

Helpdesk on Apprenticeship & Traineeship Schemes

Frequently Asked Questions

Key features of Apprenticeship & Traineeship schemes

1. What is the difference(s) between apprenticeships and traineeships?

Apprenticeships are in general much more clearly and consistently defined across the EU than traineeships. The definition of Apprenticeships used by the European Commission based on a recent EU-wide study on Apprenticeships is as follows:

‘Apprenticeships are those forms of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) that formally combine and alternate company based training (periods of practical work experience at a workplace) with school-based education (periods of theoretical/ practical education followed in a school or training centre), and whose successful completion leads to nationally recognised IVET certification degrees. Most often there is a contractual relationship between the employer and the apprentice.’

Traineeships vary much more widely in type, focus and duration (from short term work placements to longer term schemes linked to education). A definition used by the European Commission states that they:

‘...can be described as work practice (either as part of a study curriculum or not) including an educational/training component which is limited in time. They allow to document practical work experience as part of the individual CV and/or as requested in educational curricula or to gain work practice for the purpose of facilitating the transition from education and training to the labour market. They are predominantly short to middle-term (a few weeks up to 6 months, in certain cases one year).’

Key differences in apprenticeships and traineeships can be summed up in the following table:

	Apprenticeship	Traineeship
Scope	Full qualifying professional or vocational education and training profile	Complementing educational programme or individual CV
Goal	Professional profile/qualification	Documented practical experience
Educational level	Usually EQF level 3-5	Traineeships can be found as part of programmes on all EQF levels – common forms in (pre) vocational education, in higher education and after graduation (sometimes compulsory)
Content	Acquisition of the full set of knowledge, skills and competences of an occupation	Vocational &/or work/career orientation, acquisition of parts of knowledge, skills and competences of an occupation or a profession
On-the-job learning	Equally important to coursework	Usually complementing coursework or optional extra

Length	Determined, middle- to long-term	Varying, short- to middle-term
	Usually up to four years	Usually less than one year
Employment status	Employee status	Student/trainee often based on an agreement with employer or school; sometimes volunteer status or not clearly defined status
	Contracted/employed apprentice	Student/trainee often based on an agreement with employer or school
Compensation	Remunerated – amount collectively negotiated or set by law	Varying remuneration, often unpaid
	Apprenticeship allowance which takes into account net costs and benefits for the individual and the employer	Unregulated financial compensation
Governance	Strongly regulated, often on a tripartite basis	Unregulated or partly regulated
Actors	Often social partners, training providers	Individuals, companies, state, educational institutions

2. Do apprenticeship and traineeship schemes have to include remuneration for participants?

- *Apprentices* generally receive remuneration, which will be specified in their employment or apprenticeship contract. The level of remuneration is usually set by either collective bargaining or legislation. Apprentices are paid an allowance which takes into account net costs and benefits for the individual and the employer
- *Traineeships* on the other hand have highly variable levels of remuneration, and trainees often receive no financial assistance or payment at all. Payment is generally unregulated.

3. Do apprentices and trainees have employment rights?

Apprentices do have employment rights, in line with collective bargaining and legislative frameworks. Rights will generally include annual leave, pensions and collective bargaining. *Traineeships* are more unregulated however, and individuals are not therefore generally subject to the same contractual frameworks as apprentices.

4. Is there a minimum level of education that people should reach before entry into apprenticeships or traineeships?

In many cases *apprentices* must reach a particular education level before being eligible for entry into a scheme. However, depending on the content and form of the scheme, required qualifications can vary. Some Member States provide pre-apprenticeship schemes to help candidates acquire the necessary skills and/or qualifications.

It is difficult to generalise on educational requirements for *traineeships* since schemes can differ so greatly: from a short 'taster' work experience of a couple of weeks for full-time students, to mandatory professional training for medical or law students. It is necessary to explore the educational pre-requisites for each scheme.

The Helpdesk staff, and upcoming Guidebook, can provide examples of different scheme types, including examples of differences in required educational level.

5. Do schemes lead to qualifications?

Apprenticeships usually lead to a form of formal qualification, although the level varies according to the scheme itself. Qualifications are often technical, related to the specific trade undertaken by the apprentice.

Some *traineeships* lead to qualifications or provide the opportunity for acquiring them, while others may simply provide evidence of training or work experience. The provision of a qualification or certification of skills can prove important when traineeships are aimed at moving individuals into further training or employment.

6. What are the benefits of apprenticeship and/or traineeship schemes?

Empirical evidence suggests that both types of schemes can significantly improve young people's employment prospects by contributing to the acquisition of work-related skills and experience in close alignment with employer requirements, leading to nationally recognised qualifications, enhancing young people's links to the labour market, and providing young people with a valuable first experience of work.

Apprenticeships are a highly effective method of facilitating rapid school-to-work transitions for young people, through structured programmes combining working and learning, leading to vocational qualifications.

Traineeships allow young people to apply theoretical knowledge in real work settings and to gain specific technical skills which better match employers' needs. In turn this helps break an important barrier to entering the workforce – work experience.

7. How long do apprenticeships and traineeships last?

The duration of apprenticeship schemes is usually medium to long term, with schemes usually lasting up to four years.

The duration of traineeships varies considerably. In general, schemes are short to medium term and last less than one year.

8. What is an open market traineeship and which of the Member States has this legal framework in place?

Open market traineeships are those agreed between trainees and the traineeship provider (e.g. business/company, non-profit or government) without the involvement of a third party organisation (e.g. educational institution, public employment service). These traineeships are generally undertaken by young people after the completion of their studies and/or as part of their job search. The Helpdesk carried out a mapping exercise in order to find out which Member States have open market traineeships in place. The exercise required input from a wide range of experts covering different Member States and indicated the existence of open market traineeships in Belgium, Hungary and Germany. The research also indicated the absence of open market traineeships in Italy, Luxemburg, Estonia, Latvia and Malta.