



Brussels, 5.10.2017
SWD(2017) 322 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
Accompanying the document

Proposal for a Council Recommendation

on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

{COM(2017) 563 final}

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1 Introduction

Background

The proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships falls under the Commission priority for A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment. It is one of the deliverables under the Communication on Investing in Europe's Youth from December 2016 and also the European Pillar of Social Rights from April 2017. As a follow up of the Youth Employment Package in 2013 and the launch of the EAfA in July 2013, the Council adopted a Declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships on 15 October 2013, in which Member States noted that high-quality apprenticeships and other work-based learning schemes are effective instruments to improve sustainable transitions from school to work, notably by fostering skills that are relevant to the labour market and improving skill matches. They also agreed that, where appropriate and according to national circumstances, the effectiveness and attractiveness of apprenticeship schemes should be encouraged by their adherence to several common guiding principles.

Objective

The Recommendation aims to increase the employability and personal development of apprentices and to contribute to the development of a highly skilled and qualified workforce. It provides a coherent framework for what defines quality and effectiveness in apprenticeships, taking into account the diversity of vocational education and training (VET) systems in Member States.

What are apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are formal vocational education and training schemes that combine substantial work-based learning in companies and other workplaces with learning based in education or training institutions, and that lead to nationally recognised qualifications. There should be a contractual relationship between the apprentice, the employer and/or the vocational education and training institution, and the apprentice should be paid and/or compensated for her/his work.

Why are apprenticeships in focus?

The economic crisis and high levels of youth unemployment in recent years led to an increased interest in apprenticeships, because well-designed apprenticeship schemes help young people into employment. The combination of learning in school and training in a workplace, can give young people the skills that make them attractive on the labour market. Apprenticeships can therefore provide benefits for learners, employers and society.

What is the proposal?

The European Commission is proposing a Council Recommendation establishing a set of criteria for quality and effectiveness in apprenticeships. The Recommendation includes seven criteria for the learning and working conditions at the level of apprenticeship schemes and seven criteria for the necessary framework conditions at system level. The proposal includes

follow-up points for the Member States and the European Commission. The proposal builds on extensive work of European stakeholders on the issue of quality and effective apprenticeships, particularly European social partners, since the launch of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships in 2013 and largely builds on the tripartite opinion of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training adopted in 2016.

What is the benefit of a framework?

The Recommendation will contribute to improving ongoing or upcoming reforms in the Member States. By following the criteria for quality and effectiveness in apprenticeships, Member States can ensure that apprenticeship schemes are responsive to labour market needs, supportive of economic competitiveness and growth and providing quality learning pathways for the learners.¹

2 Political context

2.1 General background

Member States and the Union are to work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for **promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce and labour markets** responsive to economic change with a view to achieving the objectives of full employment and social progress set out in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union.

In June 2016, the New Skills Agenda for Europe, the Commission declared its intention to support opportunities for more work-based learning, to develop a set of support services for knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation on apprenticeships, and to support European social partners in taking forward their joint work with a possible Framework on Apprenticeships.

Through the recent Rome Declaration² celebrating the 60th anniversary of European cooperation the European leaders pledged to work towards a "*Union where young people receive the best education and training and can study and find jobs across the continent*". Quality apprenticeships are an essential part of this pledge as they can offer high quality training helping both young and adults to access the labour market.

The European Pillar of Social Rights³, launched on 26 April 2017, sets out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems, which are structured around three themes, all of which are relevant for providing quality and effective apprenticeships: 1) equal opportunities and access to the labour market; 2) fair working conditions; 3) social protection and inclusion. Of particular importance is the first one of the

¹ The present document only provides background information and data and the analyses, statements or views expressed contained do not reflect in any way the position of the European Commission but only the preliminary views of a Commission service. This is in particular the case where this document describes or interprets Union law or the manner in which Union law might or should evolve in the future.

² Rome Declaration of the leaders of 27 member states and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, 25 March 2017.

³ COM(2017) 250 final and C(2017) 2600 final.

20 principles, namely that everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market.

Providing people with quality education and facilitating their transition to employment are necessary also to reach the Europe 2020 headline target of 75% of 20-64 year-olds in employment by 2020. Guideline 6 for the employment policies of the Member States calls on Member States to *"increase educational attainment, encourage work-based learning systems such as dual learning, upgrade professional training and increase opportunities for recognising and validating skills and competences acquired outside formal education"*⁴.

2.2 EU Support to Youth Employment

The economic crisis that hit Europe ten years ago had very negative consequences for the labour market, and in particular for the employment situation of young people. Youth unemployment grew in an unexpected manner, exceeding 40% in four Member States in 2013⁵. Even if the youth unemployment rate in the European Union has dropped from a peak of 23.7% in 2013 to 16.9% in the May of 2017⁶, almost 3.8 million young people are still unemployed. The youth unemployment rate is still double the overall unemployment rate in the European Union. In 2016, 11.5 % of 15 to 24 year olds were still neither in employment nor in any further education or training (NEET) and thus at risk of being excluded from the labour market.⁷ This comes with a high cost for young people, society and economy. It is estimated that NEETs cost the EU €162 billion (1.21% of GDP) a year - in benefits and foregone earnings and taxes⁸.

In recent years, various policy responses have been proposed at EU level to address the high level of youth unemployment, including a push to strengthen apprenticeship systems in Europe. In 2012, as part of the Youth Employment Package, the Commission proposed measures to help Member States tackle unacceptable levels of youth unemployment and social exclusion by giving young people offers of jobs, education and training. The proposed measures included a recommendation to Member States on introducing the Youth Guarantee, it proposed the European Alliance for Apprenticeships to support apprenticeship reforms, as well as launched a consultation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships in 2014 for a better regulation of traineeships. These reforms have helped to better align young people's skills with labour market needs and strengthen business community engagement⁹.

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee was adopted in 2013 through the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013. The Recommendation requests that Member States ensure that all young people up to the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an

⁴ [Employment Guidelines 2016](#) ;[Employment Guidelines 2015](#)

⁵ The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on. Staff Working Document.

⁶ Eurostat, Press Release 103/2017 - 3 July 2017

⁷ Eurostat [edat_lfse_20]

⁸ Source: Mapping youth transitions in Europe – Eurofound, 2014.

⁹ COM/2016/0646 final.

apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

Three years into its implementation, it can be noted that the "Youth Guarantee has been a key driver of improvement, promoting effective action by Member States, improving coordination among different actors and facilitating structural reform and innovation in policy design. In 2015 alone, 5.5 million young people entered Youth Guarantee schemes and 3.5 million took up an offer of employment, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education"¹⁰.

Although apprenticeships are one of the four types of offers to be made under the Youth Guarantee and despite their positive outcomes in terms of labour market integration, according to the 2016 report "The Youth Guarantee and Youth Employment Initiative three years on"¹¹, apprenticeships represent only around 4% of all offers (2015). Based on available data from the Member States, since January 2014 around 390,000 young people aged 15-24 took up an apprenticeship offer under the Youth Guarantee. These figures however need to be interpreted with caution and they should not be used as an indicator for the overall take up of apprenticeships across the EU, given the focus in the Youth Guarantee on offers targeting NEETS. In most countries apprenticeships are part of the initial or continuing education and training system and as such they may be less used as active labour market policies.

The issue of the quality of offers has arisen in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, among others as there is no common definition of what constitutes a "good quality offer". In 2015 a report on the Youth Guarantee, the EU Court of Auditors recommended that the "Commission should promote a set of qualitative attributes that should be fulfilled for jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships to be supported from the EU budget" and pointed to the need for a definition of what constitutes a "good quality apprenticeship" offer. In April 2015 the European Commission issued guidance according to which a "good quality" offer under the Youth Guarantee is one that results in the sustainable integration into the labour market. In the case of apprenticeships, transition rates of sustainable integration into the labour market would therefore guide the evaluation whether an apprenticeship offer can be considered of "good quality".

The 8 December 2016 [Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council Conclusions on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative](#) called on Member States to ensure that all offers provided in the framework of the Youth Guarantee contribute to the sustainable labour market attachment of young people, and, where relevant, the validation of their skills. They also called upon the [Employment Committee \(EMCO\)](#) of the Council to "explore the possibility of discussing standards for quality criteria under [the] Indicator Framework". After that, in its Special Report on the Youth Guarantee published on 4 April 2017, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) recommended that "the Commission should, together with EMCO, develop and propose standards for quality criteria for offers to be made under the Youth Guarantee" and that "Member States should ensure that offers are only considered to be of good quality if they

¹⁰ COM(2016)646 final.

¹¹ Ibid.

match the participant's profile and labour market demand and lead to sustainable integration in the labour market". The point has also arisen in EMCO's own multilateral surveillance of the Youth Guarantee.

The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships will therefore provide the basis for a common understanding of what constitutes good quality apprenticeships also in the context of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

EU Funding

The **European Social Fund (ESF)** is one of the EU's main financial instruments for supporting vocational education and training reforms and the development of work-based learning systems, including dual-learning systems and apprenticeship schemes. Considerable financial allocations from the ESF 2014-2020 support VET reforms as well as the increase of both the supply and quality of apprenticeships across the EU. Under investment priority 10iv actions can be supported to improve the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitate the transition from education to work, and strengthen vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual-learning systems and apprenticeship schemes. The Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) complements the ESF actions addressing youth unemployment. Under the investment priority 8ii support is envisaged for the sustainable integration into the labour market of young people, in particular those not in employment, education or training (NEETs), including young people at risk of social exclusion and young people from marginalised communities, including through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.. It supports in particular regions where youth unemployment is higher than 25%. This €6.4 billion targeted financial source mobilised at EU level has provided direct support to over 1.4 million young NEETs living in those regions most in need.

In addition to the measures financed by the ESF, **European Regional Development Fund** measures within the existing operational programmes for 2014-2020 can support investment in vocational education and training and skills and lifelong learning (investment priority 10).

The **Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme** is a financing instrument at EU level to promote a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions. EaSI is managed directly by the European Commission, and its main objective is to strengthen ownership of EU objectives and coordination of action at EU and national level in the areas of employment, social affairs and inclusion. EaSI could be an instrument to provide financing for the apprenticeship support services, announced in the New Skills Agenda¹².

The **Erasmus+ programme** offers support to a broad range of young people, including apprentices in the field of vocational education and training, volunteering and youth exchanges. In addition, targeted support under Erasmus+ is provided for countries and

¹² COM/2016/0381 final.

stakeholders to work together in the field of apprenticeships. For instance, a **Work-Based Learning Toolkit**¹³, was developed by the NetWBL, a European Thematic Network for work-based learning, formed by the 29 Lifelong Learning Programme (now Erasmus+) National Agencies and coordinated by the German National Agency at BiBB. The Toolkit provides a single platform for the promotion of identified products, approaches and tools in addition to confirming the reach, users, benefits and state-of-play of work-based learning in Europe.

In 2014, through a specific call, 10 projects were selected in which National Authorities cooperate on apprenticeship reforms. One example of these projects is a Danish-led project in which 5 leading apprenticeship countries in Europe are producing a resource base for approaches to dual vocational education and training, including a **digital toolbox**. In 2015, a new Erasmus+ call was launched, targeted at strengthening support structures for SMEs engaging in apprenticeships. 12 projects were selected for building partnerships (between, for instance, businesses, VET providers and intermediary organisations) with the aim of getting more SMEs involved in apprenticeships, and 4 projects of European level networks / organisations were selected to support SMEs through their national members or affiliates. These projects will run from 2016 to 2018. The latest specific call was launched at the end of 2016 for projects on partnerships between business and providers of vocational training. These projects will run from 2017 to 2019.

In response to the calls of the European Parliament to increase the quality and attractiveness of apprentices' mobility, the Erasmus + programme will embed a new dedicated activity **ErasmusPro** for supporting long duration mobility of VET learners and apprentices for work placements abroad. A strong supporting framework, which will include thorough preparation, structured implementation and appropriate follow-up, will ensure the impact and quality of the mobility experience.

Quality Framework for Traineeships

To facilitate school-to-work-transitions, the Youth Employment Package also launched a consultation of European social partners on a Quality Framework for Traineeships so as to enable young trainees to acquire high-quality work experience under safe and fair conditions, and to increase their chances of finding a good quality job. This was a response to concerns about the quality of traineeships, in particular with regard to insufficient learning content and substandard working conditions.¹⁴

The subsequent Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships¹⁵ was adopted on 10 March 2014 and has been instrumental in supporting the provision of quality traineeship offers within the Youth Guarantee. It aims to enhance the quality of traineeships offered within active labour market policies, as well as the open-market traineeships outside formal education or training through 22 quality elements that are directly transposable into national legislation or social partner agreements. They relate in particular to learning content,

¹³ <http://www.wbl-toolkit.eu>

¹⁴ SWD(2016) 323 final.

¹⁵ 2014/C 88/01

working conditions, as well as transparency regarding financial conditions and hiring practices. The Recommendation calls on Member States to ensure that national law or practice respects the principles set out in the guidelines, and to adapt their legislation where necessary.

It should be highlighted that the Quality Framework for Traineeships does not cover traineeships that are part of the curricula of formal education nor vocational education and training (VET), neither does it cover traineeships whose completion is mandatory in order to access a specific profession (e.g. teaching, medicine, architecture, etc.). On-the-job learning in an education and training context is covered by the quality assurance arrangements provided by national legislation and or the educational institutions or professional organisations involved.

According to the Commission's report 'Applying the Quality Framework for Traineeships'¹⁶ half of the Member States have undertaken legal changes that strengthened the alignment of national legal frameworks with the Council Recommendation since its adoption in 2014, or report plans to do so. The extent to which new legislation and social partner agreements are respected in practice needs to be seen.

This Quality Framework for Apprenticeships will complement the Quality Framework for Traineeships by focussing on those forms of work-based learning not covered by the latter.

The European Pact for Youth

The European Pact for Youth, promoted by CSR Europe, was launched on 17 November 2015 with the support of Commissioner Thyssen and several CEOs of major European companies and other supporting organisations.

In a context of young people needing to have the skills for today's labour market, the Pact proposes to create 10,000 quality business-education partnerships and 100,000 new, good-quality apprenticeships, traineeships, or entry-level jobs. The objectives are to be achieved through 28 Member State national action plans implemented by CSR Europe's national partner organisations, and through broader awareness-raising activities.

The Pact commits to action in the following areas: 1) to boost the number and quality of business-education partnerships for youth employability and inclusion, 2) to reduce the skills gap, and 3) to contribute to EU and national policies on skills for competitiveness and employability.

The results of the Pact will be showcased at the first European Enterprise-Education Summit on 23 November 2017.

Together with partners such as the European Youth Forum and with the support from the Commission, the CSR Europe is working on an on-line self-assessment tool for small and medium-sized companies to allow them to identify to what extent they have sufficient processes/measures in place to assure the quality and effectiveness of their internship/apprenticeship schemes.

¹⁶ SWD(2016) 324 final

The proposed Framework will reinforce the actions taken under the European Pact for Youth, as crucial point of convergence between the urgent need for action on the supply side and the interests of learners and businesses to create quality apprenticeships. Quality apprenticeships make a difference in the career path of learners and increase benefits for host companies and economic sectors by strengthening the relevance of the learning experience.

European Employment Services (EURES)

Set up in 1993, EURES is a co-operation network between the European Commission and the Public Employment Services of the EEA Member States (The EU countries plus Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and other partner organisations. Switzerland also takes part in EURES co-operation. The network provides information, guidance and recruitment services to help workers find a job in another EU country. It supports the freedom of movement for workers by ensuring transparency on job vacancies across the Union, making them available on the EURES portal¹⁷.

The European Council Conclusions of June 2012 invited the Member States and the Commission to further develop the EURES portal and in particular to examine the possibility of extending it to apprenticeships and traineeships.

In 2016, Regulation (EU) 2016/589 came into force laying down a comprehensive regulatory framework for the cooperation and information exchange under EURES¹⁸. The Regulation also introduces new obligations on Member States relating to the transparency of apprenticeship and traineeship offers across the Union, making the sharing of publicly available offers which are subject to an employment relationship compulsory as of May 2018. The EURES portal is to become the first "show-window" displaying apprenticeship opportunities at Union level for mobility purposes. Ensuring an appropriate volume of high quality offers will facilitate activities to match candidates from other countries with offers for which there are national shortages and at the same time encourage cooperation in developing projects to secure apprentice mobility in the Union beyond the situations supported under Erasmus+.

A working group composed of representatives of the Member States and the Commission will support implementation of the Regulation as regards the roll out of obligations to share apprenticeship and traineeship offers on the EURES portal. One of the first tasks of the working group will be to examine the issue of quality standards. This includes identifying minimum conditions on sharing data on apprenticeship offers and determining how to handle the processes related to the presentation of offers to candidates, given the diversity of regulatory frameworks and recruitment practices in Member States. In the absence of "hard legal" requirements, minimum conditions on how to share the data and the code of conduct on handling would provide some quality assurance for the EURES portal as only offers considered appropriate according to agreed standards would be published at European level.

¹⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/homepage>

¹⁸ OJ L107 of 22 April 2016.

The EURES portal will provide for two different ways to share apprenticeship offers EU-wide: 1) through the existing channels, coordinated by the Public Employment Services, for EURES member organisations and 2) for organisations outside the network, through a self-service function, allowing the uploading of the offers directly, after the creation of an account for the organisation concerned. The quality standards should apply to both ways of sharing the data. The second method allows in particular the organisations which have made pledges under the Alliance for Apprenticeships to share their concrete offers for apprenticeship places on a European site.

The European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships would provide a good basis for defining the key elements that should underpin a good quality apprenticeship offer to be included under the EURES portal.

2.3 Apprenticeships – pathways to employability

Evidence shows that high quality vocational education and training, and in particular apprenticeships, yield positive employment outcomes¹⁹ in that they facilitate young people's transition to the labour market and hence improve their employability²⁰. Work-experience matters; there is evidence that graduates of VET programmes with workplace content have higher employment rates than those without workplace content²¹. It seems that absence of work-experience has a particularly negative impact on the ability of medium-level graduates to find work.²² Graduates of work-oriented programmes spend less time without work²³. In addition, the transition of VET graduates to the labour market is generally faster and they generally stay longer in their jobs than those graduated from general programmes.

During the crisis, well-developed vocational training and in particular apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning proved to be one of the most effective ways to keep youth unemployment in check or prevent it²⁴. These forms of learning proved particularly effective in providing the combination of technical, transversal and soft skills that are relevant for the labour market, and therefore increase the employability of young people.

A long-standing and robust body of evidence has consistently shown that countries with good quality apprenticeship schemes, such as, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland, are the most successful in terms of facilitating school-to-work transitions.²⁵ In these countries, vocational pathways are an attractive choice, rewarding vocational learners with good career and life prospects. For example data from Austria show that graduates from a dual-track apprenticeship have a much higher probability of

¹⁹ Cedefop. From education to working life – The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training. 2012.

²⁰ Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors.

²¹ Cedefop. From education to working life – The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training. 2012.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See for example M. Pilz (ed.). Vocational Education and Training in Times of Economic Crisis – Lessons from Around the World. 2017, or Peterson Institute for International Economics, Policy Brief on Role of Apprenticeships in Combating Youth Unemployment in Europe and the United States, 2013.

²⁵ Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors.

employment 18 months after graduation compared with graduates of VET schools and vocational colleges²⁶.

While the value of quality apprenticeships for youth employability is strongly in the political spotlight, they are also valuable learning pathways for adults. Both the Bruges communiqué (2010) and the renewed European agenda for adult learning (2011) include developing work-based learning for adults as a major objective for continuing vocational education and training (C-VET). The Bruges communiqué highlights work-based learning as a source of professional and personal development and social cohesion, and identifies it as one of the areas that require more attention and strategic action, whereas the renewed European agenda for adult learning calls for promoting different forms of work-based learning, also in combination with other learning modes, to support flexible provision and inclusion.

Work-based learning in C-VET has a key contributing role in reaching the Education and Training 2020 target of a 15% average rate of adult participation in lifelong learning by 2020.

In addition to preparing for employment, apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning contribute also to the personal development of an individual and increase social inclusion. Out of the four possible offers under the Youth Guarantee²⁷, apprenticeships showed the best results in terms of preventing people from returning to NEET status²⁸.

Increased productivity is a precondition for economic growth. Quality apprenticeships bring direct productivity benefits for companies, as well as reduced recruitment costs. Apprenticeships also provide excellent recruitment possibilities for employers, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises²⁹. Hosting or recruiting apprentices is one of the ways that enterprises can make the necessary transition into learning-rich work environments, promoting a learning attitude among all its workers³⁰, which is important for developing a highly skilled and qualified workforce. However, apprenticeships should not replace or displace jobs. Apprenticeships are first and foremost a learning experience, allowing young and adults to obtain a qualification which has value on the labour market.

2.4 Apprenticeships in political spotlight – the European Alliance for Apprenticeships

Through the Communication on Rethinking Education, the Commission committed to accelerate improvements in work-based learning in particular by establishing an EU-level Alliance for Apprenticeships. The following year, through the Youth Employment Package, the European Council of 7-8 February 2013 invited the Commission to establish a European Alliance for Apprenticeships as part of measures to tackle youth unemployment. Furthermore, the Alliance was a key element of the Commission's Communication on 'Working together for

²⁶ The Cost-Effectiveness of Apprenticeships schemes – Making the Business Case for Apprenticeships, UEAPME, BusinessEurope, CEEP. 2016.

²⁷ Please see Chapter 2.2 on EU support for Youth Employment.

²⁸ European Court of Auditors: Special Report – Youth unemployment – have EU policies made a difference. 2017.

²⁹ The Cost-Effectiveness of Apprenticeships schemes – Making the Business Case for Apprenticeships, UEAPME, BusinessEurope, CEEP. 2016.

³⁰ Study commissioned by the European commission: Follow-up of the Copenhagen process: Research into forms of individual career development and continuing vocational training (CVT). 2009.

Europe's young people' of 19 June 2013, and the 27-28 June 2013 **European Council** Conclusions referred to the promotion of high quality apprenticeships and work-based learning, notably through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, as a key element of supporting youth employment.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships³¹ (EAfA) was launched in June 2013 in the context of the Leipzig WorldSkills competitions. It brings together public authorities at national and regional level, social partners, businesses, intermediary bodies such as chambers of industry, commerce and crafts, professional and sectoral organisation, vocational education and training providers, youth and parent organisations, and other key actors in order to improve the quality, the supply and the image of apprenticeships in Europe. More recently, increasing mobility for apprentices has also emerged as an important topic in the Alliance. Under this initiative, national authorities and other stakeholders are encouraged to get involved: countries in the form of commitments and other stakeholders in the form of pledges to show their engagement to improving in particular these four objectives of the EAfA.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships was launched through a joint Declaration between the Commission, the European social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP) and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This was followed by a Council Declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, adopted on 15 October 2013, in which Member States noted that high-quality apprenticeships and other work-based learning schemes are effective instruments to improve sustainable transitions from school to work, notably by fostering skills that are relevant to the labour market and improving skill matches. They also agreed that, where appropriate and according to national circumstances, the effectiveness and attractiveness of apprenticeship schemes should be encouraged by their adherence to several common guiding principles.

The Alliance was given a new boost at the Meeting of Ministers in charge of vocational training in Riga on 22 June 2015, and at a high-level meeting in Valletta on 30-31 May 2017 – as a part of celebrations of the two and four years of the Alliance.

