



Summary of main outcomes

Cedefop's Policy Learning Forums (PLF) are an opportunity for countries to generate knowledge and they act as a site of dialogue around shared problems.

Cedefop second PLF on apprenticeships took place on 18 and 19 October 2018. The event marks a turning point in Cedefop approach to support the development of quality apprenticeships across the EU. As Antonio Ranieri explained in his welcome note to the participants, Cedefop Department for Learning and Employability is going to focus its work on apprenticeships on support to cross-country policy learning and multi-level and multi-stakeholder co-operation. Apprenticeships are the perfect area for such an approach as they are the embodiment of co-operation in VET.

This year the event was dedicated to the countries involved at different stages in Cedefop Thematic Country Reviews (TCRs). Cedefop has been carrying out the TCRs since 2014, through close cooperation with national stakeholders, to support the development of quality apprenticeships with in-depth analysis in the countries involved. So far 9 countries have been involved: Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Lithuania and Slovenia that volunteered to participate in the "full" TCR exercise; and the French Speaking Belgium and Sweden that Cedefop selected for a pilot of the flash TCRs, a shorter and narrower version of the TCRs initiated in an independent manner by Cedefop.

In sum, the 2018 PLF called participants to reflect on and learn more about how apprenticeships differ in terms of purpose, function and organisation. To do so, representatives from countries that had not undertaken the TCR exercise, namely Austria, England, Ireland and The Netherlands, were invited to present their apprenticeship system or schemes, in relation to how they solved some of the most common challenges in the TCR countries. By offering examples of countries with different approaches to apprenticeships, the TCR and flash TCR countries had the opportunity to carry out an in-depth reflection on the function and purpose of apprenticeships, by focussing on two main areas of analysis: governance and the apprenticeship place in the education and training system. These areas represent themselves distinct common challenges.

- a) As regards governance, the TCRs taught us that the education sector overall dominates and bears the greater burden in managing apprenticeship (from design to implementation). This creates an imbalance of ownership at the expense of companies and of the labour market actors, especially the social partners, whose engagement in the systems results limited. There is a need to rethink the allocation of roles and responsibilities to engage both sides at all stages, from the design to the implementation of the schemes.
- b) As regards the apprenticeship place in the education and training system, the lack of a clear identity vis-à-vis other forms of work-based learning in VET or other employment tools, or in terms of unclear boundaries of the apprenticeship scheme in the education and training system as a whole, leads,



among other consequences, to distorted expectations of the users, especially companies, and to competition between apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning or other employment and training tools for the same beneficiaries.

Fifty people participated in the event, from 13 different countries. Almost half of participants represented a ministry or a national agency involved in apprenticeships governance. The rest was split among employers' representatives (nearly one fourth), VET providers and international experts. The social partners, trade unions in particular, were not represented in this forum, despite the importance, showed by each TCR, of having all stakeholders around the same table: firstly, to start speaking the same language; secondly, to go beyond each other boundaries and find solutions for the good of young people and companies.

In the first plenary, Cedefop presented the main outcomes of the TCRs in Croatia and Cyprus, followed by feedback from country representatives.

Discussions about the TCR in Croatia touched upon the issues, among the others, of the need to work more in partnerships, pursue quality of training and dedicate more care to students learning experiences.

The debate around the TCR in Cyprus focused on making the value of qualifications visible through formal mechanisms; this is linked to the overall challenge of making apprenticeships more attractive to companies, through financial and non-financial incentives, including guidance about quality placement, or toolkits with information.

Cedefop presented the main outcomes of the flash TCRs in French Speaking Belgium and Sweden, followed by feedback from country representatives.

The two flash TCR countries partly share common challenges. In Belgium as well as in Sweden, apprenticeship identity needs to be made clearer in relation to its overall purpose. This would make its selling point in terms of educational added value and labour market opportunities clearer compared to other education and training opportunities, involving or not workplace placements, with which today apprenticeship is in competition. A second common challenge relates to company engagement, which could be activated through existing governance structures and bodies that could connect different VET providers and these with companies.

