

European Conference

Qualification standards – State and Social Partners’ Cooperation in Apprenticeship:
Which Screenplays?

Siegburg/Bonn, 3 April 2019 (12:00 – 18:00) - 4 April 2019 (9:00 – 14:00)

Apprenticeship schemes¹ are on the rise in Europe. Given the obvious difficulties in agreeing on a single definition that would cover all apprenticeship schemes, experts and policy makers agreed on a set of 14 criteria for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships². Seven of those criteria deal with framework conditions and two of which specifically with regulatory framework and involvement of social partners.

The BIBB research project ‘Development of national vocational qualification and training standards – A European comparison of stakeholders, processes and design’ focuses on how stakeholders are cooperating when it comes to develop and implement vocational education and training standards. It thus links to core framework conditions criteria of the European Recommendation.

“Employers’ associations and trade union organizations see themselves as having many responsibilities in apprenticeship policy and practice. More than half of both employers’ associations and trade union organizations are active in policy-making and the development of occupational standards“ (ILO; 2018: 60³). Recognised occupational qualification standards are results of a joint development process between the social partners and the state/region in advanced apprenticeship schemes. Binding and recognised vocational standards are economically and educationally important, because they are the prime instruments to ensure the relevance, transparency and quality of the education and training process outcomes and they form the basis for qualification portability (Poulsen/Eberhardt 2016⁴; OECD 2018⁵).

Conceptually, the project follows a governance approach and considers different apprenticeship schemes. The scope of stakeholders’ involvement depends on the regulatory legislative environment as well as upon traditions and usages; these strongly relate to historical, societal and economic contexts and their adaptation to on-going changes. While at a first glance dual apprenticeship (Germany, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland⁶) appears similar in its constituencies and core principles, the project elaborates on identifying commonalities and differences in roles, responsibilities and involvements of different categories of stakeholders. Findings could support the further development of apprenticeship schemes in countries that are currently upscaling their apprenticeship schemes like Portugal or Slovakia. In all countries, the interplay between stakeholders is evolving; thus affecting the regulatory and institutional settings. The

¹ http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4166_en.pdf

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0502%2801%29>

³ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_633677.pdf

⁴ <https://www.bibb.de/veroeffentlichungen/en/publication/show/7987>

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264306486-en>

⁶ <https://www.apprenticeship-toolbox.eu/>

reliability and relevance of qualification standards to the education and training system as well as to the labour market can possibly be enhanced.

The newly released scenarios on future of VET⁷, and the development of the European Classification of Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO⁸) might have an impact on the relevance of national/regional/local qualification standards and the role of regional/national stakeholders at large. Apprenticeship is seldom questioned as a lever of access to labour market, the institutional arrangements for ensuring quality and labour market relevance of apprenticeship are on the move. Which screenplays and procedures are underlying the development of qualification standards? How partnerships are functioning? Nothing is set in stone.

The European BIBB conference on ‘Qualification standards –State and Social Partners’ Cooperation in Apprenticeship’ gathers policy-makers, VET stakeholders and researchers from different European countries and European/international organisations. Based on the results of the BIBB research projects and their own experiences and knowledge, the participants are invited to discuss, reflect and formulate proposals on:

- The development of qualification standards for apprenticeship in a comparative perspective based on the six investigated countries;
- The role of social partners and scope of their involvement in the process of standards development;
- The meaning of the two criteria for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships: ‘regulatory framework’ and ‘involvement of social partners’;
- The possible impacts of European apprenticeship policy development on national or regional regulations; especially in the context of defining the cornerstones for 2030.

Conference proceedings will document the discussions and proposals to support further debates at national, regional or European levels. The European BIBB conference will take place in English language.

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⁷ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/changing-role-vet>

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home?resetLanguage=true&newLanguage=en>