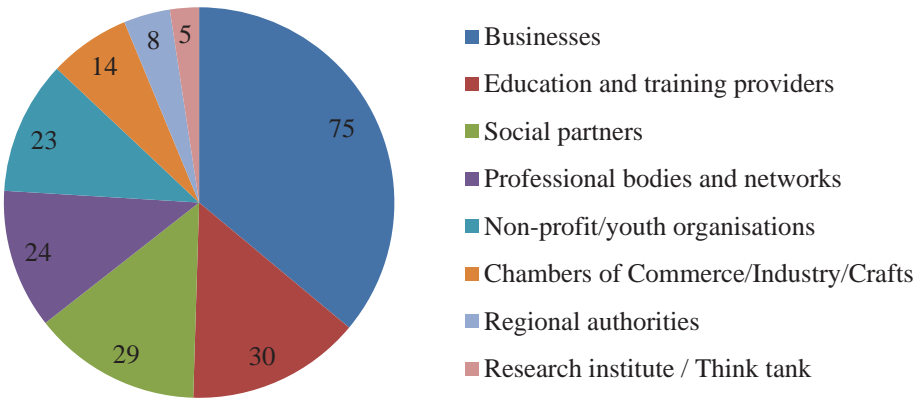
The importance of apprenticeships and work-based learning were highlighted in the 22 June 2015 "Riga Conclusions on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020". The first of the five priorities set out in these Conclusions is the promotion of "work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship". The Riga Conclusions fall under the Bruges Communiqué which, in 2010, set out long-term strategic objectives for the European cooperation in VET for the period 2011-2020, and called on Member States to support the development of apprenticeship schemes.

The communication on the New Skills Agenda invites to include a strong work-based dimension in vocational training, and thus to increase the attractiveness of vocational training and making it a first choice.

³¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/apprenticeships-alliance>

After the arrival of new members at the high-level event in Malta on 30-31 May 2017, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships has 27 Member States, 3 EFTA countries and 5 EU candidate countries³² as members with commitments to take forward reforms for strengthening apprenticeship quality, supply, image and mobility. In addition, 208 pledges have been made by apprenticeship stakeholders from the following categories:

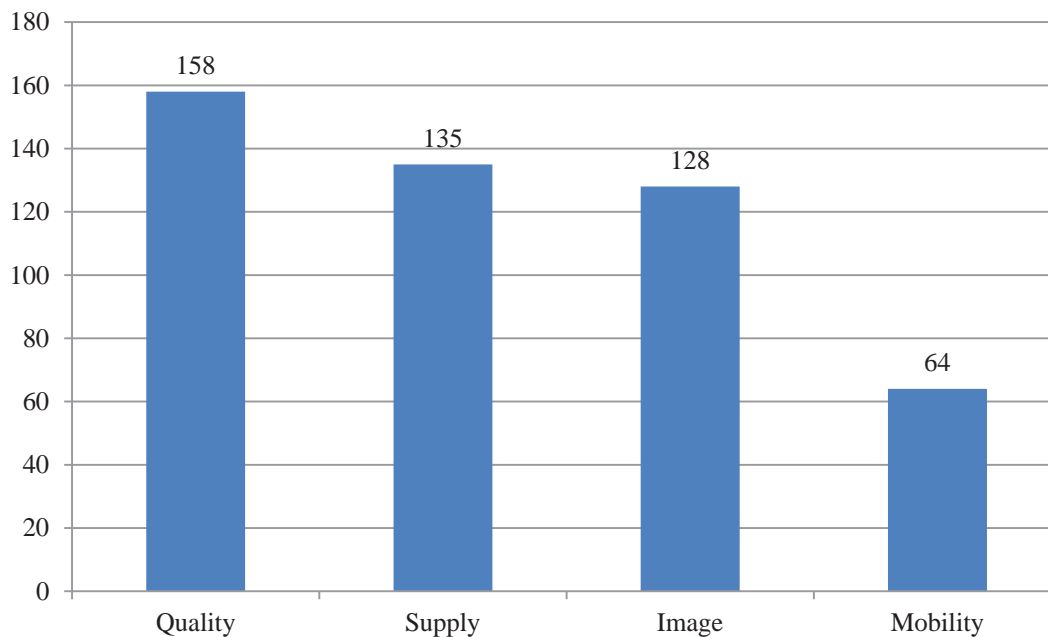
Chart 1: Number of pledges per stakeholder group



The pledges can focus on one or several of the four objectives. Most of them focus on quality, as the figure below shows, but also supply and image are considered highly important.

³² All the EU Member States apart from the United Kingdom. Also, all 5 Candidate countries and 3 EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland) have made national commitments

Chart 2: No. of pledges per EAfA objective (most pledges target more than one objective)



The Alliance has achieved significant results in its four years of existence³³:

- **Supply:** The national commitments and pledges have helped to increase the supply of apprenticeship places: by 2016, the European Commission estimated that the pledge holders had committed to create 250,000 new apprenticeship places in total; To date, it is estimated that over 700,000 training and first-job opportunities have been created through the Alliance;
- **Quality:** The commitments and pledges have helped to enhance the quality of apprenticeships, e.g. by ensuring they respond to skills needs according to labour market requirements, developing a regulatory framework; promoting employers' participation in funding apprenticeships, etc.;
- **Image:** The commitments and pledges have helped to improve the image and attractiveness of apprenticeships: numerous image campaigns targeting learners, parents, employers were carried out. Moreover, governments and stakeholders have implemented reforms to improve the image of apprenticeships, e.g. updating existing and/or preparing new training programmes to ensure the quality of the qualifications gained through apprenticeships, improving working conditions for apprentices etc.;
- **Mobility:** The commitments and pledges have helped to raise awareness for VET mobility, e.g. by providing more or better information about learner mobility and improving services for learners and VET providers to find places/partners abroad. They have also contributed to improving the quality of VET mobility, e.g. by ensuring the recognition of learning outcomes gained through learner mobility.

³³ Study "European Alliance for Apprenticeships – Assessment of progress and planning the future". 2017.

At a national level, both the adoption of the Youth Guarantee and the launch of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships in 2013 have put more policy focus on apprenticeships as a measure to facilitate school-to-work transitions. Significant action has been taken in order to improve in particular the quality, supply, and attractiveness of apprenticeships, in the spirit of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. Almost all Member States have put in place measures to strengthen their apprenticeship system. In a number of countries, structural reforms have been carried out to existing apprenticeship systems (e.g. BE, FR, UK), while in others apprenticeship systems have been created, where they previously did not exist or existed at a very small scale (e.g. ES, LV, LT, SK)³⁴.

The Commission will also develop **demand driven apprenticeship support services**, as announced in the New Skills Agenda for Europe from June 2016 and further outlined in the Commission Communication on Investing in Europe's Youth from December 2016. The support services will focus on knowledge sharing, networking and bench-learning. The bench-learning will take inspiration from a similar action implemented by the European network of Public Employment Services, but will be specifically designed to support apprenticeship stakeholders. It will provide a structured process and approach to contribute to the introduction, reform and/or improvement of apprenticeship systems. The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships could provide the criteria for the bench-learning process.

All in all, there is currently a **strong momentum and political interest** for reinforcing apprenticeships, as well as strengthening their quality and supply. Within the European Semester, country-specific recommendations have been issued in recent years for some countries to reform apprenticeship systems. Apprenticeship reforms have been proposed as one of the measures addressing the labour market relevance of vocational training, such as the recommendation for Estonia in 2015 or the one for France in 2016. The recommendation for the United Kingdom in 2016 explicitly mentions strengthening the quality of apprenticeships as a measure to address skills mismatches and to provide for skills progression. Many Member States are now acting on these recommendations and reforms are taking place in this field.

The effectiveness of apprenticeships in preparing people for an active life as workers and citizens depends very much on their quality in terms of learning content and working conditions. Agreement on certain quality criteria could help Member States, vocational training providers, companies and all relevant stakeholders to provide young people with good quality apprenticeships³⁵. Therefore such quality criteria should contribute to increasing the employability and personal development of apprentices. Increasing the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships through a coherent framework will also increase the attractiveness of this training pathway, which was also one of the aims of the communication on the New Skills Agenda for Europe from June 2016. The proposed European Framework will clarify the criteria for learning and working conditions and for framework conditions that

³⁴ See also COM(2016)646 final; SWD(2016)323 final.

³⁵ As recognised by social partners and national governments, cf. the tripartite opinion (ACVT Opinion) described in paragraph 2.5.2.1 below.

should be applied to apprenticeships throughout Europe, taking into account the diversity of vocational education and training (VET) systems in Member States.

2.5 Working towards a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

Under the priority "A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment", the Commission Work Programme 2017 outlines a Youth Initiative to ensure that "every young person should have real prospects for education, training and employment". One of its measures is the development of a quality framework for apprenticeships as a follow-up to the New Skills Agenda for Europe. Further details are outlined the Investing in Europe's Youth initiative from December 2016:

"To advance the quality, supply, attractiveness and inclusiveness of apprenticeships and work-based learning in vocational education and training, the Commission will propose a Quality Framework for Apprenticeships, setting out key principles for the design and delivery of apprenticeships at all levels, with sufficient flexibility to apply to very different Member State systems. The Quality Framework could underpin the quality of apprenticeships supported through EU programmes (Youth Guarantee, YEI, European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+, and European Social Fund)."

2.5.1 Milestones in improving the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships

Quality of apprenticeships has been the topic of extensive work at EU, at national and at international level in recent years. In Europe, in particular the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Youth Guarantee have contributed to structure Member States' action to improve apprenticeships. In addition to these instruments, the European Commission as well as other stakeholders have worked on different tools and guidance aiming at raising the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships in the context of VET reforms. This chapter presents the main milestones of this work.

European level

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) established in 2008 improves the transparency, comparability and portability of citizens' qualifications, including apprentices. The core of the EQF concerns eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do. Apprenticeships leading to a nationally recognised qualification need to be referenced to EQF levels, thus enabling a much easier comparison between national qualifications. It will also ease the access to other learning opportunities, including at higher education and training levels, and help to promote the mobility across the Member States.

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) established in 2009 is a European tool to support the development of national systems for quality assurance in VET providing a common set of principles to guide countries' quality assurance systems and also to support transparency of quality assurance systems in a European context. Countries can use EQAVET to make changes to their quality assurance systems but they can also use it to present their existing quality assurance systems in a common manner. EQAVET comprises a quality assurance and improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation/assessment

and review/revision) based on a selection of quality criteria, descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET-system and VET-provider levels. The aim of EQAVET is not to introduce new standards, but to support Member States' efforts in developing quality assurance, whilst preserving the diversity of their approaches. The EQAVET Framework applies to both school-based as well as work-based learning provision. Specific guidance on quality assurance of work-based learning has been elaborated in the framework of a dedicated working group which developed 6 building blocks. The building blocks propose guidance on designing work-based learning, improving the quality, responding to learners' needs, communicating, training the staff and assessing the learners. The EQAVET Framework is limited to quality assurance of the training provision while the proposed Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships focuses on the key elements that define quality of apprenticeships. EQAVET could be used as a quality assurance tool for countries' apprenticeships systems and measures.

In June 2013, the Commission published guidance on work-based learning in the document '**Work-Based Learning in Europe - Practices and Policy Pointers**'. The publication analyses successful work-based learning models, encourages more and better work-based learning (including apprenticeships), and is intended as a tool for policymakers and practitioners working on modernising and reforming vocational education and training systems.

The **Council Declaration on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships**, adopted on 15 October 2013, particularly highlights 10 common guiding principles which increase the effectiveness and attractiveness of apprenticeship schemes. The Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships builds on these principles.

The working groups on Vocational Education and Training, operating in the framework of the "Education and Training 2020", composed of the representatives of Member States, Candidate Countries, EFTA countries and social partners, and supported by Cedefop and ETF, provide peer advice to countries in introducing and reforming apprenticeship systems. In 2015, such a working group produced the report "**High-Performance Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning: 20 Guiding Principles**"³⁶, which is based on four enablers, namely National governance and social partner involvement; Support for companies, in particular SMEs; Attractiveness and improved career guidance; as well as Quality assurance in apprenticeships. It also offers a large number of real-life examples from the participating countries. This guidance is targeted at governments, businesses, social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders looking for inspiration on how to develop and reform work-based learning and apprenticeship systems. A new working group is currently working on VET teachers and trainers in work-based learning and in apprenticeships and developing policy pointers on this issue.

With financial support from the Commission the **cross-industry European social partners** worked on the quality (ETUC) and cost-effectiveness (led by BusinessEurope on behalf of the EU cross-industry employers' organisations) of apprenticeships. ETUC worked on "A

³⁶ European Commission (2015), High-Performance Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning: 20 Guiding Principles.

European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships – a European Trade Union proposal"³⁷. In their part of the project, the employers' organisations BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP concentrated on the cost-effectiveness of apprenticeships³⁸. European Social Partners agreed on the **joint statement** Towards a Shared Vision of Apprenticeships (June 2016).

On the initiative of European social partners, the joint statement was followed by a **tripartite Opinion by the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) on A Shared Vision for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning** which was unanimously adopted in December 2016. Its annex includes 12 elements on apprenticeships and on partnership approach. The proposal for a Recommendation on quality and effective apprenticeships will reflect this ACVT Opinion.

Cedefop, in cooperation with the Commission, is supporting individual countries in improving the setting up or modernising their apprenticeship systems/schemes or improving their quality in line with EU policies and contributes to increasing the EU evidence base which can support policy- and decision-making on apprenticeships at the EU and national levels. Through the **Thematic Country Reviews on Apprenticeships** Cedefop interacts with individual countries who voluntarily express their interest in undergoing the review based on an analytical framework of 10 thematic areas; this includes characteristic features that are present, to varying extent and in different combinations, in existing (well-functioning) apprenticeship systems.

International level

An important contribution to the theme is the 2017 **OECD** study "**Costs and benefits of apprenticeships**"³⁹, carried out with the support from Erasmus+. The study contributes to the existing stock of evidence on the costs and benefits of apprenticeships by presenting a new analysis of international data on apprenticeships from the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) and by establishing and discussing in detail links between various elements of apprenticeship design (such as apprentice wage, duration of work placements, apprentice status) and the distribution of the costs and benefits of apprenticeships.

The **ILO**, with support of the Commission, is working with countries in order to modernise apprenticeship systems and/or schemes. ILO has recently worked on Latvia, Spain and Portugal as part of an 18-month project to enhance national capabilities to assess and improve Youth Guarantee schemes, including through policy support on apprenticeship systems. The action aimed to strengthen national capacity for the implementation, monitoring of performance and assessment of results of gender-sensitive youth employment policies that are part of the Youth Guarantee schemes. On apprenticeships, the action applied an approach to quality apprenticeships and developed a toolkit to establish apprenticeship systems and

³⁷ [A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships | ETUC](#)

³⁸ [The cost-effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes - Making the case for apprenticeships | BusinessEurope](#)

³⁹ OECD (2017). *Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 153, OECD Publishing, Paris

programmes with tripartite participation. In addition, ILO is producing a logbook for Quality Apprenticeships, based on the achievements, the services and products delivered through the project. It will serve as a step-by-step guide to design and to improve quality apprenticeship systems in the three target countries.

The **Global Apprenticeship Network** (GAN) was established by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC) with the support of the ILO. The network shares best practices in apprenticeships, internships, mentoring and on-the-job training. It encourages partnerships and national networks of committed companies and also aims to scale up international cooperation in the field.

The **Interagency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (IAG-TVET), led by UNESCO since 2008, aims to ensure a good coordination of activities by the key international organisations involved in the delivery of policy advice, programmes and research on TVET. The working group on work-based learning has recently developed a leaflet called "Investing in Work-Based Learning" containing key information on work-based learning and how it is tackled at international level.

The **G20 Task Force on Employment** considers quality apprenticeships as one of the key policy tools to promote effective school-to-work transitions, enhance workers skills shortages, address skills mismatches and reduce youth unemployment. In that context, and given the differences in apprenticeships and taking into consideration the diversity of national contexts in the G20 countries, it defined, in September 2012, a list of characteristics as key elements that apprenticeship schemes may include in their design and implementation⁴⁰. They mainly help defining apprenticeships, but touch also the rights of apprentices, their remuneration, the apprenticeship funding arrangements, entry requirements and access to higher qualifications, the role of business and labour organisations, as well as career guidance. These characteristics link the quality of apprenticeship programmes to their labour market relevance, and point out, for example, that qualifications and skills provided should match the evolving labour market demands, encourage continuous training, and highlight the provision of skills that facilitate occupational mobility of apprentices as well as the quality of trainers.

The **European Training Foundation** (ETF) helps partner countries harness human capital by reforming education, training and labour market systems. It also supports EU institutions to design, monitor and evaluation EU human capital assistance. Many countries face similar challenges in transforming vocational education and training. Improving cooperation between vocational education and training and business is especially important and many countries have taken measures to align learning to workplace needs. Through their Torino Process, the ETF also monitors the EU Candidate Countries' implementation of the Riga deliverables, of which the one on work-based learning and apprenticeships is considered number one priority by these counters.

⁴⁰ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_218209.pdf

2.5.2 Views of relevant stakeholders

Many stakeholders were consulted in the preparation phase of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. This paragraph outlines the results of the consultation of the social partners, including their earlier work on the issue, the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training as well as the stakeholders of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

2.5.2.1 ACVT opinion

At the meeting of the tri-partite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) in June 2016, European Social partners proposed to adopt an ACVT Opinion on the topic of apprenticeships as a follow up to their projects 'A European quality framework for apprenticeships'⁴¹ and 'Cost effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes'⁴² and their subsequent joint statement on 30 May 2016.

In its meeting in November 2016, the ACVT discussed a draft Opinion on quality and effective apprenticeships and work-based learning. A revised version of the Opinion on a Shared Vision on Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning⁴³ was adopted unanimously through a written procedure on 2 December 2016 by Member States and social partners' representatives. Also EFTA and candidate countries showed their agreement with the text.

Even though the Opinion acknowledges the efforts made by governments, social partners and other stakeholders, it points out to the need to step up reforms and implementation for quality and effective apprenticeships and work-based learning, and to improve the coordination of and support for the various stakeholder actions. The Opinion outlines a shared vision for apprenticeships and agrees on key elements of apprenticeships, work-based learning and priority areas for action.

The Opinion represents an important call from governments, trade unions and employers' organisations from EU Member States and partner countries to further strengthen efforts to increase quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships and work-based learning. The Opinion is a significant contribution from EU VET stakeholders on initiatives announced in the Commission Work Programme 2017, particularly on the proposal to establish a European Quality Framework on Apprenticeships.

The Opinion further calls on the Commission to develop a set of support services for knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation to assist where needed apprenticeship and work-based learning reforms at national level as well as promote higher levels of mobility of apprentices across Europe.

Further views of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT)

On 20-21 April, the tripartite Advisory Committee on VET (ACVT) discussed, inter alia, the proposed initiative of a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships.

⁴¹ [European quality framework for apprenticeships](#) [European quality framework for apprenticeships](#)

⁴² ['Cost effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes'](#)

⁴³ [ACVT opinion](#) (See under EAfA, related documents)

Social partners asked that the proposal follows very closely the ACVT "Opinion on a Shared Vision on Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning" from 2 December 2016, and in particular the Annex on Elements on apprenticeships and the partnership approach.

Governmental members were concerned about the wide scope of the quality criteria and governance issues outlined. It was mentioned that Member States are already engaged in the issue of quality through i.e. the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, EQAVET and EURES. Therefore, it should be made clear how the proposal links to these platforms and initiatives. Several governmental members argued that a European framework should take an inclusive approach, encompassing also other forms of work-based learning and not just apprenticeships.

Some trade unions argued that the framework should focus on apprenticeships in the strict sense, meaning where learners also take a productive role in the workplace. They saw a need to make it clear what the proposal will cover, i.e. apprenticeships in a strict sense or also other forms of work-based learning.

While some governmental members stressed that the responsibility of employers and apprentices should be added to that of the Member States, others were worried about the potential additional burden for companies. On their side, the employers underlined that a European framework should stress the effectiveness of apprenticeships, and it was proposed to add 'effectiveness' to the title of the proposal. The Commission supported the proposal from the Lithuanian Trade Union to formulate the title as follows: "European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships".

The trade unions said that mobility should be one of the quality criteria for apprenticeships while the employers said that it can be a quality element but that it is not a prerequisite for quality apprenticeships.

The Commission stressed that the proposal for a European framework would build on the thorough work of European social partners and on the ACVT Opinion, but highlighted that it would have a different form as it will be addressed to Member States. The Commission also emphasised that Member States will not be bound by the ACVT Opinion when discussions take place in the Council. The key to such a European framework will be to have content that is clear, relevant, and makes a difference for Member States and stakeholders.

As a follow-up to the meeting, ACVT members, in coordination with DGVT members, were invited to provide written comments by 28 April. Governmental representatives from Italy (and Norway) provided further comments, both of which were supportive of the proposal to adopt a quality framework on apprenticeships, but asked to clarify the overlap and the synergies with EQAVET.

In addition, the Italian contribution highlighted the importance of defining its scope as well as the responsibilities of social partners in the implementation of apprenticeships. Italy also expressed its concerns about how binding the recommendation would be, in particular as regards to including of the recommendation with in the European Semester process and in the National Reform Plan. On the other hand Italy was in favour of the approach to encourage the

use of EU funding for the implementation of the framework, according to the model of the Quality framework for Traineeships.

2.5.2.2 European social partners' work on apprenticeships

The European social partners have been a strong driving force pushing for a European framework in the area of apprenticeships. Apprenticeships have been a key topic under the social partners Framework of Actions on Youth Employment since 2013. While the trade unions have focussed their efforts in particular on the quality dimension, the employer organisations have worked on the issue of cost-effectiveness.

In 2015, through its “New Path for Europe”, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) urged to include work-based and workplace learning as one of the “top priorities for European countries, in order to facilitate the transfer of young people between education and training and the labour market, and to ensure that workers have access to continuing training so as to retain their jobs and improve their skills and careers”. ETUC considers the quality of apprenticeship and traineeship schemes as a key element in this process, and makes a call in particular to improve training outcomes, working conditions and labour protection. Against this background, ETUC strongly supports the implementation of a wide-ranging European quality framework apprenticeship, with a common basis of quality standards.

Consequently, ETUC agreed to cooperate with BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP, and to launch related projects to contribute to the implementation of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. ETUC worked on “A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships – a European Trade Union proposal”⁴⁴. The proposal consists of twenty quality standards for apprenticeships as well as a series of quality criteria that enable these standards to be measured in a readily understandable way, supported by a series of examples of best practice to illustrate the different aspects of quality standards.

In their part of the project, the employers' organisations BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP concentrated on the cost-effectiveness of apprenticeships⁴⁵. Their starting point was that when apprenticeship schemes are designed around the real needs of the labour market, they contribute to the increased productivity and competitiveness of enterprises, which fosters job creation and supports youth employment⁴⁶. Employers consider that the involvement of companies and employers' organisations in apprenticeship schemes is an effective way of identifying and meeting skills needs in the labour market. However, in some countries employers are reluctant to engage in apprenticeships because of the high costs of training⁴⁷. All in all, well-functioning apprenticeship schemes help enterprises to meet their skills needs and are cost-effective, which is why employers call for a clear legal framework and a governance system for apprenticeships in which employers are in a central role in decision making, delivering training and in the selection/recruitment procedures. The project identified

⁴⁴ [A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships | ETUC](#)

⁴⁵ [The cost-effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes - Making the case for apprenticeships | BusinessEurope](#)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Such costs can arise from, for example, the need to adapt to accommodate trainees, mistakes made by apprentices, administrative paperwork, the time required from enterprise trainers and employees who need to support and monitor apprentices.

the potential reforms that are needed to make apprenticeship systems more cost-effective to increase employer engagement.

Both the employers and the trade unions highlight the importance for the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships of the involvement of social partners in their delivery. These two projects, which were finalised in 2016, led to a joint statement of the European social partners "Towards a Shared Vision of Apprenticeships" on 30 May 2016. In this statement, the European social partners called for a wider debate, with the European institutions and the Member States, in the framework of the tripartite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT), on the policy priorities for supporting the provision, effectiveness and quality of apprenticeships.

Hearings with social partners at European level

The Commission has organised two rounds of hearings with social partners at European level in the process of developing its proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.

In the first hearing on 30 March 2017, the process for developing the Council Recommendation was clarified. The Commission clarified that there was no legal requirement for formal consultation of the European social partners, but that the meeting was organised to ensure an open and close cooperation on an issue where they play a key role. The Commission also offered to organise a 2nd hearing meeting before it would finalise its proposal.

