



International
Labour
Organization

► What can workers' organizations do to support quality apprenticeships?



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to support quality apprenticeships?**



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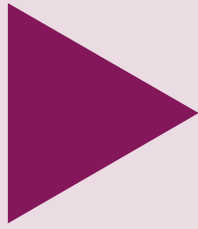
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Foreword

The world of work is undergoing profound transformations driven by technological change, demographic shifts and the urgency of the climate transition. In this context, the need for high-quality, inclusive and future-oriented skills systems has never been greater. Apprenticeships, when well designed and well governed, are a powerful means of equipping people of all ages with relevant skills and facilitating transitions into decent work.

The adoption of the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208) marked a milestone in establishing a clear, internationally agreed reference for what constitutes quality in apprenticeship systems. The Recommendation places strong emphasis on regulation, social dialogue, adequate remuneration, social protection, inclusion, and clear learning outcomes leading to recognised qualifications and employment prospects. It also affirms the central role of employers and workers' organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of apprenticeship frameworks and programmes.

This Guide has been developed to support workers' organizations in translating the principles of Recommendation No. 208 into practice. It responds to a growing demand for practical guidance on how trade unions can more effectively shape, govern and monitor apprenticeships, defend apprentices' rights, prevent misuse, and strengthen union capacity in this area. Drawing on experiences from across regions and sectors, the Guide illustrates how trade unions are already contributing to more equitable, effective and rights-based apprenticeship systems.

The Guide reflects close collaboration between the ITUC, ILO ACTRAV and the ILO Skills Branch, combining expertise on workers' rights, social dialogue and skills development. This cooperation mirrors the integrated approaches required at national and sectoral levels to ensure that apprenticeships deliver for learners, workers, employers and societies at large.

Our hope is that this Guide will serve as a practical and strategic resource for trade union officers supporting concrete action to promote quality apprenticeships as a pathway to decent work and social justice.

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Abbreviations

AMWU	<i>Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union</i>
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
CEEP	<i>Centre Européen des Entreprises Publiques</i>
CERFA	Centre d'enregistrement et de révision des formulaires administratifs
CFE-CGC	Confédération française de l'encadrement - Confédération générale des cadres
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CGT	Confédération générale du travail
CGT RA	Confederación General del Trabajo de la República <i>Argentina</i>
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CNTT	Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Togo
CSTT	Confédération syndicale des travailleurs du Togo
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
ETU	<i>Electrical Trades Union</i>
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FCE-CFDT	Fédération Chimie Energie <i>Confédération française démocratique du travail</i>
FIOM	Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici
FIM	<i>Federazione italiana metalmeccanici</i>
FNEM-FO	Fédération FO Energie et Mines
FNME-CGT	Fédération nationale des mines et de l'énergie
FNV	<i>Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging</i>
HK	Handels- og Kontorfunktionærernes Forbund
IAM	International Association of Movers
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IUF	International <i>Union</i> of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
LIUNA	Laborers' International Union of North America
LO-D	<i>Landsorganisationen i Danmark</i>

LO-N	<i>Landsorganisasjonen i Norge</i>
NABTU	North America's Building Trades Unions
NCVER	<i>National Centre for Vocational Education Research.</i>
RMT	National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SENAI	Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial
SGB/USS	Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund/Union Syndicale Suisse
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UA	United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada
UAW	United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America
UEAPME	Union Européenne de l'artisanat et des petites et moyennes entreprises
UFe	Union Française de l'Électricité
UILM	Unione Italiana Lavoratori Metalmeccanici
ULR	Union Learning Representative
UNSA	Union nationale des syndicats autonomes
USW	United Steelworkers

Introduction

Technological innovation, demographic trends and climate change have a significant impact on the world of work, and, by extension, on workers' lives and livelihoods. Whilst it is unclear how many existing jobs will be lost or transformed and how many new jobs will be created, one thing is blatantly obvious: there is an urgent need to develop training systems which enable learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to find a decent job and navigate an increasingly challenging labour market.

Numerous studies – from Australia, England and South Africa, for example – have shown that, on the successful completion of their training, apprentices are well placed to access decent work opportunities. In Australia, nearly all apprentices and trainees (95%) – trade completers – were employed after their training.¹ In England, nearly all apprentices (95%) reported at least one positive impact on their job and/or career prospects since starting or completing their apprenticeship.² In South Africa, nearly three quarters (73%) of trained artisans were in wage employment – the majority on permanent contracts.³ According to the Department of Labor in the State of New York, 'Becoming an apprentice means taking an important first step to a rewarding, well-paying career'.⁴

Trade unions have a crucial role to play in the development, implementation and oversight of apprenticeships – for the following six main reasons:

- ▶ Apprenticeship programmes target everyone. However, they often involve young individuals who are just beginning their journey into the world of work. Many of them may be in vulnerable positions – economically, socially, and professionally – and may lack the experience or resources to advocate for themselves. Unions must ensure that their rights – including adequate remuneration, safe working conditions, and social protection – are clearly defined and upheld.
- ▶ Apprentices will also be looking to trade unions to ensure that their training is of quality and leads to recognized qualifications and skilled employment. Trade unions are indeed uniquely positioned to ensure apprenticeships are transformative.
- ▶ Apprenticeships are also not always inclusive and much needs to be done to ensure ALL have access to this opportunity. Too many face barriers to access, and trade unions can help push for equity across gender, socio-economic background, and other factors.
- ▶ There is a risk that apprenticeships are misused as cheap substitute of workers, and unions should ensure this is not the case.
- ▶ Apprenticeships help young people gain skills and access employment: they offer unions an opportunity to engage future members early.
- ▶ Apprenticeships serve as a constructive entry point for dialogue with employers who generally are in favour of apprenticeships.

1. NCVER, 2023, Apprentice and trainee outcomes 2022. https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0048/9676596/Apprentice-and-trainee-outcomes-2022_.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

2. United Kingdom, Department of Education, 2022, *Apprenticeships Evaluation 2021 – Learners*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1080690/Apprenticeships_evaluation_2021_-_learners_research_report.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

3. South Africa, 2022, Department of Higher Education and Training, *Artisans in South Africa*. https://lmi-research.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/LMI-3-11-Supply-and-Demand-of-Artisans-in-South-Africa_2022.pdf

4. <https://dol.ny.gov/apprenticeship/become-apprentice> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 1

ILO Apprenticeship definition – R208 – Paragraph 1a

For the purposes of this Recommendation the term 'apprenticeship' should be understood "as a form of education and training

- a. that is governed by an apprenticeship agreement,
- b. that 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
- c. that leads to a recognized qualification."

The ILO has adopted in 2023 a non-binding legal instrument, the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, (No. 208) (for details, see Annex 1). The Recommendation presents an internationally agreed understanding of the necessary elements that need to be in place when referring to apprenticeships (Box 1). It was adopted by a clear majority – with 468 votes in favour, 1 against, and 6 abstentions. Moreover, it was approved by representatives of governments from over 130 countries, by representatives of employers' groups from over 110 countries and by representatives of trade unions from over 100 countries. There is a very good chance that representatives of your government and of workers' organizations in your country have voted to adopt this Recommendation (for details, see Annex 2).

An ILO Recommendation is an international labour standard (i.e. international law) set by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to guide national policies and practices. It sets a common standard, a common reference point and acts as a catalyst for policy making and implementation world-wide.

From a trade union perspective, the Recommendation is strategically important for advancing social justice. Its Preamble acknowledges that promoting and developing quality apprenticeships can lead to decent work and, with explicit reference to the Declaration of Philadelphia, affirms that apprenticeships support the right of all human beings to pursue both their material well-being and spiritual development in conditions of freedom, dignity, economic security, and equal opportunity.

The Recommendation includes many aspects that are of direct relevance to trade unions. The Recommendation considers that an effective framework for quality apprenticeships requires that they should be:

well-regulated based on social dialogue,

- ▶ sufficiently funded and monitored,
- ▶ inclusive and free from discrimination, violence and harassment and exploitation,
- ▶ with adequate remuneration or other financial compensation
- ▶ with social protection benefits,
- ▶ leading to recognized qualifications and employment outcomes.
- ▶ **The Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208) foresees a crucial role for trade unions in the 'design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of frameworks, systems, policies and programmes for quality apprenticeships'** (Paragraph 6). Moreover, trade union involvement in the development of quality apprenticeships is highlighted throughout the Recommendation. Mindful of the need to encourage the participation of key stakeholders in these processes, the Recommendation calls on national governments to take measures 'to continuously develop and strengthen the capacity of ...workers' organizations...' (Paragraph 13a).

This Guide aims to support the implementation of the ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208). It is designed specifically to build capacity within workers' organizations, so that trade union officers and representatives are better equipped to participate in the development of quality apprenticeship systems and to engage in the protection and empowerment of apprentices.

Box 2

Amanda Brown - Worker Vice-Chairperson of the Standard-Setting Committee on Apprenticeships, 2023

"The Workers' group is keen to promote apprenticeships as a pathway to decent work, to social justice and a better life, and we look forward to working together to build this. We know there is already widespread enthusiasm for this next part of the process, and we are confident that work to put this into practice will soon gain momentum."

"We have created a firm foundation on which national systems can be built. We will be able to see...the structures that are built on that foundation, the changes that will be the real outcome of our work, and the difference that they make."

This Guide is intended not only as a source of information but also as a practical tool to support trade unions in shaping their work on apprenticeships. The goal is to move from reflection to action, building stronger, more inclusive, and rights-based apprenticeship systems. The Guide can be used to:

- ▶ Develop a strategic approach and define organizational priorities for apprenticeships, including advocacy, policy engagement, and programme development, that align with the broader goals of promoting quality training systems and decent work;
- ▶ Structure capacity-building activities, such as workshops, training sessions, and peer learning exchanges, to enhance the knowledge and skills of trade union representatives;
- ▶ Identify areas for collaboration with other trade unions - nationally, regionally, or internationally - on shared challenges and opportunities in apprenticeship development.

It examines 10 key issues of interest to trade unions and apprentices:

1. Shaping Apprenticeships Systems and Programmes
2. Participating in the Governance of Apprenticeships
3. Including Apprenticeships in Collective Bargaining Agreements
4. Providing Off-the-Job Training
5. Providing Vocational Guidance
6. Developing Apprenticeship Agreements
7. Defending Apprentices' Rights
8. Addressing the Misuse of Apprenticeships
9. Investing in Trade Union Capacity
10. Recruiting Apprentices as Members

Each of the 10 chapters includes the following:

The relevant clause(s) of the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)

- ▶ Overall guidance and examples of existing trade union practice—based on information collected through an ILO-ITUC survey in 2025
- ▶ An exercise designed to encourage readers to consider what their trade unions could do to promote and improve apprenticeships.

