

QUEEN

Capacity Building Module

Introduction

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Purpose of Module 1

The purpose of Module 1 is to create a common understanding of the criteria for Quality Apprenticeship and early project learnings from the QUEEN project. The module is separated into different Learning Blocks.

Learning Block 0

Learning block 0 is an **introductory** block to the QUEEN project, presenting technical details, the importance of apprenticeships, and persistent challenges.

Learning Block 1

This block will explain **common linguistic** definitions of terms derived from frameworks and entities that advocate for the viable role of apprenticeships.

Learning Block 2

Block 2 will present the first part of the EFQEA: **Learning and Working Conditions**. Criteria 1–7 will be presented and compared to interregional progress made so far based on a dedicated survey among the QUEEN partners.

Learning Block 3

Block 3 will present the second part of the EFQEA: **Framework Conditions**. Criteria 8–14 will be presented and compared to interregional progress made so far based on a dedicated survey among the QUEEN partners.

Learning Block 4

The last part of the module will present the **activities in the QUEEN project**, with interviews and materials for further reading.

Learning Block 0

Introduction to QUEEN

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The project QUEEN is implemented in the framework of the Interreg Europe programme and co-financed by the European Union.





QUEEN's aim is to ensure **quality apprenticeships** that offer long-term benefits and have the capacity to adapt to evolving labour markets, fostering inclusive and sustainable **career pathways** for both youth and adults.

€
1,899,606
budget



From
01 May 2025

To
31 Jul 2029

Impact

In 2018, the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA) set 14 key criteria to guarantee strong, effective apprenticeship programs. With the help of the QUEEN project's partners, the project uses several policy instruments¹ to:

- **Achieve an interregional understanding** of what constitutes a Quality Apprenticeship and what territorial progress is in place,
- **Identify success stories** supporting Quality Apprenticeships;
- **Design, achieve, and monitor changes to policies.** Improvements are expected largely in management (greater social partner dialogue mechanisms, guidance) and strategic changes (strengthening policy in line with EFQEA Framework).



1. Policy instrument refers to any policy, strategy, or law developed by public authorities to improve a specific territorial situation. In most cases, financial resources are associated with a policy instrument. However, an instrument can also sometimes refer to a legislative framework with no specific funding. In the context of Interreg Europe, operational programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs as well as Cooperation Programmes from European Territorial Cooperation are policy instruments. Beyond EU cohesion policy, local, regional, or national public authorities also develop their own policy instruments.

QUEEN partnership

- 1. Lead partner** - Agency for the development of the Empolese Valdelsa (IT)
- 2. Advisory partner** - European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (BE)
3. Regional Intermediate Body for European Programs Human Capital Bucharest Ilfov Region (RO)
4. South Moravian Region (CZ)
5. Department for Development and International Projects of Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH)
6. Basque Government - Department of Education
7. Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI)
8. Regional Government of Tuscany (IT)
9. Cork County Council (IE)

- 1. Associated Partner** - Regional Council of Southwest Finland (FI)

10
partners

9 Partners and 1
Associated Policy
Authority are partners
in the QUEEN project.



Actions

1. Develop interregional learning processes to update policies to support

- The quality of regional apprenticeship systems and their compliance with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA) for young people and adults;
- Adapt regional systems to the International Labour Organization (ILO) recommendations;
- Develop intervention measures and methodologies to ensure the quality of apprenticeship training pathways and their communication;
- Improve skills governance in regional apprenticeship ecosystems through social dialogue.

2. Policy Solutions

Understand what has been done and what can be done at the regional policy level to address these needs, including analysis and impact evaluation of policy measures and practical solutions.

3. Elaborate concrete policy frameworks

To establish a bridge between quality apprenticeships, new skills, and their integration into business processes in line with the twin transition.

4. Policy Change

Build capacity among regional authorities and stakeholders to implement improved approaches.

5. Policy Monitoring

Implement, extend, and monitor policy improvements, using regional resources.



Why Apprenticeships?

Apprenticeship schemes are particularly effective in bringing young people from education and training into work. Evidence shows that 60–70% of apprentices move directly into a job following their apprenticeship, and in some cases, this increases to 90%. Apprenticeships provide a combination of technical, transversal, and soft skills that employers are looking for. Therefore, apprenticeships provide a powerful pathway to equip individuals with the skills needed to succeed in the labour market while fostering employment, enhancing productivity, and promoting inclusive economic growth. Ensuring high-quality apprenticeships requires alignment with the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA), which sets out systematic criteria for their design and implementation.

However, putting the EFQEA criteria into practice isn't easy, and persistent challenges remain, such as:

- Creating clearer, more flexible quality standards.
- Strengthening collaboration with social and industry partners.
- Encouraging people from all backgrounds and genders to see apprenticeships as a viable career path.
- Keeping up with global trends, such as digitalization and sustainable development.

Policy improvement process

1
Needs

- Analysis of the local policy and territorial context
- Stakeholder engagement
- Highlighting of **needs**

2
Solutions

- Identification of suitable solutions in EU regions
- Exchange with practice owners aiming to capture ideas to adapt for their own policies
- Stakeholder involvement

3
Changes

- Translating the solution into policy measures
- Policy adaptation/change
- Stakeholder communication



Conclusion

- **QUEEN, Quality Apprenticeships for Evolving Labour Needs**, is an Interreg-funded project that aims to empower youth and adults with quality apprenticeships that adapt to evolving labour markets, fostering inclusive, sustainable career pathways for all.
- **The goal is to**
 - Achieve an interregional understanding of what a Quality Apprenticeship is;
 - Identify success stories for Quality Apprenticeships;
 - Design and monitor policies in line with the EFQEA Framework.
- **Challenges for Quality Apprenticeships are to;**
 - Create clearer, flexible quality standards;
 - Strengthen collaboration with partners;
 - Encourage people from all backgrounds to view apprenticeships as a viable career path.