On content, the Trade Unions stressed the importance of quality standards for apprenticeships in order to establish a common understanding across Member States, and argued for a strict focus on apprenticeships, according to the dual principle.

On their side, the employers stressed that the framework should ensure cost-effectiveness for companies, and the role of small and medium-sized companies as apprenticeship providers was highlighted. While trade unions wanted mobility to one of the quality criteria, the employers argued that mobility could contribute to quality but that it should not be considered a pre-requisite for quality.

The 2nd hearing was organised on 7 June 2017, in which the Commission presented an outline of the main elements that it was considering as criteria for quality and effectiveness in its upcoming proposal. Overall, there was a positive reaction from both the trade unions and the employers to the elements presented by the Commission. Both the employers and the trade unions expressed their willingness to be strongly associated in the implementation of the Framework, including through the ACVT. Once again, it was emphasised from the social partners that the proposal from the Commission should build closely on the ACVT Opinion. The Commission reiterated its intention to do so, while also explaining that a proposal for a Council Recommendation would have to be different in form.

2.5.2.3 Stakeholders' survey of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships

During 2016-2017, the Commission carried out a study on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. As part of this study, the Commission enquired to which extent stakeholders

from the European Alliance for Apprenticeships support the idea of proposing a ‘quality framework for apprenticeships’. The following question was included in the online survey which formed a part of the study:

Would you be in favour of EU-wide quality standards, guidance or framework for apprenticeships?

The majority of survey respondents stated that they would be in favour of an EU-wide quality standards, guidance or framework for apprenticeships (58%), with only one fifth not being in favour of this approach (16%).

Reasons in support of quality standards include:

- The different legal frameworks, schemes and arrangements for apprenticeships across European countries hinder opportunities for the mobility of apprentices.
- EU guidelines or any other harmonisation initiative would be useful and would guarantee a degree of quality across countries.

Few respondents highlighted that, although useful, such guidelines should nevertheless be sufficiently flexible in order to respect existing differences in apprenticeship systems.

2.5.2.4 European Network of Apprentices

In 2012, the European Youth Forum, with the support of several Members of the European Parliament and companies, developed a European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships in order to establish minimum standards for interns and apprentices across Europe. The Charter highlights that internships and apprenticeships must be an educational experience and accessible to all young people. In addition, the Charter establishes criteria that internships and apprenticeships should meet, such as the existence of a contract, the right to reimbursement of costs incurred, as well as clear evaluation criteria, including complaints channels.

In the context of a renewed participation of civil society in shaping the future of apprenticeships, the European Youth Forum and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), with the support of the European Commission, have jointly launched on 31 May 2017 a network of apprentices at European level to make sure that the voices of young apprentices are heard in discussions on VET and apprenticeships in Europe.

This network promotes quality apprenticeships that put the learner at the centre and respect the rights of young people as students and as workers. Involving young people in decisions that affect them is crucial, this is why the European Apprentices Network works to ensure that apprentices are represented in the set-up, design and implementation of apprenticeship programmes. The network members will act as ambassadors for apprenticeships, to promote them as worthwhile career choice.

The network chose 7 key priorities to work upon during 2017-2018 (Quality education and Quality assurance, Rights and protection, legally binding agreements, Representation, Promoting apprenticeships, Anti-discrimination and Accessible information), most of which are also reflected in the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.

3 State of play on apprenticeships across Member States

3.1 Definition of apprenticeships / work-based learning

Work-based learning (WBL), a key aspect of VET, is directly linked to its goal of helping learners acquire the knowledge, skills and competences with direct relevance for the labour market. There are broadly three main forms of WBL: Apprenticeships, School-based VET with on-the-job training, Work-based learning in school. Hence, apprenticeship is considered to be one form of work-based learning.

Apprenticeships⁴⁸ formally combine and alternate company-based training (periods of practical work experience at a workplace) with school-based education (periods of theoretical/practical education followed in a school or training centre), and lead to nationally recognised qualification upon successful completion. Most often there is a contractual relationship between the employer and the apprentice, with the apprentice being paid for his/her work.

Although some of the criteria may be relevant for all forms of work-based learning, the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships is targeting especially the first two forms of work-based learning, namely apprenticeships and school-based VET with on-the-job training. Given the lack of work-based learning, the framework does not address work-based learning in school.

To clarify, for the purposes of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, apprenticeships are understood as:

***formal** vocational education and training schemes that **combine** substantial **work-based learning** in companies and other workplaces **with learning based in education or training institutions**, that lead to **nationally recognised qualifications**. In most cases, these are characterised by a **contractual relationship** between the apprentice, the employer and/or the vocational education and training institution, with the apprentice being paid or compensated for her/his work*

There is very little comparable data available on apprenticeships mainly due to the different understanding of the term "apprenticeships". Eurostat collects and publishes data on "combined school- and work-based programmes" in VET. According to Eurostat definition programmes are classified as:

"combined school- and work-based if less than 75 per cent of the curriculum is presented in the school environment or through distance education. The 75 per cent cut-off point should be regarded as a general guideline that may need to be operationalized differently across countries. These programmes include:

⁴⁸ Definition used by the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, <http://ec.europa.eu/apprenticeships-alliance>

- *apprenticeship programmes organised in conjunction with educational authorities or educational institutions that involve concurrent school-based and work-based training; and*
- *programmes organised in conjunction with educational authorities or educational institutions that involve alternating intervals of attendance at educational institutions and participation in work-based training (programmes of training in alternation, sometimes referred to as “sandwich” programmes).*

The Eurostat statistics presented in the following chapter are based on this definition.

3.2 Overview of apprenticeships and work-based learning systems across the EU

Apprenticeship systems currently present in Member States take very different forms. This diversity is reflected in the variety of definitions of apprenticeships that are used even within the European Union⁴⁹. Often a distinction is made between apprenticeship schemes and school-based vocational programmes with placements in the company.

In most Member States there is a generally or formally recognised definition for apprenticeships. According to a study that identified the key success factors for apprenticeships and traineeships⁵⁰, apprenticeships are usually characterised by:

1. A component of a formal education and training programme;
2. combine practical work-related training at the workplace with theoretical education in an educational institution;
3. all aspects of apprenticeships (e.g. occupational profile duration, skills and competences to be acquired, etc) are often defined in the apprenticeship contract;
4. apprentices typically have the status of an employee and receive remuneration;
5. successful completion leads to an accredited qualification, qualifying them to work in a specific occupation;
6. tight regulation and monitoring;
7. extensive involvement of social partners.

However, the way in which these elements are implemented in national contexts varies considerably, and significant reforms are taking place in many EU Member States. For example, according to a study from 2012⁵¹, 24 Member States have apprenticeship schemes which could be characterized as mainly company-based, at least on a small scale, meaning that in these schemes more than 50% of training activities take place in a work setting. However, the distribution of company- and school-based training in main national schemes varies greatly: from 66-90% of company-based training in Denmark and 60% in Germany, to only 20-30% in Spain. In 18 countries (including the Netherlands, Finland, France, Hungary,

⁴⁹ See chapter 3.1 on definitions.

⁵⁰ European Commission, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors (2013)

⁵¹ European Commission, (2012b). Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union, Report prepared by IKEI Research & Consultancy for DG EMPL.

Latvia, Sweden and the United Kingdom), predominantly school-based programmes co-exist with work-based programmes.

A more recent mapping carried out by Cedefop⁵² has identified a total of 38 mainstream/system level apprenticeship schemes⁵³ with stable/valid legal basis in 24 countries. In addition, two countries have adopted a legal framework but implementation of apprenticeship schemes occurs through pilot projects (LT, SK), and, according to this mapping, in four countries (BG, CZ, MT, SI) there is no apprenticeship scheme or the legal basis was being introduced or reformed at the moment of the data collection⁵⁴.

These 38 schemes are considered as being “apprenticeship” in the national context. In order to understand their commonalities and differences, they were analysed against a number of common criteria. The following two criteria were considered for the purpose of this overview:

1. the level of education and type of qualification the apprenticeship scheme leads to;
2. the presence of a contract between the learner and the firm and remuneration or allowance paid by the firm.

The analysis of the 38 apprenticeship schemes against the first criterion shows that the large majority (33 schemes) of the schemes lead to formal education qualifications (i.e. qualifications included in the National Qualification Frameworks); 31 apprenticeship schemes are at upper secondary level (6 out of these 31 schemes are also offered at higher educational levels); while 2 are at higher educational levels only⁵⁵. Five apprenticeship schemes are organised at sectoral level or outside formal VET system. In terms of country distribution of the 38 schemes, all 24 countries, except for LV⁵⁶, have at least 1 apprenticeship scheme leading to a formal educational qualification.

Analysis of the 38 apprenticeship schemes against the second criterion shows that most schemes (29 schemes) foresee a contract and remuneration. In terms of geographical distribution, all 24 countries, except for PT, have at least 1 scheme that foresees a contract between the learner and the firm and remuneration paid by the firm.

⁵² Study "Apprenticeships: A Cross-National Overview", Cedefop, forthcoming.

⁵³ A complete list of the 38 schemes is presented in Annex 3.

⁵⁴ In MT, the legal basis was being revised at the moment of the data collection i.e. first half of 2016.

⁵⁵ AT is piloting a scheme at universities of applied science and private universities, comparable to the German Dual Studies. However, both in DE and in AT these schemes are not referred to as “apprenticeship”, and thus not included in the mapping.

⁵⁶ LV is the only country that does not have a mainstream, regulated apprenticeship scheme at upper-secondary level in the formal VET system. LV is piloting and regulating a “Work-based learning” scheme in upper-secondary VET.

Table 1: The 38 apprenticeship schemes distributed in 6 groups⁵⁷

	Formal educational qualifications (33)		Only qualifications outside formal education	Total
	Upper secondary	Post-secondary/higher level		
Contract and remuneration	Group A 24	Group C 1	Group E 4	29
No contract or remuneration	Group B 7	Group D 1	Group F 1	9

The above analysis shows that the existence of contract and remuneration is what the vast majority of schemes have in common, with most apprenticeship schemes existing at upper secondary level in the formal VET system.

However, first insights from the analysis of the Group A schemes suggest that there are differences in the approaches to the organisation of these schemes. They can be organised in two main different ways:

A1) apprenticeships as a **type of VET or VET programme**, e.g. AT (Dual apprenticeship), CY, DE, DK, IE, HR, NL, NO or

A2) **as a mode of training/learning**, e.g. FI, FR (Apprenticeship contract), HU, LU, UK (England).

In the first sub-group, there is a clear-cut distinction between apprenticeship programmes and school-based programmes with or without placements in the company. The apprenticeship schemes correspond to specific programmes and curricula, have dedicated governance structures, definite entry requirements, and necessitate placements for all learners enrolled in the scheme (safety nets are foreseen in case placements are not found). They normally lead to apprenticeship specific qualifications. Apprentices have a clear identity among their VET or general education peers.

In the second sub-group, apprenticeship schemes are offered as an alternative way (alongside school-based VET) or complementary way (in combination with school-based VET) of organising the VET programmes (or their practical component) and allowing learners to achieve the VET qualifications. Learners may attend the whole programme or only part of the programme in an apprenticeship scheme (the other part is attended in a school-based scheme).

Any VET programme may be organised fully or partially as an apprenticeship scheme as long as the school and/or learner finds a suitable placement. Programme details and curricula are specified by the education and training authorities. It is possible to distinguish two types of contract the learners sign with the company:

- education contract or apprenticeship contract (education paradigm); or
- employment contract/full time job (employment paradigm).

⁵⁷ Information on which countries belong to groups A, B, C, D, E and F can be found in the table in Annex 3.

The first sub-group may be viewed as **an approach to the organisation of VET** (specific apprenticeship programmes, curricula, governance structures) which often relies on equal footing partnership between education and labour market actors at all levels (as part of good governance).

The second sub-group may be viewed as **an approach to training delivery** (the same VET programme may be delivered both as school-based and in alternance in the form of apprenticeship), and within this type, there is quite a diversity in the way the different schemes are organised. The leading role is often taken over by the education and training authorities.

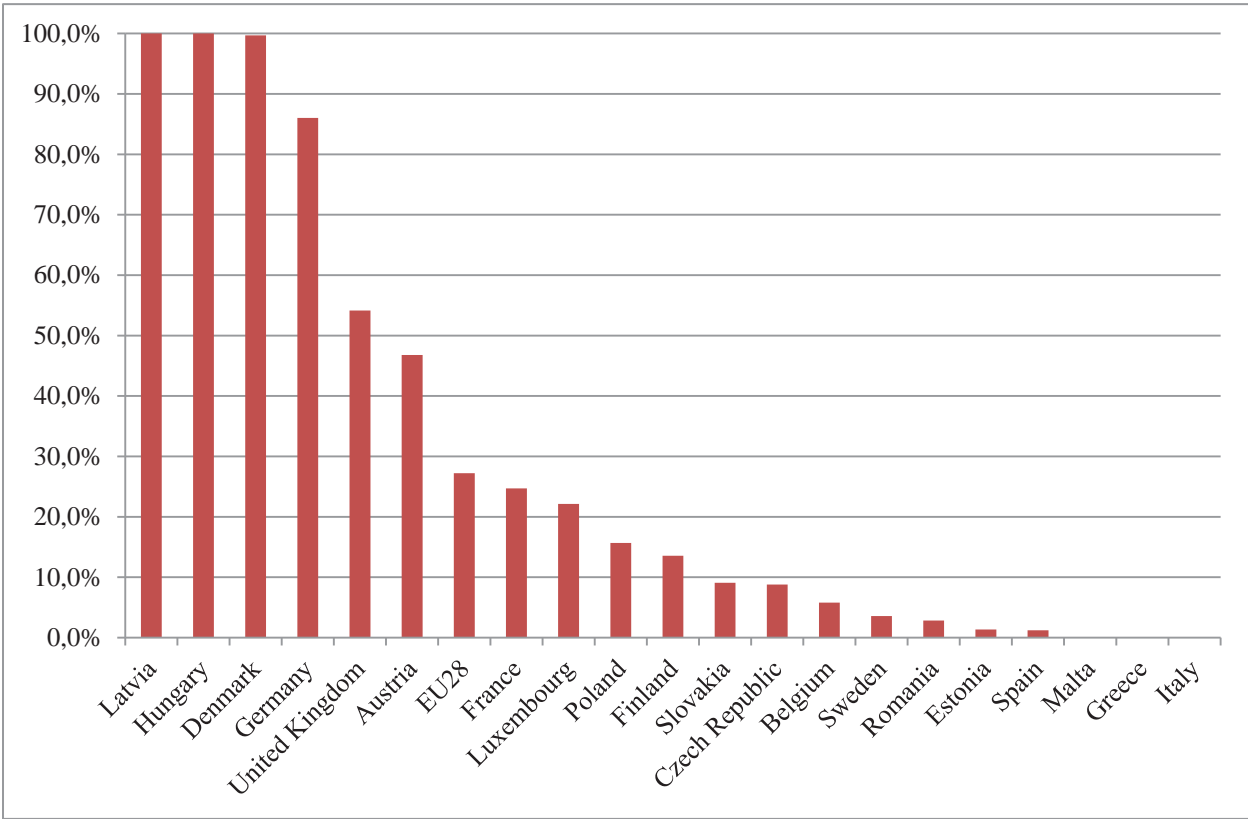
As it can be seen, apprenticeship schemes exist in almost all countries. But according to EUROSTAT statistics, in 2015, only 2.809.101 students, (i.e. around a quarter / in average 28%, of the over 10 million VET students in the EU) were in vocational programmes combining school and enterprise-based learning⁵⁸, where 25% or more of the curriculum takes place outside school⁵⁹.

There are great variations between countries; for example, in Latvia and Denmark, where around 42% of upper secondary students are in initial VET, and in Hungary where this figure is only 23.2% and almost all of them are in some form of combined school and work-based learning. In Germany the proportion is also very high, 86%, in the United Kingdom 54.1% and in Austria just under 47%. France with around a quarter of its initial VET students combining school and work-based learning is close to the European average. In the Czech Republic, despite having a high proportion of vocational students, less than 9% of these combine school and work-based learning.

⁵⁸ Source: Eurostat.

⁵⁹ Eurostat definition.

Chart 3: Share of students in combined work and school based upper secondary programmes out of total upper secondary VET students, 2015⁶⁰.



As for enterprises providing initial vocational training, according to Eurostat, around one quarter (24.0%) of enterprises in the EU-28 in 2010 with 10 or more persons employed provided initial vocational training, although the proportion varies greatly between EU Member States. Only 5 of the 27 Member States for which data are available reported a proportion that was substantially above the EU-28 average, with around a third of enterprises in Italy and the Netherlands, around one half in Austria and Denmark, and more than three fifths in Germany. By contrast, less than 1 in 10 enterprises provided I-VET in 12 of the Member States, mainly those Member States that joined the EU in 2004 or 2007, but also in Greece, Spain and Sweden.⁶¹

A recent study⁶² has made the following observation: "In countries with mainly micro businesses and SMEs (e.g. EL, EE and LV) – particularly when there is a school-based VET system – the establishment of apprenticeship systems face a number of difficulties and challenges. Nevertheless, in countries with well-established apprenticeship systems (e.g. Switzerland) it is the attitude and realism of the small arts and crafts businesses that creates

⁶⁰ Source: Eurostat (UOE, 2015). Combined school and work-based programmes are programmes in which less than 75% of the curriculum is presented in the school environment or through distance education. Data for Bulgaria, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia are missing. Working question non applicable for BG, IE, HR, CY, LT, PT, SI; definition differs in RO

⁶¹ Eurostat, Statistics explained, data extracted in December 2016.

⁶² The Cost-Effectiveness of Apprenticeships schemes – Making the Business Case for Apprenticeships, UEAPME, BusinessEurope, CEEP. 2016.

success. The personal relationship between the ‘master’ and the ‘learner’ is a key aspect of success".

3.3 Current challenges

The diversity of apprenticeships and work-based learning systems across Member states show us a fragmented policy landscape with some common features and challenges to address. Despite the very strong political push at European and national levels for strengthening or setting up apprenticeships schemes, a number of challenges still exist, as detailed below.

- As the European Semester and the national commitments on apprenticeship show, most Member States are reforming their work-based learning and apprenticeship systems. With a strong push to boost the apprenticeship supply, the OECD⁶³ has warned that high quality standards are needed to avoid that apprenticeships are geared towards low-skilled jobs. OECD also notes that the positive effects of apprenticeships on labour market conditions depend on their quality, and that **even a small proportion of low-quality offers can damage their overall reputation**. Even in Germany⁶⁴, known for its quality apprenticeships, reports on apprenticeships have pointed to unsatisfactory learning and working conditions. E.g. 1 in 3 apprentices work overtime, and 1 in 3 lack a proper training plan, meaning that they are not informed of the content of their apprenticeship. A recent report from the European Parliament⁶⁵ addresses the need to clarify the issues of an employment contract and remuneration in apprenticeships, and also the tripartite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) has made a call for action.⁶⁶
- Although the active participation of companies in apprenticeships is crucial, some of them consider that they require **costs in terms of resources (both financial and human)**. Implementing apprenticeships can be a particular challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises, which have more difficulties in dealing with recruitment and administrative procedures. Therefore, for SMEs, support systems for apprenticeships (consultancy, handling paper work, targeted supporting courses, and training networks) are often necessary. In addition, especially employers call for effective apprenticeships in which the wage or compensation is set at a rate that makes it possible for the enterprise to see a return on its investment, so as to encourage and foster the supply of apprenticeship places.
- Significant investments are made with EU and national resources in apprenticeship schemes, either as part of the education and training systems or linked to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (Erasmus+, ESF, ERDF, YEI). The European Court of Auditors pointed in two of its reports the need to underpin these investments by qualitative attributes that need to be fulfilled by the various offers under the Youth Guarantee, including apprenticeships. The European Framework for Quality and Effective

⁶³ OECD (2017). *Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 153, OECD Publishing, Paris

⁶⁴ DGB Jugend, Ausbildungsreport 2016

⁶⁵ European Parliament (2017), *Skills development and employment: Apprenticeships, internships and volunteering*

⁶⁶ Opinion of the Advisory Committee on vocational training (ACVT) (2016), A Shared Vision for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning

apprenticeships would therefore provide the orientation for designing and implementing financing programmes which support quality apprenticeships, enhancing thus the quality and efficiency of **public spending**.

- There is scope to improve the **professional position of teachers and trainers** (i.e. their skills competences as well as their overall professional standing and status) in almost every country, even those with well-developed apprenticeship systems. There is a need to develop initial training, continuing professional development opportunities and qualification frameworks. The position of in-company trainers is in particular need of attention. The necessary developments are likely to require substantial investment by public authorities.
- Trade Unions⁶⁷ have also evoked the under-representation of young women and young people from ethnic minorities in apprenticeships, and the mismatch of supply and demand, completion/premature termination and retention (transition to work) rates.
- While apprenticeships contribute to **social inclusion** by integrating disadvantaged learners and people with a migrant background into the labour market, there is also evidence showing that children of immigrants rarely have the same chances to access good training places in the apprenticeship system, partly because places are attributed through parental networks, of which immigrants have fewer.⁶⁸ In countries without an apprenticeship system, the same applies to different types of workplace training within the school system. In addition, a specific issue facing children of immigrants in their school-to-work transition is discrimination.
- Apprenticeships have also the potential to cater for the needs of older workers who are affected by restructuring processes. They can be an excellent means for re-skilling workers to re-enter the labour market. In this respect, the provision of **guidance and support** and follow-up services to apprentices during and after their apprenticeships needs to be significantly strengthened. It could be particularly beneficial to people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Additionally, young people in general lack opportunities for **mobility** due to various barriers (e.g. language, support infrastructure, insufficient funding and information and guidance), and the mobility of apprentices in Europe is still an exception, rather than a rule. In order to step up the quality of mobility, the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter and the Mobility Scoreboard have been developed. In addition, the EURES regulation provides that as of 2018, offers for apprenticeships based on an employment contract should also be advertised. Having regard to the benefits of a mobility period during a learning experience (e.g. improved foreign language skills, greater awareness of another culture, a greater ability to adapt to new situations, new professional skills, better interpersonal skills, better opportunities for subsequent employment or better academic knowledge⁶⁹), mobility should be an integral part of apprenticeship courses. Unified

⁶⁷ [A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships | ETUC](#).

⁶⁸ European Commission, OECD (2014), Matching economic migration with labour market needs in Europe.

⁶⁹ Flash Eurobarometre No 319b – Youth on the move.

quality standards in apprenticeships would also help implementing mobility in that it would increase the trust of the quality in learning abroad and therefore improve the transferability of mobility periods carried out abroad during apprenticeships. On the one hand, the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships introduces strong elements directly supporting transnational mobility of apprentices, for example including it as a component of apprenticeship qualification. On the other hand, a clear European Framework introducing quality criteria is a crucial tool to support young learners engaged in apprenticeships abroad, usually more vulnerable to variations of quality and effectiveness if compared with apprentices working within their national borders.

- Initial VET, including apprenticeships, is still perceived as a **second choice** by potential learners, families and the society as a whole. The bad image of some apprenticeship schemes, or simply the lack of awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships contribute to this negative perception towards apprenticeships as a whole. The esteem and attractiveness of apprenticeships for learners depends, to a large extent, on the quality of VET systems. Excellence programmes can help improve the motivation of learners to undertake an apprenticeship. The fact that some companies report difficulty in attracting motivated students with appropriate basic skills illustrates the need to improve the image of apprenticeships in society⁷⁰. Therefore, enhanced quality, and better communication on it, will have a positive impact on the attractiveness of apprenticeships. This was also called for in the communication on the New Skills Agenda from summer 2016. Promoting a European common understanding of the key features that define a quality apprenticeships, backed up by awareness raising measures such as the European Vocational Skills Week, will help improve the image of apprenticeships and overcome the perception of potential learners.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of the impact of the various apprenticeship schemes also tends to be a neglected area. Yet, in terms of quality, monitoring and evaluation are essential components of apprenticeship systems that provide feedback on what works effectively and what does not.