1. Shaping Apprenticeships Systems and Programmes

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation 2023 (No. 208):

- ▶ *Members should establish a regulatory framework for quality apprenticeships. Representative employers' and workers' organizations should be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of frameworks, systems, policies and programmes for quality apprenticeships (Paragraph 6).*
- ▶ *Members should adopt a process, in which representative employers' and workers' organizations participate, for determining whether an occupation is suitable for quality apprenticeships (Paragraph 9).*
- ▶ *Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations establish occupation-specific or general standards, as appropriate, for quality apprenticeships (Paragraph 10).*
- ▶ *Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, take measures to create an enabling environment for promoting quality apprenticeships, including*
 - ▶ *(a) developing and implementing strategies, setting national goals and allocating adequate resources for quality apprenticeships (Paragraph 25).*

Regional trade union confederations may develop and adopt comprehensive strategies or reference frameworks to unify and harmonize their actions on apprenticeships. Global literature shows that apprenticeship quality is highest in systems with strong employer commitment, clear occupational standards, well-trained mentors, and effective social partner involvement, aligning workplace learning with recognised qualifications. Where regulation, quality assurance, and learner protections are weak, apprenticeships tend to degenerate into low-quality employment, with limited skills acquisition, poor completion rates, and weaker labour-market returns. Trade unions' strategies can serve as documents that align the efforts of trade unions across different countries or sectors, ensuring consistency in advocacy, implementation, and monitoring of apprenticeship programmes. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), for example, published *A European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships – A European Trade Union Proposal*, which put forward a series of 20 quality standards and quality criteria for apprenticeships (Box 3).⁵ This Framework was a significant contribution to the preparation of *Towards a Shared Vision of Apprenticeships*, issued by the ETUC and three employers' organisations (BusinessEurope, CEEP and UEAPME), and ultimately to the adoption in 2018 of the *EU Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships*⁶ that acted as a catalyst for the development of apprenticeship within the European Union, and also in EU neighbouring countries.

5. <https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships>

6. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0502\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0502(01))

Box 3

ETUC Quality Standards for Apprenticeships

20 standards relating to the following:

1. Definition
2. Regulatory framework
3. Social partnership and governance
4. Equal opportunities for all
5. Equitable cost-sharing between employers and public authorities
6. Responsiveness to labour market needs
7. Formal contracts
8. Personal development and career opportunities of apprentices
9. Pay and social protection
10. Safe working environment
11. Guidance and counselling
12. Quality assurance procedures
13. Solid learning base
14. Balance between work-based and school-based training
15. Teachers, trainers and mentors
16. Competence based/duration
17. Certification and recognition
18. Progression
19. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
20. Mobility within Europe.

At national level, trade unions may engage in various initiatives to develop apprenticeship systems. This may include the preparation of laws and regulations relating to apprenticeships, the development of a template contract for apprenticeships, the promotion of quality apprenticeships for greater reach, the inclusion of apprenticeships in collective bargaining agreements, advocacy for the adequate implementation of the rights and entitlements of apprentices, guidance to apprentices on their rights and entitlements, the evaluation of apprentices' experiences to promote evidence-based policy decisions. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) in the United Kingdom, for example, has proposed an *Apprentice Charter* (Box 4) which highlights better pay and conditions, an end to fixed-term contracts, insourcing of apprenticeship training and education, more skilled apprenticeships and a new apprentice training scheme.

Box 4

United Kingdom – The Apprentice Charter of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers

The charter calls for:

- a. Better Pay and Terms and Conditions: Low pay for apprentices, particularly in the private sector, must end. The RMT is demanding standardised pay above the national living wage.
- b. An End to Fixed-Term Contracts: Many apprenticeships are offered on fixed-term contracts, leaving apprentices with no job security. The RMT is calling for a job guarantee for all apprentices who successfully complete their qualifications, as well as permanent contracts and full workers' rights from day one.
- c. Insourcing of Apprentice Training and Education: The fragmentation of the rail industry has led to the outsourcing of training, often to the lowest bidder, resulting in substandard facilities and teaching. The RMT is demanding a return to dedicated in-house training facilities that provide high-quality education for apprentices.
- d. More Skilled Apprenticeships: The NSAR (National Skills Academy for Rail) estimates that the rail industry needs at least 5,000 new apprentices each year to address the skills gap and avoid a retirement cliff edge. The RMT is calling on the Department for Transport to develop an ambitious, fully funded apprenticeship strategy with specific growth targets to address skills shortages.
- e. A New Apprentice Training Scheme Under Great British Railways (GBR): The government must use the opportunity of establishing Great British Railways to create a centralised, fully funded apprentice training scheme. This scheme should provide a clear pathway for uniformed, overalled, and back-office apprenticeships, ensuring a consistent and high standard of training across the industry.

In response to the presentation of an *Apprenticeship Action Plan 2021-2025* proposed by the Irish Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions set out its approach to the development of apprenticeships (Box 5).

Box 5

Ireland – Submission on Apprenticeship Action Plan 2021-2025 - Irish Congress of Trade Unions

The ICTU prioritised the following activities:

- a. Sharing our experience of how the current apprenticeship system operates and some of the weaknesses we have identified
- b. Commenting on the current governance and operational model for apprenticeship and suggesting a reformed structure that will mean responsibility for the apprenticeship system as a whole will be the responsibility of one state agency
- c. Suggesting a new system for the registration of skills with responsibility for the development and maintenance of a statutory skills passport being assumed by the new agency
- d. Suggesting some ways of potentially increasing participation

IUF Asia-Pacific has indicated that in the Philippines the trade union Sentro participated in the consultations that led to the adoption of the Bangsamoro Labor and Employment Code of 2022, for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).⁷ The law includes definitions of apprentice, apprenticeship, 'apprenticeable occupation', apprenticeship agreement and the dual training system, as well as clauses on the content of agreements, the venue of programmes, the financing of apprentices, the aptitude testing of applicants and the responsibility for theoretical instruction.

In Togo, the trade union confederation (CNTT) has indicated that it participated in working party discussions within the context of the reform on apprenticeship training (2019-2022). It formulated a common political position with another confederation - (CSTT) – on a certain number of points: statutory recognition of the apprentice as a worker in training; the need for a formal apprenticeship contract between the enterprise and the apprentice; minimum social protection for apprentices; safety and health; supervision of working hours and workplace conditions; the importance of equal access for girls and young people in vulnerable situations.

In Germany, trade unions, employers' organizations and representatives of government have negotiated 'Alliances' on a regular basis – the latest covering the period 2023-2026 (Box 6).⁸

Box 6

Germany – Alliance for Initial and Continuing Training 2023-2026 – excerpts

'Alliance partners want to devote more attention to the phase prior to the beginning of the formal training process: expanding career guidance; recruiting apprentices; enlisting new training companies; and optimizing the transition phase between school and work. The Federal Government will introduce a training guarantee and has launched the Vocational Training Excellence Initiative...

The Federal Government will extend the pledge, which has been central to the Alliance since 2014, to guarantee training opportunities for applicants who were unable to obtain an apprenticeship place....

The Alliance partners want to safeguard the quality and attractiveness of apprenticeship training. The aim is to improve training with the aid of modern quality assurance instruments (such as the use of digital training certificates); to reduce the number of non-completions; to provide high-quality education and training for teaching and training staff; and to strengthen vocational schools. In addition, the Alliance partners want to strengthen and promote higher-level qualifications and higher-level vocational training opportunities. The aim is to provide young people with opportunities that are equivalent to those found in higher education.'

In some countries, trade unions are closely involved in the implementation of apprenticeship training policies. In Canada, for example, the Canadian Labour Congress has participated in the implementation of the Union Training and Innovation Program, which provided investment in training equipment and supported innovative approaches, with the aim of promoting participation in apprenticeship programmes among women, indigenous workers, newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities and persons from ethnic minorities.

Other trade unions have produced toolkits and guides to provide support for establishing quality apprenticeship. In the United Kingdom, the Trades Union Congress produced an *Apprenticeship Toolkit - A resource for union negotiators and reps*.⁹ In the USA, for example, the Working for America Institute, which has been set up by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), has published a step-by-step *Guide for Unions on Joint Apprenticeship Committees* which includes

7. <https://parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Bill-No.-201-MP-Romeo-K.-Sema-LABOR-AND-EMPLOYMENT-CODE.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025) spacing

8. <https://www.aus-und-weiterbildungsallianz.de/AAW/Navigation/DE/Allianz-fuer-Aus-und-Weiterbildung/aaw-hintergrund.html> (accessed 23.9.2025)

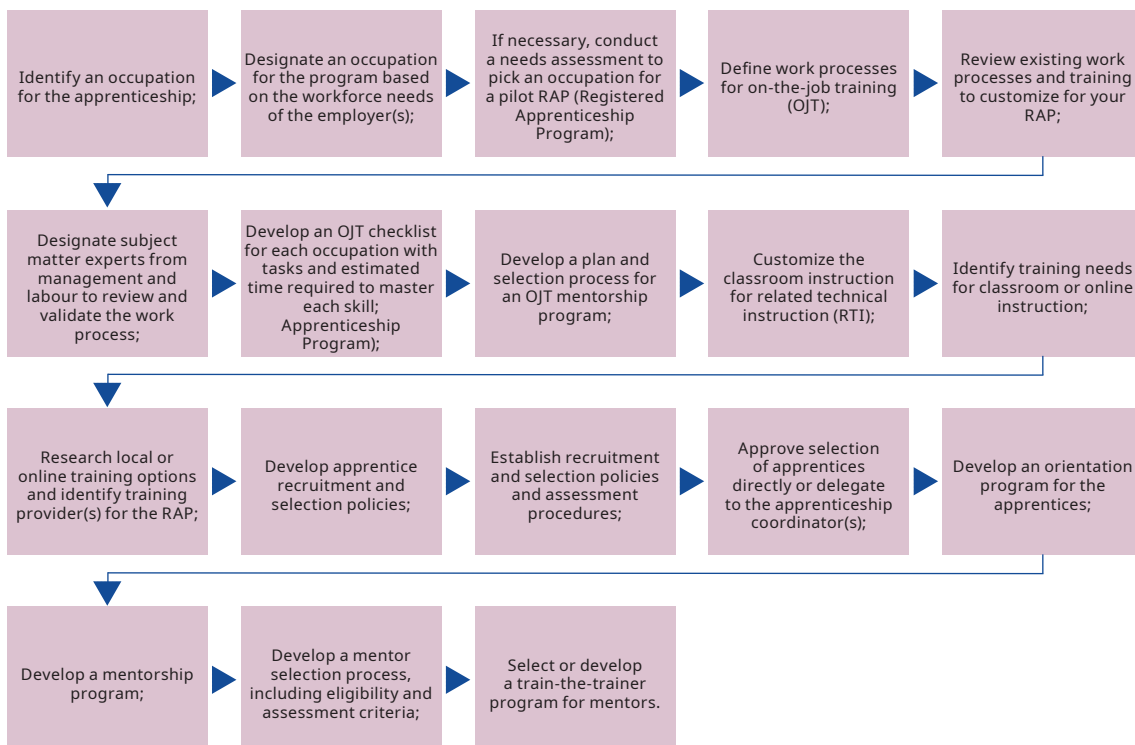
9. <https://www.tuc.org.uk/apprenticeships-toolkit> (accessed 23.9.2025)

four phases; programme development; registering standards of apprenticeship; implementation of the programme; and monitoring and oversight (Box 7).