Further information

[EFQEA Framework, European Commission](#)

[QUEEN Interreg](#)

Explore the introductory video about QUEEN [here](#)



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Learning Block 1

Terminology and Frameworks

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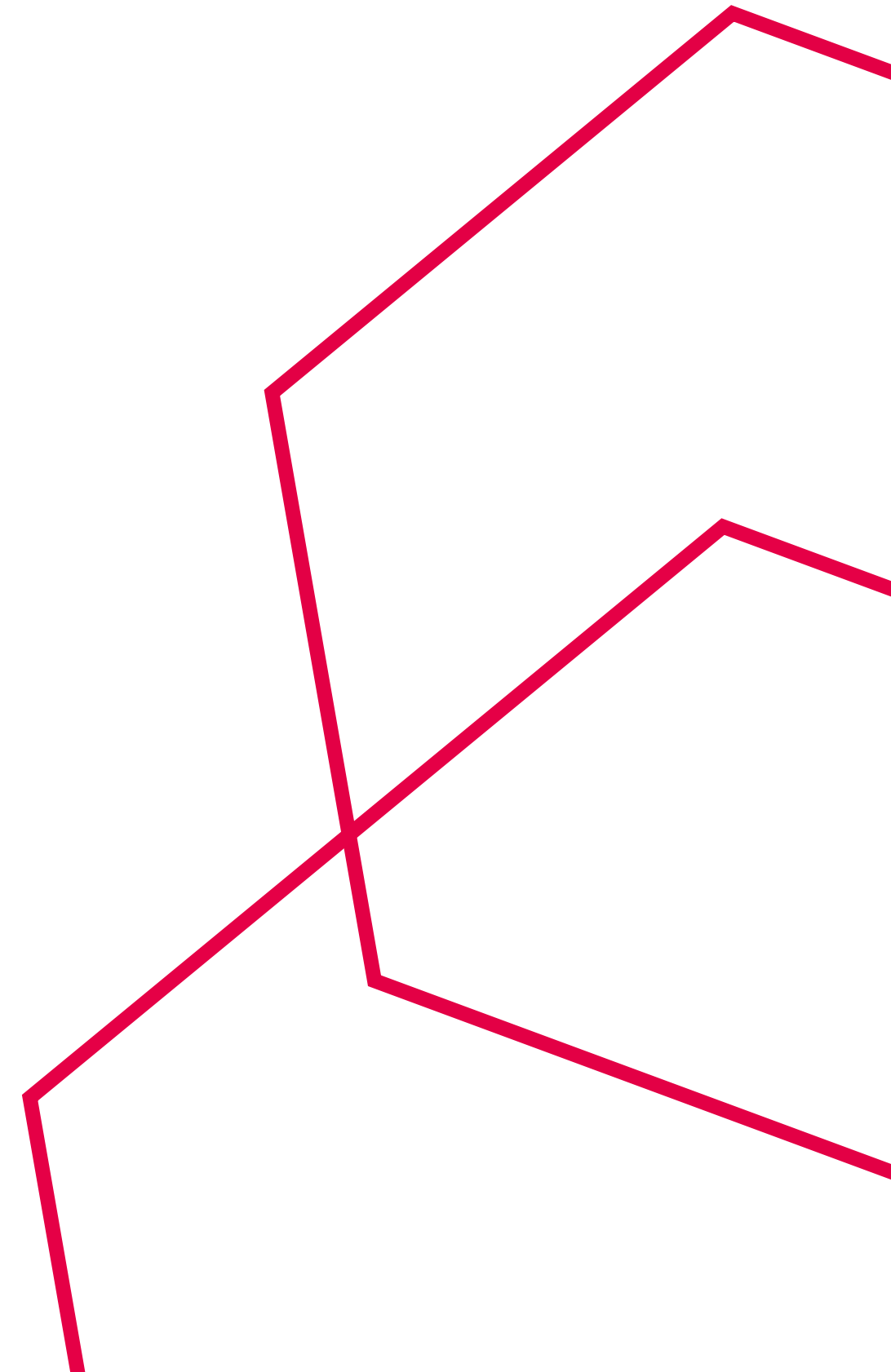
Learning Block 1 Overview

Terminology

- Apprenticeship
- Apprenticeship Coordinator
- Apprenticeship vs Internship
- Dual Apprenticeship
- Intermediaries
- Pre-apprenticeship programme
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

ILO & EFQEA framework

- ILO (International Labour Organisation)
- Introduction to the EFQEA framework
- The European Apprentices Network (EAN)
- EAfA and Cedefop



Terminology

Definition	Explanation	Source
Apprenticeship	<p>Apprenticeships provide young people with real job opportunities and help adults upskill and reskill for today's evolving job market, creating a powerful bridge between education and employment. Apprenticeships are a form of systematic, long-term training that combines training or education in the workplace with training in an educational institution.</p> <p>An apprenticeship leads to recognised qualifications, is based on an agreement defining the rights and obligations of the apprentice, the employer, and, where appropriate, the vocational education and training institution, and the apprentice is paid or otherwise compensated for the work-based component.</p> <p>The term “apprenticeship” should be understood as a form of education and training governed by an apprenticeship agreement, which enables an apprentice to acquire the competencies required to work in an occupation through structured and remunerated or otherwise financially compensated training consisting of both on-the-job and off-the-job learning, and that leads to a recognised qualification.</p>	<p>Cedefop, Council of the European union, 2018b.</p> <p>ILO (R208 - Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208))</p>
Apprenticeship Coordinator	<p>An Apprenticeship Coordinator is the person responsible for organising, monitoring, and supporting the delivery of an apprenticeship programme, acting as the main link between the company, the apprentice, and the VET provider, and ensuring that training plans and quality requirements are met.</p>	<p>Apprenticeship Coordinator, Apprentix</p>

Terminology

Definition	Explanation	Source
Apprenticeship vs Internship	<p>An apprenticeship is a formal education and training pathway governed by an apprenticeship agreement. It enables a learner to acquire all the competencies required for a specific occupation through structured, remunerated training that combines on-the-job learning in a company and off-the-job learning in a VET school or training centre. Apprenticeships lead to a recognised qualification and typically last one to four years, depending on the trade or profession.</p> <p>By contrast, an internship is a shorter, non-formal work-experience placement. Internships usually last between four weeks and six months and focus on a limited set of skills relevant to an occupation. They do not aim to provide the full skill set required to master a trade. Interns generally acquire their main knowledge and skills in a training centre or university, and the internship provides supplementary practical experience.</p>	<p>Apprenticeship, UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary</p> <p>Internship, UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary</p>
Dual Apprenticeship	<p>Dual apprenticeships (or dual systems) combine a strong component of school-based education with highly regulated work-based training in integrated learning plans leading to a formal qualification.</p>	<p>UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary</p> <p>Cedefop, Dual Apprenticeship</p>

