Working paper series

No 12 / July 2022

BUILT TO LAST: APPRENTICESHIP VISION, PURPOSE, AND RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Short papers from the Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts



The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

Europe 123, Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE

Postal: Cedefop service post, 570 01 Thermi, GREECE

Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020

Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

www.cedefop.europa.eu

Jürgen Siebel, Executive Director Nadine Nerguisian, Chair of the Management Board

Please cite this publication as:

Cedefop et al. (2022). Built to last: apprenticeship vision, purpose, and resilience in times of crisis: short papers from the Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper, No 12.

http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/449252

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

© Cedefop, 2022.

Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0).

This working paper should not be reported as representing the views of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Cedefop.

PDF ISBN 978-92-896-3422-9 ISSN 1831-2403 doi:10.2801/449252 TI-BA-22-004-EN-N

Foreword

Sitting at the crossroads between education and the labour market, apprenticeships, more than other forms of vocational education and training (VET), are sensitive to economic shocks such as the one triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides being resilient in the face of such shocks, apprenticeships also need to be prepared and agile, so they can respond to acceleration in existing long-term structural trends affecting global economies and societies – such as the green and digital transitions – which are bringing about profound transformation of the world of work.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the world of work was already changing, with significant implications for apprenticeships. Changes will continue, albeit to an accelerated pace in the new context the world faces.

Looking to drawing lessons from the past, to prepare apprenticeships better for future shocks and for the accelerated pace of changes, resilience in times of crisis is a quality of interest for researchers and policy-makers. The proliferation of apprenticeships indicates a need to understand better and clarify their vision and purpose, within national contexts and also for international comparison. The papers developed by Cedefop's community of apprenticeship experts for this publication come to contribute to these aims. They help to understand how company participation in apprenticeship changes in times of crisis and to inform responses that help apprenticeships adapt and overcome fluctuations. At the same time, they give examples of how national stakeholders can share a common vision and purpose for apprenticeships, allowing their adaptation to emerging needs without compromising their essential features as a distinct type of training. Eventually, they show the links between the two topics: apprenticeships that are built on a common vision (and shared efforts and responsibilities) are also built to last, to withstand times of crisis.

Drawing on the papers, we are convinced that this publication will contribute to better-informed policy decisions that promote conditions favouring a shared vision and purpose, and support apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis. Cedefop would like to thank the experts and their fellow authors for their valuable input and the overall voluntary contribution to the community.

Jürgen Siebel
Executive Director, Cedefop

Antonio Ranieri Head of department for VET and skills

Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), Department for VET and Skills (DVS), under the supervision of Antonio Ranieri.

The publication is a collection of the papers authored by members of Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts on apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis, and on apprenticeship vision and purpose.

The publication was prepared and edited by Vlasis Korovilos and Lisa Rustico, and reviewed by Ramona David, all Cedefop experts.

Contents

FO	REWOR	D	1
1.	INTROI	DUCTION	6
	1.1.	Policy background and Cedefop work on apprenticeships	6
	1.2.	Cedefop's community of apprenticeship experts	7
	1.3.	Overview of the current publication	8
2.	COMPA	ARATIVE ANALYSIS	9
	2.1.	Apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis	9
	2.2.	Apprenticeship vision and purpose	15
	2.3.	Conclusions	20
PA	RT I. AP	PRENTICESHIP RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS	24
3.	WORK-	-BASED LEARNING: BULGARIA	25
	3.1.	Introduction	25
	3.2.	How and why participation has changed in times crisis	26
	3.3.	Encouraging company participation	27
	3.4.	Conclusions	29
	Refe	rences	30
4.	NEW M	IODERN APPRENTICESHIP: CYPRUS	31
	4.1.	Introduction	31
	4.2.	How and why participation has changed in times of crisis	32
	4.3.	Encouraging company participation	34
	4.4.	Conclusion	36
5.	APPRE	NTICESHIP CONTRACT: FRANCE	38
	5.1.	How and why participation has changed in times of crisis?	38
	5.2.	Encouraging company participation	40
	5.3.	Conclusions	43
6.	DUAL F	PATHWAY: THE NETHERLANDS	45
	6.1.	How and why participation has changed in times of crisis?	45
	6.2.	How to encourage company participation	48
	6.3	Conclusions	53

7.	APPRE	NTICESHIP PROGRAMMES: PORTUGAL	54
	7.1.	Introduction	54
	7.2.	How and why participation has changed in times of crisis	55
	7.3.	How to encourage company participation	59
	7.4.	Conclusions	64
8.	APPRE	NTICESHIP AT THE WORKPLACE: ROMANIA	65
	8.1.	Introduction	65
	8.2.	How and why participation has changed in times of crisis	66
	8.3.	Encouraging company participation	69
	8.4.	Conclusions	70
	Refer	ences	71
9.	APPRE	NTICESHIP RESILIENCE: UK-ENGLAND	72
	9.1.	How and why has participation changed in times of	
		economic crisis?	72
	9.2.	How to encourage company participation	79
	9.3.	Conclusion	82
	Refer	ences	83
PAI	RT II. AP	PRENTICESHIP VISION AND PURPOSE	86
10.	APPRE	NTICESHIP: DENMARK	87
	10.1.	Stated vision as per national definition/regulation	87
	10.2.	Vision of national stakeholders	88
	10.3.	Impact on end users	89
	10.4.	Promoting and maintaining convergence	91
	Refer	ences	92
11.	DUAL V	ET: GERMANY	95
	11.1.	Introduction	95
	11.2.	Stated vision as per national definition/regulation	96
	11.3.	Vision of national stakeholders	98
	11.4.	Conclusions	101
	Rofor	ences	102

12.	VET IN	THE FORM OF APPRENTICESHIP: LITHUANIA	104
	12.1.	Stated vision as per national definition/ regulation	104
	12.2.	Vision of national stakeholders	105
	12.3.	Impact on end users	107
	12.4.	How to promote and maintain convergence	108
	Refer	ences	110
13.	VOCATI	ONAL PREPARATION OF JUVENILE WORKERS: POLAND.	111
	13.1.	Stated vision as per national definition/regulation	111
	13.2.	Vision of national stakeholders	112
	13.3.	Impact on end users	114
	13.4.	How to promote and maintain convergence	116
	Refer	ences	117

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

Policy background and Cedefop work on apprenticeships

The increased political attention paid to apprenticeships for over a decade became evident in numerous policy initiatives to improve, modernise and expand apprenticeship provision in Europe. In 2013, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) marked this progress at EU level. Governments of most EU Member States introduced or reformed apprenticeship schemes at a time that Europe was working its way out of the long(er)-term consequences of the 2008 financial crisis and in an attempt to tackle youth unemployment and ease transitions from education to employment.

Cedefop has systematically taken stock of several apprenticeship-related reforms and initiatives throughout this period, in the context of monitoring overall VET developments since the Bruges Communiqué. Cedefop also supported this process, working closely with selected countries to review their apprenticeship systems and schemes (1), exploring in depth how they are designed and implemented.

Investigating further how apprenticeships differ in terms of design and organisation across Europe, Cedefop contributed significantly in identifying what accounts for the various understandings of the concept of 'apprenticeship', both within a single country and across countries, in its cross-nation overview of apprenticeships in Europe study. The study, based on the data from the Cedefop database on apprenticeship schemes (2), indicated that such differences are accounted for by the different functions and purposes policy-makers attached to apprenticeships; these vary from fully preparing learners for an occupation, to short-term skills development, social inclusion, and to offering second-chance pathways for VET dropouts and other vulnerable groups.

In this context, the European debate on apprenticeships moved from simply increasing apprenticeship provision and participation to raising its quality and effectiveness. Following the initiative of the EU-level social partners, the EU Member States adopted a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships (EFQEA) in 2018, which is the second landmark in the EU policy landscape of apprenticeship

⁽¹) Apprenticeship system: a set of interrelated structures, rules and procedures underpinned by a legal framework, which regulate apprenticeship provision and make it work as a unitary whole. Apprenticeship scheme: a systematic arrangement about how apprenticeship provision should be designed, delivered, assessed, certified and governed within the overall VET system. More than one scheme may exist in an apprenticeship/VET system. See Cedefop's analytical framework for apprenticeships.

⁽²⁾ Cedefop's database on apprenticeship schemes collects and provides information on stable, system-level features of apprenticeships in a structured, and therefore comparable, way across EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the UK.

developments. It provides a common denominator for apprenticeships across countries and an extensive set of conditions that aim at improving its quality and effectiveness, setting criteria both for framework conditions, and for learning and working conditions. Cedefop's analysis of where apprenticeship schemes stand in relation to several of the EFQEA criteria showed that, despite areas of strength, a series of implications and challenges in terms of quality and effectiveness remain for policy-makers to address. Cedefop's work shows that such challenges including those of involving companies, especially SMEs, and social partners, and seem to relate to deeper issues such as identity and purpose within the national contexts.

Cedefop, together with the OECD also decided to explore the future of apprentices from the perspective of a number of megatrends, including sociodemographic changes, the accelerated adoption of emerging technologies and new forms of work organisation. Their joint publication on The next steps for apprenticeship provided insights from 16 papers by researchers from Europe, Australia and the United States into how these trends have affected, and will continue to affect, the design and delivery of apprenticeship in European and OECD countries.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis that severely hit European economies inevitably affected apprenticeship provision and demand. Long-standing, existing challenges for company participation in apprenticeships in several EU Member States were further aggravated. Either due to regulatory restrictions in several sectors, especially in lockdown periods, or due to the overall stagnation of economic activity, company participation in apprenticeship and the resilience of apprenticeship schemes came back to the spotlight. Cedefop, through its Community of apprenticeship experts (Section 1.1.2), contributed with a synthesis report on how the outbreak affected apprenticeships in the EU, Iceland, Norway and the UK, and what steps were taken to address the emerging challenges. Published within the first 3 months of the pandemic outbreak, the report shows a variety of responses in relation to the school-based and the workplace components; these often resonate the particular characteristics of how apprenticeship schemes are designed and implemented across Europe, for example in terms of types of apprentice remuneration or of the overall (existing before the crisis) collaboration of schools and companies to deliver training.

1.2. Cedefop's community of apprenticeship experts

Cedefop's Community of apprenticeship experts was established by Cedefop in 2018 and renewed in 2022 (3). It aims at strengthening and expanding knowledge on apprenticeships in Europe, through analyses, provision of information and input to the

⁽³⁾ In 2022, the community brings together apprenticeship experts from the EU Member States, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United Kingdom.

Cedefop database on apprenticeship schemes (4). The database collects and presents structured, comparable information on apprenticeship schemes in EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and the UK.

The community experts have also provided analyses on topics that they identify to be of interest at European and national levels for apprenticeship. In 2020, the first topics of their choice included apprenticeship governance in relation to cooperation between the two worlds involved in apprenticeship (education (VET actors) and the labour market), and in-company training and delivery in apprenticeships. Their work led to a collection of 21 papers published by Cedefop under the title Apprenticeship governance and in-company training: where labour market and education meet.

In 2021, the community experts explored the topics of apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis, and of apprenticeship vision and purpose. This process concluded with the 11 papers contained in this publication.

1.3. Overview of the current publication

Based on the evidence and analysis provided by community experts (or, where stated, by their colleagues), the publication includes a comparative analysis (Chapter 2) for each of the two topics. It also includes a section with Cedefop comparative analysis of the input provided by experts, which concludes with some overarching reflections and messages.

The papers are presented by topic, in two parts. Part I includes papers on apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis. The aim of exploring this topic was to understand the relationship between economic fluctuations and apprenticeship, and ways to improve its attractiveness for employers, preserving their participation and apprenticeship provision in times of crisis and in view of recovery. Part II includes papers on apprenticeship vision and purpose. The aim of exploring this topic was to understand if and why stakeholders, even within a country, struggle to share a common understanding of 'apprenticeship' and its socioeconomic role, and to reflect on how a common understanding can be promoted.

-

⁽⁴⁾ The database contains only apprenticeship schemes considered as such in the national official definitions, i.e. what governments define as such by means of norms and minimum legal requirements, which have a stable/valid legal basis, and which are system-level or mainstream schemes and lead to formal qualifications. Pilot schemes, even when underpinned by a legal basis, are out of the scope of the database.

CHAPTER 2.

Comparative analysis

2.1. Apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis

Apprenticeship provision is likely to be challenged in times of crisis (e.g. financial, health) that may threaten economic recession. Companies reduce costs, inter alia, by cutting the number of apprenticeship places offered to young people, requiring Governments to step in and safeguard young people's right to education and training. In crisis situations, most companies are less likely to invest in long-term human capital development with a view to recovery and future skill needs. Reasons for that may go well beyond economic ones: employers may be unsure if long-term investment in apprenticeship is a priority in contexts of greater uncertainty, and what its benefits might be.

In their papers, the seven experts who chose this topic (Bulgaria, France, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and UK-England) addressed it from a twofold perspective. By looking at the past, they investigated what were the observed effects on apprenticeship provision during the economic crisis of 2008 and/or the COVID-19 crisis (5), and what were the past approaches/interventions to ensuring adequate provision of apprenticeship placements during and after periods of economic downturn. By looking at the future, they reflected on what makes or would make an apprenticeship scheme resilient to labour market fluctuations and what type of ad hoc/crisis interventions could be envisaged.

2.1.1. Company participation in times of crisis: fluctuations and underpinning reasons

Fluctuations in apprenticeship placements were registered during all the crises analysed but they were usually concentrated in selected sectors or over limited periods of time.

Apprenticeships were generally used as a response to the 2008-09 crisis, primarily to combat youth unemployment, and were generously supported by public finances, so the effects of the crisis were mainly confined to some sectors. As a result, no drastic reductions were recorded in terms of company participation. For example, the papers show that in France, the pronounced decline in economic activity and a sharp fall in salaried employment from mid-2008 negatively influenced apprenticeship recruitment, putting a stop to a fairly dynamic increase in apprenticeship contract entries that had begun in 2004. However, they quickly returned to pre-crisis levels thanks to the State financial aid. In Romania, participation was not influenced by the economic crisis and, according to the corresponding paper, the reasons employers quoted for hiring apprentices were not related to the crisis. In Portugal, during the 2008 crisis, company

⁽⁵⁾ All experts but the Bulgarian and Cypriot one considered both crises. The English expert considered also the crisis following Brexit in 2016.

participation grew, at least compared with other VET programmes or with upper secondary level of education as a whole or with the eligible age group for secondary level VET programmes. In UK-England, despite the 2008-09 recession, the number of apprenticeships starts have been steadily growing.

A more significant drop in the levels of apprenticeship activity, but still limited in time and to certain sectors, was registered during the COVID-19 crisis in those industries forced to suspend their activity during the lockdowns, in all countries. The pandemic affected provision and triggered a decline in comparison to the increase registered in the previous boom period. Despite this initial reduction, it is hard to talk about an overall declining trend throughout the crisis period: most experts reported that apprenticeship places in the end remained relatively stable or even increased, after considerable efforts by public authorities to safeguard them, but also thanks to favourable design features of apprenticeship that helped adaptation in that period. For example, in the Netherlands the numbers remained stable in 2020/21, with acute decline especially in sectors forced to close (e.g. hospitality, entertainment), while others were still experiencing growth, albeit less strong than previous years.

Whenever company participation dropped during the COVID-19 crisis, it was motivated by three main causes.

First, the significant fall in production or levels of activity coming to a standstill, aggravated by uncertainty, was a major obstacle to company planning and investment. For instance, in Bulgaria, the COVID-19-related difficulties for companies in tourism and wood processing and furniture production led to a reduction in interest in training apprentices; the same happened with the companies in all industrial sectors which had to reduce services and/or production.

Second, due to the consequences of the pandemic, several companies in 'non-essential' sectors were forced by health regulation into closures and restrictions when, for example, they could not abide by lack of sufficient physical space to keep the recommended 1.5m distance. Company participation fell, especially in occupations offered in sectors such as retail, tourism and hospitality, mobility, transport, and logistics. This kind of impact concerned most of the countries covered by the papers. For example, in Cyprus during lockdown, company participation dropped significantly, especially in hairdressing and food sectors, as they had to close their businesses.

Third, in sectors where the activity did not slow down, companies may not have had space and staff for apprentice supervision, especially when it came to distance learning, due to limited resources amidst increased competitive pressures. For example, in the Netherlands, during the COVID-19 crisis, it was difficult to supervise students in the Care and wellbeing apprenticeship programmes due to pressure, both in terms of capacity and physical space.

The resilience of apprenticeship supply was particularly aided by strong financial support from the State: for example, in France, both during the 2008 and the COVID-19 crisis, the public financial aid, combined with the mobilisation of players in favour of

apprenticeship, helped to sustain apprenticeship entries and limit the decline. The 2020 recovery plan (accompanied by reform of the legal framework) was actually a stimulus to a significant increase in company participation during COVID-19, leading to a strong increase in the number of new contracts; this was especially because apprenticeship was valued as a strong instrument in combating youth unemployment and helping exit the crisis. In Portugal, where apprenticeship is structurally embedded in VET provided by the State, it brings no financial burden and direct financial repercussion for companies. These were the preconditions to have continuity in placements. In Romania, economic crisis does not seem to have had an impact on employers' decisions to offer apprenticeship places.

Some experts reported companies finding opportunities for apprenticeship during the crises. Some companies in Cyprus reported that apprentices represented a solution to skill gaps, as they were the only (low-cost) alternative to skilled workers who were unavailable due to the economic impact of the pandemic. This, however, built on the 2012 commitment that government and social partners had signed to strengthen apprenticeship further through increased collaboration of all actors. Along these lines, some Bulgarian employers declared that their interest in apprenticeship during the COVID-19 crisis was linked not only to the acknowledged general benefit of designing and customising the practical training according their own needs, but it was also less expensive to train a school apprentice than an unemployed unqualified adult. More proactively, some companies took the opportunity to train apprentices in extra digital skills, as learning had to move online during COVID-19 and because such skills are becoming increasingly needed, especially in times of crisis. During the lockdown phases, apprentices were given access to electronic platforms and taught how to work with virtual models and virtual reality. Some companies started to prepare the apprentices for broader qualifications and not just for the specific professional specialty of their VET programme, thus giving them better career opportunities and, at the same time, providing the company with broader options for their employment. In France, remote learning triggered the implementation of apprentice continuous assessment, even from a distance, making use of tools such as the apprentice notebook or training booklet. The COVID-19 crisis also brought change in experimenting with remote apprentice recruitment and related campaigns. Digitalisation made it possible to organise virtual open days and remote tests and interviews, which contributed to testing young people before hiring them. In the Netherlands, the crisis triggered closer collaboration among all actors, who mobilised to provide support to children confined at home with online classes and no social support.

In some cases, COVID-19 had a negative impact in terms of reduced apprentice participation, especially in some sectors and occupations, with a change in the choice of specialties. The UK-England paper sheds light on the diversified impact the COVID-19 crisis had on apprentices across age groups and across people of different backgrounds, with significant disparities; the greatest impact was on young people hired at lower levels,

with lower pay, who worked for small and medium size enterprises and in sectors that had to 'shut down'. In other cases, such as Romania and in Cyprus, there was no reduction in the number of apprentices during COVID-19 and participation remained stable.

2.1.2. Measures taken to increase company participation

Both financial and non-financial incentives have helped companies facing the most recent crises. The following section refers to the main measures taken in relation to COVID-19.

In all cases reviewed, financial incentives were key to supporting companies. More than one country set up ad hoc aid schemes to facilitate recruitment, often with the payment of a bonus for employers who recruit apprentices. In France, all companies recruiting an apprentice, at any education level, would receive a EUR 5 000 bonus for a minor and EUR 8 000 for an adult, until 31 December 2021. Simplified procedures were put in place to access this aid, which is triggered automatically when the contract is submitted. In the Netherlands, the subsidy for companies offering an apprenticeship to an upper secondary VET student was increased to EUR 2 700 per apprenticeship (per year per student). Research and development funds were also used to promote training in some sectors and sometimes pay a financial contribution to companies that offer active training for their employees (in construction in the Netherlands). In Portugal, the State provide financial aid indirectly by guaranteeing the payment of training providers' fixed costs, ensuring the payment of trainers during periods of suspended training and establishing or maintaining financial and social support for apprentices, even during the interruption of face-to-face training.

In UK-England, the obligatory apprenticeship levy system introduced in 2017 had a mixed impact on apprenticeship numbers. Employers showed a tendency to take on more expensive, higher-level apprentices to use up the funds available for training, mostly to reconvert existing employees (the so-called practice of 'conversion') rather than to create places for new recruits.

Non-financial incentives seem to be decisive factors for companies to guarantee continuity in the provision of apprenticeship places. The French case illustrates how the 2018 reform of the legal framework strongly encouraged employer participation in offering apprenticeship places as a result of the substantial liberalisation of apprenticeship provision (complementing financial incentives). As companies were given the possibility, and incentivised, to set up their own apprentice training centre (CFA), they can decide to use part of the apprenticeship tax they pay to finance the development of new apprenticeship training offers for their own apprentices. Administrative procedures to offer apprenticeship places were also simplified and supported by a lighter and incentive-based economic model: the more apprentices the training centres train, the more funding they receive from the State.

Solutions were also found at implementation level to adjust to the pandemic. In many countries, a major initiative was adapting the apprenticeship training mode of

delivery, including workplace learning through distance learning and telework, with the consequent adaptation of training contents and still establishing or maintaining the financial and social support for apprentices. For example, in Portugal changes had to do with the mode of delivery (online) and the training schedule (postponement of practical and work-based learning) and introducing rotation to guarantee social distancing. Trainers also benefitted from online training methodologies and the technological means necessary for the development of online training, without losing payment of their salaries and of fixed costs during the interruption of training activities. Companies were sometimes provided with technical guidelines to adjust their training supply and supported by specific agreements or protocols with VET providers. Assessment became a continuous practice, including learning from a distance, based on apprentice training booklets or notebooks, notably in France.

Enabling matching between demand and supply with a view to responding to skill shortages, has also been a key supporting element for company participation. For example, in the Netherlands, the national body Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven (SBB) (Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market) collected company apprenticeship place offers across the country, analysed them and published on an online portal, freely accessible to potential apprentices. Companies could find adequate responses to their needs thanks to a realistic and up-to-date picture of shortages, broken down by sector, region and qualification.

On the governance side, stronger collaboration at regional level among all actors in VET (schools, companies, provinces, municipalities and public employment services) was signalled as a crucial favourable condition to set up training plans tailored to regional needs. In the Netherlands, schools, social partners, sectoral bodies, training companies, and SBB used their creativity to secure sufficient apprenticeships during the crisis.

2.1.3. What could enable company participation

The Community experts reflected on the conditions that would assist companies to maintain stable participation over crises and identified possible enablers to increase its levels in a stable economic situation. They mostly refer to pre-crisis conditions, although some concern specifically the time when the crisis manifests.

Financial incentives.

- (a) Compensation could be envisaged for company mentors and for the time they spend in preparing workplace learning for apprentices: specific incentives could be introduced to support the salary cost of senior workers that train and support apprentices and the loss of productivity resulting from the displacement of financial, human, and technological resources from production to training. Extra resources could be invested, if further adaptation of training content or training delivery, e.g. a switch to remote learning, are needed in times of crisis.
- (b) Sector-specific initiatives may be put in place to support employers equipping extra workplaces for apprentices, especially in times of crisis.

- (c) In-kind public investments, such as creating structures and tools for training companies, could possibly incentivise company participation.
 - Non-financial incentives and measures at system level.
- (a) Employers need to rely on better and more detailed legislation that gives them certainty and makes the system more flexible. For example, the legal framework may include the possibility of delivering authorised online training to replace workbased training, if a crisis requires that, or reduce apprenticeship duration and, therefore, costs. It would be important, though, to guarantee that this does not impact on the comparability of learning experiences among apprentices.
- (b) Collaboration strategies among all actors involved in apprenticeship has been acknowledged as the starting point in offering companies a platform to cooperate and share responsibility for apprenticeship. Companies need to be involved through their representatives with decision-making powers, and also through social dialogue. A possible solution would be setting up an apprenticeship governance model, including political and technical levels in an integrated manner with a strong presence of employers in both. More collaboration was recommended especially with VET institution teachers.
- (c) Regarding apprenticeship pedagogy and training provision methods, COVID-19 shed light on the need to train VET students in basic digital competences. This is the starting point in embracing the training supply digitalisation trend, both for apprentices and trainers, who need more training about technologies and new pedagogies. There was also a suggestion to elaborate a hybrid model of work-based learning, combining work in a real working environment with work with virtual models and reality.
- (d) Embedding apprenticeship in medium to long-term company and sectoral strategies and goals is seen as a way to help companies to take up apprenticeship with continuity, and scale up their placement offer and be more encouraged to invest in it
- (e) Companies need simplification in bureaucracy, easier procedures and clearer and accessible information, for example about the conditions of hiring apprentices or authorising companies to train, as well as about costs and benefits of apprenticeship. This would be true in general but also in times of crisis, if ad hoc measures are adopted and need to be communicated.
- (f) Continuous efforts are required in the communication and promotion of apprenticeship to improve its image and attractiveness, its perception by employers, training providers, families and apprentices themselves. SMEs should become the target of dedicated awareness raising campaigns, including official public award ceremonies.
 - Non-financial support to companies may also be of help.
- (a) Companies need to be involved, through their representatives, in up-to-date identification of qualifications and skill needs, as well as in the definition of the

- curricula and the programmes to be offered, improving in this way the responsiveness of training to labour market demand.
- (b) Employers need methodological and practical support to organise and manage apprenticeships, including for example access by in-company trainers to educational electronic platforms. Sectoral employer associations could create, train and organise a pool of in-company trainers that companies may use to train their apprentices.

2.2. Apprenticeship vision and purpose

Stakeholders, even within the same country, often do not share a common understanding of what apprenticeship is (vision) and is for (purpose). Massive policy efforts to increase apprenticeship uptake have sometimes exacerbated this situation, as they have resulted in a proliferation at the national level of apprenticeship schemes with different purposes: vocational training fully preparing learners for an occupation, short-term skills development, social inclusion, and offering second-chance pathways for VET dropouts and other vulnerable groups.

Four experts (Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland) addressed the following research questions: What are the attitudes and goals of national stakeholders in your country concerning the stated vision of apprenticeship's purpose? Is the stated vision shared or are there clashes, and, if so, why? How to bridge the gap between contrasting visions among national stakeholders in your country?

2.2.1. Stated vision as per national definition/regulation

Each of the countries analysed has its own different apprenticeship vision or purpose, ranging from broader understanding, more closely linked to societal purposes and the overall educational dimension, to others that prioritise labour market and occupational needs in relation to the education and social aspects.

In Germany, the concept of 'occupation' (*Beruf*) is central to the understanding of apprenticeship, as it is intimately linked to its purpose. The *Beruf* is at the basis of competence-based training regulations, with a broad scope encompassing professional, methodological, social and personal dimensions. Skills, knowledge and abilities are always conceived and mentioned in a bundle, all being essential to the definition of an occupation. The recent 2019 revision of the Federal Act for vocational education and training did not modify the core fundamental and shared concept of the objectives of apprenticeship within initial VET in Germany.

Similarly, in Denmark the vision of apprenticeship is quite broad, embracing both occupational and societal purposes: the dual VET system must not only train students in vocational competences, but also on how to become creative, innovative, and to engage in democratic development of society. It should help them gain an international perspective, support their personal development and train in how to learn and study, so

that they will be able to take part in further education. Apprentices get broader training, as through the combination of the two learning venues, dual VET programmes fully qualify learners for future professions.

In Poland, the aim of the scheme is to 'qualify apprentices to perform a profession'. In most cases, curricula requirements (programme bases) were recently introduced (2019): they should include both personal and social competences and job specific ones. Their development largely remains a responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which may involve other stakeholders to some extent.

In Lithuania, the purpose of apprenticeship seems anchored around the labour market transition. Apprenticeship goals were recently reaffirmed: acquisition of practical skills at the workplace, smoother transition to the labour market, better employment prospects and better cooperation between education and business.

The vision and purpose of apprenticeships has not changed significantly in the past years in the four countries covered but have been adapted to a degree. Some central themes of adaptation can be identified related to raising attractiveness of apprenticeships in general, opening up to adults or to higher levels specifically, improving quality or adapting to emerging social and economic challenges.

