



FLASH THEMATIC COUNTRY REVIEW ON APPRENTICESHIPS

BELGIUM

French-speaking region



BELGIUM

Flash thematic country review on apprenticeships in French-speaking Belgium

Please cite this publication as:

Cedefop (2019). *Flash thematic country review on apprenticeships in French-speaking Belgium*.

Luxembourg: Publications Office. Thematic country reviews.

<http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/067083>

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.

It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

Luxembourg:

Publications Office of the European Union, 2019

PRINT

ISBN: 978-92-896-2874-7

doi:10.2801/90841

TI-03-19-277-EN-C

PDF

ISBN: 978-92-896-2872-3

doi:10.2801/067083

TI-03-19-277-EN-N

Photos

p.2 © Shutterstock/Robert Kneschke

p.8 © Shutterstock/wavebreakmedia

pp.12-13 © Euroskills, 2014/E.Watteau

pp.20-21 © Euroskills, 2016/Kajsa Karlsson

pp.28-29 © Euroskills, 2018/László Mudra

p.43 © Shutterstock/goodluz

p.61 © Euroskills, 2016/Sofia Bengtsson

p.67 © Euroskills, 2016/Alice Rydsund Jones

Copyright © European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2019
All rights reserved.

*Designed by Missing Element Prague
Printed in the European Union*

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
(Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020
Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu
www.cedefop.europa.eu

Mara Brugia, *Acting Executive Director*
Tatjana Babrauskiene, *Chair of the Management Board*

Foreword

There is broad consensus in Europe that apprenticeships can be an effective way of helping young people make smoother transitions from school to employment and of addressing labour market imbalances. However, as highlighted in the adoption of the Council recommendation for a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships ⁽¹⁾, several necessary conditions must converge to establish good quality apprenticeship schemes.

As part of Cedefop work to support policy-making and European cooperation on apprenticeships, this report contains the findings of the flash review on apprenticeships conducted in French-speaking Belgium ⁽²⁾. It is part of the second series of bilateral work with about 10 countries ⁽³⁾. By making our findings available, we aim to support national stakeholders in their endeavour to strengthen their structured dialogue and joint work, to make apprenticeships a valuable learning option for learners.

Cedefop's apprenticeship reviews rely on a participatory, evolving and iterative approach. In cooperation with national stakeholders, we identified strengths and enabling factors, focused on the challenges, and developed action points for the attractiveness and quality of apprenticeships. The involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries suggests that dialogue among the ministries and the social partners is growing and that the gap between education and labour market representatives is narrowing, with each reaching out for synergies and cooperation.

Feedback from our national partners suggests that the exercise has helped them clarify and shape their policies. Reviewing countries' apprenticeships has proved mutually rewarding and Cedefop has gained better insight into the issues at stake in Member States while working with national authorities and social partners. This is why we believe that the in-

⁽¹⁾ Council of the European Union (2018). *Recommendation on a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships: adoption*. Permanent Representatives Committee. Brussels, 5 March 2018. <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6779-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

⁽²⁾ The term 'French-speaking Belgium' is used to denote a broader scope than that of the 'French Community of Belgium'.

⁽³⁾ Cedefop's reports on the country reviews include three more in this series on reviews carried out in Croatia and Cyprus and a 'flash' review carried out in Sweden; there are also five reports in a previous series on reviews carried out in Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Slovenia.

depth information gathered so far will help not only the countries concerned but also, through our role as intermediary, other countries to reflect on their practices and implement reforms for better apprenticeship programmes.

Cedefop's team has been following policy developments closely in all the countries participating in the reviews. It will continue to do so by organising policy learning activities, enabling Member States and European stakeholders to learn from each other, and sharing experiences with a view to establishing high-quality apprenticeships in their national contexts.

Mara Brugia

*Cedefop Acting
Executive Director*

Antonio Ranieri

*Head of department for learning
and employability*



Acknowledgements

This publication was produced by Cedefop, Department for learning and employability, under the supervision of Antonio Ranieri. Ramona David and Lisa Rustico, Cedefop experts, were responsible for the publication and research conducted from January to October 2018 under the *Thematic country reviews on apprenticeships* project.

Cedefop would like to acknowledge the Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini research team who conducted preliminary analysis and drafted their findings under the coordination of international expert Bert-Jan Buiskool.

Special thanks are also due to the members of the national panel of experts, drawn from national authorities, who provided valuable input into understanding the system in French-speaking Belgium and discussion on project findings.