Countries that took part in the first and second rounds of TCRs, namely Lithuania, Malta, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, also had the opportunity to intervene: Cedefop country project managers posed one question to a pre-selected representative of each country about success cases, best practices, challenges or latest developments, as follows.

Country: Lithuania

Representative: Jolanta Zabietiene

Question: Last year apprenticeship was taking off on a small scale in Lithuania. How would you characterise the progress by now? Has apprenticeship expanded? Please name two main achievements and two main challenges that you have not overcome yet.

Answer: Jolanta Zabietiene from the Ministry of Education of Lithuania informed that a new VET law came into force in February 2018; it strengthened the role and quality of



WBL and apprenticeship by stating that practical skills should be developed at the real workplace and clarifying provisions for apprenticeship. The challenge is now to align other regulation. She noted a significant increase in the number of apprentices as one of the main achievements since last year. The number of apprentices in primary vocational education has almost doubled in the Students Register during this year: 757 apprentices in initial vocational education were registered in 2017, and 1,314 during nine months this year. But the increase was even more significant in continuing vocational training with 2,587 apprentices registered last year and 1,886 apprentices registered during nine months of this year. As main challenges she noted updating funding mechanisms for apprenticeship, planning students' enrolment in vocational training and forecasting apprenticeship places. She pointed out that the Ministry of Economy supports the initiatives of the employers in the field of apprenticeship and on-the-job training by implementing the European Social Fund measure (11 million euros planned) that consists of two activities: on-the-job training for qualification improvement (through non-formal training) and apprenticeship for acquiring the qualification or the part of the qualification (according to formal continuing training). Up to 70% of the training costs can be reimbursed. 11 projects are implemented under the first activity (on-the-job training), and 7 projects– under the second activity (training of employees by way of apprenticeship). In total, 17,007 apprentices participated in non-formal training in the project. The second achievement is 170 trained tutors from companies and schools in 2017-18 as the result of Erasmus+ project, which will develop a joint tutors training programme and will train 300 in-company tutors.

Country: Malta

Representative: Vince Maione

Question: One of the areas of actions included in the TCR for MT was to clarify the place of apprenticeship in education and training, in particular to clearly distinguish between apprenticeships and the school-based VET with compulsory work placements. At the time of the TCR, the school-based VET and apprenticeship in Malta existed in parallel in the same occupational fields and so there was a certain competition between school and apprenticeship training. The subsequent legal framework addressed this need. Would you, please, explain us how you managed to do it in the regulation, in what consists the distinction (in the remuneration and contract only) and what the practice shows?

Answer: The MT representative addressed the question by firstly questioning whether this distinction is necessary. He argued that this distinction is indeed necessary, as employers need it. In MT, the legislation only indirectly addresses the issue through a higher payment and an employee type contract. In reality, the most effective measures are taken by the VET provider because the courses offered in both apprenticeship and only school based mode is limited as much as possible. The apprenticeship course is also being recognized by some academic credits and by being officially shown on the diploma supplement.

Country: Greece

Representative: Olga Kafetzopoulou

Question: As the recently established EPAL apprenticeship scheme moved from a small-scale pilot to a mainstream option, how did you manage to balance between the quantitative goals (of approximately doubling the number of apprenticeships already offered before its introduction) and the overall goal to ensure high quality standards?



Could you name two main achievements in this respect and two main challenges that you have not overcome yet?