2.2.2. Vision(s) of national stakeholders

Where there is tradition of broad stakeholder participation in apprenticeship decision-making and governance, and established platforms for such contribution, the vision and purpose of apprenticeships seem to be clear and shared among stakeholders. These aspects, and also key strategic decisions regarding apprenticeships, are usually discussed and agreed by a broad set of stakeholders, often requiring compromise of various interests. If there are divergent opinions, these are discussed in the context of such formalised national and local fora and compromises and agreements are made there.

For example, in Denmark, governance (and responsibility) for apprenticeships (as all IVET) is shared at all levels: the National Advisory Council on Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training, where social partners, student, teacher and school leader organisations are all represented, advises the Ministry of Education on key matters concerning IVET, including apprenticeships. Social partners are represented in national trade committees and have an advisory role in local training committees, in the latter together with teachers and students. These platforms are considered by the national expert as strong enablers for sharing the vision and purpose of apprenticeships too. In Germany, the long tradition of collective decision-making was recently reinforced by two alliances (2015-18 and 2019-22) of national stakeholders that brought an even more all-encompassing governance approach and further promoted collaboration between stakeholders. The 2015 alliance gave stakeholders instruments for cooperation, besides those existing: a high-level steering group and a working-level committee with a mandate to monitor progresses and be proactive on emerging challenges. Both alliances shaped the priorities for apprenticeships for the period of their mandate.

In these cases the vision is not generally questioned, and stakeholders do not call for fundamental changes for VET/apprenticeships, but rather for 'minimal' adaptations in the light of recent developments: e.g. to address economic crisis, migration, or the green transition. The participatory approaches allow for such adaptations to be expressed as a need of several stakeholders and agreed, without representing a major shift in the understanding of apprenticeship vision and purpose.

In Lithuania, national stakeholders have been involved in preparing apprenticeship legal acts, contributing to the construction of the stated vision and recently reaffirming that the overall vision remains relevant for them. Their involvement helped clarify the differences between apprenticeships and other work-based or workplace learning opportunities. Nevertheless, employer organisations, through an agreement to implement a specific apprenticeship 'model', recently prioritised 'mature apprentices' (those who already have upper-secondary education level, current employees who lack qualifications but have practical work experience, or VET learners who find a job during their studies and use apprenticeship as a way to continue that job) over younger learners as target beneficiaries of apprenticeship. Such prioritisation, although possible by regulation (6), represents a significant change in the purpose of apprenticeship in the country which, by regulation, is addressed also to learners in upper secondary levels/IVET.

Although apprenticeship in Poland is a long-established offer, in practice it is not seen by all stakeholders as the main instrument to secure a skilled future workforce. Although the advantages of apprenticeship, in terms of fuller qualification of learners from the combination of practical and theoretical training, have been made more visible to several social partners and the government recently, some stakeholders keep favouring other VET options over apprenticeship, also for financial reasons. There is still significant divergence on what stakeholders think apprenticeship is and what it serves, which in turn reinforces the lower status of apprenticeship in the eyes of several stakeholders.

It should be noted that in Lithuania and Poland apprenticeships are not the only form of VET provision, nor the most popular one. This means that apprenticeships need to compete with other VET options to attract companies, learners or State funding. In contrast, in Denmark and Germany, apprenticeship is the main feature of VET provision, and there is lack of competition with other (major) VET options.

The existence of a shared vision is not without drawback. In Germany, the *Beruf* concept gives a solid foundation for changes: it defines the way and range for decision-making and is the premise for adaptions in the implementation of apprenticeship. However, the expert noted that it might also limit the windows of opportunity for changes. In Denmark, too, the solid vision of apprenticeship, well shared among all stakeholders,

⁽⁶⁾ In Lithuania, any VET programme can be offered in the form of apprenticeship, which opens the door for stakeholders to express their preferences on which programmes (at which level) are better suited to be offered in that form.

comes with some reluctance for change unless there is a State initiative: for example, social partners do not push to develop changes to make the green transition a part of the VET/apprenticeship purpose, or when it comes to the development of the quality of workplace apprenticeship training in the private sector.

2.2.3. Impact of clashing vision on end users

Where there is absence of a clear, commonly shared vision and purpose of apprenticeships, it creates confusion and conflicting interests among apprenticeship actors at implementation level.

In Lithuania, in the past, there were signals that VET providers perceived apprenticeship differently and confused it with practical placement in companies. Some VET institutions interpret the regulatory framework loosely and organise apprenticeship only for a small part of a VET programme. In Poland, the overall attention to other forms of VET led to reduction in school funding for apprentices; school directors (and companies) now have more incentives to prefer school-based VET over apprenticeships. Moreover, the apprenticeship variation that takes place entirely at the workplace (5% of apprentices follow this option) is not fully acknowledged by the education side; it may be seen as a competitive option for the main apprenticeship offer, being cheaper for the State and not involving VET providers and their teachers.

From the employers' side, they may see apprenticeships differently than the stated vision and purpose. In Lithuania, field research and interviews showed that companies (and their representatives) often consider apprenticeship less suitable as an IVET option for young learners and more suitable for mature learners who are more motivated to work, possess sufficient transversal competences, have some practical experience, basic work safety knowledge and skills or basic knowledge to work with new technological equipment. They also often relate apprenticeship primarily with preparing their own future employees and rarely accept the idea of risking to train people that will eventually become workers for other companies. In Poland, the high number of legal changes regarding apprenticeships, some of which are linked to their vision and purpose, creates confusion and can be considered as a major factor that discourages employers from participating in apprenticeships.

Even in cases where the vision and purpose of apprenticeships is shared at higher decision-making levels, diverging understanding can be observed at the lower levels, where apprenticeships are actually implemented. In Denmark, employers do not always grasp the full purpose of apprenticeships and may not always value learning at school, despite its potential for creativity, innovation and personal development, because the curriculum often is more theoretical than some companies need. Also, employers want more practical training for apprenticeships and even more links to businesses at earlier stages of a VET programme (which starts with a school-based component and continues as an apprenticeship). At the same time, several schools prefer to offer workplace experience to younger learners via non-for-profit organisations instead of companies.

Such differences in how apprenticeship vision and function are perceived have an impact on the learning and working conditions of apprentices. In Denmark, apprentices sometimes feel like they are used as cheap labour at their workplace because they do not perform tasks relevant for their studies, or they miss access to relevant guidance and feedback from a trainer. In such cases, they often end up being uncertain that they will learn enough to be able to work as a fully qualified skilled worker in the chosen occupation. In Poland, apprentices who complete the programme entirely at the workplace do not enjoy the same benefits as other apprentices (transportation support).

The overall outcome is that the misunderstanding of goals and processes of apprenticeship among stakeholders cause lack of student and parent interest (next to that of schools and employers). In Poland, only about 10% of students follow a work-based learning option (one of which is apprenticeship), as school-based options dominate. In Denmark, the conflicting understanding at implementation level may lead to dissatisfaction of apprentices with either the workplace or school-based component and eventually result in dropout.

2.2.4. How to promote and maintain convergence

A first level of intervention to promote convergence of understanding among various apprenticeship stakeholders seems to come from the development of clearer regulations that help consolidate and explain the vision agreed at higher policy-making and design levels. Clear, formal requirements for employers and schools participating in apprenticeship have also been used to reinforce such higher-level agreements. In Lithuania, amendments to the Labour Code and the VET Law, and particularly the Procedure for implementing apprenticeships, specified rights, duties and responsibilities of various actors and clarified many aspects of what apprenticeship is, in relation to other VET options. In Poland, the Ministry of Education introduced new obligations for employers that want to employ an apprentice: they now need to sign an agreement with school directors to offer apprenticeship on the basis of a VET programme (Programme basis), which is attached to the working-learning contract. These are tools to help trickle down the understanding that may have been developed at higher levels.

Linked to that, it seems that quality can be a factor (not just a quest) supporting apprenticeship vision and purpose. This comes either through the introduction of education requirements (Programme basis, Poland), or the higher qualification of apprenticeship teachers along with modern training facilities (Lithuania), or the higher requirements and support of in-company trainers (Denmark, Lithuania). The Danish expert claims that systematically monitoring the quality of workplace training can be an enabling factor that informs apprenticeship actors about how to provide the best training at the workplace in relation to the stated purpose of an apprenticeship programme (and make it more attractive for young people as well).

This makes even more pertinent the need for participatory governance approaches at the design and decision-making levels. The existence of procedures to initiate discussions on vision and purpose adaptations is considered as a strong enabler in

countries where there is a great consensus on these elements (Denmark, Germany). The inclusion of national stakeholders in national level deliberations was proven an effective factor also in Lithuania. Beyond decision- making, such approaches can be also complemented by stable operational branches. In Poland, such an attempt started with the establishment of a team for the 'organisation and realisation of vocational preparation of juvenile workers', with representatives from the Ministries of Labour and Education, and from the Polish Craft Association.

At the implementation level, collaboration between the two learning venues emerges as a strong factor favouring convergence. In Lithuania, employers' understanding of apprenticeship very much depends on their experience and cooperation with VET institutions. Since training of in-company trainers is not regulated and no qualification requirements are set, they may fail to provide all learning outcomes foreseen in curricula unless they get methodological input from VET institutions. Building trust between actors from the two venues is a key message to promote convergence of understanding of what apprenticeship is for; companies that participate in apprenticeships see it as an investment in the future labour force and value non-financial support, such as improving cooperation with VET institutions and effective apprenticeship communication, more than financial input. In Poland, the new provisions (Programme basis) require school leaders and companies to collaborate to adapt VET curricula to the particular apprenticeship post, so that learners see this adaptation attached to their contract. In Denmark (where a block model is applied to apprenticeships), employers and VET schools may not have the responsibility to take an overview of what needs to be taught throughout the programme in order for apprenticeships to fulfil their expected purpose. When there is a lack of established interplay between the two, there is friction in relation to what is taught at each venue: the one side does not know, and therefore cannot properly value and appreciate what is taught at the other. An enabling factor would be for stakeholders to specify who in the system is responsible for the connection between school-based and work-based training and the learning progression of apprentices.

In Lithuania, it is suggested that the potential for sectoral employer associations to promote apprenticeship to companies and explain its purposes and benefits should be put to greater use. Promotional activities can be more effective when they come from social partner organisations to their members, rather than from the education world or the State.

2.3. Conclusions

2.3.1. Apprenticeship resilience

Under certain conditions, apprenticeship may be resilient (more than one would expect), and crises could be an opportunity to reinforce them. The papers have shown that both during the 2008 and the COVID-19 crises, apprenticeship placements in most countries

have recorded drops in company participation, either temporarily or only in some sectors, but did not face overall declining trends. Thanks to State interventions and existing conditions linked to apprenticeship design, company participation remained stable overall in many sectors or even increased in a country, leaving aside the cases of sectors that were forced to close by the pandemic.

Although economic crises produce conditions that may undermine the participation of companies, providers and young people in apprenticeships, the papers shed light on some conditions – linked to the design of apprenticeship schemes and systems – that can facilitate the easier adaptation, resilience and even recovery of apprenticeships. They all point to the need to design, organise, structure and implement apprenticeship in normal times, before any crisis arises, to ensure resilience. Among the key conditions that can make apprenticeship systems relatively stronger and encourage companies to buy in are:

- (a) partnership approaches to apprenticeship design and cooperative governance mechanisms, structurally involving companies and their representatives also at decision-making levels;
- (b) motivated and rewarded VET teachers and in-company trainers and strong collaboration between them to secure the complete achievement of all learning outcomes and cross-fertilisation between schools and companies;
- (c) transparent mechanisms to match apprenticeship demand and supply and manage apprenticeship shortages at national and regional levels, grounded in the collaboration of all stakeholders;
- (d) non-financial incentives for companies in terms of clear legal framework, simplified bureaucracy and procedures, technical support (guidelines, tools etc.);
- (e) ad hoc financial incentives, especially for micro and small companies, at sectoral level, covering companies' expenses related to apprenticeship training such as those for in-company trainers;
- (f) information, awareness raising, communication about apprenticeship benefits and its costs.

These conditions are to be understood as complementary and mutually reinforcing, rather than as alternatives. If these conditions are not in place before the crisis, it is harder for apprenticeship systems to react to a crisis and ensure that companies continue to offer placements, once the crisis is having its effects on the economy.

Such provisions are, however, linked to the overall apprenticeship design and greatly reflect the (shared or not) vision of apprenticeship in a country among all stakeholders.

2.3.2. Apprenticeship vision and purpose

An analysis of the papers on apprenticeship vision and purpose shows that there are differences among countries in the extent to which stakeholders share the stated vision. The long and stable tradition in apprenticeships could be seen as a factor to explain such

differences. Countries with a tradition in apprenticeships (Denmark, Germany) might be said to have reached a greater level of 'system maturity', which helped crystallise the vision for apprenticeship in the country; in Lithuania, in contrast, the recent introduction of apprenticeship has not reached this stage. However, in Poland, with a long-established apprenticeship scheme that is not perceived and valued similarly by all national stakeholders, there is more to examine than simply the longevity of apprenticeship.

Another factor worth consideration is the extent of apprenticeship stakeholder collaboration: is it both frequent and structured across various levels (design, decision-making, implementation)? In other words, are there sufficient opportunities for a direct exchange of views on what the purpose of apprenticeship should be in the country and are there formalised fora for discussing and reaching compromises when stakeholders do not share the same vision for apprenticeships. The papers provide examples of how structured, frequent dialogue helps clarify and share vision.

They also show that such structured collaboration may help develop a broader vision for apprenticeships. It can be inferred, from the examples presented, that participatory approaches offer the platforms for an amalgamation of various needs of different stakeholders. This seems to result in apprenticeship purposes that are not one-sided, but comprehensive, balancing the needs of sectors, companies, education, workers and society.

In cases where apprenticeship needs to compete with other VET options to attract individual companies, learners and also schools, it is worth exploring if some apprenticeship actors face the pressure to blur rather than preserve and reinforce apprenticeship unique features. As a result, stakeholders may be further confused about apprenticeship terms and conditions in relation to those applying to other options; this may reinforce possible misinterpretations and misperceptions of its real vision and purpose in a country. Cedefop's past analysis has shown that when apprenticeship does not enter into competition with other forms of VET for learners or companies, it has a clear educational and training value. This happens more often than not when apprenticeship is a clearly defined system of its own, with a clear place and value in education and training systems and a clearly identifiable scope.

The level at which divergent views on apprenticeship vision and function are concentrated (from decision-making at national level to implementation at local level) is another dimension to be taken into consideration. The analysis of the four examples shows that there is a significant convergence at higher levels (national level stakeholders), but the more we move to the implementation level, the more apprenticeship actors may follow their own understanding, reflecting their own needs, not necessarily aligned with the 'higher-level' vision.

2.3.3. Cross-cutting messages

The experience of countries shows that there is space for innovation in (re)defining apprenticeship vision and purpose by reforming legal frameworks, imagining innovative collaborative governance mechanisms, and empowering teachers and trainers to respond to crisis and overall change. This also applies to the digital transition and its impact on training provision methods.

The papers showed that two seemingly loosely related topics (resilience on the one hand, vision and purpose on the other) are interconnected. They are linked by the way an apprenticeship system is designed and set up.

The vision and purpose are often the outcome of stakeholder collaboration through governance mechanisms (at strategic, design, decision-making levels) that help combine the needs of various stakeholders. They also affect how such mechanisms are set up at various levels and what the collaboration practices among stakeholders are, by detailing roles and responsibilities: curriculum development, financing, attracting learners (contract type, remuneration type) and companies (incentives, selection of right occupations).

The papers show that these governance mechanisms and collaboration practices can produce responses in times of crisis. The type, timeliness, suitability (and perhaps effectiveness) of apprenticeship response in times of crisis depends largely on the principles under which the (existing) governance mechanisms and collaboration practices are designed and set in motion.

In conclusion, apprenticeships can be built to last, and this greatly depends on the quality, depth and structure of the collaboration that already exists.

Part I. Apprenticeship resilience in times of crisis

CHAPTER 3.

Work-based learning: Bulgaria

By Petya Evtimova (7)

3.1. Introduction

The Work-based learning (dual system of training) apprenticeship scheme (8) started in Bulgaria in 2015 as part of a pilot project. In the following years, the interest of companies and students in the scheme rapidly increased (9).

Table 1. Students in the work-based learning apprenticeship scheme by year (cumulative figures)

School year	Number of students in apprenticeship
2016/17	353
2017/18	1752
2018/19	3884
2019/20	6339
2020/21	8659

Source: Ministry of Education and Science (May 2021).

The increase may also be due to the fact that, in February 2020, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science started a large-scale project (EUR 12 million budget) financed by the European Social Fund, Support for the dual system of training (10). The project also provides small financial support to employers who enrol apprentices (11). It will be implemented for 3 consecutive school years and will last until October 2023.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable impact on many industries as well as on school systems, including VET providers. Companies had to shut down or reduce production or change to hybrid work. This changed the attitude towards workbased learning but also fostered the need for new skills, particularly digital and social skills.

This paper explores the early effects of the COVID-19 crisis on apprenticeship provision and will offer reflections on what would make the work-based training

⁽⁷⁾ Founder and chairperson of Modern Education Foundation, Bulgaria.

⁽⁸⁾ See the work-based learning apprenticeship scheme in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes.

⁽⁹⁾ Information provided by the VET Directorate, Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science

⁽¹⁰⁾ Learn more about Support for the dual system of training.

apprenticeship scheme more appealing to companies, and thus more resilient, in the future.

3.2. How and why participation has changed in times crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic caused extreme uncertainties for the companies. Among the most affected sectors in Bulgaria were tourism (12% of GDP) and wood processing and furniture production (4.5% of GDP) (12), mainly working for export. Companies from both industries offer places for the work-based learning scheme from the beginning as they also suffered from lack of qualified workforce. Many hotels, restaurants and furniture factories had to reduce services and production but also many shut down: 35% of the workers employed in tourism and 10% (13) of those employed in wood processing and furniture production lost their jobs. The difficulties for the companies in these two sectors led to reduction in their interest to train apprentices; the same happened with the companies in all industrial sectors which had to reduce services and/or production. Presently, approximately 25% of apprentices are in these two economic sectors.

In May 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science carried out a questionnaire survey among 38 VET schools and 25 companies regarding participation in work-based learning ('dual system of training') during the COVID-19 crisis.

A minority of the companies (4%) and approximately one fifth of the VET schools (18%) reported that they cancelled their company-school partnership agreements due to the pandemic. Two companies reported they still had not cancelled their agreements but intended to do so in the following months. Almost one fourth of the companies (23%) said they will either close or reduce apprentice placements due to the pandemic. The main reasons given are the general uncertainty and the reduction or pause in economic activities.

Companies were also concerned about the quality of work-based training during the pandemic. In the same survey, about one third (11 companies) said that work-based training was not possible at all during lockdown. Five employers reported that training could be carried out at the workplace following all preventive measures, while eight reported that training should be done through companies' electronic platforms, and seven mentioned that electronic materials for the training should be provided by the school. One employer said that another solution should be sought without being specific (14).

⁽¹²⁾ National Statistical Institute, Statistical Yearbook 2020.

⁽¹³⁾ Ministry of Finance, National Economic Review of Bulgaria 2020.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The sum of responses in this case exceeds the number of respondent companies as some of them have given more than one answer, e.g. through electronic platforms and materials provided by the school.

The interesting outcome is that almost one fifth of the companies still consider that it is the school that should take all the responsibility, even for the work-based training in the times of crisis. The dual training system is still new in the country and many companies consider it just the responsibility of the school, with VET education in Bulgaria, including the work-based learning apprenticeship scheme, remaining strongly school-driven.

Nevertheless, the same survey indicates that even during the lockdown, one third of the companies held qualification exams for students in their premises; about another third of the respondents participated with representatives in evaluation committees when the qualification exams had been done in the VET schools. The final third either just provided examination materials for the school or did not participate at all in qualification exams. Despite the lockdown, far more than half of the companies actively participated in an evaluation process. Although the VET legislation envisages such participation as mandatory, the pandemic did not always make that possible.

3.3. Encouraging company participation

Available evidence (Section 3.2) and information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science help confirm that the Bulgarian VET system, including the apprenticeship scheme, as with all other branches of the education system, were not adequately prepared to respond to the pandemic challenges. A year and a half after its start, 90% of the VET schools questioned report that they are still trying to find the best solutions for work-based learning. Many schools and companies expressed their hopes that the pandemic will only last a few months; this is why they have not seriously planned different approaches and methods for the work-based learning. Now they agree that, if they rely on the dual training system to train the desired qualified workforce for tomorrow, further delay is not acceptable.

During interviews with employers who have not reduced or cancelled their apprenticeships (15), some have shared that they have used the time during lockdown to train apprentices in some extra digital skills including giving them access to electronic platforms and teaching them how to work with virtual models and virtual reality. According to them, digital skills are becoming increasingly necessary for any job in times of crisis.

Another shared view is that employers, during practical training in the company, started to prepare the apprentices for broader qualifications and not just for the professional specialty which the student is taught in the VET school. This gave them better career opportunities, providing the company with broader options for their employment at the same time.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Face-to-face interviews carried out by the author with employers that train apprentices, July-August 2021.

Some employers fully understand that, despite the temporary difficulties, the need for qualified professionals will still be there when the health emergency is over; at this point, having enough well-trained employees will be essential to increasing production and being competitive. Many agree apprenticeship is the best test of future employability and that, even during difficult times, it is less expensive to train a school apprentice than an unemployed unqualified adult. It is during the apprenticeship that employers have the opportunity to design and customise the practical training according their own needs.

Having apprentices in the company helps improve the working environment as they bring with them the knowledge acquired in school as well as knowledge of new technologies. Work-based learning (dual system of training) still remains the best way to have a well-prepared and skilful workforce. Even in an economic or pandemic crisis, efforts should be made to ensure that all necessary conditions to make it happen are in place.

Among the most relevant enablers for company participation in the work-based learning scheme (dual system of training) is their interest in training young people in technical and technological skills needed for the business (Gallup International Balkan, 2019). However, many employers express hopes that they will be somehow supported by the State in this endeavour. The financial support they mention is to help them equip extra workplaces for apprentices and/or to support the mentors (¹6) who work with them. The new project Support of the dual system of training, means the Ministry of Education and Science is doing just that, and this measure is well accepted by business.

But financial support is not all that the companies are expecting from the State. During the two national conferences organised jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science and the DOMINO Project team (17), and held in 2017 and 2019, employers asked for non-financial incentives such as better and more detailed legislation, easier procedures in dealing with the Labour Inspectorate which issues permissions for apprentice labour contracts, and better access to information about the conditions and requirements for the companies to enrol apprentices. Another example of good practice to provide non-financial incentives to companies is the official public ceremony held in 2019 to award (18) and publicly recognise the best companies in their work with apprentices in different industrial branches. The ceremony was organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Economy and was greatly appreciated by the business as an example of the State and society recognition of their work. All these measures provide a valuable support to companies to offer placements in the dual system of training, crisis or not.

⁽¹⁶⁾ This term is used to indicate apprentice in-company trainers.

⁽¹⁷⁾ See the videos on the conferences

⁽¹⁸⁾ Learn more on the Domino awards for business and school.

During the pandemic, in the survey carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2020 (Section 3.1), employers shared other ideas for financial and non-financial support:

- (a) access of mentors to educational electronic platforms;
- (b) financial incentives from the State for company mentors and compensation when they create electronic materials needed for work-based learning;
- (c) for crisis periods, elaboration of a hybrid model of work-based learning combining work in a real working environment with work with virtual models and reality.

These suggestions show that the companies welcome the State's financial support, but more important for them are technical and methodological support as well as the recognition of their work and their shared responsibility in the training process.

3.4. Conclusions

Many industrial sectors in Bulgaria suffer from lack of qualified professionals, though the pandemic caused a fall in production in many companies and so the need for additional workforce also declined. Although the percentage of companies planning to reduce or cancel apprenticeships is still not very large, the COVID-19 crisis had a significant impact on the provision of workplace-based training within the apprenticeship scheme. Continuous waves of different COVID-19 variants may lead to a significant increase, so sector-specific financial and non-financial incentives are more important during the crisis to guarantee the continuity of the work-based learning in the most affected economic sectors. Besides the direct financial incentives for these economic sectors, other types of incentives could be tax deduction for training costs (as in Germany and Austria) or preferential treatment in public procurement procedures (as in Switzerland). Other possible incentives could be in-kind public investments, such as building up structures and tools for training companies (ibw Austria and Schmidt, 2019). However, the government should be very careful when deciding on financial incentives and criteria for companies to receive them as, once offered, financial incentives are very difficult to withdraw.

Non-financial incentives should continue to play an important role as they add to the social recognition and reputation of the companies. The general lack of methodological and practical support for employers, being even more acute in time of crises, should be also be sustainably addressed.

It is still too early to define what works in favour of apprenticeship resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and what does not. The crisis caused enormous changes in the labour market but also in the education system. It is difficult to say which of these changes will be temporary and which will stay permanent. Meanwhile, work-based learning systems cannot stand still. They have to find the best possible solutions according to the specific industry and find it quickly, as employers and stakeholders cannot risk having a generation of not sufficiently qualified young professionals.

References

[URLs accessed 25.5.2022]

- Bulgarian Ministry of Finance (2020). *National Economic Review of Bulgaria 2020.* Sofia: Ministry of Finance.
 - https://www.minfin.bg/upload/48051/Godishen_obzor_2020.pdf
- Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. *Project: Support for the dual system of training* [in Bulgarian].
- DOMINO Project. *Dual education for the modern requirements and needs of society* [in Bulgarian]. Swiss Bulgarian Cooperation Programme.
- GIA Gallup International Balkan (2019). Survey about the knowledge, attitudes and practices among Bulgarian companies and schools regarding the dual vocational education and training.
- National Statistical Institute (2021). Statistical Yearbook 2020. Sofia.
- Schmid, K. (2019). Companies engaging in dual VET: do financial incentives matter? Approaches in Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland: options, pros and cons for reform processes. Zurich: IBW. IBW report.

Other sources

- Questionnaire survey carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science in May 2020 among 38 VET schools and 25 companies regarding the participation in work-based learning (dual system of training) in the times of COVID-19 crisis.
- Face-to-face interviews carried out by the author with employers that train apprentices, July-August 2021

CHAPTER 4.

New modern apprenticeship: Cyprus

By Valanto Sifouna (19) and Dr Stelios Orphanos (20) (21)

4.1. Introduction

In Cyprus, the New modern apprenticeship (NMA) is the apprenticeship system that provides an alternative form of education. It aims to ensure that young people can become employed and remain socially integrated as active citizens, while meeting the needs of the labour market.

'Core apprenticeship' (²²) is the main part of the NMA that provides the opportunity to students to be in the education system and be placed in industry for practical training at the same time. Students can be admitted to the Core apprenticeship after completing compulsory education (gymnasium) or after attending Preparatory apprenticeship (without completing compulsory education) (²³). Apprentices attend classes at school (secondary technical and vocational education and training schools) twice a week and are placed in various companies within the industry for their practical training for 3 days weekly.

Upon completion of their 3-year programme of studies, students are awarded the apprenticeship certificate, which is equivalent to level 3 of EQF (European qualifications framework). The certificate requires that students have successfully passed their final examinations and have completed their practical training in the industry.

The scheme offers apprentices the opportunity to choose practical training/specialisation in various industries such as car mechanics, preparation of food and beverages, carpentry and furniture production, electrical installations, building and constructing works and hairdressing.

31

⁽¹⁹⁾ Education planning officer A, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, Cyprus.

⁽²⁰⁾ Senior education planning officer, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, Cyprus.

⁽²¹⁾ Under the supervision of Dr. Elias Margadjis, Director of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, Cyprus and member of Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts when the paper was drafted.

⁽²²⁾ For additional information, see the scheme fiche on the New modern apprenticeship Cyprus in Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes.

