



Position on Quality Apprenticeships

AS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD
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Executive Summary

At European and national level, **too often policy makers see apprenticeships as yet another rite of passage to set foot in the labour market**, rather than recognising their role as educational pathways. An increased focus on quality and inclusive apprenticeships systems is needed: through quality apprenticeships, all young people, including the most vulnerable, should develop their competences and skills, while enjoying full access to their social and labour rights. Hence, efforts to improve the quality of apprenticeships must be a priority in policies on work-based learning at regional, national, European and international level.

This document identifies current challenges to quality apprenticeships, and defines steps to establish apprenticeships systems that are learner-centred, rights-based, and truly inclusive for all young people. To this end, this document outlines the European Youth Forum's main demands towards European governments, Member States of the European Union, European Union institutions, employers, and education providers. These include:

- **Providing equal opportunities for all**, by establishing apprenticeship systems that are truly inclusive of all young people: all young people should be able to access quality apprenticeships, regardless of their personal circumstances. This must entail broader efforts to tackle social norms and power structures, which still negatively influence occupational choices and participation in society more broadly.
- **Prioritising the educational value of apprenticeships**: Quality apprenticeships should help young people to develop both job-specific and transversal competences, in order to achieve learning objectives, identified for and with them, leading to official qualifications recognised at national and European level. Moreover, education providers should ensure that adequate support and information are available and easily accessible to students and their families, and that apprenticeships are presented as equally valid educational choices.
- **Ensuring access to social and labour rights**: Quality cannot be achieved if apprentices' right to fair working conditions, including the right to decent remuneration and compensation, and access to quality welfare systems, is not implemented. This must entail establishing national frameworks, recognising and upholding apprentices' social and labour rights, on the basis of the quality criteria identified in the European Youth Forum's European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships.
- **Establishing representative structures for apprentices at all levels**: Cooperation between relevant institutional and non-institutional stakeholders, including trade unions, student unions, and youth organisations must be strengthened to address the current lack of representative structures for apprentices. As National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations have a long history of democratic representation and advocating for youth rights, the establishment of representative bodies of apprentices should see their strong involvement, along the lines of the European Youth Forum's cooperation with institutional partners for the creation of the European Apprentices Network.

Introduction

Over the past few years, the narrative around apprenticeships has changed. Both at European and national level, the focus has shifted away from apprenticeships as educational opportunities, while increased attention has been given to their potential as employability tools to support young people's transition from school to work.

A variety of initiatives to promote apprenticeships and increase their uptake have been launched. In 2013, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)¹ was established to provide a platform for key stakeholders to work together on improving the quality, supply and image of apprenticeships. The New Skills Agenda for Europe identifies apprenticeships as a key tool to ensure that the right training, skills and support are available to everyone in the European Union (EU).² The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises young people's rights to a quality transition between education and employment, also through apprenticeships.³ Lastly, in 2018 the Council of the EU adopted a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.⁴

At international level, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), already in 2012, had called on governments to improve apprenticeships as a tool to support young people,⁵ and continues to promote apprenticeships as a top priority, including through the development of a Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships.⁶ Furthermore, the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth,⁷ launched as a United Nations system-wide initiative to promote youth employment, identifies quality apprenticeships as a key priority for action.

The EU and the ILO have both attempted to define apprenticeships,⁸ by identifying common traits that could apply to different country-specific apprenticeship traditions. Despite this, a universal, standardised definition of apprenticeships is still lacking.⁹

Different traditions at national level cannot not be an excuse for low quality apprenticeships. Upholding quality standards by prioritising the learning content of apprenticeships and ensuring access to rights and protection is a key step to supporting young people in their path towards autonomy. More broadly, quality apprenticeships while supporting an

¹ European Alliance for Apprenticeships, more information available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1147>

² European Commission, Communication on a New Skills Agenda for Europe, 2016. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/reqdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF>

³ European Pillar of Social Rights, 2017. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

⁴ Council of the European Union, Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6779-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

⁵ International Labour Organisation, The youth employment crisis: a call for action, 2012. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_185950.pdf

⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO), Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_607466.pdf

⁷ More information on the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth available at: <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org>

⁸ Council of the European Union, Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6779-2018-INIT/en/pdf>; International Labour Organisation (ILO), Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_607466.pdf