Answer: The Greek representative first provided some data elaborating on the rapid expansion of the new EPAL post-secondary scheme from 2016 (two pilots in two specialties) to 2018 (4,000 apprentices in 21 specialties across the country). She explained that since the TCR was launched, two main achievements that help improve quality refer to:

a) the establishment of the Common Quality Framework for all Apprenticeship schemes introducing common rules and practices and the Quality framework for VET & Apprenticeship Curricula

b) the closer cooperation among all stakeholders (Ministries of Education and Labour, national institutions and social partners), taking into account the experience of the pre-existing EPAS scheme (dual learning). This cooperation was reflected also in the introduction of several shared governance bodies at national and local level (National VET Committee, Technical VET Committee, National Coordination Body for Apprenticeship, Local Working Groups to support apprenticeship)

Finally, she referred to some main challenges that the country still faces regarding apprenticeships:

a) aligning apprenticeship specialties offered with labour market needs (using outputs of the recently established national Skills Forecasting Mechanism);

b) improving apprenticeship curricula by including at least minimum standards for in-company learning (if not more detailed);

c) boosting training of teachers and in-company trainers, so that they can improve the way they cooperate, communicate and exchange ideas to the benefit of the apprentices learning.

Country: Italy

Representative: Alessandra Biancolini, ANPAL (video message)

Question: The main challenge for the Italian Type 1 apprenticeship, as identified by Cedefop TCR, was to move away from its episodic nature and scale up to a system level. What actions did the country take to address this challenge?

Answer: Type 1 apprenticeships have been a major area of reform and public investments in the last years in Italy. Despite the huge resources devoted to this measure in 2015-2017, not only in terms of financial investments but also in terms of simplification, the public efforts have not showed visible results yet. Indeed, building trust between companies and schools and VET institutions is the result of a long-term investment and not an easy operation. The process and efforts to scale up and consolidate a systematic approach in the use of type 1 apprenticeship are still undergoing and so far concentrated on two main system level actions. The first is aimed at supporting schools and VET providers in improving the work-study alternance opportunities offered to all students in upper secondary level. To this end, it is critical to set up stable networks of stakeholders at the local level. The Ministry of Education and ANPAL in 2017 signed a protocol that launched a national system action to provide training institutions (from schools to universities) to implement models of work-study alternance schemes and apprenticeship pathways. This action involves 250 people in the country, acting as facilitators of dialogue, assigned on a regional basis to 1,250 schools and 640 VET providers. The second is directed towards companies and labour market actors. In the last year, efforts were made to empower the competences and profiles of in-company tutors, whose professional profile is not clearly defined and their qualifications are not taken in due account yet. Italy benefitted of the cooperation with



Germany to design and deliver a blended and certified training for in-company trainers under the project “Qualit” started in May through the Italian-German chamber of commerce of Milan. By the end of 2019, 400 tutors in the country should receive such training and more than 10 regions be involved in the project. Another future edition of this project is foreseen, where around half of the certified tutors will undertake a Master to train the future tutors. These actions should support the systematic use of Type 1 apprenticeships.

Country: Slovenia

Representative: Slavica Černoša, Ministry of Education

Question: It has been one year since the Law on Apprenticeship was adopted (May 2017) and the pilot started in selected programmes. Has the pilot been expanded this year? What are the first results – please name two main achievements and two main challenges that you have not overcome yet.

Answer: Slavica Černoša from the Ministry of Education of Slovenia informed that due to economic growth the demand for skilled workers in the labour market has significantly increased compared to the time of the review. The Ministry believes that this change is favourable for apprenticeship and, together with the social partners, has made a great effort to develop and promote apprenticeship. Although around 65% of the young population are enrolled in upper secondary vocational and vocational education programmes, there is still shortage of workers with such education.

She pointed out that the legislative framework for apprenticeship is set up: the apprenticeship form of education has the same educational standard as the school-based form, the difference is only indicated in the Certificate Supplement. Apprenticeship has been implemented in Slovenia for the second year as part of an ESF project ‘The Reform of Vocational upper secondary education’ run by the Institute for VET (CPI) of the Republic of Slovenia. In 2017/18, 50 students enrolled in apprenticeship and in 2018/19, 72 new students enrolled. The apprenticeship is now offered in eight programmes. Many learning places are prepared and registered, which is the task of the social partners, and educational programmes for apprenticeship are gradually being prepared and introduced into the educational system.

