



Work-based learning and simulations

Problem statement

Addressed problem: Limited work and/or "real-life" experience

All young people need support to make the transition from education into employment. Participating in work-based learning and close-to-real simulations can help young people develop positive career aspirations. It can also help them develop essential behaviours, attitudes and skills required for the workplace.

Some young people are especially keen to engage in work-based learning and close-to real simulations as they are more attracted to the vocational and practical style of learning. These approaches can help to increase self-esteem, motivation and build confidence in learners.

Limited work experience and lack of work readiness is often highlighted as a concern by employers when young people first enter the workplace. Activities that offer a real working context for young people help develop employability skills, essential for their positive engagement in the workplace and retention in VET more broadly.

Beneficiaries

Early leavers from education and training

Learners who lack employability skills

Learners with low self-confidence and self-esteem

Low-motivated learners

Young people

Unemployed youth

Vulnerable groups

Migrants / refugees

The provision of work-based learning and close-to-real simulations provide opportunities to experience the everyday reality of the workplace and are suitable for all young people. These approaches can be particularly useful for:

- Young people at risk of early leaving from education and training or who have already dropped out
- Young people who lack motivation to continue learning and who may have a low appreciation of the value of learning
- Young people who have low self-esteem and lack of longer-term perspective for themselves
- Young people who need support to develop the types of behaviours, attitudes and social skills necessary for the workplace

Addressing the problem

What should be the main features of work-based learning?

The following tips are offered to policy makers and practitioners involved in the design and delivery of such measures. The information is based on Cedefop research into successful measures.

Tip 1: Provide young people with quality careers advice, guidance and practical information

Quality [careers advice and guidance](#) should be made available to all young people. It helps young people find out more about the world of work and provides an insight into different career and job opportunities.

Young people experiencing the workplace for the first time may feel vulnerable or uncertain about what to expect. They should be provided with [advice and guidance to help them understand their role and responsibilities in the workplace](#), and to comply with the terms and conditions of their employment. For example, practical information on working hours, dress code, line management arrangements, travel arrangements, payment, health and safety in the workplace etc. can also help young people understand and deal with the uncertainty they may experience when entering the workplace.

Tip 2: Provide different models of work-based learning and close-to real simulations

There are a range of different models of work-based learning and close-to real simulations. These include:

- Apprenticeships (that formally combine / alternate company-based training with school-based education)
- School-based VET with on-the job training periods in companies (internships, work placements, traineeships)
- Work-based learning / work tasters in a school (on-site labs, workshops, printing press, kitchens, restaurants, junior or practice firms, simulations or real business / industry projects)

Work-based learning / work tasters in a school are especially important as they allow young people to 'taste' different occupational areas prior to their formal transition from education to employment. These measures enable young people develop their employability skills and experience work cultures before making concrete decisions on their career progressions.

Work-based learning / work tasters in a school can be used as bridging programmes for those students who cannot find a regular apprenticeship in countries where there is a lack of placements.

Opportunities to try different occupational areas can be designed to reflect the interests, needs and capabilities of the young person. They could include activities and sufficient time for young people to prepare for the workplace (application forms, taking part in an interview, briefing sessions). They should allow for young people to reflect on their experience of the workplace - the type of work undertaken, skills learnt and on the strengths and aptitudes they have shown.

Tip 3: Build direct partnerships with employers

Cooperation between education and training providers and employers is needed to ensure the availability of in-company placements for learners. It is also essential to ensure the experience of the work place is effective, relevant and useful to young people. It can help increase the work-related relevance of a curriculum and make it more attractive to young people. Cooperation can also lead to the development of a range of different and effective approaches to build work readiness, including career talks, work tasters and work shadowing opportunities.

Education providers should apply a [flexible approach to organising opportunities for young people to experience the workplace](#) in partnership with employers. The organisation of these opportunities could vary and is likely to depend on employers' capacity. This could include a pattern of once a week for the duration of a term, longer term block placements, or a rotation of short placements in different parts of the organisation so the young person can experience different departments of the organisation where relevant.