Contents

Foreword	6
Acknowledgments	9
Executive summary	14
1. Introduction	22
1.1. Cedefop flash TCRs on apprenticeships	22
1.2. Cedefop flash TCRs on apprenticeships in French-speaking Belgium	24
2. Apprenticeship scheme within upper secondary VET	30
2.1. Institutional landscape in Belgium-FR: VET structures and players	30
2.1.1. The upper secondary education subsystem: organisation and certificates	31
2.1.2. The upper secondary vocational training subsystem: organisation and certificates	32
2.1.3. Governance of the two sub-schemes	33
2.1.4. Participation	36
2.2. Harmonisation of apprenticeship sub-schemes: work in progress	37
3. Challenges to realising the potential benefits of <i>Formation en Alternance</i>	44
3.1. The impact of incomplete reform on the scheme	44
3.1.1. Aim of the reform	44
3.1.2. The common contract	45
3.1.3. The training plan	47
3.1.4. Company accreditation	47
3.2. Function, identity and value	48
3.2.1. Unclear function and identity of both sub-schemes	49
3.2.2. Lack of transparency in the value of the corresponding certificates	50

3.3. Competition and cooperation	53
3.3.1. Competition	53
3.3.2. Cooperation between employers and companies	56
3.4. Conclusions	58
4. Rethinking the apprenticeship scheme in French-speaking Belgium	62
4.1. Mid- and long-term scenario: work on the vision	62
4.2. Short-term scenario: improvements to existing sub-schemes	63
4.2.1. Improve certificate transparency	63
4.2.2. Improve cooperation between stakeholders	64
4.3. Conclusions	66
Abbreviations	68
References	70
Websites	72
Annex	73

List of tables, boxes and figures

Tables

Table 1. Main stakeholders in alternance	35
Table 2. Differences between the vocational education alternance sub-scheme (CEFA) and the vocational training alternance sub-scheme (IFAPME and SFPME)	40

Boxes

Box 1. The role of the panel of experts	24
Box 2. Key terms and concepts used in the report	26
Box 3. Drivers of competition between CEFA, IFAPME, and SFPME	53
Box 4. Examples of cooperation between providers and with companies	64





Executive summary

Executive summary

Cedefop conducted the flash thematic country review in French-speaking Belgium from October 2017 to October 2018, with the contribution of a national panel of experts independently appointed by Cedefop from among Belgian authorities responsible for apprenticeships ⁽⁴⁾. The study focuses on French-speaking Belgium, covering Wallonia and Brussels-Capital. The wide range of stakeholders interviewed, allows this review to provide evidence at both the implementation and institution levels (51 and 29 interviews respectively).

In French-speaking Belgium, apprenticeships at upper secondary level are delivered via the scheme *Formation en Alternance* (Alternance Training). This is organised in two sub-schemes, one in the vocational education subsystem and another in the vocational training subsystem: alternance education (*enseignement secondaire en alternance*), i.e. vocational education, which combines general and/or vocational training in a school with occupational practice in the workplace (in the upper secondary vocational education subsystem); and alternance training (also called *formation en alternance*) ⁽⁵⁾, i.e. vocational training which combines general and/or vocational training in a training centre with practice in the workplace (in the upper secondary vocational training subsystem). The former is governed by the French-speaking Community (since 2011 called Fédération Wallonia Bruxelles (FWB)) ⁽⁶⁾ and organised by the Centre for Education and Apprenticeships (CEFA); the latter is governed by the Wallonia Region and the French Community Commission (COCOF) for Brussels, and organised by the Walloon Institute of Alternance Training for Small and Medium Enterprises (IFAPME) (in Wallonia) and the Training Service for Small and

⁽⁴⁾ Members of the national panel of experts represented the Ministry of Education of Wallonia Federation, Le Forem, OFFA, IFAMPE, SFPME (see list of abbreviations).

⁽⁵⁾ The sub-scheme *formation en alternance* bears the same name as the umbrella scheme. To distinguish between the two instances, the sub-scheme will be referred to in the text as *formation en alternance/alternance training*; in contrast, the scheme will be referred to as *Formation en Alternance/Alternance Training*.

⁽⁶⁾ Since May 25, 2011 the French Community calls itself Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWB), Federation Wallonia-Brussels. The FWB comprises the French-speaking people in Wallonia and the French-speaking people in the Brussels-Capital Region. The latter are politically represented in the COCOF (Commission communautaire française – French Community Commission Brussels).

Medium Enterprises (SFPME) (in Brussels-Capital Region). In 2016, the apprenticeship scheme *Formation en Alternance* involved about 6% of all students in the upper secondary vocational training subsystem and 2.5% of students in the upper secondary vocational education subsystem.