Terminology

Definition	Explanation	Source
Intermediaries	<p>The role of intermediaries may cover various functions to match apprentices with employers and to support the entire apprenticeship process. In this way, intermediaries reduce the selection- and employment-related risks for employers (particularly for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)) and generate a bigger pool of apprentices and employers.</p>	<p>ILO, Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation No 208, 2023</p>
Pre-apprenticeship programme	<p>Pre-apprenticeship programmes are training programmes designed to prepare learners to meet apprenticeship entry requirements. They bridge the gap between the existing skills and competencies of candidates and those required to begin an apprenticeship. This may be the case when candidates have dropped out of school or when formal education is insufficient. Pre-apprenticeships contribute to greater diversity and inclusion in apprenticeship programmes.</p> <p>They have the potential to increase the pool of qualified candidates and to address inequalities resulting from unequal access to education and skills development. The term refers to a programme designed to help potential apprentices develop the competencies needed to improve their workplace readiness and meet the formal entry requirements for an apprenticeship.</p>	<p>ILO, Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation No 208, 2023</p>

Terminology

Definition	Explanation	Source
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	<p>RPL stands for recognition of prior learning. It should be understood as a process, undertaken by qualified personnel, to identify, document, assess, and certify a person's competencies, acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning, based on established qualifications standards. The process improves access to apprenticeships and can be a powerful way to recognise skills and competencies acquired through informal learning. RPL also makes it possible for potential apprentices who have certain skills and competencies to access a qualification or a partial qualification, to meet entry requirements, or to shorten the duration of their apprenticeships.</p>	<p>ILO, Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation No 208, 2023</p>
Tutor vs. Mentor	<p>A tutor supports a learner's progress in a specific subject or skill. Tutoring focuses on helping the learner understand new concepts, review previous lessons, complete assignments or prepare for examinations. The tutor's role is therefore instructional and subject-focused, requiring proficiency in the relevant content.</p> <p>A mentor provides broader guidance that extends beyond academic performance. Mentoring involves advising, supporting and encouraging the learner in their personal, technical and professional development. The mentor is typically an experienced professional who fosters a relationship built on trust, reflection and long-term growth. While a tutor helps a learner improve in a particular area of study, a mentor helps them navigate their wider development and future pathway.</p>	<p>Trainer, UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary</p> <p>Training, UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary</p> <p>Mentor, UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary</p>

The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA)

Why was it created?

The European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships is aligned with the European Pillar of Social Rights, which recognises the right to quality and inclusive education, training, and lifelong learning. To support the development of high-quality apprenticeships, the European Commission has established 14 key criteria for Member States and stakeholders. The framework aims to enhance the employability and personal development of apprentices to contribute to a highly skilled workforce that meets labour market needs.

Purpose of the framework

The Framework establishes 14 criteria for high-quality and effective apprenticeships, aimed at fostering both the acquisition of job-related skills and the personal development of apprentices. It reflects the diversity of vocational education and training (VET) systems across the EU and respects Member States' competence in this area. The Framework provides a common definition of quality and effective apprenticeships through 14 criteria organised into two categories:

- Part I – Learning & Working Conditions
- Part II – Framework Conditions

The International Labour Organization (ILO)

Is devoted to promoting social justice and is internationally recognized for its advocacy for human and labour rights.

ILO's aim is to:

- Promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work;
- Create greater opportunities for women and men to access decent employment and income;
- Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all;
- Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

The ILO's Guide for Policy Makers on Quality Apprenticeships offers practical insights and actionable strategies to build apprenticeship systems that are effective, equitable, and sustainable. The guide emphasizes the importance of structured programmes, social dialogue, and collaboration to design apprenticeship systems that meet the highest standards, ensuring benefits for individuals, businesses, and society.

Click [here](#) to read the publication

Click [here](#) to see the interview with Anna Zongolowicz from the International Labour Organisation

► Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)

Guide for Policymakers



Additional Entities advocating for Quality Apprenticeships



EAfA (European Alliance for Apprenticeship)

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) is a platform launched by the European Commission aiming to strengthen the quality and viability of apprenticeships across Europe. It brings together governments, business organisations, education and training providers, among others, to commit to national actions that support better apprenticeship systems. EAfA encourages national coalitions and stakeholder commitments to improve apprenticeship quality, support SMEs, engage regional authorities, foster social dialogue, and increase apprentices' opportunities and representation. Read more about their work and find their research on the European Commission's [website](#).



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) is an EU decentralised agency based in Thessaloniki, Greece, that provides research, evidence, data, and analysis on vocational education and training (VET) across Europe. Its work supports policymakers in understanding labour market trends, vocational skills needs, and the effectiveness of VET and apprenticeship systems. CEDEFOP acts as a knowledge hub and forum where governments, employers, trade unions, training providers, and learners can share insights and best practices on VET and apprenticeships, aligning national strategies with broader EU policy goals. Read more about their work on their [website](#).

Additional Entities advocating for Quality Apprenticeships

European Apprentices Network

By apprentices, for apprentices



The European Apprentices Network (EAN)

Established in 2017, the network was created in cooperation with the [European Youth Forum](#) and [OBESSU](#), with the support of DG Employment of the European Commission. EAN is a European-level network of apprentices that ensures the voice of young apprentices is heard in discussions related to VET. The network is composed of current and former apprentices, representatives of student organisations, and representatives of youth labour unions and is organised around three pillars, representing apprentices and VET students at different levels:

- National organisations,
- European organisations,
- Individuals who wish to help create national representation structures,

The diversity of profiles within the network enables in-depth debate and provides a comprehensive overview of apprentices' perspectives. Read more about their work on their [website](#).