3.4 Conclusion

The above illustrates that the strong push to boost the apprenticeship supply across Europe, needs to be accompanied with measures that ensure quality and effectiveness. Quality, effectiveness and supply of apprenticeships are connected dimensions that should be addressed through a comprehensive framework.

While fully respecting the diversity of national systems, common criteria are needed to ensure quality and effective provisions of apprenticeships across Europe.

The Commission will monitor the implementation of the European framework with the support of Cedefop and the tripartite Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, based on

⁷⁰ The Cost-Effectiveness of Apprenticeships schemes – Making the Business Case for Apprenticeships, UEAPME, BusinessEurope, CEEP. 2016.

national monitoring efforts and evaluations and by using a set of indicators to be developed for its assessment. (See draft proposal under **Annex 2**)

The Commission will report to the Council within three years from the date of its adoption, on progress made towards raising the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships and its implications for the future.

4 Key elements of the Proposal for a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

The evidence described in the previous chapters highlights how the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships is coherent with other EU initiatives to tackle youth unemployment and support a highly skilled and qualified workforce. Moreover, the previous overview of apprenticeship schemes in Europe identifies two conclusions: apprenticeship schemes are present in virtually all the Member States; however, the fragmented policy landscape in Europe and the high diversity among national systems makes a common framework for quality and effective apprenticeships relevant and necessary to sustain youth employment and personal development in Europe, while respecting the diversity of national systems.

The present chapter details each of the criteria for quality and effective apprenticeships and provides concrete examples of how these could be put in place, based on practices from across the Member States.

4.1 Criteria for quality and effective apprenticeships

The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships addresses in particular two levels:

- **At the level of apprenticeship schemes**, the Recommendation includes 7 criteria for quality and effective apprenticeships; and
- **At system level** it proposes another 7 criteria for framework conditions that support the set up and implementation of quality and effective apprenticeships.

These criteria have been developed taking into account the extensive pool of evidence, studies already available, particularly the key reference documents mentioned in **annex 3** (See overview table).

4.1.1 Criteria for learning and working conditions

4.1.1.1 Written contract

Written contracts between employers and learners (or their legal representatives), and even schools, are important to make clear the expectations and responsibilities of the different parties involved. For apprentices to be regarded as employees, these agreements need to take the form of contracts and to set out clearly what the workplace component comprises. This can also be – and frequently is – reflected in contracts in terms of their right to protection by

relevant legislation related to health and safety in the workplace and social welfare (see also criteria 6 and 7 below).

State of play and good practices

Overall it can be stated that contracts are stumbling blocks to the development of apprenticeships in some countries. More generally, the pay and conditions of apprentices can be challenging issues to resolve. This includes issues such as the relationship to minimum wage legislation and apprentices' status compared to regular employees (in respect of welfare benefits, etc.) since these involve costs to the state and employers. This makes it challenging, but important, to arrive at arrangements that are fair to both employers and apprentices.

There is variation in whether apprenticeships are defined in national legislation and the nature of the definition. In **Italy**, a regular employment relationship is specified but not all national definitions specify the requirement for a contract to exist between the employer and the apprentice. In the **French-speaking region of Belgium**, the Cooperation Agreement on Dual Training Act (amended in 2015) provides a new definition of apprenticeships outlining what the contract should contain: ‘vocational training which combines practical training at the workplace with training in a training institution in general and vocational subjects; it is based on a contract which is signed by a training institution, the apprentice and an employer and which stipulates the length of time to be spent in the workplace and in the training institution, the qualification obtained, entry requirements, mentoring, remuneration, and rights and obligations.’ Some countries also specify what is to be taught and by whom and in which learning setting: in **Luxembourg**, it is specified that an apprenticeship includes: practical training under the guidance of a supervisor; and scientific, moral and social general training, obtained at a technical high school.

4.1.1.2 Learning outcomes

A set of comprehensive learning outcomes should be defined for the apprentice in which specific **job-related and key competences** are balanced and support both the **personal development** and **career opportunities** of apprentices. This would address the criticism that is raised against apprenticeships as fostering only the development of job specific skills and not addressing transversal skills.

State of play and good practices

The apprenticeship modernisation process in **Greece** foresaw (in 2015) defining the learning outcomes expected to be achieved in the workplace for each specialities. In **Italy**, the Law 78/2014 foresees an Individual Training Plan setting the learning outcomes for the apprentice that needs to be attached to the contract.

Specification of learning outcomes: Austria and Estonia

In **Austria**, each occupation has a binding training regulation which sets out a profile of competences (or learning outcomes) as well as: a job profile which specifies the professional competences that the apprentice must be taught; and an in-company curriculum. School-based training is regulated by an occupation-specific and nation-wide framework curriculum.

In **Estonia**, VET curricula are developed on the basis of professional standards and associated descriptions of the competences required by professions. The curricula include expected learning outcomes, defined for Levels 2-5 of the Estonian Qualification Framework (Vocational Education Institution Act, 2013). The achievement of learning outcomes is assessed by a professional examination, according to the Vocational Education Standard.

4.1.1.3 Pedagogical support

Teachers and trainers play an indispensable role in high quality apprenticeships. **In-company trainers** should be designated for apprenticeships, and they should be supported appropriately in this task. They should **cooperate** closely with vocational education and training providers and teachers to guide apprentices.

A particularly important question surrounds the development of pedagogical skills for in-company trainers, although actions taken by Member States also demonstrate that also teachers may need support in order to be adequately equipped for new or expanded roles in respect of apprenticeships. Continuing professional development, however, often seems to be a neglected area for both teachers and in-company trainers. This area may be the greatest challenge for quality in apprenticeships in terms of the cost for both public sector and enterprises of ensuring the supply of sufficiently competent teachers and trainers. In some countries having pedagogically skilled in-company trainers is linked to accreditation.

This cooperation should furthermore be supported by mutual and regular **feed-back mechanisms**. Monitoring how the learning outcomes are reached should take place through continued monitoring systems, in which both teachers and in-company trainers cooperate. In particular, the assessment of apprentices during their time in the workplace should not be neglected even in school-based systems. In many countries teachers and schools have been given a role in overseeing workplace assessment practices, but this task could also be assigned to the workplace. This suggests that the issue of assessment should be thoroughly reflected.

Support during and after apprenticeships can be key especially for people facing disadvantage, and some examples of such support exist, e.g. in form of counsellors and mentors. However, such provision may have some major cost implications.

State of play and good practices

The quality of teachers is covered by (often long-standing) school legislation which sets down various requirements in terms of qualifications etc. Indeed, since teachers are regarded as the experts in pedagogy, they can be given responsibility for the quality of work-based learning (as in the **Czech Republic**) and vocational education and training providers can be responsible for the preparation of in-company trainers (as in **Estonia** for example). That said, it has also been recognised that teachers may need to develop their competences in respect of apprenticeships. For example, reforms in 2014/15 in **Denmark** sought to improve teachers' competences through short placements in companies to strengthen the connection to the world of work.

Sweden - Incentives for workplace training of teachers

- In Sweden, financial incentives for teachers to undertake workplace training are available through the National Agency for Education. The fund is addressed at schools and makes available 22 million Swedish crowns (2.4 million €) to partly-compensate schools for costs emerging from teachers' workplace training. The fund can partly cover costs such as supply teachers, accommodation and travel costs, safety equipment and other materials needed for teachers.
- Workplace training for VET teachers in Sweden should be of at least 2 weeks and aims to further develop teachers' practical competences in their subject of teaching. At the same time, the training supports the mutual understanding of teachers and trainers and their roles in providing high-quality VET.
- Take-up of the fund is currently lower than expected due to a number of reasons including the fact that (i) teachers do not find the time to take part in work-based training, (ii) schools have to fund 50% of the work placement and (iii) administrative obstacles exist, such as the duration of application procedures.

In the Netherlands, the teachers in VET schools have broad responsibilities and play an important role also when it comes to work-place training.

Netherlands - Teachers as 'jack of all trades'

- Teachers at VET schools in the Netherlands have wide reaching roles and responsibilities. They are involved in the development and delivery of educational programmes, as well as the coordination of teaching activities.
- This includes the introduction of innovations and quality assurance responsibilities. Further, they provide study and career guidance, mentoring and supervision during work-place training.
- Beyond their responsibility towards the learners, teachers are responsible for their own professional development and the development of the educational team they are working in.

The cooperation between the teachers in VET schools and in-company tutors is important, and Portugal has put in place a system for this.

Portugal - Cooperation between VET training institutions and in-company tutors

- In Portugal, cooperation on the assessment of learning outcomes takes place between the training coordinator based in the VET training institution and the tutor, based in a company.
- As per the legislation on apprenticeship courses, regular contacts between the VET training institution and the tutor are obligatory and the tutor is to be involved in the final assessment of learning outcomes of the student.
- It is good practice that tutors are involved in the pedagogical teams of the VET institutions. In reality, communication often takes place virtually rather than in person due to time constraints.

In contrast, the regulation of in-company trainers is subject to far greater variation across Europe. In some countries, the roles of in-company trainers are defined in some detail.

Italy - Defining the role of the in-company trainer

In Italy, to guarantee the quality of training provided by enterprises, there must be a tutor with sufficient training and competence, established by collective bargaining, to monitor apprentices' progress within companies. The main tasks of the enterprise tutor are defined as follows:

- managing reception and insertion of young apprentices in the company;
- planning and supporting learning and in-service socialisation pathways, thus facilitating the acquisition of skills and competencies;
- conducting relations with the training centres, to enable positive integration between formal training and on the job experience;
- monitoring and assessing progress results achieved by the apprentices.

In terms of competences, in-company trainers can be required to have expertise in both their subjects and vocational pedagogy, e.g. in **Austria, Germany, Slovakia**. In other countries, e.g. the **United Kingdom**, there are no such mandatory requirements.

Countries seeking to enhance and expand their apprenticeship provision may take steps to enhance the skills of in-company trainers. For example, in **Sweden**, an online course has been launched for supervisors in the workplace, and in 2008 **Luxembourg** launched a three-day train-the-trainer course. In **Wallonia, Belgium**, in 2015 an institute was established which, *inter alia*, accredits in-company tutors.

One area of general weakness in current provision for both teachers and trainers is in relation to continuing professional development (CPD). CPD tends to be an optional requirement for teachers and trainers alike and provision is particularly underdeveloped for trainers. Variation exists even within countries with well-developed apprenticeships, e.g. in **Austria** teachers are legally obliged to do CPD although the content, duration and frequency is not specified, whereas CPD for trainers is voluntary.

Pedagogical support and follow-up is an important issue for quality that can make a difference to individuals in terms of whether they succeed in their apprenticeship and subsequent employment. Such support can be provided to learners and/or companies. However, little evidence of such general provision was found in the mapping. A notable exception is provided by **Luxembourg** where the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Trades and Skilled Crafts developed a well-functioning system of apprenticeship counsellors.

Such support is particularly important in the case of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also in terms of access to apprenticeships (see also 4.1.2.4 – Flexible pathways). In **Denmark**, since 2014 colleges have been required, as part of receiving funding, to actively support special-needs students to find placements. In **France**, subsidies are available to companies to adapt facilities and instructor training for disabled apprentices, and the duration of an apprenticeship can be extended for early school leavers. In **Austria**, supra-company

training measures and pedagogical special needs are catered for, effectively providing a ‘safety net’ for people who find it hard to get a place by the ‘open market’ of company recruitment.

4.1.1.4 Workplace component

In-company learning is a crucial component of apprenticeship's added value, the stage where learners can acquire jobs-related and transversal skills able to boost their career and personal development. Moreover, a strong work-based education can address skills mismatches and inefficiencies of the labour market.

State of play and good practices

There is quite some variation across Europe in the relative proportions of apprenticeships that are work-based and school-based. Proportions vary by country and also within countries, by track or pathway as highlighted in section 2 above.

Sometimes proportions are set at national level, although there is variation in whether proportions are defined in legislation or are a matter of custom and practice. Proportions can also be a devolved responsibility: in **Denmark**, Trade Committees decide the distribution, while in **Italy**, proportions can be defined at regional level. It also needs to be taken into account that country comparisons can be difficult since there are two elements to consider: location of the apprenticeship, whether in school or in the workplace; and learning content in terms of whether it is theoretical or practical. There is no straightforward equivalence, i.e. it should not be assumed that training in the workplace is necessarily practical or that learning in a school is necessarily theoretical. Luxembourg illustrates this well, as shown in the box.

Luxembourg - Content according to type of apprenticeship

In Luxembourg, there are two different systems of training for apprenticeship. Firstly, the concomitant track, where practical knowledge is acquired in combination in an enterprise and in compulsory school attendance (one to three days a week). Secondly, the mixed track offers, for some professions, theoretical and practical training taught at an educational institution for the first year of training and in some cases for the second year (full-time academic year), after which practical training is continued in an enterprise.

4.1.1.5 Pay and/or compensation

Overall the pay and conditions of apprentices can be challenging issues to resolve. This includes issues such as the relationship to minimum wage legislation and apprentices' status compared to regular employees (in respect of welfare benefits, etc.) since these involve costs to the state and employers. It is important that the remuneration constitutes an incentive for both the learner and the employer to engage in an apprenticeship, and that it contributes to the equitable sharing of costs of apprenticeships.

Provisions for remuneration should be addressed in the regulatory framework for apprenticeships (see 4.1.2.1 below) and in the written contract (see 4.1.1.1 above).

State of play and good practices

There is a wide range of arrangements for pay or compensation for apprentices in terms of how much is to be paid and by whom, and the social partners usually play a key role in setting the rules. Apprenticeship pay or compensation is not mandatory in all countries, for example in **Latvia**. However, most countries do set down some specification in relation to wages. For example, learners in **Sweden's** apprenticeship scheme are considered to be full-time employees receiving 75% of the full-time salary owing to the training element involved.

In **Austria**, the remuneration of apprentices is determined by sectoral or company-specific collective agreements and the in-company training costs are born by the respective training company with the school-based training financed through general taxation. In **Ireland**, apprentices receive a wage from their employer when in the company and an allowance equivalent to the wage from the state when in off-the-job-training.

Often apprentice pay is defined against minimum wage legislation. In some countries, apprentices must be paid the minimum wage, e.g. Estonia, whilst in other countries the minimum wage is used as a basis. For instance, in **France** a 16-year-old in the first year of their contract is paid 25% of the minimum wage whilst employees on a professionalisation scheme receive at least 55% of the minimum wage depending on their age and educational level. The setting of remuneration in relation to the minimum wage can also be a question for collective agreement by trades, as in **Denmark**.

4.1.1.6 Social protection

Social protection is a crucial component of what is to be considered a good quality job. In line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships lists Social protection as a basis for a quality and fair apprenticeship experience.

Like for remuneration, also the provisions for social protection should be included in the regulatory framework for apprenticeships (see 4.1.2.1 below) and in the written contract (see 4.1.1.1 above).

State of play and good practices

Those apprentices who have the status of workers tend to have access to the same social protection as other workers. For example, in **Italy**, since apprentices are considered employees, they receive a salary and are entitled to insurance for job injuries and accidents, occupational diseases, health reasons, ageing and disability, maternity, household allowance and since 2013 to labour social security insurance. **Slovenia** amended the Public Finance Balance Act in 2015 to regulate relevant aspects of apprentices' work. Following the principle that "any work counts", these legislative changes mean that full social contributions are now to be paid on student work. However, there can be adjustments to this pattern: e.g. In **Belgium**, during their work-based learning periods, learners at secondary-level education

have a special status of part-time workers⁷¹. On the other hand, in **Latvia**, apprentices are insured only at school, not in the work place⁷².

In **Belgium**, social protection of apprentices, in addition to questions concerning safety at work, is regulated at federal level⁷³. This demonstrates the importance that the country places on social protection.

There are cases in which social protection of apprentices is covered with subsidies to employers. In **Bulgaria**, the ‘Youth employment’ scheme approved under the ESF Operational Programme for Human Resources Development, foresees that employers receive for each trainee payments which partly cover the cost of social and health insurance of apprentices for the duration of their on-the-job training.

Ireland - Social protection of apprentices

In Ireland apprentices sign an employment contract with the employer and therefore have the legal status (and associated rights and responsibilities) of employees. Apprentices also pay the appropriate level of employment insurance. The Further Education Authority in Ireland, SOLAS, sets out a Code of Practice for apprenticeships which states that “employers must comply with all statutory obligations including all current employment legislation”. All apprentices and employers agree to accept the conditions set out in this Code of Practice when they sign a SOLAS Apprenticeship registration form.

4.1.1.7 Work, health and safety conditions

The host workplace must comply with security standards and guarantee a safe learning and working experience for learners engaged in apprenticeships.

Also provisions on working condition should be included in the regulatory framework for apprenticeships (see 4.1.2.1 below) or in the written contract (see 4.1.1.1 above).

State of play and good practices

An example of legislation regulating working conditions can be found in **Ireland**, where it is specified in a Code of Practice that apprentices are subject to safety, health and welfare at work legislation and the regulations and codes of practice made thereunder⁷⁴, and that in particular, employers must ensure that apprentices have undergone a Safety Awareness Training Programme where applicable.

It is slightly more common to regulate working hours and leave entitlements for apprentices. In the **United Kingdom**, apprentices’ contracts stipulate they must be paid for their normal working hours (a minimum of 30 hours) and for any training which constitutes part of their apprenticeship. Apprentices are also entitled to 20 days paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays.

⁷¹ ReferNet Belgium. Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes. 2014.

⁷² Peer review on national reforms and policies in the area of apprenticeships, carried out as part of the DGVT meeting, Bratislava, 19-20 October 2016.

⁷³ Other aspects of apprenticeships being the competence of the three communities.

⁷⁴ See example under 4.1.1.6. Social protection above.

4.1.2 Criteria for framework conditions

The framework conditions proposed in the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships are aspects that should be in place at system level in order to have in place apprenticeship schemes that meet the seven criteria listed in the previous section.

4.1.2.1 Regulatory framework

Regulatory frameworks for apprenticeships should be clear, coherent and comprehensive, encompassing key aspects relevant to quality and having clarity regarding which organisations are responsible for which quality aspects. The regulatory framework should be based on a fair and equitable partnership approach including a structured and transparent dialogue among all relevant stakeholders.

State of play and good practices

The various aspects contributing to quality and effectiveness (and the components of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships) are typically covered by a number of regulations. The legal basis is normally formed of several laws, which are accompanied by voluntary codes or practices. Apprenticeships sit at the interface of the worlds of education and employment and hence are often covered by regulatory frameworks comprising laws governing general education, vocational education and training (VET) and in-company training. Crafts legislation can also be relevant as in Latvia where the role of the Chamber of Crafts is specified in nominating a master to check that the work of apprentices meets requirements to pass the qualifying examination.

Regulatory frameworks naturally reflect underlying national/regional approaches to regulation and VET and to how responsibilities are distributed in government/governance arrangements. **Germany** is a highly regulated case in which every ‘recognised training occupation’ is regulated in a training regulation that specifies the objectives, content and examination requirements and the role of chambers of commerce is enshrined in law. In the **United Kingdom**, legislation generally has an enabling function with a focus on making markets function effectively including the labour market and skills supply, with a focus on encouraging and incentivising employers to take the lead role in apprenticeships.

Evidence from a recent Cedefop study⁷⁵ relating to governance and financing of apprenticeships in 5 selected countries (**Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Spain and Sweden**) confirms that there are great differences even in the perceptions of ideal or preferred governance and financing arrangements for developing apprenticeship and in understanding the concepts. The study attributes this to differences in the respective traditions of (vocational) education and training but also to a lack of information or knowledge on possible or feasible alternatives.

⁷⁵ Cedefop. Governance and financing of apprenticeships. 2016.

From a quality perspective, governance frameworks should be clear, coherent and comprehensive, encompassing key aspects relevant to quality and having clarity regarding which organisations are responsible for which quality aspects.

Austria – Regulatory frameworks governing apprenticeships

Austria has a well-developed VET system supported by a range of related legislation and regulation. Quality in apprenticeships is governed by a range of regulatory frameworks that set out the arrangements for the design, implementation and monitoring of apprenticeships.

The **Vocational Training Act** (*Berufsbildungsgesetz*, BAG) regulates the enterprise-based part of the training. For example, it specifies the required content of the contract between the apprentice and authorized training enterprise and the rights and responsibilities of the learners and employers.

This legislation also defines apprenticeships as training in an occupation: which is reflected in the Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act; which is appropriate to train for the role of the occupation in the economy; and for which the training duration is at least two years.

Apprentices' pay is set out by **collective bargaining agreements** and the level of pay received by an apprentice will depend on which apprenticeship year they are in.

Training regulations for each apprenticeship occupation set out its job profile/ in-company curriculum and the competence profile/ activity description. The curriculum of the vocational school is equivalent to the training regulation.

Key legislation overseeing the school-based parts of apprenticeship training are the **School Organisation Act** (*Schulorganisationsgesetz*, SchOG) and the **School Instruction Act** (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*, SchUG). These laws provide, for example, the legal basis for the roles and training of teachers in relation to apprenticeships. School-based training is regulated by occupation-specific framework curricula, valid for the whole of Austria.

Belgium (Wallonia) has decided to coordinate the governance of the 2 existing apprenticeship systems, and to harmonise the apprenticeship status for the under 18-year-olds (payments and allowances, training plans, mentoring promotion). In **Malta**, the authorities intend to develop a harmonised legal apprenticeships framework which would also define the employment status of apprentices.

An important issue to be included in regulatory frameworks is how responsibility for ensuring quality or complying with legislation is divided between the different stakeholders, in particular the education and employer sides (please see 4.1.2.2 – “Involvement of social partners” below).

Authorisation or accreditation of companies is used to ensure quality in some countries, including the **Netherlands** and in **Luxembourg**, as the box below shows; others require companies to abide by quality standards as part of written agreements with learners and/or schools without the need for pre-qualification (which can be less burdensome than accreditation processes).

Luxembourg - Authorisation of companies wishing to hire apprentices

If a company wishes to hire an apprentice, it needs to hold a training authorisation. A training company must:

- be approved by the competent employers' association (Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Trades or Chamber of Agriculture) and meet the conditions of professional integrity and qualification;
- designate a tutor (manager or collaborator aged at least 21 and presenting the necessary guaranties in terms of worthiness) who will be in charge of the apprentice and his/her practical training in the company;
- make sure the vocational training is in conformity with the vocational training programme elaborated by the competent professional chambers and the government;
- make sure there are enough qualified people able to train (having a CATP/DAP or a master craftsmanship or a similar foreign diploma) and respect the maximum number of apprentices in accordance to the number of employees.

Some countries have set up centres dedicated to regulating and promoting quality. In **Ireland**, a new Apprenticeship Council (involving trade unions and employers) has been established to enhance governance and to advise and support the development of new apprenticeships, which it is developing in labour market relevant areas. **Sweden** set up an Apprenticeship Centre in December 2013 to support stakeholders to develop high quality provision. In England an Institute for Apprenticeships will start operating in April 2017, as shown in the box below.

United Kingdom – Institute for Apprenticeships

In April 2017, the Institute for Apprenticeships (the Institute) became operational within England⁷⁶, one of the four nations in the United Kingdom. It was established in law by the Apprenticeships, Skills and Learning Act 2009 as amended by the Enterprise Act 2016.

As an employer-led public body responsible for regulating the quality of apprenticeships in England, the Institute is intended to provide a stronger role for employers in the leadership of the apprenticeship system. As a result, membership of the Institute's Board primarily comprises employers, business leaders and their representatives, led by an independent chair supported by a staff of 80 employees.

The Institute's main aim is to support the government to create three million apprenticeships, within England, by 2020. Its role is to develop and maintain apprenticeship standards and assessment plans as well as review and approve them. It will maintain a public database of apprenticeship standards and give advice on government funding as well as having a role in quality assurance.