With a view to strengthening the profile of the scheme and increasing its scale, a reform process started in 2015; the overall aim was harmonising the rules governing the two sub-schemes. Some – mostly formal – aspects of the sub-schemes have been harmonised: same age limits and access requirements, a common type of contract, overall structure of training content in the individual training plans, common company requirements (accreditation procedure) and wage setting. However, in practice, there are still considerable differences between the two sub-schemes, mainly related to how alternance is organised between the two learning venues, the duration of the apprenticeship training, and the related qualifications and certificates. For the purpose of the reform, an umbrella organisation, the Office francophone de la formation en alternance (OFFA), was created to steer the scheme *Formation en Alternance* in French-speaking Belgium.

The aim of the review was to investigate the scheme's place in the VET system ⁽⁷⁾ at upper secondary level after the 2015 reform. The review identified two broad sets of challenges, reflecting the opinions of the stakeholders interviewed.

A first set of challenges concerns the still unclear function, identity and value of the two sub-schemes and their place in the VET system and in relation to lifelong learning strategies.

First, perhaps because its implementation is still in process, the reform is not fully understood and it is not always positively assessed by stakeholders interviewed. Some VET providers claim that having the alternance contract (*contrat d'alternance*) signed only by the employer and by the apprentice shifted the power balance towards the labour market side, and restricted VET providers' room for manoeuvre to control the quality of in-company training. Some VET teachers and employers complain that the reform brought about less flexibility and more bureaucratic procedures, mainly for companies' accreditation. The looser access requirements, with VET providers having to accept enrolment also from students without a prior in-company placement, seem to have opened up the scheme to less motivated students, changing the target group and profile especially of the vocational training sub-scheme. Both employers and VET provider professionals admit

(7) The VET system includes the two subsystems: the vocational education and the vocational training.

that it is sometimes difficult to implement the individual training plans mainly because they are not tailored to the reality of a workplace, and often there is only a weak link between training at the VET provider and the training in the company. VET providers, especially CEFAs, also complain about having to manage and to be responsible for the accreditation of companies offering apprenticeship placements, by following criteria and requirements which they find too formal and not adequate for guaranteeing training quality. While the harmonisation reform aims at bringing the two sub-schemes closer one another, some interviewees expressed the opinion that these should stay separate and distinct, possibly misunderstanding the aim of the reform.

Second, there seems to be a lack of clarity about the function and identity of the apprenticeship scheme. In principle, stakeholders at the institution level agree that it should combine both education and training goals and employment goals. In practice, views and perceptions at the implementation level differ among stakeholders: some see it mainly as a means to a quicker transition from school to the labour market and also to reach government employment targets. Others consider it an opportunity for the social inclusion of young people with lower levels of cognitive competence, often from disadvantaged backgrounds or at risk of dropping out of school-based education. VET providers, learners and their parents, as well as companies, report confusion and lack of knowledge and information about the two sub-schemes. As a result, the choice of an apprenticeship training provided by CEFA or by IFAPME/SFPME depends, both for apprentices and employers, on practical circumstances or (not necessarily right) assumptions and not on the relative merits of the two sub-schemes and their providers. In many cases, the apprenticeship scheme is considered as a second choice, with low social status for students who experienced repeated failures in school-based education, or prefer acquiring practical knowledge more than theoretical knowledge.

Third, although a process of reorganisation is under way ⁽⁸⁾, there is still a multitude of certificates whose differences are not always clear, both for apprentices and companies. In particular, it is not always clear how different certificates relate to one another (in different subsystems, for example), and what is their value in accessing higher education and labour market entry. In this respect, some employers and trade union representatives interviewed stated that apprentices are often considered as relatively cheap labour and are not always hired after their training. This is especially true

⁽⁸⁾ *Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications (SFMQ)* – the French-speaking service for trades and qualifications – is steering a process of harmonisation of existing qualifications.

for apprentices with low education level, little theoretical background and poor employability skills. School-based education, which provides a higher level of vocational competence and more theoretical knowledge, is usually considered to generate better learning abilities and compensate for the lack of work experience. Other employers, though, stated that they provide apprenticeship placements with the aim of training a future worker and they see the scheme as a valuable pathway to access the labour market, especially when apprentices are willing to learn, perform well, are motivated and have a good attitude to work.

A second set of challenges concerns the issue of competition among VET providers and the need for more cooperation among them, and between them and the companies providing apprenticeship placements.

