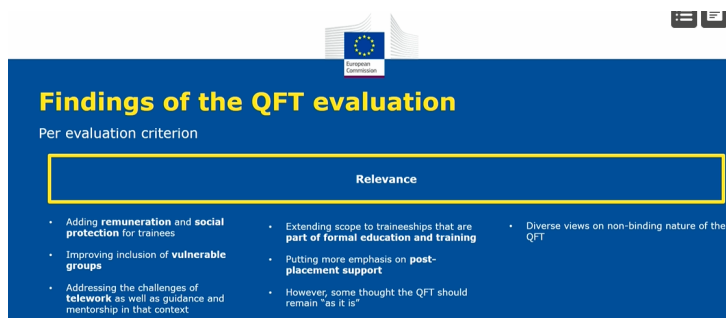


## EVALUATION OF THE EU QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINEESHIPS

**Manuela Geleng, Director for Jobs and Skills at DG EMPL**, discussed about the evaluation of the implementation of the 2014 Council Recommendation on quality framework for traineeships (QFT). The perspective was on traineeships as part of active labour market policies (ALMPs) or open-market traineeships. Educational traineeships were not considered. Though youth unemployment is lower than in 2014, it was hard to establish that the QFT contributed to this. The findings were split into four categories: effectiveness, added value, efficiency and coherence. Regarding effectiveness, the evaluation shows that clearly defined learning objectives and written agreements are required to ensure quality traineeships. 14 Member States changed their regulatory framework in the year following the Council Recommendation, but there is still room for improvement on monitoring and enforcement. There seems to be generally an added value linked to the traineeships, however, SMEs report costs that off-balance any added value. More coherence is required for traineeships linked to ALMPs while traineeships have to become remunerated and provide social protection. This would improve access of those most vulnerable. In the review of the QFT, the European Commission will aim to include teleworking and hybrid forms of work but to also include the education and training traineeships.

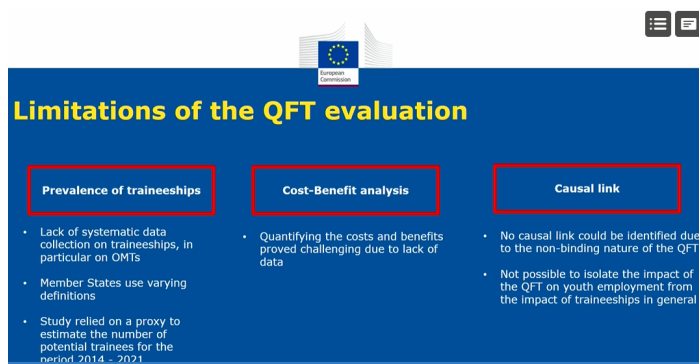


**Findings of the QFT evaluation**

Per evaluation criterion

**Relevance**

- Adding **remuneration and social protection** for trainees
- Improving inclusion of **vulnerable groups**
- Addressing the challenges of **telework** as well as guidance and mentorship in that context
- Extending scope to traineeships that are **part of formal education and training**
- Putting more emphasis on **post-placement support**
- However, some thought the QFT should remain "as it is"
- Diverse views on non-binding nature of the QFT



**Limitations of the QFT evaluation**

**Prevalence of traineeships**


- Lack of systematic data collection on traineeships, in particular on QMIS
- Member States use varying definitions
- Study relied on a proxy to estimate the number of potential trainees for the period 2014 - 2021

**Cost-Benefit analysis**

- Quantifying the costs and benefits proved challenging due to lack of data

**Causal link**


- No causal link could be identified due to the non-binding nature of the QFT
- Not possible to isolate the impact of the QFT on youth employment from the impact of traineeships in general



## Findings of the QFT evaluation

Per evaluation criterion

Efficiency	Coherence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost of implementing the QFT considered <b>proportionate</b> to benefits</li> <li>Benefits for <b>employers</b>: better understanding traineeship quality, reputational advantages, investing in potential future workers.</li> <li>However, <b>less cost effective for small and micro enterprises</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Financial incentives</b> can help increase the benefits to traineeship providers compared to the costs involved.</li> <li>Benefits of the QFT for <b>trainees</b> include improved working conditions, as well as better training and learning content, which increase their chances of entering stable employment.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coherent with other EU level initiatives and funding instruments.</li> <li>At national and regional level, a higher level of coherence with measures on ALMP traineeships than with those on OMTs.</li> <li>European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships (EFQEA) perceived as leading to a greater involvement of stakeholders and as having a higher and more specific quality</li> </ul>