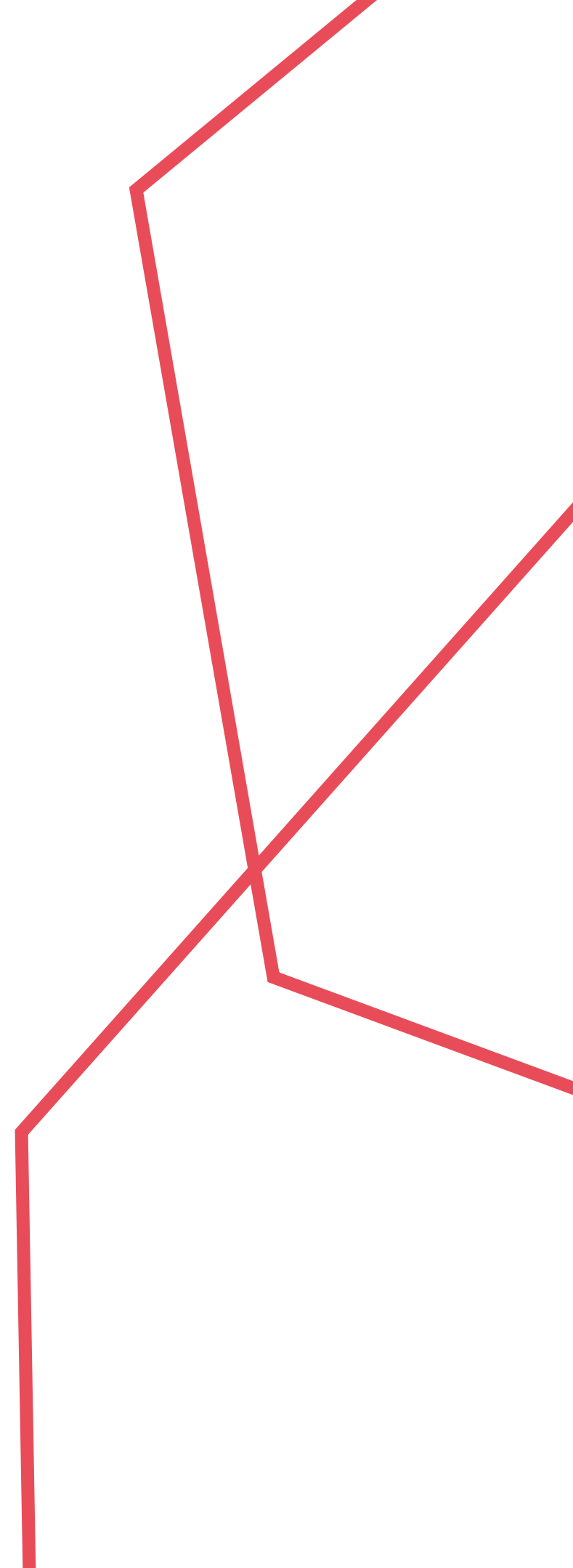
Reflection

What is the difference between an apprenticeship and a quality apprenticeship?

How can the EFQEA criteria guide your organisation in supporting apprenticeships?

How is a dual apprenticeship different from an apprenticeship, and which one do you believe is the most effective?

How is the EFQEA constructed? In which parts?



Conclusion

- **Apprenticeships** are understood as formal [vocational education and training](#) schemes that combine learning in [education or training institutions](#) with substantial [work-based learning](#).
- **A dual apprenticeship** comprises parallel training in a company and in a vocational school.
- **ILO (International Labour Organisation)** created its Guide for Policymakers - Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation for policy guidance and standards, along with core elements of quality systems
- **The EFQEA (European Framework for Quality Education Apprenticeships)** is divided into 2 parts: the first presenting core elements in relation to Working & Learning Conditions, and the second part emphasises factors connected to Framework Conditions.
- **EaFA** unites governments and key stakeholders to enhance the quality, improve the perception, and expand the availability and mobility of apprenticeships across Europe.
- **Cedefop** works to strengthen vocational education and training (VET) by supporting evidence-based policy-making and upholding effective VET, collaborating closely with its principal partners to achieve these aims.

Sources

- [Apprenticeship schemes in European countries, Cedefop Council of the European union, 2018b, Cedefop.](#)
- [Awareness raising and Guidance for Apprenticeships, EAfA.](#)
- [Basic Skills in Apprenticeships, EAfA.](#)
- [European Commission, European Alliance for Apprenticeships.](#)
- [Glossary of terms at the International Labour Conference 2022, Apprenticeships, 2022 on TVETipedia Glossary of UNESCO-UNEVOC, ILO.](#)
- [Quality Apprenticeship recommendation, ILO.](#)
- [Tool on Apprenticeships, EAfA.](#)
- [\(R208 - Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 \(No. 208\)\), ILO.](#)
- [ILO Apprenticeships](#)
- [CEDEFOP – Apprenticeships schemes](#)

Learning Block 2

EFQEA - Part I, Working & Learning Conditions

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Learning Block 2 Overview

EFQEA Part 1: Learning & Working Conditions

Learning block 2 summarises the interregional progress according to a self-assessment, where each partner evaluated their current progress to adopt the criteria for the EFQEA framework. The following slides illustrate the interregional progress in relation to each criterion in part I of the EFQEA framework:

1. Written Agreement

2. Learning Outcomes

3. Pedagogical Support

4. Workplace component

5. Pay and/or compensation

6. Transparency

7. Work, health and safety

1. Written Agreement

A contract or agreement defines the rights and obligations of the apprentice, employer, and, where appropriate, the vocational education and training (VET) institution.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** The written contract system is formalized and operational, ensuring that employer-apprentice obligations are clearly established.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** The written contract requirement is fulfilled, with opportunities to improve regional consistency and unified procedures.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Contractual by-laws are established, creating opportunities to strengthen standardisation and recognition.
- **Basque Country:** Formalized and operational.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** Written contracts are legally required, enhancing implementation consistency.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** The requirement is fully met, offering a stable basis for further system improvements.

Good practice & Opportunities

In **Cork County Council**, apprenticeships are based on a written contract signed by the employer, the apprentice, and the training institution, confirming that all parties will meet the agreed conditions and that the employer will pay the apprentice for the full duration of the apprenticeship.

2. Learning Outcomes

The apprenticeship leads to recognized qualifications, with learning outcomes tailored to match the skills needed in the labour market.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Learning outcomes are partially implemented, with comprehensive learning outcomes defined between apprentice and trainer.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Learning outcomes are defined, with room to expand company use of local degree components.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Centrally defined curricula are in place, with opportunities to deepen employer involvement.
- **Basque Country:** Formalized and operational.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** Learning outcomes are prescribed in legislation, strengthening the practical implementation.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Learning outcomes are defined and implemented, supporting further development.

Good practice & Opportunities

In **Bucharest-Ilfov**, the apprenticeship contract details the qualifications acquired and specifies the partners involved, as well as the duration and location of the training. These elements ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities for all actors involved.

3. Pedagogical Support

Mentors or trainers provide guidance to apprentices, particularly in the workplace, and support the integration of workplace learning with theoretical education.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Structured mentoring and CPD are in place, with scope to further expand continuous development.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Teacher competence has declined due to cancelled training programmes, but some local investments in training exist.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Initial trainer-training exists, with opportunities to institutionalise mentor certification.
- **Basque Country:** Voluntary trainer training is in place, with opportunities to strengthen uptake and consistency.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** CPD is a legal right and obligation.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Pedagogical support is formally in place.