⁽²³⁾ Preparatory apprenticeship is offered to young people between the ages of 14 and 16, who have not completed their compulsory education (gymnasium). Upon completing their studies, they can either advance to the Core Apprenticeship, or through an examination procedure, continue studying at the Gymnasium level. In cooperation with career counsellors and with the help of psychologists, students are offered the chance to identify their talents and abilities that will also empower their self-confidence. They will be better equipped to choose the relevant specialisation suited for them if they decide to continue to the Core apprenticeship.

4.2. How and why participation has changed in times of crisis

4.2.1. Apprentices

For the school year 2019/20, the total number of students who enrolled in core apprenticeship in Cyprus was 144 and for 2020/21 the number was 142, so constant across the 2 years. The most popular specialties/industries were car mechanics, hairdressing, preparation of food and beverages and electrical installations (Table 1).

Table 1. Apprentice participation

	2019/20 (144)		2020/21 (142)	
Specialties/occupations	Apprentices enrolled	Apprentices who have an employer	Apprentices enrolled	Apprentices who have an employer
Car mechanics	61 (42.4%)	51	54 (38.1%)	42
Preparation of food and beverages	32 (22.3%)	21	25 (17.6%)	11
Graphic design	3 (2.1%)	1	6 (4.3%)	1
Hairdressing	25 (17.4%)	16	26 (18.3%)	9
Carpentry and furniture production	11 (7.7%)	7	11 (7.8%)	3
Electrical installations	12 (8.4%)	12	17 (12%)	11
Building and constructing works	0 (0%)	0	3 (2.2%)	1
Total	144	108	142	78

Source: Monthly reports from Core Apprenticeship's inspectors.

4.2.2. Employers

For the school year 2019/20, 108 different employers participated in apprenticeships, each company having one apprentice. For the school year 2020/21 this number was 91, and during lockdown the number dropped to 78. That means that, throughout the year, fewer employers were involved in apprenticeship and some withdrew during the school year. As a result, some apprentices were not associated with an industry employer, so these apprentices were only attending classes at school twice per week. This shows the difference between apprentice and employer participation during the pandemic: the first remained stable within the crisis, while the second dropped significantly, even in specialties/industries where interest of apprentices is usually strong (e.g. hairdressing, preparation of food and beverages).

4.2.3. Why has participation changed

The reduction in employer participation was expected given that, during the school year 2020/21, Cyprus was in lockdown and businesses like hairdressers, hotels and

restaurants did not operate fully. The pandemic started in early 2020, and there was a lockdown in mid-March where many companies ceased operation. In addition, the turnover of the companies that were still operating has dropped significantly and employers could not hire staff. Instead, they had to reduce the number of the existing staff or change their employment status from full-time to part-time, so they could not offer work to apprentices within the system.

Most students chose practical training in car mechanics. In this field the participation between school years, 2019/20 and 2020/21 did not change drastically. The same applies for electrical installations, where participation increased. The number of apprentices dropped for the specialisations of preparation of food and beverages and hairdressing, as these two specialties did not operate during the pandemic. Small and medium- sized enterprises in these two fields were closed. In some cases, students started practical training in specific companies but, through the year, the businesses had to stop employing them since their turnover had decreased significantly.

The reduction in employer participation was largely due to the pandemic. Without the pandemic the participation of these companies in apprenticeships would not have been affected; this view is supported by the stable interest in these specialties based on the comparison of enrolments between the 2 school years. Social distancing, restrictions and the Pancyprian lockdown affected their operation. In the case of hairdressing, apprentice participation at the beginning was high (25 participants in 2019/20 and 26 in 2020/21) but from March 2020 hairdressing salons were listed as industries affected, suspending their operation, so apprentices could not be employed in these businesses.

Apprenticeship participation by companies remained relatively stable in specialties/industries that remained mostly open during the crisis. Participation dropped more drastically in industries affected by lockdown regulations.

For the current school year 2021/22, the possibility of a new lockdown is considered unlikely. The majority of companies estimate that turnover will be reduced and in order to be able to deal with the consequences of the pandemic they must keep their expenses in balance. To achieve this, many companies may need to terminate their contracts with their employees/apprentices.

Box 1. **Methodology**

Approach and sample

A small-scale qualitative survey was conducted to draw conclusions about employer participation in the apprenticeship scheme in Cyprus and its resilience in times of crisis. It confirmed all statements outlined in the previous section. Survey participants were employers participating in apprenticeship, representing specific professions with a traditionally high demand for apprentices: car mechanics, hairdressing and preparation of food and beverages.

Businesses in Cyprus are mainly small and medium-sized enterprises so owners often have the role of trainer for apprentices. Based on Ministry of Education data gathered from employers, few apprentices were employed in large-scale companies. The majority participated in small and medium-sized enterprises with the employer being the trainer. Apprentices find an employer for their apprenticeship themselves or with the help of the regional apprenticeship director.

Research method

Structured interviews were used to gather the information needed. The employers who participated in our survey were asked specific questions that were designed in a way that participants would not give one-word answers but develop their ideas. A total of 10 employers took part in the small-scale qualitative research: three car mechanics, three hairdressers, three restaurants and one hotel. From this sample, six out of 10 were small medium-sized businesses.

Research questions

- Do you employ apprenticeship students systematically?
- What do you think are generally the benefits of hiring apprentices?
- What exactly are the apprentices doing? Do they work alone? Do they do the same job?
- Did you collaborate with people in charge of the Apprenticeship System?
- What are the most common problems you encounter during the pandemic and how can you solve them?
- Do you think that the students you employ can be an asset for your business in general? Do you invest in them, to acquire the skills and then continue as employees?
- Does the State financially support employers who employ apprenticeship students?
- What measures do you think should be taken to support employers in hiring apprentices?
- Was your turnover affected during the lockdown periods and did this result in not offering a position in your business to students of the apprenticeship system?

4.3. Encouraging company participation

This part includes an analysis from employer interviews.

4.3.1. The general background to employer participation

Employers were generally satisfied with the apprenticeship scheme. Whether small business or large, employers stated that they hire apprenticeship students on a regular basis. They consider the apprenticeship scheme very important and when they seek to

employ apprentices, they communicate with the local supervisors of the scheme. They emphasised that sometimes they are looking to get apprentices from the core apprenticeship but fail to do so; this was mainly true of hotel units. Their main benefit of hiring apprentices is that they have in their workforce young productive people that can be trained the way the employers wish and be part of their workforce.

The person in charge of the apprentice during the training delivery phase is the employer himself/herself who acts as trainer. At the beginning, the apprentice works with other members of the staff and when he/she gains the experience needed then he/she can work alone without observation. In some cases, the role of the mentor can be assigned to a member of staff. Apprentices work through various positions.

4.3.2. Apprenticeship benefits for companies

One of the most important findings is that companies already involved in apprenticeships see benefits and support the scheme. They seek the strengthening and development of the apprenticeship system, which will strengthen cooperation between the scheme and employers.

'Apprentices work three times a week and they get paid. Of course, the amount varies depending on the nature of the work and how strong financially the business is. They are being well educated, they are multitasking as they work through various positions, they gain experience and, on many occasions, they return to our business as employees after completing the three-year apprenticeship scheme. We educate them to acquire the required skills to enter the labour market' (Employer X).

Companies believe that apprentices can be an asset for their business, and they pursue collaboration with schools and apprentices. Having in their workforce young people who are willing to learn and be productive is their aim. Due to the economic crisis and its consequences, some employers find it hard to find employees. In such cases, apprentices are the only option they have, as they will train them the way they want, they will educate them to ensure the best learning and experience outcome, and they will pay them a lower salary to help the financial difficulty they face.

4.3.3. Challenges for companies and suggestions to address them

Employers mentioned that there are three common problems. First is the behaviour of the students, their commitment and their willingness to learn and be trained. There are cases where apprentices exhibit behavioural problems, but if there is commitment, diligence and willingness to work, then any problems are steadily solved. If students do not present behavioural problems, as happens often, their cooperation with the employer is full-time, long-term, and not occasional. It is only interrupted if the student is not satisfied with the nature of the profession and does not wish to continue working.

The second common problem is financial. Employers suggested financial support would encourage their participation in the apprenticeship scheme.

Third, they mention that they want more collaboration with the teachers. This problem occurs in general, not only during the pandemic, but the pandemic made it more obvious. They emphasised that there is no alignment between curriculum and training. An alignment between what apprentices are taught in the workplace and what they are taught in school is essential. If this occurs, there will be better consolidation and understanding of what is being taught. They seek continuity and consistency, enabling apprentices to improve their skills, build on their experience and grow their abilities to communicate.

Employers suggested also that for the period when students only went to school due to the lockdown (and not to companies), there could have been better coordination between teachers and employers. This could have included what could be taught at schools to cover the gaps from not having the workplace training, or even how teachers could adjust the time spent at school (more days at school as long as it remains open and the company is not).

'The COVID-19 pandemic clearly affected our turnover', employers clearly reported. In one case, a restaurant owner who had to close his business for a long time was forced to terminate an apprenticeship due to reduction in his turnover. Emphasis was given to the support they received through the government's support plans for companies: this was a significant help for the employers, as they received a 60% subsidy for staff salaries. This was vital to retain their staff. Employers wish to continue receiving this financial support as their turnover is still not at the same levels as before the pandemic.

Some hotels, restaurants and hairdressers were financially wrecked, as their businesses were closed for a long time. During that period, these companies could not employ staff, including apprentices; when they opened again, employees were paid a reduced salary.

More financial support, on a monthly basis, is what employers are asking in order to encourage their participation in apprenticeship.

To avoid contract terminations, the Government has special employee support plans. To benefit from these plans, employers must not have already declared, and not make any further, redundancies for financial or other similar reasons. The amount of support provided to salaried employees amounts to 60% of their gross earnings. This requirement is vital, helping companies to avoid redundancies and to continue offering apprenticeship.

4.4. Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a differentiation in the participation of employers in apprenticeships, as they were significantly affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic. Businesses suspended their operation or, for those who

were still operating, their turnover dropped significantly. They could not hire apprentices, given that they had paused their economic activity, there was a general uncertainty and no context for training investment.

During the pandemic, apprentices continued to have interest in apprenticeship, at constant or even increasing levels compared with previous years. Employers generally support the apprenticeship scheme and are willing to employ apprentices in their business assuming appropriate conditions.

Support is needed to encourage employer participation. This support should mainly be financial, from the government though support plans. From the beginning of the pandemic in Cyprus (March 2020) until now (October 2021) there has been a financial support plan: what companies ask is the continuation of this plan as it is vital for their operation. Companies also seek support that should enable cost-effective apprenticeships for companies, taking into account, when appropriate, cost-sharing arrangements between employers and public authorities.

Moving beyond the immediate financial aid during (and because of) the pandemic, other identified factors should be taken into consideration. Employers seek alignment with the school curriculum (what the apprentices are trained in- company, to be taught at school at the same time) and mechanisms for cooperation and exchange between incompany trainers and teachers. There is a need for pedagogical support from school to employers and trainers. The district directors of Core apprenticeship, the school inspectors and the employers/trainers/mentors must collaborate on the work-based and the school-based training and education. Employers also seek more commitment from the apprentices. Committed employees are an asset to an organisation and add value in many ways. Companies invest in the apprentices and, if no problems arise, they will add them to their workforce.

A general conclusion is that the smoother the collaboration between the key apprenticeship actors can become, irrespective of crises, the easier for companies to keep participating during a crisis.

CHAPTER 5.

Apprenticeship contract: France

By Romain Pigeaud (24)

5.1. How and why participation has changed in times of crisis?

In terms of participation in apprenticeship (25), it is interesting to compare the effects of the economic crisis of 2008 with the health crisis of 2020.

5.1.1. The impact of the 2008 economic crisis

In a context of a pronounced decline in economic activity and a sharp fall in salaried employment from mid-2008, apprenticeship entries fell in 2009: around 288,000 new apprenticeship contracts were concluded in the private sector, from 299 000 in 2008, representing a drop by 4% in one year, after an increase by 7% between 2007 and 2008. This decline put a stop to a fairly dynamic increase in apprenticeship contract entries that had begun in 2004. The economic downturn has, therefore, negatively influenced apprenticeship recruitment.

The decline in apprenticeship entries was more marked in some sectors: construction (-14%), trade (-8%) and industry (-7%) were sectors that experienced much greater losses in salaried employment than other sectors (²⁶).

To deal with this fall in the number of employees, an emergency plan for youth employment was put in place (27). It included State financial aid for recruitment between the end of April 2009 and the end of 2010, on the one hand for companies with 11 or more employees taking on an apprentice, and, on the other hand, for companies with fewer than 50 employees taking on an additional apprentice. This financial aid, combined with the mobilisation of players in favour of apprenticeship, helped to sustain apprenticeship entries and limit the decline in 2009.

This emergency plan was quickly extended (²⁸), with an extension of its eligible beneficiaries from 2011 onwards: companies with fewer than 250 employees who could benefit from aid for any additional recruitment of a young person under an apprenticeship

⁽²⁴⁾ Expert in law and training policies, Centre-Inffo, France.

⁽²⁵⁾ Lear more on the Apprenticeship contract in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes. Another apprenticeship scheme, called the Professionalisation contract, is offered in the country.

⁽²⁶⁾ Dares (2020). L'apprentissage en 2009: baisse des entrées, hausse de la part du secteur tertiaire [Apprenticeship in 2009: decrease of entries, increase in the service sector]. Dares analyses, No 010.

⁽²⁷⁾ Decree No 2009-693 and No 2009-295, JORF, No 0137, 16 June 2009.

⁽²⁸⁾ Decree No 2011-523, JORF, 16 May 2011.

contract between 1 March 2011 and 31 December 2011. For companies with more than 250 employees, a law (²⁹) had raised the quota of employees on work-linked training to be reached, otherwise the company pays an additional contribution. In 2011, apprenticeships increased in a context of weak economic activity where unemployment rose again during the year. By 2012, apprenticeship contracts in the private sector returned to the pre-crisis level (Table 1), showing that apprenticeship recruitment was encouraged by the State financial aid.

Table 1. New apprenticeship contracts in the private sector per year, 2008-12

Year	Number of new apprenticeship contracts in the private sector
2008	299 000
2009	288 000
2010	287 000
2011	295 000
2012	297 000

Source: Dares analyses, February 2011, No 10; November 2012, No 080; June 2014, No 042.

The stimulus packages ended in the second half of 2012. At that time there was a context of shrinking economic activity and a deterioration of the labour market situation. In 2013, the number of new contracts fell to 273 000 (30). This shows a correlation of the number of apprenticeship entries with financial support and economic activity.

5.1.2. The impact of the 2020 health crisis

As in 2008 (³¹), the 2020 health crisis had an impact on economic activity. For example, in the craft sector (³²), the administrative closure of certain activities forced nearly 25 000 apprentices to stop working in their companies. Personal care activities were severely impacted: this affected apprentices in hairdressing (17 000), beauty care (4 100), and flower shops (3 100). The share of hairdressing and beauty care in apprenticeships is decreasing (less than two percentage points between 2018 and 2020) (³³).

However, in contrast to the economic crisis of 2008, during the crisis of 2020, the number of new apprenticeship contracts increased strongly. Companies have kept

⁽²⁹⁾ Loi Cherpion sur le développement de l'alternance et la sécurisation des parcours professionnels, juillet 2011 [Cherpion Law, on developing dual apprenticeship and securing professional careers, July 2011].

⁽³⁰⁾ Dares (2015). Les contrats uniques d'insertion et les emplois d'avenir en 2014: des bénéficiaires plus nombreux malgré des recrutements en baisse [Single integration contracts and jobs for the future in 2014: more beneficiaries despite decreasing recruitment]. Dares analyses, No 64.

⁽³¹⁾ INSEE (2013). Économie et Statistique, No 462-463, 2013.

⁽³²⁾ MAAF and ISM [French craftsmen Mutual Insurance and the Higher Institute for Trade] (2020). *Baromètre de l'artisanat*, Press release, 8.2020.

⁽³³⁾ Dares focus, No 38, 8 July 2021.

recruiting apprentices despite the slowdown in economic activity. This is corroborated by the increase in apprenticeship entries in 2020 (Table 2), which is driven by certain service sectors. The share of trade increases compared to 2019, as do some business services such as legal activities (34).

Table 2. New apprenticeship contracts in the private sector per year, 2018-20

Year	Number of new apprenticeship contracts in the private sector
2018	305 895
2019	354 368
2020	510 300 (*)

(*): Provisional data.

Source: Dares focus, No 38, 8 July 2021.

A strong recovery plan (Section 5.2), combined with profound reform has allowed this increase in the number of contracts.

5.2. Encouraging company participation

The experience of the 2008 and the 2020 crises points to the strategic importance of public funding in supporting employers to continue offering apprenticeship places. However, company participation in apprenticeship also needs to be supported in other ways, such as non-financial incentives. The following sections account for both financial and non-financial incentives used in the COVID-19 crisis and report the views of a selection of stakeholders interviewed for the purpose of this article (35).

5.2.1. Non-financial incentives

Prior to the health crisis, France had undertaken major apprenticeship reform, which put in place enabling conditions for companies to start apprentices, even during the crisis: 'the main axes of the apprenticeship reform include incentives for apprentices and companies, the apprenticeship bonus for SMEs and the first levels of qualification, as well as the joint development of vocational training by the State and the professional branches' (36).

The objective of this reform was to increase the number of apprentices in France. To do so, offering apprenticeship places was liberalised, since companies were given the possibility of, and incentivised to set up, their own apprentice training centre (CFA),

⁽³⁴⁾ Dares focus, No 38, 8 July 2021.

⁽³⁵⁾ Interviews for this paper included Rémy Challe (Chief Innovation Officer – Skill and You) and Yann Bouvier (Project Manager – FIPA), as well as training centres.

⁽³⁶⁾ European commission (2018). *Education and Training Monitor 2019: France*. Luxembourg: Publications Office, p. 9. doi: 10.2766/407670

without having to enrol them with external VET providers. The administrative procedures to offer apprenticeship places were also simplified and supported by a lighter and incentive-based economic model. The more apprentices CFAs train, the more funding they receive from the State. In addition, as companies are encouraged to open their own CFA, they can decide to use part of the contribution they pay (the apprenticeship tax) to finance the development of new apprenticeship training offers for their own apprentices. After the reform, the number of CFAs has increased significantly.

Table 3. Number of CFA, France, 2018-20

Year	Numbers of CFA
2018	936
2019	1330
2020	2141

Source: DEPP (2021). L'apprentissage au 31 décembre 2020 [Apprenticeship on 31 December 2020]. Information note, No 21/30.

Communication campaigns have widely promoted apprenticeship and this new opportunity. A new entity was also created (³⁷) to ensure the coordination between vocational training and apprenticeship programmes and qualifications.

Improving responsiveness to changing learning needs by adopting new emerging technologies is one way to encourage company participation in apprenticeship in times of crisis. The closure of workshops, technical platforms and, in some cases, companies has led pedagogical teams to rethink practical training. Faced with the health crisis, apprentice training centres (CFAs) are strongly accelerating their digital transformation and deploying new tools as a matter of urgency, in particular e-learning. According to a survey launched on 26 March (38), 92% of its members (training providers) had deployed a distance learning solution; before the lockdown, 25% of them had not. In detail, 64% had chosen an educational content platform; 43% a platform integrating interactive exercises (compared to 28% before the health crisis) and 40% virtual classes (compared to 15% before the health crisis). The users' feedback on these technologies is generally positive (39): the crisis has shown the value of distance learning, and it has been a vehicle for educational innovation Training providers have turned a corner and laid the foundations for new training methods that will be decisive in dealing with the health crisis and in the future.

Among the most relevant innovations brought about by the 2018 reform is the principle of continuous assessment, even from a distance, which has been adopted for

⁽³⁷⁾ Learn more on France Compétences in Apprenticeship contract, Question 9, in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes.

⁽³⁹⁾ La FOAD au temps du CoVID-19: enjeux, ressources et pratiques [MOOC in times of Covid-19: issues, resources and practices]. Centre Inffo, Dossiers documentaires, April 2020. ISBN: 978-2-84821-286-9

apprentices preparing a CAP, a vocational baccalaureate or a higher technician programme (BTS). In practice, the assessment panels that award diplomas will take into account the notebook or training booklet of the apprentices, and in particular 'the results obtained in the context of the in-service assessment and/or continuous assessment during the last year of training' (⁴⁰).

Some other examples of innovation are linked to the monitoring and supervision of apprentices, which started with an exchange forum and continued in the form of virtual classes.

Digitalisation also makes it possible to launch remote apprentice recruitment campaigns: organisation of virtual open days and remote tests and interviews, which contribute to testing before hiring them, in a period of reduced hires.

Making apprenticeship more attractive seems to be another important factor to motivate companies and young people in engaging. Interviewees noted that the perception of apprenticeship by employers, young people and their families, as well as the profile of young apprentices has changed. Campaigns to promote apprenticeship, combined with feedback from former apprentices and their successful integration into the workforce, have contributed to this positive evolution. Apprenticeship has opened up to new sectors and new educational levels. The share of contracts that increases the most between 2019 and 2020, for example, is that of Bac+3 to Bac+5 levels (41) (+9 points, from 26% to 35%) (42). The number of hires at the CAP equivalent level also increased (+7%). It is a question of accessing talented prospects. It has become a pathway of excellence, open to all.

To help young people find an employer, a six-month period was set up for any young person starting a training cycle in a CFA to sign an apprenticeship contract (⁴³). This has enabled many young people to sign an apprenticeship contract: more than 49 000 young people have entered the scheme, 43% of whom have signed a contract. Those who left the scheme without having signed a contract were directed towards signing a different one (notably professionalisation) (⁴⁴) or continuing their training under school/student status (⁴⁵).

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Ministry of Labour, Employment and Integration (2020). Press release, 16 April 2020.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Bachelor programmes (*Licences*) and Vocational bachelors (*Licence professionnelle*) are EQF levels 6. Master degrees (Masters) and Degrees in engineering (*Titre d'ingénieur*) are EQF levels 7. See the European inventory on NQF, 2016: France.

⁽⁴²⁾ Dares focus, No 38, 8 July 2021.

⁽⁴³⁾ Plan de relance de l'apprentissage: ce qu'il faut retenir [The Ministry of Labour's web page presenting the main points of the plan to foster apprenticeship].

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Learn more on the professionalisation contract in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes .

⁽⁴⁵⁾ French Ministry of Labour, data on 17.5.2021.

5.2.2. Financial incentives

In response to the health crisis, a new aid scheme has been set up to aid the recruitment of apprentices while stimulating the activity of beneficiary companies (⁴⁶). This is a bonus designed to encourage companies to recruit apprentices: EUR 5 000 for the recruitment of a minor and EUR 8 000 for that of an adult, until 31 December 2021. All companies taking on an apprentice from the CAP to the master level are eligible. Companies with more than 250 employees may get this aid subject to conditions related to a certain threshold of apprenticeship contract among their workforce (including contract of professionalisation). This aid is easily accessible with simplified procedures: it is triggered automatically when the contract is submitted.

This represented an investment for the State estimated at a minimum of EUR 1.95 billion (⁴⁷). It has been a significant investment and a windfall for SMEs, as well as for large companies. As of February 2021, more than 400 000 applications for the bonus had been submitted (⁴⁸). All the people interviewed for this report said that there had been a positive effect from the financial aid for apprenticeships introduced during the health crisis. The companies were comforted by the State, with the financial incentive, and by the CFA with the digitalisation of the training, and were reassured about their recruitment. Many employers who have discovered apprenticeship thanks to this support scheme are likely continue offering it. The aid has been extended to be available in 2022.

A comparison of the recovery plan put in place to deal with the 2020 crisis with the one for the 2008 crisis shows that:

- (a) the recovery plans put in place during the 2008 economic crisis had fewer companies immediately eligible;
- (b) the recovery plans put in place during the 2008 economic crisis had a smaller amount of aid;
- (c) the stimulus packages introduced during the 2008 economic crisis had less easy access for employers.

5.3. Conclusions

In both recent crises, recovery plans were put in place with a view to supporting company participation in apprenticeships. In the first case (economic crisis 2008 onwards), the plan managed to stop the decrease in company participation. In the second case (COVID-19 crisis), the plan resulted in a significant increase in company participation.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Decree No 2021-363, 31 March 2021. *JORF*, No 0078, 1 April 2021.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ See France Relance, the French recovery plan launched in March 2020. A budget of EUR 750 million was allocated to finance the new apprenticeships contracts.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ See published on La vie publique.fr – a French government website: *L'apprentissage en France: une progression record en 2020* [Apprenticeship in France: a record rate of growth in 2020]. *La vie publique.fr*, 10.2.2021.

This difference can be attributed first to the larger amount of aid earmarked in the COVID-19 crisis, or the wider eligibility in that case (Section 5.2).

However, the COVID-19 response was based on a deeper apprenticeship reform introduced before the crisis outbreak. The reform increased the opportunities for companies to offer apprenticeships (giving them the right to set up their own apprenticeship centre), simplified the administrative procedures and set up a coordinating body (*France Compétence*). Without these reforms and initiatives, financial incentives alone would probably not have increased the number of apprentices (at least not to the extent they were increased) during the crisis.

The 2018 reform has been a great success also because it was not designed within a financial envelope. Moreover, the public authorities did not set any numerical target for its implementation. To be able to finance these new apprenticeship contracts, EUR 750 million were paid to *France Compétence* by the State as part of the recovery plan. These funds are then transferred to the competence operators (OPCOs, responsible for supporting vocational training, set up on agreements between trade unions and employer associations), so that they can finance the CFAs for each contract signed (⁴⁹). It should also be noted that the OPCOs have paid funds to the CFAs to make the digital transition a success and encourage distance learning, in particular through calls for projects. These funds were paid out via calls for projects.

_

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Centre-Inffo (2020). *France Relance: ce qui attend les acteurs de la formation professionnelle* [National recovery plan: what should vocational training stakeholders expect]. Centre-InffoDossier documentaire, December 2020.

CHAPTER 6.

Dual pathway: the Netherlands

by Robert van Wezel (50)

6.1. How and why participation has changed in times of crisis?

6.1.1. How has participation changed in times of economic crises?

Learning and working at the same time is a popular option in the Netherlands: at upper secondary vocational education level (MBO), depending on the economic situation, 20-25% of all students follow a work-based vocational learning pathway: *BeroepsbegeleidendeLeerweg* (BBL)), the dual pathway scheme is considered as apprenticeship in the country (51). In recent years, the system has registered a steady growth in the number of enrolments in the scheme (Table 1).

In times of economic crisis, though, businesses have fewer placements for students. For example, in 2015/2016, the number of BBL students fell below 100 000, which marks a decline of 33% compared with the academic year 2011/2012. During that period, SBB (*Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*) stimulated the BBL option by retrieving information from companies about all available apprenticeship places in the whole country and offering them via stagemarkt.nl to bring this opportunity to the attention of potential students. Sectors and the government also made an effort to limit the decline in participants in the BBL scheme with financial and other support.

The picture is more differentiated during the current economic crisis triggered by the pandemic. The overall growth in the number of BBL students has slowed (Table 1) leading to a stabilisation of the number of apprentices in the 2020/21 academic year compared to 2019/20 (52): 127 000 students of the total 507 000 enrolled in VET. There are differences per sector and the related apprenticeship occupations:

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Senior policy advisor, SBB – Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven [Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market], the Netherlands.

⁽⁵¹⁾ See the Dual pathway scheme in Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes.

⁽⁵²⁾ The forecast for 2021/22 shows a further stabilisation.

Table 1. Number of apprenticeship enrolments, by qualification, per school year (from 2011/12 to 2021/22) (*)

Qualification	2011/12	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Cross-over (**)				0	101	185	287	369
ICT and creative industry	964	817	883	877	977	1 065	2 836	3 136
Specialist craftsmanship	1 828	1 363	1 362	1 411	1 434	1 480	9 491	9 269
Business services and security	4 886	2 163	2 325	1 953	2 373	2 566	1 048	1 116
Entry (***)	12 397	2 986	2 847	2 495	2 924	3 348	16 403	16 739
Trade	14 397	10 223	10 137	10 346	10 446	10 282	1 339	1 385
Food, environmental studies and hospitality	23 931	16 677	17 165	16 508	16 073	15 889	35 067	36 794
Mobility, transport, logistics and maritime	20 035	1 223	14 172	14 877	16 336	17 120	14 950	14 433
Engineering and construction	40 778	26 103	28 663	30 535	34 023	35 261	2 430	2 607
Care, wellbeing and sport	35 188	22 478	23 392	27 067	34 107	40 666	41 869	43 265
Total	154 404	95 733	100 946	106 069	118 794	127 862	125 720	129 473

^{(*):} Total number of apprentices registered on the 1 October each year.

