



Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts

How are European countries managing apprenticeships to respond to the COVID-19 crisis?

***Synthesis report
based on information provided by
Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts***

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Introduction

In April 2020, [Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts](#) took the initiative to launch an internal consultation about how European countries are managing apprenticeships under the current global health emergency due to the COVID-19 crisis.

[Cedefop community of apprenticeship experts](#) aims at strengthening and expanding the knowledge on apprenticeships in Europe. Members collaborate on a voluntary basis to generate insights on national developments regarding apprenticeships, cover existing gaps in information retrieval from the countries in specific areas of concern and provide the knowledge base for comparative analysis. Community experts are professionals with solid expertise in the area of apprenticeships. The objectives of the Community are:

- *Consolidating the EU knowledge base on apprenticeships and supporting knowledge sharing* about apprenticeship systems and schemes in EU member states, Iceland and Norway;
- *Knowledge generation* on new research themes, thematic focuses, comparative analyses on specific topics;
- *Networking* through direct access to national contacts for expertise on apprenticeship, peer learning opportunities.

This synthesis, in line with the objectives of the community, is based on provisional information shared by twenty-five experts, i.e. members from:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. Austria | 9. Greece | 18. Poland |
| 2. Belgium-Flanders | 10. Hungary | 19. Portugal |
| 3. Belgium-French speaking | 11. Iceland | 20. Romania |
| 4. Belgium-German speaking | 12. Ireland | 21. Slovenia |
| 5. Bulgaria | 13. Italy | 22. Spain |
| 6. Finland | 14. Lithuania | 23. Sweden |
| 7. France | 15. Malta | 24. UK-England |
| 8. Germany | 16. The Netherlands | 25. UK-Wales |
| | 17. Norway | |

Information refers only to the countries where the active members come from, and the scope of the note covers all apprenticeship schemes present in such countries ⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Detailed information about apprenticeship schemes leading to a formal VET qualification, with a stable legal basis and implemented at mainstream level (no pilot projects) is available in [Cedefop European databases on apprenticeships](#).

Main messages

- All countries are making **efforts to keep up with learning** at education and training providers, while they are closed (solution: distance learning), and to maintain the contracts with the companies (not suspend the contract, development of distance projects, incentives from the government, agreement with education and training providers). The aim is not to lose the year or graduation, when this is linked to an individual schedule. In the same vein (not to lose the year), most countries are still working out how to deal with the final assessment (in the worst cases, postponement is envisaged).
- **Distance learning**, however, is piecemeal, and its use very much depends on the VET providers and teachers e-skills and availability, and on sectors. Its use spans from communication/keep in touch with students, access to resources (videos etc.), and actual teaching. Some countries are considering virtual final assessment.
- A critical role is played by **teachers** and by **collaboration at school-company level** in ensuring training continuity (especially via distance learning). Where apprentices still go to companies, there are cases where companies, in collaboration with VET providers, allow learners to make up also for parts of the learning that was supposed to be delivered in school-based format.
- Whereas when it comes to schools, the situation is linear (schools are closed), when it comes to companies, the situation is more nuanced, and variation largely depends on **sectors**. Discontinuation of the school attendance does not necessarily mean discontinuation of company attendance. However, the situation varies by economic sector. Apprentices' continue their training and work, in particular, in the healthcare, food, building sectors and, generally, wherever companies continue their activities as long as the health and safety measures are observed. Apprentices have largely discontinued their company attendance in the sectors whose activities have been shut down: restauration, well-being, tourism.
- Regarding the **contractual implications** for apprentices, a key difference is between apprentices who have contracts regulated the labour code and are covered by the labour market measures; and those with contracts not covered by the labour code and continue to receive the State grant.

Outline

The synthesis is organised in five main sections:

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1. Impact on apprenticeships school-based component

1.1. Attendance at school or VET provider

- All schools and VET providers offering training to apprentices are closed. Countries differ in the deadline of this measure (until April or mid-May 2020). Consequently, in all countries, in general apprentices don't go to school ⁽²⁾.
- While most countries have not specified the implications of the training activities interruption and its impact on the duration of the apprenticeship period, there are exceptions:
 - In the German speaking part of Belgium, three scenarios are under discussion at the government level: schools start again on 20th of April; schools still stay closed until 3rd of May; lessons will not at all start again in this schoolyear.
 - France and Portugal specified that courses are suspended, will resume as soon as schools reopen, and will be adapted to the duration of closure.
 - In Germany, the orders for temporary school closures in all federal states for reasons of infection control mean that vocational school students must also be absent from classes at vocational schools. Although as a rule the training relationship ends when the contractually agreed end of training is reached (even if the final examination has not yet been taken), an extension of the training period can be requested by the apprentice at the Chamber, only if the extension is necessary in order to achieve the training objectives. This may well be the case if the vocational training in the company or at the vocational school is interrupted for a longer period of time due to corona virus.