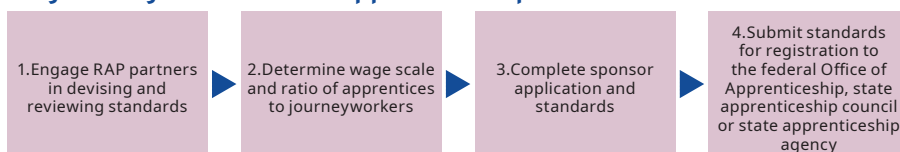
Box 7

USA - Guide for Unions on Joint Apprenticeship Committees (JACs) - excerpts

Programme Development



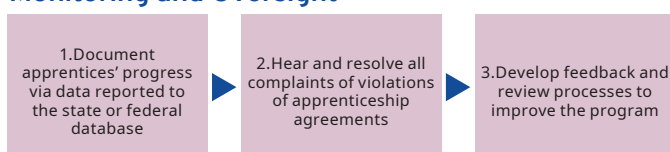
Registering Standards of Apprenticeship



Implementation of the Program



Monitoring and Oversight



Trade unions may also be involved in the evaluation of apprenticeship training. The Youth Organization of the German Trade Union Confederation produces an annual report on apprentices' experiences, and in the 2024 edition over 10,000 apprentices were surveyed. The results demonstrate a generally positive mood - many of the apprentices were satisfied with how work processes were explained and appreciated the way the in-house trainers handle conflicts in everyday work. However, there was some concern that the in-house trainers seemed to lack the time to provide apprentices with regular personal feedback. As a result, the report proposed that in-house trainers should be given more time to ensure closer supervision, and improvements should be made to the Instructor Trainer Aptitude Regulations which acts as a training in-house trainers support action.¹⁰



Discussion points:

Defining the scope of your organisation's engagement in promoting quality apprenticeships

- ▶ *Look at the 20 ETUC Quality Standards (Box 3) – they are available in English, French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish¹¹ - and consider which would be the top 10 priorities for your trade union, and why.*
- ▶ *Look at the excerpts from the Alliance for Initial and Continuing Training 2023-2026 (Box 6) and consider which elements would be trade union priorities for supporting quality apprenticeships, and why.*
- ▶ *Look at the Guide for Unions on Joint Apprenticeship Committees - JACs (Box 7) and consider which elements would be appropriate for your trade union's quality apprenticeship strategy.*

10. https://www.dgb.de/fileadmin/download_center/Studien/DGB-Jugend-Ausbildungsreport_2024.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

11. <https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/european-quality-framework-apprenticeships> (accessed 23.9.2025)

2. Participating in the Governance of Apprenticeships

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation 2023 (No. 208)

- *Members should establish or designate one or more public authorities responsible for regulating apprenticeships, in which representative employers' and workers' organizations should be represented (Paragraph 7).*
- *Members should ensure that the competent authorities have clearly defined responsibilities, are adequately funded and work in close cooperation with other authorities or institutions responsible for regulating or delivering education and training, labour inspection, social protection, occupational safety and health, and public and private employment services (Paragraph 8).*

Many countries have established competent authorities that are responsible for regulating Technical Vocational Education and Training, including apprenticeships. Apprenticeship quality depends on tripartite decision-making, and effective coordination between the public skills development institutions, workers' and employers' organisations. Within this framework, trade unions play a critical role in safeguarding training standards, apprentices' rights and working conditions. These tripartite bodies may provide policy advice to governments. They may oversee the development of national standards, accreditation processes and quality assurance mechanisms. They may design and implement training programmes. They may carry out research into vocational training. Trade unions are represented, for example, on the management boards of the following national intersectoral training authorities (Box 8).

Box 8

National Authorities – Governance of apprenticeships

Regions	Institutions	Social partner representation
Africa	Namibia Training Authority - Namibia ¹²	11 members: 5 from employers, 2 from trade unions
	Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion – Morocco ¹³	28 members: 7 from employers, 7 from trade unions
Latin America and the Caribbeans	National Service for Apprenticeships – Colombia ¹⁴	11 members: 4 from employers, 2 from trade unions
	National Institute for Technical Vocational Training – Dominican Republic ¹⁵	9 members: 3 from employers, 3 from trade unions

12. <https://namiblii.org/akn/na/act/2008/1/eng@2008-05-06#defn-term-levy> (accessed 23.9.2025)

13. <https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/15006/MAR-15006.PDF> (accessed 23.9.2025)

14. <https://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=14930> (accessed 23.9.2025)

15. <https://www.infotep.gob.do/index.php/sobre-nosotros/junta-directiva> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 8

National Authorities – Governance of apprenticeships

Regions	Institutions	Social partner representation
Asia and Pacific	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority - Philippines ¹⁶	13 members: 2 from employers, 2 from workers
	National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority - Sri Lanka ¹⁷	Employer and employee organizations are members: the numbers are unspecified
Europe and Central Asia	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training – Austria ¹⁸	9 members: 3 from the Chambers of Commerce, 3 from the Chambers of Labour
	Council for Basic Vocational Education and Training – Denmark ¹⁹	24 members: 10 from employers, 10 from trade unions

Boxes 9 and 10 present two national authorities - the National Service for Apprenticeships in Colombia and the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority in Sri Lanka – and the functions that they carry out, as defined in specific legal texts. Trade unions are represented on the management boards of these bodies and so are well placed to be able to shape the development of apprenticeship training.

Box 9

Colombia – National Service for Apprenticeships – Excerpts from Functions

1. Promoting the social development of the worker, through his/her comprehensive vocational training, to make him/her a useful and responsible citizen, possessor of moral, ethical, cultural and ecological values
2. Ensuring the maintenance of the mechanisms that ensure compliance with the legal and regulatory provisions related to the learning contract
3. Organizing, developing, managing and executing comprehensive vocational training programmes, in coordination and based on social needs and the productive sector
4. Ensuring that technical unity is maintained in the contents of vocational training programmes
5. Creating and managing an information system on labour supply and demand
6. Designing, promoting and executing comprehensive vocational training programmes for vulnerable sectors of the population
7. Issuing titles and certificates for the programmes and courses that it teaches or validates.

16. <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/2/1168> (accessed 23.9.2025)

17. https://documents.gov.lk/view/acts/1990/6/20-1990_E.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

18. <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10006276> (accessed 23.9.2025)

19. <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2016/1077> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 10

Sri Lanka - National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority - Functions

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Pr1. Planning organizing and providing vocational training | 5. Conducting research and development in vocational training |
| 2. Specifying standards in relation to vocational training | 6. Holding competitions to promote the development of various skills |
| 3. Conducting examinations and issuing certificates and other awards in relation to vocational training | 7. Developing the training capacities of establishments and other institutions providing vocational training |
| 4. Conducting National Trade Tests | 8. Advising the (Tertiary and Vocational Education) Commission in regard to vocational training. |

At sector level too, trade unions have a crucial role to play in regulating apprenticeship systems. Many countries have established sector skills bodies that may have the following functions: (a) analysing sectoral skills needs and proposing sector skills plans; (b) implementing government training programmes; (c) developing occupation standards and overseeing the preparation of curricula and learning materials; (d) collecting and administering levy funds; (e) overseeing the registration of apprenticeship agreements; (f) promoting vocational training and apprenticeship in particular; (g) coordinating stakeholders in vocational training; (h) improving the capacity of off-the-job training institutions.

Trade unions are represented, for example, on the boards of the following sector skills bodies (Box 11):

Box 11

Sector Skills Bodies

Regions	Institutions	Social partner representation
Africa	Training Committees – Kenya ²⁰	Representatives of employers and employees in the sector concerned: numbers unspecified
	Sector Education and Training Authorities – South Africa ²¹	Members representing organised labour and business, and government departments: numbers unspecified

20. <https://www.kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/IndustrialTrainingActCap237.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

21. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a97-98.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 11

Sector Skills Bodies

Regions	Institutions	Social partner representation
Latin America and the Caribbeans	National Service for Industrial Training – Brazil ²²	Chaired by the President of the National Council of Industry: 6 members from employers and 6 members from trade unions
	Sectoral Committees for Employment and Vocational Training - Uruguay ²³	Representatives of employers and employees in the sector concerned: numbers unspecified
Asia and Pacific	Jobs and Skills Alliances – Australia	Representatives of employers and employees in the sector concerned: numbers unspecified
Europe and Central Asia	Skills Operators – France	Equal number of representatives of employers and workers
	Joint Interprofessional Funds for Continuing TVET - Italy	12 members: 6 from employers and 6 from trade unions

Boxes 12 and 13 present two sectoral competent authorities - the Sector Education and Training Authorities in South Africa and Skills Operators in France – and the functions that they carry out, as defined in specific legal texts. Trade unions are represented on the management boards of these bodies and so are well placed to shape the development of apprenticeship training at sector level.

Box 12

South Africa – Sector Education and Training Authorities – Functions

1. Implementing and monitoring a sector skills plan within the framework of the national skills development strategy and liaising with authorities about its implementation
2. Identifying workplaces for practical work experience, supporting the development of learning materials, improving the learning experience, providing support in the set-up and registration of learnership agreements
3. Collecting skills development levies and disbursing grants to employers, education and training providers and workers, based on approved workplace skills plans.

22. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/historicos/dcm/dcm494.htm (accessed 23.9.2025)

23. <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/18406-2008> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 13

France – Skills Operators – Functions

1. Ensuring the financing of apprenticeship and professionalization contracts, according to the levels of support set by the sectors
2. Providing technical support to the sectors for:
 - a. stabilising forward-looking employment and skills management
 - b. determining the levels of support for apprenticeship contracts and professionalization contracts
 - c. supporting them in the area of certification
3. Providing support to micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in particular to improve awareness of employees about skills opportunities and access to vocational training
4. Providing support for skills demand anticipation.



Discussion points:

Participating in the governance of apprenticeships

- ▶ *Is there a national skills development authority for apprenticeships, with trade union representation, in your country? If the answer is yes, what is its name? its functions? Is there scope for widening trade unions engagement in this body?*
- ▶ *If yes, which of the functions undertaken by the National Service for Apprenticeships in Colombia (Box 9) or by the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority in Sri Lanka (Box 10) would your trade union propose to add to the functions of the national skills development authority in your country?*
- ▶ *If the answer is no, what steps are being taken, in the light of the adoption of the ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), to establish a national skills development authority in your country? What can trade unions do to take this issue forward?*
- ▶ *Are there sector skills bodies responsible for apprenticeships, with trade union representation, in your country? If the answer is yes, what is its name? its functions? Is there scope for widening trade unions engagement in these bodies?*
- ▶ *If yes, which of the functions undertaken by the Sector Education and Training Authorities in South Africa (Box 12) or by the Skills Operators in France (Box 13) would your trade union propose to add to the functions of the sector skills bodies in your country?*
- ▶ *If the answer is no, what steps are being taken, in the light of the adoption of the ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), to establish a sectoral competent authority in your country? What can trade unions do to take this issue forward?*

3. Including Apprenticeships in Collective Bargaining Agreements

Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

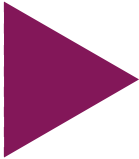
- *Members may give effect to the provisions of this Recommendation through national laws and regulations, collective agreements, policies and programmes or other measures consistent with national law and practice. (Paragraph 3)*

Trade unions may negotiate collective bargaining agreements with employers and/or employers' organisations which cover different aspects of apprenticeships. Collective bargaining agreements are a key instrument for regulating apprenticeship wages, training conditions, duration, certification, and progression, thereby enhancing quality, equity, and labour-market relevance. There may be specific agreements on Technical Vocational Education Training, including apprenticeships, or more general agreements that cover working conditions and have a particular chapter with a set of clauses relating directly to apprentices in the workplace. They may be negotiated at regional, sectoral, local and/or company levels.