Good practice & Opportunities

The **Basque Country's** integrated model strengthens apprenticeship quality by embedding career guidance across the VET system and linking it to real company environments. This approach ensures consistent implementation and supports learners in making informed choices through work-based experiences.

4. Workplace Component

At least half of the apprenticeship duration should be carried out in a workplace, and there should be opportunities to undertake part of such placements abroad.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Apprenticeships must include at least 50% workplace training, with opportunities for international mobility.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Workplace learning is well-established, with typically 70-80% workplace learning in apprenticeships.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Practical training is emerging, with opportunities to scale up duration and participation with companies.
- **Basque Country:** A robust workplace component is formalized and operational, with opportunities to diversify placements.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Partially implemented.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** Half the apprenticeship must be executed in a company with an opportunity to EU mobility programmes.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Work-based learning exists, with opportunities to ensure consistency.

Good practice & Opportunities

The Company-based Mentorship Programme in **Zenica-Doboj Canton** introduces a structured mentorship model that strengthens apprenticeship quality and aligns training with labour-market needs. Through trained mentors and standardised guidance, it ensures skills development and coherent workplace learning.

5. Pay and/or Compensation

Apprentices should receive pay and/or compensation, taking into account cost sharing arrangements between employers, apprentices, and public authorities.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Compensation mechanisms are partially implemented, with opportunities to review pay rates.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Compensation exists, with opportunities to clarify and harmonise remuneration models.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Compensation is common, with opportunities to stabilise employer incentives.
- **Basque Country:** Compensation varies by apprenticeship type.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** Apprentices should receive payment at least the minimum salary according to the national economy.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Compensation is ensured.

Good practice & Opportunities

In **Southwest Finland Region**, apprenticeship training is regulated under the Vocational Education and Training Act, which requires apprenticeships to be carried out under a paid employment contract. This ensures that apprentices receive remuneration for the full duration of their training and guarantees fair compensation.

6. Social Protection

Apprentices should be entitled to social protection, including necessary insurance.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Social protection is formalized and operational.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Social protection is fully ensured.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Social protection is emerging through dual education projects, with opportunities to expand coverage under labour legislation.
- **Basque Country:** Formalized and operational.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** Formalized and operational. Apprentices are considered insured persons.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Social protection is guaranteed.

Good practice & Opportunities

A relevant Tuscan good practice is the Region's contribution to the development of Italy's **Ministerial Circular No. 12/2022**, through its participation in the National Technical Body on Apprenticeship alongside the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and social partners. The Circular clarified the implementation of first-level apprenticeships, particularly regarding apprentices' social protection rights and obligations. By providing greater legal certainty and transparency for learners, employers, and training providers, it strengthened trust in apprenticeship schemes and supported their wider uptake.

7. Work, Health and Safety Conditions

The host workplace should comply with relevant rules and regulations on working conditions, in particular, health and safety legislation.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Safety compliance is formalized and operational.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Compliance is fully ensured.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH)** Safety cooperation is strengthening, with opportunities to expand supervision.
- **Basque Country** Formalized and operational.
- **Tuscany Region (IT)** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO)** Robust institutional framework that includes protection for vulnerable workers.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ)** Formalized and operational.

Good practice & Opportunities

In **Bucharest-Ilfov**, a strong legal framework requires employers to ensure safe working conditions and inform apprentices about workplace risks. National authorities monitor compliance, ensuring structured prevention and oversight within companies.

Collective progress within Working & Learning conditions

EFQEA Criteria	Collective Progress
1. Written contract	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
2. Learning outcomes	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
3. Pedagogical support	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
4. Workplace component	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
5. Pay and/or compensation	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
6. Social protection	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
7. Work, health and safety conditions	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Reflection

Which of the criteria between number 1-7 is the most relevant for your region or organisation?

Which criteria does your region find the most challenging and why?

Pedagogical Support and Workplace Component were the most challenging for regions to progress in. From your perspective, what is the reasoning behind this?

Learning Block 3

EFQEA - Part II, Framework Conditions

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Learning Block 3 Overview

EFQEA Part 2: Framework Conditions

Learning block 3 summarises the interregional progress according to a self-assessment, where each partner evaluated their current progress to adopt the criteria for the EFQEA framework. The following slides illustrate the interregional progress in relation to each criterion in part II of the EFQEA framework:

8. Regulatory Framework

9. Involvement of social partners

10. Support for companies

11. Flexible pathways and mobility

12. Career Guidance & Awareness Raising

13. Transparency

14. Quality Assurance and graduate tracking

8. Regulatory Framework

A clear and consistent regulatory framework should be in place, based on partnership and a transparent dialogue among all relevant stakeholders.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** The regulatory framework is formalized and operational, enshrined in several legislations.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** A framework exists, with opportunities to translate discussions into concrete measures.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Updated legislation for dual education, with opportunities to improve clarity and consistency.
- **Basque Country:** A strong framework is formalized and operational.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Partially implemented.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** National framework based on dialogue with opportunities to build a coherent regional system.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Partially implemented.

Good practice & Opportunities

Cork County Council ensures a robust and coherent regulatory framework governed by multiple acts (Qualifications Act, Labour Services Act, Industrial Training Act, Apprenticeship Act).

9. Involvement of Social Partners

Social partners, including at the sectoral level, should be involved in the design, governance, and implementation of apprenticeship schemes.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