Source: SBB reports.

^{(**):} Cross-over: an experiment (until 2025) to respond more effectively to current and innovative developments in the labour market. The cross-over qualification consists of parts of existing qualifications from two or more sectors.

^{(***):} Entry = qualifications at EQF (and NLQF) level 1.

The sectors trade, food, environmental studies and hospitality, and mobility, transport, logistics and maritime are experiencing a particularly acute decline in the number of apprentices. Engineering and construction, and care, wellbeing and sport are still experiencing growth, albeit less marked than in previous years. Nevertheless, the apprenticeship programmes in care and wellbeing, and entry registered a slightly increasing shortage of places available.

6.1.2. Why has apprentice participation changed since 2020?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 was a major threat to the availability of sufficient apprenticeship places. Due to measures to prevent the further spread of the virus, several industries closed or faced severe restrictions. The impact varied by sector and region: sectors such as retail, hospitality, hotels and the entertainment sector were obliged to close. This also indirectly affected supplying companies and had a direct impact on the availability of apprenticeships, as it was not always possible to offer apprentices access to workplaces that were closed.

On the vocational training supply side, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, in cooperation with SBB, MBO Raad (Association of VET Colleges) and JOB (national youth organisation that supports MBO students), offered schools and businesses the possibility to implement the practical training differently and agreements were made for this at school-company level. The 'service document' was introduced to serve this purpose. It states that the student still following an apprenticeship under the circumstances affected by the pandemic (it is regularly updated), is entitled to an employment contract with the employer. The school has no other role than to point out to the apprentice his/her rights and, if necessary, to advise and support him/her in this with the accredited work placement company.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, a number of bottlenecks arose in 2021 with regard to the BBL scheme in various courses:

- (a) no apprenticeship at the start of the academic year (53);
- (b) apprenticeship places being cancelled during the academic year, leaving the student the option to follow education in the school-based route within company placements (internships, *stage*) for a maximum of 3 months.

In January, February and March of 2021, many VET students, as well as taking online classes were also unable to benefit from workplace training (as part of their apprenticeship) due to the COVID-19 measures. Many businesses were closed or had no time or physical space to supervise apprentices.

⁽⁵³⁾ The condition to start an apprenticeship is that a student has concluded a practical training agreement with a work placement company on 31 December of the academic year.

Shortages in some sectors show that there is a bigger problem than just those related to the effects of the pandemic. In the case of the apprenticeship programmes within care and wellbeing, this is partly because it is still difficult to supervise students due to pressure, both in terms of capacity and physical space. The Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport and Education, Culture and Science are discussing with representatives from healthcare institutions and the various healthcare sectors to find a solution for the lack of supervision capacity for apprenticeships (and internships).

Generally, though, collaboration among actors in VET has been closer than ever during the period of the pandemic crisis, which was highly needed for young people who were left at home with online classes and no social contacts. Work placement companies, schools, social partners, sector organisations and SBB used their creativity to secure sufficient internships and apprenticeships. The SBB service desk for updating apprenticeships was used to ensure apprenticeships for all students and pupils.

The efforts and various measures taken by the government eventually showed their results in the number of available and completed apprenticeships. From summer 2021, the decline in apprenticeships due to the COVID-19 crisis in the Netherlands seems to have settled down and shortages have also fallen sharply (Table 1).

6.2. Encouraging company participation

6.2.1. Participation in apprenticeships

In consultation with VET schools, SBB involved 450 practical learning advisors at national level, identified during their visits to companies, in a consultation to identify the most common reasons why the number of apprenticeships decreased in the first and second quarter of 2021. These include the following:

- (a) work at companies accepting apprentices has decreased or has come to a standstill;
- (b) there is a limited supply of placements, both due to the consequences of the pandemic and structurally;
- (c) companies offering apprenticeship places do not have time for supervision due to competitive pressure or due to the difficulties of supervising staff working from home, or that there is not enough physical space to keep the recommended 1.5 m distance.

The Dutch government has taken measures to support employers – as well as schools and training institutions – with apprenticeships (and internships),

offering tailor-made solutions, to prevent educational disadvantages and study delays for apprentices as a result of COVID-19.

Part of this package of measures was an active campaign by the government to support companies in offering apprenticeships for secondary education (MBO students), including extra efforts for workers and jobseekers who wanted to retrain.

The subsidy for work placement companies for offering an apprenticeship to a BBL student was increased to the maximum of EUR 2 700 per apprenticeship (per year per student).

Since April 2020, SBB has implemented the Internships and apprenticeships action plan funded by the Ministry of Education and Science (and developed at its request by SBB), to identify shortages of apprenticeships (and internships), to secure new (internships and) apprenticeship places and to find targeted solutions in the region together with schools and companies offering apprenticeship placements. The ambitions of this action plan were that an apprenticeship would be available for every VET student in the 2020/21 school year. Education and the business community drew up a tailor-made action plan for each sector and region. As a result, all VET students were able to continue their internship or apprenticeship in the specified school year or were offered an alternative by the school.

The action plan includes 12 actions, such as:

- (a) calling on training companies to nurture and maintain existing internships and apprenticeships through advisers in the region and by using various communication tools. Industry associations and representatives of employers and employees are asked to do the same;
- (b) introducing a special measure for the remote accreditation of prospective work placement companies: in necessary and distressing cases, where there is no other option, SBB makes the accreditation possible without a physical visit by the practical training advisor;
- (c) monitoring the development of internships, apprenticeships and employment per sector and region in cooperation with education, business, government and other partners;
- (d) highlighting the various financial options for maintaining internships and apprenticeships to the attention of recognised training companies;
- (e) stimulating innovative forms of cooperation in the region between schools, companies and, for example, provinces, municipalities and UWV, so that more internships and apprenticeships in the labour market become available.

Among the actions envisaged by the plan, since April 2020, SBB has been mapping apprenticeship shortages per sector, market segment and region. Specific action is taken with this information, such as a major telephone campaign

among approved work placement companies to update availability, a mailing to inactive work placement companies to review the possibilities, the deployment of practical learning consultants for company visits that call for attention for updating apprenticeships, and, if necessary, securing additional places and regional agreements on the use of available apprenticeships for VET students and jobseekers.

SBB has a sophisticated network in the Netherlands that enables parties to be brought together at sectoral, regional and local levels. Thanks to the efforts of SBB through the action plan, schools, businesses and regional partners, apprenticeships were found for many students. Alternatives have also been devised to give content to apprenticeship periods through simulations. Regional collaboration with various parties has proven crucial. SBB acted as a driver, connector and collaborative partner, with a short line to the business community to find new work placement companies and to make the best use of the apprenticeships that were still available.

In 2020, education institutions, work placement companies and SBB gained experience with the successful approach to tackling shortages. SBB has made the following recommendations to combat shortages of apprenticeships (or internships):

- (a) maximum use of the available apprenticeships (for example https://stagemarkt.nl/, https://leerbanenmarkt.nl/ that offer all the opportunities for apprenticeship and actual information from companies);
- (b) organising remote supervision at companies hosting apprentices;
- (c) joint (education, companies, SBB) approach to shortages in apprenticeships based on sectoral and regional analyses;
- (d) stimulating innovative forms of collaboration between training provider and company that combine practice and education;
- (e) assistance to young people in a vulnerable position;
- (f) using alternatives to achieve student learning goals (e.g. simulations);
- (g) supporting students transferring to another study programme or staying in education.

6.2.2. Non-financial incentives to encourage company participation

Since the start of the internships and apprenticeships action plan, companies offering apprenticeship places, education institutions, social partners, R&D funds and SBB have made extensive efforts to ensure the offer of as many apprenticeships as possible. Education institutions reported which students were still looking for a place and actively used their regional networks to find one. Companies offering placements came up with creative solutions to allow

employees to work at a distance of 1.5 metres. Practical training advisors from SBB approved the accreditation of new companies where students could follow part of the practical training.

SBB has kept a record of how many reported shortages have been resolved and how many new shortages were reported by schools in the first half of 2021. Using a realistic and up-to-date picture of the shortages, broken down by sector, region and qualification, SBB made it possible to take adequate and specific measures responding to company needs. These reports focused on shortages from the perspective of students who follow an apprenticeship course. There are also shortages from the perspective of the labour market. Some sectors as healthcare, hospitality, engineering, construction and transport signal an increasing shortage of professionals. This is related to the efficiency of education compared with the demands of the labour market.

Thanks to the joint effort of work placement companies, schools, other regional and sectoral partners and SBB, it has been possible to address more than 27 500 reported shortages (combination of internships and apprenticeships). On 1 July 2021, the number of shortages (8 355, combination of internships and apprenticeships) reached its lowest point since SBB started actively recording the shortages of apprenticeships.

SBB also collects, analyses and publishes information about the labour market and the opportunities for an apprenticeship (⁵⁴). SBB also takes into account the effects of the pandemic on the work of professions and the consequences of, for example, the social distancing regulations. Where necessary, SBB develops, in direct cooperation with (regional) companies and training centres, minors that can be added to the qualifications to provide the apprentices (and companies) with the actual competences, knowledge and skills.

SBB shares this information with schools, the business community, municipalities, the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV) and the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs and Employment, so they can use it to provide information to students and apprentices, prospective students and apprentices, workers and jobseekers.

SBB has also worked to prevent green 'harvesting', i.e. avoiding offering students a job opportunity without continuation of education and a guarantee to achieve the desired qualification. Taking a job without a diploma can be attractive for a young person and an employer in the short term, but figures show that young people without a basic qualification are less likely to keep their job sustainably. Just before the COVID-19 crisis, SBB, together with the Ministry of Education,

_

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Information is collected for internships too.

Culture and Science, representatives of the labour market MKB Nederland, VNO-NCW, JOB and MBO Council, signed a declaration of intent to help young people who start work without a diploma to obtain a basic qualification by combining work with a VET diploma (usually with apprenticeship). If desired, SBB will discuss this subject, in collaboration with the education institution, with the work placement company, with the aim of encouraging the latter and the young person to combine work with (continued) training in an apprenticeship.

6.2.3. Financial incentives

On top of existing subsidies for companies hiring apprentices (55), in 2021 the government introduced additional financial incentives for employers as the examples below show.

In 2021, the subsidy for work placement companies for offering an apprenticeship was increased to the maximum amount of EUR 2 700 per apprenticeship offered to a BBL student (apprentice) (⁵⁶). While the amount of the practical learning subsidy normally depends on the number of weeks that a company hosts and supervises an apprentice, in the event of a forced closure (e.g. due to COVID-19), the weeks in a limited period of activity shall not be deducted. In addition, businesses can request an advance payment for apprenticeships in MBO.

Employers with loss of turnover due to the COVID-19 crisis can invoke the Temporary emergency bridging measure for sustained employment (NOW), which also includes BBL students with an employment contract, and, in certain cases, also BOL (school-based vocational learning pathway) students with an internship allowance (57).

In the previous economic crisis period, R&D funds (⁵⁸) also made an important contribution to preserving apprenticeships. Through these funds, employer and employee representatives actively promote training (including apprenticeships) in

-

⁽⁵⁵⁾ For additional information, see Cedefop European Database on apprenticeship schemes.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ See information Subsidieregeling Praktijkleren [Subsidy scheme for practical learning].

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Learn more on NOW 2.0 measure [Temporary emergency bridging measure for sustained employment].

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Examples of funds and companies that offer training facilities for apprenticeships in the construction sector include Bouwend Nederland, FNV Bouw, CNV Hout & Bouw (ontwikkelaars plan).

their sectors (e.g. construction sector) and sometimes also pay a financial contribution to companies that offer active training for their employees (59).

A fourth example of financial incentives is the SLIM scheme. From 2020, the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment is offering EUR 48 million for initiatives aimed at stimulating learning and development in SMEs. In addition, EUR 1.2 million is made available for the same purpose in large companies from the agricultural, catering and recreational sectors (60).

6.3. Conclusions

With the 2020 Action plan for apprenticeships (and internships), vocational education and the business community in SBB acted quickly at the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. This allowed SBB to respond promptly to shortages of apprenticeships (and internships) and to find solutions for many students and workers and jobseekers together with education institutions, recognised training companies and industry associations. The infrastructure and cooperation in MBO have proven their added value.

The Minister for Education, Culture and Science has made resources available from the National education programme for the extension of the SBB action plan. It was decided to continue the action plan into 2022. Attention to sufficient apprenticeships remains necessary because of:

- (a) uncertainties about an increase in shortages when the number of COVID-19 infections increases and the effects of any new government measures;
- (b) residual shortages of apprenticeships in specific regions and/or sectors and vulnerable groups of students.

With the 2020 action plan, the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Social Affairs and Employment are also giving a stimulus to retraining and further training of workers and jobseekers through practical learning in MBO. There is a great need for professionals that VET cannot fully meet with an initial intake of students at upper secondary level. This offers opportunities for utilising the possibilities for retraining and further training through practical learning in MBO.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Berenschot (2009). *Maatregelen in Crisistijd*: Voorbeelden van werken aan werkzekerheid in opdracht van het Ministerie van SZW [Measures in times of crisis: examples of work on job security on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment].

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Learn more on the SLIM subsidy [Incentive scheme learning and development within SMEs].

CHAPTER 7.

Apprenticeship programmes: Portugal

By João Barbosa (61)

7.1. Introduction

The Portuguese apprenticeship scheme (apprenticeship programmes, *cursos de apprendizagem*) (62) is a training pathway with alternating periods of training at VET centres (about 60% of the total length of the programme) and at workplace in companies or other organisations (about 40% of the length of the programme). It is under the control of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security. Apprenticeship programmes are delivered:

- (a) by the public employment service Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP) vocational training centres:
 - (i) directly managed by IEFP;
 - (ii) or jointly managed by IEFP and the social partners (referred to as 'protocol centres');
- (b) by external training entities (public or private accredited VET providers), some directly linked to companies.

This paper focuses on the participation in apprenticeship programmes by comparing them:

- (a) with the other upper secondary level VET programmes;
- (b) with the whole upper secondary educational offer;
- (c) with the population eligible for upper secondary VET programmes (people aged 15 to 25).

The analysis encompasses the period of the Portuguese economic and financial crises (2010-14) (63) and the period of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. For the first period, the analysis is based on data on the number of learners enrolled in

⁽⁶¹⁾ Senior advisor, Directorate-General for Employment and Industrial Relations (DGERT), Portugal.

⁽⁶²⁾ Learn more on the Apprenticeships programme scheme Portugal. in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes.

⁽⁶³⁾ The crisis began as part of the 2008-09 global financial crisis and developed in the context of the Eurozone public debt crisis, with a particular emphasis on the 2011-14 period when Portugal was subject to an Assistance Programme by the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank.

upper secondary education, including apprenticeships (⁶⁴) and on interviewing relevant stakeholders. For the second period, it is based on stakeholder interviews (IEFP, providers, and companies) since there are no official data available yet.

7.2. How and why participation has changed in times of crisis

7.2.1. How participation has changed

According to the data presented in Table 1 and Table 2, participation in apprenticeship programmes during the economic crisis 2010-14 grew against cycle trends, either compared with other VET programmes or with upper secondary education as a whole or with the eligible age group for secondary level VET programmes. In general, this growth was more significant than the decrease seen in the other types of education and training.

For example, in the last year of the financial crisis (2014) the situation was the following, compared to 2010:

- (a) apprenticeship programmes: +14 361/+77%;
- (b) other VET programmes: -4 210/-3.3%;
- (c) upper secondary level of education: -47 277/-10.7%;
- (d) eligible age group (15-25): -45 687/-4.0%.

Despite the progressive annual decrease in participation observed from 2014 onwards, in 2019 participation remained above the participation level observed in 2010 (before the crisis) by 10.7%. In the same period, participation fell in other VET offers (-5 200/-4.1%), in upper secondary education (-47 555/-10.8%) and in the eligible age group (-55 402/-4.8%).

⁽⁶⁴⁾ According to the IEFP, companies providing work-based learning for apprenticeships number about 5 000 (about 0.4% of the total companies in country). However, it was not possible to obtain information on how this number has evolved over time. Therefore, the participation of apprentices was used as an indicator of company participation: the increase in the number of apprentices also means an increase in the participation of companies (not necessarily the participation of more companies).

Table 1. Students enrolled in upper secondary level programmes (2010-19)

	Apprenticeship programmes					Other VET programmes				Upper secondary programmes					
Year	Total	Variation Total		Variation Total			V Total		Va	ariation					
		Annual		Accumulated			Annual Ad		Accum	Accumulated		Annual		Accumulated	
		N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%
2010	18 669					128 177					440 895				
2011	21 056	2 387	12.8	2 387	12.8	128 247	70	0.1	70	0.1	411 238	-29 657	-6.7	-29 657	-6.7
2012	33 366	12 310	58.5	14 697	78.7	127 348	-899	-0.7	-829	-0.6	398 447	-12 791	-3.1	-42 448	-9.6
2013	35 400	2 034	6.1	16 831	90.2	126 985	-363	-0.3	-1 192	-0.9	385 210	-13 237	-3.3	-55 685	-12.6
2014	33 030	-2 370	-6.7	14 361	77.0	123 967	-3 018	-2.4	-4 210	-3.3	393 618	8 408	2.2	-47 277	-10.7
2015	26 010	-7 020	-21.3	7 341	39.3	134 512	10 545	8.5	6 335	4.9	391 538	-2 080	-0.5	-49 357	-11.2
2016	24 202	-1 808	-7.0	5 533	29.6	125 876	- 8 636	-6.4	-2 301	-1.8	399 775	8 237	2.1	-41 120	-9.3
2017	21 869	-2 333	-9.6	3 200	17.1	124 376	-1 500	-1.2	-3 801	-3.0	401 050	1 275	0.3	-39 845	-9.0
2018	20 860	-1 009	-4.6	2 191	11.7	122 689	-1 687	-1.4	-5 488	-4.3	399 386	-1 664	-0.4	-41 509	-9.4
2019	20 674	-186	-0.9	2 005	10.7	122 977	288	0.2	-5 200	-4.1	393 340	-6 046	-1.5	-47 555	-10.8

Source: DGEEC – Direção Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciência (2021). Educação em números – Portugal 2021 [Education in figures: Portugal 2020]. Lisboa: DGEEC, p. 40.

Table 2. **Population in group age 15-25 (2010-19)**

			Va	riation			
Year	Total	Ann	ual	Accumulated			
i eai	Total	N	%	N	%		
2010	1 151 168						
2011	1 139 411	-11 757	-1.0	-11 757	-1.0		
2012	1 123 090	-16 321	-1.4	-28 078	-2.4		
2013	1 110 874	-12 216	-1.1	-40 294	-3.5		
2014	1 105 481	-5 393	-0.5	-45 687	-4.0		
2015	1 105 495	14	0.0	-45 673	-4.0		
2016	1 096 721	-8 774	-0.8	-54 447	-4.7		
2017	1 093 201	-3 520	-0.3	-57 967	-5.0		
2018	1 091 449	-1 752	-0.2	-59 719	-5.2		
2019	1 095 766	4 317	0.4	-55 402	-4.8		

Source: INE, Pordata database.

For the COVID-19 pandemic crisis period, the stakeholders interviewed did not report significant changes in terms of participation of apprentices or companies. The changes mentioned had mainly to do with the mode of delivery and with the training schedule. Following the general confinement decreed in March 2020, two main measures were taken.

First, all training in which face-to-face mode of delivery was not possible was switched to online mode or, under certain circumstances, to simulated practice (in the case of practical or work-based learning). Then, the sequence of training was changed with the postponement of practical and work-based learning (whenever it was impossible to develop it online or by simulation) and the anticipation of theoretical training that could be delivered online.

These measures were induced and supported by the IEFP through issuing specific technical guidelines (65).

7.2.2. Why participation has changed

The data presented above clearly show that, contrary to what might be thought, the participation of students in apprenticeship programmes during the 2010-14 crisis did not only not fall, but actually underwent significant net growth.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Orientação Técnica [Technical guideline] No DEM-DFP, de 11.03.2021, Emprego/Formação – Funcionamento dos Serviços – Atuação perante a pandemia COVID 19 [Employment/training – Operation of services – Action in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic].

Orientação Técnica [Technical guideline] No 32 DFP, de 04.04.2020, Formação Profissional – Formação a Distância – Procedimentos para implementação e disseminação de ações de formação a distância [Professional training – Distance learning – Procedures for the implementation and dissemination of distance learning actions].

This somewhat surprising situation results from the combination of several factors. One may be the specific characteristics of Portuguese apprenticeship. In Portugal, with few exceptions, apprenticeship programmes are not organised or directly funded by companies: they are organised by vocational training centres (public or private) and funded by public funds (national and European). Companies are only partners of vocational training centres for apprenticeship provision and bear no direct costs for it. However, their participation remains decisive as, in the context of apprenticeship, workplace learning is also decisive. The absence of direct financial repercussions for employers allowed them to keep participating in apprenticeships during the crisis.

Therefore, apprenticeship schemes may be less sensitive to changes in economic cycles and more sensitive to the political decisions taken as long as public funding is assured.

In this light, the agreement on 'deepening the apprenticeship system', included in the *Commitment to growth, competitiveness and employment* (⁶⁶) that was signed in January 2012, may have had relevance for the growth of participation in apprenticeship in the period of the economic crisis.

This commitment, in respect of apprenticeship programmes, prompts government and social partners:

- (a) to increase the target groups covered to since 2012 reach 30 000 apprentices;
- (b) to identify and correct programme 'overlapping situations' (67);
- (c) to invest in the most important areas and target groups to match the needs of the economy and the companies;
- (d) to involve the public employment service vocational training centres (IEPP) (⁶⁸), including those centres jointly managed with IEFP and the social partners, by investing in the technological training component and in increasing the competitiveness of companies (⁶⁹).

The increase in the apprentice participation started in 2011, probably because of the increase in investment by the public employment service (responsible for apprenticeship schemes) in training provided by 'protocol centres' and by external training centres (Section 7.1). These options, due to their more direct connection to employers, assure, at least theoretically, better employability prospects for apprentices.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ CES – Conselho Económico e Social [Economic and Social Council] (2012). Compromisso para o Crescimento, Competitividade e Emprego [Commitment to growth, competitiveness and employment.]

⁽⁶⁷⁾ To identify and correct situations of oversupply generated by the offer of the same courses/training areas in the same territory by different providers.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ The commitment reference means to reinforce the involvement of IEFP centres, since they were already involved by offering apprenticeship courses.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ The rationale here is that apprenticeship is a way of increasing company competitiveness by providing their future workers with the required technical training.

But the significant growth is also related to stakeholder involvement and to the concrete measures taken following the commitment. Among them, it should be highlighted that:

- (a) bringing apprenticeship to the centre of the public debate, by decision-makers, brought great public visibility (including in media);
- (b) reinforcing the involvement of the public employment service helped benefit from:
 - its strong commitment to the promotion and dissemination of apprenticeship programmes;
 - (ii) the integration of apprenticeship as an employment policy option;
 - (iii) the definition of programmes and priority training areas according to the needs of the companies and the regions;
 - (iv) the definition of guidelines for setting up the yearly supply of courses in line with the programmes and priority areas identified;
 - (v) the focus on programmes related to industrial, technological and productive activities:
 - (vi) maintaining and, in some cases, increasing the offer of workplace training by companies, supported by specific agreements or protocols with VET providers.

Focusing on the recent COVID-19 pandemic crisis, interviews reveal that participation of apprentices, IEFP trainers and companies seems to have been maintained at the pre-pandemic levels. This was made possible by:

- (a) adapting training contents to the distance development mode;
- (b) training IEFP trainers in online training methodologies;
- (c) making available to providers, apprentices, and trainers the technological means necessary for the development of online training;
- (d) establishing or maintaining financial and social support for apprentices, even during the interruption of face-to-face training;
- (e) ensuring payment to the IEFP trainers during the interruption of training activities;
- (f) guaranteeing the payment of fixed costs of providers (both IEFP and joint) when it was necessary to suspend the training;
- (g) making flexible work-based learning through telework, adjustment of training schedules and calendars, and apprentice rotation to guarantee social distancing.

7.3. Encouraging company participation

7.3.1. Why should companies participate in apprenticeship?

The benefits for companies from participating in apprenticeship are widely recognised and identified by the most diverse sources (70). The scope and the consequences of these

/7 0\	000	for	ovomnlor	
()	See,	101	example:	

benefits depend on the context, specifically on the way in which the apprenticeship scheme itself is designed, organised, governed, and delivered, and on involvement of the different stakeholders. However, despite the contextual specificities, there is a broad consensus on benefits such as:

- (a) providing companies with skilled workers by tackling the skill shortage;
- (b) tailoring workers' skills to the companies' needs and organisational culture;
- (c) improving the productivity and quality of goods and services and thus increasing the companies' competitiveness;
- (d) saving in recruitment and initial training costs by hiring graduate apprentices;
- (e) creating a recruitment pool that allows the replacement of the skilled workforce;
- (f) allowing and/or increasing the retention of workers, particularly the most skilled and talented:
- (g) revitalising the companies by introducing new points of view and new ways of doing;
- (h) modernising companies by introducing new technologies (preparation for technological change);
- (i) using apprenticeship as a trial run for the later hiring of workers;
- (j) transferring knowledge between different workers generations;
- (k) improving companies' reputations by assuming training as a social responsibility towards the community.

With few exceptions, companies are not directly responsible for organising apprenticeship programmes but only responsible for carrying out their workplace learning component. However, most companies are SMEs (in 2019, 1 333 649 of 1 335 006, corresponding to 99.9%), most of which are micro companies (1 281 857 corresponding to 96.1%) and only 0.6% (7 300) medium-sized companies (71).

These specificities mean that an apprentice's commitment to the company may be lower than in other countries, given the shorter stay and the weaker connection to the company, since they primarily depend on and report to the vocational training centre. They also mean that companies generally have a reduced capacity to hire graduate apprentices and integrate them into their workforce.

For these reasons, some of the benefits of participation in apprenticeship may be less obvious to Portuguese employers. However, even in this context, they can be significant. First, skilled workers are always crucial to company competitiveness, regardless of the sector of activity or the size of the company. The more these workers

[•] International Labour Organization (2017). ILO toolkit for quality apprenticeships: Vol. 1: guide for policy-makers. Geneve: ILO, Chapter 8: Funding.

[•] Kuczera, M. (2017). Striking the right balance: costs and benefits of apprenticeship. Paris: OECD Publishing. OECD Education working papers, No 153.

[•] US Department of Commerce; Case Western Reserve University (2016). *The benefits and costs of apprenticeship: a business perspective.*

⁽⁷¹⁾ See the Pordata database on enterprises size in Portugal [accessed 9.20.2021].

are acquainted with the organisation and methods of work and with the company's culture, the better for the employer to benefit from training apprentices.

In addition, companies will always need new staff, both in quantity and in quality: prospects of expansion or change in activity, need for technological and organisational modernisation, or replacement of workers who leave or retire. That is why participation in apprenticeship, and its workplace learning, has the obvious advantage of allowing companies to 'shape' apprentices according to their real needs (including in desired soft skills) and being able to choose to hire the most skilled and talented. The stakeholders interviewed reported that it is common practice in companies to hire the best apprentices at the end of their training, which can be a strong incentive for apprentices to be more committed to the company's objectives and processes.

Therefore, the key message for employers is that investing in apprenticeship is an investment on the future. Not only their future and of their companies, but also the future of the country, which can appeal to their sense of social responsibility.

7.3.2. Enablers of company participation

Participation in apprenticeship is beneficial to companies but this participation does not depend only on company will. It also depends on a set of conditions that can facilitate it.

The discussion about how to encourage company participation in apprenticeship must consider their type of involvement and must address aspects such as political and institutional framework and support, governance, and financial and non-financial support.

