EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Skills
**Vocational Education and Training, CEDEFOP**

**PANEL 1:**

**5th anniversary of the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are an effective form of work-based learning in vocational education and training that ease the transition from education and training into work. However, due to the important learning element within an apprenticeship, such programmes can be effective in helping young people and adult learners getting into a stable employment only if they are of sufficiently high quality. In addition, an apprenticeship is an important investment for the employer; therefore it has to be effective for them in order to make this investment.

**European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships**

In order to ensure that apprenticeships and beneficial for both the apprentices and the employers, EU Member States agreed on a **European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships** (EFQEA) in 2018. These were agreed to ensure that apprenticeships offer high added value to employers (providing them with future workers with robust qualifications), apprentices (qualifying them to be employable across jobs within an occupation or a sector, now and in the future) but also European economies and societies as a whole: a well-trained workforce supports innovation and competitiveness in the transition to a greener and more digital world.

The **Council Recommendation on EFQEA** defines **14 quality criteria** – 7 on learning and working conditions, and further 7 on framework conditions.

| 7 criteria for learning and working conditions: | 7 criteria for framework conditions: |
|---|---|
| 1. Written agreement | 8. Regulatory framework |
| 2. Learning outcomes | 9. Involvement of social partners |
| 3. Pedagogical support | 10. Support for companies |
| 4. Workplace component | 11. Flexible pathways and mobility |
| 5. Pay or compensation | 12. Career guidance and awareness raising |
| 6. Social protection | 13. Transparency |
| 7. Work, health and safety conditions | 14. Quality assurance and tracking of apprentices |

Three years after the adoption of this recommendation, the Commission examined **how the Framework has been put into practice** in EU Member States. The Commission report was

based on input from all EU national governments, social partners both at EU and national level, as well as the members of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

Key findings of the report show that, of the overall 14 criteria, the **7 criteria on learning and working conditions are in place** in the majority of Member States, while **further progress is needed in implementing the 7 criteria on framework conditions**. The generally slower implementation of framework conditions is mostly due to the fact that these criteria require systemic changes at national level. Such changes need time.

The report also indicates that the **Framework supports Member States** in an incremental, **continuous improvement of their apprenticeship schemes**, including on those criteria that were already partially in place in 2018. In conclusion, the analysis confirms that the **European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships continues to be relevant and up to date, and that it remains a key instrument** to enhance the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships across the EU.

The full report with its annexes (country fiches) is available here (see under 'Related documents').

**ILO standards on quality apprenticeships**

Quality and effective apprenticeships are not only a priority within the EU. At its 111th Session (June 2023), the International Labour Conference also concluded its discussions on the role and importance of apprenticeships in reducing unemployment and addressing labour market needs. This second standard-setting discussion has led to a Recommendation to be adopted by the ILO's tripartite constituents. This new instrument is expected to provide a normative framework to regulate the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeships, while ensuring safe working conditions to apprentices. The ILO standards refer to the EFQEA.