1.2. Distance learning

Most countries set up arrangements for distancing learning and organize online classes: Austria, Bulgaria, Belgium Flanders, French Speaking Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK (England, Wales). Familiarity with and success of distance learning vary across countries:

- In Bulgaria, students study the theory online for 2 or 3 days just as they did in school. In other cases, schools are encouraged to discuss and reach agreements with the companies on a plan in which students can study theory online every day until the quarantine is over and then work out all days they have missed in the companies. This option could also be applied if the companies are not closed but wish to do so.
- In Finland, apprentices who still learn at workplaces may access school training resources via distance learning: education providers have several apps and procedures which connect student, vocational teacher and trainer at the workplace. Students who cannot go to

⁽²⁾ In French Speaking Belgium, students whose parents are working in the medical sector or essential activities are not supposed to stay home. They go to their schools where teachers take care of them; however, teenagers usually stay home.

workplaces now, are offered the opportunity to continue their studies in education providers other learning environments, distance learning for example, if possible.

- In France, distance learning for apprentices is foreseen by paragraph 2 of article L. 6211-2 of the labour code. If the training provider sets up distance learning opportunities, two situations may apply: either the apprentice follows distance learning at home, if he or she has the necessary equipment; or, the apprentice follows distance learning in the company, when the conditions apply, and the company can offer the necessary equipment. The main aim is ensuring continuity of apprenticeship training. If this is not possible, apprentices may go to their company.
- In Germany, apprentices who still go to companies may access school training resources while at the workplace. In fact, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZdH) recommends to companies that provide in-house vocational training that they advise their apprentices to allow sufficient training time to process materials provided by respective via e-learning platforms. If vocational schools do not instruct enterprises on this, employers should actively contact the vocational schools to discuss further procedures such as granting learning time to apprentices.
- In Hungary, teaching is continued via distance learning options. Theoretical courses are online, and for hands-on classes teachers overcome this additional challenge by creating and using demonstration videos or through other creative solutions. In case companies do not offer workplace training, schools might adjust to provide the theoretical part in block form.
- In Iceland, teaching was moved online overnight. This has been challenging for many teachers, especially those teaching more hands-on classes. But they are using and creating demonstration videos and finding creative solutions with online resources. The response seems to vary though by schools and departments and it is clear that in some cases teachers have decided to postpone all classes until the schools open again and then add to the time students have to work in the schools.
- In Ireland, engagement with stakeholders is underway to ensure continuity of learning for apprentices. Some providers are incorporating online platforms to facilitate learning and assessments; many already moved or are looking at possibility of online on-the-job delivery; some providers are making plans for assessment using virtual platforms. Online learning solutions are, in particular, being utilised in more recently developed apprenticeships such as engineering, IT, finance and insurance.
- In Italy, there are many solutions either at national or local level concerning the methodologies and the tools that are used for implementing distance education. So far, training institutions have found proper solutions to deliver training on line and to provide assessment of students.
- In Malta, there is a general effort to continue with lessons via distance learning at all levels. It is still very early to say how effective it is, but at least the effort is there by all parties

concerned and the technological/infrastructural setup is proving to be up to the standard required.