On the one hand, competition is internal between CEFA, IFAPME and SFPME in providing apprenticeship training, as they address the same pool of learners and companies, and also between *enseignement secondaire en alternance* and school-based vocational education. Competition could, in theory, improve the quality of the apprenticeship scheme; in the context of Belgium-FR, however, with two apprenticeship sub-schemes and three providers at the upper secondary level, in addition to the school-based upper secondary vocational education, it instead creates inefficiencies and non-rational use of resources, especially when the number of apprentices is limited and each provider has only small classes (so economies of scale are not realised). Stakeholders interviewed confirmed that there is tension between maintaining high quality standards for in-company training and finding or keeping companies willing to train apprentices. Competition is also external between the scheme *Formation en Alternance* and other apprenticeship schemes such as those organised within adult education centres and public employment services. Competition for in-company training places is also between apprentices and students from other parts of the education and training system that provide work-placements: school-based education (offering trainees that do not receive remuneration), higher education, and training centres of the public employment service. Although these partly serve other target groups and other purposes (such as the PES and adult education centres), they are in competition for training places in companies.

Cooperation between VET providers and employers, although clearly recognised as a relevant kind of non-financial incentive for companies, needs improvement. Stakeholders interviewed underlined the importance for VET providers and companies of working together with clear understanding of who will teach what and how learning in different venues leads to one

certificate, including training quality control and the shared assessment of apprentices. At the time of the review, however, the involvement of companies in assessment was limited, despite the large share of apprentice time spent in the company; besides there were few formal quality control mechanisms in place to assess the quality of workplace training. Interviews with VET providers revealed that their support to companies is considered by employers as too limited.

To address these challenges, based on the analysis of the field work findings, this review formulates two scenarios.

In a mid- and long-term scenario, it is recommendable to work on a clearer and shared vision on the function, identity and value of the scheme *Formation en Alternance*, by clarifying its place in the VET system and in relation to lifelong learning strategies. Policy-makers should discuss what the main policy objective and the function of the scheme are, by considering whether it can still be offered to all students, in all sectors, to achieve any qualification and gain any certificate, as was the case at the time of the review. This could result in an umbrella policy framework and overarching legislation to organise the whole VET system, where alternance be a fully fledged and positive education alternative. In the long run, a thorough reflection on the future of education and the role of employers within it, it is also necessary.

In a short-term scenario, it is possible to work on improvements of the existing sub-schemes of *Formation en Alternance* in the following ways:

- (a) first, by making certificates more transparent in both sub-schemes. A crucial element is permeability to higher education and the alignment between various certificates. Building bridges between the two sub-schemes and between general education (*enseignement de transition* providing access to higher education) and *Formation en Alternance* is of utmost importance for the young people involved;
- (b) second, by improving cooperation between stakeholders involved in the scheme: VET providers among themselves and providers with employers. Providers should make their offer for *Formation en Alternance* more transparent for all actors involved (employers, parents, young people), for example by sharing a database with all accredited employers, or establishing a one-stop shop (one desk) for information about their training offer and for guidance for students;
- (c) it also seems crucial to improve employer engagement, from the definition of the training content of *Formation en Alternance* offer based on sectoral or occupational skill needs, and their involvement in the

