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## **Apprenticeship badge framework**

### ***A Benchmark Guide for Return on Investment in apprenticeship***

RoI of WBL and apprenticeships

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## Executive summary

This comprehensive framework (Body of Knowledge) can be used for self-evaluation of the apprenticeship practices followed by SMEs. This is a fast-track Guide for owners, managers and HR departments of SMEs so they can measure, in an easy way, the impact of an apprenticeship on the performance and effectiveness of their enterprises.

This guide was created under the Erasmus + by a Partnership established for the Project ROI and serves as an evaluation tool for apprenticeship measurement. It is applied by the partners to assess and identify good practices and apprenticeship-friendly SMEs which will be assigned with the Badge.

In addition to being one of many other evaluation tools, this ROI apprenticeship appraisal tool is a reference to ensure the SMEs are aligned with the new requirements and competences. They are necessary to meet the demand for high impact on skills development and on development of the fast-changing human resource management of SMEs.

## Terms and definitions

**Apprenticeship agreement:** contract of service between the apprentice and employer confirming the apprentice is undertaking an apprenticeship and the standard they are following.

- **Work-based learning** : According to CEDEFOP online glossary, 2011, by definition work-based learning is the: “Acquisition of knowledge and skills through ‘carrying out – and reflecting on – tasks in a vocational context, either at the workplace (such as alternance training) or in a VET institution”.
- **Apprenticeship**: According to CEDEFOP online glossary, 2011, by definition apprenticeship is the: “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”.
- **Apprenticeship framework**: work-based training programme that employees can follow to become competent at a job. It includes time learning at work and studying for a relevant qualification outside of work.
- **Apprenticeship standard**: sets out in simple terms the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for an apprentice to be competent and capable in their role, as determined by employers.
- **Assessment plan**: describes the end-point assessment for an apprenticeship standard: what will be assessed and how, who will carry out the assessment, who will make the final decision on competency and grading, and quality assurance arrangements to ensure reliability and consistency across the country.
- **Digital Apprenticeship Service**: The online end-to-end service for employers. It will enable employers to find an apprentice candidate, choose a training provider and pay for apprenticeship training and assessment.
- **Employer occupational brief**: developed by employer groups to provide more detail on the expected curriculum that will be assessed in a standard.
- **End-point assessment**: a holistic assessment at the end of the apprenticeship to test that the apprentice is fully occupationally competent in that role.
- **Off-the-job training**: learning which is undertaken outside of the normal day to day working environment and leads towards the achievement of the apprenticeship.
- **Statement of Commitment**: this supplements the apprenticeship agreement. It sets out the key expectations, roles and responsibilities of each party involved in the apprenticeship and is signed by the employer, provider and apprentice.



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- **Traineeship:** high quality package of work preparation training, English and maths and work experience for young people who have left school and wish to get on an apprenticeship but lack the basic skills and experience employers are looking for.

## Context of the project

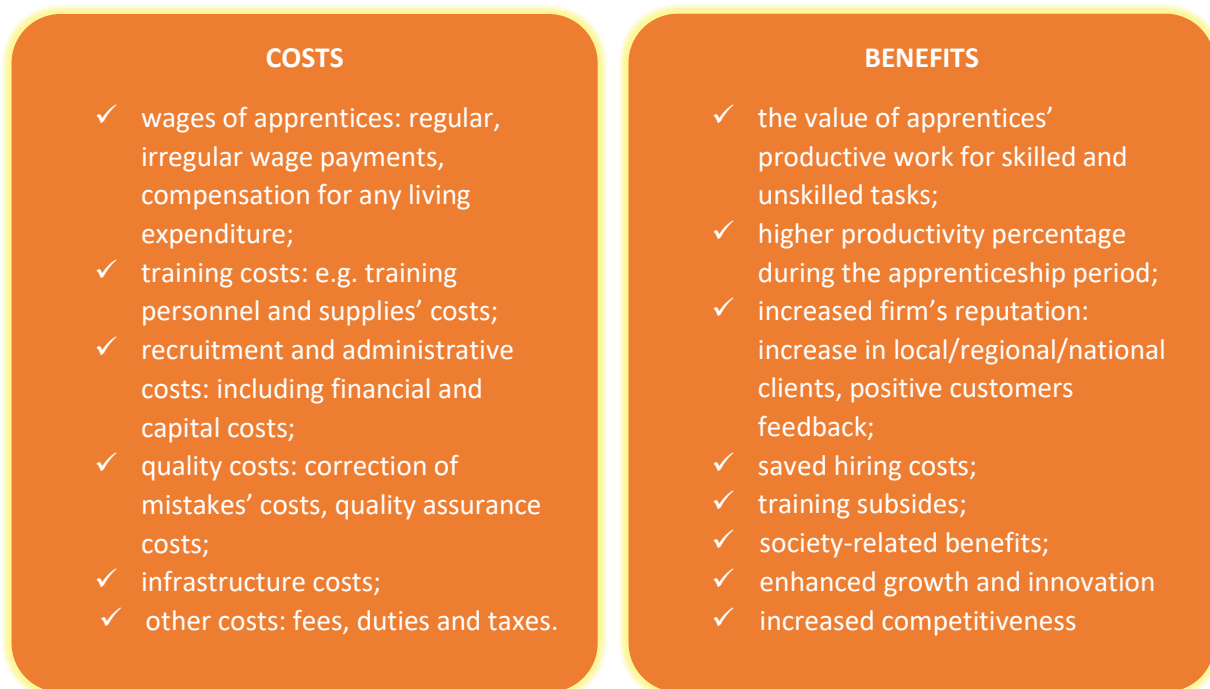
Work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeships provide additional options to tackle the issue of youth unemployment. One of the main causes of youth unemployment is a significant mismatch between the skills and competences currently required by employers in the labour market and those acquired by young people through education system. This is based on the research conducted by the project partners in the six participating countries.