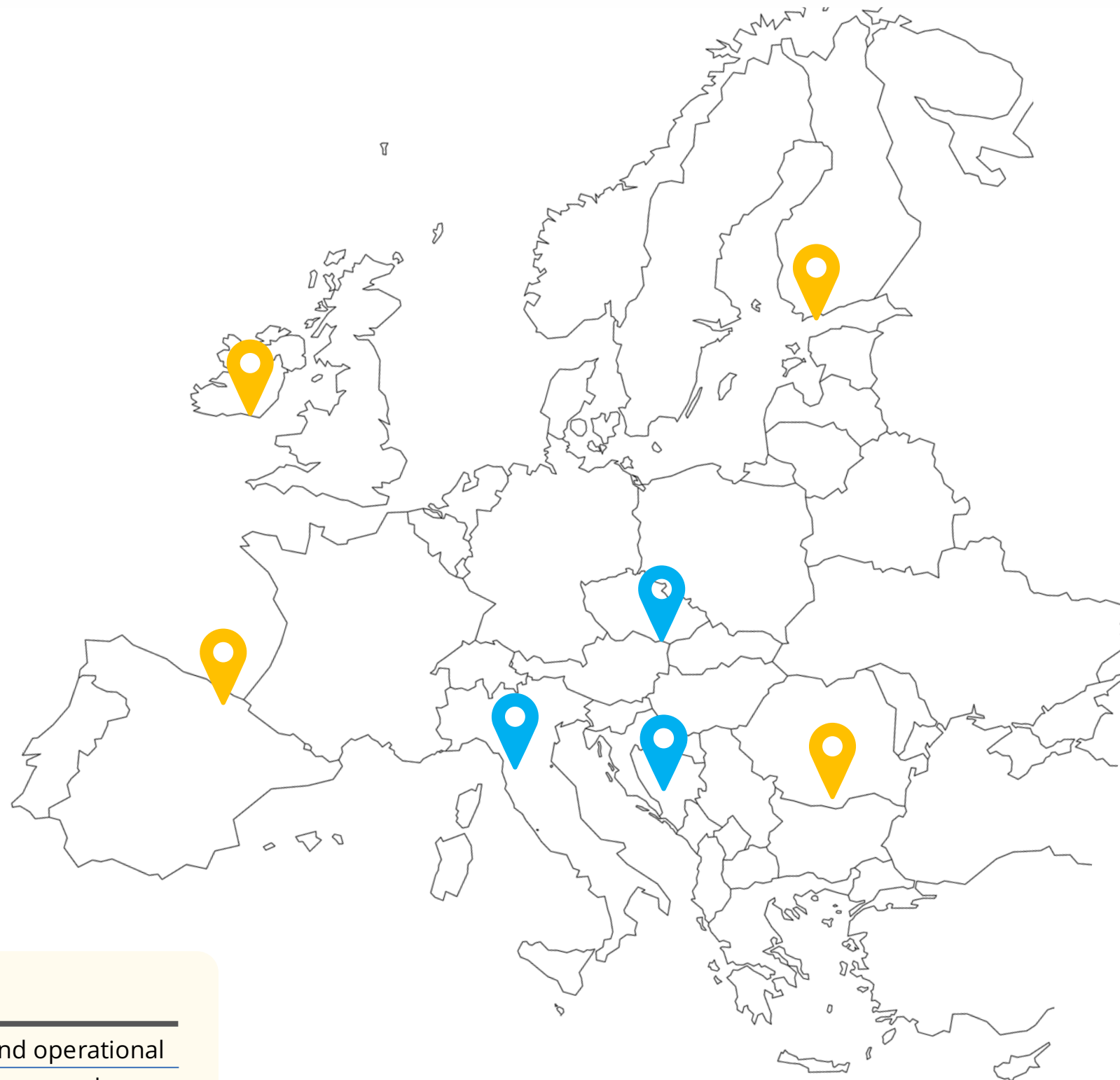
- **Cork County Council (IE)** Social partner involvement is formalized and operational, supported by National Apprenticeship Alliance.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI)**: Partially implemented.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH)**: Social dialogue is improving, with opportunities to institutionalise cooperation.
- **Basque Country**: Social partner involvement is partially implemented.
- **Tuscany Region (IT)**: Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO)**: Social partners are formally involved, with opportunities to expand their strategic role.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ)**: Formalized and operational.

Good practice & Opportunities

The **Tuscany Region Quality Charter** provides a regional framework that translates standards into shared commitments for institutions, social partners and training providers. By embedding apprenticeships in governance and aligning learning pathways, it ensures structured work-based learning, consistent quality and better employment transitions.

10. Support for Companies

Financial and/or non-financial support should be provided, particularly for small, medium-sized, and micro-companies.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** Company support is partially implemented, with opportunities to increase funding levels.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Support exists, with opportunities to improve.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Initial grant for employers exists, with opportunities to expand financial and tax incentives.
- **Basque Country:** Partially implemented.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** In development.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** has financial and administrative support in place, with the opportunity to expand flexibility and inclusion.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Support is in development, offering opportunities to enhance measures.

Good practice & Opportunities

While no region has fully formalised and operationalised support for companies, several regions subsidise employer support and focus on strengthening cooperation with business and industry.

11. Flexible Pathways and Mobility

Apprenticeships should lead to a nationally recognised qualification and offer flexible entry requirements, as well as opportunities for further education and training. Transnational mobility should also be an integral component of apprenticeships.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