7.3.2.1. Political and institutional framework and support

The institutional framework and political support are essential, as the results obtained from the 2011-14 crisis response measures demonstrated. The agreement between the government and the social partners (worker and employer representatives) on apprenticeship schemes objectives and the orientation of public policy, as well as on the specific measures to be applied, is a determining factor. This is because it creates conditions for effective investment in apprenticeship by all stakeholders, boosting demand from apprentices, the offer by providers and the provision of workplace learning places by companies. It also contributes to improving society's image of apprenticeship (and of VET in general), breaking the stereotype that it is only aimed at people with learning difficulties and/or belonging to disadvantaged social groups.

Interviewees mentioned other enablers of company participation related to the political and institutional framework and support:

(a) defining a joint strategy by all public authorities involved: the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, as responsible for VET policy; the public employment service (IEFP), as responsible for implementing apprenticeship programmes; and the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education (ANQEP), as responsible for defining and updating VET curricula;

- (b) shifting of the central role from vocational training centres to companies by giving them a greater responsibility for their apprentices, in respect of training content or the overall management of their training pathways;
- (c) including the topic of apprentice workplace learning in conversations and negotiations with social partners;
- (d) considering the component of workplace of apprenticeship as one of the training modalities provided for in the Labour Code, viewing it as a measure to promote the qualification of future employees;
- (e) defining medium- and long-term strategies and goals to ensure continuity for companies (and for providers as well) to encourage their investment in apprenticeship;
- (f) implementing regular information campaigns and repositories aimed at companies, especially focused on the advantages they can obtain from their participation in apprenticeship, such as management and technological modernisation or the possibility of hiring qualified workers.

Setting up a strong political and institutional framework negotiated with all the stakeholders (including companies), reinforcing companies' involvement in all phases of the process, having a sound long-term strategy easily recognisable and accepted by companies, are key factors to keep them aware of the relevance they have for apprenticeship (in delivering workplace training) and of the benefits they can obtain from it. They are a guarantee that companies will remain involved, even in times of crisis when available resources tend to be scarcer.

7.3.2.2. Governance

Involving employers at all stages is the key to good governance of apprenticeship schemes. As shown in the 2012 commitment, it is relevant that this involvement takes place at the political level through definition of the strategy and goals to be achieved. Similarly, the *Agreement on Vocational Training and Qualification* recently signed between the Portuguese government and the social partners, regarding the design and strategic orientation of VET, envisages the creation of a new type of dual post-secondary training, focused on young adults, in close articulation with companies. This will expand the experience of the apprenticeship scheme to level 5 of the NQF/EQF, particularly in sectors and competences where the needs of the labour market and of companies are pressing (72).

But it is no less important that this involvement also takes place at a technical level, for example by:

_

⁽⁷²⁾ CES – Conselho Económico e Social [Economic and Social Council] (2021). Formação profissional e qualificação: um desígnio estratégico para as pessoas, para as empresas e para país [Professional training and qualification: a strategic purpose for people, companies and the country].

- (a) participating in the identification of qualifications and skill needs, as well as in the definition of the curricula and the programmes to be offered, improving the responsiveness of training to labour market demands;
- (b) creating conditions for companies to participate in apprenticeship, regardless of their size and without increasing the burden they must bear. A good solution could be the creation, by the sectoral employer associations, of a pool of tutors which companies can use to support their apprentices in workplace learning or of technological resources (equipment, training materials including online) that companies could use if they need;
- (c) monitoring the process of apprenticeship provision and its results and, if necessary, proposing improvement measures.

In this regard, it could be relevant to set up an apprenticeship governance model integrating the political and the technical levels, with a strong presence of employers in both. In such a structure, all stakeholders could participate, facilitating and speeding up decision-making on changes to meet times of crisis. This could help produce responses to crisis that have a greater focus on the offer in certain training areas emerging from the crisis, or with new delivery modes (which possibly require training of trainers and/or reequipment of providers and companies), or with the reinforcement and redirection of funding and other incentives to companies that continue to invest in apprenticeship despite the difficulties.

7.3.2.3. Financial and non-financial incentives

Even though Portuguese companies do not have direct costs (wages), they may bear indirect costs: those related to the salary of senior workers that train and support apprentices, and the loss of productivity eventually resulting from the displacement of financial, human, and technological resources from production to training.

Supporting these costs, or at least part of them, could be a way to encourage the participation of companies. This can be done by paying for services, by supporting the hiring of graduates, by granting subsidies, or by establishing tax reductions or in any other way.

In addition, non-financial incentives can also be considered, such as prioritising company access to training for its regular workers if they also train apprentices, and awarding the company's role in the country's economic and social development and its commitment to social responsibility.

These benefits are especially relevant in times of crisis, since they reduce the costs incurred by companies precisely at a time when, due to the effects of the crisis, they may have few resources available for this purpose (financial benefits) and help them to keep in mind their social role (non-financial benefits).

7.4. Conclusions

In times of crisis, a reduction in participation of companies, providers and apprentices in apprenticeships is both a possibility and a risk, but it is not a certainty. Crisis can, under certain conditions, be an opportunity to reinforce this participation. This paper examined enablers of employer participation in apprenticeship, which help identify conditions to keep participation high, even during crises. Among these conditions we highlight:

- (a) the effective commitment of policy-makers (government and public bodies) through:
 - (i) the definition of a favourable political and legal framework;
 - (ii) the definition of a medium-/long-term strategy;
 - (iii) the taking of concrete decisions aligned with the policy framework and the strategy;
- (b) the active involvement of relevant stakeholders at all stages, with special emphasis on employers, given their relevance in identifying the skills needed by companies and by the labour market and in providing the workplace learning component that is crucial for quality apprenticeship;
- (c) the disclosure of the advantages that providing work-based learning may have for companies: the possibility of choosing to hire the best, more skilled, and more committed workers they need;
- (d) the creation, by the employers' associations or by responsible public bodies, of logistical conditions for the participation of micro and small sized companies, which can be, for example, creating pools of workplace learning tutors or technological resources centres;
- (e) the establishment, by government, of incentives for company participation which can be financial and/or non-financial. Financial assistance can include support to the hiring of graduates, non-financial ones may reward companies for their participation.

These conditions can make apprenticeship more resilient and better prepared to face the challenges of people's qualifications and companies' skill needs, both in times of crisis and also, in 'normal' times. As crises may be cyclical, the conditions to face them must be created in times of normality, when the pressure on the different stakeholders and on the system as a whole is lower: this is when stakeholders must prepare for the crisis to come by together creating conditions such as those mentioned above. The better things are designed, organised, structured and implemented in normal times, the more likely for the apprenticeship system to overcome difficulties during crises.

CHAPTER 8.

Apprenticeship at the workplace: Romania

By Ana Rădulescu (73)

8.1. Introduction

In Romania, apprenticeship at the workplace has been the long-standing form of dual learning (since 1929) (74). It is offered by the Ministry of Labour and managed by the National Agency of Employment, as a form of continuing vocational education and training (CVET). Law 279/2005 provides all the conditions under which this apprenticeship takes place: the obligations and rights of the employer who employs apprentices and of apprentices, and the conditions under which the apprenticeship contract (75) is stipulated. Article 16 (2) of Law 279/2005 stipulates that an employer who enters into an apprenticeship contract under the terms of the apprenticeship law can receive on request, for the entire period of the apprenticeship contract, the equivalent in Lei of approximately EUR 450 per month (granted from the unemployment insurance budget within the limits of the funds allocated for this purpose).

The scheme is implemented by the National Agency for Employment. Employers may apply for the public employment service subsidy of approximately EUR 483 per month (Romanian Lei 2 250) for each apprentice for up to 3 years (the maximum duration of the apprenticeship scheme) from the unemployment insurance budget or the European Social Fund (ESF). Minimum duration of the programme varies by qualification level:

- (a) 6 months for EQF level 1;
- (b) 1 year for EQF level 2;
- (c) 2 years for EQF level 3; and
- (d) 3 years for EQF level 4.

Apprenticeships at the workplace can be organised for the qualifications established by the legislation in force and for the occupations included in the Occupation Classification in Romania, for which professional training standards or occupational standards exist.

All apprentices receive nationally recognised qualification certificates of equal value as in initial VET.

⁽⁷³⁾ Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Learn more at Apprenticeship at the workplace scheme – Romania, in Cedefop database of apprenticeship schemes. Another scheme is also described in the same database: VET in dual system – Romania

⁽⁷⁵⁾ The apprenticeship contract is a special type (atypical) of employment contract.

Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice for the last 4 years indicate that more than half of apprentices are adults (over 25 years of age) and the other half young people who are no longer in formal education or training (early school leavers or NEETs), so they are not VET learners:

- (a) in 2018, from 3 364 apprentices that concluded apprenticeship contracts in total, 2 848 were adults over 25 years of age (85%);
- (b) in 2019 from 6 163 apprentices that concluded apprenticeship contracts in total, 5 611 were adults over 25 years of age (91%);
- (c) in 2020 from 3 088 apprentices that concluded apprenticeship contracts in total, 2819 were adults over 25 years of age (91%);
- (d) in 2021 from the 2 627 apprentices that concluded apprenticeship contracts in total, 2 574 were adults over 25 years of age (98%).

This paper will look at changes in apprenticeship levels of activity in the past 10 years, starting from the aftermath of the 2008 crisis and moving on to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the offer of apprenticeships at the workplace in Romania. It provides lessons learned over this crisis.

8.2. How and why participation has changed in times of crisis

8.2.1. The economic crisis of 2008

The most recent regulation on the scheme 'apprenticeship at the workplace' entered into force in Romania in 2005, but proved to be inefficient and inapplicable; a series of successive changes in the legal framework followed in 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2018. An important amendment to the law took place in 2014 and 2018, a change that was reflected in the increase in the number of apprenticeship contracts.

Given the frequent policy changes at the time, the influence of the economic crisis of 2008 on apprenticeship at the workplace cannot be easily analysed.

Either as a result of the amendments brought to Law 279/2005 or possibly in the background of the relaunch of economic activity at national level, starting with 2014, there is a slight increase in the number of apprentices under the 'apprenticeship at the workplace' scheme: from 44 apprentices in 2013 to 337 in 2014, according to statistics of the Public Employment Service (PES). During 2006-17, few employers wanted to organise apprenticeship training programmes, hiring a total of aproximately1 200 apprentices. Starting with 2018, the number of apprentices increased each year: 3 364 in 2018, 6 163 in 2019 and 3 088 in 2020.

The number of contracts for apprenticeship at the workplace remains insufficient compared to needs in making apprenticeship a successful tool to support qualification and employment of low qualified adults, irrespective of crisis situations. The very low value of this indicator in 2014 indicates a lack of attractiveness of the apprenticeship

system for companies, and also suggests a low level of employer awareness. These conclusions follow from relevant analyses of the issue.

From November 2013 to November 2014, within the project Models for encouraging investments in continuous vocational training at the level of the company (⁷⁶), the Labour market programme (sociological survey) was conducted on a sample of 5000 companies, covering the training activities they performed in 2013 (⁷⁷).

The information collected showed that only 0.2% of the responding companies participated in 'apprenticeship at the workplace' in 2013. 62.4% claimed not to have participated in apprenticeship in 2013 because they did not need workers trained by means of such programmes. At the same time, 27.4% of the employers considered as a barrier the fact that their own workers must allocate some of their working time in order to train/coordinate the apprentices. More than one fifth of the companies were discouraged by the (for them unreasonably) high costs associated with vocational training programmes for apprentices, and 15.8% by the specific bureaucracy of apprenticeship.

The distribution of the reasons for not participating in apprenticeships is similar for SMEs and large companies. The only notable difference is the higher share of SMEs discouraged by the high costs of apprenticeships: the financial effort related to organising apprenticeships is perceived as higher by the small and medium size enterprises.

The results of this study show that participation in apprenticeship programmes is not influenced by the economic crisis and the reasons that employers invoke in hiring apprentices are not related to the economic crisis.

8.2.2. The COVID-19 pandemic

During the state of emergency, a presidential decree allowed only online theoretical training for all types of training. Courses, including apprenticeship, were not totally suspended, but limitations were introduced regarding the movement of people during the day and so the development of courses could not be achieved. It was left to the training providers to decide if they could run courses safely, taking into account the decisions of the local committees for emergency situations.

In apprenticeships, the implementation of workplace training was possible where companies continued their activity in compliance with the measures to prevent infection. Where the economic activity of the company was suspended, all apprenticeships were suspended.

After the end of the state of emergency, the Ministry of Labour developed norms regarding the further development of online distance learning for theoretical training of

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Part of the Research and development sectoral plan of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elders for the 2013-15 period.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ The survey was conducted in collaboration with the National Institute for Scientific Research in the field of Labour and Social Protection – NISRLSP, the National Centre for Statistical Training – NCST, Novel Research.

all programmes, including apprenticeship, the development of online programmes that do not require practical training at an employer's premises, i.e. in real conditions, and online exams for these programmes.

Nevertheless, many training providers chose to start training programmes, including apprenticeship, with the introduction of infection prevention measures, including social distance measures (78).

Although, during the COVID-19 pandemic vocational training and economic activities were restricted, there was no reduction in the number of apprentices.

According to the administrative data provided by the PES, which finances apprenticeship at the workplace under the conditions of Law 279/2005 from the budget of unemployment benefits or European funds (ESF), 3 364 apprenticeship contracts were signed in 2018, 6 163 apprenticeship contracts were signed in 2019, 3 088 apprenticeship contracts were signed in 2020 and 2627 apprenticeship contracts were signed in 2021. For these contracts, grant agreements were concluded with the PES.

Although employers can request PES to subsidise apprenticeships and conclude grant agreements with PES, receiving the equivalent of EUR 450 for each apprentice/month, throughout the course, they are still reluctant to organise apprenticeships, many quoting the administrative tasks involved in concluding such an agreement.

The involvement of companies in the provision of continuous training programmes, including apprenticeship at the workplace, increases with the size of the company. The most important reasons why companies do not organise continuing vocational training programmes (INCSMPS, 2018) are the perception that they have the qualifications and skills needed to carry out the activity (43.7% of companies surveyed), and the recruitment of people with the necessary qualifications and skills as a strategy for solving skills deficits (27.8% of companies). The reasons of the high cost of continuing vocational training (15.2%) and the limited time available for training due to the workload of staff with professional tasks (17.1%) remain secondary but are growing in importance for small firms. Another difficulty in organising CVT courses is the poor development of the market, 13.3% of companies invoking this reason; the share of companies quoting this problem varies depending on the size class. However, the first reason invoked by companies for not getting involved in CVT activities may show a low level of awareness of the importance of CVT among employers; raising awareness of the importance of training among employers and social partners is essential to increasing interest and involvement.

In conclusion, the levels of participation in apprenticeship was not affected by the pandemic situation created by COVID-19.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ All the prevention measures that the economic agents must respect are included in a joint order of the Minister for Labour and the Minister for Health and apply also in the case of professional training programmes.

8.3. Encouraging company participation

With the increase in PES subsidies to employers who hire apprentices, the interest of employers (number of apprenticeship places offered) has increased despite other adversities of the COVID-19 crisis. This shows that a main factor determining the lack of attractiveness of apprenticeships for employers relates to the cost of training. The Labour market programme survey outcomes after the 2008 crisis further support this point of view.

This also shows that securing and disbursing financial resources for companies willing to participate in apprenticeships is an effective instrument to maintain (or even increase) their participation.

Within a project implemented by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister in 2015 (⁷⁹), a cost-benefit analysis regarding apprenticeship programmes identified several benefits for all parties. Employers, in particular:

- reduce costs related to recruiting a qualified person to meet company requirements.
 Employers are filling vacancies: after completing the apprenticeship period, people often remain employed, which implies stability of jobs created for apprentices;
- (b) receive a substantial subsidy from PES;
- (c) ensure they will have personnel qualified in accordance with their company requirements and have higher productivity as apprentices acquire company-specific skills:
- (d) benefit from apprentices' activity (productive time);
- (e) benefit from the skills their apprentices develop.

The positive effect is higher among employers who have difficulties in attracting qualified workers due to increased migration outflows or different kinds of labour and skill shortages. The procedures currently in place aim to ensure the quality of vocational training, particularly through use of approved trainers as well as having apprenticeship coordinators at the workplace.

There are also benefits for other stakeholders. Apprentices are provided the opportunity of getting a job after they have completed the apprenticeship programme, in accordance with the acquired qualification and experience. Training providers profit, as the employers are obliged to use the services of an authorised vocational training provider to participate in apprenticeships. And apprenticeships help increase the labour force qualification level and reduce the number of unskilled workers, while productivity grows.

Increasing the involvement of companies in providing continuing education courses, including apprenticeship at the workplace, is essential. Although both the interest of companies in providing training (including apprenticeship) and the number of adults

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Developing the administrative capacity of the ministries to draw up economic and financial analyses in order to support the process of developing public policies relevant for programming and implementing structural instruments.

participating in courses have steadily increased in the last two decades, the participation of adults in lifelong learning has fallen, reaching 1.1% in 2017 (Pouliakas and Branka, 2019).

To encourage company participation, the following measures could be applied:

- (a) simplify specific apprenticeship procedures and further promote the apprenticeship system;
- (b) make the system more flexible so that it would allow reduction of apprenticeship duration and, therefore, reduction of costs;
- (c) ensure vocational training through the employment agencies.

8.4. Conclusions

It is not simple to identify the impact of the crisis situations on the labour market (either the economic crisis of 2008 or especially the crisis caused by COVID-19) on the number of apprenticeships organised or of apprentices.

There are several issues related to employers' perceptions that limit the number of apprenticeship places, irrespective of negative labour market junctures.

According to a survey conducted in companies (INCSMPS, 2018), the interest of companies in getting involved in various forms of learning in the workplace remains moderate, although relatively more promising for CVET. Only 27.5% of companies say they would be interested in organising VET dual education programmes and 47.6% apprenticeship at the workplace programmes.

The training of private sector employees is ad hoc, because only large companies have a training strategy or a special budget for vocational training. Small companies are less likely to train their employees because they do not usually have the institutional infrastructure to organise and implement human resource development programmes. As SMEs face more constraints, government support for the training of employees in these firms (either outside businesses or in the workplace) becomes essential. Involvement of social partners is also weak.

Employers are reluctant, because of the administrative barriers they perceive and because they are unaware of the benefits of this form of learning.

Apprenticeship' participation could be increased through intensive information measures on benefits and reduced bureaucracy. Awareness needs to be raised among SMEs regarding the opportunities that apprenticeships offer.

One lessons learned in vocational training during the COVID-19 pandemic period is that trainers need more training, especially regarding new technologies and new training methods. It also became evident that VET and apprenticeship need to keep up with new technologies and new methods of training. A large share of the population lacks basic digital competences, so these become a necessary starting point. The need to adjust legislation in order to include the possibility of delivering authorised online training also became clear.

References

[URLs accessed 25.5.2022]

- Eurofound (2020). *Labour market change: COVID-19: policy responses across Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Eurofound research report.
- INCSMPS National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection (2018). *Project 'Agenda for competences Romania 2020-2025' within the Sectorial Research-Development Plan of MMPS for the period 2018-20.* [in Romanian].
- Pouliakas, K. and Branka, J (2020). *EU jobs at highest risk of Covid-19 social distancing: is the pandemic exacerbating the labour market divide?* Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper, No 1.
- Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (2005). Law 279/2005 on apprenticeship at the workplace. [in Romanian].

CHAPTER 9.

Apprenticeship resilience: UK-England

By Andrea Laczik and Kat Emms (80)

9.1. How and why has participation changed in times of economic crisis?

9.1.1. How has participation changed

There is a clear relationship between the economy and apprenticeships (Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2013) that is shown by economic growth and a skilled workforce. Work-based learning has been seen as an answer to skill gaps in the English workforce. Apprenticeships help skills development, improve wages and support career progression for the apprentice (individual) (Ecorys; IES and IRS, 2013); they may also improve productivity of those employers that offer apprenticeships, as employees with higher skills are more effective, are more able to do their jobs and produce higher quality work.

In this analysis three points of crises will be discussed in relation to apprenticeships and training (81). First, the 2008-09 financial crisis followed by the deepest recession since the second World War; second, Brexit following the 2016 referendum; and third, the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020.

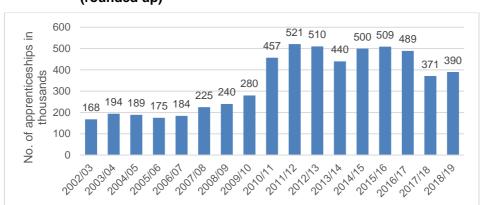


Figure 1. Total apprenticeship starts in UK-England (2002/03 – 2018/19), thousands (rounded up)

Source: DfE/EFSA FE data library.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ EDGE Foundation, UK.

⁽⁸¹⁾ Comparing the figures in this section should be done with care. Graphs originate from different documents, hence the data collection methods used for the various sources may differ.

The current apprenticeship scheme in England was launched in 1994 (Mirza-Davies, 2015). Figure 1 shows the overarching growing tendency of apprenticeship starts between 2002/03 and 2016/17 (DfE/ESFA, FE Data library, 2021). The number of apprenticeship starts has been steadily growing despite the 2008-09 recession. In 2016 the UK voted to leave the EU, but the impact of leaving has only been gradually emerging.



Figure 2. Apprenticeship starts in England by age since 2008/09, thousands (rounded up)

 ${\it Source}: \ {\it DfE/EFSA}\ {\it FE}\ {\it data}\ {\it library}: \ {\it apprenticeships}.$

The majority of apprenticeships are taken by adults (19+) in England which may include existing employees in a company and new recruits who begin an apprenticeship with an employer. Figure 2 demonstrates that the number of apprenticeship starts for the under-19 age group has marginally increased over time. However, the number apprenticeship starts has been falling for this age group since the apprenticeship reforms were introduced in 2015. We can observe a considerable increase for the 19-24 age group, and even more so for the 25+ year olds. The number of apprenticeship starts for 25+ has grown four times between 2008-09 and 2012-13.

Table 1. All-age apprenticeship programme starts by level (from 2010/11 to 2018/19), thousands

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Intermediate level apprenticeship	301	329	293	287	298	291	261	161	144
Advanced level apprenticeship	154	188	208	145	182	191	198	166	175
Higher apprenticeship	2	4	10	9	20	27	37	48	75

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Proportion									
Intermediate level apprenticeship	66%	63%	57%	65%	60%	57%	53%	43%	37%
Advanced level apprenticeship	34%	36%	41%	33%	36%	37%	40%	44%	44%
Higher apprenticeship	0%	1%	2%	2%	4%	5%	7%	13%	19%

Source: DfE/ESFA, FE Data library.

In England, there have been considerably more intermediate level (level 2) apprenticeship starts than advanced level (level 3) apprenticeships (Figure 3 for level equivalents). Higher-level (levels 4-7) (82) apprenticeship starts, although growing, are still at a low level. In 2015 the UK Government also launched Degree Apprenticeships, which fall within higher-level qualifications and provide the opportunity for the apprentice to gain a full bachelor (level 6) or master degree (level 7). Apprenticeship data often combine data concerning levels 4-7. However, in Figure 5 higher-level and degree apprenticeships are reported separately.

Figure 3. Correspondence of levels established between national qualifications frameworks and the European qualifications framework

Regulated qualifications framework (RQF)	Framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ)	European qualifications framework (EQF)
8	8	8
7	7	7
6	6	6
5	5	_
4	4	5
3		4
2		3
1		2
E3		1
E2		
E1		

Source: Ofqual, 2019.

⁽⁸²⁾ Intermediate level (level 2) corresponds to EQF level 3; advanced level (level 3) to EQF level 4; and higher levels (levels 4-7) to EQF levels 5-7 (see Ofqual, 2019, p. 7).

In 2015, the government established the Apprenticeship reform programme (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015) following the Richard review of apprenticeships (Richard, 2012). The main changes included the introduction of degree apprenticeships in 2015, and the establishment of the Institute of Apprenticeships (83), funded by the government to support employers in developing the new apprenticeship standards linked to end-point assessment requirements. Additional requirements were set for learners to achieve in English and maths to get access to apprenticeship programmes. The minimum duration of apprenticeships was set to one year. Funding of apprenticeships has been fundamentally changed, and the apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017, ending the voluntary nature of employers' contribution to training. Following the introduction of the apprenticeship levy (84), apprenticeships starts have dropped significantly (for a more detailed discussion see Section 9.1.2).

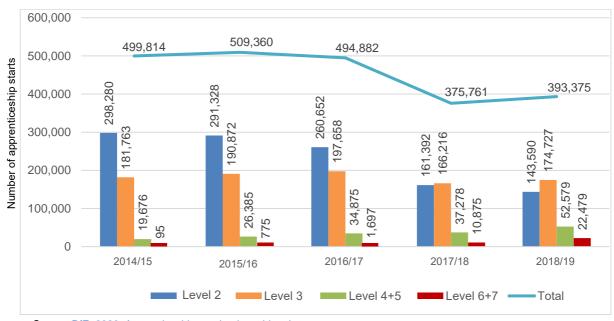


Figure 4. Apprenticeship starts from 2015, by level of apprenticeship, England, 2014/15 to 2018/19

Source: DfE, 2020, Apprenticeships and traineeships data.

The impact of the third crisis, COVID-19, was immediate. In 2019-20 (85) there were 322 500 apprenticeship starts, down 18% from 2018-19. Higher apprenticeships accounted for over a quarter of starts (25.6% or 82 500 starts) while intermediate and

⁽⁸³⁾ The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education. The Institute is an employer-led organisation.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ Since April 2017, all employers with an annual pay bill of more than GBP 3 million contribute 0.5% of their pay bill in excess of the GBP 3 million threshold to the apprenticeship levy.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ See the apprenticeship and traineeships statistics for the academic year 2019/20 provided by UK National Statistics.

advanced apprenticeships accounted for 74.4% of starts (240 100). Under 19s accounted for 23.6% of starts; 19-24s for 29.5% and those aged 25+ made up almost half of apprenticeship starts, 46.8%. During the period since the start of the first lockdown (23 March to 31 July 2020), there were 60 860 starts, a 45.5% drop compared to the same period in 2018/19. Of these, learners aged 25 and over accounted for 61.6% (54.5% in the previous year).

During lockdown, intermediate apprenticeships accounted for 25.6% of starts (36.1% in the previous year); higher apprenticeships accounted for 31.4% (17.7% in the previous year). However, the latest figures for 2020-21 (86) are down by 6.9% from 2019-20 Q3 (253 100). Higher apprenticeships accounted for nearly a third of starts (31.9% or 80 700 starts), intermediate apprenticeships accounted for a quarter of starts (25.4% or 64 300 starts) and under-19s accounted for 21.0% of starts (53 100). These trends are further underpinned by the apprenticeship vacancy numbers, as demonstrated in Figure 5.

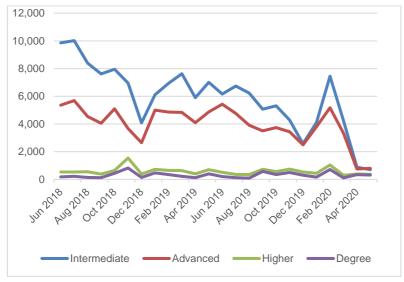


Figure 5. Number of vacancies on 'Find an apprenticeship' (*) by level, England, July 2018 to May 2020

(*) Find an Apprenticeship is the government hosted portal for finding apprenticeship vacancies. Source: The Department for Education (2020). Apprenticeships and Traineeships, England: update June 2020.

9.1.2. Why has participation changed

Since the launch of the current apprenticeship system, subsequent governments have introduced initiatives to support skills development through apprenticeship programmes to increase the number of apprenticeship starts and the quality of apprenticeship programmes (Mirza-Davies, 2015). Following the Leith review (2006) the then Labour government aimed at one in every five young people starting an apprenticeship, while in 2015 the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government set a target of 3 million

⁽⁸⁶⁾ See the apprenticeship and traineeships statistics for the academic year 2020/21 provided by UK National Statistics.

apprenticeship starts (across all ages and levels) by 2020. There have been ambitious targets set.