- In Norway, there are several apps and websites which connect student, vocational teacher and trainer at the workplace. These are working very well for both giving tasks and the assessment of learning.
- In Lithuania, after suspension of school attendance, schools were given two weeks to prepare for distance learning, and teaching recommenced on 30 March, via on-line platforms chosen by schools. An electronic diary is used to facilitate communication among teachers and learners.
- In the Netherlands, for the purposes of distant learning, student should be aware of location, content and quality of didactic activities e.g. webinar for several students / groups and consultation hours by phone with teachers for instruction. Choices are made to facilitate distant learning for priority lessons or for students who are in the last phase of assessment, and to facilitate students who can't join the distant learning activities. Training Centres can provide study and ICT facilities.
- In Portugal, the latest developments point to a general increase in the use of digital platforms, also in apprenticeships. The Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP) has its own digital platform for eLearning that is available for all their network of training centres. Apprenticeship programmes will soon have guidelines for functioning, as there are several issues to clarify. For instance, there must be an agreement between the VET provider, the trainee and the trainers; a pedagogic guarantee that the contents will be provided following the eLearning methodology; the attendance of the trainees needs to be confirmed. The government is planning to start the final semester via distance learning and discussions are held on allowing classroom teaching for the last years of programmes allowing higher education access, only for the subjects to be assessed.
- In Spain, students continue their programmes, when possible, through online classes. In the region of Madrid, this is possible through the online platform called "Aula Virtual de Educamadrid", which allows teachers, students and families find educational resources. Each Autonomous Region may have its own online educational platform. Several different tools are used as well by students and teachers.
- In Slovenia, it took some time to decide who would organize distance learning for apprentices but eventually schools did: all apprentices have to follow distance learning classes with their schools. Usually, schools include apprentices in groups of students who follow the school-based pathway. The experience of teachers is not homogeneous in delivering online classes.
- In Sweden, there is not a national learning tool, but many use online tools and it seems to work. There are also several applications to connect apprentice, vocational teacher and in-company trainer.
- In UK-England, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) provides support to encourage training providers to deliver training to apprentices remotely, and via e-learning,

as far as is practicable, allowing the modification of end-point assessment arrangements, including remote assessments wherever practicable and possible

- In UK-Wales, maintaining contact with learners and distance learning is encouraged, and the apprenticeship provider network have positively responded.

2. Impact on company-based component

2.1. Attendance in the company is suspended

In most countries, apprentices don't go to companies, if they are closed by Regulation, but the situation varies by sector, scheme or educational level.

- In Greece, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Italy (type 1 and type 3) apprentices do not attend their place of work. In Slovenia, this will continue for as long as schools are closed. This seems to be the case also in Spain, in those regions where dual VET is offered under the umbrella of cooperation agreements (apprentices are considered as learners and receive scholarships).
- In French Speaking Belgium, all company/based placements are suspended except for those at higher education level.
- In Norway, the government has decided to close a lot of private companies, where consequently apprentices cannot go, and they are temporarily laid off. In case of employed apprentices, some employers have suspended the contract, especially in sectors such as hotels, restaurants and shops.
- In Greece, most private companies are temporarily shut down, and the public sector works in rotation, so a decision to pause attendance in companies was taken for all apprentices.

Accordingly, in-company training is suspended:

- In Belgium-Flanders, if apprentices don't go to the workplace, companies do not provide any replacement for the in-company training component.
- In the Netherlands, if the employment contract is finished/expires, normally also the (separate but complementing) learning agreement expires. If the learning agreement is finished earlier than agreed at the start of the training course, it's up to the educational experts from the training centre to decide if the intended learning outcomes / work processes / key tasks can be completed, without the relevant in-company hours. The experts will take into consideration the results from previous work placement or alternative (practical) exercises. If the student needs an alternative work placement, students, parents or the training centre can ask SBB to suggest one. If this is impossible to get, necessary work placement will be postponed, and the learning period will be prolonged. As an alternative, upon student request and approval by the training centre, learning can be switched from apprenticeship / work-based learning to school-based learning (allowed several times already because of the Coronavirus), provided that the training content is suitable for a school-based pathway and the switch is documented.

- In Germany, if the company is closed by the authorities, the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce suggests that companies in such case, try to shift the training content to other departments. If this is not possible, companies are advised to give their apprentices a project to work on at home, which will help the company move forward after reopening. Additional learning time for the vocational school is also a possibility to use the time. An extension of the training period can be exceptionally requested by the apprentice at the Chamber, only if the extension is necessary in order to achieve the training objectives. The German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH) states that “Even though the Vocational Training Act and the Crafts Code do not provide for any direct legal entitlement to an extension of the vocational training relationship in the event that the final examination or journeyman's examination is not held until after the end of the training period, we recommend that the chambers grant applications for an extension analogous to § 27 c (2) HwO / § 8 (2) BBiG as an exception due to the special situation, provided that the training companies do not raise justified objections to an extension of the contract.
- In UK-England, employers (and training providers) may report and initiate a break in learning, where the interruption to learning due to COVID-19 is greater than 4 weeks. The ESFA provides clarifications on how to record breaks in learning so that funding is not unnecessarily disrupted.