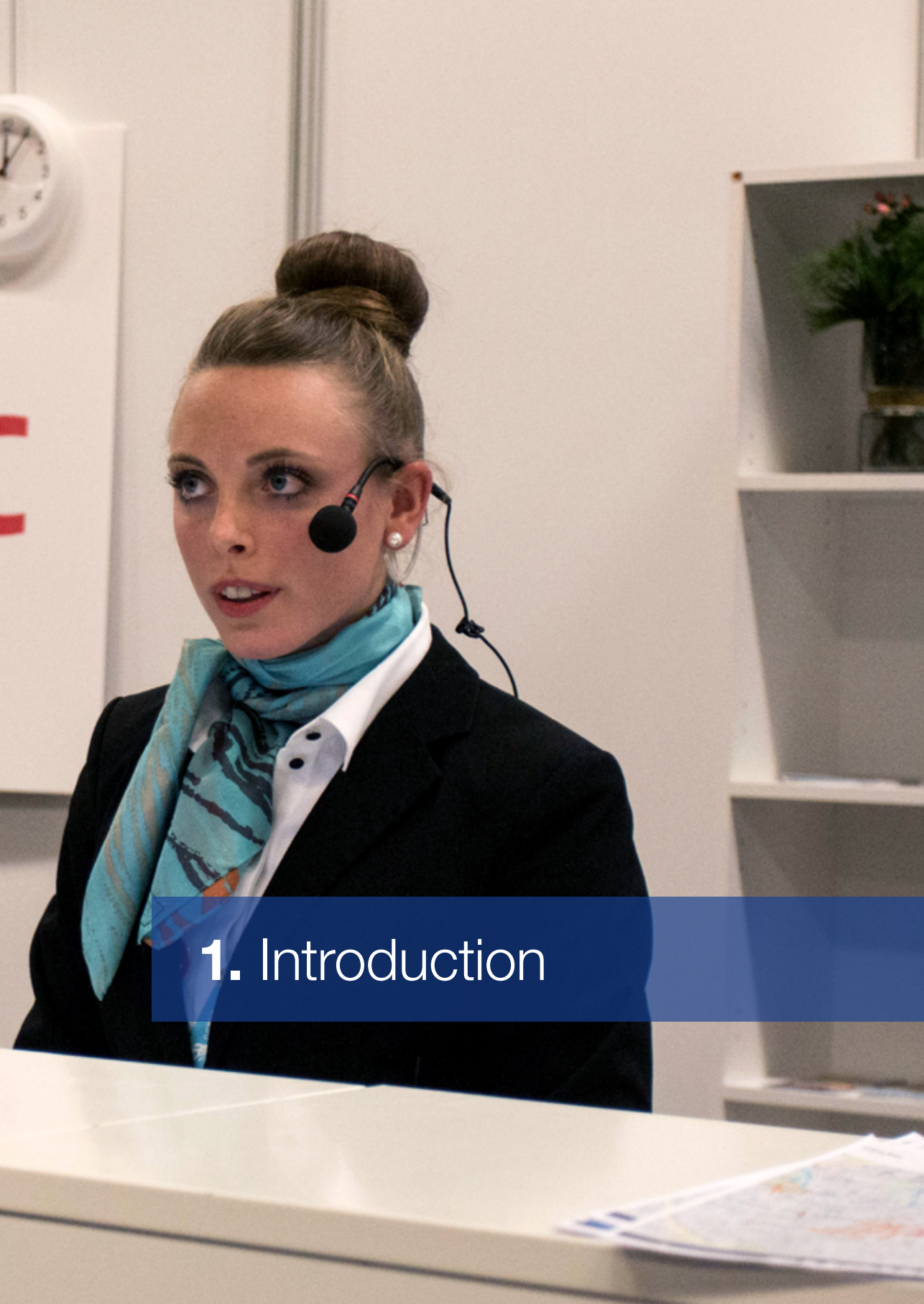
final assessment of apprentices. Employers should be able to rely on full, transparent information about the scheme and the corresponding sub-schemes and what they can expect from a CEFA, IFAPME or SFPME student;

- (d) it is of utmost importance to invest more in collaboration and concertation between companies and VET providers on the practical level. Providers could work with companies and their representative associations at sector level to set up a methodology for high-quality workplace-based training and to equip in-company tutors with the necessary tools to implement the training plan and assess apprentice learning outcomes. The existing certificate of in-company tutor could become mandatory for all companies offering placements for *formation en alternance*;
- (e) more could also be done to promote the apprenticeship scheme as an attractive choice within upper secondary VET, positively framing the scheme to (future) apprentices, as well as employers, by sharing the experience of individuals who made a career after apprenticeship training, as well as the benefits of the scheme in terms labour market outcomes.

These areas for reform and suggestions for action do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all stakeholders involved in the review. French-speaking Belgium itself will decide whether and how these would be taken forward.

A white rectangular sign is hanging from a thin wire on a light-colored wall. The sign features the word "Scandio" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. To the right of the sign, a portion of a round analog clock is visible, showing a white face with black numbers and a red needle. Below the sign, a white horizontal ledge or counter is visible, with some faint, blurry reflections on its surface.

Scandio



1. Introduction

Introduction

1.1. Cedefop flash TCRs on apprenticeships

In the context of its work to support countries that are reforming or implementing reforms of apprenticeships, and alongside the fully fledged thematic country reviews (TCRs) on apprenticeships started in 2014 ⁽⁹⁾, in 2017 Cedefop piloted the first two flash TCRs on apprenticeships, in Sweden and French-speaking Belgium.

Like the TCRs, the objective of Cedefop flash TCRs on apprenticeships is twofold:

- (a) at national level, to carry out a focused, in-depth review of the strengths and weaknesses of selected area(s) of analysis of apprenticeship systems or schemes, resulting in examples of policy- or practice-oriented solutions to tackle the recognised weaknesses and/or identification of good practices;
- (b) at the European level, to increase the evidence base which can support policy- and decision-makers in European countries at different levels in designing and implementing policies and measures for developing and/or improving quality apprenticeships; and to support cross-country comparison.