⁹ International Labour Organisation (ILO), Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, 2017, p. 3. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_607466.pdf

individual's professional and personal development, contribute to building more sustainable and inclusive societies. With around 4 million young people in apprenticeship-type schemes in Europe,¹⁰ ensuring that their educational value is recognised and that apprenticeships comply with minimum quality criteria must become a priority. Moreover, issues such as stereotypes, lack of inclusiveness, and a bad reputation still stand in the way of quality apprenticeships. Furthermore, the political attention that has been given to apprenticeships as a tool for quality transitions has highlighted how there is a lack of representative structures for apprentices, preventing them from being meaningfully consulted on decisions that may affect them.

This position offers policy recommendations to address these challenges. It is based on the European Youth Forum's longstanding interest in the quality of apprenticeships, as evidenced by the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships,¹¹ as well as the more recent involvement with the European Apprentices Network (EAN),¹² and further input gathered through an online consultation with Member Organisations.

Key Elements of Quality Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships as educational opportunities

Apprenticeships are often perceived merely as a tool to fill the gap between the skills potential employees may have, and the abilities employers are looking for. Catering for the needs of employers, however, should not be the main purpose of apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are first and foremost educational opportunities; the educational value of apprenticeships must be placed at the core of apprenticeship programmes. Education, as a fundamental human right enshrined in several legal instruments at international and European level,¹³ must be a lifelong, learner-centred process focused on personal development, where increased employability is a welcome effect, not the primary objective.

Apprenticeships must be learning experiences, providing young people not only with job-specific skills, but with transversal, transferable competences, such as problem-solving and critical thinking, supporting them to become active citizens. Apprenticeships should be shaped around the needs and interests of the learners, for them to reach their full potential.¹⁴

This can be achieved through stronger participation of apprentices themselves in defining

¹⁰ European Commission, Press Release, Commission adopts initiative to boost apprenticeships in Europe, 2017. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-3585_en.htm

¹¹ European Youth Forum, European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. Available at: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0595-10_European_Quality_Charter_Internships_Apprenticeships_FINAL.pdf

¹² European Apprentices Network (EAN). More info available at: <https://apprenticesnetwork.eu/>

¹³ For example: Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education, and that it must be free, at least in the elementary stages; Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines education as crucial in the "development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential"; Article 14 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights guarantees the right to education, including compulsory education.

¹⁴ EAN, Key Priorities for Quality Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <https://apprenticesnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/key-priorities-for-quality-apprenticeships.pdf>

their learning objectives, as well as through quality and effective mentorship and monitoring before, during and after the placement.

Lastly, apprenticeships must always lead to official qualifications. Lack of recognised qualification may prevent apprentices from taking advantage of mobility opportunities, accessing higher-VET, or advancing their career.¹⁵ Continued work on the European Quality Framework (EQF),¹⁶ and the inclusion of apprenticeships in National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs), would ease young people's access to the labour market and support mobility, including through ErasmusPro¹⁷ and by easing young people's access to visas, when necessary.

A rights-based approach to quality apprenticeships

Unsatisfactory learning opportunities and working conditions can be challenges, even in countries usually highlighted as examples for the quality of their apprenticeship systems.¹⁸ Moreover, different apprenticeship traditions and definitions at national level may result in different levels of protection being provided to apprentices. Quality apprenticeships should always be safe and fair experiences, especially for young people, who may be at greater risk of being treated as cheap or unpaid workforce due to their already vulnerable position in the labour market.

Policy makers and employers must implement a rights-based approach to quality apprenticeships. The specific nature of apprenticeships as work-based learning, and the dual status of apprentices as both learners and workers,¹⁹ must not hinder apprentices' access to and enjoyment of a minimum set of rights and safety nets.²⁰ To this end, apprenticeships should comply with minimum quality standards, to be set out in legislative instruments as well as in legally binding agreements to protect apprentices from any form of exploitation. Young apprentices must be provided with easily accessible, understandable and youth-friendly information about their rights and obligations, as well as how to address potential violations.