Following the 2008-09 recession, apprenticeship start numbers have not changed considerably. There was no immediate drop in participation in apprenticeships overall (Figures 1 and 2), while, a fall in apprenticeship numbers for those aged 19-24 can be observed (Figure 2), as an aspect of the recession impact on youth employment. Felstead et al. (2012) specifically researched the impact of 2008-09 recession on training at work. They investigated workplace training (in general, not particularly apprenticeships), though their sample included employers who offered apprenticeships. They argue that, during the recession, employers reduced training expenditure only to a small extent, hence the impact on training participation was minimum. Some employers considered apprenticeships as a remedy for skill shortages, particularly for those employers that were able to plan for the medium term. However, suitable candidates are difficult to attract, particularly in times of crisis. Felstead and colleagues suggest that the impact on training depends on a number of factors, 'such as the severity and length of the recession, the financial health of companies both before and during an economic downturn, pressures to maintain training activity and the nature of the training provided' (Felstead et al., 2012, p. 982). They suggest that employers employ 'smarter' forms of training delivery (Felstead et al., 2012, p. 983) such as focused training supporting business needs, offering more in-house training, drawing on the expertise of existing employees as trainers, and increased offering of e-learning. There are, however, forms of training that are considered vital for the business. These included 'compliance with legal requirements, meeting operational needs, countering skill shortages, addressing market competition, fulfilling managerial commitments and satisfying customer demands' (Felstead et al., 2012, p. 983). While Felstead et al. do not focus on apprenticeship only, their findings and arguments may have relevance for our current analysis since in-company training constitutes a large part of the apprenticeship model.

In 2015, the government embarked on the Apprenticeship reform programme (Section 9.2), aiming to incentivise employers to invest in training, which had been decreasing over time. Apprenticeship starts fell sharply following the introduction of the levy, hence the levy led to intended and unintended outcomes. Patrigani et al. (2021) investigated the impact of the apprenticeship levy between 2015/16 and 2018/19. Their research found that, while the number of intermediate and advance level apprenticeship starts have dropped, higher-level apprenticeship starts increased. This tendency was greater for levy-paying employers in comparison with non-levy-paying employers for well-known reasons, such as large companies having the resources and infrastructure to administer and support apprenticeships, claw back expenditure they spent on apprenticeship training, take on new apprentices and invest in workforce development. Higher-level apprenticeships are more expensive to deliver than lower-level, so it should not be a surprise that large companies increasingly used the levy for their existing employees and enrolled them on higher-level apprenticeship programmes. This

tendency has further implications for the number of apprenticeship starters from disadvantaged backgrounds that have been steadily declining over time and which fell by around 36% between 2015/16 and 2017/18 due to the introduction of the levy (Battison et al., 2020).

The Brexit referendum happened in 2016, but the UK only left the EU in January 2021. Brexit differs from other crises in that there was a long lead-up time to the withdrawal and there was preparation time to overcome the challenges apprenticeships face. Hence the effects of Brexit are emerging only slowly, and the real impact is still to be experienced and investigated. It is inevitable that Brexit has, and will continue to have, an impact on skills and the skills system. By leaving the EU, the supply of a skilled workforce in the UK is shrinking as EU nationals leave the country, particularly in lower skilled professions. Already prior to Brexit, apprenticeship starts in sectors did not align well with challenges the UK economy was facing (Ofsted, 2020, p. 26) (87), meaning a skills mismatch in provision. Construction and the healthcare sectors are examples needing to recruit considerable numbers of apprentices in order to respond to the demand set against them (88).

The impact of Brexit was further muddled with the impact of COVID-19, or perhaps the impact of Brexit was postponed and overshadowed by the impact of COVID-19 on apprenticeships. It is challenging to disentangle the extent to which Brexit or COVID-19 has been responsible for some of the impact apprenticeships experienced in England. While the UK was considering the consequences of leaving the EU, in March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. It has been increasingly clear that, in addition to health and social impact, the economic impact will be deep and long-lasting (Edge, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 is felt unevenly across, for example, different parts of the UK, across age groups and across people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Sectors such as education, retail, hospitality and construction have been highly impacted. There is significant disparity for women, since they are more likely to have care responsibilities, as well as more likely to be working in 'shutdown' sectors negatively affected by COVID-19. Those who were on lower pay and with lower qualifications, especially young people, were highly impacted by COVID-19 during a period of low recruitment. Employers were seeking 32% fewer entrants to apprentice or school leaver programmes than originally planned for 2020, while graduate jobs have been also cut by 12%. A survey of over 1 200 employers in January 2021 found that one in five (22%) employers had made redundancies or stopped taking on interns, trainees or apprentices (20%) (89).

⁽⁸⁷⁾ Even before Brexit, there had been skill shortages in the UK, see Skills shortages in the UK economy.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ Paul Joyce, Ofsted's Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills urged the government 'to identify where current skills shortages lie and to set out plans for how the country can best meet this demand'. The Ofsted report (2020, p. 26) suggests that the levy money should directly target skill shortages.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ Learning and Work Institute (2021). Facing the future: employment prospects for young people after coronavirus

The Sutton Trust (Doherty et al., 2020) analysis suggests that 'Many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds take up apprenticeships. They are more likely to be concentrated in apprenticeships at lower levels, be paid lower salaries, and work at smaller companies'. These are the characteristics of those most at risk of being furloughed or made redundant. There was a considerable impact on apprentices: 'employers surveyed reported that, on average, just 39% of apprenticeships were continuing as normal, with 36% having been furloughed and 8% made redundant. 17% of apprentices had their off-the-job learning suspended'. According to the same survey, 37% of apprentices were unable to work from home due to lack of equipment or their role was not suitable for home working.

9.2. Encouraging company participation

9.2.1. What is the argument in support of apprenticeships?

Some argue that apprenticeships are well suited to building skills for new and emerging industries. Apprenticeship programmes are more agile and respond well to industry and labour market demand; they embrace new practices, procedures etc. that are introduced in the workplace. Apprenticeships have the flexibility to be tailored to local employers' needs. Based on the apprenticeship standards, training providers develop the curriculum taking into account employers' needs. While apprenticeships can fill local skill shortages, an Ofsted report (2020) suggests that there is still work to be done to achieve it.

Figure 2 demonstrates that the majority of apprenticeships go to those aged 25 and older, as opposed to those aged 19-24 or to under 19. Retraining and upskilling existing employees are significant in order to meet the needs of the changing economy.

There is a clear demand for higher-level skills, at technician level and degree level. There is evidence that practically focused programmes, where theory closely links with practice, are producing industry-ready graduates (Emms and Laczik, 2020; Huegles and Kersh, 2020). Degree apprenticeships (DA) that were introduced in 2017 develop skills at the highest level; they follow the apprenticeship model with a minimum 20% off-the-job training and 80% on-the-job. However, regardless of the level, apprentices develop skills that are relevant in the workplace and are needed on the job, and so can be valuable to employers in keeping pace in a volatile economy.

The Build the future apprenticeship survey (Open University and the 5% Club, 2021) which focuses on the future of apprenticeships since the pandemic, surveyed 600 employers in England and found:

- (a) 70% of business leaders in England believe that apprenticeships and work-based learning will be vital to their organisation's recovery from the pandemic;
- (b) 66% of organisations report that apprenticeships have enabled their organisation to bounce back from the economic fall-out of the pandemic more quickly;
- (c) 72% now plan to hire more apprentices over the next year;
- (d) 50% of employers who do not currently hire apprentices now plan to do so;

(e) 48% of employers in the arts, recreation and entertainment sectors are planning to hire more apprentices over the next year compared to 81% of employers within the information and digital services sector (p. 8-9)

The Open University business barometer (October 2021), reports on 1 500 senior business leaders' responses at the time of the pandemic, as the Brexit pressures increase and the furlough period comes to an end. The report finds that 'more than half (56%) say apprenticeships and work-based learning will be vital for the future of their organisation, an 8% increase from last year. From organisations that currently employ apprentices, 96% expect to maintain or increase apprenticeship numbers in the next 12 months' (Open University (2021), p. 9).

While the number of respondents in both studies is modest, they offer a good range of employer types across England, including SMEs and large organisations. These findings may offer suggestions for many employers' thinking about the future of apprenticeships.

The arguments for the benefits of apprenticeships have not changed over time, but some gain greater prominence when a crisis hits the country. The pandemic showcased the importance of a skilled workforce, for example in the care system and logistics, which were continually needed as essential services when other parts of the economy were shut down. While the crises impact overwhelmingly negatively on peoples' lives and the economy, perhaps apprenticeships were more positive in being seen as vital for the future.

9.2.2. How are employers encouraged to take on apprentices in times of stability rather than crisis?

In a more economically stable time between the 2008 economic recession and the 2020 pandemic, the UK government introduced an Apprenticeship reform programme (Delebarre, 2015) in order to encourage employers to take on more apprentices. This aimed at improving the quality of apprenticeships and increasing the number of apprenticeships. The programme placed employers 'at the heart of the reform' and encouraged them to take ownership. Employers were specifically contributing to the development of apprenticeship standards to ensure labour market value. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy put an end to employer voluntary contributions to training, with intended and unintended outcomes as the levy encouraged employers to use the available training funds to take on more expensive, higher-level apprentices to use up the funds available for training. These apprenticeship places often went to existing employees rather than to new recruits. Reclaiming the levy presented complex and significant administrative burdens, hence again discouraging rather than encouraging employers to increase their apprenticeship places. Small and medium-size enterprises, which more often do not pay the levy (90), often do not have the resources

⁽⁹⁰⁾ If they have an annual pay bill under GBP 3 million, they do not pay the apprenticeship levy.

to take on apprentices due to financial and administrative constraints. These selective examples suggest that the 2015 Apprenticeship reform programme in England had a mixed impact on apprenticeship numbers regardless of government intentions, and overall the number of apprenticeships starts fell sharply in 2017/18 (Figure 4). This offers an example of the government try to increase English apprenticeship numbers in a non-crisis situation, by raising funds through a tax on employers.

In contrast, the pandemic offers a fundamentally different context. The UK government, employers and apprentices were unprepared for the crisis. The impact of the economic shutdown from one day to another created an environment where immediate measures had to be taken to protect jobs and encourage employers just to retain, rather than take on apprentices. Apprentices were hit hardest, especially those who were on lower-level apprenticeships and worked for small and medium-size enterprises and in sectors that had to shut down (see above). The 2020 response to the crisis was to inject funding into the system to encourage job opportunities. In broad terms, the UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak (25 November 2020) in his Spending Review 2020 speech outlined how the government plans to support skills development to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. These included a GBP 1.5 billion investment to rebuild colleges, GBP 291 million spent so that more young people go into further education and a GBP 375 million to deliver the Prime Minister's lifetime skills guarantee. Sunak planned to improve how apprenticeships work for businesses by offering them GBP 3 000 incentives for taking on a new apprentice.

Going forward, it is believed that apprenticeships for new recruits and existing employees will play an important role in the post-pandemic recovery. It was already argued that some employers plan to take on more apprentices in the future (Open University, February 2021 and October 2021) as they see apprenticeships as a solution to skill gaps and skill shortages. However, given the current crises of the pandemic and the increasing visibility of the impact of Brexit, further incentives for employers to create apprenticeship opportunities are needed.

Policy-makers may have not gone far enough. The All-party Parliamentary group on apprenticeships, which is sponsored by employers, universities and research groups, investigated how apprenticeships may support the economic recovery as we come back from the pandemic. In support of the further development of apprenticeships, their Report 2020/21 recommends that the government should:

(a) increase the flexibility of what the apprenticeship levy can be used for and when.
 The levy should sufficiently allow businesses to transfer or pool their resources to improve provision of apprenticeships;

- (b) extend Kickstart schemes (91) into 2022 and provide bespoke guidance to providers and employers on how T levels (92), Kickstart and apprenticeships can provide benefits and complement one another;
- (c) raise apprentice minimum wages to be in line with the national minimum wage;
- (d) UCAS (93) should continue its expansion of its existing portal to service FE, apprenticeships and T levels;
- (e) promote the apprenticeship ambassador scheme, which is a group of employers championing apprenticeships and aiming to encourage other employers to commit to apprenticeship delivery and support the delivery of a mentoring scheme undertaken with each regional network;
- (f) establish a government-run advice and one-stop-shop for small businesses;
- (g) the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (IfATE) funding band review must ensure sustainable and long-term funding for apprenticeships to ensure that employers have the confidence to invest in their workforces and support the UK's recovery from COVID-19.

9.3. Conclusion

Apprenticeships offer a combination of in-company and off-the-job training (constituting at least 20% of normal working hours), which makes them vulnerable in times of economic crises. It was argued that crises differ in their impact on apprenticeships. The impact of the 2008/09 recession and the pandemic had on apprenticeship numbers differed considerably. During the former, apprenticeship numbers changed little while during the latter apprentices were disproportionately losing their jobs and/or being furloughed. The impact of Brexit on the UK economy is slowly emerging. Although considered a crisis, solutions could be found and arrangements made before its full impact is realised in the UK. In-between these crises, policy changes happened such as the Apprenticeship reform in 2015, which had intended and unintended impacts. At after about 18 months since COVID-19 started, employers rebalanced their thinking and discussed investing in apprenticeships. The need for, and value of, a skilled workforce and how to train/re-train employees effectively, points to the apprenticeship programme model. The UK government has been introducing policy initiatives where they placed employers at the heart of the apprenticeship system. While increased employer engagement has been welcomed, the impact has been variable on apprenticeship numbers. The UK government directly and indirectly influence employer behaviour, for

⁽⁹¹⁾ The Kickstart scheme provides employers with funding to create new jobs for 16-24 yearolds who are claiming unemployment benefits and are at risk of long-term unemployment.

⁽⁹²⁾ T levels were introduced in 2020; they offer post-16 learners a 'vocational' route equivalent to the traditional academic route available for 16-18-year-olds at English (RQF) level 3.

⁽⁹³⁾ The UK service which supports post 16 choices, particularly around coordinating undergraduate study applications.

instance through the apprenticeship levy and offering financial incentives. However, when there is a crisis, such as COVID-19, financial measures have been offered promptly to smooth the impact. Further commitment and a systematic approach are necessary to achieve long-lasting impact.

References

[URLs accessed 25.5.2022]

- All-party Parliamentary Group (2021). *All-party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships:* report 2020/21. London: House of Commons. https://connectpa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/APPG-on-Apprenticeships-2020-2021-report.pdf
- Battiston, A. et al. (2020). *Apprenticeships and social mobility: fulfilling potential*. London: Social Mobility Commission.
 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attac hment_data/file/894303/Apprenticeships_and_social_mobility_report.pdf
- Centre for Economics and Business Research (2013). *Productivity matters: the impact of apprenticeships on the UK economy.* Southampton: Centre for Economics and Business Research. https://cebr.com/reports/productivitymatters/
- Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2015). *Government completes next stage in apprenticeship reform.* press release (13 January 2015). London: Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.
 - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-completes-next-stage-in-apprenticeship-reform
- Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2020). *English apprenticeships: our 2020 vision*. London: Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.
 - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-in-england-vision-for-2020
- Delebarre, J. (2015). *Apprenticeships policy, England 2015.* London: House of Commons Library. Briefing paper, No 03052,
- Doherty, K. and Cullinane, C. (2020). *Covid-19 and social mobility Impact brief, No 3: apprenticeships*. London: The Sutton Trust.
 - https://eric.ed.gov/?q=the+impact+of+inclusion+on+students+with+and+without+disabilities+and+their+educators&pg=442&id=ED605805
- Ecorys; IRS and IES (2013). The effectiveness and cost-benefit of apprenticeships: results of the quantitative analysis. European Commission.
 - https://www.bing.com/search?q=Ecorys%3B+IRS+and+IES+%282013%29.+The+effectiveness+and+cost-
 - benefit+of+apprenticeships%3A+results+of+the+quantitative+analysis&form=ANN H01&refig=5466e4c9128e489a8946e8b533e5ed8e
- Edge Foundation (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on education: evidence on the early impacts of lockdown. London: Edge Foundation.
 - https://www.edge.co.uk/research/projects/impact-covid-19-education/

Edge-Hotel-School/#!

- Emms, K. and Laczik, A. (2020). A contemporary approach to employable graduates: Cardiff National Software Academy. London: The Edge Foundation. https://www.edge.co.uk/research/projects/research-reports/A-contemporary-approach-to-employable-graduates-Cardiff-National-Software-Academy/
- Felstead, A.; Green, F. and Jewson, N. (2012). An analysis of the impact of the 2008-09 recession on the provision of training in the UK. In *Work, employment and society*, Vol. 26, No 6, pp. 968-986. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0950017012458016
- Huegler, N. and Kersh, N. (2020). Evaluation of the Edge Hotel School: final report. London: Edge Foundation. https://www.edge.co.uk/research/projects/research-reports/Evaluation-of-the-
- Learning and Work Institute (2021). Employment prospects for young people after coronavirus. Leicester: National Learning and Work Institute.
 - https://www.bing.com/search?q=Learning+and+Work+Institute+%282021%29.+E mployment+prospects+for+young+people+after+Coronavirus&qs=n&form=QBRE &msbsrank=0_1__0&sp=-
 - 1&pq=huegler%2C+n.+and+kersh%2C+n.+%282020%29.+evaluation+of+the+edge+hotel+school%3A+final+report&sc=1-
 - 83&sk=&cvid=2AEBDF68D293418D8DC129C8CE963DBF
- Leitch, S. (2006). Leitch review of skills: prosperity for all in the global economy: world class skills: final report. Norwich: HMSO. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243599/0118404865.pdf
- Mirza-Davies, J. (2015). *Apprenticeships policy: England prior to 2010*. London: House of Commons Library. Briefing paper, No 07266. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7266/CBP-7266.pdf
- Ofsted (2020). The annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2018/19. Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 121 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. London: Ofsted. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attac hment_data/file/859422/Annual_Report_of_Her_Majesty_s_Chief_Inspector_of_E ducation__Children_s_Services_and_Skills_201819.pdf
- Ofqual (2019). Referencing the qualifications frameworks of England and Northern Ireland to the European qualifications framework. Coventry: Ofqual. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attac hment_data/file/840837/Referencing_the_Qualifications_Frameworks_of_England _and_Northern_Ireland_to_the_European_Qualifications_Framework.pdf
- Open University and The 5% Club (2021). Build the future apprenticeship survey. Milton Keynes: Open University. https://www.open.ac.uk/business/knowledge-hub/whitepapers-reports/build-the-future-report#:~:text=Build%20The%20Future%20Apprenticeship%20Survey%20The%20Open%20University%2C,from%20across%20the%20private%2C%20public%20and%20third%20sector
- Open University (2021). *Business barometer, October 2021*. Milton Keynes: Open University. https://www.open.ac.uk/business/pse-business-leaders

- Patrigani, P. et al. (2021). *The impact of the apprenticeship levy on apprenticeships and other training outcomes.* London: Centre for Vocational Education Research. Discussion paper, No 034.
 - https://cver.lse.ac.uk/textonly/cver/pubs/cverdp034.pdf
- Richard, D. (2012). *Richard review of apprenticeships*. London: Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-richard-review-of-apprenticeships
- Sunak, R. (2020). *Spending review 2020 speech*. London: HM Treasury. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/spending-review-2020-speech

Part II. Apprenticeship vision and purpose

CHAPTER 10.

Apprenticeship: Denmark

By Jan Bisgaard (94)

10.1. Stated vision as per national definition/regulation

The Danish VET system is a dual system (95). All vocational programmes are dual apprenticeships combining school-based and workplace training. VET students start with a 1-year school-based vocational period. At the end of the school-based training, the students must find and sign an apprenticeship contract at a workplace, before they continue the main part of their vocational programme. The main part is then split approximately one third at school and two thirds in a workplace.

The Ministry of education is responsible for the VET system, but the system is designed and maintained in agreement with the National Advisory Council on Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training (*Rådet for de grundlæggende Erhvervsrettede Uddannelser*), which advises the Ministry of Education on key matters concerning VET. The social partners, student-, teacher- and school-leader organisations, are all represented in the national advisory council. These organisations have an institutional role and responsibility at all levels of VET. Social partners are also represented in national trade committees (*De faglige udvalg*) and the social partners, teachers and students play an advisory role at the local level through local training committees (*Lokale Uddannelsesudvalg*) who advise colleges on local adaptations of VET.

The purpose of the Danish VET system represents a compromise among all VET stakeholders. The purpose is to give VET students the chance to become a skilled worker in a trade or to set up their own business; it must train students in vocational competences, but also to become creative, innovative. Another formal purpose is to engage students in democratic development of society, to help them gain an international perspective and to support their personal development. It is also to train students in how to learn and study, so that they will be able to take part in further education.

This makes evident that the purpose of Danish vocational education is broad and incorporates special interests from all stakeholders.

⁽⁹⁴⁾ Associate professor, PhD, Danish Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (NCE), University College Copenhagen.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ For more information, see the Danish dual system in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes.

10.2. Vision of national stakeholders

As a result of this extensive participation of stakeholders in VET governance, the social partners generally share the vision represented by the purpose of the VET system. The Danish Trade Union Confederation (*Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation*), which represents workers in both the private and the public sector, and The Confederation of Danish Employers (*Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening*), which is the employer main organisation in the private sector, presented in 2021 a common wish list (Højland and Knudsen, 2021) to the Danish Parliament. Their overall wish is to attract more young people to begin a vocational education. This is to address the prognosis that the labour market will lack 99 000 vocationally trained workers by 2030 (AE, 2021). At the same time the prognosis predicts that the labour market will have an oversupply of 59 000 unskilled workers and an oversupply of 25 000 academic skilled workers (ibid.)

To make the VET system more attractive to young people, the stakeholders suggest in their common wish list (Højland and Knudsen, 2021) that VET schools must have more modern tools and equipment as well as an inspiring learning environment. Further, stakeholders want teachers at VET schools to be trained in how to teach the use of new technologies. They also suggest (ibid.) that the VET system should become even more flexible for adults older than 25, so it becomes easier for adults to move from the status of unskilled to that of skilled worker.

Interviews with stakeholders for this paper also reveal a concern about how to attract young people to vocational education. Nanna Højlund, Vice Chairman of the Danish Trade Union Confederation, said that they do not have specific wishes for changes in the VET system as such, but for the transition from secondary school to the upper secondary school, so students will not have to choose either a general high school, business or technical high school or a vocational programme. She suggested that young students instead should start with a common basic course before they are asked to choose an upper secondary education programme.

Jannick Bay, chief of education and integration in the Confederation of Danish Employers, said that they are also concerned about the transition from secondary school to upper secondary school, but they do not want to change the entrance to upper secondary school level. Instead, the Confederation of Danish Employers wants a change in the way of teaching in primary and upper secondary schools, so that teaching become less focused on theoretical aspect of subjects and academic skills, and more focused on the practical use of the different subjects in the curriculum. He also said that public schools should have more cooperation with local companies in the private sector, so pupils get more knowledge about their opportunities on the labour market before they must make their choice of upper secondary education. This is already a possibility and many companies would like to engage in school education. But schools often choose to cooperate with not-for-profit organisations, such as environmental or cultural institutions instead. So, with a more practical way of teaching and by more access to companies

and industries, the Confederation of Danish Employers hopes to inspire more young people to choose vocational education and apprenticeship.

Jannick Bay pointed out that VET programmes have to become more flexible so they will be more attractive to young people at the age of 18-24 who are working as unskilled workers or to youngsters who have finished an academic upper secondary education. This way they hope to attract more young people who find themselves ready for vocational education later in life.

The views expressed in the interviews are to a great extent in line with the stated intentions of the government. The Danish Prime minister Mette Frederiksen addressed the lack of young people choosing to start vocational education in her speech at a national conference about the future of Denmark in August 2021 (STM, 2021). She pointed out that the country needs more vocationally skilled people in the future, to ensure a green transition in society. This was followed by a paper from the Danish government with 10 suggestions for the future of Denmark (Regeringen, 2021), which also stated that 45 000 young people are not in either employment or education (NEETs) and still only 20% of young people choose vocational education when they start their upper secondary education. The government wants to reduce the number of NEETs, and they also want vocational education to become more attractive to young people.

None of the social partners interviewed in summer 2021 saw a need for change in the purpose of the VET system, nor a need for a special focus on the green transition in society in the purpose of the VET system. They recognise that vocational education and skilled workers have a primary role in the green transition, but they find that the broadly stated purpose of vocational education already has room for this, and the system also has the needed flexibility. They saw no need for political change in the curriculum, though they expected that changes in VET curricula would come from the national trade committees (*De faglige udvalg*).

Requirement for a specific focus on the green transition of society in the purpose of VET eventually came from the Minister for Education in autumn 2021 (UVM, 2021). As a result, in 2022, the purpose of VET will be expanded so that VET programmes prepare apprentices to be able to contribute to the green transition.

10.3. Impact on end users

The commonly shared, broad purpose of vocational programmes (including apprenticeship) has some clear advantages. First, almost all apprentices who complete their education get a job soon after passing their final examination. Second, the dual system gives apprentices different learning arenas with a different purpose. At school, apprentices have an opportunity to gain theoretical knowledge, reflections, broad perspectives, and promote their personal development, together with the opportunity to develop creative and innovative skills. At the workplace, apprentices have the opportunity to work with authentic work tasks; from this they often learn highly

professional routines and gain problem-solving experiences. Apprentices also often learn how to behave in a workplace community and understand relationships with customers or citizens.

The dual system pushes teachers at school to relate their teaching to the development of practice in the industries. In this way school teaching does not become a theoretical and backwards looking bubble. Instead, schools have to link theoretical knowledge to practice in industry. This is appreciated by schoolteachers, as several of them want to be at the forefront of practical teaching of new technologies and sustainable practices and schools sometimes support or inspire the development of new practices in industries.

But the broad purpose of the VET system, and dual training in particular, is also subject to challenges. First, it can be a challenge for apprentices to grasp the links between school education and workplace training. This is often because teachers do not know enough about apprentice training at the workplace and workplace trainers often do not know enough about what is being taught at school (Wilbrandt, 2002, 2003; Hansen, 2004; EVA, 2013; Bisgaard 2018, 2019). This leaves apprentices with the responsibility to establish interplay between their learning at the workplace and their learning at school, which is difficult for some. In relation to how each side sees apprenticeship (its vision and purpose), learning at school is not always recognised as important by workplace actors, because the curriculum often is more theoretical, despite its room for developing creativity and innovation next to academic skills. Further, school is often not recognised as important at the workplace as a space for personal development. Such views among company staff are reflected in how apprentices see the purpose of the school-based part of their learning, with some failing to value what is taught at schools and finding it irrelevant. They appreciate learning at the workplace more (Wilbrandt, 2002, 2003).

Sometimes apprentices feel like they are used as cheap labour at their workplace because they do not get access to work tasks that are relevant for their studies, or they lack access to relevant guidance and feedback from a trainer. In such cases, they often end up being uncertain that they will learn enough to be able to work as a fully qualified skilled worker in the chosen occupation. If this is combined with not feeling like being a part of the workplace community, their engagement with their apprenticeship can be lost (Bisgaard, 2018).

If the broad purpose of the dual VET system and the different intentions of the different learning arenas is not clear to apprentices, teachers and trainers, it sometimes becomes confusing for apprentices to be in this dual form of education. In the worst case, this confusion becomes a reason why apprentices drop out of education. This is crucial, considering that at the moment there is almost a 50% dropout rate in the vocational education system.

So, there might be a shared vision of the purpose at policy level, but at the implementation level, between companies and schools, there is often not a shared

understanding of the purpose and the progression of apprentice learning. This lack of shared understanding holds the risk of unintended push out, leading to dropouts.

To prevent such dropout, the training of VET school teachers was expanded in 2010 (EVA, 2014) to combine one year of theoretical teacher training with practical training at schools. However, trainers in workplaces are still not required to undergo formal pedagogical training to become a trainer. In the public sector and in large private companies it is becoming increasingly frequent to train trainers at small 2- to 4-day courses, sometimes up to 12 days. The first few trainers in the public sector recently underwent a 1-year training course.

Neither of the social partners interviewed expressed a need for mandatory training courses for trainers, but both hope to see that more knowledge about work-based learning and on-the-job training in apprenticeship are developed and made available for trainers. In 2020, social partners and the government made an agreement to provide funding for this (UVM, 2020).