During the development of the project and this framework the SMEs and their needs were in focus.

There are various factors and elements of the education system across EU but a unified approach and frameworks have been developed in order to enhance the role of work-based learning in its different forms and apprenticeships in particular to make them an effective tool for SMEs to solve the issue with lack of skills and talent, from one side. On another hand, they are growth and success factors for businesses and key driver for success for SMEs.

Implementing a holistic approach and system for apprenticeships allows SMEs to become more competitive and attract the right set of skills, knowledge and competences for growth and innovation as key competitive advantages in today's economy and competitive markets. According to our research and conducted focus groups and surveys among SMEs their decision to engage in the supply of WBL and apprenticeship training is determined by the cost-benefit ratio of such an investment.

The following costs and benefits have been identified through our research based on focus groups and surveys among SMEs:



Apprenticeships and work-based learning include all activities related to recruitment, training, etc. Many SMEs realize the need and have started to recognise that investing in young people helps them to attract talent and that this investment starts early with partnerships and activities at schools and universities.

There should be a systematic approach to the apprenticeship trainings and programs developed for the specific needs of the SME and the sector of its business. There are certain conditions to be considered and set in order for the apprenticeships to deliver a long-term value to be sustained over time.

## Organisational context

Apprenticeships are an important asset to any organisation and bring significant benefits to the business and existing workforce.

Apprenticeships are a unique way to 'grow on their own'; they combine on-the-job training in the SMEs with off-the-job learning and provide them as employers with an effective way of growing their skills base.

The successful practice of apprenticeships learning takes place in the context of the company organisation and provides combination of practical skills with theoretical knowledge to the apprentice. Apprenticeships can therefore offer a career route within the organisation and an invaluable opportunity to develop in-house the specific expertise needed now and/or in future. Furthermore, offering Apprenticeships can help to improve social mobility and diversity.

Each SME should regularly scan and analyse the external environment and regulations related to employment, dual education, and education system in general.

The following groups of aspects should be considered:

- ✓ Economic aspects – macro-economic conditions, tax reductions, funding options



- ✓ Social aspects – sustainability, trends, social challenges, demographics, diversity
- ✓ Educational aspects – education system in the country, regional development, EU legislation
- ✓ Legal aspects – employment law, dual education, work-based learning regulations
- ✓ Technical aspects – standards, technological development, trends, needs, production processes

Internally, the SME should monitor the progress of development of internal procedures, processes, HR policy and other functions directly related to work-based learning and apprenticeships. It should also analyse and assess its capabilities, resources and competences to manage such process and sustain it in longer term.

Capability aspects such as equipment, facilities and investment should be monitored as well. Analysis of the performance and efficiency of the apprenticeship programs should be in place

## **Analysing and understanding of the involved parties and the ecosystem**

Each SME successful in apprenticeship programs and practices should identify the parties who are involved in the education system under dual education and WBL. The company should understand their needs, manage expectations and answer their requirements. Strategic partnerships with schools and training providers should be established early in the process and the top management commitment should be in place.