¹⁵ ETUC, A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: <https://www.etuc.org/publications/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships#.Weg92BN-q9Y>

¹⁶ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Recommendation on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, 2008. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>

¹⁷ European Commission, Press Release, Apprenticeships abroad: Commission gives boost to long-term placements across the EU, 2017. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-2763_en.htm

¹⁸ European Commission, Staff working document accompanying the proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017SC0322>

¹⁹ The status of apprentices differs from Member State to Member State. Regardless of whether they are identified as workers (e.g. Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and the UK), students (e.g. Cyprus, Czech Republic, Latvia). For more information see: ETUC, A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: <https://www.etuc.org/publications/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships#.Weg92BN-q9Y>

²⁰ EAN, Key Priorities for Quality Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <https://apprenticesnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/key-priorities-for-quality-apprenticeships.pdf>

More inclusive apprenticeships

Investing in adequate support during the pre-apprenticeship period and increasing the quality of apprenticeship placements is crucial. This would help preventing vulnerable and marginalised groups of young people or young people in NEET situations (not in employment, education, or training) from getting too far from society, by providing them with an alternative way to learn, that can be more appealing than more academic paths. For this to happen, however, policy makers, employers and education providers must be willing to offer quality work-based learning opportunities to vulnerable and marginalised groups of young people and those furthest from the labour market, who may not possess the necessary foundational skills.²¹

These gaps can be tackled through greater investment in inclusive education systems and by providing financial incentives to employers to hire vulnerable youth. Financial support, however, should be conditional to the implementation of inclusive human resources and recruitment policies, to ensure that vulnerable young people can not only enter, but remain in the labour market. Minimum quality standards for apprenticeships must also be ensured, including for apprenticeships under the Youth Guarantee in EU Member States.²² Most importantly, a change in the current narrative is needed. Investing in providing vulnerable and marginalised groups of young people with quality learning opportunities must be seen as a form of social investment, with a long-term, positive impact on society as a whole.

More broadly, stereotypes still have a strong influence on apprenticeships. Cultural and gender roles deriving from societal norms and power structures negatively affect society and the labour market, creating unfair expectations and influencing individual and collective behaviours. Entrenched societal attitudes and socio-cultural factors can limit career paths, lead to discrimination by employers and career counsellors, This can have an even stronger impact on young people who are often influenced in their choices by their family, friends, teachers, community and media.²³

For example, as apprenticeship placements are often based on traditional gender roles, women are generally under-represented in many sectors:²⁴ in the UK, while female participation in apprenticeships tends to be concentrated into few sectors, with many women taking up placements in health and social care; in key sectors such as engineering, men outnumber women 25 to 1.²⁵ Women who take up apprenticeships in traditionally male-dominated jobs, such as those related to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering

²¹ On average young people in NEET situations tend to have weaker literacy or numeracy skills, as detailed in: OECD, Work-based Learning for Youth at Risk, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 150, OECD Publishing, 2016. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5e122a91-en.pdf?expires=1535027822&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=329FDDA3118A268C9CBF0943F00E6469>

²² European Youth Forum, Updated position on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, 2018. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Updated-position-on-the-implementation-of-the-Youth-Guarantee.pdf>

²³ International Labour Organisation (ILO), Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_607466.pdf

²⁴ For country-specific data, see International Labour Organisation (ILO), Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_607466.pdf

²⁵ Young Women's Trust, Young Women & Apprenticeships: still not working?, 2017. Available at: https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Young_Women_and_apprenticeships.pdf

and Mathematics), often face strong resistance and prejudice.²⁶ This, while discouraging young women from looking for and taking up apprenticeships, is also likely to negatively impact men interested in building a career in more female-dominated sectors, perpetuating the overall current lack of gender diversity, and fostering occupational segregation.

Stereotypes and discrimination, moreover, can have further negative impacts when paired with prejudices against other specific groups of young people, such as the LGBTIQ+ community, young people with disabilities, or refugees. Indeed, lack of accessible infrastructures, customised pathways for vulnerable groups, fair working conditions; as well as structural obstacles such as the hidden costs of undertaking an apprenticeship (e.g. costly tools and equipment), and employers' attitudes towards young employees which are not always inclusive or sensitive to ensuring that the work environment is welcoming, can also have a detrimental effect on vulnerable youth. This further discourages them from accessing apprenticeship opportunities, and damages the reputation of apprenticeships.

