



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 21.06.2018
C(2018) 3550 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion on the Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships {COM(2017) 563 final}. The Recommendation was adopted by the Employment and Social Affairs Council on 15 March 2018. It fits within the EU's priority on jobs, growth and investment, and responds to the emphasis on work-based learning and apprenticeships in the 2015 Riga Conclusions on medium-term deliverables for European cooperation in vocational education and training. It follows up the New Skills Agenda for Europe, the Communication on Investing in Europe's Youth from 2016 and the Commission's Work Programme for 2017.

Quality apprenticeships have proved their value in easing people's access to the labour market within the Member States that implement such apprenticeships, and hence also providing employers with access to skilled employees. While apprenticeships are organised differently between the Member States, the Framework builds on existing evidence and provides a clear set of criteria for what constitutes quality and effective apprenticeships. As many Member States are in the process of reforming or improving their systems, the Framework can feed into these processes and also improve the comparability of systems and mobility for apprentices.

The Commission is pleased that the Camera Deputaților welcomes the Commission's commitment to ensure quality education, training and jobs, and the role of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships in this regard. In its Opinion, the Camera Deputaților notes a number of important issues for the implementation of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, such as the broader work linked to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, the European Qualifications Framework, the Youth Guarantee and apprenticeship mobility.

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The Commission would like to stress that the Framework will serve apprenticeships for all age groups. Although apprenticeships are more common among young learners, some Member States have substantial apprenticeship programmes for adult learners. Quality and effective apprenticeships are helpful not only for young people's entry in the labour market, but also for adults' career progression and transition into employment.

It is proved that mobility boosts learners' skills, and improves their chances on the labour market. The Framework therefore highlights that mobility should be a component of apprenticeship qualifications. The revised European Qualifications Framework (2017) improves the transparency, comparability and portability of apprentices' qualifications. Erasmus+ and the publication of apprenticeships in the European job mobility portal EURES will also facilitate more apprenticeship mobility. The new Framework could become a useful tool in this regard.

The Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships may particularly help the development of quality and effective apprenticeships where they are most rare today, including rural and marginalised areas, as mentioned in Camera Deputaţilor's Opinion. Improving the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships could also contribute to social inclusion by integrating disadvantaged learners and people with a migrant background into the labour market. On the other hand, apprenticeships could provide high-qualified labour in complex and technical occupations, including digital, as pointed out in your Opinion.

The Camera Deputaţilor mentions the role of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the importance of easy access to information. The Commission is setting up new Apprenticeship Support Services to strengthen knowledge sharing, networking and mutual learning between Member States and apprenticeship stakeholders, and to support the implementation of the Framework. One of the objectives of those services is to improve access to information on apprenticeships to various types of users.

The Commission welcomes the Camera Deputaţilor's call for ensuring synergies with the Framework in the context of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, and especially in guiding the provision of quality apprenticeship offers. It agrees at the same time that the Framework will be a guiding instrument and its application should not result in bureaucratic or formal barrier for access to EU funds.

The Commission notes the Camera Deputaţilor's call for a possible voluntary harmonisation among Member States. Since Member States are responsible for the content and organisation of education and vocational training, the Commission is not in a position to propose harmonisation in this area. However, with this Framework, the Member States are invited to agree on common criteria that should ensure the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships. Depending on the level of implementation, this may lead to improved comparability of systems and portability of qualifications.

The Commission welcomes the Camera Deputaților's broad support for the Framework and for continued efforts to strengthen apprenticeship delivery in the European Union. The Commission is ready to support Member States in the implementation of the Council Recommendation.

This year we also mark five years of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and launch the new Apprenticeship Support Services during the European Vocational Skills Week, planned for 5-9 November 2018. We hope for active involvement of Romanian stakeholders in these processes.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue on this issue.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Marianne Thyssen
Member of the Commission*