Different from the TCRs, the flash TCRs are an independent review process, steered and managed by Cedefop, which focus on selected aspects of the apprenticeship system or scheme under review. The expected result of Cedefop's flash TCRs on apprenticeships is the identification of areas for reform and suggestions for action and/or examples of policy- or practice-oriented solutions. These are based on a focused, in-depth analysis of strengths and weaknesses of specific aspects of apprenticeship systems or schemes, reflecting the opinions of the national stakeholders.

The scope of the review covers apprenticeship systems or schemes under reform or to be set up/improved. Apprenticeship as a term is understood as having the following distinguishing features:

⁽⁹⁾ www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/apprenticeships-work-based-learning [accessed 25.2.2019].

- (a) systematic long-term training, alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre that leads to a qualification;
- (b) an apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage);
- (c) the employer is responsible for the company-based part of the programme.

The methodology of the review is based on the following:

- (a) an analytical framework, which includes characteristic features present, to different extents and in different combinations, in existing apprenticeship systems or schemes (Annex 1);
- (b) a participatory and policy-learning approach through stakeholder involvement. The analysis largely relies on surveys of a wide range of stakeholders at different governance levels, from those in charge of the implementation to institution representatives. Stakeholders are interviewed during the data collection phase, with two rounds of interviews. Cedefop establishes contact with the country at national institution level, to appoint a national panel of experts (Box 1).

The flash TCRs are organised in two phases. The preliminary phase aims at setting the baseline and preparing the first survey round: establishing contacts with the country at national institution level; defining the scope of the review; preparing a country fiche; and identifying broad target groups of interviewees for round 1. During the implementation and analysis phase, stakeholders are surveyed in two consecutive rounds of interviews: the first collects information to gather the deepest understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the specific area(s) of the scheme or system under review, as reflected in the opinions of the national stakeholders in the interviews. Discussions at the appropriate governance levels focus on things that work and that do not work in priority areas; on what is missing in the current practice and what support is needed; and, if applicable, identify good practices. The second survey round builds on the findings of the first and addresses stakeholders at institution level, including policy-makers, social partners and experts, called to assess and discuss findings and propose policy- and practice-oriented solutions.

Box 1. The role of the panel of experts

The panel of experts on apprenticeships in the flash TCR country voluntarily cooperates:

- to identify the scope and focus of the review, on the basis of the Cedefop analytical framework;
- to help review the apprenticeship country fiche prepared by Cedefop;
- to help identify potential target groups for the two survey rounds and to support the contacts with the interviewees;
- to support, in a timely manner, the practical implementation of the review, for instance through in-depth discussions on the strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, solutions and policy, institutional, and organisational implications for the apprenticeship systems or schemes;
- to discuss main findings throughout the review, primarily the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship system or scheme and final policy recommendations.

Source: Cedefop.

1.2. Cedefop flash TCRs on apprenticeships in French-speaking Belgium

The overall aim of the flash TCR in French-speaking Belgium (Belgium-FR) was to provide an in-depth understanding of the apprenticeship scheme (*Formation en Alternance*). It also wished to consider the 2015 reform, which aimed at harmonising the rules governing the two corresponding sub-schemes, i.e. in vocational education (*enseignement secondaire en alternance*) and in vocational training (*formation en alternance*)⁽¹⁰⁾, offered by three training providers: CEFA for the former and IFAPME and SFPME for the latter (Section 2.1). The primary focus of the review was the scheme's place in the VET system. The national panel of experts had initially expressed interest in also exploring the training content and learning outcomes of the

⁽¹⁰⁾ The sub-scheme *formation en alternance* bears the same name as the umbrella scheme. To distinguish between the two instances, the sub-scheme will be referred to in the text as *formation en alternance/alternance training*; in contrast, the scheme will be referred to as *Formation en Alternance/Alternance Training*.

apprenticeship scheme, and the participation of and support to companies, but these areas were addressed only indirectly throughout the review.

The geographic focus of the flash TCR is French-speaking Belgium (Belgium-FR), covering Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Regions.

Desk research was initially carried out to provide a review of what is already known about the features and the implementation of the scheme under analysis ⁽¹¹⁾. Data collection commenced in January 2018 and was completed in September 2018. A total of 80 interviews with key stakeholders were carried out in two rounds, with the findings from round 1 feeding into round 2. In round 1, 51 interviews were carried out with those involved in the day-to-day running of the apprenticeship scheme, including VET providers ⁽¹²⁾: CEFA (eight), IFAPME (four) and SFPME (one), apprentices and their tutors, as well as companies. In total, 18 directors/tutors/other staff of VET providers were interviewed, 22 apprentices and 11 respondents from companies (the director or person responsible for the in-company part of the apprenticeship training). The second round of interviews ⁽²⁹⁾ focused mainly at the institution level ⁽¹³⁾, developing a picture of the apprenticeship scheme across Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Region.