## **Management commitment**

Strong management commitment is required with regards to:

- ✓ Ensuring that the HR strategy towards apprenticeships is aligned with the vision and strategic development of the business
- ✓ Fostering a culture for apprentices and recruitment of young people with no/little work experience
- ✓ Ensuring the necessary resources – human, technical, financial – are available
- ✓ Transparency and open communication in the organisation of the importance of apprentices and their role for the business
- ✓ Promoting the development and improvement of the programs/practices of apprenticeships
- ✓ Fostering of the corporate culture with the participation of apprentices

## **Roles and responsibilities**

There should be two groups of responsibilities within SMEs: general management and specific HR roles for the apprenticeships. Depending on the size and the structure and business model, each SME can assign a particular unit and/or team, single person to deal with all procedures and activities of apprenticeship programs. The purpose is to:



- ✓ provide efficient and effective management according to the requirements; develop operational plan and specific tasks to be accomplished;
- ✓ assign responsible people to projects and operations which involve apprentices;
- ✓ alignment of the apprenticeship program with the organisational structure; coordination across units and projects;
- ✓ regular reports to the management and the responsible unit for the apprenticeships.

## Resources and competences

The SME should identify and provide the necessary resources and competences of people working with and responsible for the successful development, design, implementation and maintenance of the apprenticeship practices/programs. Additional resources might be needed for the establishment and continuous improvement as well. The human resources should be adequate and encourage open communication, foster creativity, exchange of knowledge and skills between apprentices and employees, etc. They should assure job roles and design of the functions which allow support, interactions and transparency. Personnel's access to information, tools and resources is important as well.

All internal rules and regulations should be presented and discussed early in the process of recruitment of apprentices, trust and loyalty should be encouraged and maintained.

## Performance assessment

The SME should determine the factors, key performance indicators and efficiency indicators to be monitored in the process. Methods for monitoring and criteria for evaluation should be designed and applied for the tracking and management in order to decide the future development of the program. It should be developed in holistic manner covering the following aspects at the very least:

	<b>BENEFITS</b>	<b>COSTS</b>
<b>ECONOMIC</b>	What are the main economic benefits for the SMEs which apply WBL and apprenticeships?	What are the main financial costs?
<b>SOCIAL</b>	What are the main social benefits and impact of the SME when in WBL and apprenticeships?	What are the costs associated with the social impact and benefits of the SME?
<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	What are the main benefits in terms of management?	What are the costs associated with the management benefits?

The assessment should be performed on a regular basis for in-depth analysis and continuous improvement of the process of recruitment and retention of apprentices.



Clear vision and procedures are necessary also for the development of the apprentice and decision-making process for hiring or not the apprentice after the end of the apprenticeship.

Weaknesses and strengths should be determined in order to provide adequate improvement. Performance and collaboration with employees are some of the indicators to be implemented and used by the HR management.

## KEY ENABLERS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

- Apprenticeships need to be embedded in the planning HR and workforce process with clear business benefits, as part of a long-term strategy on workforce growth and skills development.
- Traineeships can be an effective way of sourcing and preparing the next generation of apprentices for the development of business and planning of the future skills
- A prerequisite for a successful Apprenticeships programme is clarity about the role that apprentices play in the organisation, job design which ensures on- and off-the-job learning and development
- There needs to be a shared understanding of how apprentices will be supported and by whom: trainers and mentors.
- There needs to be a support of the senior and middle management, and the employees.
- HR managers have the right support and alignment of the HR policy and tools to effectively manage young apprentices.
- The apprentices receive on and off the job support and needs to be high quality and tailored to both the apprentices' and employers' needs; to achieve this the relationship with the training provider needs to be managed carefully (see Section 5).
- Recruiting apprentices differ from the usual recruitment process and procedures should be in place, especially when the candidate is particularly young (16–18) and has no prior work experience. Alternative recruitment methods and techniques need to be considered.

It is important to be aware of the legal framework and other regulations: apprentices are covered by a contract of employment and have similar rights to other employees. To ensure further success, the apprentice needs should be placed at the center of the Apprenticeships programme and employers provide support, mentoring, training and ensure smooth transition from school to work environment.

SMEs need to make sure they provide fair access to their Apprenticeship schemes and widen the talent pool from which they recruit in terms of gender, ethnicity and diversity.