10.4. Promoting and maintaining convergence

The factors that enable convergence among VET stakeholders about the vision and purpose of apprenticeship are first linked to the fact that all that all stakeholders have an institutionalised role and their own responsibilities as part of the system. Any disagreements and divergent perspectives are shared in formalised national and local bodies, and compromises and agreements are made there.

However, this also creates hesitant development of vocational education, with some reluctance for change unless there is a State initiative. When it comes to changing the purpose of VET and apprenticeship, for example so that the green transition of society becomes a part of purpose, or when it comes to the development of the quality of workplace apprenticeship training in the private sector, the social partners do not push on to develop such changes.

It is hoped that stakeholders will soon support the expansion of the purpose of VET (which includes apprenticeship), to include the green transition in society so that the country gets a chance to meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement and fulfil the government's intention of a 70% CO₂ reduction by 2030. This expansion in the purpose of VET should also lead to a proper change in the curriculum and the way of teaching and training that might be a way to attract young people who would like to engage in the green transition. Expansion of the purpose should also make stakeholders, especially companies, see Danish dual VET as an instrument for long-term employability and competitiveness in the global economy.

Combining the school-based part with apprenticeship, VET dual programmes fully qualify learners for future professions. They do not provide any kind of (partial) work experience as in some other countries but have a more complete educational dimension. It is hoped that stakeholders will soon recognise the need for systematically monitoring

the quality of workplace training in apprenticeships, aiming to inform apprenticeship stakeholders on how to provide the best approach. This knowledge would be relevant to the pedagogical education of trainers and their coaching ability. If data from systematic monitoring of apprentice experience of workplace training were to become public, it would also be easier for apprentices to get access to knowledge about the quality of the workplace training, before signing a 3.5-year contract with a specific employer.

Such data collection on the quality of workplace training would also allow financially rewarding those companies with the best learning environment, and providing extra support and coaching to companies with a low score in training quality.

An increased focus on quality would probably also make it more attractive for young people to choose a VET programme and eventually become an apprentice, knowing their learning is likely to be improved. This would benefit companies, apprentices and the society.

Another enabling factor would be that the stakeholders should specify who in the system is responsible for the connection between school-based and work-based training and the learning progression of apprentices. As long as neither schools nor workplaces hold responsibility for such connection and apprentice learning progression, it is the apprentices who need to assume this responsibility. However, apprentices often are not mature enough to make the connections between school and workplace training in a way that ensures their learning progression will make them able to fulfil the purpose of the corresponding apprenticeship/VET programme. In the future schools, or a third institution lead by national trade committees, may be engaged in ensuring the connection between school-based and work-based training and the learning progression of apprentices in the different learning arenas.

References

[URLs accessed 25.5.2022]

- AE Arbejderbevægelsens Erhvervsråd [Economic Council of the Labour Movement] (2021). Danmark mangler 99.000 faglærte i 2030. [Denmark needs 99 000 skilled workers in 2030]. https://www.ae.dk/analyse/2021-03-danmark-mangler-99000-faglaerte-i-2030
- Højland, N. and Knudsen, P. (2021). *De-at FH og DA: få nu de faglærte på finansloven:* det er afgørende for den grønne omstilling [It is crucial for the green transition to get skilled workers on the Finance Act]. *Altinget*, 27.8.2021.
 - https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/fh-og-da-faa-nu-de-faglaerte-paa-finansloven-det-er-afgoerende-for-den-groenne-omstilling
- Bisgaard, J. (2018). *Praktikkens Didaktik: Hvordan styrkes lærlinge og studerendes engagement og læring i praktik? Ph.d-afhandling.* [Internship didactics: how is apprenticeship and student engagement and learning strengthened in internships?

- PhD thesis]. Aarhus Universite; DPU.
- https://www.ucviden.dk/da/publications/praktikkens-didaktik-hvordan-styrkes-l%C3%A6rlinge-og-studerendes-enga
- Bisgaard, J.; Pedersen, I.L. and Thanning, D (2019) *Praktikkens Didaktik:* praktikvejledning på SOSU og PAU. [Internship Didactics: internship guidance at SOSU and PAU]. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- COWI (2009). *Lærlinge og elevers psykiske arbejdsmiljø*. [Apprentices' and students' mental work environment]. Copenhagen: Ministry of Education. COWI report.
- EVA Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut [Danish Evaluation Institute] (2013). Sammenhæng mellem skole og praktik: evaluering af skoler og virksomheders arbejde med at understøtte sammenhlng i tekniske erhvervsuddannelsers hovedforløb [Coherence between school and practical training: evaluation of schools' and companies' work to support coherence in the main courses of technical vocational education]. Copenhagen: EVA. https://www.eva.dk/ungdomsuddannelse/sammenhaengmellem-skole-praktik
- EVA (2014). Første statusnotat: løft af den grundlæggende pædagogiske kompetence til diplomniveau [First status note Lifting of the basic pedagogical competence for diploma level]. https://www.eva.dk/sites/eva/files/2017-07/20140617%20Loft%20af%20den%20grundlaeggende%20paedagogiske%20kompetence%20til%20diplomniveau%20forste%20statusnotat.pdf
- FT Folkedingket [Danish Parliament] (2021). *Tv fra Uddannelses og Forskningsudvalgets møder* [TV from the Education and Research Comm'ttee's meetings]. https://www.ft.dk/da/udvalg/udvalgene/ufu/tv?s=20201&m=td.1760407&as=1#player
- Hansen, M.P. (2004). Samspillet mellem skole og virksomhed i erhvervsuddannelserne [Interaction between school and company in vocational education]. In: Bottrup, P. and Jørgensen, C.H. (eds). *Learning Lab Denmark, Vol. 2.* Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.
- Regeringen [Danish Government] (2021). Danmark kan mere: ti fremskridt til debat [Denmark can do more: 10 issues for debate]. https://www.regeringen.dk/media/10608/danmark_kan_mere-final-a.pdf
- STM Statsministeriet [Danish Prime Minister's Office] (2021). Statsminister Mette Frederiksens tale på konference om fremtidens Danmark [Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's speech at a conference on the Denmark of the future]. https://www.stm.dk/statsministeren/taler/statsminister-mette-frederiksens-tale-paa-konference-om-fremtidens-danmark/
- UVM Undervisningsministeriet [Danish Ministry of Education] (2020). Trepartsaftale om flere lærepladser og entydigt ansvar. [Tripartite agreement on more apprenticeships and unique responsibility].
 https://www.uvm.dk/trepart/trepart-om-flere-laerepladser-og-entydigt-ansvar
- UVM (2021). Ny aftale fastsætter rammer for udmøntning af 200 millioner kroner til uddannelsesindsatser inden for grøn omstilling. [New agreement sets a framework for implementing DKK 200 million for educational initiatives within green transition]. https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2021/nov/211102-ny-aftale-fastsaetter-

rammer-for-udmoentning-af-200?fbclid=lwAR0laRXgdQkdbS2l2cPKuMOIfW_DX0GdlKMLe7PLmycBdKnoStr_QtlVvY0

- Wilbrandt, J. (2002). Vekseluddannelse i håndværksuddannelser: lærlinges oplæring, faglighed og identitet [Alternance education in craft education: apprentices training, professionalism and identity]. Copenhagen. Ministry of Education, 1st edition.
- Wilbrandt, J (2003). Læring i bevægelse mellem skole og virksomhed og fra læring til svend [Learning in motion: between school and company and from learning to journeyman]. In: Nielsen, K. and Kvale, S. (eds). *Praktikkens læringslandskab: at lære gennem arbejde* [Learning landscape of practical training: learning through work]. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.

CHAPTER 11.

Dual VET: Germany

By Isabelle Le Mouillour (96)

11.1. Introduction

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a far-reaching impact on vocational education and training in Germany: the number of training places on offer fell by 50 700 places (-8.8%) to 527 400 compared to 2019, and the number of young people seeking a training place fell to 545 700. Under the given circumstances, it was difficult to bring together young people interested in apprenticeship and companies offering training places. As a result, the number of new apprenticeship contracts dropped by 57 600 to 467 500 (-11%) (BIBB, 2021, p. 3).

Although the apprenticeship system (⁹⁷) is under stress and needs to adapt to changes, the core concept of *Beruf* remains a leading and shared understanding underlying policy decisions, activities and innovations. The German apprenticeship system offers 323 recognised training occupations under the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (HwO) (BIBB, 2021).

The member organisations of the BIBB Board (98) state: 'Even in times of pandemic, dual vocational education and training represents a good entry into working life, provides the foundations for lifelong learning and thus ensures long-term and sustainable employment. At the same time, it forms the backbone for ensuring a qualified, skilled labour force' (BMBF, 2021, p. 124).

This *Beruf* concept defines the corridor for decision-making; adaptions in the implementation of apprenticeship in Germany emerge from that premise. It gives a solid foundation for changes; it might also limit the windows of opportunity for changes to some extent. At the same time, the discussions between the stakeholders reinforced their common shared vision.

This paper reviews the core concept of the German apprenticeship system in the frame of recent national consultation and discussion bodies.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ Head of Area, VET in international comparison, research and monitoring, Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BiBB), Germany.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ Learn more on the Dual apprenticeship scheme in Cedefop European databases of apprenticeship schemes.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ The statutory function of the BIBB Board is to advise the Federal Government in all matters of principle relating to apprenticeship. It has equal representation of employers, employees, the federal states and the Federal Government.

11.2. Stated vision as per national definition/regulation

In its Section 1, the German Vocational Training Act (2019) states: 'Initial training, through a systematic training programme, must impart the vocational skills, knowledge and abilities (occupational competence; berufliche Handlungsfähigkeit) necessary to engage in a form of skilled occupational activity in a changing world of work. It must also enable apprentices to acquire the necessary occupational experience' (Bundesgesetzblatt 2020) (Box 1). This stated concept sets the frame for the 323 Staterecognised, federally regulated training occupations (Ausbildungsberufe), the underlying regulations being either the German Vocational Training Act (BBiG) or the Crafts Code (HwO).

Box 1. Competence-based training regulations

The concept developed in 2009 by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training to design competence-based training regulations builds on the requirements of the Vocational Training Act. It is oriented by the principle of the recognised occupation (*Berufsprinzip*), describes minimum standards and can integrate existing structural concepts such as disciplines, specialisations and additional qualifications. The concept is based on the following guiding principles to design competence-based training regulations:

1. Orientation to competences

The training regulations lay down the competences which trainees should acquire in binding form. The competence-based description takes account of the professional, methodical, social and personal dimensions. The competence model for vocational training always represents the ability to act in relation to the working and business processes typical of the occupation

2. Learning-outcome-oriented description of competences

The training regulations describe competences in terms of learning outcomes. Learning outcome statements describe what a learner knows, understands and is in a position to do after completing a learning process.

3. Orientation to working and business processes

Working and business processes are the starting point for the content structuring and bundling of training contents/of the competences to be acquired.

Source: BMB; KMK (2013, p. 102).

While analysing the 19th century and the core concept of occupation (*Beruf*), Büchter states: 'Looking back at occupational debates since the end of the 19th century, it becomes apparent that they were not only about the question of the future of the occupational concept in the narrow sense, but always also about the different structuring and reproducing functions of the occupation in the employment and education system' (Büchter, 2019, p. 185).

In the period 2011 to 2021, the number of regulated training occupations diminished from 344 to 323. This does not mean, however, that the apprenticeship system offers fewer opportunities. Structurally, training occupations have evolved with the number of so-called mono-occupations reaching 236 and 87 regulations with more differentiated

structures, to which 47 training occupations should be added that include elective or additional qualifications (2021) (99).

It is relevant to reflect upon the Vocational Training Act and highlight some of the implications of its statement:

- (a) to achieve occupational competence, learners have to acquire a set of competences in a given learning and training time (most apprenticeships have a duration of 36 months) and have to benefit from both learning premises (the apprenticeship company and the vocational school);
- (b) the objective is linked with a distinctive labour market segment (100) in which the apprenticeship graduate acquires his/her occupational competence at intermediate (skilled worker) level;
- (c) training occupation is the organising principle for both employment and VET (Hanf 2011);
- (d) skills, knowledge and abilities are always mentioned in a bundle; this aspect was reaffirmed in the process of the development of the German Qualification Framework (BMBF; KMK, 2013).

A further aspect is the distinction between training occupations (*Ausbildungsberuf*) and 'gainful' occupations (*Erwerbsberuf*) whereby the development and design of a training occupation takes into consideration the 'gainful' occupations understood as 'a set of activities, knowledge and requirements that an individual actually performs, applies and fulfils in his or her occupational activity' (Tiemann, 2012, p. 51). A training occupation is consequently a 'bundle of qualifications that are acquired and certified within the

^{(99) &#}x27;Mono-occupations' describe self-contained training regulations with no specialisation. Training occupations with differentiation include special training contents. The differentiation takes place in particular in the form of specialisations (*Schwerpunkte*) and fields (*Fachrichtungen*). Differentiation according to specialisations takes account of special operational features. In the second and third years of training, specialisations usually take up no more than 6 months of the total training time. If there are sector-specific features, there is a greater differentiation by disciplines. The third year of training is used to impart the skills, knowledge and abilities. Elective qualifications are mainly developed in highly specialised sectors, in which each company deals with a different spectrum and specialisation is required that goes beyond the field. With this model, different 'qualification bundles' can be individually combined in the second half of the training to form a professional profile. The number of elective qualification units offered and to be selected, as well as the amount of time during the training can vary considerably. Since the amendment of the Vocational Training Act in 2005, additional qualifications can be included in training regulations which supplement or extend the vocational competence (BIBB 2021:62).

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ The concept of occupational segmentation relates to the characteristics of the German labour market which is generally not discussed but a major research topic: the field of dual and school-based vocational education and training consists of different occupational segments. These segments have their own functionalities and are linked with various access and career opportunities for individuals. On the firm side, the segments necessitate different training models and various forms of employment, both for skilled workers who have trained in the dual system and for those who have completed school-based training (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) – Germany).

framework of institutionalised training. It qualifies for the training of certain (and a number of similar) occupational activities and thus gives a signal about potentials' (Tiemann, 2012:51). Training occupations are consequently social constructs emerging from the consensual agreements between social partners and the State at Federal and Länder levels.

'In the 1990s the *communis opinio* was that a structural change in the institutional composition of the German dual system was needed as it could 'no longer cater to the requirements of companies in the process of developing and changing work organisation, products, and work processes (...) However, despite crisis scenarios, social partners and other stakeholders were successful in ensuring the effectiveness of the dual system and preserving vocational professionalism through a number of innovations, keeping the basic structures intact' (Clarke et al., 2021, p. 308).

Nowadays the core concept is not discussed, but the structuring of training occupations has changed to adapt to a new rhythm of changes and the focus is on prompting or attracting learners and companies to apprenticeship and vocational training.

11.3. Vision of national stakeholders

Beside the common understanding and shared visions, stakeholders have their respective views on occupations; possible divergence might be understood along the functions attributed to occupations in Germany.

Table 1. Functions of Beruf in economy and society

	For companies, Beruf provides:
Economic function	For the labour market, <u>Beruf</u> serves to: mark the line between unqualified workers and academically qualified workers (intermediate qualifications) reduce competition on the labour market align occupational profiles and adapt vocational knowledge and skills to requirements of the employment system
Social function	For the society, Beruf supports: the definition of social position or status in society the legitimation of access to professional positions the legitimation of professional and social connections of income, promotion prospects and social prestige integration and stability as well as social mobility of individuals responsibility of professions for the common good (Provision with goods and services produced)

Individual	For individuals, Beruf acts as: a basis for a particular biography, for employment a source of social acknowledgment and identity a prerequisite for self-determination, personal development, professional and social identity and habitus development an instrument for self-responsible individual success as well as for failure in the meritocratic context of education, profession and income. ecological responsibility
------------	--

Source: Hanf (2011) p. 54; Büchter (2019),188 ff.

In recent years, the State actors from different levels of the German government, employees' and employers' organisations, as well as representatives of civil society, all defined as VET stakeholders, discussed intensively the role and missions of apprenticeship in the realm of increased digitalisation, migration and demographic changes. Those discussions were institutionally organised in the frame of four processes: the National Alliances for Initial and Further Training (the first one in place during 2015-2018; the second during 2019-22), the renewal process for the Federal VET Act (2019) and the Federal Enquête Commission for Vocational Education and Training in a digital work environment (2018-20) (101).

The review of the published reports indicates that, although the key stakeholders see need for changes and adaptions, those changes should not affect the core concepts of the German apprenticeship systems. In their positions expressed during the recent debates, stakeholders in the apprenticeship system always mention the learners, although their definition in terms of target groups evolved and widened, taking for instance the gender balance issue, or the inclusion of migrants into VET.

The recent 2019 revision of the Federal Act for vocational education and training did not modify the core fundamental and shared concept of the objectives of apprenticeship within initial VET in Germany. The focus was on the need to adapt to overall economic and societal changes such as the economic crisis, the aspiration of the young for higher VET, and the issues of digitalisation and sustainability in a context of accelerated pace of change (4th Industrial Revolution). The revision follows a more targeted approach and the introduction of new titles (Professional Bachelor, Professional Master) addressed directly to learners in an attempt to render apprenticeship more attractive to them. This shift should also be considered in a more in-depth change in the apprenticeship system and its due consideration as part of lifelong learning. Two further modifications can also be interpreted as a reaction of the institutional level to the biographical and social conditions of the learners: the introduction of a minimum apprenticeship wage and the flexibilisation of apprenticeship provision, offering part-time apprenticeship for a better fit with a learner population getting older and more diverse.

The Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) states that 'following the comprehensive evaluation of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG) by the Federal

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Enquête-Kommission Berufliche Bildung in der digitalen Arbeitswelt des deutschen Bundestages (2018-21).

Ministry of Education and Research in 2016, which concluded that neither fundamental nor systemic adjustments to the BBiG are necessary, the employers are in favour of a 'minimally invasive' amendment to the BBiG' (BDA 2019, p. 18). The BDA considers the apprenticeship system as good and practice-oriented, as it meets the need of employers in terms of skills training and of employees through securing access to the labour market and opening of career opportunities.

The other major employers' representative organisation, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), follows this opinion and quotes some of the current challenges as follows: 'A fundamental need for reform of the VET system in Germany is not seen. However, in order to respond to current challenges, such as changing educational flows of young people, selective legislative action makes sense. The primary goal must be to noticeably increase the attractiveness of VET and make it more visible in society, as well as to maintain good framework conditions for company and personal commitment to training' (ZDH, 2019, p. 3). In its position paper, the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) underlines its support to the main objectives of the reform for an attractive VET and a high-quality educational pathway. It also adds 'rapid technological change, the integration of immigrants and refugees, the lack of social participation of young people with poor starting opportunities, the lack of training quality in some sectors – all these developments make it necessary to modernise the BBiG and the HwO' (DGB, 2019, p. 61).

The alliances aim at involving and coordinating the activities and joint responsibilities of VET stakeholders, thus strengthening their joint ownership. They can be considered as a commitment of the VET stakeholders to apprenticeship as well as a manifestation of ownership. As highlighted by the OECD, 'Even though Germany has a long tradition of collective decision-making in skills policy, the alliance brings added value by effectively pursuing a 'whole-of-government' approach in promoting collaboration between stakeholders' (OECD, 2020, p. 61). During the 2015 alliance, the stakeholders gave themselves instruments for cooperation, besides those existing: a high-level steering group and a working-level committee with a mandate to monitor progress and be active in meeting emerging new challenges. During the COVID-19 crisis and in its aftermath, the Alliance prolonged its agenda to 2022 (from initially 2021) and took on board a list of measures to tackle the consequences of the crisis. The second Alliance (2019-20) stresses even more the need to address the varieties of apprentices in terms of educational and biographical backgrounds and corroborates the innovations introduced in the revised BBiG, especially the need to develop further advanced vocational training.

Table 2. Key objectives of the alliances for initial and continuous VET in Germany

Alliance (2015-18)	Alliance (2019-22)
Giving everyone a chance to obtain incompany training	Bringing more companies and young people together and keeping them in training
Improving the attractiveness and the quality of apprenticeship Strengthening advanced vocational training at higher qualification levels Acting together	Training guidance and counselling Further increasing the attractiveness and quality of dual training; jointly promoting vocational training Strengthening continuing vocational education and training and promoting higher qualification/higher vocational education and training

Source: BMWi (2019); BMWi (2015).

The German Bundestag appointed in June 2018 the Enquête Commission on Vocational education and training in the digital world of work. Its focus was on VET in all its aspects. The Commission is composed of 19 Members of Parliament and 19 experts representing employers' and employees' organisations as well as VET research. All political parties were represented and all VET stakeholders, national and international, have been invited to hearings. The result of the work is a 543 page report with concrete recommendations for VET, apprenticeship and school-based VET. The work and achievements were made accessible to the wider public. As within the alliances, the core objective of apprenticeship is not put into question. The main focus is on identifying possible measures for improving its implementation.

11.4. Conclusions

The four processes mentioned in this short paper were called to complement the regular coordinative and decisional meetings of the German VET stakeholders as foreseen by the Act and taking place at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training. The Federal Commission, working groups or Alliances gather an even greater variety of stakeholders, thus ensuring the involvement of all societal actors in the design of the future of VET and apprenticeship. In the frame of a corporatist system, this approach also means a shared responsibility for all, including the learners, apprentices and future skilled workers. Apprenticeship is – even today – a social and societal issue.

References

[URLs accessed 25.5.2022]

- BDA Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (2019). Die duale Berufsausbildung muss auch für Ausbildungsbetriebe weiter attraktiv bleiben. In: Deutscher Bundestag (2019). Zusammenstellung der Stellungnahmen der eingeladenen Sachverständigen. Ausschussdrucksache 19(18)124. Ausschuss für Bildung, Forschung und Technikfolgenabschätzung. 19. Wahlperiode, pp. 18-29.
- BIBB Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (2021). *Datenreport zum Berufsbildungsbericht* 2021. Bonn: BIBB. https://www.bibb.de/datenreport/de/2021/datenreport_2021.php
- BMBF Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2021). *Berufsbildungsbericht* 2021. Berlin: BMBF. 21-04-28-bbb-2021.pdf
- BMBF; KMK Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung; Kultusministerkonferenz (2012). *German EQF referencing report*. Berlin: BMBF. https://europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-06/German%20Referencing%20Report%20.pdf
- BMWi Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie (2015). *Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung 2015 2018*. Berlin: BMWi. https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/A/allianz-fuer-aus-und-weiterbildung-2015-2018.html
- BMWi Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie (2019). *Allianz für Aus- und Weiterbildung 2019-2021*. Berlin: BMWi. https://www.aus-und-weiterbildungsallianz.de/AAW/Navigation/DE/Allianz-fuer-aus-und-Weiterbildung-2019-2022/aaw-2019-2022.html.
- Büchter, Karin (2019). Beruf und Beruflichkeit: historische (Dis-)Kontinuität von Diskursen, Funktionen und Sichtweisen. In: Bellmann, Lutz et al. (2019). Schlüsselthemen der beruflichen Bildung in Deutschland: ein historischer Überblick zu wichtigen Debatten und zentralen Forschungsfeldern. BIBB: Bonn, pp. 185-199.
- Bundesgesetzblatt (2020). Bekanntmachung der Neufassung des Berufsbildungsgesetzes vom 4. Mai 2020. In: *Bundesgesetzblatt*, Jahrgang 2020, Teil I, Nr. 22, pp. 920-947. Bonn: Bundesanzeiger Verlag.
- Clarke, L.; Westerhuis, A. and Winch, C. (2021). Comparative VET European research since the 1980s: accommodating changes in VET systems and labour markets. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Vol. 73, No 2, pp. 295-315.
- Deutscher Bundestag (2019). Zusammenstellung der Stellungnahmen der eingeladenen Sachverständigen zur öffentlichen Anhörung von Sachverständigen am 16.10.2019 zum Gesetzentwurf der Bundesregierung. Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Modernisierung und Stärkung der beruflichen Bildung. Ausschuss für Bildung, Forschung und Technikfolgenabschätzung. Ausschussdrucksache, 19(18)124.
- DGB Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (2019). Stellungnahme des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes zum Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Modernisierung und Stärkung der beruflichen Bildung. In: Deutscher Bundestag (2019). Zusammenstellung der Stellungnahmen der eingeladenen Sachverständigen:

- Ausschussdrucksache 19(18)124. Ausschuss für Bildung, Forschung und Technikfolgenabschätzung. 19. Wahlperiode, pp. 60-71.
- OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2020). Strengthening the governance of skills systems. Paris: OECD.
- ZDH Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks (2019). Stellungnahme zum Gesetz zur Modernisierung und Stärkung der beruflichen Bildung. In: Deutscher Bundestag (2019). Zusammenstellung der Stellungnahmen der eingeladenen Sachverständigen: Ausschussdrucksache 19(18)124: Ausschuss für Bildung, Forschung und Technikfolgenabschätzung. 19. Wahlperiode, pp. 2-10.

CHAPTER 12.

VET in the form of apprenticeship: Lithuania

by Lina Vaitkute (102)

12.1. Stated vision as per national definition/ regulation

Apprenticeship in Lithuania is defined as 'the form of VET organisation where training or a part of it is carried out at a workplace: company, farm or at a (craft) master's' (Law on VET, 2017) (103). Based on the Law on VET (2017), the Procedure for the organisation of VET in the form of apprenticeship (2019), and the Labour Code (2017), the defining features of apprenticeship are:

- (a) apprenticeship is considered as one possible form of organisation of VET, it can be applied for all formal IVET and CVET programmes, leading to a recognised qualification, as well as for any module of these programmes;
- (b) apprentices are employed under an apprenticeship employment contract (pameistrystės darbo sutartis) concluded between the company and the apprentice. VET provider, apprentice and employer also conclude a training contract (profesinio mokymo sutartis). The apprentice is entitled to a salary of not less than the minimum monthly salary or minimum hourly wage;
- (c) only learners with at least lower-secondary education may enrol in apprenticeship schemes. In (the rare) case that an apprentice, in addition to a VET programme, is also enrolled into an upper-secondary general education programme, the employer must create conditions for the apprentice to finalise the latter too;
- (d) the VET provider carries out up to 30% of the overall programme. The employer carries out the rest of the training;
- (e) the employer appoints an employee responsible for the organisation of the apprentice work and practical training and an employee responsible for coordination of work and practical training (trainer). The overall apprenticeship procedure is supervised by a vocational teacher appointed by the head of the corresponding VET institution;
- (f) the employer must assure achievement of learning outcomes or create appropriate conditions for achieving learning outcomes specified in the formal VET programme.

The national apprenticeship vision is implicitly formulated in legal acts and can be expressed through the above-mentioned characteristics. The purpose of apprenticeship is multifold:

104

⁽¹⁰²⁾ Qualifications and VET Development Centre, Lithuania.

⁽¹⁰³⁾ See the Lithuanian apprenticeship scheme in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes.

- responding to company needs (apprentice works in the company while learning, he/she may stay in the company after finalising training, sometimes employees become apprentices);
- (b) facilitating learner integration into the labour market (apprentices follow the same programme as their peers in the school-based system in a more authentic workplace environment, they have more direct practical training and work experience);
- (c) preventing dropout (by ensuring income for apprentices and making training more flexible);
- (d) making VET more responsive to the labour market realities (cooperation between VET institutions and companies is promoted).

Apprenticeship is targeted at persons who already have lower-secondary education and the opportunity for apprentices to receive *matura* (i.e. finalise upper-secondary education programme) is encoded into the Law on VET.

12.2. Vision of national stakeholders

Clarifying the vision of apprenticeship was one of recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoESS), the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the Ministry of Economy, provided in Cedefop's thematic country review in 2015 (Cedefop, 2015). Lack of a single apprenticeship concept (vision) was named as a barrier for apprenticeship development by national actors (MoESS, 2014; VšĮ Vilniaus Jeruzalės darbo rinkos mokymo centras, 2015; KPMPC, 2014). The amendments to the Law on VET (2017) and the Labour Code (2017), and the Procedure for the organisation of VET in the form of apprenticeship (*Profesinio mokymo organizavimo pameistrystės forma tvarkos aprašas*) (2019) clarified various aspects of apprenticeship.