2.2. Attendance in the company continues

Apprentices go to companies and in-company training continues if all parties think it's safe.

- In Belgium-Flanders, apprentices whose workplace component takes place in an essential service can continue to work if the student, the sector and the company agree to do so. The essential services and trainings are defined by the government.
- In French Speaking Belgium, students in higher education with work-based learning, can continue to go to the workplace if the employer and the school agree so.
- In Finland, training at the workplace can continue if the education provider and the employer consider that the work environment is safe for the student. The government recommends social distancing at work for all those for whom it is possible, and in some sectors, there are temporary restrictions on the pursuit of a profession. If the safety of the students cannot be ensured, it is recommended that on-the-job training be continued only when the risk no longer exists.
- In Hungary, training in the workplace can continue if the employer can still provide and ensures a safe environment for apprentices. Parents though may decide not to allow their children to participate at workplace training. Many employers picked the option to continue offering training from distance; in that case in-company trainers send projects to their apprentices at home, and assessment process is not affected. They also have to option to decide together with the school for a postponement of the practical training.
- In the Netherlands, apprenticeship within companies can be continued, on condition that the organisation (company) or training centre approves the continuation of the

apprenticeship. The guidelines from the government and training centre, in accordance with guidelines from National Institute for Public Health and the Environment and Public Health Service, should be respected.

- In Portugal, work-based learning can continue to be delivered at the workplace, as long as the enterprises where it takes place are working and if there is an agreement between all parts (learner, tutor and VET provider).
- In Sweden, the government has decided that the apprentices or students who should attend work-based learning, can continue to go to the workplace, if the employer and the school think that that is a good option.

In the rest of the countries whose experts were consulted, apprentices continue to go to companies and in-company training goes on, typically (although not only) those providing essential services:

- In Austria apprentices keep working in sectors like food trade, bakeries, pharmacies, car repair etc. apart from sectors closed by regulation (tourism, services). Working from home is available as an option.
- In German Speaking Belgium, until 19th of April apprentices are 100% in the companies for on-the-job training which would normally take 80% of the apprenticeship. Apprentices are considered like other collaborators in the company and they are still at work if the companies can assure social distancing and all the precautions. Some sectors had to close, for example, restaurants or shops: in this case, apprentices are at home or in temporary unemployment.
- In Bulgaria, if the companies in which apprentices are placed are not closed, they can continue to go to work but respecting all sanitary requirements.
- In Lithuania, if companies are not closed, apprentices continue working. Decision about training rests on employers, which need to guarantee a safe working environment. Work from distance is recommended by the Government whenever possible.
- In France, closure of VET centres does not translate in suspension of apprenticeship and training continuity should be ensured: if distance learning is not possible, training should take place in the company. Training time originally meant to be spent in the training centre will be postponed to other periods, initially allocated for work-based learning in the company. Companies may make exceptional use of part-time work (article R. 5122-1 du code du travail) also for apprentices, as a regular employee.
- Also, in Germany, if the company has no orders to close down, apprentices working hours may be reduced by up to 50 percent.
- In Ireland, many apprentices continue with their employers doing on-the-job training. However, this varies depending on the type of economic sector. For example, there are sectors which are experiencing increased demand during this emergency (e.g. biopharma), while other sectors are currently temporarily shut down as part of the public health response measures (e.g. construction sites).

- In Italy, type 2 apprentices employed in essential services (health services, food sector, sanitary equipment for instance) may still work, if they are assured to stay in a safe workplace. All other companies are closed, especially those which normally employ the largest share of apprentices in the country (services to the persons, tourism and the retail sector). Apprentices employed in such companies don't go to the workplace.
- In Norway, apprentices in the health sector are still at work, and reports say that they are really contributing in coping with the health emergency.
- In Spain, apprentices in Dual VET with an apprenticeship contract are considered as employees and are expected to still go to the company. In practice though, this refers to the minority of apprentices, as most contracts (92% in 2018 according to CCOO Trade Union) are in sectors that are closed (hospitality, tourism, retail). Teleworking is possible, especially for IT apprenticeships.
- British apprentices are required to follow the UK Government advice (as applied to all employees); while employers are responsible for putting in place and ensuring 'social distancing' measures at work. In Iceland, the situation varies by trade and by company. As apprentices are considered employees, their options depend on the situation at the company in question and the industry involved. Those that can work do so (e.g. in the building sector) and those who can't don't (e.g. hairdressing). However, employers are responsible for ensuring employee safety at work and take measures for social distancing.