Enabling Conditions for Quality Apprenticeships

Representative structures for apprentices

Apprentices may be considered as either students or workers, or both, depending on the country context. Representative structures for apprentices are therefore still uncommon. Apprentices can be represented by trade unions or student unions, but the lack of specific representatives bodies may hinder their chances to have their voice heard.

To improve the quality of apprenticeships, providing spaces for apprentices to highlight issues and propose solutions, should become a key priority at national and European level. Apprentices' right to organise formal structures to protect their economic and social interests should be respected and should entail the establishment of organised bodies with clear internal processes and structures. Representative structures should be present at local, regional, national and European level, with each level selecting its own representative(s) for the following one. However, the establishment of these structures within companies and sectors to ensure a more balanced relationship between apprentices and employers should be fostered too. These structures should be democratic, inclusive, and representative of the diversity of sectors where apprenticeships may take place. To this end, their establishment could be the result of a joint effort between trade unions, student unions, chambers of commerce, education providers, and youth organisations.

Promoting apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are often viewed by young people, parents, and society more generally, as a less attractive or prestigious pathway for youth. According to a 2013 Eurobarometer, while 46% of young people reported having had a traineeship, only 26% declared to have

²⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO), Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_607466.pdf

undertaken an apprenticeship.²⁷ Employers, moreover, report difficulties in attracting students.²⁸

Efforts to improve the image of apprenticeships, however, must be holistic. Promoting a better narrative around apprenticeships can only succeed if paired with efforts to strengthen their educational value, increase their quality and respect of apprentices' social and labour rights.²⁹ Moreover, guidance to students should be provided as early as possible, by better training teachers in schools, as too often the focus is on more traditional and formal educational pathways, contributing to reinforcing the image of apprenticeships as a less valuable or prestigious choice. Awareness-raising measures targeting young people, their families and/or carers, and easier access to clear, understandable information on apprenticeships and the benefits they can bring, are also necessary.³⁰

The role of youth organisations

Youth organisations can play a key role in promoting quality apprenticeships. Through their outreach to young people, they can raise awareness about apprenticeships, and promote them as valuable opportunities, including for those belonging to vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Moreover, youth organisations have a key role to play in ensuring that young apprentices' voices are heard in decisions that may directly affect them and their rights.³¹ Many youth organisations already represent the interests of apprentices, and should therefore be actively involved in the establishment and functioning of representative bodies for apprentices. In particular, as National Youth Councils (NYCs) represent the consolidated voice of young people through youth organisations and have a history of influencing institutions,³² they could function as a model for representative bodies for apprentices, both in terms of democratic structure and process. Representatives of the relevant NYCs could support the work of apprentices bodies at national level, to ensure coordinated efforts, similar to the experience of the European Apprentices Network.³³ Moreover, representative bodies could be linked to the relevant NYC, for example through membership. Coordination between representative

²⁷ European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 378, The experience of traineeships in the EU, 2013. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl_378_en.pdf

²⁸ Business Europe, The cost-effectiveness of apprenticeships schemes - Making the case for apprenticeships, 2016. Available at: <https://www.businessseurope.eu/publications/cost-effectiveness-apprenticeship-schemes-making-case-apprenticeships>

²⁹ OECD, Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 153, OECD Publishing, 2017. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/995fff01-en.pdf?expires=1535029412&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=DBC0CE89DB23847E0BE44BF3BE0ED441>

³⁰ EAN, Key Priorities for Quality Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <https://apprenticesnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/key-priorities-for-quality-apprenticeships.pdf>

³¹ Ibid.

³² European Youth Forum, Everything you always wanted to know about National Youth Councils - but were afraid to ask, 2014. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/YFJ-NationalYouthCouncils-WEB-2P.pdf>

³³ The European Apprentices Network (EAN), established in 2017 by the European Youth Forum and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), with the support of the European Commission, brings together current and former apprentices, as well as young people representing student structures, trade unions, and youth organisations. For more information, see: <https://apprenticesnetwork.eu/>

bodies of apprentices and other representative structures such as trade unions and student unions should also be fostered, including through the involvement of International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations (INGYOs) and their members, to ensure coherence and cooperation on transversal issues at local, national and European level.

