



# **Work-Based Learning in Europe**

*Practices and Policy Pointers*

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## Executive Summary

This policy handbook is one of the European Commission contributions to strengthen work-based learning (WBL) in initial vocational education and training (IVET) and is a follow-up to the mandate of the Bruges Communiqué to develop a “vademecum/study on successful work-based learning models”. The aim of the Commission was to produce policy guidance illustrated by concrete practices from the Member States which can be used by policymakers and practitioners to introduce or reinforce work-based learning elements in vocational education and training (VET).

The document focuses on WBL in initial vocational training and this work will be complemented by Cedefop’s review of work-based learning approaches in continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and research on the effectiveness of various forms of work-based learning in CVET. As 50 percent of young people in Europe at upper secondary level are enrolled in VET, the document focuses mainly on upper secondary VET.

**Chapter 1** presents the features of the three main WBL models in Europe; these are apprenticeships, on-the-job training periods in companies and WBL integrated in a school-based programme.

**Chapter 2** summarises the benefits of high quality WBL, highlighting the win-win situation for learners, employers, VET schools and society at large.

**Chapter 3** looks at three issues which can be considered as “success factors” for effective WBL: governance, quality and partnerships.

**Chapter 4** describes the main tools for making WBL work in practice and enhance its quality. These tools include overarching guidelines on high-quality work-based learning, quality improvement measures, assessment tools such as student diaries and measures to ensure students’ health and safety at the workplace. Selected examples from Member States illustrate the different chapters.

**Chapter 5** draws the conclusions stressing the need for the active commitment and expertise of not only policymakers, notably those responsible for education and training and for employment/ labour market policy, but also – crucially – of social partners and other key actors.

The document uses information from recent studies and academic discussions, including Cedefop data and analysis, and draws on practical examples from Member States, collected in consultation with the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT). Its main content has been discussed with an expert group including experts from the field of VET and representatives of the ACVT.

## Work-Based Learning In Europe - Time To Move Up a Gear

The European Council in its informal meeting in January 2012 agreed that Member States should increase "substantially the number of apprenticeships and traineeships to ensure that they represent real opportunities for young people, in cooperation with social partners and where possible integrated into education programmes". Experience suggests that this form of education can meet the twin goals of improving individuals' employability and increasing economic competitiveness. Member States and social partners committed themselves in the Bruges Communiqué, the European agenda for cooperation in vocational education and training (VET), to the objective of including work-based learning in all initial VET courses. As mentioned in the Rethinking Education Communication<sup>1</sup> and the Youth Employment Package<sup>2</sup>, the value of VET – and notably of dual training systems - in facilitating youth employment is clearly acknowledged.

Creating opportunities for high-quality work-based learning thus lies at the heart of current European education and training policies. In February 2013, the European Council confirmed that the highest priority should be given to promoting youth employment and invited the Commission to establish a "European Alliance for Apprenticeships". It also announced the creation of a dedicated Youth Employment Initiative, open to regions with high youth unemployment rates, with a financial support of EUR 6 billion. Despite these commitments, the supply of apprenticeship and traineeship places in the EU continues to be under-developed. The picture varies greatly by country. Those enrolled in apprenticeships in the strict sense, represent 33% of secondary VET students. 24 EU countries have schemes in place where learners spend more than 50% of their time learning in the workplace, but the scope of the schemes varies widely<sup>3</sup>. In Austria, Denmark and Germany, work-based learning (typically apprenticeships) predominates, reaching more than 30% of students. In countries such as Spain and Portugal these programmes are less common. Efforts are needed to invest in expanding the offer of apprenticeships and traineeships in countries where opportunities for this type of learning remain very limited.

A lack of workplace experience and the related skills and competences is one of the factors contributing to the "skills gap" in the EU today. While 5.6 million<sup>4</sup> young people in the EU suffer the consequences of unemployment, 36% of employers' report that they struggle to find new recruits with the skills they need. Something is clearly wrong. The need to identify, adapt and adopt practices which can tackle this skills gap is urgent.

Part of the solution can be found in high quality vocational education and training (VET) systems, in which the active participation of employers and a strong element of work-based learning facilitate young people's transition to work by providing the knowledge, skills and competences which they need for a successful first step into the labour market. Countries with strong and attractive VET systems, and notably those with well-established apprenticeship systems, tend overall to perform better in terms of youth employment.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the document "VET for Better Skills, Growth and Jobs" of 20/11/2012, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1036&newsId=1731&furtherNews=yes>

<sup>3</sup> See IKEI (2012) "Apprenticeship supply in the Member States of the European Union", pages 31-32 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6633&type=2&furtherPubs=yes>

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, Unemployment Statistics, April 2013

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics)

The political commitment is there. Country specific recommendations<sup>5</sup> related to workforce skills and competences and VET highlight the need for reforms to better connect VET and labour markets, strengthen the relevance of VET and support transition from VET to work. But the political commitment must be translated into concrete actions at national level. Peer review and mutual learning activities are getting underway.

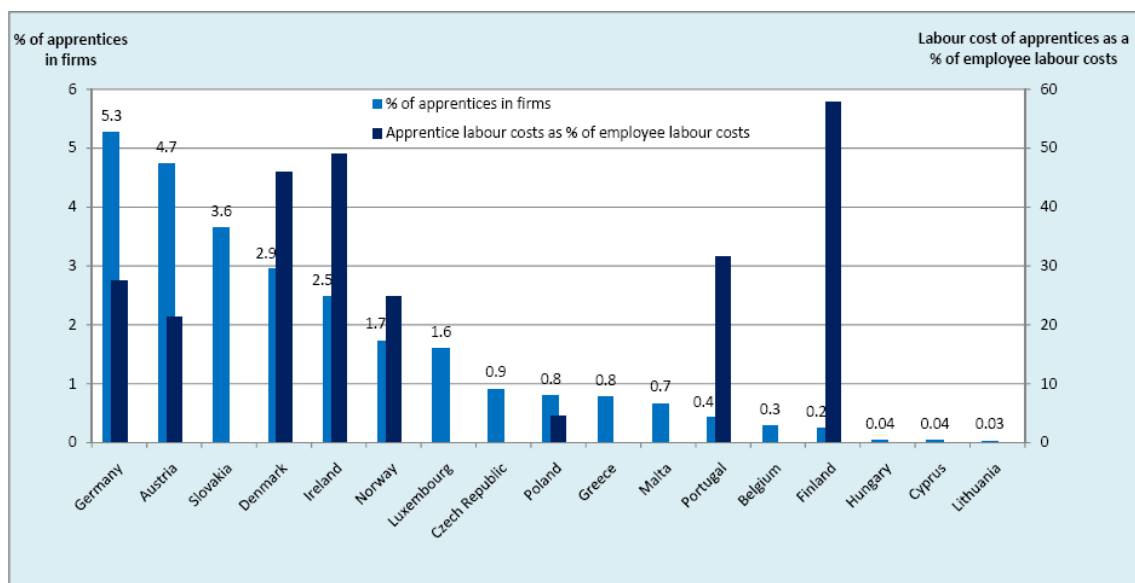
The purpose of this document is to highlight how Member States, in close cooperation with social partners and other stakeholders, can establish or reinforce different types of work-based learning with the goal of tackling youth unemployment through high-quality VET. The document is one of the European Commission contributions to strengthen work-based learning in initial VET and is a follow-up to the mandate of the Bruges Communiqué to analyse successful work-based learning models.

## 1. Models of work-based learning in initial VET in Europe

Work-based learning (WBL) is a fundamental aspect of vocational training – it is directly linked to the mission of VET to help learners acquire knowledge, skills and competences which are essential in working life. In line with the Rethinking Education Communication this document identifies three main models of WBL:

**1.)** Alternance schemes or **apprenticeships** are typically known in Austria and Germany as the "dual system". These are fundamentally based on the integration of companies as training providers together with VET schools or other education/training institutes. In these programmes, learners spend a significant time on training in companies. In parallel, or in "alternating" periods, they acquire general and occupation-related knowledge and often complementary practical skills and key competences in VET schools or other education/training institutes. One in twenty staff is an apprentice in Germany and Austria, but the numbers are far lower in most other European countries, with less than one in every hundred staff being an apprentice in 10 of the 17 countries for which data are available.

**Figure 1: % of apprentices in firms**



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat's Labour cost survey, 2008 data.

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm)

Across EU countries, the terms alternance and apprenticeship are often used interchangeably. These models are characterised by a high intensity or frequency of work integration or real-life work situations. Cedefop defines alternance training as 'education or training combining periods in an educational institution or training centre and in the workplace. The alternance scheme can take place on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis. Depending on the country and applicable status, participants may be contractually linked to the employer and/or receive a remuneration.

Furthermore, apprenticeships, as specific forms of alternance training, are defined as 'systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre'. Apprenticeships differ in several key aspects from other alternance models. For example, they typically include a long-term training period and higher amount of training in the workplace in comparison to other forms of alternance training. A contract links the apprentice to the employer; the apprentice receives a wage or allowance. In addition, the employer must offer apprentice training leading to a specific occupation; social partners take responsibility for the quality of the company-based training of the apprentice.

Countries with strong apprenticeship systems report very good results in terms of young people's transition to employment. Learners acquire the skills they need for a first step into the labour market, while employers train their workforce with a view to supplying the knowledge, skills and competences which they need to stay competitive.

**2.)** A second model of WBL is school-based VET which includes **on-the-job training periods in companies**. On-the-job training periods typically cover internships, work placements or traineeships that are incorporated as a compulsory or optional element of VET programmes leading to formal qualifications. They can be of varying duration but typically represent less than 50% of the training programme duration (often around 25-30% or less). They are primarily intended as effective school-to-work transition mechanisms that allow young people to familiarise themselves with the world of work and thus facilitate their transition from education to employment. In some countries or programmes, they are a prerequisite to be able to successfully complete a VET programme.

**3.)** Finally, WBL that is **integrated in a school-based programme**, through on-site labs, workshops, kitchens, restaurants, junior or practice firms, simulations or real business/industry project assignments. The aim is to create "real life" work environments, establish contacts and /or cooperation with real companies or clients, and develop entrepreneurship competences.

