Minister of Social Security and Labour

Commissioner for Education, Culture,  
Multilingualism and Youth

Minister of Education and Science