



## Proposal for a Flagship Initiative on Apprenticeships

In January 2012, the European Council agreed that member states should ‘substantially increase the number of apprenticeships and traineeships’. Since then, not enough progress has been made which is why EUROCHAMBRES calls on the European Union and its member states to increase their efforts to introduce apprenticeships. Taking into account the high youth employment rates in countries with strong apprenticeship systems such as Austria and Germany, the EU should focus on ensuring excellence in vocational training programmes in order to reduce Europe-wide youth unemployment to pre-crisis levels (around 15%) by 2018.

### **EUROCHAMBRES suggests developing a European Union flagship initiative aiming to increase the share of apprenticeships among VET programmes to 50% by 2020.**

Only **27%** of EU VET students are currently enrolled in vocational programmes that combine school and company-based learning. In comparison, around 88.2% of German VET students take part in a programme combining school and work-based learning.

In total, only 3.7% of the youth population (aged 15-29) in the EU-27 undertakes an apprenticeship. Taking into account the forecasted **need of medium-level skills** (46.6% of all qualifications by 2020), this situation is alarming! We need to reduce the skills mismatch now if we want to keep Europe on track towards competitiveness, growth and employment.

#### **How can the EU help member states to develop apprenticeships?**

- Increasing the amount of apprenticeships within VET programmes should be a target continuously and systematically evaluated within the **Country Specific Recommendations**.
- **CEDEFOP** should be associated as a close partner to the flagship initiative in order to monitor national policy developments and support Members States and stakeholders through research.
- The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (**EaFA**) should be developed further to an **open platform** uniting all stakeholders, allowing them to cooperate and exchange best practices.
- Earmark funding for the development and improvement of apprenticeships with **Erasmus+**.
- Invest in institution and capacity development of intermediary organisations, such as Chambers or business organisations, to ensure business involvement in the development of job profiles and training regulations. **Only effective intermediary organisations can ensure a strong involvement of small businesses in apprenticeships.**

#### **What are apprenticeships?**

According to CEDEFOP apprenticeships are “systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.”

### Why are apprenticeships so important for the European economy?

Apprenticeships bring many advantages to both the employer and the apprentice and also to society at large. European countries with a strong record of work-based learning tend to have lower levels of youth unemployment and their graduates find employment faster. In most European apprenticeships programmes, a majority of students find employment immediately after graduation – in some countries the proportion is as high as 90%. At the same time, apprenticeship schemes increase the availability of medium level skills which are particularly valuable to SMEs.

## European Flagship Initiative on Apprenticeships

### Professional skills in Europe 2020

Vocational training - and apprenticeships in particular - are a blind spot within Europe 2020 and even Education and Training 2020. The flagship initiative “An Agenda for new skills and jobs” that was launched in 2010 together with the Europe 2020 strategy, had little to no effect on youth employment rates and a better transition from school to work. Work-based learning elements in vocational training can close a gap that has not yet been adequately addressed at EU level. However, this can only be achieved with the strong commitment of all stakeholders, most importantly the members states.

### The role of Chambers in apprenticeships

Every year, more than 1.8 million young people participate in vocational education and training via the Chamber system. Almost 800.000 young apprentices are accompanied by Chambers whereas more than 600.000 receive a Chamber diploma. The involvement of Chambers in apprenticeships varies according to the national prerequisites. In some countries they co-manage the entire VET cycle, in others they are involved in the matching between students and businesses and again in others they oversee exams and manage contracts.



### Chambers of Commerce & Industry: key players in raising skills

#### Every year:

People receiving training qualifications from Chambers	1,800,000
Chambers involved in education and training	80%
Apprenticeships directly managed by Chambers	600,000
Chambers delivering initial or continuous vocational education and training (VET)	48%
Chambers providing entrepreneurial skills training	92%

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