In this model, schools or training centres have the main responsibility for creating close to real life or real life working environments. VET schools are equipped with school workshops, labs, kitchens and restaurants, or cooperate with business and industry to use their facilities. The mandatory share of learning in these working environments varies, depending on the type of VET. Work in practice firms or junior firms and real-life project assignments are frequently used and often form mandatory parts of curricula. Teachers design learning activities in cooperation with companies: they need to develop the skills to work in multidisciplinary teams and focus on work-process orientation, innovation and creation processes.

Many countries in Europe combine these three general models of WBL. Terminology and definitions vary, and even a single term such as "apprenticeship" may have different connotations and underlying concepts. Clear statistical data on WBL is therefore not easy to locate. In general terms, VET at upper-secondary level is mainly school-based. Apprenticeship programmes often coexist with school-based systems.

Work-based learning is also subject to systemic reforms and the European landscape is continuously evolving. The continuing impact of the economic crisis is certainly one trigger for this. Table 2 below captures both the volume and recent development of WBL in VET in countries from which comparable data is available. Brief country specific descriptions of recent policy reforms are included in the annex.

**Table 1: Share (2010) and changes therein (2006-2010) of students in upper secondary VET attending work-based learning programmes**

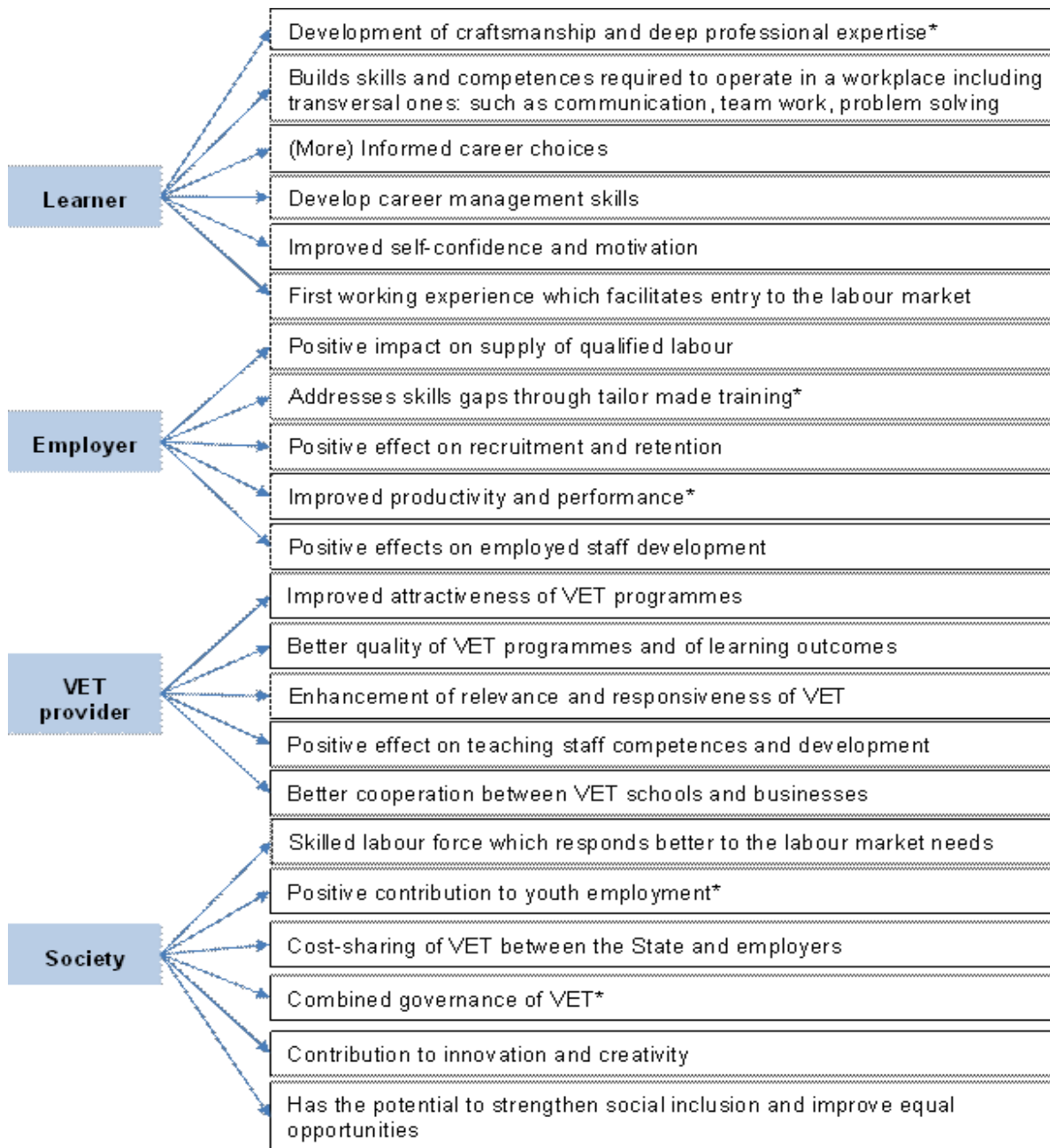
| Current tendency | Share of work-based learning |             |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
|                  | Low                          | High        |
| Increasing       | IE,FI,LU,FR,NO,NL            | AT,HU,DE,CH |
| Decreasing       | BE,ES,PL                     | SK,CZ,IS,DK |

*Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems. Note: Work-based learning refers to UOE definition; for several countries, no reliable data is available.*

## **2. Work-based learning: a win-win situation for learners and companies**

Work-based learning is an example of a win-win situation, and notably when the learning takes place in a company, as with apprenticeships. As presented in figure 2 below, there are benefits from this type of learning for all parties involved, beginning with the learner and the company which hosts the learner and /or cooperates with the VET school/institution, through VET providers themselves and up to the broader level of society.

**Figure 2: Benefits of workplace / in-company learning**



\* These benefits are in particular attributed to work-based learning approaches where the period of time spent on the workplace is substantial, such as apprenticeships.

\* Source: own representation

### 2.1. The right skills for learners

In today's highly competitive labour markets, the experience gained through WBL opens doors to later jobs. WBL models that are based on intensive periods of training in the company, such as alternance and apprenticeships, often offer young people the possibility to stay with the employer on completion of the apprenticeship, or reduce the time it takes to find the first job. Positive early employment outcomes are a clear



benefit for learners. Youth unemployment rates in European countries with a strong tradition of WBL such as Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland are lower than in countries with less developed WBL systems. The period of time spent by graduates to find employment is also shorter. This is confirmed by a recent Cedefop report on labour market outcomes which shows that VET is more successful than general education at getting individuals into work in the short and medium terms.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the more workplace content in the education, the better the labour market outcomes.

Young people who are given the opportunity to participate in WBL gain access to multiple communities of practice and so have the potential to engage in rich opportunities for learning. Such opportunities enable learners to develop competences that allow them to grow as individuals, shape and develop their own identity, become involved with production/service delivery and experience the day-to-day challenges of the workplace. These processes contribute to their development of craftsmanship and of deep expertise in the occupation which cannot be stimulated in a purely school-based environment.

## 2.2. The right skills for companies

Hosting a learner, whether as an apprentice or a trainee, or cooperating with VET schools on project based assignments, has a cost for the employer, be it direct costs in terms of remuneration or indirect costs such as staff time dedicated to this activity. However, it also has benefits that go beyond sole economic returns as shown below.

Trainees, in particular those in programmes where a substantial share of the learning time is spent in the company, and apprentices take part in a firm's productive process and generate gains for the firm. The firm's costs and benefits vary greatly from country to country due to different wage and social security regulations but also due to sectoral and firm characteristics. It is impossible to make general statements about the level of firms' costs and returns on WBL – even when looking only at apprenticeships. Nevertheless, some examples can be provided:

- In Germany, the average net costs of an apprentice to the company is 3,596€ per year (gross costs are 15,288€ and gains 11,692€) but in some sectors (agriculture or liberal professions) the net costs are lower than 1000€ due to high gains from apprentices.<sup>7</sup> According to one source, companies recover the costs of apprenticeship training in sectors such as trade, craft and construction within the apprenticeship training duration<sup>8</sup>;
- In Switzerland, the net costs of apprentices to firms are significantly lower than in Germany, as they more frequently allocate apprentices to productive tasks and most firms recoup the training costs before the end of the apprenticeship<sup>9</sup>;
- Evidence from the UK shows that depending on the sector, the net costs of apprenticeships to employers are recovered within the first year following completion of training in sectors such as IT, business administration or retail, but can take longer in other sectors<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Cedefop "From education to working life - The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training": <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/20448.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> BIBB (2009) *In-company vocational training - A worthwhile investment for enterprises*. Findings from the 2007 BIBB Cost-Benefit Survey

<sup>8</sup> Mohrenweiser, J. and Zwick, T. (2008) *Why do firms train apprentices? The net cost puzzle reconsidered*. Leading House Working Paper No. 16

<sup>9</sup> Dionisius, R. et al (2008) *Cost and Benefit of Apprenticeship Training: A Comparison of Germany and Switzerland*. IZA Discussion Paper No. 3465.

<sup>10</sup> See research results here: <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Employers/The-Benefits/IER-Research.aspx>

For SMEs with limited financial resources, WBL represents an important tool to react in a flexible, efficient and concrete way to the needs of the company. It also offers the opportunity to train young people according to the needs of the company. This can be of particular interest to employers in those sectors where there are skills shortages.

Training young people also has broader benefits for companies. In-company trainers responsible for training/mentoring learners benefit by developing their skills and competences as trainers but also by developing new knowledge, since learners bring new perspectives and challenges as they learn. The people who interact with apprentices are not only those designated as formal trainers but many more people in a host company who take on training and mentoring tasks. This broad engagement of staff enhances the organisational learning in a company.

### 2.3. VET schools/institutions working in partnership with companies

Teachers from VET schools are typically required to cooperate with companies which host learners during WBL. Therefore, work-based learning provides opportunities for teachers to follow developments in workplace practices, processes, equipment and technology. Furthermore, good links and networking between VET providers and employers facilitates direct access for learners and teachers to the latest technology and equipment. In particular in the case of industrial sectors, the investment required for VET schools to purchase such equipment may be too high and the possibility of cooperating with businesses makes it more cost-effective for them to train learners. On the other hand, in some cases, and in particular in sectors dominated by SMEs, the VET school /institution may be the regional hub which offers the up-to-date technology which companies can access.