In 2020, a national apprenticeship portal www.pameistryste.lt was launched to provide targeted information for companies, VET institutions and apprentices. Representing the current vision of national stakeholders, the portal names four goals of apprenticeship: acquisition of practical skills at the workplace, smoother transition to the labour market, better employment prospects and better cooperation between education and business. Apprenticeship covers all sectors and is applicable to younger and mature learners, IVET and CVET (104). Since its implementation is at early stage, time is needed for piloting the current apprenticeship model.

In the past there were signals that VET providers perceived apprenticeship differently and confused it with practical placement in the companies. Field research and

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ If employers are not keen on following the requirements of the formal curriculum, they have the opportunity to construct their own non-formal training programmes (the latter model falls out of the described scheme). According to representatives of MoESS, the Ministry has not received essential proposals for improvement of the current apprenticeship model and does not record critical issues.

interviews (105) with VET institution representatives revealed that, in general, they share the vision of apprenticeship as stated in official documents. After amendments to the Labour Code and Law on VET in 2017, the different interpretations of the status of apprentice (a worker and a learner) are no longer possible. The Procedure for the organisation of VET in the form of apprenticeship specified the rights, duties and responsibilities of VET providers and employers. Also, VET institution staff were offered several rounds of training about apprenticeship organisation in the period 2017-21, which provided an opportunity for spreading the information on changes in legal acts and building their apprenticeship organisation and implementation know-how.

As legal acts allow one module of a VET programme to be recognised as an apprenticeship, VET provider representatives said that some VET institutions take advantage of this opportunity and organise apprenticeship for their students only in the final module of the programme (5 or 10 ECVET credits duration). The respondents disagree with such an interpretation of legal acts. According to them, such a model is only an imitation of apprenticeship and distorts its purposes. They also question the idea that it is possible to combine apprenticeship with an upper-secondary general education programme, although this is theoretically possible by legal acts (Section 1.1). In practice, the upper-secondary curriculum is intense and only in rare cases would employers agree with such a learning schedule for apprentices.

It is complicated to generalise labour market actor views. The statistical data reveal that apprenticeship is not widely used, with 3.1% of students enrolled in this form in 2019 (Orlauske and Kapocius, 2020a). Only a small number of companies have actual experience of apprenticeship, confirmed by other company surveys. For example, a survey of industrial companies revealed that 68% of companies in 2019-20 have not participated in apprenticeship, and every second one has not even heard of it (Orlauske and Kapocius, 2020b). Hence, employers' understanding of the apprenticeship mission depends on their experience and cooperation with VET institutions, since still the dominant role in apprenticeship is played by the latter (Orlauske and Kapocius, 2020a). For example, a company contacted for the purpose of this paper explained that, at the beginning, there was confusion regarding the concept of apprenticeship and its organisational issues (for example, fine-tuning work and learning of apprentices, coordinating schedules, cooperation with the VET institution, role of trainers), but dilemmas were resolved with the help of the VET institution. Other respondents noted that employers primarily relate apprenticeship to preparation of their own current or future employees (and sometimes without the contribution of VET institutions) and rarely accept the idea of preparing workers for other companies.

In 2019, five main employer organisations (Investors Forum, the Lithuanian Employers' Confederation, the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists, the Lithuanian

-

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ To draft this analysis, representatives of Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, Qualifications and VET Development Centre, employer organisations, VET providers, trade unions were contacted by email or by phone (N=11).

Business Confederation, the Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts) and the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce signed the agreement regarding the model of apprenticeship implementation in Lithuania (*Lietuvos darbdavių organizacijos*, 2019). The agreement was initiated with the aim of discussing and confirming the apprenticeship definition in line with key features of apprenticeship (Section 12.1). The agreement prioritises certain apprenticeship groups, proposing that the largest priority in attracting apprentices should be given to persons already having a VET or higher education qualification and adults (18+ years). Contrary to the provisions of the Law on VET, it suggests that 'Apprenticeships should not be applied to minors who study a profession together with a lower or upper secondary education programme'.

No specific attention is dedicated to apprenticeship issues in the trade union agendas. In the past they were concerned about the status of apprentices, an issue resolved by the Labour Code in 2017.

12.3. Impact on end users

Field research and interviews with VET institutions and employers confirmed the dominant tendency to offer apprenticeship to more mature learners: those who already have upper-secondary education, current employees who lack qualifications but have practical work experience, or VET learners who find a job during their studies and use apprenticeship as a way to continue that job. Employers understand apprenticeship is more suited to these target groups, as they feel that these apprentices are more motivated to learn and work, have a certain level of personal maturity and sufficient transversal competences. Employers also feel more secure when apprentices have some practical experience, basic work safety knowledge and skills or basic knowledge to work with new technological equipment. They value VET schools providing such introductory training. For this reason, according to views of employers, involvement of apprentices in working and learning in companies from the start of their training programme is not really possible.

In contrast, there are cases of apprenticeship for younger learners when VET institutions and companies share theoretical and practical training from early stages of their training. The former path (apprenticeship for mature learners) may be a good starting point for companies to familiarise with apprenticeship and establish contacts with VET institutions, but it should not become the standard for apprenticeship in Lithuania (Orlauske and Kapocius, 2020a). However, as explained in the previous section, implementation of apprenticeship at upper-secondary level (EQF level 4 qualifications) is complicated during the first 2 years of training, when students are enrolled in a general education curriculum (*matura*), and is more frequent only in the final third year of training.

The current apprenticeship model foresees that a VET institution and a company are equal partners in this process and that apprentices achieve the same competences and the same qualification as learners in a school-based system. According to VET

institution respondents, successful apprenticeship examples exist in various sectors, where apprenticeship is implemented in close synergy with VET institutions and companies. However, according to field research and interviews, in most cases VET institutions tend to be a leading side in planning training and assessment activities. Coordinating schedules in two learning venues may be problematic and the pandemic showed the potential of distance learning and distance consultations for school-company collaboration facilitation.

Sometimes employer involvement in the scheme is a one-time project and, consequently, lacks sustainability. In these cases, employers give priority to quick training, oriented towards preparation of employers for their companies; they do not fully assume their responsibility and contribution in equipping apprentices with knowledge and transversal skills in line with VET programmes and even treat apprentices as a cheap labour. Since training of in-company trainers is not regulated and no qualification requirements are set, it can be presumed that, without access to trainers' training and methodical input from VET institutions, in-company trainers may fail to provide all learning outcomes foreseen in the curriculum and training may be restricted to short-term, narrow company needs. This is a particular sensitive issue in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews revealed that some employers are struggling to survive, and apprenticeship is not a priority for them. Others lack employees and would be interested in speedy preparation of prospects.

Trade union representatives raise the question of payment to in-company trainers, stressing that it is important to guarantee that they would be compensated for their extra work with apprentices.

12.4. How to promote and maintain convergence

National stakeholders have been involved in preparing apprenticeship legal acts, so they contributed to the construction of the stated vision. Signing the agreement on the apprenticeship model implementation reconfirmed that such a vision remains relevant for them, despite the prioritisation of mature apprentices. Comparison of learning and labour market outcomes of apprenticeship between younger and mature students would help stakeholders better understand the potential benefits of apprenticeships for various groups of apprentices (young learners, mature learners, employees, students at risk) and for companies.

The main stated reasons for slow apprenticeship roll-out are the lack of consolidated information, insufficient capacity of its actors (VET institutions and companies) and lack of motivating factors (financial and non-financial support). Many employers still believe that they should be motivated financially to get involved in apprenticeship and employers would welcome more sustainable tax incentives, while the current financial mechanism, relying on EU funding and consisting of several, differently run schemes, lacks sustainability. It is important to note that, contrary to employers without apprenticeship

experience, those who already contribute to apprenticeship note that financial support is a secondary motivating factor; they see apprenticeship as an investment in the future labour force and stress the availability of non-financial support, such as improving cooperation with VET institutions and effective apprenticeship communication (Orlauskė and Kapočius, 2020b). The latter insight reconfirms the need for targeted non-financial support for potential apprenticeship actors, for them to move beyond their vision of apprenticeship as a 'quick fix' solution with immediate financial gain.

Interviews and available analysis of the current situation repeatedly signal that there is a demand for robust, user-friendly practical guidance on how to implement apprenticeship between two learning venues in line with legal acts and in the Lithuanian context. According to the report of a roundtable dedicated to apprenticeship information dissemination, it is important to consolidate messages about apprenticeship, its gains and purposes (Orlauskė and Kapočius, 2020c). The following areas were suggested for information dissemination: terms, benefits of apprenticeship, practical information for apprenticeship actors (legal documents, description of apprenticeship processes), examples of successful practices and projects implemented, available financial support and contact information. These recommendations were considered when developing the apprenticeship portal www.pameistryste.lt. The portal was already promoted on national television and it is important to continue its promotion to all potential apprenticeship actors. Clear messages about apprenticeship and its benefits should also reach the wider public.

Some individual companies lack a more active role of national or sectoral employer associations' in promoting apprenticeship and explaining its purposes and benefits. They claim that the portal run by an education sector institution cannot compete with the authority of social partner organisations. Labour market respondents note that sectoral employer association potential in advocating apprenticeship and consulting role is underused: social partner organisations are in a better position to reach their members and explain them the vision, purpose and long-term benefits of apprenticeship.

Capacity building of VET institutions, teachers, and company managers and trainers needs to be continued. VET institutions act as brokers of apprenticeship and need to be able to convince employers of the benefit of apprenticeship and prove their technological, methodological and administrative expertise; training courses on apprenticeship regulation, organisation and mediation remain important. The quality of apprenticeship needs to be promoted: VET institutions should be enabled to keep the same training and quality standards in apprenticeship as in school-based VET programmes.

More generally, a repeated message through the interviews and in the documents analysed is the importance of building employer trust in VET in general and in VET institutions, through a proactive attitude of VET institutions, direct promotion of VET institutions to local partners and tandem training events. Most VET institutions are already equipped with modern technology or have access to modern sectoral practical training centres of other institutions. However, building trust relies on the technological expertise of vocational teachers, so it is important to continue investing into teachers'

technological competences and take measures to raise the prestige of the vocational teacher occupation and attract more practitioners to work in VET institutions.

References

[URLs accessed 25.5.2022]

- Cedefop (2015). *Apprenticeship review: Lithuania. Signposting the apprenticeship path in Lithuania.* Luxembourg: Publications office. Thematic country reviews.
- Lietuvos darbdavių organizacijos [Lithuanian Employers' Organisation] (2019). Susitarimas dėl pameistrystės modelio įgyvendinimo Lietuvoje [Agreement regarding implementation of apprenticeship model].

https://www.pameistryste.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SUSITARIMAS-D%C4%96L-PAMEISTRYST%C4%96S-MODELIO-%C4%AEGYVENDIMO-%C5%A0ALYJE 2019-04-19.pdf

- KPMPC [Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre] (2014). Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes Lithuania.
 - https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2015/ReferNet_LT_2014_WBL.pdf
- MoESS [Ministry of Education and Science (2014). *Pameistrysté Lietuvoje. Poreikis ir galimybės* [Apprenticeship in Lithuania: needs and opportunities]. https://www.nsa.smm.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/fm_Pameistryste-Lietuvoje.pdf
- Orlauskė M. and Kapočius Ž. (2020a). *Pameistrystės sėkmės receptas: Ko dar trūksta Lietuvai*? [Success recipe for apprenticeship: what else does Lithuania need?]. https://www.pameistryste.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/1_Esamos-PMĮ-bendradarbiavimo-praktikos.pdf
- Orlauskė M. and Kapočius Ž. (2020b). Apklausos rezultatai ir įžvalgos: Lietuvos gamybos įmonių suinteresuotumas įsitraukti į pameistrystės organizavimą [Results and insights of the quantitative survey of production companies: interest of Lithuanian production companies to get involved in the organisation of apprenticeship]. https://www.pameistryste.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2 Darbdavių-apklausa.pdf
- Orlauskė M. and Kapočius Ž. (2020c). *Apskritojo stalo diskusijos rezultatai ir įžvalgos: Konsoliduotos informacijos poreikio įvertinimas ir informacijos sklaidos gairės* [Results and insights of the round table discussion: Consolidated information needs assessment and guidelines for information dissemination].
 - https://www.pameistryste.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/3_Vie%C5%A1osios-konsultacijos-rezultatai.pdf
- VšĮ Vilniaus Jeruzalės darbo rinkos mokymo centras [Vilnius Jeruzale Labour Market Training Centre] (2015). *Pameistrystės organizavimo gairės profesinio mokymo įstaigoms* [Guidelines for organising apprenticeship for VET institutions]. https://www.vjdrmc.lt/uploads/Projektai/Pameistryst%C4%97s%20gair%C4%97s%20mokymo%20%C4%AFstaigoms%202019.pdf

CHAPTER 13.

Vocational preparation of juvenile workers: Poland

by Andrzej Wojciech Stępnikowski (106)

13.1. Stated vision as per national definition/regulation

In Poland, apprenticeship for young people is offered in the context of the juvenile employment framework as 'vocational preparation of young workers' (*przygotowanie zawodowe młodocianych pracowników*) (107). According to the Polish Labour Code Act (Chapter IX) the aim of the scheme is to employ a learner as an apprentice (juvenile worker, *młodociany pracownik*) in order to prepare and qualify him/her to perform a profession. The scheme combines a working-learning contract with salary (and social insurance paid by employer) with realisation of educational goals. It leads to a vocational exam (journeyman in craft) at the end of the process required for the apprentice to get the corresponding qualification. This scheme is analysed in the current paper (108).

Apprenticeship can be offered for 205 occupations grouped in 32 branches, corresponding to 254 qualifications. It is available mostly through 3-year programmes offered by first-grade branch (sectoral) schools (*szkoła branżowa pierwszego stopnia, SBI*). The Ministry of Education develops and updates its classification of professions for branch schooling (KZSB), while the Ministry of Labour maintains a much wider classification, corresponding to the so-called 'market qualifications' that can be also included in the national qualifications framework (109). By regulation (e.g. Regulation of 16 May 2019), apprenticeship combines theoretical and practical training, usually in two different venues (school and company, but in some cases also in training centres). For apprenticeships organised under branch schooling, a core curriculum (Programme basis) for 'education in occupations' is issued by the Ministry of Education, specifying the number of hours of practical vocational education according to the occupation, per venue. A Programme basis comprises competences for all students (personal and

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Senior researcher, Centre for Vocational Education Research and Development, Łukasiewicz-Research Network, Poland.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Learn more on the vocational preparation of young workers scheme in Cedefop European database of apprenticeship schemes.

^{(108) &#}x27;Vocational preparation for adults' (*przygotowanie zawodowe dorostych*) is another form of apprenticeship focused only on the unemployed, according to the Act on Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions. It is a smaller-scale initiative, result of a bottom-top approach in the cooperation between the Ministry of Labour and the Polish Craft Association. See more on the Polish fiche of Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ See more in the collective volume of short papers from Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts – Cedefop et al. (2021).

social), competences to be developed in all professions of a specific sector and occupation-specific competences within a sector. The Programme basis also provides the ground for the examination standards for relevant journeyman exams in crafts apprenticeship. After 3 years of learning and after passing these exams, apprentices acquire a certificate of vocational qualification or journeyman at level 3 of the Polish qualification framework (110).

However, about 5% of apprenticeships take place entirely at the workplace (approximately 1 800 apprentices in crafts). These apprentices are not school students and receive theoretical training either at the workplace or through special courses provided mainly by craft chambers and public education CVET centres, schools and OHP (Voluntary Labour Corps – special agency of Minister for Labour – since 1958). In the absence of a predefined curriculum, the employer uses the examination standards as a guide to plan and deliver training.

Apprenticeship generally requires many interactions between employers, apprentices, schools and territorial self-governing units (which are paying subsidies to school directors). Derivative of those relationships are also interactions between different ministries, such as those for education, labour and economic growth (the last two merged in the end of 2020). Sometimes issues connected with apprenticeship are also a matter of interventions of other ministries, like finance (for example, in 2010-11, when subsidies for apprentice remuneration from the Labour Fund were 'frozen') or transport/infrastructure, for travel apprentice allowances. Such diversity of issues (few legal acts, about 10 executive acts from different ministries), subjects and ministerial competences division makes the apprenticeships system a challenge for stakeholders.

13.2. Vision of national stakeholders

The Copenhagen Process and the expertise brought by researchers had a positive influence on the views of the Polish social partners and government on apprenticeships, backed up by the resilience of WBL and 'dual learning' during the economic crisis. Some politicians have better understanding of the advantages of apprenticeship from the combination of practical and theoretical training, also thanks to good practices from craft (ZRP) or Polish-German Industry-Economic Chamber (AHK). However, the overall trend is that 'apprenticeship' or 'dual learning' has become a 'catchy' banner and in practice not much was done to promote its real purpose and improve its quality. However, an added value of that trend was the assignment of some funds from RDS (Ministry of Labour) for the promotion and dissemination of good practices of apprenticeship and dual learning (targeting employers and their organisations), starting from 2017.

Since 2019, the Ministry of Education has introduced new obligations for employers that want to take on an apprentice. With the introduction of the Programme basis (Section

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ The same kind of qualifications are acquired by participants of 'Adult vocational preparation' (AVP) but in half the time.

13.1), employers now need to sign an agreement with school directors to offer apprenticeship on the basis of a VET programme, which is attached to the working-learning contract with an apprentice (on top of documents connected to public subsidies, personal data protection, accounting and supervising of learning process). The agreement between the school and the company provides a guide to what is expected to be trained in the workplace, and may help improve the quality of workplace training and the overall apprenticeship experience for learners. The intention to raise quality of apprenticeships through the link to a Programme basis was generally well received by national apprenticeship stakeholders.

The lack of travel allowance for the approximately 1 800 apprentices that are not school students (in contrast to apprentices in branch-schooling) was a 'litmus test' for the common understanding of the specificity of status of an apprentice (or the lack of such common understanding). Most apprenticeships of this type are from small towns and villages and often have to use public or private transport to get to their work, so the lack of travel allowance is a significant issue for them. Social partners jointly brought up the issue in 2018 (lead by experts from the Polish Craft Association, the Confederation of Employers Lewiatan and Polish Employers along with 'Solidarity' Trade Unions) and estimated that EUR 1 000 000 was required annually to treat this type of apprentice equally to those in branch schooling. Despite this relatively low cost and the almost two years of struggle to introduce such reliefs into the legal framework – (as agreed through the Social Dialogue Council (RDS) and its Chairman (Minister for Labour and Social Policy) – no solution was put in place. The Ministry of Education felt no responsibility for those apprentices that are outside of 'school walls'. The Ministry of Infrastructure, although initially interested in covering the cost, requested data on apprentice numbers and potential costs: such data were presented only by craftsmen associations and not the government side. The effort to introduce allowances was in vain due to lack of common understanding of the apprentice status and specificity, and their particular problem. The lack of solution accentuates the overall situation of this type of apprentice, lacking a right and obligation to complete compulsory education until the age of 18 according to the Polish Constitution (Article 70).

This case reveals different attitudes and different levels of awareness regarding the apprenticeship scheme. As a context, in Polish reality, the adjective 'juvenile' used for the scheme is socially strongly connected with teenage criminals, which affects negatively on perceptions about apprentices and the scheme. The lack of common understanding goes even further, reflecting concrete interests of specific groups, mainly of a social and financial nature. It can be argued that the Ministry of Education, schools, most teachers and their trade unions see apprenticeships that take place entirely at the workplace as a 'competition', as this is cheaper for the State, does not foresee time of apprentices at schools and reduces teacher's pensum hours (and their salary) (Stępnikowski, 2020, p. 53).

The impact of financial aspects on the role given to apprenticeships is also evident in the amount given to VET schools. Since 2016 there has been a fall in the school

subsidy amount per apprentice of one third. That means that the school director will be more interested in school-based IVET types over apprenticeships as the school will receive more subsidies for its functioning. That is one of reasons for the constant increase in students in school-based technical programmes and the drop in apprentices (e.g. in craft companies from 90 000 in 2010 to 65 000 in 2017). A similar issue can be observed regarding the type of profession chosen by apprentices, as 60% of them are channelled towards one of the five most popular professions: hairdresser, car mechanic, carpenter, confectioner and electrician (Stępnikowski, 2020, p. 174). That is also due to the financial and organisational problems for the school director to operate multiprofessional classes. School directors seem to settle with the opportunity that those professions are most popular without reflecting on the purpose of apprenticeships and the future of graduates.

Despite an effort to increase the educational aspect of apprenticeships, e.g. by better defining what is to be taught via the use of the Programme basis and the agreement between school/company, and despite some good practices, e.g. from AHK, not everyone has realised the importance of the educational aspect, and some (even schools but possibly companies too) prioritise other interests. There is still significant divergence around what stakeholders think apprenticeship is and what it serves.

13.3. Impact on end users

The common misunderstanding of goals and processes of apprenticeship among stakeholders, together with the strict division of competences among and between ministries as well as between regional authorities, cause lack of interest of students, parents, schools and employers. Only about 10% of students follow work-based learning, not all of which are apprentices, as school-based options dominate (50% in school-based technical schools and 40% in general high-schools). In the mid-term, up to 2030, this trend of decreasing number of apprentices and employers involved in apprenticeships will be even more visible as there are no real administrative and financial improvements (accompanied by a lack of acknowledgement for 'blue collar' workers and craft qualifications, despite the demand for them on the labour market) (Stępnikowski, 2020, p. 53).

Lack of consistent identity of apprenticeship at the core of Polish social, administrative and legal frameworks brings weakness to the system. Apprenticeship has no strong allies in the government (independent of the political party that is governing). There are (too) many enthusiasts of school-based learning and too strong financial attachment between education and local/regional self-government authorities: this causes systemic 'petrification' resulting in lack of /insufficient support for apprenticeships. As long as there will be diverse treatment of school-based VET students and apprentices (with the dual status of learner too, or with the single status of

'only' apprentice at the workplace) on many different levels there will be no 'renaissance' of such schemes in Poland.

The number of legal changes regarding apprenticeships, some of which are linked to the vision and purpose, create confusion and discourage employers. They bring new administrative burdens that are often mentioned by employers hiring apprentices, especially with regards to craft and SMEs (ZRP position 2021). In some cases, employers can count on support from craft or industry chambers but generally new obligations (and contract attachments) are not encouraging enterprises to engage in the apprentices training. For example, a lack of clear vision on apprenticeship in craft companies, stemming from the definition of a 'craftsman', affects how apprentices should take the professional exam for the relevant qualification (at the Chamber of crafts or in regional examination boards). This, in turn, affects which enterprises can get the State bonus (dofinansowanie) when their apprentices qualification/journeyman exams: craft companies are entitled the bonus if their apprentices succeed in Chamber of crafts exams, not in the Regional examination boards exams; non-craft companies do not receive the bonus even in their apprentices succeed in the Chamber of crafts exam.

During the last decade we could see a constant reduction in numbers of employers engaged in apprenticeship. Looking at craft companies as the group that represents 65% of all enterprises engaged in apprenticeship (according to Ministry of Finance public expenditure overview), those that train apprentices dropped by 10%, from 26 078 in 2011 to 23 667 in 2019 (ZRP, 2020). An even worse fall was experienced during the period 1996-2018, where the number of employers participating in apprenticeship decreased by 50% from 47 500 in 1996 to 21 835 in 2018 (Stępnikowski, 2020, p. 87).

All those trends following three different education reforms (which twice addressed the VET programmes basis) have also resulted in a drop in apprentices. Each reform (1999, 2012, 2015-17) is followed by an additional fall in apprentices (Stępnikowski, 2020, p. 88). In 2000 there were 291 250 apprentices (157 300 of which in crafts), in the year 2010/11 there were 155 800 apprentices (90 100 in crafts) and in 2016/17 there were only 122 500 apprentices (64 700 in craft companies) (111).

Generally, the lack of analysis and research on apprenticeship in Poland is an indication of the lack of a clear vision and engagement of stakeholders (112). Similarly, there are some legal comments and attempts to promote this form of vocational education, but they are not reinforced in a systemic way by ministries (only to some extent from RDS and as brochures financed by the territorial self-government units and regional labour offices).

⁽¹¹¹⁾ During 2019 there was a one-time increase (76 257 apprentices in crafts) due to the so called 'double recruitment' connected with liquidation of recruitment to gymnasium.

⁽¹¹²⁾ Since 1978 (W. Okuszko), the first science monograph publication on apprenticeship in crafts was published in 2020 by Andrzej Stępnikowski.

13.4. How to promote and maintain convergence

To promote apprenticeship efficiently, a concise identity with positive image of apprentices and employers that train them needs to be created. Such an image should be convergent with widespread promotion by the Council of Ministers (KPRM) so that it could be an inspiration for each ministry involved, and a way to further consolidate a common vision. There should be one ministry coordinating apprenticeship schemes that would develop a certain policy and realise it, supported by other ministers.

Such an attempt started with the establishment of a team for the 'organisation and realisation of vocational preparation of juvenile workers' (apprenticeship) (bylaw of the Minister for Development, Labour and Technology, 5 May 2021). The team was to consist of a maximum of 15 people, including two representatives from that ministry, two from the Ministry of Education and Science and five from the Polish Craft Association. Its tasks include analysis and overviews of law implications regarding employment of apprentices and their salary, organisation and realisation of the part of theoretical education, health and safety issues and special conditions of employment and training of juvenile workers. The focus of tasks is based on a prior analysis (2020) i.a. by ZRP (and its formal request directed to RDS) which highlight weak points of the scheme, including the division of competence between ministries, the complexity of the legal framework with diversity of regulation issues, and difficulties with law interpretation. The conclusions of the work of the team will be given for consideration to the Minister for Employment.

That should be done in parallel with additional financing solutions, like subsidies from Polish Craft Incubator, where funds are foreseen for information, education and promotion of the 'dual system', or from including apprenticeships (not partially excluded as it is in current version where the plan favours 'student stage') in the Polish national plan for recovery and increased resilience. Established systemic solutions should be promoted for cooperation with the newly planned 120 branch centres for competences (BCU) that are about to realise the idea of centres of vocational excellence (COVEs).

As long as Polish society and stakeholders (e.g. the Ministry of Education) keep favouring the school-based system over the apprenticeship system there will be no visible progress in the quality and quantity of the scheme and apprentices, and their employers will still be pushed back to the frontiers of education system. The newly created inter-ministerial team seems to be only a 'rescue boat' for apprenticeship system maintenance in Poland. This body (supported by the ministries) can have a real capacity to influence other stakeholders (teachers, trade unions, school directors, parents, employers) as well as officials (at national, regional and local levels).

References

[URLs accessed 25.2.2022]

- Cedefop et al. (2021). Apprenticeship governance and in-company training: where labour market and education meet: Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts: short papers. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop working paper, No 3. http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/065622
- Stępnikowski, A. (2020). *Mistrz w rzemieślniczym przygotowaniu zawodowym. Kompetencje społeczne i pedagogiczne.* Radom: Łukasiewicz Research Network Institute of Sustainable Technologies.
 - https://www.academia.edu/49581719/Mistrz_w_rzemie%C5%9Blniczym_przygotowa niu_zawodowym_Kompetencje_spo%C5%82eczne_i_pedagogiczne

BUILT TO LAST: APPRENTICESHIP VISION, PURPOSE, AND RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Short papers from the Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts

The 2008 financial crisis, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, presented significant challenges – along with some opportunities – for apprenticeship systems and schemes across Europe, bringing into focus their resilience in times of crisis. These events, along with trends such as the green and digital transitions, have triggered discussions among relevant stakeholders on the purpose and their overall vision for apprenticeships in their countries.

This publication comprises papers drafted by Cedefop's community of apprenticeship experts on apprenticeship resilience, and apprenticeship vision and purpose. To complement the country-specific angle, Cedefop developed a comparative, cross-scheme and cross-country analysis and shared its reflections.

The publication shows that approaches may vary significantly between individual EU Member States. It also reveals that the two topics examined are connected, and share similarities in the way apprenticeship schemes are designed and governed. Understanding such interconnections will help policy-makers to introduce better targeted and more effective reforms that benefit learners, employers and societies.



Europe 123, Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE Postal: Cedefop service post, 570 01 Thermi, GREECE

Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020 Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

www.cedefop.europa.eu