IndustriAll Europe²⁴ succeeded in negotiating a Europe-wide agreement, the European Framework Agreement for professional integration of young people 2017-2022²⁵ with SAFRAN, the multinational aerospace, defence and security corporation (Box 14). This agreement covered group companies in the following countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

24. IndustriALL Europe was formed in 2012, following the merger of three European sectoral unions – the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF), the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (EMCEF) and the European Trade Union Federation - Textiles Clothing and Leather (ETUF-TCL).

25 https://news.industriall-europe.eu/documents/upload/2021/6/637599770862920833_EFA_Safran_EN_signed%20version%20June%208%202021.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)



Box 14

SAFRAN – European Framework Agreement for professional integration of young people 2017-2022 – excerpts

Safran intends to welcome 5% of apprentices (full time equivalent - FrE) at Group level in Europe each year and is also committing to give priority to the recruitment of some of those young people at the end of their training, in accordance with national practices where candidates are equally qualified.

The parties recognize the importance of supporting and monitoring young people during their training periods within the company, particularly to facilitate their potential recruitment within the Group. Thus, the parties consider that the supervision of young people trained by the Group must be such that it motivates them. A guide for young people undergoing training will be drawn up in order to inform them about the Group's policy and this agreement's content.

Called "guide of the apprenticeship", it will aim to take stock of the course of the period in company and the skills acquired by the young learner. This aims to review the progress of the period and the skills acquired by the young learner. This follow-up is also the way for the trainee to benefit from an exchange on his/her first experiences and skills acquired. Moreover, this guide will mark out the main stages of the young apprentice throughout his career at Safran. Its translation will be done in languages adapted to the need. It will also complement the "training booklet" where it exists.

The parties believe that within the framework of training, the (in-house) supervisor plays a key role in the success of the young person's vocational training, by welcoming and supporting the newcomer. Through this follow-up, the supervisor advises and guides the young person in training. The supervisor gives him/her all necessary knowledge to finalize the training. Therefore, they wish to encourage support of young

Collective agreements are often negotiated at sector level, where representatives of employers and workers come together to address industry-specific challenges, working conditions, wage structures, and training needs. This level of negotiation allows for tailored solutions that reflect the realities of specific sectors, ensuring that agreements are both relevant and effective in promoting decent work and sustainable development. The French Ministry of Work, Full Employment and Inclusion has noted that in 2022 there were 94 sectoral agreements relating to vocational training, including apprenticeships.²⁶ The main topics were, as follows:

- ▶ 38 for retraining or promotion through dual programmes
- ▶ 29 for qualifications
- ▶ 21 for dual training including apprenticeships
- ▶ 18 for the funding of training
- ▶ 16 for mentoring.

26. Ministère du Travail, du Plein Emploi et de l'insertion. 2023. La négociation collective en 2022. https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/sites/travail-emploi/files/files-spip/pdf/bnc-2022_edition-2023-version_accessible.pdf this needs a link, but I cannot incorporate it (accessed 23.9.2025)

More recently, four trade union federations (CFE-CGC, FCE-CFDT, FNEM-FO and FNME-CGT) and two employers' organisations (UFe and UNEmIG) signed a specific and detailed agreement Training and Apprenticeships in the Electrical and Gas Industries 2024-2028, that included a section on 'promoting dual programmes as a major lever for recruitment and professional integration', which aims to improve the conversion rate of apprentices into professions where the greatest needs are expressed.²⁷

Another example is a wide-ranging collective agreement signed in 2021 by three Italian sectoral trade union federations (FIM, FIOM and UILM) and two employers' organisations. This agreement covered all aspects of pay and working conditions, included a chapter on vocational training, and more specifically, clauses relating to apprenticeships, workplace training committees and workplace training advisers.²⁸

In some countries, Canada for example, collective agreements may be signed at local (ie. Province) level. In Ontario, the country's most populous province, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and its Ontario Council negotiated a wide-ranging collective agreement in the painting sector which proposed to set up a local apprenticeship committee to ensure the industry of an adequate supply of properly trained and skilled mechanics. It also included clauses relating to apprentices' wages, the overall length of the apprenticeship (5,400 hours), the ratio of apprentices to skilled journeypersons (1 to 3) and the role of the company mentor.²⁹

Company-level agreements often include references to pay, working conditions and rights of apprentices. In Bangladesh, local trade unions, along with IUF Asia-Pacific, and one of the biggest transnational confectionary companies signed an agreement which included a clause stating that quality apprenticeships would be introduced, as per the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 and Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015. (according to a representative of IUF Asia-Pacific).

Wide-ranging collective agreements are often negotiated at company level. The agreement signed in 2024 by Energy Queensland and 4 trade unions - AMWU, Professionals Australia, ETU and the Services Union (Box 15) includes clauses relating to the employment of apprentices.³⁰ The agreement signed in 2024 by General Motors of Canada Company and Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union, includes clauses referring to the following: apprentices' pay and conditions; the composition of the Joint Apprenticeship Committee (two persons representing the company and two from the trade unions) and the scope of its decision making; the process used to evaluate candidates; and the review of the school curricula.³¹

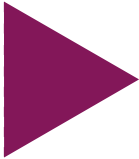
27. https://sgeieg.fr/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/ACCORD_FORMATION_ET_ALTERNANCE_IEG_2024_2028_VFinales_SIGNE.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

28. <https://www.federmeccanica.it/relazioni-industriali/contratto-collettivo-nazionale-di-lavoro-ccnl.html> (accessed 23.9.2025)

29. <https://www.isca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Painters-Collective-Agreement-2022-2025.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

30. https://www.energyq.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/1092501/Energy-Queensland-Union-Collective-Agreement-2024.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

31. https://media.gm.com/content/dam/Shared/Images/Facilities/north_america/canada/en/cami/pdf/2023/2023%20CAMI%20Collective%20Agreement.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)



Box 15

Australia – Enterprise agreements - Energy Queensland

3.8.2 Apprentice Numbers

Energy Queensland will increase technical stream apprentice numbers by 10% of the previous year's intake (based on a minimum of 460) per annum during the life of this Agreement. Intake numbers will be subject to appropriate supervision levels and consultation

3.8.3 Graduating Apprentices

Energy Queensland is committed to the retention of graduating apprentices upon successful completion of their apprenticeship

3.8.4 Existing Employees

When an existing employee becomes an apprentice or a trainee with Energy Queensland, they will be entitled to maintain the salary point they received immediately prior to becoming an apprentice or trainee or the rate prescribed for the relevant level of apprenticeship or traineeship, whichever is the greater

3.8.5 Adult Apprentices and Adult Trainees

When an apprentice or trainee turns 21 years of age during the course of their apprenticeship or traineeship with Energy Queensland, they will be paid Salary Point 0.0 in accordance with Schedule 1 of this Agreement, or the rate prescribed for the relevant level of apprenticeship or traineeship, whichever is the greater



Discussion points:

Including apprenticeships in collective bargaining agreements

- *Look at the Safran agreement (Box 14) and/or the Energy Queensland agreement (Box 15) and consider the steps that need to be taken by your trade union to include provisions like these in a collective bargaining agreement.*

4. Providing Off-the-Job Training

Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- ▶ *Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, establish occupation-specific or general standards, as appropriate, for quality apprenticeships by taking measures that provide, among other things, for: the appropriate balance between off-the-job learning and on-the-job learning (Paragraph 10.j).*
- ▶ *Members should prescribe the conditions under which: educational and training institutions may provide off-the-job and on-the-job training (Paragraph 12.b).*

Off-the-job training may be managed and administered by training providers that are run by trade unions. Trade unions provide off-the-job training to ensure apprentices receive structured, high-quality and transferable learning that complements workplace experience, protects against narrow firm-specific training, and strengthens occupational standards and worker voice. North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU), the United Steelworkers (USW) and the International Association of Machinists (IAM), for example, organise the provision of off-the-job training.

North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) and partner contractors invest nearly \$2 billion annually in U.S. apprentice and journey-level training. NABTU's affiliate unions and partner contractors operate more than 1,600 U.S. training centres.

- ▶ United Steelworkers (USW) launched the Institute for Career Development (ICD), a contractually negotiated benefit for eligible USW members and the companies that employ their members. ICD has 13 participating companies across the steel, tire, rubber, glass container and utility sectors, operating in nearly 60 locations across the United States.
- ▶ International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 751 established the Machinists Institute, a nonprofit educational institution serving the aerospace, manufacturing and automotive machinists' industries to provide cutting-edge education and training to build a highly skilled and diverse workforce to meet employer demand.³²

Trade unions may set up their own training 'intermediaries'. In Australia Registered Training Organisations (RTO) are bodies other than host enterprises or educational and training institutions, that coordinate, support and/or assist in the provision of apprenticeships. The Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union, for example, has set up its own RTO,³³ and in this way is able to play a key role in organising off-the-job training in its sectors.³⁴

Trade unions may also call on the services of external training consultants. In a recent development the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America in Ford (UAW-Ford) linked up with a consultancy, Penn Foster, to provide online apprenticeship courses – for electricians, industrial truck mechanics, machine repairers, metal model makers, millwrights, plumbers/pipefitters, tool & die makers. toolmakers and welders.³⁵

32. https://www.workingforamerica.org/system/files/brief_advancing_partnerships_final.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

33. <https://training.gov.au/Organisation/Details/3688/summary> (accessed 23.9.2025)

34. <https://cfmeu.edu.au> (accessed 23.9.2025)

35. <https://partner.pennfoster.com/uawford> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Trade unions have also offered other forms of off-the-job training which go beyond the basic requirements of the apprenticeship curriculum. The Youth Organisation of the German Trade Union Confederation offers training courses which provide apprentices with core skills development opportunities – communication skills, for example.³⁶



Discussion points: Providing off-the-job training

- *What measures could be taken by your trade union to improve the development of off-the-job training for apprentices?*

36. <https://jugend.dgb.de/ueber-uns/was-wir-machen/bildung/jugendbildungsprogramm> (accessed 23.9.2025)

5. Providing Vocational Guidance

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- *Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, establish occupation-specific or general standards, as appropriate, for quality apprenticeships by taking measures that provide, among other things, for:*
 - k. *access to vocational guidance and career counselling, and other support services as appropriate, before, during and after the apprenticeship. (Paragraph 10)*

Whilst future apprentices may often obtain vocational guidance from national educational agencies, trade unions may provide vocational guidance, so that apprentices can make evidence-based decisions for their education and training pathways. In Canada, for example, the Labourers' Union of North America (LiUNA) has set up a network of centres which provides pre-apprenticeship programmes and thus prepare learners to meet the requirements of apprenticeship training.³⁷ In Italy, the CGIL has established a national network of local offices which provide employment and guidance services – 'the union's point of activation, information, orientation, and relationship with young people'.³⁸

Once apprentices have embarked on their training, they may be able to benefit from advice and support provided by trade union representatives who are members of 'enterprise committees' or 'works councils'. In Germany IG Metall, the metalworking union, has a comprehensive support service for apprentices. Its offices throughout Germany provide information and guidance, and its manual *Apprenticeships – Securing the Future* is designed to assist Work Councils and company training staff in their efforts to create more and better training opportunities.³⁹

A different type of workplace support, provided by Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), was established in the United Kingdom. Union Learning Representatives have the same statutory rights as other trade union representatives and the right to paid time off. The ULR role involves: promoting the value of learning, supporting learners, arranging learning/training and supporting workplace learning centres to embed learning in the workplace.⁴⁰

In the case of UNISON, the UK public service union, ULRs have provided a variety of different learning support activities as shown below (Box 16).