A great challenge for apprenticeship in Slovenia is how to attract young people to this form of education and training. Although transition to tertiary education is ensured, a relatively small number of the young population choose this form of education and training. A great deal of effort will be needed to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeship and a lot of work with the youngsters, and especially with their parents, because they are the ones that direct their children into specific learning paths and education programmes.

Having recalled the country-specific and common challenges of all TCR and flash TCR countries, participants could listen to the presentations about the apprenticeship place in the education and training system and governance in four non-TCR countries and discuss each country-case in one parallel workshop¹.

¹ The summary of the non-TCR country presentations and workshops are based on the notes of the international experts who co-moderated the workshops and reported the summary of outcomes in plenary (names in Italics below).



Austria: Christina Zauner, Deputy department head, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research

Rapporteur: Jörg Markowitsch, 35

The Austrian presentation raised the interest of several countries, including neighbour countries. The workshop turned into a Q&A session about details of the Austrian system and exchange about other countries' reality. Questions included:

- Which links are there between learning at the workplace and learning in school? Besides informal co-operation between schools and companies, the link is mainly established by the training regulation on the one hand and the framework curriculum on the other hand. From the point of view of students, school and work are perceived as 'two worlds'.
- How is supply and demand matched? There are matching problems. For instance, there is a high demand for apprentices in tourism in western/southern parts of Austria, while in Vienna there are many young people who cannot find an apprentice place.
- Is there a limitation of apprenticeship places? In Austria you first have to get a contract with a company, before you can start the school programme. Once you have a place at a company, the place at school is also guaranteed. This for sure creates a completely different market, and different problems. For instance, it is quite demanding for the organisation of the part-time school, because it is hard to estimate how many classes in which programmes can be filled.
- How to attract companies? There is certainly some path-dependency: most crafts/companies take apprentices because they always did, and not so much because of a rational cost/benefit decision. It's their traditional way of recruiting new employees. Over the last couple of years various measures to support companies have been introduced, e.g. a basic subsidy and more targeted supports such as counselling services for companies were introduced.
- What is the role of chambers? Chambers have a quite strong role: At strategic level (together with trade unions) they decide about how to develop the system, introduce new occupations etc. At operational level they are involved in assessment, accrediting training companies. Also, companies are obliged to be a member of the Chamber in Austria.
- How is access to further and higher education supported? A vocational 'matura' (external matriculation examination) was introduced for apprenticeship graduates in 1997 (consisting of exams in Maths, German, a foreign language and a professional field). In 2008 it was reformed, so that apprentices can start preparing for the exams already during the apprenticeship.
- Different views on apprentice pay. Depending on occupations apprentices in Austria roughly earn 500 Euros in first year. In last year they receive 80% of the salary of a skilled worker as this is laid down as minimum pay in collective agreements.
- From the short contributions by the participants two common trends could be identified:
 - Common trend 1: Decline of apprenticeship. There is a decline of VET student populations at lower level and increasing take up of technical education (one level above). Within apprenticeships there is a trend towards more demanding/advanced ones (e.g. in UK, NL, FR).



- Common trend 2: bad practice of directing low-achievers to VET. In some countries, this resulted in apprenticeship becoming a second chance route; but even in countries like Austria, it has negative effects on the image of VET.
- Finally, a bad practice in Austria was identified. The fact that school leavers can take up apprenticeship only at the age of 16, while secondary school ends at the age of 15. This leads to the situation that many young people enroll for one year in a VET college although they do not want to finish it, and 'drop-out' the second year when they start their apprenticeship. This 'bridging' problem, for which even a particular school/programme was invented, the polytechnical school, has historical reasons which are unsolved up until today.