School and business collaboration on the provision of WBL can also enhance cooperation in areas such as curriculum design, career guidance and mentoring and results in better value for money, as costs/resources/technology are shared with employers.

Employer engagement sends a signal to the learner (and his/her parents who often have an important role in the learner's choice of pathways) that the VET programme has value on the labour market. Such signals positively affect the image of VET.

### 2.4. More relevant and inclusive VET systems

Work-based learning strongly contributes to the quality of initial VET and ensures that the skills young people acquire are those needed on the labour market. In particular, work-based learning tackles skills shortages as employers are most likely to engage learners in apprenticeships in areas where they have difficulties recruiting qualified staff. Positively engaging learners in this way creates powerful opportunities to raise the aspirations, confidence and motivation of individuals. Learners who benefit from high quality learning in the workplace can be put in situations that help them develop problem solving abilities and the capacity to adapt to change as they encounter new and different workplace practices, technologies and environments. Thus high quality work-based learning can also contribute to innovation.

Apprenticeships, and to some extent traineeships, share the costs for training between the state and employers. Whilst there are notable economic returns from WBL for the state through positive employment outcomes, higher wages and a reduction in public expenditure, employers also benefit from lower overall training costs. Employers perceive important returns from high quality VET (in terms of productivity or innovation) and therefore should contribute to sharing the costs.

Work-based learning is also particularly effective to re-motivate and retain learners who are otherwise at risk of dropping out and thus supports social inclusion. Apprenticeships enable young people to earn a wage while learning which, although often not the most important factor, is nevertheless relevant for many of them when deciding to enrol in an apprenticeship. Many young people thrive on a more hands-on form of learning and benefit from training in a real-life work environment. Learners are able to pursue learning in environments that are better suited to their learning styles and aspirations than school-based education. Work-based learning, provided it offers the right support and "fit" with the person, also positively affects young persons' resilience.

### **3. Effective work-based learning ... what works?**

There is wide experience throughout Europe of how to establish and support high-quality work-based learning in initial VET. Drawing on practical examples from Member States as well as on studies and research, the issues below can be highlighted as success factors. They can be grouped around three main concepts:

- Governance
- Quality
- Partnerships

#### **3.1. WBL governance and shared responsibilities**

##### **Integrate WBL within the education and training system**

Integration of WBL, and notably apprenticeships, in the broader education and training system is a first condition of success. In order for alternance pathways to be attractive to a range of learners and employers, they must be permeable, in other words structured in a way that enables people to access additional, continuing and advanced VET or further and higher education. The qualification must be clearly linked to and anchored within the overall qualification system.

Within a specific training programme it is important that the WBL aspects articulate clearly with the school-based parts, complementing each other. In well-established dual systems, recognition in the school environment of what learners learn in the workplace is a crucial success factor, ensuring the coherence of the pathway. Vice-versa, the work-based learning parts of a programme need to take into account the progress made in school-based instruction.

##### **Provide a clear regulatory framework for WBL**

Learners enrolled in alternance or apprenticeship training are between studying and employment. They are learning but at the same time take part in the production process of a company and, over time, the company benefits from their work. There is therefore a need for a specific regulatory framework that clarifies the responsibilities, rights and obligations of each party. It should specify the status of the learner, the remuneration arrangements and other benefits (if applicable), together with the obligations of the employer, the learner and the training centre. The contractual arrangements between the learner, the employer and the VET provider (if necessary) also need to be clearly defined. Written agreements protect all those involved from abuse or damage.

The regulatory framework for apprenticeships needs in particular to ensure that:

- Employers do not use the apprentice status to replace regular workers. Incentives for employers to take on apprentices risk creating a replacement effect. In other words, an apprentice may be recruited for a position that was previously carried out by an employee; and
- The administrative burden imposed on companies through the regulatory framework is not too heavy. Otherwise it may be seen as a disincentive. In some countries, apprenticeships suffer from a bad reputation among employers due to the perception of high levels of paperwork involved. This negatively affects the supply of apprenticeship placements.

The regulatory framework concerns not only the "micro-level" relationships between the learner, the workplace and the VET provider, but also needs to set a top-level frame including responsibilities for:

- Developing qualification standards or learning outcomes-based requirements
- Developing curricula and learning plans
- Quality assurance, evaluation and review
- Public funding and its use

#### ***Providing a clear regulatory framework***

*In many countries WBL exists within a well-structured regulatory framework. Apprenticeship models in Germany, Austria and Switzerland for example are highly institutionalised with certain regulatory requirements contributing to the overall quality of the apprenticeship programme. In Germany for example, the Vocational Training Act (1969) defines the parameters within which firms and Chambers of Commerce may legitimately operate apprenticeship contracts. It also specifies the duration of apprentice training, the examinations to be carried out by the Chambers to test workplace learning and obliges employers to release apprentices to undergo these tests. It also provides apprentices with the right to take legal action if the employer violates its obligations. Chambers of Crafts, industry and commerce regularly monitor training firms and have the power to withdraw a firm's permission to train apprentices, if firms do not meet the required standards.*

Not only apprenticeships but also on-the-job training periods require a clear regulatory framework for the period a learner spends in the workplace. Given that on-the-job training periods are typically shorter than apprenticeships, employers' commitment to an individual learner may be less, as is their willingness to remunerate the learner or to engage in administrative procedures to host her/him. Frameworks need to take into account this difference in the benefits for employers from hosting trainees, as compared to apprenticeships.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Guidelines on high quality work-based learning, Belgium (Flanders)***

*The Flemish Government in Belgium has issued a document called 'Guidelines on high quality work-based learning'. This is a handbook that can be used to plan for and implement WBL. It includes clear and practical guidance in relation to different aspects of WBL. For example, it provides guidance on what needs to be in place before embarking on WBL, the preparation required in terms of identifying who will be*

<sup>11</sup> The European Commission is currently preparing a proposal for a Quality Framework for Traineeships to introduce Europe-wide minimum standards, as announced in the communication *Towards a job rich recovery*<sup>1</sup> of 18 April 2012 (Employment Package, COM(2012) 173 final).

*involved, ensuring clear information and regulations are in place, preparing the learner and ensuring the work environment and equipment is suitable.*

*The guidelines emphasise the need to ensure teachers/trainers/mentors are equipped with the necessary resources/support/time to perform their role. It also provides helpful information on how to match learners to a suitable place of work (by linking the competence profile the learner starts with to the school-career guidance / pathway to work guidance for example) and how to support learners (by specifying minimum follow-up criteria such as the number of visits tutors should pay for example). In addition, the guidelines provide helpful information in relation to assessment, feedback and follow up activities.*

### **Closely involve social partners**

Involving national social partners is necessary to ensure that WBL remains responsive. Their involvement is essential for identifying future skills requirements so that the development of skills across the economy keeps pace with needs. Training/occupational standards need to be reviewed and updated regularly, and social partners are well positioned to make input to the process. They have direct experience of the extent to which WBL provision is user-friendly and successfully geared towards employability and competitiveness. Social partners who work in partnership with VET providers are also particularly helpful in making the necessary arrangements to maximise WBL opportunities.

For work-based learning to be an integrated element of VET and for employers to contribute to cost-sharing, there needs to be a governance structure in place in which employers can make sure that their needs are reflected. VET systems which have strong work-based learning pathways (in countries such as Austria, Denmark, France or Germany) also have VET governance structures that reflect the division of responsibilities.

### **Provide incentives for employers to engage in WBL**

Good WBL governance means creating a cost-benefit ratio that encourages employers to get involved. Work-based learning can only exist in a country if companies buy into this concept and offer apprenticeship places, student placements or cooperate with schools. Stimulating the creation of apprenticeships and placements is a key challenge in many European countries that wish to upscale their WBL practices within initial VET.

For employers, WBL represents a cost but also provides benefits and even financial gains. The ratio depends on many aspects: the duration of the WBL training and the time actually spent in the workplace, the regulations regarding salaries, benefits and social security contributions, the needs in terms of facilities, equipment, materials and the possibilities for the employer to engage the learner in productive tasks.

The regulatory framework typically clarifies the incentives for employers to engage learners in alternance programmes. These can be financial incentives such as tax reductions, subsidies or other, but also non-financial, such as access to certain support services, for example to help companies with the paperwork related to hosting apprentices.

## ***Financial and fiscal incentives to employers***

*In France employers receive exemptions from social contributions and receive a bonus for hiring apprentices. In the Netherlands, employers offering the apprenticeship BBL-route (beroepsbegeleidende leerweg) are eligible for a reduction in tax and social insurance contributions. Some countries have also developed specific incentives aimed at employers who offer apprenticeship places for the very first time and at employers who take on additional apprentices. For example, in Germany a programme called 'Jobstarter' has been introduced by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research with the intention of creating additional training places and providing support to companies that have no previous experience with training: In the UK the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers to take on unemployed 16 to 24 year olds has been established.*

*In Denmark, the government introduced the 'Youth Package' initiative to support the creation of 5000 additional traineeships in 2010 by tripling the financial subsidy paid to employers who hire trainees.*

### **Address the WBL needs of SMEs**

SMEs face particular challenges in engaging with WBL, given their smaller workforces, limited resources and lack of familiarity with the WBL regulatory and administrative framework. Their engagement can be encouraged by intermediary organisations that offer expertise, information and help to support and motivate employers participating in WBL. Intermediary bodies can relieve employers from the administrative burdens that are often associated with different forms of WBL provision and assist them in locating information, for example advice on tax incentives to train young people. Intermediary organisations can, for example, provide advice to SMEs on curricula or on how to organise different forms of WBL.

Member States should therefore support networks of companies and empower intermediary bodies such as Chambers to facilitate high-quality WBL, notably involving SMEs.