Moreover, as non-formal education (NFE) providers, youth organisations play a key role in providing young people, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised, with new skills and competences, beyond those acquired within formal education systems,³⁴ Their role should be further recognised by European governments, enabling individuals to obtain recognition and validation of competences acquired through NFE.³⁵ For EU Member States this would entail implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning.³⁶

Apprenticeships and Youth Unemployment

There is broad consensus that apprenticeships can ease young people's transition from education to the labour market, therefore tackling youth unemployment. Apprenticeships' positive impact on unemployment, however, is closely linked to employers' and VET providers' willingness to offer quality opportunities. This should also entail supporting students with quality guidance and counselling from an early age; but also investing in outreach strategies and awareness raising activities around apprenticeships.³⁷ Moreover, stronger efforts are required to increase the quality of apprenticeships by ensuring good working conditions and making apprenticeship systems more inclusive.

However, while quality apprenticeships have the potential to increase employability, apprenticeships alone cannot be the solution to youth unemployment. It is crucial to view youth unemployment as a complex phenomenon, which requires a more comprehensive approach, and a broader range of actions and policy measures. Labour market policies ensuring the availability of quality entry-level jobs that will allow apprentices to find their place in the labour market once their placement is over are equally essential. This should be part of broader efforts to complement employment policies with reform of welfare and social protection systems to ensure that all young people not only have access to quality training and employment, but also to strong enough safety nets to be able to reach autonomy.³⁸

³⁴ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, 2012 – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>

³⁵ European Youth Forum, Position on Inclusive Education, 2018. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Pos%20on%20Inc%20Education%20paper%20EN%20G.pdf>

³⁶ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, 2012 – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>

³⁷ ETUC, A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships, 2017. Available at: <https://www.etuc.org/publications/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships#.Weg92BN-q9Y>

³⁸ European Youth Forum, Excluding Youth: A Threat to Our Future, 2016. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Excluding-youth-a-threat-to-our-future.pdf>

Our Demands

The European Youth Forum calls on European governments, Member States of the European Union, on the European Union institutions, and on employers and education providers to put in place measures to address these challenges and ensure young people's access to quality apprenticeships. To this end, the European Youth Forum has identified the following key actions and demands.

We call on **European governments** to:

- Ensure that free, quality education is accessible to all young people, and that publicly funded individualised support is available to more vulnerable and marginalised youth. This should be complemented by fostering partnerships between formal education providers and youth organisations; and by providing adequate information to young students on educational opportunities other than university education, and the necessary support to develop the competences to access them.
- Provide financial incentives to employers to hire vulnerable youth, on the condition that inclusive human resources and recruitment policies are in place, to ensure that vulnerable young people can not only enter, but remain in the labour market.
- Implement Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), by ensuring free access to quality and inclusive VET, without discrimination based on any ground leading to all young people possessing the necessary skills to access quality jobs.
- Provide guarantee of residence to ensure young people's right to asylum through their apprenticeships.³⁹
- Ensure compulsory supervision and mentoring of apprentices by a trained supervisor before, during and after the apprenticeship,⁴⁰ and support from qualified teachers in training institutions.
- Establish and implement national quality frameworks on apprenticeships recognising a set of social and labour rights applicable to all apprentices, and complementing national labour laws. These frameworks should be based on the European Youth Forum's European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships.⁴¹ EU Member States, should in addition take into consideration the 2018 Council Recommendation for a European Framework on Quality and Effective Apprenticeships,⁴²
- Ensure that apprenticeships are always based on a written, legally binding agreement, clearly setting out the rights and obligations of the employer, the apprentice, and the educational or training institution, as well as a detailed description of the apprenticeship and an individual learning plan developed with the

³⁹ European Youth Forum, Resolution on Protection and Integration of Young Refugees in Europe, 2015. Available at: https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Resolution_Protection-and-Integration-of-Young-Refugees-in-Europe.pdf

⁴⁰ European Youth Forum, European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. Available at: <https://www.youthforum.org/european-quality-charter-internships-and-apprenticeships> ; EAN, Key Priorities for Quality Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <https://apprenticesnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/key-priorities-for-quality-apprenticeships.pdf>

⁴¹ European Youth Forum, European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. Available at: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0595-10_European_Quality_Charter_Internships_Apprenticeships_FINAL.pdf;

⁴² European Council, Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, 2018. Available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6779-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

apprentice.

