

EC-ILO ACTION ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICIES:

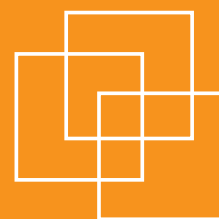


International
Labour
Organization

ENHANCING CAPABILITIES OF PRACTITIONERS TO DESIGN, IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICIES – UNDER THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON ESTABLISHING A YOUTH GUARANTEE

COMPONENT TWO: APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMMES

A summary of project implementation and achievements



About the project component 2

What is the EC-ILO action on youth employment policies about?

The International Labour Office (ILO) and the European Commission (EC) have been working together to enhance the capabilities of practitioners to design, implement and monitor youth employment policies and improve apprenticeships programmes. This joint action consists of two components. The first has been supporting EU Member States in assessing the progress and improving the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG) schemes; while the second has provided support to improve national apprenticeship systems. It targeted three countries: Latvia, Portugal and Spain.

What is the component on apprenticeships about?

The second component of this joint action (hereinafter referred to as the “project”) has strengthened the capability of national institutions and implementing partners in Latvia, Portugal and Spain to design or improve quality apprenticeship systems and programmes in sectors with jobs and growth potential. It generated technical inputs, promoted social dialogue, and built the capacity of stakeholders in order to meet its objectives. The project worked on three levels: the macro, meso and micro levels. At the macro level, it analysed policy and system issues and engaged stakeholders to address them through social dialogue. At the meso level, it facilitated the identification of sectors with jobs and growth potential – and in which apprenticeships were suitable. Finally, at the micro level, the project built the capacity of training providers, employers’ and workers’ representatives, and regulators to design quality apprenticeship programmes.

Key features of quality apprenticeships

Quality apprenticeships are a unique form of technical vocational education and training (TVET) with the following features. Quality apprenticeships:

- Combine on-the-job training and off-the-job learning, which enable learners from all walks of life to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies required to carry out a specific occupation.
- Are regulated and financed by laws and collective agreements and policy decisions arising from social dialogue.
- Require a written contract that details the respective roles and responsibilities of the apprentice and the employer.
- Provide the apprentice with remuneration and standard social protection coverage.
- Lead to a recognized qualification, following a clearly defined and structured period of training and the successful completion of a formal assessment.

The ILO approach to successful quality apprenticeship systems is based on six key building blocks:

- meaningful social dialogue
- a robust regulatory framework
- clear roles and responsibilities
- equitable funding arrangements
- strong labour market relevance
- inclusiveness

Source: ILO (2017) ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships volume I: Guide for policy makers

Project approaches in seven steps

The project implemented activities in seven steps in the target countries, as summarized below.

Step 1 Rapid TVET analysis: The ILO analysed the TVET system, with a focus on apprenticeships, in each target country. The analysis provided an overview of the TVET system, and the key features of apprenticeships and the main stakeholders in the respective country.

Step 2 Stakeholder engagement: This step laid the groundwork for engaging stakeholders, forging consensus and coming up with a roadmap and work plan for the duration of the project.

Step 3 Issue analysis: An issue analysis was prepared to identify strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats inherent in existing apprenticeship systems and programmes in each target country. Further, a detailed stakeholder mapping was generated to prepare the ground for in-depth consultation targeting a broader group of stakeholders.

Step 4 Sector analysis: Skills development needs to be demand-driven to ensure that apprenticeship training leads to productive and decent employment; the project therefore conducted sector analyses to gain insights from the employment and economic trends in different business sectors at the national and regional levels.

Step 5 Tools development: The ILO developed a guide for policy-makers to improve the design and implementation of apprenticeship systems and programmes. In addition, practical tools (e.g. an apprenticeship contract template, communications and workshop material) were also shared.

Step 6 Tripartism and social dialogue: The project facilitated social dialogue and collaboration among the government, workers' and employers' organizations (i.e. tripartism). It provided a platform where views, concerns, ideas and needs could be expressed openly. This step was crucial to sustain the momentum of improving apprenticeship systems.

Step 7 Technical assistance and capacity building: Technical assistance and capacity building activities were offered to meet stakeholders' needs. Tailor-made workshops and a study visit, for instance, helped stakeholders gain insight into how to improve apprenticeship systems and programmes.

Key achievements

The project has achieved its objectives by:

- 1) providing technical assistance;
- 2) promoting social dialogue; and
- 3) enhancing the capacity building of stakeholders.

Technical products facilitated evidence-based stakeholder discussions; social dialogue assured the engagement of key actors in the project and their ownership of project activities; and capacity building helped sustain the impact of the project.