### **Networking "intermediate" bodies for WBL across borders**

*The EuroApprenticeship project, coordinated by APCMA (the French Assemblée permanente des chambres de métiers et de l'artisanat), is networking 220 "intermediate bodies" that have a regional and / or sectoral competence on apprenticeship matters. These bodies mobilise their own networks of companies and training centres to organise transnational learning mobility for apprentices. The project aims to equip the network with the tools its members need to effectively support apprentices undertaking learning and training abroad. Tools have been developed to support the promotion, organisation, validation and quality monitoring of mobility projects, as well as: a partner search database; an "observatory" on learning systems and mobility; a "barometer" measuring employers' image and awareness of mobility; and a label rewarding the commitment of companies to the mobility of apprentices.*

*This type of support by intermediary bodies is core to the involvement of SMEs in training apprentices across borders.*

### **Provide targeted support for at-risk groups to engage in WBL**

Early school leavers and other young people who leave compulsory education may need additional learning or support to apply for an apprenticeship. They can benefit from "transition measures" which offer a bridge into initial VET and are primarily

targeted towards young people who have dropped out of education or are at risk of doing so. Measures which ease transition into initial VET provide much needed support for young people before they enter full-time programmes, and often include support to develop or improve the key competences needed for a successful next step in training or employment

Learners in these transition measures are expected to carry out concrete tasks to gain practical experience. Participating employers are often selected because of the tasks and nature of jobs they can offer, but also the support they can provide. They may receive a subsidy for hosting the learner.

### ***‘Introductory Training’ a successful transition initiative***

*The EQJ Programme in Germany is an initiative designed to help young people continue in education and training following completion of their general compulsory education. It is targeted at learners who are not able to find an apprenticeship in the VET system. The EQJ programme attracts up to 40,000 learners per year and is essentially an in-company introductory training programme that lasts between 6 and 12 months. Training is primarily carried out within the workplace with some learning in the school-based environment.*

*This in-company introductory training programme allows difficult-to-place young people to gain access to the regular system of dual vocational education and training. The training should provide basic occupational skills within any of the occupations covered by the dual system. Learners have the opportunity to participate both in qualification modules (“Qualifizierungsbausteine”) and specific vocational modules (“berufsfeldspezifische Module”), and in the process to obtain partial qualifications in occupations trained within the apprenticeship scheme. If participants successfully complete the EQJ-Programme (determined by a testimonial issued by the company and certified by a related professional organisation, e.g. the Chamber of Industry and Commerce or the Crafts Chambers), they are able to get recognition for the learning outcomes achieved in the subsequent vocational training programme as part of the regular apprenticeship.*

*The main advantage of this programme is that it offers meaningful opportunities for young people to experience the world of work, many of them for the very first time, together with real opportunities for them to access the labour market and secure employment. Employers offering in-company introductory training can receive funding through a pay subsidy of up to 216 Euro per month, plus a lump-sum share of the average total social insurance contributions for the trainee; this is a higher subsidy than for hosting regular apprentices. In February 2012, the German Federal Government stated that around 70% of all participants in EQJ secured a placement within the dual system following completion of the EQJ introductory training.*

The Council Recommendation on Youth Guarantee schemes tasks Member States with providing young people up to the age of 25 years with a good quality employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. At-risk groups such as early-school leavers, low skilled young people, migrants or young people from a disadvantaged background are particularly in need of targeted support.

### 3.2. Quality of the qualification and the learning process

#### **Define standards which cover a broad range of knowledge, skills and competences**

One core aspect of the quality of WBL is the profile of knowledge, skills and competences that learners develop. Good quality WBL is related to a range of competences and, in combination with school-based learning, results in professional profiles that embrace a full profession and enable learners to develop a full understanding of a professional field. Such understanding is needed in order for people to be able to adapt to change later on when technologies and processes change and some tasks disappear while new ones arise. The active involvement of social partners in defining these standards is an important quality factor and is especially well-developed in dual systems.

The qualification standards for work-based or learning outcomes descriptions for smaller scale WBL activities need to take this account. They set the range of knowledge, skills and competence that is to be achieved through WBL. This should be broad enough to embrace a profession in a holistic manner and give learners the basis for not only immediate transition to employment but also future evolutions. As well as skills specific to the profession, learners need to acquire strong basic skills.

#### **Offer diverse WBL opportunities**

In alternance models, learners spend large proportions of their training pathway in the workplace. It is therefore crucial that the workplace offers diverse and rich learning opportunities that enable learners to develop the skills, knowledge and competences they need to become fully qualified professionals. Training which is too narrow and too company-specific limits opportunities for transferability and progression. Students need exposure to a range of situations and tasks, and the curriculum for WBL should define a sufficiently broad range of knowledge, skills and competences, including a range of key competences. Companies, especially SMEs, can usefully cooperate to form "training alliances" to offer learners exposure to a full range of situations and tasks. Sharing an apprentice among several companies ensures that s/he gets familiar with different technologies/processes.

Some economic sectors, such as information technology or creative industries, may be organised in a way that does not fit into traditional apprenticeship schemes of providing learning at the workplace, with dedicated training by a Meister (master craftsman). Innovative models of alternance training can overcome this, for example by engaging apprentices in problem-based, creative and innovative tasks and assignments.

#### **Clearly define WBL learning outcomes and objectives**

All on-the-job learning periods, even short ones, should have a clear pedagogical purpose, defined learning outcomes and specified objectives that both the learner and the employer are aware of. In some cases learners participating in on-the-job training periods are only exposed to short-term periods of work experience, e.g. several weeks. These are not always designed as a learning process with clear objectives and planned tasks and thus learners risk ending up in on-the-job training periods that are unplanned and unstructured with limited opportunities for real learning or skills development.



Clear articulation between periods of work-based learning and school-based learning is key to the success of on-the-job training periods, particularly from the perspective of the learner. Critically, an outcomes-based curriculum makes it easier for learners and employers alike to identify the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies the learner is expected to acquire. This requires a clear understanding of the assessment approach and how the period of on-the-job training will be assessed (formative/summative).

***On-the-job training periods (Période de formation en milieu professionnelle) – France***

*In France, young people participating in upper secondary VET have the opportunity to participate in short periods of on-the-job training. The minimum duration of the training periods in companies is three consecutive weeks but learners can participate in up to six training periods. In total, students preparing the professional upper-secondary leaving certificate (baccalauréat professionnel), which is typically acquired following a three years programme, have to undertake 22 weeks of on-the-job training.*

*A key feature of the success of this approach is a strong focus on integrating school-based learning within the job training periods. For instance, the qualification standards define which competences are to be acquired through the on-the-job training. Finding an employer for the student is the responsibility of the VET provider. In particular VET teachers have the responsibility to identify and cooperate with companies that are most suitable to host their students.*

*Each student has to sign a training agreement (convention de stage) with the school and the employer. This agreement contains all the formal aspects related to working time, health and safety or insurance but also the pedagogical aspects.*

*Use of such documentation enables learners to observe, interact and reflect on what they have learnt and on the activities carried out during the training period. This approach to on-the-job training is supported by the Ministry of Education in France. In addition, employers have a key role to play in the preparation phase before the training commences. Teaching staff together with employers define the practical aspects of the training period and determine the tasks the learner is required to carry out. To ensure learners are appropriately supported, support is provided by qualified mentors.*

**Prepare and support learners for work-based learning**

Learners need preparation and support in their search for a host company where they will carry out their training. Given economic pressures, employers are typically looking to take on learners who have developed certain skills and attitudes that support their employability. In many countries, there remain issues of unequal participation and success rates across different groups of learners. Apprenticeships should be open and accessible to all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability or learning difficulty. Different forms of support can be provided to help achieve this: career guidance (how to approach companies, how to find a suitable company, etc.); preparatory training on aspects such as how to behave in an interview and how to behave in a workplace; coaching and mentoring. These support services can be provided by bodies ranging from schools to public employment services, youth clubs/ centres or others.

### **Outreach strategies – Aalborg Technical College (Denmark)**

*The Aalborg Technical College in Denmark has developed an in-house work placement service to ensure a better match between supply and demand for apprenticeship places. The college employs a number of apprentice-place counsellors. They typically have a professional background in the sectors they target, so "they can speak the language of the industry". There is also a training programme for all the apprentice counsellors. In addition the head apprentice counsellor has taken the initiative to develop a handbook on all aspects of apprentice place creation to ensure that the school can offer a good service particularly to micro companies that choose to take an apprentice for the first time, and also to ensure that both students and companies get accurate and updated information.*

*A central element in the school's apprentice place activities is the digital registry of all approved apprentice places. From this registry "apprentice place consultants" can see if it is time for a company to renew an apprentice contract and identify companies that are approved and do not have an apprentice.*

*The college's efforts have paid off. In 2010, when the crisis had set in, the region of Aalborg Technical College experienced a 28% growth in apprentice places. In 2011, the school was at the very top of apprentice place creation in terms of matching supply and demand.*

*According to enterprises and students, one of the most critical success factors is the structured and planned outreach strategy of the school. The college has been at the forefront of using available data sources to ensure a match between supply and demand. The second most important factor is the proximity between "apprentice-place consultants" and host companies. The school also organises training sessions for host companies which creates trust between the school and the companies, many of which are micro companies.*

The VET teachers/trainers/mentors who support young people in their transition to the workplace need access to the right professional development to help them fulfil their role to an excellent standard. The work they do should be recognised as part of their competence profile /job description.

### **3.3. School-company partnerships**

#### **Encourage networks of VET schools with local businesses**

In all models of WBL, VET schools need to operate in networks with local businesses. In the case of on-the-job learning periods, learners are often required to identify suitable placements themselves. Without any support to secure an employer placement from the VET provider, learners are at risk of taking up placements that are of limited relevance and offer limited opportunities for skills development. Schools that have been effective in developing good links with their local employer base are more likely to succeed in establishing a network of companies willing and well-prepared to host learners. It is more feasible to introduce and maintain a consistently high quality learning framework with employers who have well established links with the school than with those who offer one-off placements. The extent to which schools develop and maintain working relationships with employers is a core determinant of high quality WBL. A network of advisors or "coaches" in contact with employers and schools

can be a successful means of encouraging this type of cooperation, as is the case in Germany with the "Mobility Coaches" initiative.<sup>12</sup>

#### **48 hours – Lillebælt Academy - Denmark**

*The Lillebælt Academy which offers two years vocational programmes developed an initiative called 48hours. The main purpose of this practice is for students to gain concrete experience with problem solving and cross-professional cooperation. Reflective practice is a key aspect of this initiative. Teachers from the Academy noticed that students in the more traditional 3 month trainee placement tended to work on activities that are well defined and narrow in scope. Thus the 48 hour initiative was conceived to expose students, in a very practical way, to new forms of work where they are expected to be able to tackle problems as part of a company's innovation efforts. This practice complements the more traditional on-the-job training periods as it focuses on the development of other competences.*

*Students are exposed to a real challenge that a given company has identified. The assignment corresponds to the actual duration of 48 hours. The problem defined needs to be in line with the level of skills of the students. Each time students participate in such a 48 hour event, the problem area chosen is negotiated between the school and the company. The school has realised that it is of value if a problem is not too well defined, because students also learn a lot in the process of identifying a problem and tackling it from different perspectives. This is in particular the case when they work in interdisciplinary teams and with a real company.*

*The evidence provided through an internal evaluation with the companies involved suggests that this WBL model provides concrete innovation value-added for the companies.*

#### **4. Tools for effective work-based learning**

Public authorities, stakeholders and VET providers have developed a range of tools and processes that can be used to support the quality of WBL. These concern tools and instruments for:

- Overarching guidelines to integrate work-based learning into VET programmes;
- External quality assurance measures/tools that include:
  - Measures focusing on employers' capacity to host learners; and
  - Measures that integrate WBL as part of VET providers' quality assurance
- Process and tools to support planning and implementation of WBL in practice
  - Personalised learning plans;
  - Visiting learners in the workplace (including briefing and de-briefing);
  - Having a designated contact person in place
- Assessment and recording achievement approaches that include:
  - Formative assessment
  - Student diaries (as a form of formative assessment)
- Measures to match learners and placements;
- Measures to ensure students' health and safety in the workplace.