This report starts, in Chapter 2, by presenting the institutional and legal framework of the scheme *Formation en Alternance* at upper secondary level. Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the challenges identified during the review. This was the basis for Cedefop's formulation of the policy pointers presented in Chapter 4, which the country might consider for enhancing the scheme *Formation en Alternance*.

⁽¹¹⁾ A detailed description is available in the online Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes: [Belgium-FR country fiche](#); and related apprenticeship scheme fiche [links accessed on 12.12.2018].

⁽¹²⁾ The selection of VET providers was balanced among smaller and larger centres, centres in urban and rural areas, centres with a large number of apprentices.

⁽¹³⁾ Interviewees represented: VET providers: IFAPME, SFPME and the education networks; institutions playing a role in the harmonisation of the apprenticeship scheme; Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for economy and employment and Member of the Board of the [French Community Commission](#) (COCOF), responsible for vocational training; the Cabinet of the Vice-President of the Walloon Government and Minister of Economy, Industry, Research, Innovation, Digital, Employment and Training; the Cabinet of the Minister of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, responsible for Education; Public Employment Services (Forem); the unions CSC and FGTB; the employers organisations UCM, Alimento (services managed by the social partners in the food industry), Agoria (cluster of technology-inspired companies), Constructive (Belgian sectoral fund for the construction sector), Cefora (the training centre founded by the social partners in Belgium with the aim of promoting training and employment for the clerks from the companies involved), UWE; independent experts.

Box 2. Key terms and concepts used in the report

Alternance in vocational training in Belgium-FR (*formation en alternance*): combines one to two days per week basic training for a trade in a training centre (general and profession-related knowledge and practical skills) with training on the work floor; most of the training takes place on the work floor.

Alternance in vocational education in Belgium-FR (*enseignement secondaire en alternance*): the same kind of training as in alternance in vocational training but organised within the education system with the main difference that the young people receive two days of technical and general courses and work in the company during the other days.

Apprenticeship is systematic, long-term training alternating periods in the workplace and in an education institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the apprentice with training leading to a specific occupation. In this report apprenticeship is used to indicate the scheme *Formation en Alternance* as a whole and the IFAPME/SFPME sub-scheme.

Apprenticeship scheme it is a set of rules and regulations about how this type of training should be designed, delivered, assessed, certified as well as governed. Such schemes can be applicable to different apprenticeship training programmes (according to the sector of the programme, its duration) and result in different types of qualification (according to their level, name).

An **occupational profile** is the detailed description of all the activities an occupation consists of, together with a description of the competences required to execute the activities.

A **training profile** defines the learning outcomes that need to be acquired to develop the professional competences described in the occupational profile.

The **curriculum** includes the definition of learning objectives, content, methods (including assessment), material, and arrangements to train teachers and trainers.

Certificate: the certificate that is obtained after completing a training/education module. The French-speaking part of Belgium differentiates (Parlement de la Communauté française, 2016):

- **certification:** formal result of an evaluation and validation process obtained when a competent authority establishes that an individual has achieved, at the end of an education, training or skills validation process, the requirements to satisfy a given standard;
- **certification of education:** certification consisting of a coherent and significant set of learning outcomes aimed at personal development, the pursuit of studies or training, access to professional life;
- **professional certification:** certification consisting of a coherent and significant set of learning outcomes aimed at further training, insertion or retention on the labour market or professional specialisation; the professional certification may, if necessary, also allow the continuation or the resumption of studies by validating the skills acquired in vocational training.

VET includes both vocational education and vocational training subsystems.

VET providers: in Belgium-FR they are CEFA, IFAPME and SFPME.

Vocational education: general education combined with vocational training and organised within the formal educational sub-system.

Vocational training: formal training offer aimed at preparing for a specific profession and access to the labour market, parallel to the educational subsystem.

Source: Cedefop.





2. Apprenticeship scheme within upper secondary VET

Apprenticeship scheme within upper secondary VET

In French, the apprenticeship scheme at upper secondary level is referred to as *formation en alternance* ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Other existing apprenticeship schemes, as for example apprenticeships in vocational education courses within adult education (cf. *promotion sociale*), or training for jobseekers and apprenticeships in higher education (*enseignement supérieur en alternance*) ⁽¹⁵⁾, are outside of the scope of this study.