⁷⁶ Skills policy is devolved to each nation within the UK

Sweden - Apprenticeship Centre

In 2013, the Swedish government established an Apprenticeship Centre as part of a series of initiatives in recent years to increase the quality of workplace-based learning and attractiveness of IVET more generally. The centre is operated by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

The centre's main responsibilities include:

- stimulating the provision of apprenticeship education in upper secondary school;
- promoting young people's interest in apprenticeship education;
- supporting and giving advice to VET-providers, employers and social partners in for example the organisation of apprenticeship education and training for supervisors at workplaces
- stimulating cooperation at regional level between schools and the world of work.

Effective partnerships between schools and employers at local level are vital to allow for effective cooperation between teachers and in-company trainers and in achieving high quality in apprenticeships. Some examples of how such partnerships are organised and the topics they cover are shown in the box.

Sweden, Belgium and Czech Republic - The role of local partnerships

In Sweden, according to regulations, schools offering vocational programmes should establish one or several local programme councils for cooperation between schools and working life. The tasks are not regulated but may include for example supporting the school organiser to provide workplaces, planning and organising the workplace-based learning and participating in the systematic quality assurance of apprenticeship education.

In Belgium, there is close cooperation between training/learning centres and companies at sectoral, local and sub-regional levels in order to design curricula for a particular subject. Employers and training centres agree training plans which set out what the employer and the training centre/school will offer. The support for the young person taking part in work-based learning is thus coordinated both in the company as well as the training centre/school for the duration of the apprenticeship.

Overall it can be said that since the regulatory frameworks require coherence as well as clarity of roles and responsibilities, there may be a need to review them in order to identify gaps. An important issue to overcome (an obstacle in some cases) is the degree of obligation to be placed on employers through regulatory frameworks.

4.1.2.2 Involvement of social partners

An important issue is the extent to which there is effective stakeholder cooperation involving all relevant parties, in particular Social Partners, at all stages in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeships.

Employers are increasingly involved in the entire cycle of apprenticeship development and review. It appears that the role of trade unions is less prominent and should be explicitly defined, rather than be subsumed by general social partnership provisions, and better articulated in quality frameworks. Their involvement can have many benefits at all levels of design, governance and implementation of apprenticeships, as has been demonstrated by cases in which all social partners are represented in various sectoral training committees.

State of play and good practices

Stakeholder involvement in apprenticeships is generally well developed across Europe and has either existed for many years, being an established and integral part of apprenticeship systems as in Germany and Luxembourg (see the two boxes below), or is being introduced and/or enhanced, as in **Bulgaria**.

Germany and Luxembourg - Stakeholder involvement in apprenticeships

In **Germany**, the apprenticeship system is designed to build institutionalised consensus by enabling and supporting the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. For example, the Federal Vocational Training Act (BBiG) ensures the involvement of social partners in decision-making processes related to VET. Mechanisms to design, implement and monitor apprenticeships involve stakeholders from different sectors at all levels: the Federal government, the Länder governments, the private sector and social partners.

The basic principles underpinning the design of apprenticeships are agreed between the Federal Government, the Länder, Industry and Trade Unions. The details of a specific recognised training occupation are then agreed between the social partners and developed into a training standard. This training standard is then approved by a Federal government-Länder coordination Committee.

Implementation of apprenticeships is shared between private employers and Länder-run vocational schools. However, there are several arrangements in place to ensure stakeholder involvement in the teaching and learning of apprenticeships. For example, at a regional/local level vocational education and training committees are set up by the competent body and have a role to participate in decisions about all VET matters. These committees involve six representatives each from trade unions, employers and vocational teachers. Additionally:

- Examination Committees for apprenticeships involve employers, employee representatives and vocational teachers;
- Schools and local employment services cooperate on career guidance, although school-level provision varies between Länder.

Apprenticeships are monitored by a variety of organisations including the responsible industry bodies, school inspectorates and public institutes such as the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and the Institute for Employment Research of the Federal Employment Agency.

In **Luxembourg**, stakeholders play a central, substantial role in the VET system through their involvement in the design, implementation and monitoring of apprenticeships. Strong cooperation between the State and social partners is a core principle of the 2008 legislation to

reform the VET system which stipulates that ‘the vocational training system is based on a partnership between the State, the professional chambers representing employers and those representing employees’.

The Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth (MENJE) and different Professional Chambers⁷⁷ work in partnership to develop the standards for VET and ensure they are directly responsive to labour market needs. This partnership arrangement governs a wide range of aspects including: the determination of training needs; determining the professions or trades covered by basic vocational training and initial vocational training; and designing frameworks for training programmes as well as assessing the training system and qualifications.

Proposals for apprenticeship (and other training) programmes are agreed by National Vocational Commissions (NVCs) which include stakeholder representatives of: high school teachers where basic professional (CCP) or initial professional (DT and DAP) education is offered; each Professional Chamber concerned by the training; and the National General Education Commissions (designated by the Minister). NVCs also include representatives for specific professions e.g. of the Higher Council of health professions and representatives of employers in the health sector.

At a more local level, curricular teams operate on behalf of specific, or groups of, professions. They have a responsibility to: develop and revise the training programmes for the trades and professions for which they are responsible; ensure consistency between the objectives of training at school and of training in the workplace; and to establish (in cooperation with the respective Commissions) guidelines and procedures for continuous assessment at school and in the workplace.

Collaboration in design and review processes often takes place through special councils, committees or groups. In **Austria**, recommendations on the design of new and existing apprenticeship occupations are made by the Federal Advisory Board on Apprenticeship that includes 12 representatives of social partner bodies and which are supported by regional advisory boards. In **Sweden**, every vocational programme has an associated national programme council. The national programme councils are advisory bodies composed of 6-10 representatives from industry, employer and employees organisations, as well as some authorities, and have the task of supporting the Swedish National Agency for Education in issues concerning, for example, the content of vocational programmes and the demands of the labour market. In **Ireland** the apprenticeship curriculum is updated approximately every four years by the state agency, SOLAS, together with other relevant stakeholders including subject expert committees, representing the social partners and education and training organisations, under the direction of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee. In the **United**

⁷⁷ Luxembourg has five Professional Chambers. The Chamber of Commerce (*Chambre de commerce*), Chamber of Trades and Skilled Crafts (*Chambre des métiers*) and Chamber of Agriculture (*Chambre d'agriculture*) represent employers. The Chamber of Workers (*Chambre des salariés*) and Chamber of Civil Servants and Public Employees (*Chambre des fonctionnaires et employés publics*) represent wage earners.

Kingdom employers, training providers and awarding organisations along with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) are involved in developing apprenticeship frameworks across the United Kingdom to ensure that the provision meet the needs of employers.

An important issue is how responsibility for ensuring quality or complying with legislation is divided between the education and employer sides. In dual system countries, the major role played by employers is institutionalised through chambers and/or craft associations or trade committees. In countries with a less strong tradition of apprenticeships and/or with a strong educational tradition, schools can also have responsibility for having quality systems that cover apprenticeships and that monitor quality, as in **Sweden**, being a rather natural extension of schools' traditional role.

There are different ways to place legal obligations relating to quality of apprenticeships on employers. Codes of practice can be used to which employers and learners must adhere. For instance, in **England**, the National Apprenticeship Service has published a 'Statement on Apprenticeship Quality' that sets out minimum guided learning hours, length of training and the number of hours an apprentice should be employed. In **Ireland** there is a Code of Practice 'to assist both employers and apprentices to understand their duties and responsibilities relating to the apprenticeship programme' and which states that 'employers must comply with all statutory obligations including all current employment legislation'. Both the apprentice and the employer sign an apprenticeship registration form by which they agree to accept the conditions set out under the Code of Practice. According to the Code of Practice, the employer must, among other responsibilities, 'comply with the statutory obligations imposed by legislation'.

In many countries steps have been taken to enhance the role of employers, e.g. in 2012 in Poland and 2014 in Bulgaria (see box).

Poland and Bulgaria - Developing the role of employers

In Poland, changes introduced since 2012 in vocational education have widened the scope of possible forms of cooperation between schools and employers. Employers can now participate in every stage of the vocational education process: from the process of identifying the skills needs for an occupation to the point of assessing learning outcomes of VET students during external examinations.

In Bulgaria, the amendments of the Vocational Education and Training Act, adopted in July 2014, increase the functions of branch and sectoral employers' organisations. Article 56 stipulates that they: participate in the development and updating of syllabi and curricula for VET; participate in ensuring school and production practice of students and propose improvements of their organisation; ensure conditions for establishing partnerships between employers and the institutions providing work-based training (dual training); participate in the elaboration of the Regulations for quality assurance in VET; participate in the development of the national examination programmes; ensure conditions for provision of training in enterprises; participate in teachers' training; and, participate in the evaluation of quality of VET.

In contrast, the role of trade unions is seldom explicitly defined in the way that the role of employers is. Rather, it tends to be subsumed by general social partnership provisions. However, there are examples of trade union involvement, e.g. in **Germany**, local vocational education and training committees, which are set up by competent bodies to have a consultative role, involve six representatives of trade unions, employers and vocational teachers. Employees are also involved in Denmark, as the box below demonstrates.

Denmark – National trade committees

In Denmark, national trade committees are appointed to all vocational courses to fulfil a key role in the management, development and quality assurance of apprenticeships within the Danish VET system. These committees, of which there are approximately 50 in Denmark, comprise equal numbers of employer and employee representatives. A key responsibility of these bodies is to set the detailed content of education and training programmes within the general apprenticeship framework. This applies to the duration and structure of the programmes, their objectives and assessment, as well as the distribution between practical training and school-based teaching.

National trade committees also oversee the employer approval and certification process of employers. In this regard, their responsibilities include:

- assessing and approving enterprises as qualified as training establishments for apprentices;
- monitoring the in-company training;
- resolving disputes between the enterprise providing practical training and the apprentice.

The committees are obliged to take steps to ensure that the VET system is responsive to labour market needs and developments. This involves proactive identification of new education and training apprenticeship schemes as well as adjustments to, or closing of, existing programmes if not required any more by the labour market.

At the local level, the committees' close cooperation and coordination with VET providers and local colleges is managed by the appointment of local education committees for each of the programmes at the college. These local committees are required to: advise the colleges about planning apprenticeship schemes; work towards the development of cooperation with local trade and industry; and strive to obtain more internship.

Even though stakeholder involvement is well developed in many countries, there are others that would evidently struggle to involve relevant stakeholders fully in all aspects of design and delivery given the general state of play in relation to, for example, social dialogue. Costs incurring from involvement of various stakeholders are largely in-kind. Nevertheless, this can be a barrier to employers, especially SMEs. Regarding the underrepresentation of trade unions that can generally be observed, an issue to be resolved is how they can be appropriately brought into the system with a clear role.

4.1.2.3 Support for companies

Subsidies, compensation, and incentives are commonplace and necessary to stimulate employer participation in apprenticeships. Such financial mechanisms need to be well-targeted and their effectiveness and efficiency needs to be evaluated.

In many cases non-financial support measures are even more important for smaller companies to be able to participate in apprenticeships. They might need help in dealing with administrative procedures and paper work, selection of apprentices, or in assuring the continuous development of in-company trainers, to mention but a few examples. Support structures should be created which can foresee a role for intermediary organisations like chambers of industry, commerce and crafts or professional organisations.

State of play and good practices

There is much variation in the scale of the employer contribution and how it is managed and collected. Some countries use levies, as the examples from Denmark and the United Kingdom in the box below illustrate.

Denmark and the United Kingdom - Employer apprenticeship levies

In Denmark, all employers (both public and private sector) pay a fixed, annual amount into the Employers' Reimbursement Fund linked to the number of employees they have and irrespective of whether they have apprentices or not. Employers get reimbursed from the Fund for their apprentices' wages while they attend college. In 2012 all employers paid an annual contribution of DKK 2,921 (€380) per full-time employee.

The United Kingdom has introduced a levy for large employers (those with a wage bill of over £3 million per year) from 2017. Under the new arrangements, these employers will pay 0.5% of their wage bill to the State. The levy payment can be spent on apprenticeship training.

Systems of subsidies and incentives are commonly used to encourage employer involvement. For example, in **Finland**, employers can claim training compensation to cover the costs arising from work-based learning: compensation is agreed on a case-by-case basis when the apprenticeship is arranged and is paid by the apprenticeship organisation, often the education providers. In **Luxembourg**, training companies pay a monthly allowance to each apprentice which is fixed by a decree and varies according to the VET programme; part of this apprenticeship allowance, as well as the employer's share of social security contributions for the apprenticeship allowance paid, is refunded to the companies by the State. Additionally, the employer may be entitled to: (1) financial aid to promote apprenticeships (*aide de promotion de l'apprentissage*) which covers 27% or 40% of the allowance paid to the apprentice depending on the type of apprenticeship; and (2) the reimbursement of the employer's share of the social security contributions for the apprenticeship allowance paid. In Bulgaria, the 'Youth employment' scheme approved under the ESF Operational Programme for Human Resources Development establishes payments to employers based on the minimum wage. For work-based training, employers receive for each trainee 90% of the minimum wage for the country during the respective year, and payments for social and health insurance and mentor salaries based on 50% of the minimum wage.

Subsidies can also target specific groups of employers or individuals. It is generally acknowledged that SMEs need additional support in order to be involved in apprenticeships. An example of subsidies targeting SMEs can be found in England.

United Kingdom - Employer incentives/subsidies

Employers in each of the four nations within the United Kingdom are able to access a range of different incentives designed to encourage them to employ more apprentices.

In England, businesses can access the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE). AGE provides financial assistance (i.e. grants of £1,500) for businesses with fewer than 50 employees to take on apprentices aged 16-24 years within a formal Apprenticeship scheme. England is also currently exploring other models for the funding and development of apprenticeships through employer-led trailblazer pilot projects. These test projects offer employers greater autonomy in the development and funding of apprenticeships i.e. direct control of funding for apprentice training, and development of the content of the training including new apprenticeship standards in a number of sectors.

In Scotland, financial support for employers includes the:

- Employer Recruitment Incentive initiative which provides payments to support employers to take on disadvantaged young people as apprentices;
- Adopt an Apprentice incentive that offers a payment to cover wage and recruitment costs for companies in Scotland willing to take on a Modern Apprentice who has been made redundant.

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government introduced the Young Recruits Programme (YRP) to provide financial support to businesses that employ apprentices aged between 16-24 years. The YRP offers employers a weekly wage subsidy of £50 over 26 weeks, subject to employer and apprentice eligibility criteria.

In Northern Ireland, employers receive a payment for each completed apprenticeship. The amount of payment is determined by the complexity and level of the apprenticeship.

A wide range of SME support measures exists across Europe, while at the same time examples exist in countries where there are no specific provisions for SMEs (e.g. **Finland**) although it is acknowledged that the issue requires attention. Measures include subsidies and exemptions from social security contributions (e.g. **France and Italy**), and making it possible for apprentices to receive training in more than one company (e.g. in **Austria and the Czech Republic**) or job training centres (e.g. **Austria**).

It can be difficult for companies, especially SMEs, to make provision for in-company trainers. In order to address this issue, some countries enable companies to group together. In **France**, under the *Groupement d'employeurs pour l'insertion et la qualification* (GEIQ – Employers' groups for inclusion and qualification), several enterprises can create a group (with a specific legal status) that engages one tutor who can accompany several apprentices in these enterprises.

4.1.2.4 Flexible pathways and mobility

From a quality perspective, it is important that the **entry requirements** for an apprenticeship are clear, that there are opportunities to have prior learning taken into account and that encouragement is given to people who might be at a disadvantage, such as young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), or those who have learning difficulties and/or

social or mental problems. In addition, **nationally recognized qualifications** are crucial for the learner to capitalize its efforts, to increase the inner value of apprenticeships in the labour market, and to eventually open the way to further education and training.

Flexible measures include the provision of pre-apprenticeship courses and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The availability of processes to validate prior learning and skills depends on wider system developments outside apprenticeships that any quality framework would need to allow for.

An important question is whether apprenticeship qualifications are part of national qualifications frameworks since also this is likely to increase their attractiveness and value. Apprenticeships need the currency that comes from the status of a qualification and this is likely to be enhanced where the qualification is part of a national qualifications framework.

Opportunities for **transnational mobility** of apprentices should be provided as a component of an apprenticeship. Mobility should be accompanied by necessary preparations and support before and during the mobility, including foreign language learning.

There are many tangible advantages of mobility periods as part of apprenticeships. These are for example improved foreign language skills, greater awareness of another culture, a greater ability to adapt to new situations, new professional skills, better interpersonal skills, better opportunities for subsequent employment or better academic knowledge⁷⁸. Despite the proven advantages, mobility is not currently considered as an integral element of an apprenticeship. Therefore, it should be facilitated and publicised more than at present. Including mobility element in the quality framework will also help built trust in apprenticeship places publicised as part of EURES.

State of play and good practices

Typically, minimum requirements are set for entry to apprenticeships such as having successfully completed compulsory education. Such requirements can be a uniform national (minimum) specification. But entry requirements can also be industry-led, as in the **United Kingdom** where they vary by level, sector and specific apprenticeship. In **Germany** and **Austria** companies set their own requirements, typically a specific school qualification or grade.

Increasingly there is special provision for people who do not meet 'standard' entry requirements. For example, in **Cyprus**, there is a preparatory apprenticeship for early school leavers aged 14 – 16. In **Ireland**, if minimum entry requirements are not satisfied, students can take an approved pre-apprenticeship course or be admitted if they have at least 3 years' approved work experience and be aged over 16. In some cases, measures for specific disadvantaged groups can involve the suspension or alteration of requirements/conditions for entry and the availability of preparatory courses but it can also involve the provision of subsidies to employers and/or the provision of support to make apprenticeships accessible. It is worth noting that the Youth Guarantee has been playing a role with respect to developing special access and support for NEETs.

⁷⁸ Flash EB No 319b – Youth on the move.

Austria – 'Integrative VET' Programme

In Austria, the programme 'Integrative VET' is an example of a support measure which helps to provide disadvantaged young people with a VET qualification and integrate them into working life:

The length of the apprenticeship depends on the chosen path and varies from 12 to 36 months. 80% of the workplace learning takes place in a training centre financed by the Austrian PES (AMS) or in a company, while 20% is school education and training. The possibility of a tailored training scheme enables companies, specific autonomous training establishments and part-time vocational schools to cater for individual abilities and skills and meet individual needs. Hence, the possibility of a tailored scheme makes it easier for companies to manage the implementation of an apprenticeship. An evaluation shows that the company-based programme is more effective than the training centre-based in terms of employment outcomes. One month after completing the programme, 76% of the company-based apprentices are in employment compared to only 20% of the training centre based apprentices. (Dörflinger et al., 2009)

Whether the **recognition and validation of prior learning** is available to potential apprentices is likely to depend on the general state of development of such processes. **Sweden** represents an advanced case where credit accumulation and transfer is possible. In **Germany** and **Austria**, if people can prove their professional experience they are eligible to take the apprenticeship leaving examination, or if people have undergone previous training this can be used to reduce the amount of training time during an apprenticeship.

The recognition and validation of competences acquired during apprenticeships has a vital role to play in the status, value and attractiveness of apprenticeships and the associated 'currency' of apprenticeships in the labour market. The recognition accorded to apprenticeships in terms of qualifications depends upon decisions around their relationship to national qualifications frameworks, and hence on developments outside apprenticeships per se. Apprenticeships are seen as a means of improving the attractiveness of vocational education and training pathways and there are examples where they have been part of the harmonisation of vocational and general qualifications. For instance, in **Poland**, changes were introduced to the VET system in 2012 that increased the permeability of apprenticeship schemes as certificates for apprentices became equal to those issued for basic vocational schools' graduates making it possible to continue education at the technical level upon completing an apprenticeship scheme.

An important question is whether apprenticeship qualifications are part of national qualifications frameworks since this is likely to increase their attractiveness and value. Cases where apprenticeships have stood apart from the development of national qualifications frameworks are rare, e.g. **Latvia**.

Regarding the question of whether apprenticeships give access to further education and training, practices vary. Bridging courses can be required, as for some courses in **Sweden**, or, individuals may need to take a double qualifying path, as in **Portugal**, where candidates acquire both an education certificate and a vocational education and training certificate to

enable both labour market and further education access. Generally there is a trend to improve permeability, e.g. in **Spain** in 2013, dual vocational training was regulated and complemented with optional subjects, facilitating access to higher level VET and other learning paths.

Geographical mobility rarely seems to be a part of apprenticeship quality framework, according to the sources examined, but opportunities for mobility often depend on provision outside apprenticeships themselves. A notable exception is **France** where the Apprenticeship Training Centres (*centres de formation d'apprentis* (CFA)) promote diversity by raising instructor awareness and encouraging international mobility for apprentices, in particular by drawing on European Union programmes. In **Luxembourg**, owing to the small size of the country, certain diplomas are not offered in the Luxembourgish school system but learners have the possibility to follow a cross-border apprenticeship, undertaking their practical training in one country while attending school in another. Recently, the European Commission launched the programme ErasmusPRO, new action within Erasmus+, on long duration mobility of apprentices. The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships builds on recent developments in the field of mobility and identifies long duration mobility as a key component of quality apprenticeships, and as an added value for both learners and the single market.

4.1.2.5 Career guidance and awareness raising

Studies show that apprenticeships are often perceived as a second choice educational and career path, if compared with general education and other work-based learning options. To invert the trend and support the establishment of effective and quality apprenticeships, career guidance, mentoring and awareness raising campaigns are a vital component of an effective apprenticeship framework.

Career guidance is important to ensure good outcomes and various methods have been developed in this respect. The development of lifelong guidance services (including related quality assurance mechanisms) is a general trend which is positive in respect of apprenticeships since it may be possible to be part of these wider developments.

Awareness raising on apprenticeship opportunities should be implemented through better communication on their contents and their quality, as well as on the career options that apprentices have after graduation. All stakeholders should participate in this promotion, not least companies and training providers.

Skills competitions and VET weeks, for example, are proven excellent ways to promote apprenticeships. The Commission supports the promotion of apprenticeships in particular through initiatives such as the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the European Vocational Skills Week.

State of play and good practices

Career guidance plays an important role in ensuring positive outcomes for individual apprentices. Good career guidance helps individuals make well-informed and sustainable educational choices. It can reduce stereotypes and prejudices of apprenticeships amongst young persons and their families.

Typical approaches include making it compulsory for individuals to participate in guidance counselling, requiring schools and other organisations to provide guidance services and providing national support. For example, in **Austria**, there is compulsory career guidance at the end of the compulsory schooling period, which includes ‘shadowing days’ in the world of work. In **Denmark**, all colleges have education guidance counsellors and each apprentice has a ‘contact teacher’ to provide individual support. In **Germany**, the public employment service and its local agencies are in charge of vocational guidance and counselling for youth and adults. The provision of vocational guidance in schools varies between different federal states, but there is a formal agreement that schools and local employment services cooperate on career guidance and career guidance is also embedded in different elements of the school curricula.

4.1.2.6 Transparency

In order to facilitate access to apprenticeships, apprenticeship offers should be published in a **transparent** way, both nationally and abroad. The criterion is in line with the general principles of transparency and good governance.

EURES is highly recommended for international publicity of apprenticeship offers throughout Europe, and would also enhance cross-border mobility of young people.

State of play and good practices

Access to apprenticeship offers varies greatly. Recruitment procedures are shaped by the nature of the apprenticeship system in general. Where there is strong ownership of apprenticeships by the business community, as in **Austria** and **Denmark**, then recruitment is strongly ‘bottom-up’ and companies are required to register available places, e.g. with the public employment service. In **Luxembourg**, the law obliges companies to declare vacant apprenticeship places with the public employment service. National recruitment services also exist: e.g. in **England** the government runs a service for registered training providers (including large employers with direct grant funding) to post vacancies and manage applications. Schools can also play an important role in recruitment. In the **Netherlands**, the onus to find an apprenticeship is on the individual but schools act as intermediaries. It is not uncommon across Europe to have special staff for placing learners in companies.

Online tools to support recruitment are increasingly common. In **Poland** 2014/15 saw the launch of an internet portal which allows people to check, inter alia, the availability of apprenticeships in schools and allows employers to inform those who are interested in vacancies. In **France**, the Ministry of Labour has an online portal devoted to facilitating the recruitment of young people onto apprenticeships along with regional platforms that provide services such as contract offers, the option for young people to post their CVs, and offers of places.