<sup>12</sup> [www.mobilitaetscoach.de](http://www.mobilitaetscoach.de) For information in English:  
[http://www.esf.de/portal/generator/19632/property=data/2013\\_\\_02\\_\\_19\\_\\_flyer\\_\\_mobi\\_\\_e.pdf](http://www.esf.de/portal/generator/19632/property=data/2013__02__19__flyer__mobi__e.pdf)

#### 4.1. Overarching guidelines to integrate work-based learning into VET programmes

VET providers and stakeholders in many countries where WBL as part of VET is under transformation need support on how to improve integration of WBL into school-based practices or how to innovate existing work-based learning practices. Beyond setting the requirements for WBL in legislation, governments can issue guidance and guidelines to serve this purpose.

These documents typically cover concrete aspects of planning, delivering and assessing WBL. They may contain checklists for self-assessment, or methods that providers and employers can use to self-diagnose their existing practices.

Examples of such guidelines are presented below with links to the full source.

##### **Guidelines on high quality work-based learning, Belgium (Flanders)**

*The Flemish Government in Belgium has issued a document called 'Guidelines on high quality work-based learning'. This is a handbook that can be used to plan for and implement WBL. It includes clear and practical guidance in relation to different aspects of WBL. For example, it provides guidance on what needs to be in place before embarking on WBL, the preparation required in terms of identifying who will be involved, ensuring clear information and regulations are in place, preparing the learner and ensuring the work environment and equipment is suitable.*

*The guidelines emphasise the need to ensure teachers/trainers/mentors are equipped with the necessary resources/support/time to perform their role. It also provides helpful information on how to match learners to a suitable place of work (by linking the competence profile the learner starts with to the school-career guidance / pathway to work guidance for example) and how to support learners (by specifying minimum follow-up criteria such as the number of visits tutors should pay for example). In addition, the guidelines provide helpful information in relation to assessment, feedback and follow up activities.*

*Source: The Flemish government, Agency for Educational Services  
<http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/leidraad-kwaliteitsvol-werkplekieren>  
Brochure with guidelines for students and companies explaining how to organize and what to expect from a work-based learning experience (in Dutch only).*

##### **Creating and Supporting Expansive Apprenticeships: A Guide for Employers, Training Providers and Colleges of Further Education – United Kingdom**

*This guidebook was prepared based on research into apprenticeships in the UK with the objective to enhance the quality of the learning experience on the workplace. The starting point was the understanding that some apprenticeships are rather 'narrow'. In other words the apprentices do not have the optimal opportunities to develop skills and competences that stretch beyond the immediate tasks and actions of the job/position they are placed in. Therefore this guidance promotes the development of 'expansive' apprenticeships which aim to develop broad expertise that is applicable in a range of situations and contexts.*

*The guide was developed and is disseminated by the National Apprenticeship Service which is a body that funds and coordinates delivery of apprenticeship programmes in*

England.

The expansive model has the following characteristics:

- Apprenticeship is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability
- Workplace and provider share a post- Apprenticeship vision: progression for career
- Apprentice has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for, apprentice's status as learner
- Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive worker and expertise in occupational field
- Apprentice is treated as a member of an occupational and workplace community with access to the community's rules, history, knowledge and practical expertise
- Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace
- Workplace maps everyday work tasks against qualification requirements – qualification valued as adds extra skills and knowledge to immediate job requirements
- Qualifications develop knowledge for progression to next Level and platform for further education
- Apprentice has planned time off the job for study and to gain wider perspective
- Apprentice's existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued and used as platform for new learning
- Apprentice's progress closely monitored and involves regular constructive feedback from range of employer and provider personnel who take a holistic approach
- Based on these characteristics, the guide encourages employers and VET providers to diagnose their offer or work-based learning and to adjust it to the expansive model. The guide is also supported by real-case examples (case studies) of expansive apprenticeships.

Source: National Apprenticeship Service (2010) *Creating and Supporting Expansive Apprenticeships: A Guide for Employers, Training Providers and Colleges of Further Education*

[http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/media/Welcome%20to%20Research/ApprenticeshipToolkit\\_December\\_2010.pdf](http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/media/Welcome%20to%20Research/ApprenticeshipToolkit_December_2010.pdf)

### **Manual for transferring models of work-based learning from one institution to another - Finland**

In August 2010, the Finish National Board of Education in cooperation with other organisations partners of the project under the Lifelong learning programme published a manual for transferring innovative work-based learning practices. The point of departure of this document is the fact that many providers and stakeholders are unsure on how to select the most appropriate model of WBL and how to transfer it into their context.

The manual is targeted at a range of different audiences including VET providers, colleges, training centres and employers. The manual focuses on the process of transformation and innovation of VET programmes and WBL practices. It encourages VET providers to:

- Carry out a needs assessment to identify which practices need improvement;
- Identify good practice to learn from using criteria for what is a good practice in WBL, identify those aspects of this practice that are not-context dependent and can be transferred and assess the added value of the case for the provider/ organisation which wishes to innovate its own approach;
- Choose and use methods to support the transfer process such as SWOT analysis or a

*peer-review process. The manual also provides guidance on how the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) can be used to improve the implementation of WBL by offering practical examples of how a VET school (as an illustration) can identify where improvements to WBL are required, how to plan to make such improvements and how to deal with changes that have been made.*

*Source: WBL-TOI MANUAL - Manual for planning of work-based learning - transfer of innovations, Finish National Education Board (2010), [http://www.workplacement.nl/tl\\_files/bestanden/WBL-TOI%20manual\\_%20En.pdf](http://www.workplacement.nl/tl_files/bestanden/WBL-TOI%20manual_%20En.pdf).*

#### 4.2. External quality assurance tools

Quality assurance and quality improvement measures/tools are critical to the success of WBL. Quality assurance measures can be based on a range of approaches from self-assessment (internal review) to external quality assurance mechanisms whereby the existence and use of appropriate procedures is verified by an external body.

External quality assurance tools for WBL are an accountability mechanism. They ensure that the employers who host learners in WBL comply with the minimum requirements. They also typically verify that providers and employers put in place processes to plan, implement and assess WBL to make sure that young people develop the expected knowledge, skills and competence.

These mechanisms are typically used for WBL that concerns longer periods of time spent by the learner on the workplace – such as alternance models or on-the-job training periods. Compared to quality assurance mechanisms that concern school-based learning only, these mechanisms also cover the delivery of learning in a company. Obviously, the relationship between the public authority and the company is very different than the one with a publicly funded school, therefore the quality assurance measures required from employers cannot be the same as those required from schools.

There can be specific quality assurance requirements for employers hosting learners (see below the accreditation of employers) or, in more school-based systems, quality assurance mechanisms regarding WBL can also be integrated into the general quality assurance of VET schools.

#### **Measures concerning employers' capacity to host learners**

In some countries employers must be approved by a competent authority before they are eligible to host learners. This can take the form of an accreditation or other (see below). The accreditation of employers is used for a number of different reasons, though typically used to determine the suitability of the training premises from a health and safety perspective, the suitability of the trainers' technical/personal experience and qualifications and to determine the quality of the training on offer and suitability of existing facilities and materials.

In some cases, the accreditation of employers is carried out by the relevant trade committee, local craft chamber or chamber of commerce and industry. This approach aims to ensure the quality of the placement and learning provision and encourages cooperation and collaboration between employers and other key stakeholders involved in WBL. Whilst the accreditation of employers is used as a way for employers to demonstrate they are able to supply a high standard of skills and knowledge to WBL

learners, it also creates an additional layer of procedures for employers to comply with. This can be considered as burdensome by some and have negative effect on employers willingness to host learners. Therefore, it is important for the national authorities to carefully consider the pros and cons of such approach.

Accreditation is only one way of verifying that employers have the required capacity to host learners. In other cases, the above mentioned bodies or even the VET providers themselves may be requested to check that the company complies with a certain set of criteria but this is not an accreditation procedure as such. The organisation in charge of carrying out such a check is than (at least partly) accountable for the quality of the learning experience on the workplace while the employer remains responsible and accountable for all aspects related to health and safety and labour regulations (the control of which falls under the remit of a labour inspection).

The following examples illustrate the procedures to ensure that employers have the capacity to provide WBL.