England: Andrea Laczik, Research and Policy Manager, Edge Foundation

Rapporteur: Terence Hogarth, FGB

- The system in England has, over time, moved away from a supply-led system. Government ensures that minimum standards are met with respect to the content of an apprenticeship and the way in which it is delivered. Nevertheless employers now have much more influence over the content and structure of training than hitherto, and the way in which training providers are funded means they have to be sensitive to the signals they receive from the market. Many apprenticeship systems – and VET systems more generally – have the goal of being more responsive to the labour market. This is usually made with reference to feedback loops of one kind or another. The example of England suggests that a fully-demand led system perhaps needs to go further than simply having feedback loops where one group of stakeholders (e.g. employer groups) provides information to others (e.g. those in charge of curriculum development).
- The system in England may be regarded as efficient (the supply-side needs to promptly respond to the demand side, and the demand side can relatively quickly develop new standards as the nature of work changes), but this does not necessarily deliver the volume of apprenticeships some might want to see. Increasing participation in apprenticeships is dependent upon finding a means of increasing the aggregate demand for skills and finding a way of balancing the costs and benefits of training (between the state, the employer and the apprentice) so that employers are not risk averse to investing in this form of training. In general, the issue of the way in which the risks of investing in apprenticeships is dealt with in different kinds of apprenticeship systems in the EU is one which might benefit from further investigation.
- Persuading more young people – and more employers – to invest in apprenticeships requires them to have information about the likely relative return from doing so. Across the EU as a whole, there is comparatively little evaluative information on the relative returns of completing an apprenticeship versus something else. There is no way of definitively saying that apprenticeship is better than something else whatever that something else might be. As the example of hairdressing mentioned above demonstrates, there are often a lot of myths circulating which can be corrected if the evidence is available to do so.



- The apprenticeship system in England may be different from that in other countries and, as a system it may not be readily transferable to other countries. But the debate in the break-out session demonstrated that there is a thirst for information about certain elements or processes within the overall system which could be used by those charged with reforming their own apprenticeship systems. This is not peculiar to the system in England. There would appear to be merit in being able to learn the lessons learnt in any country with a substantial apprenticeship system.

Ireland: Shauna Dunlop, Director of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, SOLAS

Rapporteur: Isabelle Le Mouillour, BIBB

- Apprenticeship is regarded as “the fabric of society”. It has a long history. A meaningful apprenticeship is not just one that leads to employment but it has greater value for youth and society. In fact, there is a need to assess costs and benefits of apprenticeships, but not only in terms of return on investments for companies: balance between public budget for apprenticeship and the financial and socio-economic cost of having high shares of no/low qualified persons in society should be considered.
- As an employer driven system, it suffers from the impact of economic downs and ups, which requires to take measures to lessen the dependence of apprenticeship on economic cycles.
- The Irish system has in high consideration the need to balance the company demand and youth offer, by also taking into account gender segregation and goals of social inclusion.
- There are 14.000 apprentices in Ireland, enrolled in two schemes (New Apprenticeship and Craft Apprenticeship), studying for qualifications at levels 4 to 8 (EQF). The budget for apprenticeships was 120 mio. Euro in 2017.

The Netherlands: Hester Smulders, Senior researcher, ECBO

Rapporteur: Bert-Jan Buiskool, Ockham-IPS

- Representatives of Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Slovenia, Croatia, Lithuania attended the workshop and found similarities with the Dutch approach, which led to lively discussions.
- In the Netherlands apprenticeship is clearly built as an alternative track for those who learn differently. Not all countries have this focus. I think it is important to keep this in mind while discussing transferability of practices.
- Seven key messages / or elements were considered interesting in the Dutch system:
 - Equal status of apprenticeship track versus school-based track. There was some discussion to what extent the two pathways differ since the school-based track also include a strong WBL component, and it produces similar labour market outcomes. The conclusion was that apprenticeship is another mode of learning (based on the preference of the student), with strong benefits including for students (opportunity to learn differently and



