

## REFERENCE YEAR 2023

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# UNDERSTANDING OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

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### Content updates and contributors

Version 2023 - Drafted by Michel Urbain, Project manager, OFFA (Office francophone de formation en alternance), Belgium - Member of [Cedefop Community of apprenticeship experts](#) for Belgium - French community

#### **Q1. Is there a stable legal basis for apprenticeships in your country?**



✓ YES



✓ NO



✓ IN  
DEVELOPMENT

The legal basis was established in October 24th 2008 through the framework cooperation agreement signed by the Walloon Region, the French Community (now: Wallonia-Brussels Federation) and the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region on "Formation en Alternance", and was implemented in 2015/2016.

- L'arrêté du 15 juillet 2015 du Collège de la Commission communautaire française relatif au contrat d'alternance et au plan de formation y afférent, tels que prévus en vertu de l'accord de coopération relatif à la formation en alternance du 24 octobre 2008 et modifié par les avenants des 27 mars et 15 mai 2014.
- L'arrêté du 16 juillet 2015 du Gouvernement wallon relatif au contrat d'alternance.
- L'arrêté du 17 juillet 2015 du Gouvernement de la Communauté française relatif au contrat d'alternance.

Decree of 3 July 1991: <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23820> regulates vocational education organised by educational authorities (CEFA).

Decree of 17 July 2003 <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=4042> organizes vocational training provided by training centers IFAPME/SFPME. These are independent structures from the educational authorities, but they are supervised by the by the Minister of Education of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation to ensure that the apprenticeships offered comply with the official learning outcomes requirements and that the budget received by public authorities is used appropriately (see also Q3).

#### **Q2. Is there an official definition of 'apprenticeship' or 'apprentice' in your country?**



✓ YES

✓ NO

“Formation en alternance” describes, as of 1 July 2015, any situation that meets cumulatively the following six conditions:

1. Training is carried out partly at the workplace and partly within or at the initiative and under the responsibility of an educational or training institution; these two parts together aim to carry out a single training plan and, to that end, are coordinated and alternate regularly.

2. The training pathway leads to a vocational qualification.

3. The part carried out at the workplace covers an average work duration, on an annual basis, of least 20 hours a week, excluding holidays and vacations.

4. The part carried within or at the initiative and under the responsibility of an educational or training institution, foresees on an annual basis:

- at least 240 training hours for young people subject to compulsory part-time education (NB: age 15-18);

- at least 150 training hours for young people no longer subject to compulsory schooling.

These numbers of hours can be calculated as a proportion of the total duration of the programme. Moreover, if a person is exempted from part of the programme by the educational or training institution, the corresponding number of hours count towards the total of 240 or 150 hours.

5. Both school/training center- and work-place based training components are conducted under and covered by a contract, the employer and the young person are part thereof. Training can be conducted as part of several successive contracts provided that:

- the minimum number of hours of training in the education or training institution reaches the minimum numbers set by law;

- the full pathway, composed of various successive contracts, is guaranteed and monitored by the education and training institution responsible for the training and for the final qualification award.

6. The contract foresees financial compensation for the young person; it is paid by the employer and is to be considered as remuneration.

An apprentice is defined as any person who, as part of “formation en alternance”, is tied to an employer by a contract.

### Q3. At which level do apprenticeship schemes exist in your country?



✓ AT UPPER  
SECONDARY LEVEL

✓ AT POST-  
SECONDARY (NOT  
TERTIARY)

✓ AT TERTIARY  
LEVEL



✓ AT SECTORAL  
LEVEL

Upper secondary level:

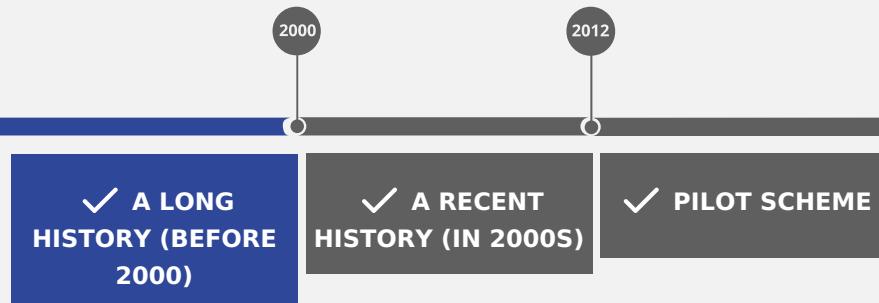
1. "Formation en alternance" targets young people aged 15 to 25 and it can be organized:
  - by educational authorities through CEFA centers (Centres d'Education et de Formation en Alternance) which are attached to a secondary school and under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (enseignement en alternance);
  - by SMEs training centers: the SFPME (Espace Formation PME) in Brussels and the IFAPME (Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et PME) in Wallonia (formation en alternance (apprentissage))
2. Industrial apprenticeship contracts (CAI) are organized by some sectorial branches and lead to occupational qualifications.

Post-secondary level: the "Convention de stage", Alternation contract in an entrepreneurship programme is organized by SMEs training centers: The SFPME (Espace Formation PME) in Brussels and the IFAPME (Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et PME) in Wallonia. Entrepreneurship is a post-secondary level but is not considered as high education. It targets people aged 18 to 25. The final outcome is the Certification of Entrepreneur which allows to run a company or to be employed as qualified employee.

Tertiary level: several Master en Alternance and Baccalauréat in Alternance are piloted

The only mainstream apprenticeship schemes with a stable legal basis that meet the criteria of Cedefop database are formation en alternance and convention de stage.

#### Q4. How well-established are apprenticeship schemes in your country?



Apprenticeships schemes are organized by either apprenticeship centers in schools (CEFA) or by the training organizations of SMEs (IFAPME, SFPME).

The CEFA scheme was originally introduced as part of compulsory schooling in 1985 at the time of extending the compulsory schooling age from 15 to 18, with the implicit purpose of providing education to all young people who were at risk of early leaving. SMEs training has a long-lasting tradition in apprenticeships and target the skills needs of the SMEs labour market. In 1907 the first apprenticeship secretariat in Wallonia was created. The IFAPME network can be considered as the heir of this first historic institution.

## **Q5. Relevant information that is essential to understanding the specificity of apprenticeships in the country.**

The only mainstream apprenticeship schemes with a stable legal basis that meet the criteria of Cedefop database are formation en alternance and convention de stage. Cedefop database provides a scheme fiche for formation en alternance only.

Previously, young people who sought to follow an apprenticeship scheme could opt for two separate tracks: through CEFA or IFAPME/SFPME.

The Minister of employment and training of the Walloon Region stated in May 2015: "These are two worlds and two different philosophies. The pathways, the structures, the apprenticeship contracts, funding or incentives are not identical. This leads to sterile competition between learners, training organizations and even businesses."

To harmonize the systems, a framework cooperation agreement on "formation en alternance" was signed by the Walloon Region, the French Community (now: Wallonia-Brussels Federation) and French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region on 24 October 2008 (modified by addendum dated 27 March 2014), which lead, nearly 7 years later in July 2015, to the introduction of three decrees, one at each level of power, implementing the framework cooperation agreement on "formation en alternance".

The cooperation agreement (as of October 2008, not implemented until 2015) aims at simplifying, harmonizing and promoting the mobility of learners, and on 1 September 2015 it established a common contract for all operators of "formation en alternance", i.e. the so-called contract d'alternance (see Q27 in the scheme fiche). These operators are overseen by the OFFA (Office Francophone de la Formation en Alternance) whose mission is the coordination of "formation en alternance" in French-speaking Belgium. A full overhaul of the two tracks is being carried out since the school year 2015/2016 to achieve a unique apprentice status, a common apprenticeship contract (contrat d'alternance) and equal conditions for all employers.