### **Centres of Expertise - The Netherlands**

*In the Netherlands, the national VET law<sup>13</sup> prescribes that companies that want to offer work placements to students need to be accredited. The Ministry of Education provides Centres of Expertise (sectorally organised institutions) this authority. Through an accreditation process, these Centres, such as the Centre for Innovative Craftsmanship decide if the quality of the work placement is suitable and offers a good and safe working and learning environment with appropriate supervision. Centres of Expertise use common quality criteria to determine the suitability of the company of which the most important elements are:*

- *Does the company offer sufficient training opportunities, linking up with one or more senior secondary VET courses?*
- *Does the company have an experienced and competent in-house workplace trainer available?*
- *Is the company prepared to work together with the VET school? The workplace trainer will have regular contact with the school.*
- *Does the VET student have work space available?*

*All accredited work placement companies are registered on a public website (Stagemarkt.nl) to enable learners and schools/colleges to use this database of accredited companies to look for availability of work placements for WBL learners. Once accredited as a work placement company, the Centre of Expertise will assist work placement companies with the following:*

- *If the company meets the criteria for accreditation: accreditation of the company within two weeks after registering as a work placement company;*
- *Training the in-house workplace trainer;*
- *Supporting the company in communication with the schools;*
- *Help with recruiting students, for example by publishing a position on Stagemarkt.nl;*
- *Knowledge exchange between work placement companies in the sector;*
- *Assistance in the use of industry agreements and industry provisions for work placement companies.*

*One of the key features of this approach is the fact that it is based on a partnership approach. This includes the Dutch Ministry of Education, the Foundation for Cooperation*

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.s-bb.nl/work-placements.html>

on VET and the Labour Market (SBB), educational institutes, social partners and companies. Furthermore in 2009, partners agreed on a WBL protocol clearly setting out the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder within the work placement process. This protocol is based on the objective of creating common trust between all stakeholders including that of learners.

In November 2012 the new Dutch government, in its coalition agreement, imposed a cut on the budget of the Centres of Expertise of € 40 mio in 2015 and € 80 mio (almost 80 %) from 2016. Talks on the implementation of this measure are in progress. The idea is not to skip the tasks mentioned above, but to organise them more efficiently by involving the VET colleges. The responsibility for developing qualifications dossiers (also the primary concern of the centres) will be probably centralised at the SBB.

### **Apprenticeship in the Hotel and Catering Industry, Belgium Flanders**

Horeca Vorming Vlaanderen is responsible for overseeing the organisation of Apprenticeships in the hotel, restaurant and catering Industry in Belgium – Flanders and assumes responsibility for defining competence profiles in the sector. It is also responsible for ensuring communication between learning venues (employers and schools), learners and their parents is in place. In addition, Horeca Vorming Vlaanderen is responsible for carrying out the assessment and accreditation of workplaces in order to ensure their suitability for learners. The suitability of the placement is based on a set of criteria to ensure that minimum requirements are met.

Before a company qualifies for the "Workplace Learning +" programme and can host students from VET schools at least one teacher from the school must complete an internship in the company. During this internship, the teacher must work and operate in all different kinds of workplace to be made available to student participating in "Workplace Learning +". She/he determines if a company is suitable and ready to take part in the programme, drawing on the experiences obtained through the internship.

Evaluation criteria have been defined for the assessment of occupational skills and key competences (especially working attitudes), and KIO is currently working on new evaluation criteria for technical skills. Furthermore to be recognised as employer, the company must not have any debts in relation to social insurance. The company is also asked to provide a copy of the food menu in order to show the variety of different dishes served (as an indicator that the apprentice is learning the preparation of different dishes).

Further information:

<http://www.horecanet.be/horecavorming/default2.asp> (available in French and Dutch)

#### 4.3. Work-based learning as an element of quality assurance framework at provider level

Work-based learning, and more specifically the quality of work-based learning, may also be integrated into the external quality assurance framework for VET providers – for example as part of accreditation measures or as part of inspection criteria.

In some Member States legislation has been introduced to improve quality by strengthening quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms through the



introduction of certain legislations. For example, as an attempt to drive up quality standards of apprenticeships, the UK introduced a Specification of Apprenticeship Standards in England in 2010. As part of the quality assurance process in the UK, public funding could be withdrawn from providers whose apprenticeships fail to meet quality standards. Linking funding to quality standards requires clear guidelines available to education providers about the requirements of the quality assurance process, though this represents cost and resource implications for providers.

The accreditation of education providers is however used as one way of facilitating and strengthening links between education providers and industry and demonstrating the supply of high quality WBL teaching and learning. This accreditation serves to enhance and promote the quality and reputation of the provider, the education provision on offer and the partners involved. Furthermore, in order to ensure the quality of the learning experience, in many Member States a number of key stakeholders are collaboratively involved in determining the content of WBL programmes, agreeing the suitability of the education content and agreeing work placements.

### ***Teknikcollege – Sweden***

*In Sweden, the Teknikcollege concept is based on a model of competence centres where municipalities, providers of education and companies collaborate with a common aim to increase the attraction and quality of technology focused courses that aim to meet the needs of industry.*

*A key feature of success is that companies within each region take part in, for example, planning the content and quality of work-based learning. This collaborative approach between companies, providers of education and the municipalities is led by regional/local steering groups and is promoted as a way of increasing resource efficiency in terms of sharing costs, experiences and networks. It is also promoted as a way of improving the quality of the learning provision and creating a larger recruitment base of experienced and qualified learners. Since employers are involved in the quality assurance and content of the education, learners studying at Teknikcolleges are considered to be attractive candidates for employment in the future.*

*In order to meet the requirements for certification and to be approved as Teknikcollege, the following criteria must be met:*

- *Regional perspective – act as a common resource for municipalities and companies*
- *Educational infrastructure – specialised technology-oriented education and training to meet the needs of industry at upper secondary and post-secondary levels. Offer upper secondary school students academically oriented programmes in combination with technology oriented vocational programmes. Cooperation between different stakeholders including adult learners and young people.*
- *Clear profile – educational activities must have a clear profile linked to the needs of the regional companies*
- *Collaboration with working life – collaboration between education providers and working life through regional/local steering groups with significant company representatives*
- *Quality assurance – regional steering group responsible for the quality of education and developments*
- *A creative and stimulating learning environment – learning environment that stimulates creativity and engages male and female learners*
- *Machinery and equipment – is of high quality and creates opportunity for learning new technology*

- *Coherent study days – Teknikcollege courses characterised by coherent study schedules and staffing that reflects working life*
- *Teamwork and integration between subjects – teachers work in a team and assume joint responsibility for the learning and development of learners. Emphasis is placed on personal development, working in groups. Teaching is based on the integration between practical and theoretical subjects*
- *Learning at workplaces – companies offer workplace training, combined with effective supervision the intention is to provide learners with a sound foundation of vocational knowledge. Learners are encouraged to apply for summer jobs.*

See <http://teknikcollege.se/> and <http://np.netpublicator.com/netpublication/n62415443> for information in English

#### 4.4. Planning and implementing WBL in practice

As explained earlier, incorporating WBL into initial VET requires an articulation between school-based and work-based instruction – though the share of time spent in the different venues will vary from one model to another. This articulation requires thorough planning and good coordination during implementation. Different concrete steps can be deployed to achieve this. The examples of personalised learning plans and the requirements for visits between the school and the company are described below. The student diaries discussed under formative assessment are another example.

##### **Personalised learning plans**

In WBL, an effective personalised learning plan is at the heart of a quality learning experience and is used as a planning tool that sets out the overall learning goals, learning outcomes and concrete learning objectives of a programme that learner will follow. The learning plan should clearly state how the learning objectives will be achieved, whilst recognising that objectives may need to be modified as the learning plan unfolds.

The personalised learning plan should not be considered as additional paperwork duplicating information that exists elsewhere but instead should be used as an active tool that makes clear to the learner and the employer the nature of the learning proposed and undertaken. Personalised learning plans could be used as part of a learners progress review for example, reflecting the growing capability of the learner, though any changes made should be agreed with the learner and where appropriate the employer and education provider.

Personalised learning plans should be owned and used by the learner as a record of learning goals, achievements and enabling learners to make the links between different components of learning for example. In addition, learners can use their learning plans to reflect on their experience and/or to make tentative plans to improve their own knowledge and experiences in the future. Often, a personalised learning plan will be drawn up to specify details of where and how the learning will take place together with details of the appropriate learning outcomes against which the learner must collect evidence of achievement over a period of time. The format and content of the personalised learning plan should typically include as a minimum details of:

- Skills, knowledge and competences required and the timescale over which the learner will have achieved this;

- Training the learner is to receive, where it is delivered and how it is scheduled, who is delivering it and what support is being provided;
- Methods that will be used to deliver training (including on- and off-the-job training);
- How on- and off-the-job training will be co-ordinated;
- The learner's assessment and review arrangements.

To support schools in drawing up personalised learning plans standardised templates, guidance as well as completed examples can be made available.

### Visiting learners in the workplace

As part of the quality assurance process, visiting the learner in the workplace is a way of integrating the school-based component of the learning programme with the company-based component. Visits are important to learners and provide opportunities for learners to discuss progress, present their own work and raise any issues concerning the placement. Regular contact with teaching staff from the school/college provides learners with a sense of support and contact and presents opportunities to discuss the integration of theory and practice. Visits can also be structured in a way that provides important opportunities for employers to discuss the learner's progress, the learning content and integration of different components of the programme.

In addition, briefing and de-briefing sessions are also an important aspect of the learning process and allows learners to reflect on their learning experience and verify new knowledge.

#### **De-briefing sessions – Austria**

*In the Austria, traineeships in VET Colleges of Tourism participate in systematic de-briefing sessions. Schools organise student briefing and debriefing sessions for preparation and follow-up procedures after the completion of the practicum respectively. These are carried out between the learner and teacher. The briefing is not intended as a form of assessment as such but instead contributes to the valorisation of what the individual has learnt whilst in the company. The tasks to be fulfilled during the traineeship need to correspond to the level of education of the students.*

*De-briefing sessions focus upon a review of the educational objectives of an internship. According to these objectives e.g. the student shall acquire knowledge and skills which are relevant for his/her professional field; the student shall implement skills acquired in school in a relevant work context; he/she shall gain comprehensive insight into the organization of a company; the student shall get known to the duties and rights of an employee and check the job situation upon these criteria; he/she shall conduct themselves in a friendly, accurate, confident and effective manner towards supervisors and co-workers; he/she shall gain a positive attitude towards work in general and towards the specific professional environment in particular, via the combination of school and practical experiences.*

*Further information on internships in the tourism sector (available in German only):*  
[http://www.ak4u.at/uploads/media/Gastgewerbepraktikum\\_01.pdf](http://www.ak4u.at/uploads/media/Gastgewerbepraktikum_01.pdf)

#### 4.5. Designated contact points

Whilst in the workplace designating a person who is in charge of the learners and his/her progression is essential to the support learners require. This designated person has a crucial role to play in mentoring the learner, helping the learner make sense of the different components of the learning programme and also to ensure that learners do not feel isolated or unsupported. Whilst it is important for learners to have designated point of contact in the workplace, similarly it is equally important for employers to have a main point of contact in the school/college. Employers often require additional support when providing placements for learners, particularly in terms of supporting learners and their different learning needs.