37. <https://liunlocal1059.com/build-your-career/> (accessed 23.9.2-25)

38. <https://www.solcgil.it/p/chi-siamo.html> (accessed 23.9.2-25)

39. https://amberg.igmetall.de/download/20231002_Broschuere_Ausbilden_Zukunft_sichern.pdf (accessed 23.9.2-25)

40. <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/union-learning-reps-ulrs> (accessed 23.9.2-25)

Box 16

United Kingdom – Unison – Responsibilities of Union Learning Representatives

- ▶ Raising awareness of lifelong learning issues in the workplace, especially for non-traditional learners
- ▶ Helping to identify and articulate the learning needs of particular groups of members/potential members
- ▶ With the branch education or lifelong learning coordinator, liaise with employers on lifelong learning opportunities in the workplace
- ▶ Recruiting new members into the branch and encouraging existing members to get more involved through their interest in learning
- ▶ Contacting and talking to members and potential members about how UNISON can assist them in their development
- ▶ Supporting members who are on a learning programme
- ▶ Signposting potential learners to possible providers
- ▶ Representing and negotiating on behalf of members on issues around learning
- ▶ Delivering workshops and learning events for members.⁴¹



Discussion points: Providing vocational guidance

- ▶ ***Take a look at the activities that UNISON Union Learning Representatives may perform (Box 16) and consider which would be the most useful and feasible for the development of quality apprenticeships in your country.***

41. <https://shop.unison.site/content/uploads/2023/12/ULR-handbook.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

6. Developing Apprenticeship Agreements

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- ▶ *Members should ensure that apprenticeships are governed by a written agreement that is concluded between an apprentice and a host enterprise or public institution and, if permitted by national laws and regulations, may also be signed by a third party, such as an educational or training institution or an intermediary. (Paragraph 17)*
- ▶ *Members should ensure that an apprenticeship agreement: clearly defines the parties' respective roles, rights and obligations*
 - a. *specifies where the apprenticeship takes place*
 - b. *does not contain any provision that operates to restrict the apprentice's opportunities for labour market mobility after the apprenticeship*
 - c. *contains provisions relating to the apprenticeship duration, remuneration or other financial compensation and its frequency, hours of work, rest time, breaks, holidays and leave, occupational safety and health, social security, dispute resolution mechanisms and the termination of the apprenticeship agreement*
 - d. *identifies the competencies, certifications or qualifications to be attained and any additional education support to be provided*
 - e. *is registered under conditions established by the competent authority*
 - f. *is signed at the beginning of the apprenticeship*
 - g. *where the apprentice is a minor, is signed on the apprentice's behalf by a parent, guardian or legal representative, or by the apprentice with the consent of a parent, guardian or legal representative, as required by national laws and regulations. (Paragraph 18)*
- ▶ *Members should develop, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, a model apprenticeship agreement to facilitate consistency, uniformity and compliance. (Paragraph 19)*

Apprenticeships should be governed by a written agreement between an apprentice and a representative of an enterprise. It is the case for example, in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Republic of Tanzania, Togo and the United Kingdom. The agreement may also be signed by a representative of a TVET institution, as in the Netherlands and South Africa.⁴²

Some countries, Côte d'Ivoire⁴³ (Box 17) and Germany⁴⁴ (Box 18) for example, provide minimum requirements for apprenticeship agreements.

42. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_731155.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

43. <https://www.droit-afrique.com/upload/doc/cote-divoire/RCI-Decret-1996-286-apprentissage.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

44. https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bbig_2005/BJNR093110005.html (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 17**Côte d'Ivoire - apprenticeship agreement – minimum contents**

- ▶ The surname, first names, age, profession and address of the in-company mentor or the name of the company which takes on the apprentice
- ▶ The surname, first names and qualification of the in-company mentor
- ▶ The surname, first names, age and address of the apprentice
- ▶ The surname, first names, profession and address of his/her father and mother or guardian
- ▶ The date and duration of the contract
- ▶ The occupation focus of the training
- ▶ Remuneration, food, housing and any other conditions that comply with the regulations in force
- ▶ The place of work
- ▶ The on-the job training that the in-company mentor will provide. (Article 12)

Box 18**Germany - apprenticeship agreement – minimum contents**

- ▶ The name and address of trainer and trainees
- ▶ The nature, syllabus, timetable and the objectives of the apprenticeship training, and in particular the form of occupational activity for which the training is to be provided
- ▶ The commencement and duration of the apprenticeship
- ▶ The training measures taking place outside the enterprise
- ▶ The length of the normal daily period of training
- ▶ The length of the probationary period
- ▶ The level of payment
- ▶ The amount of holiday leave
- ▶ The conditions under which the apprenticeship contract may be terminated
- ▶ A general reference to collective agreements, plant agreements or service agreements applicable to the apprenticeship relationship
- ▶ The form of the training certificate. (Article 11)

Some countries have developed model apprenticeship agreements to standardize and formalize the terms of apprenticeship training, as in Switzerland and India. The template for an Indian apprenticeship agreement is based on Schedule III of the Apprenticeship Rules, 1992 (as amended).⁴⁵ It includes the following key elements:

1. Name and address of establishment
2. Name of apprentice
3. Correspondence
4. Date of Birth
5. Age and date of execution of contract
6. Social Category
7. Present qualification
8. Name of the apprenticeship trade
9. Duration of Apprenticeship and periods of training (on- and off-the job)
10. Rate of stipend (year 1, 2, 3 and 4)
11. Name and address of guardian (if the apprentice is a minor)
12. Guarantor
13. Guarantor Information - name and address
14. A joint declaration by the employer, apprentice (or guardian), and surety affirming that they have read and understood the Apprentices Act, 1961 and the Apprenticeship Rules, 1992, and agree to abide by all provisions.
15. Signatures of the employer (with seal), apprentice, guardian, and surety.
16. Names and addresses of two witnesses
17. Contract Registration Number - to be provided by the Office of the Apprenticeship Adviser.

Additional examples of model apprenticeship agreements, including an ILO template developed from a comparative review of country practices, can be found in Annex 3.



Discussion points: Shaping apprenticeship agreements

- **Take a look at the ILO model for an apprenticeship agreement (Annex 3),⁴⁶ and/or examples from Côte d'Ivoire (Box 17), Germany (Box 18) and India. Consider which (additional) components your trade union would like to propose for a model apprenticeship agreement. What steps need to be taken by your trade union to advocate in favour of a model apprenticeship agreement?**

45 https://upload.indiacode.nic.in/showfile?actid=AC_CEN_6_6_00016_196152_1517807321778&type=order&filename=modelcontractform.pdf (accessed 23.9.2-25)

46. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/template-apprenticeship-agreement> (accessed 23.9.2-25)

7. Defending Apprentices' Rights

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- ▶ *Members should take measures to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work in relation to apprenticeships. (Paragraph 15)*
- ▶ *Members should take measures to ensure that apprentices:*
 - a. receive adequate remuneration or other financial compensation, which may be increased at different stages of the apprenticeship to reflect the progressive acquisition of occupational competencies*
 - b. are not required to work hours that exceed limits specified by national legislation and collective agreements*
 - c. are entitled to holidays with adequate remuneration or other financial compensation*
 - d. are entitled to be absent due to illness or accident, with adequate remuneration or other financial compensation*
 - e. have access to paid maternity or paternity leave and parental leave*
 - f. have access to social security and maternity protection*
 - g. are afforded freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining*
 - h. are afforded protection and receive training in respect of occupational safety and health and in respect of discrimination and violence and harassment*
 - i. are entitled to compensation for work-related injuries and illnesses*
 - j. have access to an effective complaints and dispute resolution mechanism*
 - k. are entitled to protection of personal data. (Paragraph 16)*
- ▶ *Members should ensure that an apprenticeship agreement:*
 - d. contains provisions relating to the apprenticeship duration, remuneration or other financial compensation and its frequency, hours of work, rest time, breaks, holidays and leave, occupational safety and health, social security, dispute resolution mechanisms and the termination of the apprenticeship agreement. (Paragraph 18)*

Apprentices are often in a vulnerable position, particularly during the on-the-job training phase. They are typically young and may lack awareness of their rights and entitlements. In many cases, apprentices may also struggle to have their voice heard - especially in situations where they face exploitation, mistreatment, or abuse. This underscores the importance of robust protective measures, clear guidance, and accessible support systems to safeguard their rights, their safety and their well-being throughout the apprenticeship period. Governments, employers, employers' organizations, and trade unions all have, to various degrees, obligations and responsibilities in this regard.

Trade union action is particularly essential to ensure that apprentices fully benefit from Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. These principles enshrined in ILO Conventions include freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation; and the right to a safe and healthy working environment.

Concretely, for apprentices, it means the following:

- ▶ Apprentices have the right to form or join a trade union of their choice and to participate in and benefit from collective bargaining.
- ▶ No apprentice should be under 14 years of age, and no apprentice under 18 years of age should be involved in a hazardous occupation.
- ▶ No apprentice should be coerced to work under the threat of violence or intimidation.
- ▶ Equality of opportunity and treatment is regulated and enforced for all apprentices irrespective of their race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin.
- ▶ The national occupational safety and health policies should explicitly include apprentices, and there should be provisions specific to apprentices in these regulations that take into account their vulnerabilities.
- ▶ Apprentices should have the same access to risk prevention as other workers.
- ▶ Apprentices should have the right to withdraw from activities that they identify as dangerous to their health and well-being.
- ▶ **Implementing Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work for apprentices remains a challenge in various contexts.** Where the structured learning content is inexistent, child labour may be disguised as apprenticeship, where children performing tasks without explicit learning structure become socially acceptable because “they learn by doing”. Moreover, apprentices’ freedom to join a trade union is often challenged. As newcomers to the workplace, apprentices are particularly vulnerable and face heightened risks, especially when they have not received adequate awareness-raising or occupational safety training, including proper provision and use of personal protective equipment.

