



# EU file

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## Employment and social affairs

Responsibility for employment and social policy lies primarily with national governments. EU funding supports and complements their efforts.

To counteract the impact of demographic ageing, EU employment and social policy is designed to:

- ease the transition from school to work
- make it easier to find a job
- modernise social security systems
- make it easier for workers to move freely around the EU
- alleviate poverty
- protect people with disabilities

The EU also:

- coordinates & monitors national policies

- encourages member countries to share best practices on social inclusion, poverty & pensions
- supports training, skills development & entrepreneurship
- makes laws on workers' rights, discrimination at work & coordination of social security schemes, and monitors their implementation.

## Employment

The European Commission encourages EU national governments to:

- create job opportunities
- reduce labour market disparities
- support economic competitiveness
- monitor employment policies in EU countries.

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## Workers' rights

There are now EU laws to limit working hours, tackle workplace discrimination, make working conditions safer and ensure employees receive compensation for work injuries.

## Social security & inclusion

The EU promotes social security and inclusion by providing and coordinating funding to help member countries invest in people — in areas like childcare, healthcare, training, accessible infrastructure, help with finding a job — and to reform their social security systems.

## Skills

Because the required skills and qualifications change over time, the EU has developed a set of initiatives to:

- develop the skills needed
- manage the availability of required skills to prevent gaps & mismatches
- make it easier to have qualifications formally recognised abroad, to be able to live, study & work anywhere in Europe.

## Living & working abroad

The EU and national governments are working together to coordinate social security schemes across the EU so that workers continue to receive their pensions and social security benefits when they change jobs and work in different EU countries. EURES — the network of European

employment services — makes it easier for companies to recruit people from abroad and for people to work abroad.

## EU funding programmes

- European Social Fund (ESF)
- European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF)
- Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD)
- EU Programme for Employment & Social Innovation (EaSI), which includes:
  - PROGRESS
  - EURES
  - Microfinance & social entrepreneurship

## European Alliance for Apprenticeships

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) brings together public authorities, businesses, social partners, chambers, vocational education and training (VET) providers, youth representatives, and other key actors to promote apprenticeship schemes and initiatives across Europe.

### EAfA works to:

- reform apprenticeship systems
- promote the benefits of apprenticeships
- encourage a smart use of funding and resources

EAfA was launched in July 2013 with a first ever joint declaration by the European Social Partners

(ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP), the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU. This was followed by a Council Declaration by EU countries and individual national commitments.

Although managed by the Commission, the success of EAfA lies with the implementation of national reforms and the commitment of partners, notably through pledges by stakeholders.

### Why is it needed?

Apprenticeships and work-based learning ease the transition from education and training to work, and evidence suggests that countries with a strong VET and apprenticeship system have lower levels of youth unemployment.

By boosting the quality and supply of apprenticeships, EAfA will promote youth employment, supporting the aims of the Youth Guarantee, while reducing the disparity between skills and labour demand.

Companies engaging apprentices are likely to benefit from a net profit on their investment, either during the apprenticeship or soon after by employing a fully trained worker. At the same time, VET students and apprentices will learn valuable workplace skills in a professional environment, ensuring a greater degree of future employability.

### What has been done so far?

EaFA has mobilised EU and partner countries and stakeholders, supported the establishment of bilateral and national agreements, initiatives, and cooperation mechanisms, supported the reform of apprenticeship systems, and raised awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships, as well as contributing to the policy debate with studies and dialogue.

There are also a number of agreements on bilateral cooperation:

Germany supports Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain on VET reform.

Romania works with Austria, Germany and Finland to set up quality apprenticeships.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have formed a Baltic Alliance on Apprenticeships.

Other stakeholders such as chambers of commerce, industry and crafts also have bilateral agreements.