Whilst this is potentially resource intensive for the school/college, mechanisms to support employers and facilitate effective communication are fundamental to the success of WBL.

#### **Quality Development in Education within Crafts Enterprises - Germany**

*A successful feature of the model project 'Quality Development in Education within Crafts Enterprises' that was introduced in Germany in 2010, is the fact that each company providing apprenticeship placements must have at least one designated trainer to support the learner during their training, though typically the learner also receives training from other skilled workers within the company. One of the aims of this model project is to improve communication between trainers, skilled workers and learners, and give them a better understanding of the education they are providing / receiving. Allocating a trainer to the apprentice is a key component of this.*

*Employers who offer apprenticeships need to provide a trainer or trainers who have proven the personal and practical abilities to train apprentices. The trainer could be the employer himself or an employee. In any case trainers need to be proven by passing an exam, following a regulation for trainer's aptitude ("Prüfung nach der Ausbildung Eignungsverordnung", AEVO)<sup>14</sup>, to demonstrate vocational and pedagogical skills. Between August 2003 and 2009 instructors were exempted from the examination, since August 2009 trainers need to take this exam.*

*Trainers need to be at least 25 years old; they are required to have passed the final examination in a subject area which matches with the offered apprenticeship or, alternatively, need to have sufficient professional experience. Preparation courses ("Ausbilderlehrgänge") provide support for preparing, offering, concluding apprenticeships in companies. Employers are supported by consultants for trainers or educational consultants ("Ausbildungsberater") who offer counselling.*

#### 4.6. Assessment and recording achievement in WBL

Assessment and recording achievement in WBL is an important part of the learning process and serves several functions. This includes the diagnosis of learners success/failure, the provision of valid and meaningful outcomes of what has been achieved, evaluation of teaching and learning and maintaining a record of learners' progress to assist them in planning their own learning.

Given that learning takes place in different learning environments and in different forms within the context of WBL, assessment in WBL often involves more than one assessment approach and therefore requires a clear understanding about the purpose

<sup>14</sup> See [http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/ausbilder\\_eignungsverordnung.pdf](http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/ausbilder_eignungsverordnung.pdf)

and practice of different assessment design (e.g. diagnostic, formative, summative)..Critically, assessment in WBL requires a clear understanding of how the assessment of the different components of the WBL programme (school based, work based and/or combination of both) will be brought together at the end.

### **Formative assessment**

Formative assessment in WBL represents a continuous process and is a highly effective way of tracking and monitoring a learner's progress and to ensure that they are given feedback about their performance and achievements. Formative assessment can be used to indicate next steps for both teachers/trainers and learners and can be formal or informal, or both typically involving a dialogue between the learner and their teacher/trainer. In WBL, an end of programme examination found in many alternance/apprenticeship models is designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment which the learner has reached and to ensure that all requirements of the qualification/award has been achieved. Each assessment technique serves its own purpose and so the key issue is to ensure that the assessment method chosen is fit for purpose – this should be the guiding principle in considering the assessment approach.

In WBL, formative assessment is used to chart achievement and monitor progress – this can be found in the case of on-the-job learning periods in France as illustrated in the box below.

One of the most important uses of formative assessment in WBL is to establish the learner's level of ability and to provide a focus on what has been learned and what needs to be learned in the future. Importantly it serves as an opportunity to identify any additional support needs the learner may require. Student diaries and/or workbooks are another approach to monitoring and assessing learner progress.

### **Student diaries**

Increasingly WBL students are encouraged to use student diaries throughout the duration of their learning experience. Maintaining a student diary is used as a strategy to deepen learning, stimulate critical thinking, improve reflective practice<sup>15</sup> and enables learners to valorise what they have learnt whilst in the company for example. Student diaries enable learners to make sense of their learning by keeping a record of what they have learnt and by looking back on an experience or an event and being able to consider it critically. This is especially useful for learners in WBL who typically alternate between different learning environments. The student diary then represents a valuable tool that helps learners understand and integrate different learning components, linking theory and practice.

Student diaries can also be used as a self-evaluation tool for the learner and can be used with the teacher/trainer to look at how a learning experience can be improved by together discussing and planning changes determined necessary.

There are however a number of key issues to consider when using student diaries as a form of assessment. Learners need to understand the purpose of student diaries and understand how to map their learning experiences so that it can be used as a reflective aid for example. Learners and indeed teachers/trainers will also need to understand how the learners documented experiences contribute towards assessment. This highlights further issues about the validity of the diary as an authentic representation of the learner's work. Teachers/trainers may require additional

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<sup>15</sup> Schon, D (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. London: Temple Smith.

professional development in structuring student diaries and using them for assessment purposes.

### **Student diaries – Austria**

*In Austria learners are required to maintain a work diary documenting details of the activities they have participated in throughout the duration of the placement. Combined with regular contact between the workplace and the education provider, the work diary manifests itself as an active tool to illustrate the relationship between the school based and work based elements of the programme and integration with the IVET system.*

*In a work diary ("Arbeitsheft" or "Werkbuch") daily tasks/activities are recorded. This work diary needs to be accessible at any time for the educational institution for review and sign-off. The work diary remains at school until successful completion of the final exam. After completing the placement the work diary is used in the school. Learning experiences and gained knowledge of learners are often evaluated in relevant subjects in the school year after the placement or summarized in form of presentations.*

*Further information on internships, including work diaries please see:  
<http://m.stmk.arbeiterkammer.at/bilder/d70/Pflichtpraktikum.pdf>*

## 4.7. Matching learners and work placements

In many forms of WBL, learners are required to take responsibility for identifying and securing work placements. In preparing learners for their transition to the workplace, there are key issues to consider in relation to how learners are being prepared, particularly in terms of acquiring and developing the skills demanded by employers today. This is particularly important given that employers often complain about the level of basic skills and key competences learners have when they enter the workplace. As such, ensuring appropriate selection criteria is in place provides one such approach to ensure that learners are allocated to placements that give them the potential to grow and develop.

Placing dedicated personnel in charge of recruitment/placement procedures, though resource intensive is another approach to ensure learners are placed appropriately. A key issue in relation to finding suitable placements for learners is the extent to which the placement matches the expectations from the perspective of the learner and the employer. Matching expectations is important so as to avoid a negative learning experience for the learner and to avoid situations where employers feel they are not able to support the needs of the learner or are no longer willing to provide work placements in the future.

A number of Member States have introduced a range of measures to assist employers, learners and education providers in the process of identifying/offering suitable placements. Two different approaches are highlighted here.

### **Apprenticeship vacancy matching - UK**

*In the UK the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was set up in April 2009 providing a single contact point for employers and apprentices. A key part of this service is the new on-line system for Apprenticeship vacancy matching. The service provides a way for young people to search, apply for Apprenticeships and then manage their applications. It also*

*allows employers to advertise and manage their Apprenticeship vacancies.*

*It is intended that the service will be further developed to provide employers with a range of benefits – these include:*

- Giving employers with current apprenticeship vacancies direct access to the vacancy matching system, allowing them to view and track their apprenticeship vacancies and applications.*
- The ability for apprenticeship vacancies to be displayed on other websites, with links back through to apprenticeship vacancies, enabling the wider promotion of vacancies, raising the profile of employers and attracting a wider pool of potential successful applicants.*
- Large employers, training providers and partners will be able to bulk upload vacancy details directly from their systems, saving time and resources and enabling a quicker turnaround on posting vacancies.*
- Allowing employers who use their own recruitment sites to track successful individuals who apply from Apprenticeship vacancies, removing the need for manual intervention.*

#### 4.8. Ensuring health and safety in the workplace

Part of the quality assurance process for WBL is ensuring that learners are placed in suitable and safe learning environments. Strict adherence to health and safety regulations is therefore essential. Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure learners are fully aware of health and safety standards and that they are supervised appropriately in the workplace. Importantly, those responsible for carrying out this training must be fully supported and qualified to perform this task.

Given that learners participating in WBL are typically new to the work place, health and safety training should be an integral feature of induction/initial assessment and form an on-going aspect of the personalised learning plan. Learners must be fully informed both of the regulations, rights and duties with regard to health and safety that they and their employers are bound by.

Where WBL takes place on an employer's premises, it is normally the case that the employer has a legal responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. It is important to note however that the legal status of the learner as an employee, learner or hybrid status of employee/learner varies from country to country and across different forms of WBL. As such a key issue to consider in relation to the health and safety of learners is clarity regarding the legal obligations that fall to employers/schools/colleges together with the necessary contractual arrangements and insurance in place to protect the learner, employer and education provider.

Learners who assume the legal status of employees typical require a contract of employment. This should contain the terms and conditions of employment and be agreed between the employer and the learner. It is also important to highlight that all learners regardless of their status as a learner or employee should be in receipt of a written agreement or contract if appropriate. Though the situation will vary across Member States, employers will require a type of liability insurance that covers the employer's liability in respect of work-related injuries to employees and learners. In most cases this insurance is compulsory by law. A key issue to consider here is the duration of the work experience of the learner where it should be verified that the insurance provides protection for both the short term and long term placement of learners.