3. Implications on contracts, remuneration

In general, apprentices whose contracts are not suspended are paid as usual.

When companies close there are two main cases: the most relevant difference is between apprentices whose contracts are covered by the labour code and receive a wage and are covered by the labour market measures; and apprentices whose contracts are not covered by the labour code and receive an allowance and/or State grant.

- The former case (apprentices' contracts are covered by the labour code) applies to Austria, Belgium-Flanders, French Speaking Belgium, German Speaking Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, UK-England, Wales and in some cases Sweden.
 - In Austria, if companies are closed, they can apply for *Kurzarbeit* (reduced working regulation), a scheme whereby the training company pays 100% of apprenticeship wages but gets reimbursed from PES for most of these expenses (the scheme is limited until the end of September 2020; *Kurzarbeit* may be applied for 3 months; a subsequent extension for another 3 months is possible).
 - In Belgium-Flanders, if the contract is suspended, apprentices can apply for temporary unemployment. The national unemployment service has to decide if this is applicable. If the contract is not suspended, the learner fee will continue to be paid.

- In French Speaking Belgium, apprentices receive a compensation from the federal government in terms of temporary lay-off benefit.
- Companies in the German speaking part of Belgium can send their apprentices in temporary unemployment and they will get an unemployment compensation. In some cases, if the company can't assure that the apprentices are safe, apprentices are at home but without remuneration.
- In Finland, if the apprenticeship is interrupted, the right to study continues at the educational institution's other learning environments, and the student can apply for study grant. The Finnish government has decided that this is an exceptional situation and will be taken into account in deciding about study grant for students.
- In Germany, if training time is reduced, remuneration can be adjusted accordingly.
- In Greece, for post-secondary level apprentices a special COVID-related grant is being considered for the time in-company learning and payment are suspended. For upper-secondary apprentices, regulations are also being prepared to ensure they keep being paid based as usual.
- In Hungary, employers may choose to continue offering workplace training. In that case, the apprenticeship contract is not terminated or suspended, and employers must pay apprentices the agreed wage.
- In Ireland, apprentices who commence an 'off the job / education' phase receive an off the job training allowance paid for by the State. This remains the case during this emergency even though education and training centres remain closed. However, the Irish Government has also introduced schemes to support businesses. For example, a wages subsidy scheme (for all employers) which can subsidise salaries up to a maximum of 70% has been introduced. It is anticipated that this scheme could ease the move towards redundancies in the short term. However, there are sectors of the economy already adversely impacted by the current situation and therefore some apprentices are being laid off / becoming unemployed. These apprentices will need to engage with social welfare services for unemployment benefit, and a new Pandemic Unemployment Payment has been introduced to support all employees who have lost their jobs during this time.
- In Lithuania, if companies remain open, employment and remuneration conditions remain the same for the majority of apprentices. In some cases, working time is reduced and remuneration decreased accordingly, or the labour contract was cancelled. Measures to compensate 60-90% of employer salaries to apprentices were introduced, for those companies affected by COVID-19.
- In Italy, type 2 apprentices who are not working benefit from a special temporary redundancy measure for 9 weeks, that may be extended if the closure of economic activities will be extended. The government is exploring the possibility to extend to such measure (that normally the company does not pay for this target group) to type 1 and type 3 apprentices too, but no decisions have been formally taken yet.