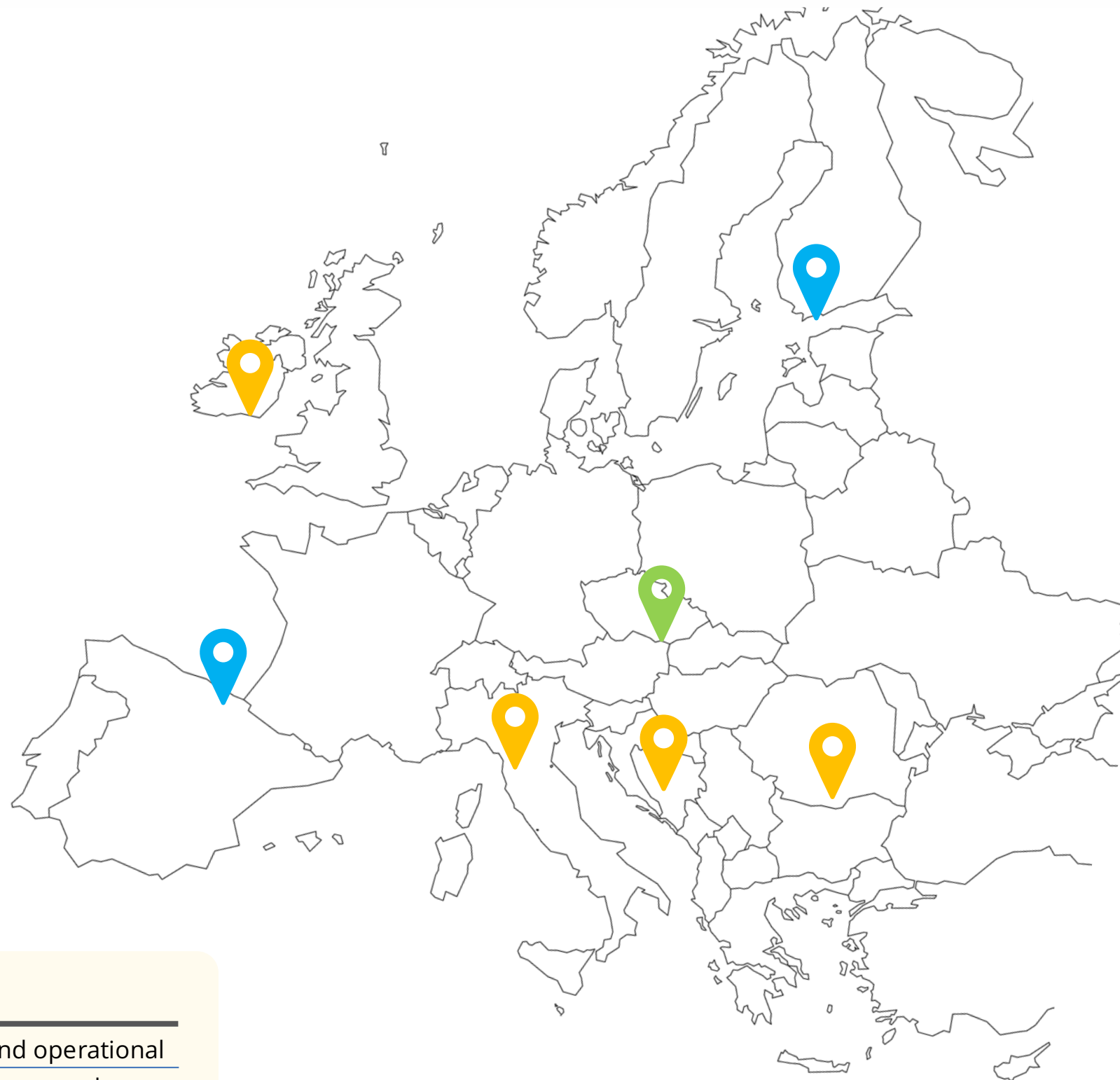
- **Cork County Council (IE):** Flexible pathways are partially in place, with opportunities to expand mobility.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Partially implemented.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Lifelong learning options are emerging, with opportunities to expand mobility.
- **Basque Country:** Flexibility is underway, with opportunities to support learners returning to education.
- **Tuscany Region (IT):** Partially implemented.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** Flexible pathways exist, with opportunities to strengthen mobility options.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** Formalized and operational.

Good practice & Opportunities

The VET system of the **Basque Country** introduced five personalised pathways (A–E) to accommodate diverse learner needs and reintegrate early school leavers.

12. Career Guidance and Awareness Raising

Career guidance, mentoring, and learner support should be provided to ensure successful outcomes and reduce drop-outs.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE)** Guidance is partially implemented, with opportunities to improve support at secondary level education.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI)**: Awareness varies between companies, with opportunities to improve guidance and access for all learners.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH)**: Guidance is improving, with opportunities to expand gender-sensitive promotion and parental engagement.
- **Basque Country**: Guidance is in development, with opportunities to enhance VET system.
- **Tuscany Region (IT)**: Partially implemented.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO)**: Guidance is in place, with opportunities to improve personalized support and consistency.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ)**: Formalized and operational.

Good practice & Opportunities

Career counselling has improved in **Zenica-Doboj Canton** through cooperation between employment services and schools, supported by awareness campaigns that promotes vocational careers.

13. Transparency

The transparency of, and access to, apprenticeship offers within and between Member States should be ensured.



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

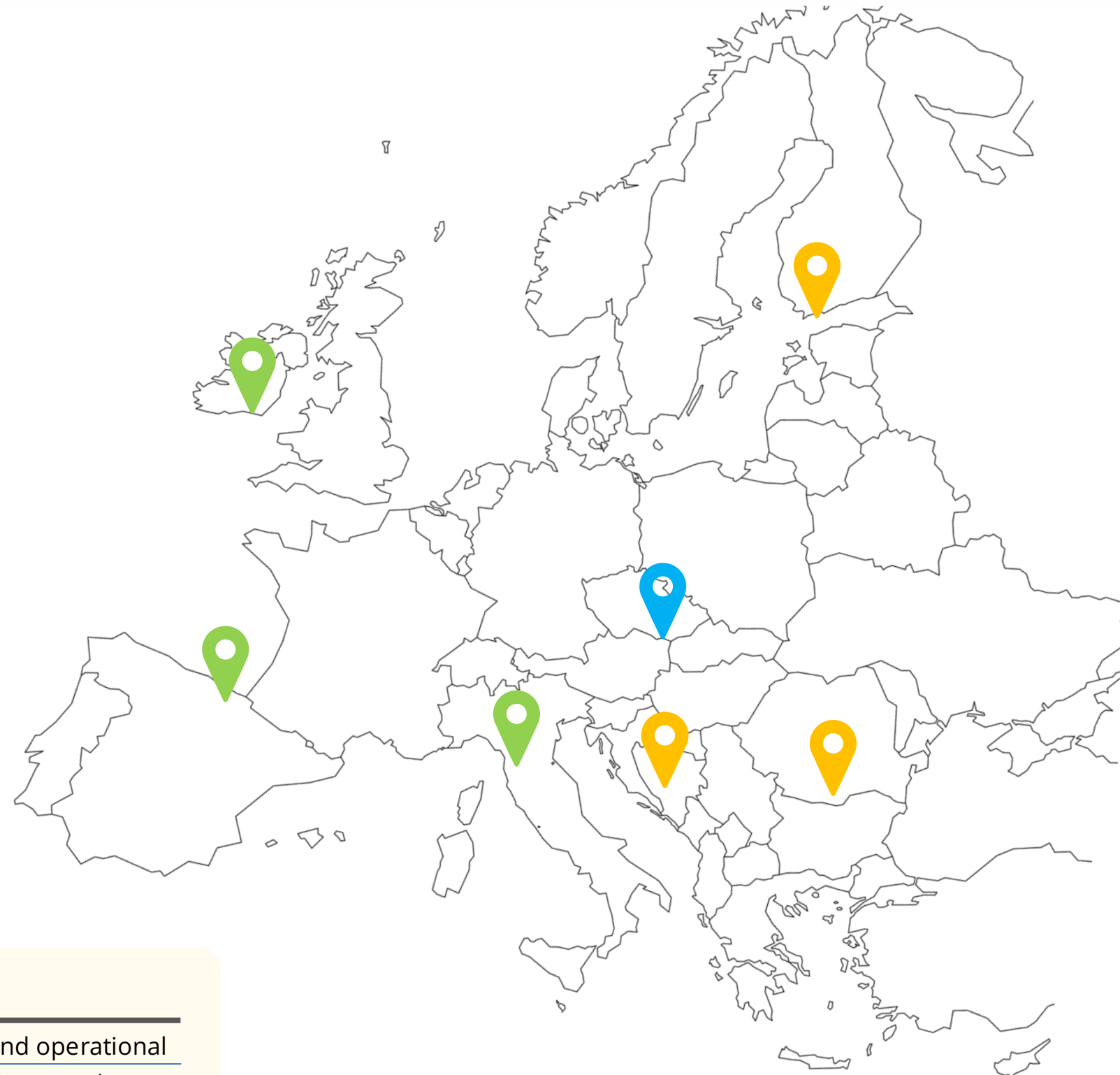
- **Cork County Council (IE)** Transparency and mobility is implemented, with opportunities to expand implementation.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI)**: Formalized and operational.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH)**: Transparency is emerging, with opportunities to create a unified online registry.
- **Basque Country**: Formalized and operational.
- **Tuscany Region (IT)**: Partially implemented.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO)**: Transparency is implemented through a constitutional guarantee to public information.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ)**: Partially implemented.