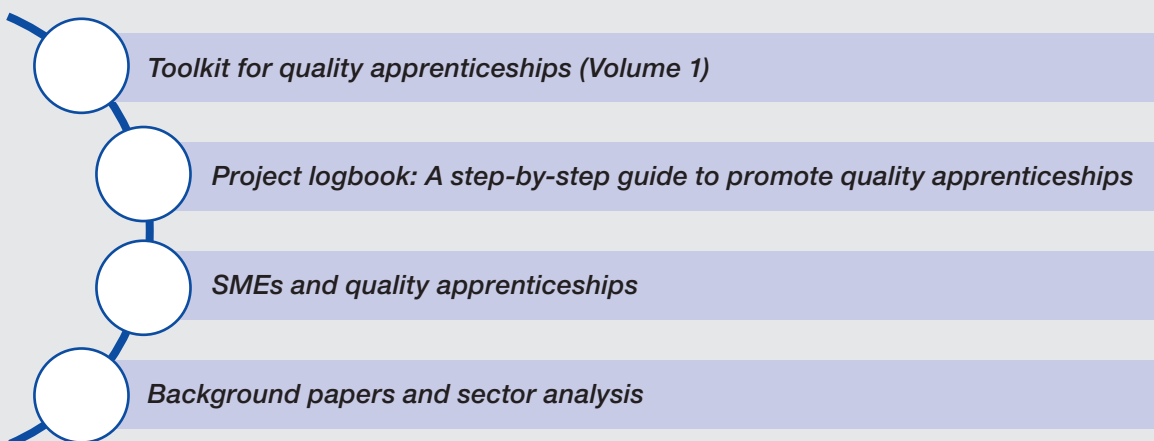
Technical products

The ILO has developed a *Toolkit for quality apprenticeships (Volume 1)* for the use of policy-makers. The publication presents the defining features of the ILO's approach to quality apprenticeship systems and aims to support policy-makers in the design and further development of these systems. It serves as a reference material for readers, thereby helping them understand how apprenticeships may be organized in practice, and how they can be adapted to different socio-economic contexts. It builds on the ILO's accumulated knowledge and experience.

The ILO *Project logbook: A step-by-step guide to promote quality apprenticeships* details the approaches the project took to promote quality apprenticeships in the three target countries. It documents the implementation process of the project in seven steps, listing the major activities and their objectives; it also gives an account of the lessons learned at each step. This document has been drafted as a step-by-step guide to facilitate national initiatives to promote quality apprenticeships beyond the three target countries.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often face more difficulties than large ones in training apprentices – due to various factors including capacity and resource constraints, as well as adverse economies of scale. The three target countries identified engaging SMEs in apprenticeships as a challenge. SMEs in Germany, however, do not shy away from offering apprenticeship programmes. In fact, the vast majority of apprenticeship programmes are offered by SMEs in the country. The project undertook a study visit to Bonn, Germany, and drafted a report *SMEs and quality apprenticeships*, which summarizes the findings of this visit; it highlights the roles of intermediary organizations, quality assurance mechanisms, and policy support for SMEs.

Other technical products developed by the project phase included **background papers on TVET and apprenticeships and sector analysis on job and growth potential** in the three countries. These outputs were used to engage stakeholders in evidence-based social dialogue.



Promotion of social dialogue and tripartism

The project facilitated and promoted social dialogue and tripartism because the system of quality apprenticeships implies multi-stakeholder skills development, which requires stakeholder coordination and collaboration. In order to develop or improve quality apprenticeships, it is vital to develop close communication based on mutual trust among the parties involved. It is important to bear in mind that while everyone agrees on the importance of skills development for youth and jobseekers, each stakeholder may have different views on – or a varying stake in – quality apprenticeships.

The project generated many occasions when government officials and representatives of the workers' and employers' organizations could openly express their needs and concerns, and exchange ideas. It first arranged for individual consultations with each party to allow the ILO to understand their position before it organized tripartite meetings and workshops, in which ILO staff members carefully facilitated stakeholder dialogue. This process fostered better mutual understanding and trust, as well as an enabling environment for open and constructive discussion on current issues and the ways they can be addressed; it also prompted tripartite cooperation. The following is a cross section of activities conducted by the project:

- The project provided technical inputs (e.g. TVET analysis, good practices of other countries, recent research findings) so that stakeholders could discuss challenges based on facts and evidence.
- The project helped clarify the roles and responsibilities of workers, employers and the government at the macro, meso and micro levels in order to promote stakeholder collaboration.
- The project facilitated tripartite issue analysis and discussion and supported the development of a roadmap to improve the national apprenticeship system.



Capacity building

The project built the capacity of national stakeholders through tailor-made technical workshops and a study visit in order to sustain the impact of the project beyond its lifespan. Topics of technical training included:

- Features of quality apprenticeships and programme design
- Diagnosis of challenges in the current apprenticeship system
- Costs and benefits of apprenticeships
- Financing quality apprenticeships and design of incentives
- Vocational teacher training
- Strategic interventions to address high dropout rates

In addition, the project organized a study visit to Germany to demonstrate how a successful apprenticeship system can work. Since the German model has been created in its own socio-economic context, drawing upon its own institutional set-ups, it cannot be replicated in the target countries. However, the benchmarking of the national systems in the target countries against the German model apparently helped the tripartite stakeholders understand the issues they face - and even inspired possible solutions that might fit their own national contexts.

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