Employers also benefit from building direct partnerships with schools. Employers are able to showcase their industries and workplaces, improve their profile in the community, and potentially attract a pool of prospective recruits for their future workforces.

Tip 4: Build partnerships with community-based organisations

Community-based organisations can play a key role in supporting young people with their transition from education to employment. In addition to offering opportunities for work-based learning and close-to real simulations, many community-based organisations provide services and recreational activities that help young people improve their self-esteem, motivation and develop essential life skills. These activities may be particularly attractive to young people who are at risk of leaving education and training due to performance issues.

Tip 5: Ensure regular communication between the school tutor and the company tutor

If [work-based training](#) is provided by a company or an entity different to that of the school, there should be a tutor or person responsible for training at this company / entity. This will ensure stronger connections and regular dialogue between schools and employers to allow more varied modes of engagement between business and young people. This can be achieved by ensuring the learner has been assigned a key worker. This will help young people feel supported and ensure that employers are clear about the relationship between the on and off-the-job components of a learning programme.

Expected outcomes

Providing work-based learning and/or close-to-real simulations opportunities to young people enables them to develop their overall readiness and understanding of the world of work. It helps them develop their awareness of job demands and employer expectations, and ultimately supports their effective transition and integration to the labour market.

The following outcomes can be expected at different levels:

		
INDIVIDUAL	INSTITUTIONAL	SYSTEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate the development of young people's interests and curiosity • Improved work habits • Developing a positive attitude to learning and education and training • Gaining a better understanding of career options • Gaining a better understanding of job roles • Making informed choices • Improving self-awareness - understanding of own abilities, aptitudes and interests • Improved 'work readiness' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and characteristics of work-based learning opportunities for students • Improved satisfaction with programmes • Programmes better meet the needs of learners and employers • Cooperation procedures between education and training providers and employers are being used • Cooperation procedures between education and training providers and community-based organisations are being used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved links between workplace and VET provider-based learning • Increased participation in VET programmes

Related protective factors

Positive future vision for oneself and positive career choices



Work readiness



Related resources

Statistics and data



STATISTICS AND DATA

Apprenticeship schemes in EU supporting the school-to-work transition enhancing employability

24 Member States have apprenticeship schemes in which at least 50% of the training takes place on the company’s premises. Apprenticeships are usually associated with a number of benefits for individual learners, for the companies that use them, and for the society overall.

-  EU level
-  Austria
-  Belgium
-  Bulgaria
-  Croatia
-  Cyprus
-  Czechia
-  Denmark
-  Estonia
-  Finland
-  France
-  Germany
-  Greece
-  Hungary
-  Ireland
-  Italy
-  Latvia
-  Lithuania
-  Luxembourg
-  Malta
-  Netherlands
-  Poland
-  Portugal
-  Romania
-  Slovakia
-  Slovenia
-  Spain
-  United Kingdom
-  Sweden

Good practices



GOOD PRACTICE

Supra-Company Training

Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung (ÜBA)

In Austria, young adults finding it hard to obtain an apprenticeship are assisted by a nationwide program called “Supra-Company Training”. The measure provides apprenticeship training to help young people enter the labour market.



GOOD PRACTICE

Crafts Square

Piazza dei Mestieri

In Italy, ‘Crafts Square’ offers young people, unemployed young people and adults with an alternative educational offer with a good balance between practical and theoretical courses. The environment created by the ‘Craft Square’ aims to ensure learners feel understood, supported and valued.





GOOD PRACTICE

Introductory training (Einstiegsqualifizierung (EQ))

The “Introductory training” scheme has been running in Germany since 2004. The scheme funds apprenticeship-like training with a view to helping young people find a regular apprenticeship opportunity.



Germany

Tools



TOOLS

PES practices for the outreach and activation of NEETs

The PES handbook offers national examples of how the public employment services work in partnership with youth outreach workers and other key services to engage and support young people at risk of early leaving.



EU level

Publications



High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles

The European Commission has set out 20 guiding principles for stakeholders involved in work-based learning. These focus on four main themes:

Involving national governance and social partners;

Supporting companies;

Making apprenticeships attractive and improving career guidance; and

Quality Assurance.

Download the report [here](#).



EU level