- transition to the labour market: around 80% of graduates keep on working in the company after finalizing the apprenticeship); for companies as a recruitment tool; for adults (upskilling; reintegration etc.).
- Strong national governance framework, steered by a central body (SBB) but with flexibility at local level, managed by schools, which are free to develop the curriculum also hearing the views of companies (this is done quite informally in dialogue with employers).
 - Engagement of companies: learning is historically routed in the culture of companies. Half of all companies in the Netherlands are accredited as learning and working companies, based on criteria such as: (1) quality of the working place (including safety); (2) expertise of mentor (*'praktijkbegeleider'*) according to a profile; and (3) cooperation between employer and school / SBB.
 - Apprenticeship in decline, due to lower interest of companies especially of sectors that are in decline (industry etc.).
 - Personalized (individualized) learning trajectories. Recently, there is much focus on the orientation in the first year, while the final decision about which programme to follow is experience-based, by following preparatory courses; interviewing employers; and receiving personal guidance.
 - Permeability: the Dutch system has an early tracking mechanism: at 12-13 years old, decisions are taken whether the student follows the general education track or the vocational track. But the system does not provide sufficient flexibility to easily switch between VET and general education.
 - Labour forecast system / feedback loops via SBB: macro effectiveness of small education programmes is assessed.

During plenary 4, participants were invited to brainstorm on the future of the PLFs and an extended community of practice. A summary of ideas follows:

Participants were asked to discuss two overarching questions that they could further translate into sub-issues and points or propose other issues:



- How to shape Cedefop policy learning forums on apprenticeships in the future?
- How to build an extended community of practice?

Participants discussed in small groups and put forward the following ideas and issues about the PLF:

Preparation for the PLF

- more (structured) information in advance;



Running the PLF

- allocate more time to presentation and discussion of developments;
- allocate more time for questions;
- organise 'open space' discussions;
- country to country peer review, not overall but on specific issues;

Topics and themes

- thematic focus for PLFs, based on the Cedefop's analytical framework or database;
- expanding to WBL - common roots;
- policies in place, their rationale and operation;
- monitoring the effects of national reforms followed by in-depth discussion;
- including excelling companies in developing curricula and delivering education;
- work in clusters of countries, based on the size of the apprenticeship system/scheme, similar target group, contractual relationships;
- take a problem-centred approach: start with in-depth analysis of a problem in a set of countries, then presenting the results in a form of a fair/exhibition where participants will exchange and learn;
- two pillars: development of education and country policy and development of industry and craft;
- apprenticeship and industry 4.0 and digital tools;
- statistics of apprenticeships;
- evaluation of the systems.

Scope, target groups and participation of the community of practice:

Differing views:	
Focus on TCR countries and specific issues (e.g. role of chambers)	Keep the community of practice open with a possibility to choose topics of interest and target groups (teachers and trainers, companies, apprentices).

- involve various stakeholders to take part and express their point of view: apprentices, teachers, companies;
- encourage participation of trade unions.

Most recurring issues about the PLF are:

- get more focused on specific themes/issues;
- bring other stakeholders and beneficiaries to discussions;
- provide for cluster work;
- allow more time and opportunities for interaction and in-depth discussion.

The Cedefop apprenticeship team will use these ideas to develop Cedefop's approach for future policy learning activities and related activities.

During the concluding session, Agnes Roman (ETUC) spoke about the importance of the quality and effectiveness framework for apprenticeships, adopted by the Council in March 2018, as a result of an initiative of the European social partners.

Tamás Várnai (European Commission) presented the forthcoming initiatives of the European Commission in the context of its Supporting services for apprenticeships.

Mara Brugia (Cedefop Acting Director) closed the event by outlining future developments of Cedefop work on apprenticeships. She gave the message that looking beyond 2020, Cedefop believes that there is a greater need to understand the relevance



and the role of apprenticeships as part of collective skills formation, to improve their quality in line with the proposal for establishing a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships, and reflect on future developments of this traditional learning tool in the context of new challenges such as Industry 4.0. This exercise is of crucial importance to avoid that apprenticeships are misused, e.g. for cheap labour force and active labour market measures.

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