4.1.2.7 Quality Assurance and graduate tracking

Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are important to track the effectiveness of apprenticeships and to provide evidence for any reforms that may be required as part of review cycles. In general monitoring and especially evaluation systems are in need of development, although with exceptions.

Quality assurance mechanisms should be developed in coherence with EQAVET. Overall there is a need for the further development of monitoring and evaluation systems since there tend to be many gaps in current practice. Apprenticeships need to be based on sound evidence of labour market needs. The contents of apprenticeship schemes should be **responsive to the changes in the skills needs** in the labour market as well as in the society. The **monitoring** of employment outcomes (e.g. through **tracking** systems) is especially important to be able to assess the effectiveness of apprenticeships.

There are significant variations in the adequacy of current skill anticipation systems⁷⁹, and in how the needs of employers are fed into the development of vocational qualifications in general.⁸⁰

State of play and good practices

Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are important to track the effectiveness of apprenticeships and to provide evidence for any reforms that may be required as part of review cycles. In general monitoring and especially evaluation systems are in need of development, although with exceptions, e.g. in **Austria** a quality management in apprenticeship initiative was launched in 2013 by the social partners which uses a set of indicators assessed yearly, including the number of apprenticeship drop-outs, apprentices who do not sit the final exam and the number of apprentices who do not acquire an apprenticeship certificate⁸¹. In **Germany**, the quality of work placements provided by companies is monitored by external monitoring agencies and works councils. Works councils represent employees at the firm level and control quality within the training firm.

Responsibility for monitoring varies. In **Sweden**, schools are charged with overall responsibility for monitoring the quality of apprenticeships; in **Slovakia**, the State School Inspectorate monitors workplace training. Responsibilities may also be divided between different organisations, as in **Denmark** where the Ministry of Education monitors schools' apprenticeship provision, whilst Trade Committees monitor companies' training provision.

Apprenticeship systems should be built on evidence of **labour market needs**. This is a vital underpinning to effective apprenticeship systems, however, its costs may largely be borne outside the apprenticeship system itself, since skill anticipation systems are typically developed for wider purposes. There is a lack of information in the sources consulted about this aspect, but in general there is variation in the extent of development of national skill anticipation systems⁸². However, where there are reasonably established national labour market data collection systems, these are used to provide information to feed into the development of apprenticeships or are in development (this may include national research bodies conducting forecast studies as BIBB do in **Germany**), and the bodies charged with responsibility for apprenticeship design and review are required to take into account labour market needs. In **Denmark**, for example, Trade Committees have a responsibility to monitor

⁷⁹ Forthcoming Cedefop country reports and synthesis

⁸⁰ Forthcoming Cedefop report on learning outcomes as a tool for dialogue between education and the labour market

⁸¹ Cedefop/ReferNet

⁸² Forthcoming Cedefop country reports and synthesis

labour market needs for different apprenticeship schemes and decide whether new ones are required to meet that need, or whether existing ones should be discontinued.

In general, there is a need for the development of tracking systems so that employment and training outcomes data can be collected on a regular basis rather than through ad hoc surveys. Evaluation tends to be conducted through one-off evaluation reports (e.g. on the effects of apprenticeships on salaries and labour market success in **France**) rather than systematically.

Regarding the assessment of apprentices, an important issue is how this is conducted in the workplace to ensure its reliability and credibility. Teachers may have a role in overseeing assessment processes to ensure their quality. For example, in **Slovenia**, schools monitor the quality of workplaces (visiting the companies during work-based learning, reviewing reports of work, questionnaires for students and mentors). During the work-based learning, students complete required documentation, i.e. reports of work-based learning or diaries of work, which is supervised and confirmed by the mentor and reviewed by organisers at school when work-based learning ends. In **Finland** the responsibility for the assessment of work-based learning periods has recently been transferred to the work places. In **Malta**, a new an online logbook has been put in place for students to monitor progress on a monthly basis. The system also helps targeting measures to reduce drop-outs.

Countries may have previously imposed different requirements on institutions in different educational pathways. In **Luxembourg**, the Agency for the Development of School Quality (*Agence pour le développement de la qualité scolaire – ADQS*) has developed a reference framework related to school quality. It constitutes a working framework for the self-evaluation of school quality within academic establishments. A common quality assurance framework for technical secondary schools is currently being developed and also applies to associated work-based learning. All secondary schools, including those in VET, are to be obliged to elaborate quality development plans.

In some countries, having qualified trainers in place is a way to assure the quality of companies that train apprentices. This is the case e.g. in the **Netherlands** where qualified trainers are required in order for companies to have apprentices. In **Germany** there must be one trainer per training company who has passed the trainer aptitude test. Requirements can also be set in terms of the ratio of trainers to apprentices, e.g. in **Estonia** there can be no more than 4 trainees per supervisor.

Netherlands - Company accreditation based on qualified in-company trainers

In the Netherlands one of the criteria for accreditation is the availability of a trained supervisor or tutor (*praktijkopleider*). Tutors must be qualified at least at the same level for which he/she is supervising work-based learning. Furthermore, tutors must be able to share their working expertise with students and be pedagogically competent (validated by diplomas/certificates). Tutors coaching VET students have to be qualified. Training programmes for tutors are offered by Centres of Expertise and developed by the Centres themselves. There is no national or standard programme for tutors, but most have identical topics, concentrating on didactic skills: instruction, motivation and assessment.

5 Potential scenarios (policy options) at EU level for improving the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships

A number of scenarios (or policy options) are available at EU level to support the improvement of apprenticeships across the different Member States. This chapter discusses the different options and examines their advantages and disadvantages, as well as considerations in relation to the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity, drawing conclusions as to the best option to be pursued.

The possible alternative scenarios discussed are the following:

1. No supplementary action at EU level (baseline scenario);
2. Quality label for apprenticeships;
3. Quadripartite Declaration.
4. Policy orientation (via Council Recommendation)

5.1 Presentation of the potential scenarios

This section explains briefly each of the 4 possible scenarios. Each scenario will be examined in more detail in section 5.2 below, including their advantages and disadvantages.

Scenario 1: No supplementary action at EU level (baseline scenario)

Under this baseline scenario, the EU level support would be restricted to similar activities that are currently carried out to support the improvement of apprenticeships. The ongoing improvement of the quality of apprenticeships would rely on the existing tools and mechanisms used at EU level, as well as a continuation of the provision of similar support. EU-level action would be supplemented by any action at national or regional level, as is currently the case.

Existing tools and mechanisms at EU level include the activities of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)⁸³ (e.g. pledges, sharing of good practices and experiences, provision of access to tools and knowledge-sharing), Thematic Country Reviews on Apprenticeships⁸⁴ carried out by Cedefop, peer reviews, studies, events (e.g. the European Vocational Skills Week⁸⁵) or guidebooks (e.g. Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors - A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners⁸⁶). It is also worth noting, as stated in section 2.2 above, that the Youth Guarantee has been playing a role with respect to developing special access and support to apprenticeships for people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Scenario 2: A quality label for apprenticeships

⁸³ <http://ec.europa.eu/apprenticeships-alliance>

⁸⁴ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about-cedefop/public-procurement/thematic-country-reviews-apprenticeships>

⁸⁵ [European Vocational Skills Week](#)

⁸⁶ Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013). *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors - A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners*, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11348&langId=e>

A certain number of quality labels (or similar mechanisms) for work-based learning have been developed through different stakeholders' initiatives, including for example:

- The European Quality Label for Internships⁸⁷ developed by InternsGoPro on the basis of the European Charter for Quality Internships and Apprenticeships⁸⁸ developed by the European Youth Forum;
- The EQAMOB ('European Quality Assurance for in-company learning Mobility for apprentices') quality label for companies⁸⁹ established by the Euro Apprenticeship network⁹⁰.

At Union level, in the framework of the Erasmus + programme, the Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter⁹¹ aims to reward and promote quality in mobility. Charter holders benefit from streamlined fast-track procedures, including the application process, the organisation of mobility projects, and reporting activities for VET mobility actions under the programme. The Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter is awarded to organisations that have track records of proven quality in organising VET mobility for learners and staff

At national level, quality labels for apprenticeships exist in certain countries (e.g. Norway, Canada). In Germany, quality labels for VET have been created at national level, but award processes increasingly take place also at sector level (as a result of quality systems of VET providers active in the same branches) or in certain parts of the VET system only⁹². Cedefop has noted that a number of networks or sector organisations of VET providers active at European level have developed their own accreditation or are creating their own quality labels without the inclusion of any public bodies⁹³. EU quality labels exist in other fields e.g. in relation to food and agricultural products⁹⁴. However, no quality label for apprenticeships exists at EU level (issued by the European Commission or other European agencies).

A quality label could be introduced at EU level to recognise apprenticeship schemes which meet a number of agreed quality criteria. Such a label could be used to recognise good quality individual apprenticeship schemes and provide an incentive for others to achieve the specified quality criteria. It is important to note that quality labels would need to be renewed in a continuous cycle with an average time span of about five years⁹⁵.

A recent study⁹⁶ (currently under finalisation) on the progress and future planning of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) has indicated some interest among stakeholders in establishing a quality label in the framework of the EAfA, in particular to acknowledge members' participation. A recent Cedefop report on Assuring Quality in

⁸⁷ <http://www.internsgopro.com/en/label/>

⁸⁸ <http://qualityinternships.eu/>

⁸⁹ <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/fr/eqamob-co-quality-label-for-companies.html>

⁹⁰ <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/the-partners.html>

⁹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/education/calls/2015-eac-a01_en

⁹² Cedefop (2009), *Accreditation and quality assurance in vocational education and training: Selected European approaches*

⁹³ Cedefop (2009). *ibid*

⁹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/schemes_en

⁹⁵ Cedefop (2009). *ibid*

⁹⁶ ICF (unpublished), *European Alliance for Apprenticeships - Assessment of progress and planning the future*

Vocational Education and Training⁹⁷ has also stated that ‘use of quality labels could be more widespread’.

Scenario 3: A Quadripartite Declaration

Under this option, the European Commission could suggest to European social partners and the Presidency to conclude a Quadripartite Declaration. The agreement could take the ACVT (Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, a tripartite body) opinion on ‘A Shared Vision for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning’⁹⁸ as a basis. A Quadripartite Declaration would be similar to the approach used for the launch of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) in Leipzig in 2013, which involved a Joint Declaration⁹⁹ by the European social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP), the European Commission and the Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Scenario 4: Policy orientation (via Council Recommendation)

Under this scenario, the Commission, building on the extensive work carried out by the social partners, international organisations, in the context of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and on the tripartite ACVT Opinion, would consolidate these into a single comprehensive policy orientation setting down the key quality attributes for apprenticeships. These would be confirmed by the Member States in the form of a Council Recommendation.

This consolidated policy orientation would create a shared policy objective and progressive convergence towards higher standards in defining, reforming or creating quality and effective apprenticeship schemes. The legislative act should guarantee proper follow up from Member States and public visibility to trigger a wider participation of stakeholders to build on the momentum created by the proposal, while respecting the principle of proportionality and subsidiarity.

In addition to monitoring and direct orientation, parallel actions at EU level could maximise the benefits of the Council Recommendation by engaging Member States and stakeholders in further actions, in line with the principles of the European Framework. Under this scenario, the Commission could support the implementation of the Recommendation through several non-legislative measures. For example, a demand driven set of apprenticeships support services is intended to be set up in 2018 to strengthen the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and to support apprenticeship reforms at national level. The support services will enhance knowledge sharing, networking and bench-learning, building on the successful public employment services bench-learning model. A particular focus will be on mobilising actors for concrete actions at national, regional and local level.

At the same time, awareness activities can play a crucial role in disseminating the principles of the Quality Framework to the public and promote the exchange of good practices among

⁹⁷ Cedefop (2012), *Assuring Quality in Vocational Education and Training*

⁹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1147&langId=en&moreDocuments=yes>

⁹⁹ European Alliance for Apprenticeships: Declaration of the European Social Partners, the European Commission and the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lisa/139011.pdf

Member States. A recent successful example of awareness raising initiatives is the European Vocational Skills Week.

5.2 Assessment of potential scenarios (policy options)

An assessment of each potential scenario (policy option) has been carried out in relation to the potential advantages and disadvantages, as well as considerations in relation to proportionality and subsidiarity.

The baseline option - **Scenario 1** (no supplementary action at EU level) - has the advantage that it would trigger limited costs at EU level and that it would present no additional burden to governments, training providers, companies or apprentices themselves, as compared to current situation. However, with a view to improving the quality of apprenticeships throughout the European Union, its disadvantages clearly outweigh the advantages. With no additional effort, it is likely that the disparities in the quality of apprenticeships and the support provided to key stakeholders would persist, contributing to unequal provision and outcomes for apprentices across the EU and hampering their mobility of apprentices and workers across the European Union. The responsibility and financial burden of ensuring quality apprenticeships would continue to fall on Member States and/or individual providers of apprenticeships (training providers, companies), with limited support measures financed by the Commission. Neither national authorities nor grassroots level stakeholders (i.e. companies, training providers) would be encouraged or motivated any further than at present to improve quality standards through either top-down initiatives or bottom-up provision of support. Finally, this option implies an ongoing lack of visibility at EU level on Member State arrangements and progress on the quality of apprenticeships, and may hamper coherence with other EU initiatives. It would also probably not satisfy the recommendation of the European Court of Auditors to the Commission to set up a list of qualitative attributes for the Youth Guarantee offers, including apprenticeships.

Scenario 2 (EU quality label) provides a number of potential advantages when compared to the baseline scenario. An EU level quality label could provide a strong motivating factor for companies and training providers across the EU to improve the quality of apprenticeships, with public recognition for their efforts and achievements. The criteria set out for the label would set consistent and coherent guidelines and a quality benchmark across the EU on the expected standard of quality for apprenticeships. Since applying for the quality label would be optional for training providers or companies, this option would not represent any obligatory cost or additional burden on these actors. However, this scenario also entails a number of potential disadvantages.

Firstly, the process of agreeing the essential components of a quality label with all key actors at EU and Member State level may be lengthy, but launching a label without the buy-in of all key stakeholders would carry a high risk that certain groups and categories would not adhere to it.

Second, while costs for the set-up of the label may be limited, the costs of carrying out sufficiently rigorous assessments of quality for the accreditation of the label are likely to be high, potentially involving quality auditors. Assessments are also not a ‘one-off’ since they

need to be carried out on a regular basis (e.g. every five years) to ensure that quality standards for label holders are maintained, which implies ongoing costs. By whom such costs should be borne (EU/Member States/individual apprenticeship providers) would need to be established, but would represent a clear burden in any case. Substantial investment would also be likely to be required in order to promote the label.

Third, due not only to the potential cost but also the potential complexity and length of the process of application and accreditation for a quality label, take-up may be limited and may be more accessible to larger apprenticeship providers (e.g. large companies) with greater financial and administrative resources for an investment of this type. If the bar is set too high or the requirements too complex, there is a risk that the existence of such a label may even have a demotivating influence on smaller providers. Larger companies may also be more interested in the positive publicity surrounding the award of a quality label, which may have lesser attraction to, for example, a local training institution or an SME. In order to make it more accessible to smaller providers and counter any potential demotivating influence, additional support and advice may need to be provided, implying additional cost.

Fourth, since the label would not be obligatory, the overall impact may be limited, particularly if take-up is not high or limited to a specific group of providers or countries.

Fifth, since a number of VET quality labels already exist, developed by VET networks or sectoral organisations, there is a risk that an additional label could contribute to confusion to providers.

Finally, it is important to note that it would be difficult to monitor or measure the impact and outcomes of a quality label, beyond simply quantifying the number of labels awarded and the number of apprentices covered.

Scenario 3 (a Quadripartite Declaration) also has the potential for a number of positive impacts as compared to the baseline scenario. Similarly to scenario 2, it would provide the opportunity for consistent and coherent messages on the criteria and standards expected for quality apprenticeships across the EU. Indeed, as compared to the first two scenarios, it is likely to have higher visibility and motivation for action for Member State levels authorities. Similarly to scenario 2, although there would be coherence across the EU in terms of messages about the criteria for quality and effective apprenticeships, consistency of outcomes could not be guaranteed, in particular without additional support, which carries significant cost implications. It is also likely that a Declaration may have a high degree of visibility or impulsion, in particular to apprenticeship providers (i.e. training providers or companies) or apprentices and their families, meaning that additional promotion would need to be implemented to ensure the messages filter down to implementation level. In addition, to ensure effectiveness, it would be desirable to monitor the progress of Member States to achieving the quality standards set – for example by setting up regular monitoring by Cedefop or an external provider and/or developing benchmarks and indicators - which represents a cost at EU level and/or at Member State level. However, an additional advantage would be that it would ensure formal agreement and commitment by all four key partners (i.e. the European Commission, the European employers' representative organisations, the European workers' representative organisations, the Presidency of the European Council) at the same moment,

which could provide a strong impetus for action. However, in terms of disadvantages, a significant one that needs to be taken into account is that the Declaration would not formally involve all Member States, potentially undermining the national commitment to implement the actions foreseen and failing to bring together the social partners and the governments' commitments therefore from all Member States.

Scenario 4 (Policy orientation via Council Recommendation)

Policy orientation at the EU level must occur in parallel with harmonious implementation of the Quality Framework's criteria, according to national circumstances and based on the good practices shared at the EU level. Such optimal scenario would guarantee a correct follow up to the innovations and contents of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.

EU level Recommendations (as opposed to national level policy announcements, recommendations or joint declarations) are likely to lead to greater consistency across the EU in quality standards. The principle of proportionality is respected, as the content and form of Union action do not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objective of the treaties. As a matter of fact, the EU Treaties specify that the Commission shall encourage cooperation between Member States and facilitate the coordination of their action in all social policy fields including employment and basic and advanced vocational training¹⁰⁰, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training¹⁰¹.

As stated in the Better Regulation guidelines, a Recommendation is a legal instrument that encourages those to whom it is addressed to act in a particular way without being binding. A Recommendation enables the Commission (or the Council) to establish non-binding rules for the Member States or, in certain cases, Union citizens. A Recommendation can be used when there is not sufficient evidence that would justify a need of a binding legislative instrument, or in policy areas where the EU has supporting competence, complementing the action of Member States, and cannot by definition be prescriptive.¹⁰² However, an EU level Recommendation should lead to significantly greater consistency, transparency and understanding of quality and effective apprenticeships among Member States and to clear commitment on Member State's side to follow up on the actions foreseen in the Recommendation.

5.3 Conclusions of the comparative analysis of the potential scenarios

All policy options appear to be in line with, while not exceeding, what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the EU Treaties. None of the proposed scenarios interfere with the responsibility of the Member States for defining the content and organisation of apprenticeship schemes.

¹⁰⁰ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 156, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN>

¹⁰¹ Ibid, Article 156

¹⁰² http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/tool_15_en.htm

While the advantages and disadvantages differ by policy option, it can be noted in particular that - in absence of legislative tools at a EU level - none of the first three scenarios seem likely to meet the objective of providing sufficient encouragement or support for Member States (i.e. national and regional authorities) and key stakeholders involved in apprenticeships (e.g. training providers, companies) to improve the quality of apprenticeships. However, scenario 4 (Policy orientation via Council Recommendation) is preferred in terms of potential costs-benefits and coherency among Member States and fulfilling at the same time the ECA recommendation in this respect. Therefore, a policy orientation scenario, delivered via Council Recommendation, is the optimal proposal to stimulate actions at an EU and national level, while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

However, this does not exclude progress to be made in other scenarios, in order to reinforce the implementation and/or the follow-up of the Recommendation.

5.4 Analysis of possible impacts on Member States

The following section provides an analytical framework to assess the potential costs and benefits and reflects on possible impacts on Member States of a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.

5.4.1 Analytical framework on potential costs and benefits

This analytical framework considers possible costs and benefits and has been produced by drawing upon the existing literature as well as the results of the mapping exercise (see chapter 3.2) to highlight both the direct and indirect impacts which would be expected to result from the introduction of a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The framework has been developed with reference to the Better Regulation Toolbox¹⁰³, in particular as concerns the use of analytical methods and approaches such as cost benefit analysis, including the categorisation of costs and benefits.

5.4.1.1 Assessment of potential costs

5.4.1.1.1 Overview of potential costs

The following framework is based on a systematic assessment of the types of costs which would be expected to be associated with the introduction of an EU level Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, although the exact detail of this will depend on the specific requirements of the agreed Framework. This includes consideration of the possible costs to employers, apprentices, VET providers, other stakeholder groups (such as employer organisations), the public sector and society as a whole.

Table 2: Overview of type of costs related to apprenticeships

Type	Description	Notes
Direct	Implementation costs for employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wage costs for apprentices 	Such costs are largely financial and likely to be estimated/recorded by individual employers as part of assessing the business case for offering apprenticeships.

¹⁰³ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/toc_tool_en.htm#. The toolbox provides guidance on the use of analytical methods and approaches such as cost benefit analysis, including the categorisation of costs and benefits.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff costs of supervisors/mentors ▪ Equipment and material costs ▪ Cost of external services (e.g. assessment of learning outcomes) ▪ Costs of reduced productivity or mistakes (e.g. due to inexperience of apprentices) 	<p>Although apprentice wages represent a cost to the business there will be a corresponding benefit in terms of output/productivity. However, this cost may exceed the benefits gained due to the relative inexperience of the apprentice and also the time spent in training.</p> <p>Different countries also have in place different financing arrangements for the covering the wage of apprentices and the staff costs of supervisors/mentors.</p>
	<p>Implementation costs to employers' organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support to employers to meet costs of apprenticeships ▪ Promotion and coordination of apprenticeships 	<p>In some cases part of the implementation costs are assumed by employer's organisations. However, care should be taken to avoid double counting with the costs to individual employers noted above.</p>
	<p>Implementation costs to VET providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Costs of off-the-job training ▪ Examinations and accreditation costs ▪ Costs related to coordination/oversight 	<p>Apprentices spend part of their time engaged in school/college-based training which results in a cost for providers, although this is likely to be covered by public subsidies or employer contributions. Depending on the framework arrangements, providers may also have a role in coordination or oversight of apprenticeship arrangements.</p>
	<p>Costs to individual apprentices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunity cost of time spent engaged in apprenticeship ▪ Other expenses (e.g. travel to college) 	<p>Young people will dedicate their time to pursuing an apprenticeship resulting in an opportunity cost. However, enrolling in an apprenticeship will bring advantages such as better employment prospects, personal development and other non-monetary benefits. Where participation is voluntary, it is generally assumed that participants will make rational decisions (i.e. will only enrol in an apprenticeship if benefits outweigh the costs).</p>
	<p>Implementation costs for the public sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public subsidies for apprenticeships ▪ Analysis of skills needs ▪ definition of curricula ▪ Examination/qualification award ▪ Quality assurance ▪ Coordination and support 	<p>National or regional authorities may provide subsidies to help offset the costs of other parties.</p> <p>Depending on the framework arrangements, authorities may also have a role in the implementation of the apprenticeships schemes, coordination or provision of support.</p>
	<p>Implementation follow-up costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Costs of any related inspections or sanctions ▪ Monitoring and evaluation of the framework 	<p>Depending on the framework arrangements, an authority or organisation may be given responsibility for implementation follow-up activity relating to the framework.</p>
Indirect	Costs to other public services	Depending on the arrangements in place there may be

	associated with the intervention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced tax revenues 	some loss of tax revenues compared to a non-apprenticeship contract. However, this cost will be relatively low, as not all apprentices would be working in the event that they did not take up an apprenticeship. Moreover, evidence has showed that apprentice graduates earn more than people with ISCED 0-2 ¹⁰⁴ levels, so the cost would be quickly recovered.
	Transaction costs to employers	There is a possibility that some employers will incur costs associated with recruitment and retention if apprenticeships decide to seek alternative employment following completion of their training (with the potential write-off of investments in training for that individual).
	Costs to non-participants or wider society	It is assumed that delivery of the intervention will not impact on the availability of other public services so there will be no significant additional costs to non-participants or society.