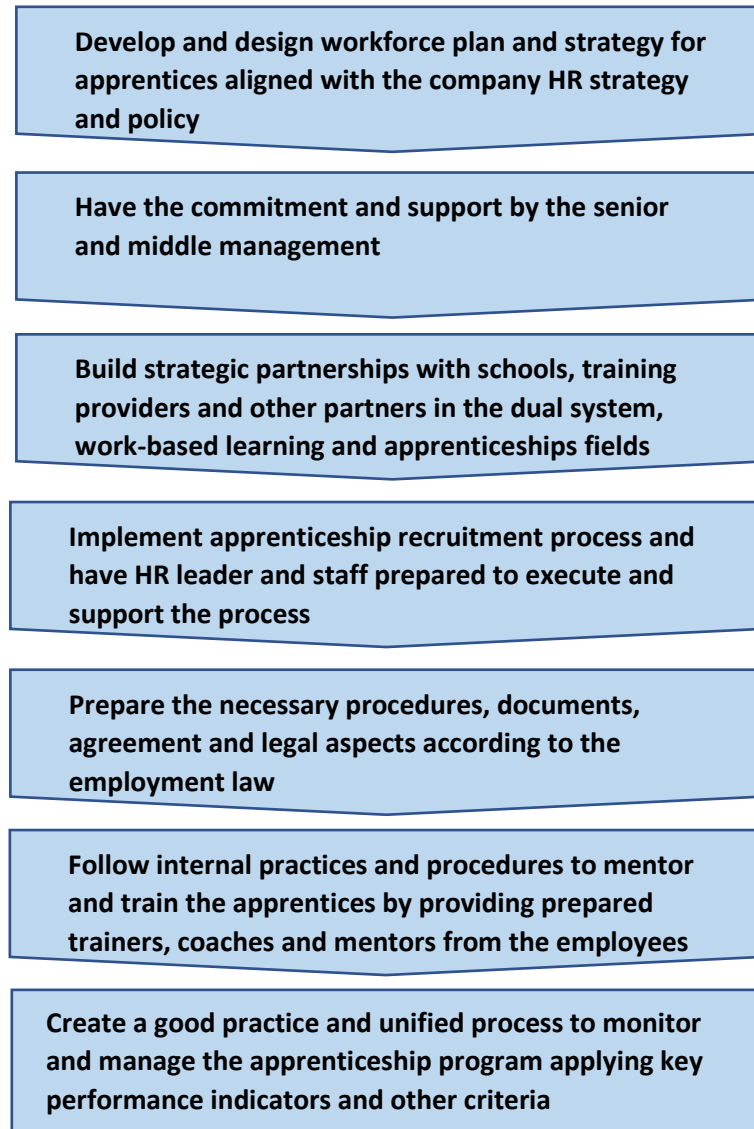
[Source: CIPD, A Guide for employers, 2017](#)





## Apprenticeship process

The below figure outlines the steps in the process of developing and implementing a program for apprenticeships



There are a number of identified advantages for SMEs who provide apprenticeships. They include:

- ✓ access to next generation/future skills and experience
- ✓ access to a wider talent pool
- ✓ has a positive impact on organisation's performance
- ✓ contributes to higher productivity by hiring the former WBL trainees
- ✓ flexibility to tailor the skills and competences of future employees to the business
- ✓ exchange of knowledge and new ideas between employees and apprentices
- ✓ enhances organisation's profitability



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- ✓ contributes to reducing the cost of external recruitment and internal induction (introducing staff to a new job and organisation)
- ✓ enhances company image and reputation.

### Evaluation criteria

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>
Targeted recruitment of apprentices	Yes/No
Number of existing apprenticeship agreements	
Enhanced reputation and recognition of work with apprentices	Yes/No
Active participation of apprentices in the company's processes	Yes/No
Investment in development of programs and other activities with/for apprenticeships	Yes/No
Open communication and support by the management for apprentices	Yes/No
Provision of full time positions after the end of the apprenticeship	Yes/No
Partnerships with training providers, educational institutions, schools, etc.	Yes/No
Tailored and flexible approaches to apprentices	brief description for qualitative analysis
Cost-effectiveness of the apprenticeships	brief description for qualitative analysis
Motivating and supporting other SMEs and stakeholders to work with apprentices	Yes/No
Achieved additional benefits and positive effects in the society by the SME	brief description for qualitative analysis

### REFERENCES

Synthesis Report on Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships in Selected EU Countries, Published by Technical University of Košice, 2018

CIPD, Learning to work, A Guide for employers, 2017

The UK skills system, British Council report

Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship Assessment Plan

Guidance Framework - Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering apprenticeships: Seven guiding principles, Europe 2020: Employment Policies; EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



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