## Lessons learned

<b>Reinforcing the QFT</b> Considerations to be made, notably on Remuneration and Social Protection, Inclusiveness, Telework, post-placement support. Reflections on (extending) QFT scope Draw inspiration from the EFQEA	<b>Improve application on the ground</b> Stronger monitoring and enforcement Increase awareness of QFT principles amongst employers, trainees, labour inspectors, and other relevant stakeholders	<b>Employers</b> Increase awareness Financial incentives (linked to application on the ground) Practical guidance
<b>Cross-border traineeships</b> Make better use of EURES Provide concrete and practical information to (potential) trainees	<b>Horizontal coordination</b> Across cross-cutting policy areas (employment policies, ALMP policies, education policies) Involving relevant stakeholders (social partners, and SMEs, PES, national administrations, educational institutions)	<b>Data</b> Data on the prevalence, quality and nature of traineeships across Member States to be significantly strengthened to allow for comparison across the EU

### Discussion

**MEP Monica Semedo, RENEW, rapporteur of the European Parliament report on QFT**, explained that the Parliament is proposing updates in line with the findings of the Commission evaluation. The aim objectives would be to strengthen remuneration and social protection for trainees, to expand scope to education and training traineeships, to boost accessibility of vulnerable groups and promote telework. For the Parliament, it will be key to foresee also mentorship during the traineeships, and to ensure that traineeship providers and companies have sufficient assistance and information on how to guide trainees. Better data collection regarding traineeships is another point of the report.

**MEP Alicia Homs Ginel, S&D**, recalled that the framework remains non-binding, but that there is a need to strike a better balance between minimum standards and flexibility. The current framework is not guaranteeing decent working conditions and protection against exploitation. The 27 Member State different regulatory focuses do not allow for this.

**MEP Dragos Pislaru, RENEW, Chair EMPL Committee**, questioned the inefficiency of EURES which was identified by the report.

**MEP Rosa D'Amato, Greens**, drew attention towards the geographical scope of the QFT, considering that there is a growing gap between the urban and rural areas in terms of access to the traineeships, and also among the regions better developed and those less developed. She considered the usage of the RRF to strengthen the provision of and accessibility to traineeships.

**MEP Elżbieta Rafalska, ECR** stated that it is worrisome to not have sufficient data on traineeships beyond borders. Enterprises and education and training stakeholders should be better included in the data collection. The framework should also be reviewed so as to provide adequate support to SMEs

which have been shown to have more costs than benefits from traineeships.

**Manuel Geleng, DG EMPL**, agreed on the lack of data. Confirmed that a new study will be launched to look to information sharing, the financial aspect, guidance through traineeships, and the position of EURES. The expectation is that an interim report on the update of the QTF by the Commission will be published around April/May, while a final draft report is foreseen for November 2023. A Eurobarometer survey on the topic of traineeships will also be launched this Spring.

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT REPORT ON EU QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINEESHIPS (QFT)

**MEP Monica Semedo, RENEW, rapporteur**, highlighted the fact that any unpaid traineeship costs a person €1000 a month. Marginalised groups are found to be eight times less likely to have a traineeship. The quality of traineeships also needs to be improved as the trainees report insufficient competences developed, and inadequate learning and professional experiences. Access to traineeships can ensure more equal opportunities and access to the labour market for all. The youth unemployment rate is too high and needs to be tackled. Therefore, the right conditions for traineeship must be established. This includes an expansion of the scope of traineeships in the QFT, to include educational ones as well. Principles on learning content are needed while an adequate remuneration (at least the basic living costs) must be ensured for trainees. Further assistance must be provided to trainees and employers to navigate this while Member States should be better supported to learn from each other.

**MEP Alicia Homs Ginel, S&D, shadow rapporteur**, recalled the need to combat exploitation and required ambition to push a directive on the issue of traineeships.

**MEP Elżbieta Rafalska, ECR, shadow rapporteur**, called for mentorship and remuneration as part of traineeships.

**MEP Rosa D'Amato, Greens, shadow rapporteur**, insisted on the need for a European Directive on the topic, to ensure social insurance and contributions at the minimum.