Costs for employers currently vary between countries depending on the apprenticeship schemes in place. For instance, in countries where apprentices have the status of an employee and receive a wage close to entry level pay or minimum wages, costs will be higher than in those countries where apprentices do not receive a salary or receive just a stipend. In addition, there are costs linked to the assessment of learning outcomes and the monitoring and evaluation of the apprenticeships in countries where those costs are assumed by the company.

Some schemes involve firms in the design of the curriculum to make sure their requirements are adequately reflected in the learning outcomes. In this case, employers and/or employer organisations face costs related to aspects such as planning, funding, organising training and setting expectations.

Off-the-job education in apprenticeship schemes for young people that lead to upper-secondary qualifications are typically fully funded by public authorities (perhaps with some contribution from employers) and provided at no cost to apprentices.

In addition to direct funding for apprenticeships, governments can provide other kinds of contributions. This could include oversight of apprenticeship schemes, funding final examinations and assessments, providing training to apprentice instructors in companies, and supporting bodies that involve various stakeholders to advise on apprenticeship policies. Also, public funding could be used to develop relevant quality assurance tools to cover both off-the-job and on-the-job education and training to ensure that apprentices develop a full range of generic and occupational skills during the programme. Specific costs related to a quality framework may include costs of monitoring and evaluation. For example, in Austria, a quality management in apprenticeships initiative was launched in 2013 by the social partners. It builds on a set of indicators, which are assessed yearly, including the number of apprenticeship drop-outs, apprentices who do not sit the final exam and number of apprentices

¹⁰⁴ Based on a comparison between the graduates and their situation if they had not completed an apprenticeship qualification.

who do not acquire an apprenticeship certificate¹⁰⁵. Public bodies could also play a role in collecting and analysing data on the labour market to inform the development of apprenticeship schemes.

Finally, public subsidies for apprenticeships may play a role in increasing the provision of apprenticeships; although the empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these subsidies is still limited and some studies¹⁰⁶ suggest that they involve substantial deadweight.

5.4.1.1.2 Analysis of cost implications

Evidence to inform analysis of cost implications has been obtained from desk research and also interviews with stakeholders in Member States that were found to have some form of existing quality framework.

Following the typology set out in the Better Regulation Toolbox¹⁰⁷, focus is on examples of the direct costs of implementation of a quality framework. This includes compliance costs¹⁰⁸ and administrative costs/burdens¹⁰⁹ as well as any associated implementation follow-up costs¹¹⁰. However, as noted, the nature of the costs associated with an EU level quality framework will depend on the precise requirements of such a framework as well as the extent to which it requires stakeholders to do more or change their current practices.

While this chapter will discuss the different cost that can incur in relation to compliance, administration and implementation follow-up of measures designed to assure the quality of apprenticeships, the existence of these costs should be considered alongside the existing research evidence which shows that the benefits of apprenticeships are likely to outweigh the costs.

1) Compliance costs

A key area of cost for employers is the wages paid to apprentices. Desk research shows that national requirements often specify the terms of the contract that must be offered to apprentices including the wage that is to be paid. For example, in Estonia, employers are required to pay apprentices the minimum wage while in France apprentices are paid a percentage of the minimum wage (which varies depending on the number of years completed). In Ireland there are two types of apprenticeship; for the established system of craft apprenticeships the state pays a training allowance to apprentices while for apprenticeships in new areas the employer is required to pay a wage¹¹¹. In Sweden, however, apprentices do not have a contract with the company and do not receive a salary (instead, in

¹⁰⁵ Cedefop/Refernet

¹⁰⁶ E.g. OECD (2017). *Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship*, OECD Education Working Papers, No 153, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹⁰⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/toc_tool_en.htm#

¹⁰⁸ Compliance costs encompass the expenses which are faced by stakeholders in order to comply with the requirements of a quality framework.

¹⁰⁹ Administrative costs/burdens are those costs which result from administrative activities necessary to comply with information obligations.

¹¹⁰ Implementation follow-up costs are costs associated with the monitoring or adjudication activities linked to the implementation of an initiative.

¹¹¹ These new apprenticeships are a result of efforts to expand apprenticeships to new sectors where there is a labour market need, a process which began in 2014 and is ongoing.

common with other students, they receive a grant from the state)¹¹². In some cases this cost exceeds the value to the employer of the output produced by the apprentice given that they are undergoing training and have limited experience. Analysis of the costs and benefits of apprenticeships to employers in Germany found that apprentice-related personnel costs was the largest single category of costs (comprising of wages plus voluntary and statutory social benefits)¹¹³.

In some cases public subsidies or other incentives are provided to offset these wage costs. For example, in France, all enterprises (including public establishments) employing apprentices for at least one month can benefit from a tax credit. In the Netherlands, an annual budget of 200 million Euros is set aside to provide a subsidy for apprenticeships (companies receive a subsidy payment per student, per year). In Sweden, despite apprentices not receiving a salary, companies receive an incentive payment for providing apprenticeship placements (5,000 Euros per apprentice per year).

In some cases, the costs of financial incentives can also fall on employers, with either all employers or some employers contributing, typically through a levy on a percentage of turnover or payroll. Funds from contributions may be used to support training in general and apprenticeships in particular. For example, in Denmark¹¹⁴ and France, all employers share the costs of apprenticeships. In Austria, Germany and Switzerland, levies are collected by sector; while in England (United Kingdom), only larger employers contribute.

Employers also face costs in complying with requirements to provide trainers and/or mentors for apprentices. Again, requirements vary by country but in some cases these individuals are required to undergo training to perform this role. There may also be an opportunity cost if time is taken away from other duties. For example, in Germany if the trainer does not have the required qualification they must undertake a course and pass a test to obtain a licence. There may also be restrictions on how many apprentices an individual can support. For example, in Estonia, there is a requirement that each mentor within the employer organisation can support a maximum of four apprentices. In Sweden, however, companies offering apprenticeships do not have to fulfil any specific requirements or pass any validation process, neither are they obliged to provide a tutor for the apprentices (although they are advised to do so).

There is also a cost associated with the training for apprentices which is delivered by an educational institution or training provider. The source of funding for this element varies although the key question is how the introduction of a quality framework impacts on delivery. Some countries specify the amount of time which apprentices must spend in training and/or other measures to ensure quality, although it is generally implied that adherence to national educational standards or qualifications frameworks will be the primary means by which the quality of the off-the-job training component will be assured.

¹¹² It should be noted that a new approach is being developed in Sweden where apprentices in the industrial sector will be employed by the company and will receive a salary (with 50% to be paid by the employer and the rest by the public sector). The pilot project will be launched in autumn 2017.

¹¹³ <https://www.bibb.de/en/25852.php>

¹¹⁴ In Denmark, this is set through the Employers' Reimbursement Fund. This refunds employers for their apprentices' wages while they attend college. Employers have to pay in whether or not they have apprentices. Source: Cedefop/Refernet

2) Administrative costs

Administrative costs can be divided into one-off (or set-up) costs and ongoing (or repeated) costs. At national level, development of quality measures has tended to involve some form of planning or preparation and the same would be true for an EU level framework (although the costs of the latter would perhaps be expected to fall on the European Commission rather than national actors). For example, in Ireland, QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) has developed statutory guidelines, released in June 2016, which all apprenticeships must adhere to. These guidelines outline the roles and responsibilities of different parties and come at a time when work is underway to develop new apprenticeships following a 10 stage process which involves representatives of key stakeholder groups forming a consortium to develop an occupational profile which forms the basis of the programme. There is also a central process of coordination to ensure that there is only one statutory national programme for each occupation (with no duplication/overlap). Courses cover a broad spectrum of skills and so link to more than one occupation.

Examples of ongoing administrative costs include the collection and analysis of monitoring data and production of reports. For example, in Germany, each year the responsible Ministry produces a report and undertakes a survey with a sample of enterprises. In Sweden, the Agency responsible for apprenticeship undertakes an annual survey with a sample of apprentices. In the Netherlands, SBB monitors employers on an ongoing basis. Every time an apprenticeship is finished a monitoring questionnaire is sent to the company.

There are also costs involved in coordinating and supporting the various actors involved in the apprenticeships process. In Estonia, the Ministry has a team of four staff at a central location and a further 15 at local level to support VET (with a proportion of their time spent on implementing the quality requirements for apprenticeships). These posts are part-funded by ESF and it is intended that they will only be required in the short-term while the system is being introduced and developed. These members of staff support education providers in setting up agreements with employers and apprentices. In Austria, apprenticeship offices (located in the economic chambers of the provinces) act as intermediary bodies on behalf of the Ministry and are responsible for issuing declarations to employers which want to offer apprenticeships as well as the supervision of training companies, recording of apprenticeships and examinations. These offices are supported by Regional Advisory Boards on Apprenticeships. In Ireland, there is a network of training advisors who visit companies that want to register an apprentice and assess their suitability; ongoing monitoring visits also take place (with the frequency dependent on the number of apprentices employed by each company).

Employers and training providers also incur administrative costs related to their agreement with and obligations to the apprentice. A proportion of this cost relates to tasks which would be completed for any employee or learner. However, a feature of some quality frameworks is the need for an agreement between each apprentice and the employer and/or education provider which implies an additional administrative cost. For example, in Finland the apprentice and employer sign a contract which sets out the agreed terms and also key tasks (including the education provider and studies to be undertaken). In Estonia, there is a need for

a specific agreement between the school, the student and the employer; although the costs of preparing such agreements are likely to lessen over time as schools develop relationships with employers.

3) Implementation follow-up costs

Roles, responsibilities and actions in respect of monitoring and implementation follow-up vary by country. In Germany, Chambers are responsible for the quality of apprenticeships and works councils also have obligations to assure the quality of apprenticeships within their organisations (although SMEs generally do not have works councils and so are missing this layer of quality assurance). All companies that provide apprenticeships are obliged to comply with relevant Training Obligations and could be prosecuted if they fail to do so. In Estonia, it is the schools which have a role in overseeing compliance and the responsibility to take action if an employer does not meet their obligations. In Denmark, the Ministry of Education supervises college apprenticeship provision and trade committees monitor employers’ training provision.

In some cases, the company has to be accredited in order to offer apprenticeships. In the Netherlands, for example, companies have to pass a validation process at the outset and renew this every four years, the costs of which are funded by the public sector. SBB is the organisation in charge of validation and ensuring the quality of apprenticeships and every year 60,000 accreditations are renewed. The total cost to the public sector of this quality assurance for apprenticeships is estimated at around 40 million Euros at present. In the event that apprentices or schools complain about the quality of any placement, SBB initiates a process to review the validation awarded to the company and may suspend it.

5.4.1.2 Assessment of potential benefits

The following framework is based on a systematic assessment of the types of benefits which would be expected to be associated with the provision of good quality apprenticeships. The benefits of apprenticeships have been explored by a number of studies and research has also considered the factors which determine the quality of apprenticeships although it is not possible to determine the value which is added by specific quality criteria.

Table 3: Overview of benefits

Type	Description	Notes
Direct	Economic benefits to apprentices	Apprentices receive wages (although this is not a common practice in all Member States) and apprenticeships improve young people’s employability. In the long term, those who participate in apprenticeships gain flexibility and mobility and are more likely to receive training and upgrade skills later in life.
	Economic benefits to employers	Employers will benefit from the productive contribution of apprentices during their period of apprenticeship and even beyond if the apprentice will remain in the training company. Additionally, apprenticeships help to mitigate against skill shortages and can also support efforts to upskill and retrain existing staff.
	Fiscal benefits to the state: ▪ This may include	Changes in welfare payments and tax receipts are a transfer payment (due to the corresponding impact on participant incomes). However, the fiscal impact is interesting to assess as it will help to

	saving in benefit payments and increase in tax receipts.	offset the cost of delivery to the public sector.
Indirect	Wider economic benefits	Improved educational attainment levels would be expected to contribute to improved worker productivity and potentially improved labour market functioning and competitiveness.
	Wider social benefits	This relates to the potential societal benefits resulting from increased skills (and perhaps employment) levels, such as increased social inclusion and the benefits to the next generation.
	Spill-over effects on third parties	It is possible that the intervention may result in positive effects on the demand for apprenticeships more widely, with resulting benefits for participants.

Employers benefit from the contribution made by apprentices during their period of apprenticeship (and beyond if they are recruited). Other benefits identified in research¹¹⁵ include reduced costs of recruitment and integrating new staff into the company. Additionally, the OECD¹¹⁶ explains that employers offering apprenticeships enhance their reputation as they may be seen as contributing to the common good. This may indirectly increase profits if companies seen as socially responsible are more likely to sell their products and services. However, as the author points out, these benefits are difficult to measure.

The report published by BusinessEurope (2016)¹¹⁷ finds that there can be a gain if apprentices are subsequently retained, as additional payback comes in terms of immediate productivity upon graduation, fostering an enterprise culture and higher employee loyalty. According to this report, in many cases companies see apprenticeships and the responsibility to train young people as a challenge which motivates them to review their processes and check that each of their processes is of high quality, which helps to improve their overall production or service quality. Additionally, apprenticeships help to avoid skill shortages and can be seen as a very useful approach to upskill and retrain internal staff.

Well-designed apprenticeship schemes help meet enterprises' skills needs and appropriately take into account costs in order to encourage enterprises to invest in apprenticeships. Cost-benefit analyses of apprenticeships have been carried out in Germany¹¹⁸, the United Kingdom¹¹⁹ and Spain¹²⁰. The studies demonstrate that benefits for employers will vary depending on factors such as the duration of the apprenticeship scheme and time spent in the

¹¹⁵ For example, Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013). *The effectiveness and costs-benefits of apprenticeships: Results of the quantitative analysis*

¹¹⁶ OECD (2017). *Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 153, OECD Publishing, Paris

¹¹⁷ Business Europe (2016). *ibid*

¹¹⁸ Dionisius et al. (2008). *Cost and Benefit of Apprenticeship Training: A Comparison of Germany and Switzerland*, IZA DP No. 3465, available in <http://ftp.iza.org/dp3465.pdf>

¹¹⁹ McIntosh, S. (2007). *A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Apprenticeships and Other Vocational Qualifications*, DfES Research Report 834

¹²⁰ Walter and Muhlemann (2015). *Apprenticeship training in Spain – a cost-effective model for firms?*, Bertelsmann Stiftung, available at http://www.fundacionbertelsmann.org/fileadmin/files/Fundacion/Publicaciones/ROI_web_EN.pdf

enterprise, the wage of the apprentices, the retention of apprentices and support in administrative management.

Work undertaken in Germany has estimated the costs and benefits of apprenticeship training to employers. This shows that in the short-term the costs generally outweigh the benefits but over time this situation changes, particularly as hiring apprentices once their training is complete can lead to substantial savings in recruitment costs and help companies to better meet their demand for skilled workers. Overall, the study concludes that, in normal circumstances, apprenticeship training yields a net benefit for employers¹²¹.

The most direct benefit for apprentices is the wage they receive during the apprenticeships (which is correspondingly a cost to employers). According to the literature, apprenticeships also enhance young people's employability and increase their future employment prospects.

Better prospects on the labour market for apprentices

In European countries where the apprenticeship system is most developed, young people have better labour market outcomes than in other countries^{122,123,124}. In addition, national studies based on individual data also find evidence that apprenticeships ensure smoother transition from school-to-work compared to vocational school-based education, or compared to entering the labour market immediately after compulsory education. Apprenticeship graduates (16-35 year-olds) are less likely to be unemployed than those who have not completed upper-secondary education, and have similar chances of being employed as those who graduated from post-secondary programmes¹²⁵. Apprentices achieve better job matches¹²⁶; higher wages; shorter periods of unemployment before finding a first job^{127,128,129} or a longer duration of first job¹³⁰ compared to individuals with low educational attainment or school-based vocational education.

¹²¹ <https://www.bibb.de/en/25852.php>

¹²² Van der Velden, R., Welter, R., Wolbers, M. (2001), 'The Integration of Young People into the Labour Market within the European Union: the Role of Institutional Settings', *Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market Working Paper* n.7E

¹²³ Quintini, G., Martin, S., (2006). 'Starting Well or Losing their Way? The Position of Youth in the Labour Market in OECD Countries', *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, n. 39, OECD, Paris

¹²⁴ Quintini, G. and T. Manfredi (2009), 'Going Separate Ways? School-to-Work Transitions in the United States and Europe', *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 90, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/22171770044>

¹²⁵ Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013). *ibid*

¹²⁶ Ryan, P., (2001), 'The school-to-work transition: A cross-national perspective' *Journal of Economic Literature*, 39 (1), 34-9

¹²⁷ Ryan, P., (1998) 'Is apprenticeship better? a review of the economic evidence', *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 50(2), 289-329

¹²⁸ Bonnal, L., Mendes, S., Sofer, C. (2002). 'School-to-work transition: Apprenticeship versus vocational school in France', *International Journal of Manpower*, 23 (5), 426-442

¹²⁹ Parey, M. (2009), *Vocational Schooling versus Apprenticeship Training. Evidence from Vacancy Data*

¹³⁰ Bellmann, L., Bender, S., Hornsteiner, U. (2000). *Job tenure of two cohorts of young German men 1979-1990: An analysis of the (West-)German employment statistic register sample concerning multivariate failure times and unobserved heterogeneity*, IZA Discussion Paper, n. 10

McIntosh (2007)¹³¹, in a study based in United Kingdom, also found higher wage levels among those who hold an apprenticeship qualification than those who only completed elementary education.

According to the OECD¹³², young apprenticeship graduates earn more than similar adults with education below upper-secondary level and more than those who graduated from academic upper-secondary education (and have no higher qualifications). In contrast, they earn less than those with post-secondary and tertiary education and training. Analysis of the apprenticeship system following the 2003 Biagi Reform show how being an apprentice increase the probability of obtaining a permanent contract; 16% higher if compared with young fixed-term workers¹³³.

In the long term, those who participate in apprenticeships gain flexibility and mobility and are more likely to receive training and upgrade skills later in life. Apprenticeships also help to make qualifications more widely available and help individuals to develop or change career. For example, in Germany the unemployment rate of skilled workers was 6.6 percent in 2009 and fell to 5 percent in 2012, while the unemployment rate of unskilled workers was 19.0 percent in 2012¹³⁴.

Finally, Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013)¹³⁵ highlight that non-monetised benefits result from increased happiness and satisfaction because of the intrinsic value of work for individuals ('doing work for its own sake'), improved long-term wealth, health and family circumstances due to the improved socio-economic position relative to not having undertaken apprenticeships.

However, it is important to note that the apprenticeship-related advantages tend to be higher at the beginning of working life and then decline or even disappear over the longer term.

Estimates from Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013)¹³⁶ taking into account cross-country calculation of Eurostat LFS micro-data and LMP databases indicate that **one percentage point increase in apprenticeship coverage rate is associated with a 0.95% increase in youth employment rate**, and a 0.8% reduction in the youth unemployment rate. Such studies confirm the positive benefits that apprenticeships entail for individuals and for society as a whole, while underestimating further non-monetary benefits for individuals and firms, such as individual well-being and fresh, innovative ideas in the workplace. In the long term, apprenticeships schemes help to reduce unemployment rates and increase productivity, and encompass benefits including better health and lower criminality rates.

¹³¹ McIntosh, S. (2007). *ibid*

¹³² OECD. (2017), *ibid*

¹³³ Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013). *ibid*

¹³⁴ Business Europe (2016). *ibid*

¹³⁵ Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013). *ibid*

¹³⁶ Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013). *ibid*

5.4.2 5.4.1.3 Key variables for estimating costs and benefits

This section considers how the size of the apprenticeship sector and existing arrangements for quality and effectiveness at national level have an impact on potential costs and benefits from a European Framework.

Estimating the size of the apprenticeship sector

For the purposes of the Recommendation apprenticeships are understood as forms of formal vocational education and training schemes that combine substantial work-based learning in companies and other workplaces with learning based in education or training institutions, that lead to nationally recognised qualifications. In most cases these are characterised by a contractual relationship between the apprentice, the employer or the vocational education and training institution, with the apprentice being paid or compensated for his/her work¹³⁷.

However, there are different types of vocational programmes at national level which combine work with theoretical study to promote employment and employability. Apprenticeships are typically embedded in VET programmes. However, not all VET programmes provide apprenticeships, and therefore the number of apprentices cannot be approximated by the number of pupils enrolled in VET programmes as this would be a significant overestimate. This makes it difficult to estimate the size of the sector at EU level.

Eurostat collects statistical data on number “pupils enrolled in upper secondary and post-secondary school and work-based learning programmes by programme orientation, sex, type of institution and intensity of participation”. However, it lacks of data for 8 Member States in upper secondary level, and 12 Member States in post-secondary education level. For reasons of data accuracy and completion, the database is not sufficient in order to estimate the total number of apprentices at EU level.

In order to estimate the number of apprentices across the EU, three potentially relevant datasets have been identified and are summarised in the following table.

Table 4: Data sources

Source of data	Eurostat (education data)	Eurostat (EULFS, demographic data)	OECD (EULFS)
Extracted on	05/04/2017	28/03/2017	05/04/2017
Sex	Total	Total	Total
Age	15-24	15-24	15-24
Year	Eurostat: 2013	Eurostat: 2013	OECD: 2013 (last year with data)
Definition of apprentice	Pupils enrolled in upper secondary and post	Number of young people in employment with	Number of young people that were students or

¹³⁷ [Cedefop \(2014\) Developing apprenticeships, Briefing note, May 2014](#)

	secondary non-tertiary education in school and work-based vocational programmes	temporary contracts, being the reason 'in education or training' with education attainment levels ISCED 0-4 and no response	apprentices in regular education during the last 4 weeks prior to the survey interview and participated in formal workplace training during the reference week of the survey on the basis of a temporary contract
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper secondary education - school and work-based vocational programmes (educ_uoe_enrs04) • Post-secondary non-tertiary education - school and work-based vocational programmes (educ_uoe_enrs07) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary employees by education attainment (ISCED 0-4 and no response) (lfsa_etgaed) • Reason temporary contract (lfsa_etgar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in apprenticeships • Population 15-24 years (Eurostat, demo_pjan)

As none of the available datasets provide an exact match to the definition of an apprenticeship they are unable to provide an accurate estimate of the size of the sector, although this data could be expected to give some indication of the relative popularity of apprenticeships across different Member States. Desk research and interviews have also highlighted differences in the definition of apprenticeships at national level.

For some countries the data differs widely among the three datasets (e.g. Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Sweden and United Kingdom) whereas for others differences are narrow (Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany). None of the sources provide data for Bulgaria¹³⁸ and Romania¹³⁹.

Further caveats which apply to this analysis are:

- Use of cross-sectional data: this can only provide information on the stock of apprentices at a given point in time; some of these will drop out and will not achieve the qualification. The number of young people enrolled in apprenticeships can also dramatically change over time as a result of policy shifts.
- Reference year: the most recent year of available data in the OECD database is 2013, while Eurostat provides data up to 2015 (although 2013 has been used for consistency). The estimates provided can be considered to be valid in 2016 if we can reasonably assume that participation is not likely to have changed substantially in recent years. In this regard, the data from Eurostat from 2015 do not vary dramatically compared to 2013.

¹³⁸ However, according to a report produced by Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013) in 2011/2012 there were 50,078 placements/beneficiaries.

¹³⁹ However, according to the report produced by Ecorys, IES and IRS (2013) in 2012 there were only 60 placements/beneficiaries.

- Labour market conditions: the size of the population in apprenticeships will be impacted by the state of the economy as people will tend to enter the labour market at an early stage in economically buoyant conditions (and potentially participate less in apprenticeships as the opportunity costs would increase).