- In the Netherlands, a temporary measure to partially cover employment costs is introduced by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. An entrepreneur who expects loss of revenue (minimal 20%) can request the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV) for a period of 3 months an allowance in the costs of employment (max 90% of the total wages, depending of the loss of revenue). Prerequisite is that the company doesn't fire employees for business economic reasons during the subsidy period. Apprentices are included, because they are employees of the company.
- In Poland, although workplace training is suspended, all employers are encouraged to keep paying salaries to apprentices, as they can still count on the already existing subsidisation scheme.
- In Romania, for the period of temporary suspension of the individual employment contract, at the initiative of the employer, as a result of the effects produced by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, the allowances that the employees (and apprentices) receive are set at 75% of the basic salary corresponding to the job occupied. This support is funded by the national unemployment insurance budget (technical unemployment).
- In Sweden, in cases where apprentices have an employment contract (not the typical case), some employers have made a pause in the contract, especially in the Hotel, restaurants and shops sector. So, either they continue without a salary (but still finish their education) or they have to have distance studies.
- In UK-England, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) tries to find alternative placements to apprentices made redundant and continue their apprenticeship within 12 weeks. In UK-Wales, where apprentices need to 'self-isolate' they should continue to receive a wage from their employer (there is a UK Government incentive to encourage employers not to make staff redundant). Should any apprentice be made redundant, there are existing processes in place, which will see them receive a small training allowance, whilst continuing to work with their provider to secure alternative employment.
- Apprentices' contracts are not covered by the labour law, and State allowances/grants are paid, in Malta, Portugal, Norway, Slovenia, and, in most cases, in Sweden.
 - In Malta: apprentices will not be paid by the employer, but they will continue to get the stipend issued by Government.
 - In Portugal: during the suspension period, the absences are considered as a justified absence, so the social benefits are going to be paid, with some exceptions, in the following terms: the training/professionalisation scholarship is going to be paid according to the working days of the suspension period, regardless it would be in full or partial time, based on the calculation of the usual number of hours of the daily training. The apprentice will also be paid: the welcome and accommodation allowance, proving the need and the expense made. Meal allowances are not going to be paid during the suspension period. Refund of authorised costs for

transportation expenses must be processed upon proof of expenditure, and provided that the trainee has attended the programme in the month to which it reports, in proportion of the training days attended.

- In Norway, apprentices receive a different compensation, depending on the sector. They get from 1000 Euro per month from the government.
- In Slovenia, apprentices receive an apprenticeship allowance only for the days when they actually work. They are not compensated in this period when their work is suspended, and they are not included in the COVID-19 compensation scheme, since they are considered students with apprenticeship contract.
- In Sweden, all apprentices receive EUR 250,00 from the government every month. Some have an employment contract and get more, around 500 euro, according to different collective agreements. All employers continue to receive a State grant, amounting to about EUR 4,500 per year per student.

4. Assessment and final examination

Most countries are still working out how to deal with assessment.

- In many countries, decisions about examinations and graduation are not made yet (Belgium-FR, France, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Poland).
 - In Belgium-Fr, decisions are yet to be made about examinations and degrees awarding.
 - Ireland is engaging with key education stakeholders to develop alternative approaches to assessment. This work will be based on data gathered from the apprenticeship providers and consultation on the most effective and appropriate approaches to assessment given current circumstances. The agreed approach to assessment will be developed with reference to guidance provided by the national qualifications authority. This work aligns with a broader approach across the tertiary education system to examine continuity of learning and assessment.
 - In France, training programmes will be adapted by the training centres when they reopen to apprentices to take account of the delays due to their closure, but it's not envisaged yet how this will affect assessment. At present, the postponement of examinations is not envisaged. The training programmes will be adapted by the training centres when they reopen to apprentices to take account of the delays due to their closure.
 - The Italian Government is still working to solve this issue and a final decision will be probably taken after Easter holidays. The same applies to Norway.
 - In Malta, the assessment of school-based work will be done remotely wherever possible, but a decision on how to tackle it will be taken at a later stage when the whole issues of assessments will be decided.