**Deadline for amendments: 7 february at noon.**

## STRUCTURED DIALOGUE WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSION VP MARGRETHE VESTAGER

**Vestager**, as responsible for the European Year of Skills (EYS) on the side of the European Commission, linked the ambitions of the EYS with Europe's overall competitiveness. She required for the EYS decision to have a clear focus on which priorities are to be achieved, while clarifying that skills will be for life, democracy and work. Skills and learning are pillar of competitiveness considering also how labour shortages have impacted 25 different occupations. Labour shortages are the main factors to hampering development and scale of businesses. The responsibility on skills development should also fall with employers.

The European Commission will focus on four elements during EYS:

- Promoting effective and inclusive investments for skills and training
- Making sure that skills are relevant for labour market needs
- Matching people's aspirations and skill sets with job opportunities

- Attracting people from third countries with needed skill in the EU

Vestager reiterated that skills have to be for life, as communication, cooperation, interpersonal skills, digital skills make people successful at their workplace and beyond. In this context, she highlighted the upcoming two Proposals for Council Recommendation on digital education and skills, the launching of the pilot for the Education Digital Skills Certificate, the initiative to speed up and facilitate the recognition of qualifications of third country nationals, the launch of the Cybersecurity Academy. The Update of the Quality Framework for Traineeships was mentioned as part of the EYS agenda, with fair remuneration and access to social protection to be part of it. The goal of the EYS is to go beyond Brussels and lift the work on skills development in the long-run.

### ***Discussion***

**MEP Radan Kanev, EPP**, explained that the labour market in Europe is not attractive and it should be adapted to allow young employees to work for multiple employers, to move within their work, to have flexible schedules and contracts. He also questioned the slow pace of the current transposition of the Disability Strategy by Member States and the participation of people with disabilities on the labour market.

**MEP Agnes Jongerius, S&D**, mentioned the fact that lifelong learning is not made sufficiently attractive to workers that have had previously disappointing experiences with learning. She also considered the importance of imposing social conditionality, associated to the upcoming work on public procurement and state aid, that would see more workers pushed towards upskilling and reskilling.

**MEP Max Orville, RENEW**, highlighted the low uptake of digital skills across Europe which would lead to not meeting the 2030 targets of 80% of Europeans having at least basic digital skills. He congratulated the work done on harnessing talents in Europe and the brain drain in the context of the EYS and wished to know what more support will be given to outermost regions during the EYS. He supported the work on Quality Framework for Traineeships.

**MEP Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, ECR**, explained that learning and skills development is linked to EU values and that. However, the current ideological agenda of the EU prevents the development of creativity, which should lead the learning process and Europe, limits the freedoms of businesses and enterprises and does not allow learners to follow training according to their vocation and aspirations. This interventionist strategy is harmful to entrepreneurship and risk taking. She concluded by discussing soft skills and the lack of opportunities for many to develop in their childhood communication or relational skills which would help them in adulthood.

**Margrethe Vestager** detailed the fact that Europeans have insufficient information on the available jobs for them. On the point of legal migration, she saw this as only a smart part of the process of meeting labour market needs as all in the EU should have the chance to be upskilled and reskilled. However, the recognition of qualifications would be crucial to ensure that newcomers are not under-employed. On the points of the attractiveness of lifelong learning, she encouraged the promotion of a culture of learning which sees job shadowing, gamification, quizzes, practical projects or team work as part of the modern ways of learning. Lifelong learning should be integrated into how the labour market works, so as employers can prepare their employees and if those leave, to be sure to find other employees prepared by other employers in this sense. She supported the Harnessing Talent Communication considering that investment must be made in the affected regions to maintain talent and skills there. She shared the view

of the people with disabilities and the slow take-up of the European Accessibility Directive. She warned against social conditionality for learning as the goal would be to develop a culture of learning and not to force people into learning, but she supported the view on life skills and on high quality traineeships. She concluded by stressing that Individual Learning Accounts and Microcredentials will be key tools for the success of the EYS.

## SWEDISH PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

The Swedish Presidency presented their priorities in the field of employment and social affairs. **Paulina Brandberg, Minister of Equality and Deputy Minister for Employment**, listed the four main priorities: security, competitiveness, green and digital transitions, democratic values and the rule of law. Skills development was mentioned in the context of competitiveness and the twin transitions. Upskilling and reskilling were linked to future competitiveness, and to securing the twin transitions specifically to boost Europe's competitiveness. The Swedish Presidency will launch the negotiations on the European Year of Skills, and is looking forward to developing basic skills for having a more sustainable, competitive and resilient Europe.