Table 5: Estimated number of apprentices - estimate of number of students in apprenticeship-type studies by EU 27 Member States, secondary education, 2009 (thousands)

	Apprenticeship students (according to national definitions) (1)	Apprenticeship-type scheme students (2)	Total Apprenticeship-type students (1+2)
Austria	132.0	170.0	302.0
Belgium	22.2	613.3	635.6
Bulgaria	1.3	163.5	164.8
Cyprus	0.3	0.9	1.2
Czech Republic	-	347.4	347.4
Denmark	95.0	-	127.7
Estonia	0.6	-	0.6
Finland	70.0	181.9	251.9
France	427.7	605.6	1,033.2
Germany	1,659.3	25.4	1,684.7
Greece	14.0	-	14.0
Hungary	45.6	10.9	56.5
Ireland	26.2	30.0	56.2
Italy	644.6	976.6	1,621.2
Latvia	0.4	34.9	35.3
Lithuania	0.3	22.4	22.7
Luxembourg	7.3	6.0	13.3
Malta	0.7	7.0	7.7
Netherlands	171.9	351.8	523.8
Poland	-	851.1	851.1
Portugal	14.6	110.0	124.7
Romania	-	-	-
Slovakia	2.0	-	2.0
Slovenia	64.2	-	64.2
Spain	-	271.3	271.3
Sweden	7.0	170.9	177.9

United Kingdom	279.7	749.1	1,028.8
European Union (27)	3,686.9	5,700.2	9,419.8

Source: European Commission (2012), Apprenticeship supply in the Member States of the European Union

This classification provides some indication of the relative importance of apprenticeships and also the extent to which an established apprenticeship system or sector is already in place.

Existing arrangements on quality and effectiveness at national level

The report *Cross-country overview of apprenticeships - Findings on EAfA*¹⁴⁰ analyses national commitments on apprenticeships and the progress on reforms related to activities to improve the supply, the quality and the image of apprenticeships based on a survey of government representatives in Member States, EFTA and Candidate Countries. These findings provide some indication of the baseline situation (i.e. the measures that have already been taken), as reported by the country representatives. Focusing on activities designed to improve quality suggests that the most common action has been work to strengthen partnerships followed by design of qualifications to meet labour market needs, steps to raise the quality of training for teachers/trainers and changes to VET curricula.

Table 6: Main type of activities implemented to improve the quality of apprenticeships¹⁴¹

Type of activity	Countries mentioning this activity (out of 32)
Strengthening partnerships between education and training providers and employers	AL, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EL, ES, DE, FR, HU, IE, LV, MT, ME, NL, NO, PL, RO, SK, SI, TK (22 in total)
Introducing or improving mentoring and guidance at the work place	BE, FR, DE, HU, MT, NO, RO (7 in total)
Raising the quality of training of teachers and trainers	AT, BE, DK, FI, HU, LT, LUX, MT, ME, PL, RO, SI, SE (13 in total)
Changes or modernisations related to VET curricula	AL, AT, HR, DK, IE, LV, LT, MT, ME, NO, PL, SK, TK (13 in total)
Improvements to assessment and certification of learning outcomes	AL, CZ, DK, IE, LV, MT, PL (7 countries)
Accreditation of companies to ensure minimum quality conditions	AL, HR, LV, MT, ME, PL, TK (7 in total) ¹⁴²
Design qualifications to meet labour market needs	BE, BG, DK, EE, EL, IE, LV, LT, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, TK (14 in total)
Reducing barriers for the learner to access further education (permeability)	AT, DK, FR, DE, IE, PL, SI (7 countries)

¹⁴⁰ ICF International (2016). *Cross-country overview of apprenticeships - Findings on EAfA*

¹⁴¹ ICF International (2016)

¹⁴² From other sources it has become evident that also NL has an accreditation system.

Training standards based on learning outcomes	AT, EL, LV, LUX, MT (5 countries)
Other	EL, TK (2 countries)

In those countries with well-established quality frameworks, the cost of implementing an EU level framework is likely to be less significant than in countries that are currently lacking a quality framework. However, desk research has shown that the nature and scope of the steps taken to ensure the quality of apprenticeships varies from country to country and further clarification of the content and coverage of the proposed EU level quality framework (and the extent to which it will be prescriptive about the standards to be attained as opposed to leaving this to be determined at national level) will be required in order to fully consider the additional cost implications for Member States.

5.4.2.1 Summary on costs and benefits

The previous sub-sections offer examples of where costs have been incurred in relation to compliance, administration and implementation follow-up of measures designed to assure the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships.

The European Framework will help to underpin the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships across Member States. The additional cost to Member States for the implementation of the Framework **will largely depend on two factors: the size of the apprenticeship sector** and on how far the requirements reflect measures which are already in place. The level of costs, and who bears them, would differ depending upon the specific details of the quality framework which has been put in place (including the roles and responsibilities of different actors), the size of the sector in the country and the cost-sharing arrangements in place.

A study launched by the Commission to provide evidence on the potential impact of the implementation of the European framework in each Member State in terms of costs indicates that approximately 8 Member States are well advanced in having put in place systems which would cover most of the criteria mentioned: Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia and the UK. When including the Czech Republic, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden, 14 seem to have covered half or more of the criteria in one way or another. Given the many variables and the absence of any supporting data to allow to approximate the implementing costs for each individual criteria, the study could not estimate the additional costs that would be triggered for individual Member States to adjust their system as a follow-up to the European framework. Also, the costs will depend on the criteria finally agreed by the Member States and the indicators that need to be developed to measure implementation and progress.

The costs should be considered alongside the existing research evidence which shows that under certain conditions the benefits of apprenticeships are likely to outweigh the costs; this includes evidence from Germany where an established quality framework is in place¹⁴³. The OECD emphasises the value of putting in place well-designed apprenticeships, which can

¹⁴³ <https://www.bibb.de/en/25852.php>

provide benefits for learners, employers and society at large. For example, the apprentices will have a smoother transition to the labour market and employers will have access to the right skills to further develop their companies. This leads to benefits in the form of employment and economic growth.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that in the context of the EU policy framework for actions to support Youth Employment (ESF, Youth Employment Initiative, Erasmus + etc.), significant funding is made available under the current MFF both for structural reforms for setting up quality and effective apprenticeships and individual support to key stakeholders such as employers, VET providers, trade unions or apprentices themselves. The European Commission will continue to support the reform process in Member States, particularly in relation to apprenticeships respecting the criteria regarding the learning and working conditions as well as the framework conditions through existing funding instruments. Under the European Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020), some 12 billion EUR are foreseen for actions supporting the sustainable labour market integration of young people and 6 billion EUR for vocational education and training measures, all of which could also cover support for apprenticeships. Other programmes that could support implementation of the framework are the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Erasmus+ (providing enhanced opportunities of mobility of apprentices and teachers and trainers in apprenticeships, as well as mutual learning among Member States), the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME), the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 2.2, "EU funding"

Annex 1 – Overview of key reference documents

This table provides an overview of how the criteria on quality and effective apprenticeships build on key reference documents elaborated previously by European institutions and stakeholders.

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships	European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships (EYF) (2012)	Council Declaration: 10 guiding principles (2013)	European Quality Framework for Traineeships: 10 headings (2014)	Cedefop analytical framework for thematic country reviews (2015)	20 guiding principles for apprenticeships and WBL (ET2020 WG on VET) (2015)	ETUC 20 Quality Standards (2016)	BusinessEurope: 15 Recommendations under 4 headings (2016)	ACVT Opinion (Annex): 12 Elements on Apprenticeships and 4 on partnership approach (2016)
Criteria for learning and working conditions								
1. Written contract	Article 3: Written and legally binding contract including main principles, credit points, guidance and clear evaluation criteria		2. Conclusion: of a written traineeship agreement 9. Rights and obligations (e.g. confidentiality, intellectual property rights)	0. Distinguishing features 9. Apprentice`s working and learning conditions		7. Formal contracts		4 .The contract should spell out the rights and obligations of the employer and apprentice - working conditions and training perspective
2. Learning outcomes	Article 1: A. should be primarily be a learning experience Article 2:	e) Strong work-based high quality learning and training component	1. Learning and training objectives 10. Reasonable duration	3. Training content and learning outcome 10. Responsiveness	7. Right balance company specific & general skills needs 17. Ensuring the	6. Responsiveness to labour markets 8. Personal development		2. Respond to labour market needs and support personal development 3. wide range of

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships	European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships (EYF) (2012)	Council Declaration: 10 guiding principles (2013)	European Quality Framework for Traineeships: 10 headings (2014)	Cedefop analytical framework for thematic country reviews (2015)	20 guiding principles for apprenticeships and WBL (ET2020 WG on VET) (2015)	ETUC 20 Quality Standards (2016)	BusinessEurope: 15 Recommendations under 4 headings (2016)	ACVT Opinion (Annex): 12 Elements on Apprenticeships and 4 on partnership approach (2016)
	Length and tasks corresponding to learning objectives			to labour market	content of VET programmes is responsive to changing skills needs in companies and in the society	and career opportunities		sectors and occupations
					19. Fair, valid and authentic assessment of learning outcomes (link to quality assurance)	16. Competence based / duration		5. Strong work-based component should complement the specific on-the-job skills with broader transversal & transferable skills
	Article 1: A. should be a primarily learning experience Article 2: Guidance of a competent supervisor		5. Designate a supervisor for trainees	6. Requirements and support to teachers and in-company trainers	10. Support companies to assign qualified trainers company trainers & tutors	15. Teachers, Trainers & Mentors	Excellence – 4) Teachers & Trainers sufficiently trained and up-to-date	11. Support for teachers, trainers and mentors
3. Pedagogical support					14. Raising the quality of VET teachers			

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships	European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships (EYF) (2012)	Council Declaration: 10 guiding principles (2013)	European Quality Framework for Traineeships: 10 headings (2014)	Cedefop analytical framework for thematic country reviews (2015)	20 guiding principles for apprenticeships and WBL (ET2020 WG on VET) (2015)	ETUC 20 Quality Standards (2016)	BusinessEurope: 15 Recommendations under 4 headings (2016)	ACVT Opinion (Annex): 12 Elements on Apprenticeships and 4 on partnership approach (2016)
4. Workplace component	Article 1: Provide recognised working experience	e) Strong work-based high quality learning and training component		3. Training content and learning outcome	20. Supporting professional continuous development of in-company trainers	14. Balance between work-based and school-based training		5. substantial part of an apprentice's training should be spent in the workplace
5. Pay and/or compensation	Article 2: Right to receive reimbursement of costs + decent remuneration not below the EU poverty line or national minimum wage	f) Adequate remuneration	8. Clarify whether an allowance or compensation is applicable	0. Distinguishing features 9. Apprentice working and learning conditions		9. Pay & Social protection		6.A. should receive pay or compensation and commitment of the apprentice

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships	European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships (EYF) (2012)	Council Declaration: 10 guiding principles (2013)	European Quality Framework for Traineeships: 10 headings (2014)	Cedefop analytical framework for thematic country reviews (2015)	20 guiding principles for apprenticeships and WBL (ET2020 WG on VET) (2015)	ETUC 20 Quality Standards (2016)	BusinessEurope: 15 Recommendations under 4 headings (2016)	ACVT Opinion (Annex): 12 Elements on Apprenticeships and 4 on partnership approach (2016)
6. Social protection	Article 3: Inclusion in social security system	f) Social protection	7. Health and accident insurance	9. Apprentice working and learning conditions		9. Pay & Social protection		4. including, where appropriate, the way in which apprentices are covered by social protection
7. Work, health and safety conditions	Article 3: 1. Health and safety Article 3: Working hours		6. Working conditions	9. Apprentice working and learning conditions		10. Safe working environment		
Criteria for framework condition								
8. Regulatory framework	Article 4.1: Legal framework and recognition of skills	a) Regulatory framework		1. Place in the education and training system 2. Governance structures	1. legal framework	2. Regulatory Framework	Governance – 3) framework conditions	1. Clear and appropriate regulatory framework
9. Involvement of social partners	Article 4.3: Partnerships	b) National partnerships, social partners		2. Governance structures 4. Cooperation	2. structured dialogue	3. Social partnership and governance	Governance – 2) Involvement of enterprises and	13. Partnerships are a pre-condition for

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships	European Quality Charter on Internships & Apprenticeships (EYF) (2012)	Council Declaration: 10 guiding principles (2013)	European Quality Framework for Traineeships: 10 headings (2014)	Cedefop analytical framework for thematic country reviews (2015)	20 guiding principles for apprenticeships and WBL (ET2020 WG on VET) (2015)	ETUC 20 Quality Standards (2016)	BusinessEurope: 15 Recommendations under 4 headings (2016)	ACVT Opinion (Annex): 12 Elements on Apprenticeships and 4 on partnership approach (2016)
				between learning venues	3. strengthened role of social partners 4. Systemic cooperation VET schools & companies 18. Fostering mutual trust and respect between A. partners		employers' organisations Governance - 3) Involvement of social partners Meeting enterprises' skills needs – 2) mutual learning & exchange of knowledge and ideas Meeting enterprises' skills needs -3) National pilot actions to develop public-private partnerships (digital skills)	quality A. 15. labour market needs to be taken into account 16. involvement of relevant stakeholders 15. Involvement of social partners
10. Support for companies (cost-sharing arrangements)		f) Funding & cost-sharing		5. Participation of and support to companies	5. Sharing costs and benefits 6. Support	5. Equitable cost-sharing between employers &	Governance – 4) Reduce the burden of accreditation	7. Cost-effective set up enabling a return on

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
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				7. Financing and cost-sharing mechanisms	measures for SMEs 8. Support for companies with no experience 9. Support for companies providing A. for disadvantaged learners	public authorities	procedures for enterprises	investment 8. Cost-sharing approach 9. Support for SMEs
11. Flexible pathways and mobility	Article 3: Smooth integration in labour market 4.1 Systems for certification and recognition 4.1 Support youth labour	c) Adequate integration through a system of recognised qualifications and competences d) Quality assurance and routes to progress (7) Facilitate cross-border	13. Proper recognition 15. Facilitate	3. Training content and learning outcomes 1. Place in the ET system	11. Promoting permeability and other educational career pathways	4. Equal opportunities for all 13. Solid learning base 17. Certification & recognition 18. Progression 19. Recognition of informal and non-formal learning	Governance – 4) Flexible approach to the recognition of prior learning Excellence – 1) flexibility and permeability Excellence – 2) Higher VET	12. Different types and levels of education pathways incl. higher VET

OVERVIEW - CRITERIA FOR QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE APPRENTICESHIPS								
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	mobility	mobility opportunities	cross-border mobility and EURES			20. Mobility at the national and European levels	Excellence – 3) Enhancing mobility	
12. Career guidance and awareness raising	4.1 Promote exchange of best practices	h) Opportunities for all, career guidance i) Awareness raising	4. Promote best practices	9. Apprentice working and learning conditions	13. Career guidance 12. Improving the image by promoting excellence 15. Awareness-raising activities	11. Guidance & counselling	Promoting apprenticeships – 1) , 2) Career guidance Promoting apprenticeships – 3) and 4) Promotional activities and campaigns	10. Career guidance/course offering
13. Transparency			14. Transparency requirements					
14. Quality assurance and graduate tracking		d) Quality assurance and Progress routes		8. Quality assurance 10. Responsiveness to labour market	16. Clear framework for quality assurance	12. Quality assurance procedures		

Annex 2 - Potential set of indicators

Criteria for quality and effective apprenticeships	Potential indicators
1. Written contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the contract with the employer cover the following: duration, employer's obligations, apprentices' rights and obligations, learning outcomes, pay, hours, holiday entitlement and termination? • Does the contract with the training institution cover the following: duration, apprentices' rights and obligations, learning outcomes and termination?
2. Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the learning outcomes broader than the needs of companies? • Are curricula regularly updated? Are they developed based on existing qualification standards and/or occupational profiles? • Are apprenticeship schemes developed in the light of future employment needs reflecting national and/or sectoral priorities?
3. Pedagogical support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the company assign a qualified staff member (tutor) to accompany apprentices? • Do apprentices have access to guidance and counselling services? • Do apprenticeship schemes ensure that teachers and trainers have access and support to continuing training to carry out their technical and pedagogical obligations both in training institutions and in companies?
4. Workplace component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the apprenticeship scheme contain guidelines for the coordination of work-based and school-based training? • Does the apprenticeship scheme indicate the percentage or training time (as part of work based learning) spent in the company? <i>Does it provide for at least half of time to be spent learning in the workplace?</i> • Does the training plan ensure that learning in the company covers the full set of practical skills and competences required for a qualification?
5. Pay and/or compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do apprentices receive pay and/or compensation of indirect costs from the employer, as defined in the written agreement between the company and the apprentice? • Is the pay or compensation compliant with collective bargaining agreements, and/or the national and/or sectoral minimum legal wage? • Do apprentices receive any other financial support? • Are apprentices exempt from paying tuition fees?
6. Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are apprentices covered by social protection regulations? • Are the apprentices protected in case of company failure (e.g. bankruptcy) to provide the training?
7. Work, health and safety conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are apprentices covered by health and safety regulations in the workplace, and are these regulations implemented? <i>Are apprentices informed and trained in this field?</i> • When appropriate, are apprentices provided with personal protective equipment? • Does the contract set the working hours?
8. Regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear legal framework enabling apprenticeship partners to act effectively and guaranteeing mutual rights and responsibilities? • In the event that different levels of legislation (e.g. national and regional levels) are involved, are the strategic and operational functions clearly defined and adequately allocated?

Criteria for quality and effective apprenticeships	Potential indicators
9. Involvement of social partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a structured, continuous dialogue between all apprenticeship partners, including a transparent way of coordination and decision-making? • Do employers' organisations play a key role in engaging and supporting companies? • Are employer and employee representatives actively engaged at all levels?
10. Support for companies (cost-sharing arrangements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are apprenticeship schemes supported financially by public authorities? • Is there a system of non-financial support to companies (especially SMEs)? E.g. support in the accreditation procedures • Is there recognition, or even award, for companies that provide quality apprenticeships?
11. Flexible pathways and mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there mechanisms for the validation of prior learning – formal, non-formal, and informal? • Do apprenticeship schemes provide qualifications which are formally recognised within National Qualification Frameworks <i>and/or the European Qualification Framework</i>? • Do apprenticeships offer both horizontal and vertical pathways to <i>career development</i>, further specialisation or education at higher levels? • Do apprenticeship schemes provide opportunities for the mobility of apprentices at national and European levels?
12. Career guidance and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the apprentice have access to career guidance from a qualified professional? • Do employers' organisations and, where appropriate, economic chambers provide information, guidance as well as motivation building actions targeting enterprises? • Are there strategies, initiatives in marketing apprenticeship and informing companies of the benefits of taking apprentices, related possibilities and available incentives?
13. Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there minimum requirements for companies willing to provide apprenticeships places and/or an accreditation procedure? • Publication of offers? •
14. Quality assurance and graduate tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are training institutions and companies subject to quality assurance inspections carried out by independent bodies? • Does the quality framework ensure a regular monitoring of the apprenticeship market, including anticipation of skills needs, and short-term and medium-term forecasts of supply and demand for apprenticeship places? • Are the responsibilities for quality assurance shared? Is it clear who is in charge of what aspects of quality assurance? • Do the public authorities produce statistics to show the transition rate from apprenticeship to employment, <i>tracking the career progression of the apprentices</i>? • Are ex-ante and/or ex-post impact evaluation of apprenticeships in place?

Annex 3 – Overview of apprenticeship schemes in 24 European countries

Name of the apprenticeship scheme ¹⁴⁵ (in the national language and English)		Educational level or type of qualification at which the scheme leads to	Group
AT	Lehre / duale Ausbildung [Dual apprenticeship]	Upper-secondary	A
AT	Überbetriebliche Lehre [Supra-company apprenticeship]	Upper-secondary	B
BE-fr	Formation en alternance [Dual training]	Upper-secondary	A
BE-nl	Deeltijdsberoeps Secundaironderwijs [Part-time vocational secondary education]	Upper-secondary	A
BE-nl	Leertijd [Apprenticeships for SMEs]	Upper-secondary	A
CY	Νέα Σύγχρονη Μαθητεία [New Modern Apprenticeship]	Upper-secondary	A
DE	Berufsausbildung [Dual VET]	Upper-secondary	A
DK	Lærlingeuddannelse [Apprenticeships]	Upper-secondary	A
EE	Töökohapõhine õppevorm [Workplace based learning]	Upper-secondary and higher	A
EL	ΕΠΑΣ Μαθητείας ΟΑΕΔ [EPAS apprenticeships]	Upper-secondary	A
ES	Formación profesional dual [Apprenticeships in Dual VET]	Upper-secondary and higher	A
FI	Ammatillinen perustutkinto [Apprenticeship training]	Upper secondary and higher	A
FR	Contrat d'apprentissage [Apprenticeship contract]	Upper-secondary and higher	A
FR	Contrat de professionnalisation [Professionalising contract]	Sectoral scheme	E
HR	Jedinstven model obrazovanja [Unified Model of Education]	Upper-secondary	A
HU	Tanulószerződésen alapuló duális szakképzés [Dual Vocational System Based On The Apprenticeship Training Contract]	Upper-secondary	A
IE	Apprenticeship	Upper-secondary	A
IS	<i>Iðmenntun [Apprenticeship]</i>	<i>Upper-secondary</i>	A
IT	Apprendistato per la qualifica e il diploma professionale [Type 1] [Apprenticeship for a vocational qualification and diploma]	Upper-secondary	A
IT	Apprendistato professionalizzante [Type 2] [Occupation-oriented apprenticeship]	Sectoral scheme	E
IT	Apprendistato di alta formazione e ricerca [Type 3]	Higher level and sectoral	C ¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Source: Cedefop. See also chapter 3.2, in particular table 1.

¹⁴⁶ Apprenticeship type 3 in Italy also leads to non-educational qualification.

	[Higher education and research apprenticeship]	scheme	
LU	Contrat d'apprentissage [Apprenticeship contract]	Upper-secondary	A
LV	Amata mācekļis [Craft apprenticeship]	Sectoral scheme	E ¹⁴⁷
NL	Beroepsbegeleidende Leerweg [Dual pathway]	Upper-secondary	A
NO	Videregåendeopplæring, yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram [Upper-secondary vocational programmes]	Upper-secondary	A
PL	Przygotowanie zawodowe młodocianych [vocational preparation of young people]	Upper-secondary	A
PT	Cursos profissionais [Professional VET programmes]	Upper-secondary	B
PT	Cursos de aprendizagem [Apprenticeship programmes]	Upper-secondary	B
PT	Cursos de educação e formação – CEF [Vocational courses at upper secondary level]	Upper-secondary	B
PT	Educação e formação para adultos – EFA [Adult education and training]	Upper-secondary	B
PT	Cursos de especialização tecnológica – CET [Technological specialisation programmes]	Post-secondary	D
RO	Ucenicia la locul de munca [Apprenticeship at the workplace]	Upper-secondary	A ¹⁴⁸
RO	Invatamant profesional in sistem dual [VET in dual system]	Upper-secondary	B ¹⁴⁹
SE	Gymnasial lärlingsutbildning [Apprenticeships in upper secondary]	Upper-secondary	B ¹⁵⁰
SE	YA-anställningar [Work introduction agreements]	Sectoral scheme	E
SE	Kompletterande utbildninga [supplementary apprenticeships]	Sectoral scheme	F
UK	Apprenticeships (England, Wales, NI)	Upper-secondary and higher	A
UK	Modern Apprenticeships (Scotland)	Upper-secondary and higher	A

Source: Cedefop

Note: there are no mainstream apprenticeship schemes in BG, CZ, LT, SK, SI and MT

¹⁴⁷ A bilateral contract is signed between the apprentice and the master craftsmen/crafts company. The apprentice can receive salary (frequently from the apprenticeship second year) paid by the crafts master or the company during the apprenticeship, but it is not mandatory

¹⁴⁸ Since the introduction of Law No 179/2013, apprenticeship at workplace can be organised for qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4 on the NQF. Learners receive a salary paid by the firm. However, the firm may receive an amount equal to the salary from the state budget for unemployment insurance monthly and upon request during the course of the apprenticeship contract.

¹⁴⁹ Learners receive an allowance from the state budget (budget for education).

¹⁵⁰ The contract and remuneration are foreseen but not compulsory. In the 2016-2017 academic year 40 apprentices have an employment contract and a salary.