



European
Commission

EAfa

Webinar

Greening the EU: Apprenticeships in the renewable energy sector

13 November 2024



On the 13th of November 2024, the European Commission's European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfa) hosted a webinar to explore how apprenticeships can contribute to – and support – the renewable energy sector. The webinar provided an opportunity for EAfa members to share and learn from sustainable VET practices across the EU to advance and accelerate the green transition.

Welcome by the European Commission (DG EMPL) and Thematic Introduction by Cedefop

Ana Carrero, Deputy Head of Unit - Vocational Education and Training (VET) at DG EMPL, European Commission, welcomed the audience and highlighted the critical role of the renewable energy sector to meet EU climate targets. The European Commission has put forward several policy initiatives including the [Green Deal Industrial Plan](#), the [Net-Zero Industry Academies](#) and the [REPowerEU Programme](#). This topic will continue to be very a high priority in the new Commission's agenda, as President von der Leyen has already announced a [Clean Industrial Deal](#). Reaching these targets will require effective up and reskilling measures to support further growth in the renewable energy sector. Several ongoing actions under the European Skills Agenda support this direction. These include partnerships under the [Pact for Skills](#) (e.g. Renewable Energy Skills Partnership), some Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence, EU funding or the working group on VET and the green transition. The sector faces several challenges including labour and skills shortages. As many of these shortage occupations correspond to VET profession, quality apprenticeships can play an important role as they provide hands-on training and practical knowledge needed to manage green technologies.



The H2CoVE project is not just about training, it is about transforming education and industry to build a sustainable and skilled workforce for the future."

Shima Souraki,
Advisor at Vestland County Council

Adam Tsakalidis, Expert in the Skills Intelligence and Foresight Team (Cedefop) explained how employment in the renewable energy sector is monitored, focusing on taxonomy and the large-scale review and analysis of online job advertisements (OJAs).

The European multilingual classification of Skills, Competences and Occupations (ESCO) helps classify green occupations and their correlated skills. Building on this taxonomy, large-scale reviews of OJAs is conducted to estimate the prevalence or 'pervasiveness' of green occupations and skills across sectors. From 2019 to 2022, the percentage of OJAs requiring at least one green skill increased from 3% to 5%, with 17% of advertisements in the 'electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' sector demanding green skills.

Employment,
Social Affairs
and Inclusion

Presentation of inspiring practices

Kicking off the panel discussion, **Shima Souraki**, *Advisor at Vestland County Council in Norway*, introduced the audience to the Hydrogen Centres of Vocational Excellence (H2CoVE) project co-funded by the European Union. The project aims to create a skilled workforce for the emerging hydrogen economy through a network of 5 regional CoVEs, which provide unique expertise to equip students with the practical skills that are needed for the hydrogen sector. Through an analysis of needs among VET stakeholders, H2CoVE has identified a demand for international collaboration and more work-based learning, as well as updated curricula and learning materials that cover technical skills in areas such as hydrogen production, storage and handling, and safety protocols. Responding to these needs will ensure that vocational training aligns with industry demands through practical and technical learning, empowering the future workforce of the hydrogen economy in Europe.

The next panellist, **Kasia Lyko**, *National Apprenticeship Programme Coordinator at Kerry Education and Training Board (ETB)*, presented the work undertaken by Kerry ETB to promote training services in County Kerry, Ireland.

In particular, the Wind Turbine Maintenance Technician (WTMT) Apprenticeship programme was launched in November 2022 for those wanting to pursue a career in the maintenance of large-scale commercial wind turbines. This three-year programme was developed with input from industry experts to address existing skills gaps in the sector. The programme has turned out particularly successful, with 60% of the training occurring at the job, as apprentices work directly with employers to develop the skills they need.

Amber Riedl, *Training Leader - Renewable Energy at OHKW Klimajobs*, shared insights on the growing need for professional technicians to facilitate the energy transition in Germany, and how 'career changers' can contribute to the transition by acquiring the necessary training and qualifications. OHKW Klimajobs retrains individuals who want to change to a green career by adapting the German dual education system to the needs of adults already in the workforce. They focus on persons aged 25 and above who are precariously employed in low wage jobs, as well as refugees, unqualified immigrants and employees impacted by the green and digital transitions. The career changers enrol in modular training programmes to gain new skills and certifications, enabling them to become technicians in the solar and heat pump sectors.

Lastly, **Tuscany Bell**, *Policy Officer for the Energy Sector at the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)*, provided an overview of the challenges observed by trade unions in the renewable energy sector and proposed solutions moving forward. Inequalities in accessing training, a lack of interest in careers in the sector, and the scarcity of skilled workers were highlighted as major barriers to achieving a successful energy transition. Looking forward, there is a need for a sector-wide approach to overcome these challenges, including the mapping of skills, and aligning courses to the priorities of the green transition within industries. Additional efforts from trade unions to engage with schools can also support the attractiveness of educational programmes and jobs within the sector.

Discussion on challenges and take-away messages

The final part of the webinar saw **Anna Barbieri**, *Team Leader for Apprenticeships and Erasmus+ at DG EMPL*, invite participants to reflect on the key factors for establishing successful apprenticeships in the renewable energy sector. She then invited the speakers to further elaborate on their work.

Amber Riedl emphasised the importance of certifications in training to ensure workers can progress from entry level jobs to technical and specialised roles. **Shima Souraki** highlighted the collaborations between VET providers and the private sector in each active region as a success factor. For instance, in the context of H2CoVE, employers directly informed education providers about specific skills required for the hydrogen economy. **Tuscany Bell** pointed towards an ongoing exchange among social partners to collect best practices to address challenges in the electricity sector, particularly relating to gender equality and job-to-job transitions. Lastly, **Kasia Lyko** stressed the importance of initiatives, such as the WTMT Apprenticeship programme, capable of attracting and offering school leavers and those without prior qualifications a pathway into the sector.

Conclusion

This webinar highlighted the crucial role that apprenticeships can play in the European renewable energy sector. They can be adapted to a variety of needs for sectors in high demand, for young people and adults, and in traditional settings or in modular approaches. The panellists shared important initiatives undertaken by stakeholders at EU, national and regional levels. These examples underline the potential of apprenticeships in addressing skills gaps and preparing workers for the green transition, offering some an opportunity to start a new career in the renewable energy sector. Panellists stressed the importance of collaboration between industry and educational providers to create high-quality apprenticeships that meet evolving demands and called for measures to improve the attractiveness of apprenticeships in the sector. At the end of the webinar, participants and the audience were invited [to make an EAfA pledge](#) to promote apprenticeships in the renewable energy sector and to look out for upcoming events on the [EAfA website](#).

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