Whether apprentices are workers or students within national legislation, trade unions have a responsibility to protect their rights. Where apprentices are considered employees - for example in Australia, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Italy, Kenya, New Zealand, Philippines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – they will enjoy the same rights and protections as other workers (with some exceptions), and so initiatives taken by trade unions for workers will also be of direct and immediate benefit for apprentices. In other countries, where apprentices have a different status, for example in Germany, India and Pakistan, their rights and protections may be secured by other regulations.

In practical terms trade unions are often involved in protecting apprentices’ rights. The German Trade Union Confederation has set up an on-line interactive advice service, entitled ‘Dr Azubi (Dr Apprentice)⁴⁷, and one of its affiliated organisations, ver.di, a services union, provides apprentices with answers to frequently asked questions.⁴⁸

The French General Confederation of Labour has published a guide designed specifically to ensure that apprentices know their rights (Box 16),⁴⁹ as have other trade unions – for example, the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union,⁵⁰ and the Dutch FNV.⁵¹ Other trade union organizations, for example, the Regional Office for Asia-Pacific of the IUF has prepared a series of dissemination materials - infographics on quality apprenticeships, including rights of apprentices, and also leaflets on what unions can do.

47. <https://jugend.dgb.de/ausbildung/beratung/dr-azubi> (accessed 23.9.2025)

48. <https://www.verdi.de/themen/bildung-ausbildung/++co++ed85152e-89b3-11ec-87b2-001a4a16012a> (accessed 23.9.2025)

49. <https://analyses-propositions.cgt.fr/guide-de-l'apprentie> (accessed 23.9.2025)

50. <https://www.amwu.org.au/apprentices> (accessed 23.9.2025)

51. <https://www.fnv.nl/werk-inkomen/loopbaan/werken-en-leren-bbl> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Box 19

France - Apprentices' Rights – General Confederation of Labour

The General Confederation of Labour has published Know your Rights to ensure that they are respected to raise awareness on rights and entitlements. It includes the following:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Minimum age | 7. Holidays |
| 2. Duration | 8. Pay |
| 3. Health and safety | 9. Social protection |
| 4. Breach of contract | 10. Off-the-job training |
| 5. Unemployment rights | 11. Discrimination |
| 6. Working time | 12. Sexual harassment |

It is particularly important for unions to ensure that apprentices are covered by grievance mechanisms. Regulations should ensure that apprentices have the right to file complaints. In Indonesia, a grievance mechanism for apprentices at the workplace level has recently been adopted. The guidelines note that 'almost every company has a grievance mechanism for its workers. If the company already has one, then the company can review the grievance mechanism and make required adaptations for apprentices'. Moreover, the guidelines provide for the involvement of a trade union representative in the grievance mechanism team (Box 20).⁵²

Box 20

Indonesia - Participating in dispute resolution mechanisms

It has been proposed that the internal workplace team dealing with grievances should include a trade union representative, along with the HR Director, the person in charge of the apprenticeship programme, the apprenticeship (in-house) mentor and the training instructor.

Grievances raised by apprentices may concern mistreatment, but they can also relate to other aspects of the apprenticeship experience. In Ireland, the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee plays a key role in overseeing apprenticeship training. The Committee includes two representatives from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions on its Board, ensuring that worker perspectives are duly considered. It has established a formal process—developed with trade union involvement - for adjudicating appeals and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)⁵³ applications. This mechanism helps ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in the administration of apprenticeship programmes.⁵⁴

52. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/METI_ID-Mekanisme%20Keluh%20Kesah_rev%2003%20%28FINAL%29.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

53. RPL is the process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying a person's competencies that have been acquired through non-formal or informal learning, against established qualification standards, in order to enable individuals without formal qualifications to obtain greater recognition for existing skills, in order to improve their employability, their mobility and their access to further learning, and to improve signalling of competencies on the labour market.

54. <https://www.lmetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SOLAS-QA-Manual-Complete-2023.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

Trade unions have acted on behalf of apprentices when their rights have not been respected. There are numerous examples. The All-India Railwaymen's Federation has campaigned to ensure that 3,000 apprentices who had completed their training should be allowed to take their final examinations.⁵⁵ Faced with allegations of sexual harassment and bullying, the Regional Office for IUF for Asia/Pacific intervened with local management to address these issues. If a grievance cannot be settled internally, a trade union may make a formal complaint requiring arbitration by a Labour Relations Board, as, for example, in Canada, when a grievance regarding apprentices' remuneration was brought in 2025 by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers against Rran Electric and Automatic Inc.⁵⁶



Discussion points:

Defending apprentices' rights and contributing to dispute resolution

- ▶ *Look at the list of apprentices' rights enumerated in the French Guide (Box 16). Which of these rights is part of the labour code or other legal instruments in your country? What are the most easily reported grievances? Which rights or entitlements would be a priority for your trade union? What would be the best way in which these priorities could be safeguarded? What are the most often reported grievances?*
- ▶ *In practical terms what would your trade union need to do to ensure that apprentices have access to dispute resolution mechanisms? What can your trade union do to support apprentices throughout this process?*

55. <https://www.airfindia.org/2023/07/19/appointment-of-the-course-completed-act-apprentices-against-20-quota-cen-no-01-2019/> (accessed 23.9.2025)

56. <https://www.canlii.org/en/on/onlrb/doc/2025/2025canlii16776/2025canlii16776.html> (accessed 23.9.2025)

8. Addressing the Misuse of Apprenticeships

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- **10. Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, establish occupation-specific or general standards, as appropriate, for quality apprenticeships by taking measures that provide, among other things, for:**
 - f. the appropriate balance between apprentices and workers in the workplace, with a view to ensuring successful apprenticeship programmes and adequate supervision, and while taking into account the need to avoid the replacement of workers and to promote apprenticeships in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.*

Some trade unions, particularly in the developing world, have been wary of supporting apprenticeships. In Indonesia, for example, there are indications that 'trade unions are sceptical about the concept and are concerned about misuse in terms of cheap labour'.⁵⁷ This point has also been recognised recently by the IUF Asia/Pacific (Box 21).

Box 21

Bangladesh - Misuse of apprenticeships – IUF Asia/Pacific

In one of the biggest transnational confectionary companies, the union successfully negotiated a collective agreement which limited the use of contract workers and supported the conversion of precarious workers to permanent jobs. A month after the agreement was signed, management hired 40 apprentices on three-year apprenticeships. There was no on-the-job training and no off-the-job training, and their wages were 40 per cent lower than the wages of the permanent workers. They were simply replacing contract workers.'

'In one of the biggest transnational food companies, there is a one-year apprenticeship programme. Management advertised permanent job vacancies. After written and verbal interviews, the selected candidates were then recruited as apprentices for one year. After completion of one year as an apprentice all apprentices are then given an appointment letter as a probationary worker for three months. After that three-month probation period workers received a confirmation letter as permanent workers. The union requested that management review the recruitment process to prohibit precarious employment arrangements. This includes the misuse of the apprenticeship system to hire workers at a lower wage rate on what is effectively a long probation period.'

In the first instance, the trade union challenged this behaviour, and management responded that the union has no right to raise the issue because apprentices are not members of the union. In the second, the trade union requested that management review the recruitment process to prohibit precarious employment arrangements.

57. <https://apindo.or.id/storage/files/study-and-research/aHfKQSXHRGqnTPZKRItXP0vgtNsLbOJ5gsTddbCK.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

While in some countries trade unions have expressed caution or scepticism toward apprenticeship systems - often due to concerns that they may be used to disguise low-cost labour arrangements - their active engagement is essential to prevent such misuse. Rather than withdrawing from these discussions and decisions, trade unions can play a decisive role in shaping effective apprenticeship policies that uphold decent work standards and ensure apprentices do not replace workers. Unions should be involved in the design, monitoring, and governance of apprenticeship programmes to establish safeguards, such as fair remuneration, clear learning outcomes, and limits on the share of apprentices in workplaces, thereby ensuring that apprenticeships contribute to skills development without undermining decent employment.

Establishing safeguards against the misuse of apprenticeships is essential to ensure they serve as genuine pathways to decent work and skills development. In France, the CGT has drawn attention to the fact that on the successful completion of their training, apprentices have not always been offered further employment opportunities. Instead, they have been replaced by a new cohort of apprentices, thus allowing employers to claim further apprenticeship recruitment incentives.⁵⁸ In the United Kingdom, a focus of the apprentice campaign launched by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers targets the misuse of apprenticeships. 'Due to government tax incentives and the weaker status of employment rights for apprentices they are often misused by companies as a source of exploitable labour. Our successes on this issue have not been sector-wide but case by case with employers'.

Other Trade unions have taken action against the misuse of apprenticeships, recognizing that such practices can undermine both the integrity of training systems, employment levels and the rights of young workers, as follows:

In Canada, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and its Ontario Council have negotiated a wide-ranging collective agreement stipulating that apprentices should be well-mentored, on the basis of a ratio of 3 skilled journeypersons for each apprentice.⁵⁹

- ▶ In India, the All-India Railwaymen's Federation has found that in many places, due to the shortage of staff, apprentices have been required to work in other jobs that are not part of their training programme,
- ▶ In some regions of Togo, unions affiliated to the CNTT have been warned of abuse in master-apprentice relationships. As a response they have reported cases to the Labour Inspectorate and regional vocational training directorates, entered into dialogue with master craftspeople to put an end to the abuse, redirected apprentice victims to other, better-supervised training locations, organized training sessions on the prevention of abuse and violence in apprenticeship environments.



Discussion points:

Addressing the misuse of apprenticeships

- ▶ ***What can your trade union do to ensure that apprentices are not used as replacement of workers? Is there a limit on the number of apprentices that enterprises in your country can take on? if yes, what is the figure? Is it appropriate? is it respected?***

58. https://analyses-propositions.cgt.fr/sites/analyses-propositions.cgt.fr/files/2024-05/2022-07-18%20-%20Apprentissage_0.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

59. <https://www.isca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Painters-Collective-Agreement-2022-2025.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

9. Investing in Trade Union Capacity

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- *Members should take measures to continuously (a) develop and strengthen the capacity of government agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, and educational and training institution. (Paragraph 13)*

Most trade unions have limited, or very limited, resources to devote to the development of apprenticeship training. They often do not have representatives with the knowledge and technical expertise, and also the time, to work on the development of apprenticeship training. They would most certainly benefit from government measures to develop and strengthen their capacity, as has been highlighted in Paragraph 13 of the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208).

Still, many trade unions have made apprenticeships a strategic focus, dedicating time and resources to support and influence their development. The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) has committed significant resources to the development of apprenticeships through various initiatives:

- The Apprenticeship Patrol (*Lærlingpatruljen*), which involves trained union youth representatives visiting apprentice workplaces to monitor conditions and provide feedback.
- The delivery of apprenticeship courses, which aim to educate apprentices about their rights, working conditions, and union structures.
- The publication of the Apprenticeship Handbook (*Lærlinghåndboka*), which is developed and distributed by LO as a free tool for apprentices and union representatives, ensuring that guidance and organizational support are widely available.⁶⁰

Togolese trade unions, such as the Federation of Construction Workers, have actively invested in building their capacity to support apprenticeships. As part of this effort, they have organised awareness-raising campaigns to highlight the benefits of apprenticeships, particularly for young people who have dropped out of school. These initiatives reflect a strategic commitment to promoting inclusive skills development and expanding opportunities for vulnerable youth.

