



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

**EAfA**

European  
Alliance for  
Apprenticeships



# Quality of apprenticeships in the EU:

Selected findings from  
Cedefop analysis in relation to the  
European Framework for Quality and  
Effective Apprenticeships



# 2026 Cedefop cross-country analysis

- To identify areas of strength, persisting challenges and patterns across Europe
- 14 EFQEA Criteria → Cedefop indicators
- Sources
  - [Cedefop European Database on apprenticeship schemes/ Cedefop Community of apprenticeship experts](#)
  - Other Cedefop activities (Guidance, Validation, mobility, VET in Europe, teachers and trainers)



**EFQEA IMPLEMENTATION:  
A CEDEFOP ANALYSIS  
AND MAIN FINDINGS**  
How schemes in Cedefop's European database on  
apprenticeship schemes compare with EFQEA criteria

*Past similar  
analysis*  
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/4195>

A screenshot of the Cedefop database search results page. The search bar at the top contains the text 'What are you looking for?' and has a dropdown menu set to '2026'. To the right of the search bar is a 'Country' dropdown menu and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, it says 'Displaying 8 scheme fiches'. The results are displayed in a grid of four cards. The first card is titled 'Work based learning (dual system of training)' and is for Bulgaria. The second card is titled 'Unified Model of Education' and is for Croatia. The third card is titled 'New Modern Apprenticeship' and is for Cyprus. The fourth card is titled 'Workplace-based learning' and is for Estonia. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'To top' button and a 'Higher education and research apprenticeship [Type 3]' card.

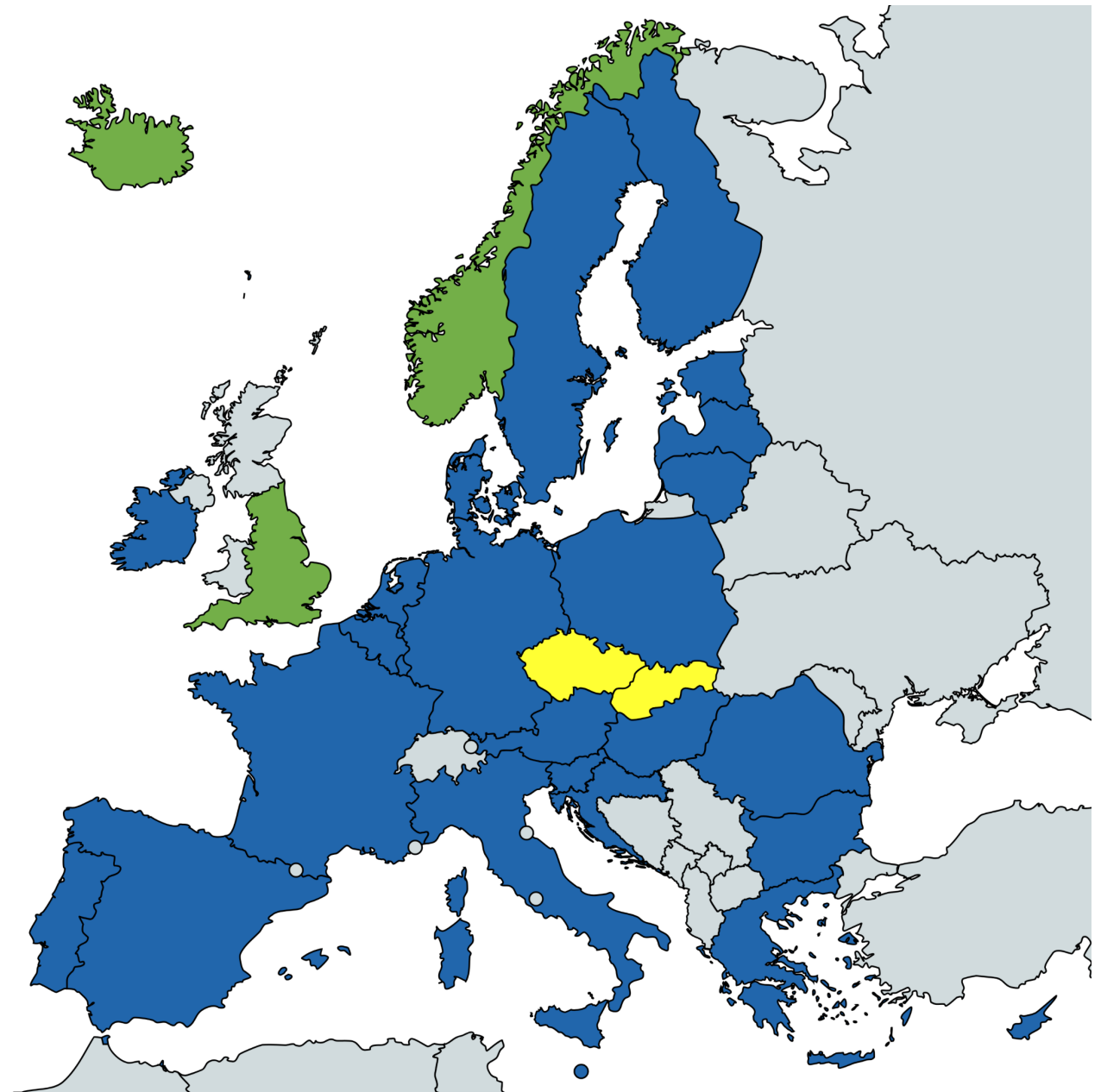
# Countries and schemes covered

All EU Member States covered

Czechia and Slovakia were added recently; full scheme fiches available later this year

Norway, Iceland and England are also covered

Overall, there are 32+3 schemes in 30 countries



# Quality elements affecting conditions for apprentices



## The apprentice is paid or otherwise compensated

- In all schemes, apprentices are paid
- Taxable (wage) or not taxable (allowance)
- In 50% of the schemes, the wage covers also the time of learning at school



## Written agreements

- All schemes are covered by written agreements
- These set at least a minimum set of rights and responsibilities for both parties
- Their type varies: contract covered by labour law, or not?