**Anna Tenje, Minister for Social Security**, linked investment in skills to the idea of prolonging the working life and combatting Europe's demographic crisis. At the same time, in the context of the Care Strategy, she raised awareness on the importance of boosting the upskilling and reskilling of people working in the care sector and recognising their role.

## EUROPEAN SEMESTER FOR ECONOMIC POLICY COORDINATION: EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PRIORITIES FOR 2023

**MEP Estrella Durá Ferrandis, S&D, rapporteur for the report**, acknowledged that the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey 2023 matches the social and economic context. Social inequalities caused by the climate change, inflation and the recovery from the pandemic through the RRF are discussed. There is a worry in terms of the losing purchasing power and the raising inequalities. She called for more flexibility for well being and progress during the review of the European Semester, guiding public investment towards closing inequalities and linking the Semester with the European Pillar of Social Rights at the Sustainable Development Goals. She proposed social coordination as part of the Semester, namely a monitoring system for possible risks to social conversion. She also proposed green models for social protection, ensuring sustainable growth based on Sustainable Development Goals, innovation based on fair social and environmental standards..

**Marie-Pierre Vedrenne, RENEW, shadow rapporteur**, wished to see an indicator to assess coherence across the EU and also the inclusion of climate recommendations in the framework of the European Semester.

**MEP Konstantinos Arvanitis, GUE/NGL, shadow rapporteur**, called for a new economic model through amendments, pension provision, increased minimum wage in line with inflation and the fight against tax evasion.

**Kira Marie Peter-Hansen, Greens, shadow rapporteur**, wished that the Semester would contribute to access to essential services, support households impacted by challenges from climate change, acknowledge the vulnerability of workers, women, people of disabilities and reflect the issue of youth

unemployment.

**Elżbieta Rafalska, ECR**, on behalf of shadow rapporteur, founds missing from the ASGS 2023 the problem of borders, but recognised all other challenges.

**Representatives from DG EMPL** highlighted that employment priorities and the European Pillar of Social Rights will become more relevant under the European Semester. They hoped to see strengthen coordination of policy responses and social and economic resilience. Real minimum wage declined and 2022 and the labour market performance of 2021 and 2022 might not be replicated in 2023 given the war in Ukraine. The Commission will work on updating minimum wages to protect purchasing power and on reinforcing the social protection systems, social safety nets while ensuring fiscal sustainability.

**Vote scheduled for 6 March.**

### EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS 2023

**MEP Romana Tomc, EPP, on behalf of rapporteur Furlas**, underlined as priorities of the EP decision the reskilling and upskilling to combat labour shortages, the matching people's aspirations on the labour market, the development of both hard and soft skills, the promotion of active citizenship. The compromise amendments focus on supporting lifelong learning, supporting quality jobs, reduction of inequalities, etc.

**MEP Estrella Durá Ferrandis, S&D, on behalf of shadow rapporteur Albuquerque**, reinforced the principle of leaving no one behind, linking the EYS with the European Year of Youth and dialogue between social partners.

**MEP Sylvie Brunet, RENEW, shadow rapporteur**, brought three issues to be prioritised by EYS. Firstly, inequality, especially for women, the most vulnerable, and people with disabilities. Secondly, promotion of mobility in particular for young people. Thirdly, promotion actions at all levels, European, regional and local level so people find out about the EYS initiatives in all Member States.

**MEP Elena Lizzi, ID, shadow rapporteur**, wanted to see more investment in EYS, as well as more focus on the reconciliation of skills with the opportunities provided in the labour market. She considered also the financing available for SMEs for upskilling and reskilling and also the most vulnerable including geographical location.

**MEP Katrin Langensiepen, Greens, shadow rapporteur**, insisted on directing skills developments towards women, girls, Roma people. The goal would also be to evaluate how accessible is the education system for people with disabilities for example.

**Elżbieta Rafalska, ECR, shadow rapporteur**, asked for the initiative to remain realistic. Skills have to be adapted for what employers need, but lifelong learning needs to be prioritised also.

**Chiara Riondino, DG EMPL**, responded by presenting the unique opportunity to bring EU work to the local level and to target skills shortages and inclusive measures that do not leave anyone behind.

**The vote is scheduled to take place on 6 February in EMPL Committee.**