The United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA) has set up its own Education and Training Department. Its mission is 'to equip United Association locals with educational resources for developing the skills of their apprentices and journeypersons. By thus facilitating the training needs of the membership, we maximize their employability and prepare them for changes in the industry'.⁶¹

There are some examples of ILO Members already developing and strengthening the capacity of workers' organisations. In the United Kingdom the government established a Union Learning Fund, managed and administered by the education department of the Trades Union Congress, which aimed 'to develop the capacity of trade unions and union learning representatives (ULRs) to work with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take up of learning in the workplace'. One of its objectives was to support high quality apprenticeships and traineeships. However, the British government subsequently decided to end the funding in 2021.⁶²

60. <https://www.lo.no/globalassets/brosjyrer/laerlinghandbok-2023-160x200-nett.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

61. <https://ua.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Training-Newsletter-April-2025.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

62. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2020-0139/CDP-2020-0139.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)



Discussion points: Investing in trade union capacity

- ▶ *What measures can be taken by your trade union in the short term and in the medium-to-long term to build capacity for the development and improvements of apprenticeships? What measures can be taken by your trade union to persuade your government to establish a trade union fund for the development of quality apprenticeships?*

10. Recruiting Apprentices as Members

Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208):

- ▶ *Members should take measures to ensure that apprentices: (g) are afforded freedom of association (Paragraph 16)*
- ▶ *Apprentices should be able to benefit from freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. Even before the adoption of the Quality Apprenticeship Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208), in its Compilation of decisions, the ILO tripartite Committee on Freedom of Association has already expressed that ‘the status under which workers are engaged with the employer, as apprentices or otherwise, should not have any effect on their right to join workers’ organizations and participate in their activities’.⁶³*

As part of their broader outreach and organizing strategies, many trade unions place particular emphasis on recruiting apprentices. For example, Canada’s Building Trades Unions feature a dedicated section on their website where members from 16 different trades share their experiences and insights, helping to inspire and inform potential apprentices.⁶⁴ In Togo, trade unions have organised awareness-raising activities in training institutions to explain the role of trade unions, the rights of apprentices and the benefits of membership and set up groups of young trade union members. In Germany, although apprentices are not formally employees, they have the right to become members of a trade union. In other countries, Argentina, for example, apprentices have the right to join a trade union but are generally not recruited by trade unions until they have formally entered the labour market. Similarly, Unite the Union - one of the largest trade unions in the United Kingdom and Ireland - actively targets young workers through engaging campaigns, including a promotional feature titled ‘Five reasons you’d be silly not to think about joining us’ (Box 22), which highlights the benefits of union membership in a relatable and accessible way.⁶⁵

63. https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:70002:0::NO (accessed 23.9.2025)

64. <https://www.buildingtrades.ca/en/apprenticeship/> (accessed 23.9.2025)

65. <https://www.unitetheunion.org/why-join/membership-types/unite-young-members/decent-work-for-all/5-reasons-you-would-be-silly-not-to-join-unite-as-a-young-member>

Box 23

United Kingdom - Recruiting apprentices as members - UNITE the Union

"Here are just five reasons why you'd be silly not to think about joining us...

Unite will give you visibility - Employers listen to collective strength. By working together, Unite members give themselves a bigger voice and, in doing so, a better chance of being heard. The boss can't sack you because he wants to give your job to his son's girlfriend, if everybody knows your name.

12. Unite will give you security - Members of trade unions are more likely to stay in their jobs longer – on average, five years longer – than non-members. Remember that benefits such as holidays, sick pay and pensions often didn't (or still don't) exist without a union voice.

13. Unite will give you strength - The sizeable majority of zero-hour contracts are given to students between 16 and 25. Flexible working often just means insecurity and forced zero and short-hours contracts need to stop - we can achieve this by organising and campaigning together.

14. Unite will give you options - It's not just the money (though union members do earn, on average, 10% more than non-members), Unite members can utilise free legal representation and advice about holiday entitlement, maternity and paternity leave, redundancy rights and training and development.

15. Unite will give you dignity - Union members don't have to tip-toe around in fear of incompetent managers and outdated rules. Sure, you can still lose your job for a substandard work performance, but the backing of Unite equips you with a level of expertise that makes bosses behave as they should."

In order to encourage the recruitment of apprentices, some trade unions reduce their membership rates. To be a member of the Danish Union HK, the second largest in the confederation LO, a fulltime worker pays 300-500 Danish krone a month; apprentices pay a reduced rate – 30 Danish krone.⁶⁶ To be a member of the Australian Electrical Trades Union in Victoria, in 2025/2026 a tradesperson pays \$866; an adult apprentice pays \$463, and a junior apprentice (under 21 years) in his/her first year pays \$99.⁶⁷

Trade unions actively promote the rights of apprentices, regardless of whether they are union members. Their efforts include incorporating apprenticeships into collective bargaining agreements, addressing grievances, advocating for safe working conditions, ensuring adequate remuneration, and undertaking a range of other actions outlined in this manual. By doing so, trade unions help ensure that apprentices receive fair treatment, quality training, and protection in the workplace - reinforcing their broader role in advancing decent work and inclusive labour practices.



Discussion points: Recruiting apprentices as members

- *Take a look at UNITE the Union's 5 reasons for joining a trade union (Box 20). If you were called upon to write a brochure for your trade union to recruit apprentices, which of these reasons would be the most appropriate? Can you think of other reasons?*

66. <https://www.hk.dk/en#join> (accessed 23.9.2025)

67. https://www.etuvic.com.au/about-us/#:-:text=The%20ETU%20also%20offers:%20*%20Family%20baby,at:%20*%201800%20134%20835%20*%20etu.members@etuvic.com.au (accessed 5.3.2026)

Annexes

► Annex 1 – ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization

Having been convened in Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, and having met at its 111th Session on 5 June 2023,

Noting that global unemployment and underemployment rates continue to be high, that inequality persists and that rapid transformations in the world of work, such as those resulting from the challenges of climate change, exacerbate skills mismatches and skills shortages, requiring the development of quality apprenticeships that provide opportunities for people of all ages to skill, reskill and upskill continuously,

Noting also that this continuous skilling, reskilling and upskilling contributes to promoting full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all,

Underlining the importance of quality education and training for all and access to quality lifelong learning,

Recalling that all human beings have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity,

Recognizing that the promotion and development of quality apprenticeships can lead to decent work, contribute to effective and efficient responses to world of work challenges and provide lifelong learning opportunities to enhance productivity, resilience, transitions and employability and meet current and future needs of apprentices, employers and the labour market,

Recognizing that the promotion, development and delivery of quality apprenticeships can also support entrepreneurship, self-employment, employability, the transition to the formal economy, the creation of decent jobs and the growth and sustainability of enterprises,

Considering that an effective framework for quality apprenticeships requires apprenticeships to be well regulated, sustainable, sufficiently funded, inclusive and free from discrimination, violence and harassment and exploitation, to promote gender equality and diversity, to provide adequate remuneration or other financial compensation and social protection coverage, to lead to recognized qualifications and to enhance employment outcomes,

Emphasizing that apprenticeships should be promoted and regulated, including through social dialogue, with a view to ensuring their quality, providing benefits and protection to apprentices and enterprises, and enhancing the attractiveness of apprenticeships to potential apprentices and employers, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises,

Recalling the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

Underlining the relevance of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022, the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022, the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, as amended in 2022, the Conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises (2007) and the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019) for the promotion of quality apprenticeships

and the effective protection of all apprentices, particularly in the light of the profound transformations in the world of work,

Recalling the provisions of other relevant ILO instruments, particularly the Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) and Recommendation (No. 122), 1964, the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), the Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169), the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195), and the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204),

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals concerning quality apprenticeships, which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and having determined that these proposals shall take the form of a Recommendation,

adopts this 16 June 2023 the following Recommendation, which may be cited as the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023:

I. Definitions, scope and means of implementation

1. For the purposes of this Recommendation:

(a) the term “apprenticeship” should be understood as a form of education and training that is governed by an apprenticeship agreement, that 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 recognized qualification;

(b) the term “intermediary” should be understood as an entity, other than the host enterprise or the educational and training institution, that coordinates, supports or assists in the provision of an apprenticeship;

(c) the term “pre-apprenticeship programme” should be understood as a programme designed to help potential apprentices to develop their competencies with a view to improving their workplace preparedness or meeting the formal entry requirements for an apprenticeship;

(d) the term “recognition of prior learning” should be understood as a process, undertaken by qualified personnel, of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying a person’s competencies, acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning, based on established qualification standards.

2. This Recommendation applies to apprenticeships in all enterprises and sectors of economic activity.
3. Members may give effect to the provisions of this Recommendation through national laws and regulations, collective agreements, policies and programmes or other measures consistent with national law and practice.
4. Members should implement the provisions of this Recommendation in consultation with representative employers’ and workers’ organizations.

II. Regulatory framework for quality apprenticeships

5. Members should incorporate and promote quality apprenticeships within their relevant education, vocational training, lifelong learning and employment policies.
6. Members should establish a regulatory framework for quality apprenticeships, and qualification frameworks or systems to facilitate the recognition of competencies acquired through apprenticeships. Representative employers’ and workers’ organizations should be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of frameworks, systems, policies and programmes for quality apprenticeships.
7. Members should establish or designate one or more public authorities responsible for regulating apprenticeships, in which representative employers’ and workers’ organizations should be represented.

8. Members should ensure that the competent authorities have clearly defined responsibilities, are adequately funded and work in close cooperation with other authorities or institutions responsible for regulating or delivering education and training, labour inspection, social protection, occupational safety and health, and public and private employment services.
9. Members should adopt a process, in which representative employers' and workers' organizations participate, for determining whether an occupation is suitable for quality apprenticeships, taking into account:
 - (a) the competencies needed to work in that occupation;
 - (b) the appropriateness of an apprenticeship as a means of acquiring such competencies;
 - (c) the duration of the apprenticeship required to acquire such competencies;
 - (d) the current and future demand for skills in, and employment potential of, that occupation;
 - (e) the occupational, training and labour market expertise of employers' and workers' organizations;
 - (f) the wide range of emerging occupational fields, and evolving production processes and services.
10. Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, establish occupation-specific or general standards, as appropriate, for quality apprenticeships by taking measures that provide, among other things, for:
 - (a) the minimum age for admission, in accordance with the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182);
 - (b) occupational safety and health, in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187);
 - (c) any educational qualifications, attainments or prior learning required for admission;
 - (d) the responsibilities of apprentices, employers, educational and training institutions, and intermediaries;
 - (e) the supervision of apprentices by qualified personnel and the nature of such supervision;
 - (f) the appropriate balance between apprentices and workers in the workplace, with a view to ensuring successful apprenticeship programmes and adequate supervision, and while taking into account the need to avoid the replacement of workers and to promote apprenticeships in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (g) the expected minimum and maximum duration of the apprenticeship;
 - (h) the extent to which the expected duration of the apprenticeship may be reduced on the basis of prior learning or progress made during the apprenticeship;
 - (i) learning outcomes and curricula based on relevant occupational competencies, the education and training needs of apprentices and labour market needs;
 - (j) the appropriate balance between off-the-job learning and on-the-job learning;
 - (k) access to vocational guidance and career counselling, and other support services as appropriate, before, during and after the apprenticeship;
 - (l) the qualifications and experience required for teachers, instructors, in-house trainers and other experts involved in apprenticeships;
 - (m) the appropriate balance between apprentices and teachers, taking into account the need to ensure quality education and training;
 - (n) the procedures for assessing and certifying the competencies acquired;
 - (o) the qualification acquired on the successful completion of the apprenticeship.
11. Members should take measures to ensure that there is a fair and transparent process by which an apprenticeship can be undertaken in more than one enterprise, subject to the apprentice's consent, when this is considered necessary for the completion of the apprenticeship.