- Some countries decided to postpone / extend (even without a date) examinations, e.g. Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, the UK-Wales and England.
 - In Austria, no regulation exists yet on assessment from a distance. Apprentices document their learning by themselves. At the moment, final exams will not be held. This regulation will last until 13 April. Additional postponement will be decided in due time.
 - In Slovenia, the ministry already decided that final exams (as well as general and vocational matura) will take place this year, although at the moment it is not clear how and when. Several options are being discussed, also with schools.
 - In Greece, final assessment is planned to be carried out in October.
 - In UK-Wales, challenges with apprentices completing their programme are especially seen when it comes to any physical 'end tests', but these will need to resume when the current restrictions are lifted.
 - In UK-England, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) clarified that apprentices ready for assessment, but who cannot be assessed due to COVID-19 issues, can have an extension to the assessment time frame with their end-point assessment being rescheduled. Remote assessments can be implemented wherever practicable and possible.
 - In Germany, the approximately 210,000 industrial-technical and commercial trainees nationwide will not take their examinations until June instead of April and May. Summer examinations by Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IHK) have been postponed to 16 and 17 June 2020 (Industrial-technical final exams) and 18 and 19 June 2020 (Commercial written final exams, including the hospitality industry). Examination candidates who were registered for their final examination Part 1 in spring 2020 will be given the opportunity to take the examination in autumn 2020. The examination period for the practical examination will begin as planned on 2 May 2020. Dates for further education examinations: The IHK further training examinations, which are regularly scheduled for June 2020, will also take place on these dates. From 22 June 2020, the catch-up dates for the March examinations that were not taken, and the postponed further training examinations scheduled for April and May will start. By the end of August 2020, the cancelled or postponed examinations will have been made up for. According to the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK), as a rule training ends when its contractually agreed end is reached, so postponement of examinations does not prolong training. However, if training objectives are not met, an exception can be granted (See 3.1) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts call chambers to grant such applications by apprentices (See 4.1).
 - Netherlands: for students who can achieve their diploma during this cohort, Training Centres exert that the student achieves this diploma on quality-based terms for the 1st of January 2021. Training Centres can decide to value the evidence provided that a student has fulfilled the requirements / learning outcomes.
 - In Romania, all final exams of graduates are suspended.

- In Belgium-Flanders, schools can assess students from a distance. A dedicated working group will provide guidelines to facilitate this, together with distance learning.
- In Lithuania, assessment is performed remotely for learning outcomes achieved via distance learning. The Ministry of Education has decided to cancel final exams for VET graduates this year, replacing the exam grades with the average of learners' grades so far.
- In Finland, each student graduates on an individual schedule on the basis of the personal competence development plan (PCDP). In this situation, if it is not possible to arrange demonstration of competence in workplace for all students, the education provider gives priority to those students who are scheduled to complete the degree and graduate this spring. Demonstration of competence can also be organized in other workplace-like learning environments outside the educational institution, for example on the training provider's own construction sites or teaching farms. The evidence must always be arranged in such a way that the methods of demonstrating competence correspond as closely as possible to authentic work tasks and work processes and enable the assessment of professional skills. If this is not possible, the demonstration and assessment of competence will be transferred to a later time.
- In Iceland, there is variability in the responses of schools and teachers, but in all cases, the shared aim is to not have to postpone studies or graduation from school. However, there is most likely going to be a delay in students' graduation if they cannot work in companies the predetermined number of weeks required. The ministry of education, science, and culture sent out a statement April 3rd saying that all those who had intended to graduate from VET this spring and complete their journeyman's exam will be able to do so – at the latest by 15 September 2020. This will be ensured by a collaboration between the schools, the ministry, and industry representatives in charge of the journeymen exams.

5. Centralised support

Some countries already had or set up ad hoc bodies to centrally manage this situation and provide support

- In Belgium-Flanders, the minister of education is in close contact with a working group consisting of the educational providers, social partners and educational experts, which is also in charge of dealing with issues related to apprentices' evaluation and graduation.
- OFFA in French speaking Belgium coordinates a Task Force in charge of:
 - Coordination of operators, partners and tutors to share positions between education and training
 - Reaction to developments, adaptations of decisions, monitor major difficulties, collect information from sectors.
 - Ensuring clear, seamless and shared communication with partners and users

- Inquiry into politics
- In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture and The Finnish National Agency for Education are producing instructions, webinars and materials to support exceptional teaching arrangements, and publishing FAQs.
- In France, the Ministry of Employment published some FAQs: <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/gr-coronavirus-apprentissage-15032020.pdf>
- In Germany, FAQs were published by the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK) <https://www.dihk.de/de/aktuelles-und-presse/coronavirus/faq-19594>
- In the Netherlands, official information has been provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
- In Ireland, a central working group of key apprenticeship stakeholders has been established, led by the Department of Education and Skills, to support apprentices, employers, education and training providers and other key stakeholders over the period of the shutdown. From the outset, and in line with efforts across the tertiary system, the Working Group prioritized steps to create continuity of learning and assessment for apprentices.
- In Portugal, all information is centralised and available online, the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training has FAQs and guidelines online <https://www.iefp.pt/noticias?item=9823250>.
- UK-En, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responding by taking steps to ensure that, wherever possible, apprentices can continue and complete their apprenticeship, despite any break they need to take as a result of COVID-19, and to support providers during this challenging time.