



EUROPEAN YEAR OF RAIL **2021**

# EaFA European Year of Rail 2021

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships on track!

## Background

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The EU has designated 2021 as the European Year of Rail<sup>1</sup> to promote the use of trains. The initiative aims to highlight the benefits of rail as a sustainable, smart and safe means of transport.

On top of environmental benefits, a wider adoption of rail as a means of transport will also trigger the creation of new employment opportunities in a sector that occupies almost 1 million people in the EU (7<sup>th</sup> Rail Market Monitoring Survey Report, 2021).

The rail sector, however, faces skill shortage driven by innovation and digitalisation and by the estimated retirement of a large share of the existing workforce in the next 10 years. The green transition and the consequent rise of new job profiles will further increase the need for new skills and competences. Active policies are required to up-skill and reskill existing workers and to ensure that future skills needs are met.

Apprenticeships play and will play a fundamental role in equipping young people with skills and knowledge that will match sector needs and ensure their employability. At the same time, apprenticeships can be a means to ensure mobility of apprentices and workforce through competitive, up to date and shared curricula.

In this context, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA), in collaboration with the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB), the Federal Ministry for Climate Protection, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK), and the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) seeks to organise a high-level event bringing together all relevant stakeholders from all over Europe to discuss the state of play in the sector, key challenges ahead and opportunities to seize in relation to vocational education and training, in particular apprenticeships.

## Objectives of the event

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The ultimate objectives of the event are to contribute to the EU Green Deal goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2050, to create new training and employment opportunities and to contribute to addressing skills shortages in the sector and its crucial role as a beacon of sustainable mobility and growth.

The renewed EaFA calls for new commitments on **digital and green apprenticeships**, as announced in the Youth Employment Support package of 1 July 2020, focusing on the economic sectors that will be at the front line of the transition to a climate-neutral Europe. With this event, EaFA aims to encourage the creation of quality and effective apprenticeships in a green and attractive sector with growing job opportunities and possibilities for job mobility, as well as to motivate to gender balance

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<sup>1</sup> [https://europa.eu/year-of-rail/index\\_en](https://europa.eu/year-of-rail/index_en)



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in apprenticeships in the sector in accordance with the *Women in Rail* Joint European binding agreement negotiations led by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF)<sup>2</sup>.

### Themes

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This event will provide the opportunity to focus the attention on opportunities and underlying tensions that need to be considered and addressed in order for this sector to unleash its full potential in terms of job creation and training and employment opportunities for all. It will address the following three specific themes:

#### *(1) Just transitions: digital and green*

Innovation and digitalisation are everyday reality and hold the potential to unlock new and better employment opportunities. At the same time the digital divide, if not tackled, will translate into growing social inequality. VET and apprenticeships can be a key factor to close this digital divide. Apprenticeships can also contribute to the green transition of the sector and support the integration of disadvantaged groups.

#### *(2) Attractiveness and women in rail*

While often still facing social stigma, VET and apprenticeships offer real opportunities in terms of skills development, competence acquisition and employability. Raising awareness, increasing apprenticeships attractiveness and reaching out to new target groups are challenges that need to be addressed now. In particular, already less represented in apprenticeships, women are even less engaged in specific sectors, rail included. This challenge requires new commitments, as recently demonstrated by Austrian companies in the railway sector introducing a quota of up to 45% female workers to be met across all job fields and 50% quota of women when filling management positions<sup>3</sup>.

#### *(3) Mobility and transnational cooperation*

Mobility is important as apprentices gain independence, learn new skills (particularly soft skills), foreign language skills through international work experience. The companies involved also benefit, as cultural exchange fosters creativity, reinforces the companies' skills base and attracts international talent. Although the new Erasmus programme offers apprentices an increasing number of learning opportunities abroad<sup>4</sup>, mobility of apprentices in the sector remains limited by several factors – financial, administrative, legal. It requires cooperation among all key players involved to become a widespread reality. In the rail sector specifically, the lack of harmonisation of VET profiles in the transnational rail (freight) traffic is a factor hindering mobility of apprentices.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cer.be/sites/default/files/publication/201203\\_Joint%20CER-ETF%20Declaration%20on%20Covid-19.pdf](https://www.cer.be/sites/default/files/publication/201203_Joint%20CER-ETF%20Declaration%20on%20Covid-19.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.diepresse.com/5928716/jetzt-gibt-es-bei-den-obb-eine-frauenquote>



## EUROPEAN YEAR OF RAIL 2021

### DRAFT AGENDA<sup>5</sup>

9-10 December 2021, Vienna

DAY 1		
Time	Duration	Title / Description
10.00		<i>Hotel Check-in after ÖBB Night train Brussels delegation arrival to Vienna<sup>6</sup></i>
12.00		<i>Lunch</i>
13.00		<i>Bus to Site Visit</i>
14.00 -17.00	3 hours	Site Visit: ÖBB Training Centre Parallel meeting for European Apprentices Network (EAN) with Austrian Apprentices
18.30 – 21.00	2h 30 mins	Evening Reception / Dinner
DAY 2		
Time	Duration	Title / Description
8.30		<i>Registration, coffee and networking</i>
9.00 – 9.30	30 mins	Introduction and Welcome
9.30 – 9.45	15 mins	Setting the scene
09.45 – 10.00	15 mins	EAFa New Members Ceremony
10.00 – 10:45	45 mins	Session 1: Just transitions: digital and green
10.45 – 11.15	30 mins	<i>Coffee break and networking</i>
11.15 – 12.00	45 mins	Session 2: Attractiveness and women in rail
12.00 – 12.45	45 mins	Session 3: Mobility and transnational cooperation
12.45 – 14.00	1h 15 mins	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 16:00	2 hours	In-depth round table discussions
16.00 – 16.15	15 mins	<i>Coffee break</i>
16.15 – 16.45	30 mins	The perspective of the apprentice
16.45 – 17.00	15 mins	Closing remarks
17.00		End of the event <sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> An agenda for participants joining virtually can be prepared.

<sup>6</sup> **Potential travelling times for 9-10 December 2021:** Departure Wed 8 Dec at 19:32 from Brussels - Arrival Thu 9 Dec 9:19 to Vienna // Return Fri 10 Dec 20:13 from Vienna - Arrival Sat 11 Dec 9:35 to Brussels

<sup>7</sup> *Participants' choice to return to Brussels by night train or stay overnight in Vienna*