Good practice & Opportunities

The Foresight Academy in **Southwest Finland** is based on a multi-stakeholder collaboration to anticipate regional skills needs. It provides a structured regional foresight that aligns education, apprenticeships and work-based learning with future skills needs through systematic labour-market intelligence.

14. Quality assurance and graduate tracking

There should be quality assurance (QA) of apprenticeships and tracking of employment and career progression of apprentices



Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Current Status

- **Cork County Council (IE):** QA and tracking are formalized and operational, supported by data from several sources.
- **Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI):** Discussions have taken place to unify practices.
- **Zenica-Doboj Canton (BH):** Tracking has begun, with opportunities to institutionalise feedback loops.
- **Basque Country:** QA is formalized and operational, with extensive QA recognition systems.
- **Tuscany (IT):** Formalized and operational.
- **Bucharest Ilfov (RO):** QA exists, with opportunities to build a coordinated system.
- **South Moravian Region (CZ):** In development.

Good practice & Opportunities

The **Basque Government** operates a comprehensive, multi-layered quality assurance system covering all VET centres. This system ensures consistent monitoring of apprenticeship delivery and systematic tracking of learners' career progression across the region.

Collective progress within Framework Conditions

EFQEA Criteria	Collective Progress
8. Regulatory framework	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
9. Involvement of social partners	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
10. Support for companies	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
11. Flexible pathways & mobility	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
12. Career guidance and awareness raising	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
13. Transparency	● ● ● ● ● ● ●
14. Quality assurance & graduate tracking	● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Key

- Formalized and operational
- Partially implemented
- In development

Reflection

Which of the criteria between 8-14 is most relevant for your region or organisation?

How could support for companies be improved?

In comparison to Part I of the EFQEA, Part II reveals more areas requiring further development and progress. What is your reasoning behind this?

Learning Block 4

Interregional progress and news within the QUEEN project

Interreg
Europe



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[Tuscany's Apprenticeship Model](#)

Tuscany Region, known for its cultural heritage, is emerging as a leader in apprenticeship innovation through the EU-funded QUEEN project. At the Tuscany Interregional Workshop, the region showcased its holistic ecosystem built on strong public-private partnerships and a tripartite governance model. Its Charter of Quality in Apprenticeship promotes coherent planning, collaboration, quality work-based learning, and transparent skills recognition.

Hosted in Siena, a hub for life sciences, wine innovation, and sustainable finance, the workshop highlighted Tuscany's resilience and forward-looking strategy. Through QUEEN, Tuscany advances tools and policy innovation on mobility, gender equality, and microcredentials, positioning itself as a model for modern, inclusive vocational education in Europe. Read more about the event [here](#).

[Explore the activities during the study visit to Mazzei Winery](#)



Interregional progress

[EAfA High-Level Event in Brussels](#)

On 30 June–1 July 2025, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) held its High-Level Event in Brussels on “Apprenticeships for the Union of Skills and the Clean Industrial Deal”. EU institutions, social partners, education providers, and regional actors discussed advancing VET for Europe’s green and digital transitions. Key announcements included the 2026 Blue Book traineeships, a goal to train 1 million women in STEM by 2028, and the VET Action Plan 2026. EARLALL co-led the Community on Cities and Regions, highlighting the QUEEN project as an example of regional policy fostering innovation. The event reaffirmed regions’ role in resilient apprenticeship ecosystems.

**Learn more about the
Union of Skills [here](#)**





[Apprenticeship Dialogue: Southwest Finland's 1st Meeting](#)

The first regional stakeholder meeting in Southwest Finland Region took place on 24 September 2025, bringing together 24 experts from education and employment services. The workshop focused on strengthening collaboration to develop skills and advance apprenticeships. Hosted by Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland University of Applied Sciences within the QUEEN project, the meeting engaged the Regional Ecosystem for Continuous Learning, connecting education providers, employers, and stakeholders to co-develop flexible learning solutions.

Key discussions highlighted smoother transitions into apprenticeships, improved guidance, personalized business collaboration, and expanded higher education internship models. Insights from the workshop will feed Turku University of Applied Sciences / Southwest Finland Region (FI) regional analysis and further consultations with experts. Read more [here](#).

[Discover how the regional Council of Southwest Finland connects with QUEEN](#)



Interregional progress

The Basque Country (Euskadi) Apprenticeship model

The Basque Country apprenticeship model aligns an innovation-driven VET system with the industrial economy. Governed through a participatory model involving government and social partners, its Basque Guidance Strategy 2023–2026 promotes equitable, learner-centred pathways. With over 10,000 companies engaged in dual VET and employment rates around 85%, Euskadi links training to strategic sectors such as advanced manufacturing, energy, biosciences, and digital and green technologies.

Through QUEEN, Euskadi shares its person-centred guidance model and innovation ecosystem, while seeking to strengthen SME collaboration, integrate transversal skills, and enhance teacher training—contributing to a more inclusive and future-ready European workforce. Read more about it [here](#).



[Watch a video about the QUEEN projects relevance for the Basque Country](#)



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Interreg website*

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