

Tripartite agreement for increasing apprentices in the health sector

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** **DENMARK**

Timeline

2020 Approved/Agreed**2021 Implementation****2022 Implementation****2023 Implementation****2024 Implementation****ID number 38204**

Background

There is a risk of a decrease in the number of people employed in the social and welfare sector. It is essential to ensure that there is a sufficient number of employees in the social and healthcare sector in the coming years. In this context, recruitment to social and healthcare programmes is key. The tripartite agreement aims to increase applications to VET programmes in this sector and, in the long term, to increase the number of those employed in the sector.

Objectives

The objective of the agreement is to ensure initiatives that will contribute to increased applications to VET programmes in the welfare and service sector, as well as a strengthened retention of students and a long-term solution to the shortage of apprenticeships in the social and health sector.

Description

In November 2020, a tripartite agreement was made between the government, Local Government Denmark (KL) (the national association of municipalities), the national association of the Danish Regions and the largest trade union confederation in Denmark (FH).

The agreement outlined several points:

- (a) from 1 July 2021, the municipalities commit to employing adult apprentices, aged 25 and above older in social and welfare programmes, from the second part of the basic VET course (the basic course is divided into a first part and a second part, each lasting 20 weeks). This will ensure that adult students apprentices will receive a salary early on in their education, during the basic programme. The usual entry requirements will apply;
- (b) the municipalities will be reimbursed for salary costs by the Employers' Reimbursement System (AUB);
- (c) the parties to the agreement will, in case of a huge increase in the number of student

applications, consider how they should establish a reasonable limit on student admissions to the basic course on social and welfare programmes. This will be evaluated in 2024. There will be a separate evaluation of the agreement in 2024, evaluating, among other things, whether the agreement had resulted in a significant increase in activity. Additionally, the developments in the number of students in the social and healthcare sector (SOSU) will be closely monitored, and to the extent that activity significantly exceeds the expected, the parties that signed the agreement will discuss if any changes are needed;

- (d) there will be a continuing expectations alignment on the quality of the second part of the basic VET course, specifically, the admission requirements to enter the main course agreed between the education institutions, the trade committees of social and welfare programmes and the Ministry of Children and Education. The first results of these continuing talks are expected in the first quarter of 2021 and there will be quarterly updates until the end of 2022;
- (e) there is a relatively long summer break between the end of the basic VET course and the start of the main VET course, which can lead to transition challenges. The Ministry of Children and Education and the education institutions will map all transition problems to establish the number of students who drop out in this period. Based on the results of the mapping, the parties will assess, in cooperation with the trade committees, the need for a more coherent course;
- (f) until a permanent solution is found, no later than 2024, the municipalities will be reimbursed for their salary expenses in relation to transition periods problems between the basic courses and main courses. An evaluation of the transition period will be made in 2024;
- (g) to ensure a long-term solution to the shortage of apprenticeship positions in welfare programmes, the municipalities must ensure a minimum dimensioning number of apprenticeships in the social and health sector, specifically in the social and health worker programme and the social and health assistant programme, for a five-year period.

Due to the dual system and the model of the Danish labour market, the workers' and employers' unions [in this case the Local Government Denmark (KL)] and, the national association of the Danish Regions) must make a new agreement by the end of May 2021 so the supply of apprenticeships in the public sector in welfare and social VET programmes can be ensured.

2020 Approved/Agreed

The tripartite agreement came into effect in November 2020.

2021 Implementation

Recruitment of apprentices started and there were adjustments to entry requirements to enter the main course.

The tripartite agreement was extended till 31 December 2022.

2022 Implementation

The tripartite agreement for increasing apprentices in the health sector wasn't completed at the end of 2022 - as planned- and remained operational.

2023 Implementation

The tripartite agreement for increasing apprentices in the health sector was operational and ran as regular practice.

2024 Implementation

In January 2024, the Government and the majority of parties in Parliament agreed to improve the quality of social and healthcare (SOSU) training programmes. The parties

behind the agreement agreed on the following 13 initiatives aimed at improving quality, increasing recruitment, and reducing dropout rates:

- (a) permanent funding increase to boost local recruitment and quality;
- (b) new tripartite agreement on creating more apprenticeships and providing wages during training;
- (c) more pathways into the social and health care assistant program, such as for individuals with relevant experience;
- (d) removing barriers to starting a SOSU programme;
- (e) increased focus on the talent program and recruiting young welfare talents;
- (f) language support for students and professional development for teachers;
- (g) investment in simulation equipment;
- (h) professionalisation of apprenticeship supervisors;
- (i) digital educational overview for all vocational programmes;
- (j) systematic data analysis on the causes of dropout;
- (k) completion of SOSU programmes;
- (l) assessment of opportunities for apprenticeships in private companies;
- (m) follow-up on the Danish Centre for Social Science Research's (VIVE) analysis of the image and perception challenges in social and healthcare professions

The agreement and its initiatives are part of the comprehensive reform of the Danish education system and are described in the axis prepared for the *Future III More skilled workers for our healthcare and elderly care* which includes the government's proposal for initiatives aiming to:

- (a) alleviate the challenges of declining applications and the high drop-out rate;
- (b) to meet the increasing demand for social and healthcare professionals in the health service and elderly care

Finally, with *the Agreement on the allocation of the reserve for measures in the social, health, and labour market sectors for 2024-27* (SSA-agreement), EUR 400 thousand (DKK 3.1 million) was allocated for targeted recruitment efforts for the SOSU programmes for the period 2024-27 to ensure a broad recruitment base for these programmes. These efforts also intend to promote positive narratives about the social and healthcare professions, for example, through role models who can challenge existing stereotypes and contribute to greater diversity in the enrolments in SOSU programmes.

The agreement will be implemented by the ministries of social affairs, education and higher education.

Bodies responsible

- Local Government Denmark (KL)
- The National Association of the Danish Regions (Danske Regioner)
- Danish trade union confederation (FH)
- Ministry of Social Affairs, Housing and Senior Citizens
- Ministry of Children and Education
- Ministry of Higher Education and Science

Target group

Learners

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers
Adult learners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)
National, regional and local authorities

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Optimising VET funding

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Tripartite agreement on strengthened recruitment to the public labour market](#)

[Strengthened recruitment to the public sector labour market](#)

[Procedure paper for admission to social and healthcare \(SOSU\) schools and employment in the municipalities for +25-year-old social and healthcare \(SOSU\) students from the beginning of basic course 2](#)

[Agreement on more social and healthcare assistants](#)

[Prepared for the future III: More skilled workers for our healthcare and elderly care](#)

[Agreement on the allocation of the reserve for measures in the social, health, and labour market sectors for 2024-27](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

A coherent plan for the education system

The coherent plan for the education system consists of different reforms and initiatives across the entire education system thus targeting a wide array of groups.

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2024 Implementation

Tripartite agreement to ensure more apprenticeships in Danish VET

In November 2020, the government and the social partners signed a tripartite agreement with initiatives worth EUR 66 million (DKK 500 million) annually.

According to the agreement and as from 1 January 2022

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Tripartite agreement for increasing apprentices in the health sector: Denmark. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/38204>