- Ensure that trainers are sufficiently supported to develop the necessary skills, both pedagogical and practical, to train an apprentice, including by having access to continuous re-training in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning.
- Ensure that apprentices access the rights to decent remuneration,⁴³ compensation for costs incurred during the placement (e.g. housing, transport, equipment), and social protection, and that they are fully covered by health and safety regulations in the workplace throughout the entire duration of their placement.
- Introduce legislation to ensure that apprenticeships count as working time giving rise to pension entitlements, access to unemployment benefits, minimum income schemes, as well as parental and sick leave.
- Support the establishment of representative bodies, run by apprentices for apprentices and recognise them as key stakeholders, along with social partners, employers, education providers, and youth organisations, in all decisions concerning apprenticeships.

We call on **EU Member States** to:

- Implement Principle 1 of the European Pillar of Social Rights ensuring that everyone has access to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning.
- Include apprenticeships in National Qualification Frameworks to ease the integration of young people in the labour market and support youth mobility.
- Better recognise the role of youth organisations as non-formal education providers and as crucial actors in providing innovative and flexible education to all young people, including by implementing the 2012 Council Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning.
- Support mobility by ensuring apprentices' easy access to visas.

We call on **EU institutions** to:

- Continue fostering apprenticeship mobility in Europe by investing in programmes such as ErasmusPro.
- Invest in increasing the quality and inclusiveness of apprenticeships, including by supporting pre-apprenticeship training programmes to help vulnerable and marginalised young people acquire basic skills to be better prepared for apprenticeships, through the European Social Fund and the upcoming European Social Fund Plus.
- Ensure that apprenticeships under the Youth Guarantee, as a key initiative targeting young people in NEET situations, comply with minimum quality criteria as set out in the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, and the Council Recommendation for a European Quality Framework on Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.
- Foster cooperation at European and national level between relevant stakeholders,

⁴³ According to the European Youth Forum's European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, fair remuneration should not below the EU poverty line of 60% median income or national minimum wage, if more favourable, in accordance to the tasks which are performed by the apprentice and to working hours. For more information see: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0595-10_European_Quality_Charter_Internships_Apprenticeships_FINAL.pdf

including youth organisations, social partners, employers, and VET providers, also through existing structures such as the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, to promote quality apprenticeships as a valuable choice for young people.

We call on **employers and education providers** to:

- Increase cooperation to establish quality apprenticeship programmes.
- Shape apprenticeship programmes around learning objectives, which include both job-specific skills and transversal competences, developed with the active and meaningful participation of the apprentice.
- Invest in training and re-training of supervisors, mentors and teachers, on the basis of the lifelong learning principle.
- Establish representative structures for apprentices and ensure their meaningful participation in governance and decision making processes.

We call on all **governments, institutions and employers** to:

- Recognise that apprenticeships are first and foremost educational opportunities and implement a learner-centred approach based on the best interests of the apprentice, ensuring that apprentices develop a broad range of skills, and can have access to higher education.
- Ensure that evaluation processes are in place to monitor the progress of apprentices in reaching their learning objectives, and that apprenticeships are certified by competent bodies to ensure that the knowledge, skills and competences developed lead to qualifications recognised at national and European level, according to National Qualification Frameworks and the European Qualification Framework.
- Ensure that easily accessible, understandable, youth-friendly information is made readily available to young apprentices and their families, for them to fully understand their rights and obligations, be aware of redress mechanisms, and be informed about any health and safety risk posed to them while undertaking their apprenticeship.
- Ensure that measures promoting apprenticeships do not deepen already existing stereotypes, but rather ensure equal access to this type of work-based learning for all, regardless of socio-economic background, ethnicity, age, gender or any other status.
- Recognise youth organisations as key stakeholders in European and national level discussions around apprenticeships, alongside social partners, employers, and VET providers, and involve them in awareness raising measures promoting apprenticeships.
- Adopt a holistic approach to tackling youth unemployment, by complementing efforts to promote quality apprenticeships with employment measures focusing on fostering job creation.

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