In most Member States, the health and safety of learners participating in WBL is central to the regulatory arrangements for WBL for example:

### **Learner safety – Austria**

*Traineeships in VET Colleges for Tourism in Austria are – as well as traineeships in other areas – safe guarded by safety regulations that protect their safety in the workplace. Employers have to fulfil basic requirements concerning security and safety at the workplace. If schools are informed that an employer does not meet security and safety regulations, their contracts can be terminated.*

*A traineeship in VET colleges for tourism is regulated via a contract between the trainee and the employer. It is an employment relationship, therefore also follows collective agreements and general safety regulations which are defined within the employee protection law ("Arbeitnehmerschutz"). This law protects safety and health at work, regulating the employment of particular groups and working hours. Safety and health protection at work e.g. consists in rules prescribing how work premises, work areas and workplaces must be constructed and fitted out in order to ensure that the people employed in or on them suffer no injury to their health and bodily well-being.*

*The contract of employment of a trainee regulates aspects such as length of training period, weekly working hours, remuneration, provision of board and lodging free of charge and free of health or moral hazards. The employer is obliged to conduct the training within the framework of the employee protection regulations which are applicable to the trainee.*

*For trainees younger than 18 this also includes regulations of the Child and Youth Employment Act ("Kinder- und Jugendlichenbeschäftigungsgesetz"). This includes protection regulations for working time, overtime, breaks and rest periods, no work during night, on Sundays or state holidays, regulations for leisure time and other aspects. Some special regulations or exceptions apply to traineeships in tourism, such as the approval to work on each second Sunday and on state holidays.*

*If regulations of the contract of employment with the trainee, regulations of the employee protection law, regulations of collective agreements or other regulations applicable to the trainee are seriously disregarded (e.g. regulations of working time), the contract can be cancelled ahead of schedule.*

*Further information:*

*<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emire/AUSTRIA/ANCHOR-ARBEITNEHMERSCHUTZ-AT.htm>*

*<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emire/AUSTRIA/ANCHOR-ARBEITSZEIT-AT.htm>*

*Collective agreement: <http://www.arbeiterkammer.com/bilder/d2/2315.pdf> (in German)*

## **5. Conclusions**

Structural change is needed to develop high-quality work-based learning and strong apprenticeship systems, involving long-term commitment by employers and policymakers. As set out above, the benefits for individuals, enterprises and indeed society at large are significant.

In parallel to such on-going reforms, immediate results can also be obtained by investing in other forms of work-based learning, notably on-the-job-traineeships, on-site labs and workshops in schools, and real life project assignments which all increase



the relevance and quality of vocational education and training and support a smooth transition from learning to work.

Success requires the active commitment and expertise of not only policymakers, notably those responsible for education and training and for employment / labour market policy, but also – crucially – of social partners. Effective collaboration by a wide diversity of stakeholders is needed to put into practice the three key components described in this document:

1. **Governance.** Good work-based learning governance is the basis for a successful system. It requires effective collaboration and strong commitment by a wide diversity of stakeholders, together with a clear definition of their roles and responsibilities.
  2. **Quality.** Both the qualification gained and the learning process itself should be of high quality to exploit the full potential of WBL and ensure it is recognised as a valuable learning pathway, transferable across borders.
  3. **Partnerships.** Effective partnerships between VET schools / institutions and companies are fundamental to successful WBL.
- The European Commission is currently concentrating its efforts to build a "European Alliance for Apprenticeships". In the Alliance, the Commission will work with Member States, social partners, chambers of commerce and industry, VET providers and others to strengthen the supply and quality of apprenticeships across Europe.
  - This document, which is the Commission's contribution to the mandate of the Bruges Communiqué to analyse successful work-based learning models, is intended as a tool for policymakers and practitioners working on modernising and reforming VET systems. The numerous country examples it contains provide useful information on the three key components for successful work-based learning. It is hoped that the document will help encourage more and better work-based learning by highlighting successful practices and policies in diverse settings.

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## ANNEX – Work-based learning in recent VET reforms

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- AT** In Austria the 2006 Vocational Training Act was amended and now provides a legal basis for modularising Apprenticeship with the intention of making VET more flexible and responsive to sectoral needs. More recently, a training guarantee for young people up to the age of 18 was introduced in June 2008. This measure aims to ensure that all compulsory school graduates who do not have a place at an upper secondary school or cannot find a company-based Apprenticeship place are given the opportunity to learn an Apprenticeship trade at a supra-company training centre which takes over the role of the company. This measure is exceptional to address the shortage of apprenticeship placements and the aim is to enable transition of young people into regular apprenticeships.
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- BG** As part of Bulgaria's National Programme for Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training a number of projects are implemented on the public-private partnership principle with enterprises providing opportunities for learners to improve their practical skills through apprenticeships in different companies. In 2010, 22 partnerships were financed and 1348 students were provided with an opportunity for practical training in enterprises.
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- CY** One of the main reforms in the field of VET as outlined in the National Reform Programme includes upgrading the Apprenticeship System. The 'New Modern Apprenticeship' (NMA) is planned to be fully operational in 2015. Its main strategic objectives are to ensure mobility between education, apprenticeship system and employment, and minimise the danger of social exclusion. It also aims to increase the supply of labour with persons qualified to meet the needs of the economy.
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- DK** In Denmark a 'New Apprenticeship' programme was introduced in 2006 and provides opportunities for young people to spend the first year of the programme with an employer before embarking on the theoretical school-based part of the programme. In Denmark, the government is providing incentives to enterprises to provide new training places (which have been in short supply) to ensure that by 2015, 95% of youth will complete at least upper secondary education – including through VET. In 2011, 9000 extra training places were created and bonuses to enterprises that create them were increased. The government also created 2200 places in the public sector and 1500 places in colleges.
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- FI** In Finland as part of the reform of the qualifications structure of vocational education and training the development of Apprenticeships with multiple employers will be investigated and opportunities for young people, migrants and people with disabilities to participate in Apprenticeship training will be improved.
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- FR** Two main Laws were introduced in France in 2011 with the aim of developing work study/Apprenticeship contracts. In 2011 an initiative was also established with the aim of engaging 800,000 young people in work study training (of which 600,000 will be apprentices) by 2015. Measures have also been introduced to simplify administrative arrangements in order to encourage companies to take young people on as apprentices.
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- DE** Measures have been taken to increase the number of available Apprenticeship places in Germany. This includes the introduction of a number of programmes aimed at promoting the modularisation and flexibility of vocational training, improving transition from general school education into vocational training and increasing permeability between vocational training and higher/tertiary education.
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- IE** FÁS is in the process of updating curricula for Apprenticeship trades and it has developed Apprenticeships in areas such as print media, industrial insulation, jewellery, electronic security systems and farriery as well as "Generic Common Modules", for example basic IT awareness. As committed to in a recent Government initiative, The Action Plan for Jobs 2012, the Department of Education and Skills is conducting an independent review of the current apprenticeship training model, with a view to providing an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures an appropriate balance between supply and demand."
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- IT** Following the Law 30/2003 that introduced a number of reforms to distinguish between three different types of Apprenticeships, a new reform of Apprenticeships was approved in July 2011. This includes the introduction of an Apprenticeship entitled 'Apprenticeship for a vocational qualification or diploma' that is aimed at young people aged 15-25 and will be regulated by the Regions. As part of the reform the length of the Professional Apprenticeship has been reduced to a maximum three years (five for craft industries) and a new Apprenticeship will be introduced for the public sector. In addition Apprenticeships for adults will be introduced for adults who have lost their jobs during the economic downturn.
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- LT** The Law on VET (2007) facilitates participation in VET through a number of developments including that of Apprenticeships.
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- LU** The 2008 education reform placed an increased emphasis on creating closer links between industry and education. Work experience placements and Traineeships are seen as effective means of linking young people to the labour market. To this end a large number of training schemes now include compulsory Traineeships.
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- NO** Norway has a main model of VET of 4 years (2+2 model), in which students complete two years of upper secondary school before signing an apprenticeship contract with an enterprise/public institution for the last two years before completing the trade or journeyman's examination at the end of the four years. In some trades there is a mismatch between supply and demand of apprenticeship places. If there is a problem providing enough apprenticeship places, the county authorities are obliged to offer a third year at school leading up to the same final trade or journeyman's examination. Current political debate is focused on increasing work-based learning within this third year offered to those who do not receive an apprenticeship place. It is also debated whether this 3rd year should be increased by up to one year additional training, provided there is proven agreement of close cooperation between the school and the work place. Currently, the main political debate concerns trying out a dual model (alternance model), instead of the current 2+2 model. This is done to increase student motivation and prevent drop-out. Parliament is deciding on both measures mentioned above in June 2013, but the government has
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allocated money to try out both models in the counties as of next school year and the current timeframe is two and four years respectively. Norway has also made an agreement with the social partners called the "Social Partner contract" for a benchmark of a 20% increase in the number of apprenticeship places compared to 2011 numbers to be achieved within 2015.

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**PT** Since 2007, following the European Commission and OECD's recommendations for Portugal to implement measures aimed at improving the attainment levels of young people and increasing the productivity of the workforce, the Portuguese education and training system has undergone major changes. A major reform occurred at the end of 2007 with the creation of the National Qualifications System (Decree-Law no 396/2007, 31 December) which reformed vocational training. All the education and training pathways in the scope of the NQS include work-based learning. Overarching aims of this reform was to facilitate the access to VET, to raise the attainment levels of the Portuguese population, to improve the quality of VET and to ensure that VET qualifications better match labour market needs.

As part of Portugal's active labour market policies (ALMP) a range of initiatives were also introduced in 2011 to enhance the employability of the unemployed and young job-seekers, this includes 50,000 Apprenticeships for young people. The document "Commitment for Growth, Competitiveness and Employment" (January 2012), subscribed by the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Policies, envisages strengthening vocational education and increasing the connection between training providers and companies in order to improve the qualification levels of the population.

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**RO** Amending and completing the Law no. 279/2005 on Apprenticeships at work aims to reduce the administrative burden by repealing the procedure of authorisation of the employer and certification of the apprenticeship master, as well as facilitating the implementation of measures to stimulate participation in Apprenticeships

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**SE** As part of the new school reform for upper secondary school level in 2011 an Apprenticeship will now be possible as an alternative route instead of a school-based programme. At least 50 % of the programme will be based on workplace learning. In addition the new vocationally-oriented upper secondary programmes include opportunities to participate in a WBL period of 15 weeks over a three year period. Currently Sweden makes upper secondary VET more relevant by establishing national and local programme councils. These councils (set up in 2011) contribute to cooperation between VET and the world of work and assist VET providers in arranging training places.

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**UK** In the UK the Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Act published in 2009 guarantees all suitably qualified young people an entitlement to an Apprenticeship place. The Act also set out details of the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) which outlines the minimum requirements to be included in a recognised English Apprenticeship framework. Compliance with the SASE is a statutory requirement of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning (ASCL) Act. The new rules set, for the first time, a set of minimum duration of 12 months for apprenticeships to help improve the relevance of the training. In Scotland the national vacancy service for youth employment and training helps young people to find apprenticeships and traineeships. It also supports employers and training providers by targeting the youth labour market more effectively.

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*Sources : Cedefop Refernet reports (2011), IKEI study on the supply of apprenticeships (2012) and updates suggested by governmental representatives of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (May 2013).*