## Lead to nationally recognised qualifications

- All schemes analysed: qualifications are recognised by education and training systems
- Appx 80%: the same qualification with school-based VET
- Fewer bottlenecks
- Progression to higher education usually possible

# Quality elements affecting conditions for apprentices



## Comprehensive and balanced set of learning outcomes

- For most schemes, balanced set of learning outcomes, including general / transversal
- 70% of schemes: same standards with school-based VET
- Examples of additions for green/digital LOs identified



## Improved flexibility and ease of access

- 50% of the schemes set only a minimum enrolment age – open to all ages
- > 50% the schemes: arrangements for recognition of prior learning related to apprenticeships
- preparatory programmes to ease access



## Other financial support to apprentices

- 80%: offer other financial support to apprentices, beyond the wage/main allowance
- Either to top-up the wage
- Or to cover transportation costs etc.

# Quality elements affecting conditions for apprentices



## Pedagogical support

- All schemes: companies designate an in-company trainer
- In only 55% of the schemes: relevant VET qualification required
- In only 30%: requirements for pedagogical training/ competences
- While trainer CPD opportunities exist, requirements are rare



## Guidance and learner support

- Apprenticeship-specific services or provision were identified in half of the schemes
- The other half, initially designed for school-based VET: do they reach apprentices systematically?



## Social protection levels

- Different types of agreements (contract or not) affect the set of social protection
- Comprehensive set of social protection terms in about 60% of the schemes
- Appx 40% of the schemes offer a basic level

# Quality elements affecting conditions for employers



## Labour market relevance

- Social partners and/or chambers have a role in co-shaping qualifications (88%) or curricula (84%) or both
- 60%: Sectoral councils contribute, e.g. by conveying labour market needs



## Ability to inform workplace learning

- In all schemes, an individual training plan is drawn up
- Almost always the training company contributes/approves
- But *standards* for the workplace component set in about 1/3 of the schemes



## Share of work-based learning

- In 80% of the schemes, share of workplace learning is over 50%, often around 60-70%
- In the remaining 20%, share is lower, but near 50%
- Duration is usually 2-3 years

# Quality elements affecting conditions for employers



## Financial support for companies

- offered in almost all schemes
- 75% of the schemes: subsidies
- >50%: tax deductions (incl. social insurance contribution)
- 60%: other types
- 70%: combine more than one type of financial support



## Support to in-company trainers

- 65% of the schemes: opportunities for in-company trainers training offered by chambers, professional associations or other actors
- Collaboration of trainers and teachers is frequent, even if *systematic* processes are rarely identified



## Other non-financial support

- Exists in all schemes, although partial in half of them
- Campaigns/awareness raising
- Platforms to post places
- Support by chambers or other bodies on how to join and provide training

# Quality elements affecting conditions for employers



## Requirements for workplace learning

- Only 40% of the schemes: accreditation of training companies and/or trainers
- Only 55%: clear evidence of systematic monitoring during the workplace component
- Only 55%: sanctions to employers for failing to deliver the expected training



## System evaluation

- <20%: satisfaction surveys, or cost-benefit analyses
- Rarely regular, mostly sporadic, ad-hoc basis
- Difficult to measure the value / real benefits of apprenticeships for employers



## Cost-sharing

- Only in 50%, wages cover the time at school
- 1/6 of countries, small employer contribution as a share of wage
- State or EU funds subsidise costs, top-up payments
- Limited use of training funds for apprenticeships

# The emerging picture



## STRONG FOUNDATION

The foundations of quality are largely in place



### Key messages

- Key EFQEA elements are present in almost all apprenticeship schemes across Europe.
- Many EFQEA criteria are substantially covered (areas of strength).
- Additional activity identified in some of the less-addressed criteria of 2021 analyses.



## CHALLENGE

Aim for deeper and broader coverage of quality elements



### Key messages

- Beyond meeting quality criteria at first glance, look for an in-depth coverage, including for criteria related to the workplace component.
- Connect quality elements: they strengthen (or weaken) each other.
- Build a culture of quality monitoring and continuous improvement.



## WAY FORWARD

Governance and social partner involvement drive further quality gains



### Key messages

- Stronger coordination and shared responsibility increases ownership and mobilises resources.
- Linked to more engagement of social partners / stakeholders at the implementation level.
- In turn, linked to deeper and broader coverage of quality: more indicators are met at the implementation level.





# NEXT STEPS IN CEDEFOP'S WORK ON APPRENTICESHIPS



## Updated database fiches

All country fiches will be updated with the latest data and made available online.



ONLINE IN  
**June/July  
2026**



## Cedefop/EaFA Webinar on Quality of apprenticeships in the EU

Join our webinar to discuss key findings and priorities for quality apprenticeship systems.



More information and registration:

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events/quality-apprenticeships-eu>



**1 July  
2026**



## Publication of the cross-country analysis

The full analytical report will be published.



**September  
2026**



## Policy learning forum on Quality apprenticeships through social dialogue

High-level event to exchange insights and good practices (Cedefop Management Board).



**7 October  
2026**



## Cedefop/ETF policy brief on quality in apprenticeships

Key messages and policy implications in a concise and actionable format.



**December  
2026**



Building on evidence. Learning together. Improving quality apprenticeships.



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# Thank you

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