12. Members should prescribe the conditions under which:
 - (a) enterprises may offer apprenticeships;
 - (b) educational and training institutions may provide off-the-job and on-the-job training;
 - (c) intermediaries may coordinate, support or assist in the provision of apprenticeships.
13. Members should take measures to continuously:
 - (a) develop and strengthen the capacity of government agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, and educational and training institutions;
 - (b) strengthen the training capacity of host enterprises;
 - (c) increase the competencies of teachers, instructors, in-house trainers and other experts involved in apprenticeships.
14. Members should take measures to ensure that apprenticeship systems and programmes are regularly monitored and evaluated by the competent authorities. The results of monitoring and evaluations should be used to adapt and improve the systems and programmes accordingly.

III. Protection of apprentices

15. Members should take measures to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work in relation to apprenticeships.
16. Members should take measures to ensure that apprentices:
 - (a) receive adequate remuneration or other financial compensation, which may be increased at different stages of the apprenticeship to reflect the progressive acquisition of occupational competencies;
 - (b) are not required to work hours that exceed limits specified by national legislation and collective agreements;
 - (c) are entitled to holidays with adequate remuneration or other financial compensation;
 - (d) are entitled to be absent due to illness or accident, with adequate remuneration or other financial compensation;
 - (e) have access to paid maternity or paternity leave and parental leave;
 - (f) have access to social security and maternity protection;
 - (g) are afforded freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
 - (h) are afforded protection and receive training in respect of occupational safety and health and in respect of discrimination and violence and harassment;
 - (i) are entitled to compensation for work-related injuries and illnesses;
 - (j) have access to an effective complaints and dispute resolution mechanism;
 - (k) are entitled to protection of personal data.

IV. Apprenticeship agreement

17. Members should ensure that apprenticeships are governed by a written agreement that is concluded between an apprentice and a host enterprise or public institution and, if permitted by national laws and regulations, may also be signed by a third party, such as an educational or training institution or an intermediary.
18. Members should ensure that an apprenticeship agreement:
 - (a) clearly defines the parties' respective roles, rights and obligations;
 - (b) specifies where the apprenticeship takes place;
 - (c) does not contain any provision that operates to restrict the apprentice's opportunities for labour market mobility after the apprenticeship;
 - (d) contains provisions relating to the apprenticeship duration, remuneration or other financial compensation and its frequency, hours of work, rest time, breaks, holidays and leave, occupational safety and health, social security, dispute resolution mechanisms and the termination of the apprenticeship agreement;
 - (e) identifies the competencies, certifications or qualifications to be attained and any additional education support to be provided;
 - (f) is registered under conditions established by the competent authority;
 - (g) is signed at the beginning of the apprenticeship;
 - (h) where the apprentice is a minor, is signed on the apprentice's behalf by a parent, guardian or legal representative, or by the apprentice with the consent of a parent, guardian or legal representative, as required by national laws and regulations.
19. Members should develop, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, a model apprenticeship agreement to facilitate consistency, uniformity and compliance.

V. Equality and diversity in quality apprenticeships

20. Members should take measures to promote equality, diversity and social inclusion in apprenticeships, taking special account of the situation and needs of persons belonging to one or more vulnerable groups or groups in situations of vulnerability.
21. Members should take appropriate measures to promote gender equality and balance in all aspects of apprenticeships, including in access to apprenticeships.
22. Members should take effective measures to prevent and eliminate any discrimination, violence and harassment and exploitation against apprentices and provide access to appropriate and effective remedies.
23. Members should actively promote apprenticeships for adults and experienced individuals seeking to change industry or occupation, upgrade their skills or enhance their employability, in order to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment.
24. Members should take measures to promote access to quality apprenticeships as a means to facilitate the successful transition from the informal to the formal economy and from insecure to secure work that is decent and provides access to social security and labour protection.

VI. Promotion of quality apprenticeships

25. Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, take measures to create an enabling environment for promoting quality apprenticeships, including by:
- (a) developing and implementing strategies, setting national goals and allocating adequate resources for quality apprenticeships;
 - (b) mainstreaming quality apprenticeships in national development strategies and in education, vocational training, lifelong learning and employment policies;
 - (c) establishing sectoral or occupational skills bodies to facilitate the implementation of quality apprenticeships;
 - (d) developing and maintaining robust mechanisms, such as labour market information systems and regular consultations with representative employers' and workers' organizations, to assess the current and future demand for skills with a view to designing or adapting apprenticeship programmes accordingly;
 - (e) implementing effective and sustainable financing models;
 - (f) providing incentives and support services;
 - (g) developing robust monitoring mechanisms, including data collection by the competent authority on rates of retention, non-completion and success in apprenticeships, to assess the effectiveness of financing models and incentive schemes in creating quality apprenticeships;
 - (h) facilitating effective public-private partnerships to support quality apprenticeships within a national regulatory framework;
 - (i) supporting, where appropriate, intermediaries that coordinate, support or assist in the provision of apprenticeships;
 - (j) undertaking awareness-raising activities and promotional campaigns at regular intervals to improve the image and attractiveness of quality apprenticeships by highlighting the benefits of apprenticeships to workers, young people, families, teachers, career counsellors, employers' and workers' organizations, and employers, particularly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises;
 - (k) increasing awareness of apprentices' rights, entitlements and protections;
 - (l) establishing needs-based pre-apprenticeship programmes with a focus on increasing the rates of participation, retention and success in apprenticeships by persons belonging to one or more vulnerable groups or groups in situations of vulnerability;
 - (m) facilitating access to further vocational training and other education opportunities for apprentices;
 - (n) providing flexible learning pathways and career guidance to support mobility, lifelong learning and portability of skills and qualifications;
 - (o) developing, supporting and encouraging the inclusion of mentorships in apprenticeship programmes;
 - (p) using new technologies and innovative methods to improve the effectiveness and quality of apprenticeships;
 - (q) promoting apprenticeships in fields related to the green economy and a just transition, with a view to disseminating knowledge and building skills oriented towards the future of work.
26. Members should promote a culture of lifelong learning, skilling, reskilling and upskilling, including with respect to core skills.
27. Members should, in consultation with representative employers' and workers' organizations, with a view to facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy, take measures to:
- (a) strengthen the capacity of micro, small and medium-sized economic units by facilitating access to business development and financial services, improving the occupational safety and health environment, and enhancing the teaching and training methods and the technical and entrepreneurial competencies of master craftspersons;

- (b) ensure that apprentices have access to off-the-job learning and may complement their on-the-job learning in other enterprises or through intermediaries, where appropriate;
- (c) strengthen the capacity of associations of micro, small and medium-sized economic units, including through financial support, to improve the quality of apprenticeships;
- (d) adopt a process to recognize relevant prior learning, including when acquired in the informal economy, and encourage the provision of bridging courses.

VII. International, regional and national cooperation for quality apprenticeships

28. Members should take measures to:

- (a) enhance international, regional and national cooperation and exchange information on good practices, in all aspects of quality apprenticeships;
- (b) cooperate to offer expanded learning opportunities to apprentices and to recognize competencies acquired through apprenticeship programmes or prior learning;
- (c) build effective partnerships to promote quality apprenticeship programmes, including through tripartite national, sectoral or occupational skills bodies, global and regional alliances and apprenticeship networks;
- (d) promote the recognition of apprenticeship qualifications nationally, regionally and internationally.

► Annex 2 – Record vote on the adoption of the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)

See https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_norm/%40relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_885493.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

► Annex 3 - Recent ILO tools on Apprenticeships

See

ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation - Guide for policy makers https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/Quality_Apprenticeships_WEB.pdf (in English) (accessed 23.9.2025)

<https://www.ilo.org/fr/publications/guide-lintention-des-decideurs-politiques-recommandation-no-208-sur-les> (in French) (accessed 23.9.2025)

https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/SKILLS_Quality_Apprenticeships_WEB_Sp.pdf (in Spanish) (accessed 23.9.2025)

Policy Brief - Recommendation No. 208 on Quality Apprenticeship: What Role for Trade Unions? https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/Policy%20Brief%20ACTRAV_Recommendation%20No%20208_web_Rev%2028-10-2024.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

Training Manual - Skills Development and Lifelong Learning: Resource Guide for Workers' Organizations https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_761035.pdf (English) (accessed 23.9.2025)

https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_841492.pdf (in Bahasa Indonesia) (accessed 23.9.2025) spacing

ILO Policy Brief – Strengthening apprenticeships for transitions to formality See https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_914562.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

How to organize a tripartite review of national apprenticeships frameworks See <https://www.itcilo.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Infographic%20tripartite%20review%20-%20apprenticeships%20frameworks%20-%20v02.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

ILO Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation – infographics See https://www.itcilo.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Infographic%20Recommendation%20No_208_v02.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

ILO template for an apprenticeship agreement See <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/Apprenticeship%20agreement%20template.pdf> (accessed 23.9.2025)

► Annex 4 – IUF Asia/Pacific Quality apprenticeships: skills, rights and what unions can do - infographics

See <https://iufap.org/2024/08/07/infographics-on-quality-apprenticeships-skills-rights-and-what-unions-can-do/#:~:text=IUF%20Asia%2DPacific-,INFOGRAPHICS%20on%20quality%20apprenticeships%20skills%2C%20rights%20and%20what%20unions%20can,PDF%5D> (accessed 23.9.2025)

► Annex 5 – IG Metall – Ausbilden=Zukunft Sichern – Handlungsmöglichkeiten für Betriebsräte und Ausbildungspersonal

See https://amberg.igmetall.de/download/20231002_Broschuere_Ausbilden_Zukunft_sichern.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

► Annex 6 – US Department of Labor Program – template for registration and apprenticeship agreement

See https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/apprenticeship/pdfs/ETA_form_671.pdf (accessed 23.9.2025)

► Annex 7 – Confédération Générale du Travail - Guide de l'apprenti

See <https://analyses-propositions.cgt.fr/guide-de-l'apprentie> (accessed 23.09.25)

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