2.1. Institutional landscape in Belgium-FR: VET structures and players

Belgium is a federal State consisting of three regions – Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region ⁽¹⁶⁾ – and three communities: the Flemish-, the French- and the German-speaking ⁽¹⁷⁾. The regions have powers in fields connected with their region or territory, including economy, employment, supervision of the provinces, municipalities and inter-municipality utility companies. Communities hold powers connected to the individual and are based on language, which directly connected with the individual.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The sub-scheme in the vocational training sub-system is also called *formation en alternance* (see footnote 10).

⁽¹⁵⁾ More info at www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26521

⁽¹⁶⁾ The French-speaking Community since 2011 is called Fédération Wallonia Bruxelles, (FWB). In Flanders, the Government and the Parliament of the Flemish Region ‘merged’ with the Government and Parliament of the Flemish Community. In practice, therefore, only one Government and one Parliament exist in Flanders. Conversely, the French-speaking Community maintained the separation between the bodies of the French Community and those of the Walloon and Brussels Regions.

⁽¹⁷⁾ The Flemish Community unites the inhabitants of Flanders and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. The French Community encompasses the inhabitants of the French-speaking area of Wallonia and the French-speaking inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region. The German-speaking Community includes the inhabitants of the German-speaking area of Wallonia.

Education ⁽¹⁸⁾ (including vocational education) is an exclusive competence of the three linguistic communities, since these are also issues linked to individuals, while vocational training is exclusive competence of the three regions. Each community and region is responsible for financing and organising its education and training systems, including the definition of programmes and reference systems and the certification process. The federal Government of Belgium has residual competences in education and training:

- (a) determination of the age at which education is compulsory (6 to 18 years) is a federal competence. Full-time education is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 15 ⁽¹⁹⁾. Schooling is compulsory in all communities to the age of 18 ⁽²⁰⁾ for young people in part-time education;
- (b) social security is a federal competence; within the social security legislation there is an official definition of apprentices (*apprentis*) used by the federal authorities (Annex 2). Authorities and providers, who are organising or offering *alternance* training, need to comply with social security regulations.

The geographic scope of this report is French-speaking Belgium, covering Wallonia and Brussels-Capital Region.

In French-speaking Belgium the scheme *Formation en Alternance* is organised in two sub-schemes, with different historical backgrounds and different legal frameworks:

- (a) the alternance education sub-scheme in the upper secondary education subsystem, governed by FWB and organised by CEFA;
- (b) the alternance training sub-scheme in the upper secondary vocational training subsystem, governed by the Walloon Region and by COCOF ⁽²¹⁾ for the French-speakers in Brussels; it is organised by IFAPME (in Wallonia) and SFPME (in Brussels).

2.1.1. The upper secondary education subsystem: organisation and certificates

Upper secondary education in French-speaking Belgium exists in four components:

⁽¹⁸⁾ Education comprises all levels: preschools, primary school, secondary school, higher education outside university, university, adult education.

⁽¹⁹⁾ The upper threshold of 15 years of age applies if the student has followed two different years in education; otherwise, the upper limit is 16 years, under no other condition.

⁽²⁰⁾ The student may leave school at the age of 17, after the end of the school year, if he or she turns 18 years old by 31st December of the same year.

⁽²¹⁾ See list of abbreviations.

- (a) general education;
- (b) technical education;
- (c) artistic education;
- (d) vocational education.

Through these forms, two distinct streams are recognised, linked to different types of certificates:

- (a) *enseignement de transition* (transitional mainstream education), which prepares pupils to continue their studies up to higher education, while offering opportunities of starting out in working life. On completing their studies, pupils are awarded an upper secondary education certificate (*certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur*, CESS);
- (b) *enseignement de qualification* (vocational education), which prepares pupils to start out on their working life while allowing them to continue their studies up to higher education. An upper secondary education certificate (CESS) and/or a qualification certificate (*certificat de qualification*, CQ) and/or a certificate of studies (CE6P) are awarded at the end of the course.

General education is always *enseignement de transition*, while technical and artistic education can be *enseignement de transition* or *enseignement de qualification*. Vocational education is always *enseignement de qualification*.

The alternance education sub-scheme is an alternative pathway of vocational education that allows young people to follow a number of days of theory every week at the vocational education provider and complement training in a company.

2.1.2. The upper secondary vocational training subsystem: organisation and certificates

The upper secondary vocational training subsystem in French-speaking Belgium covers only vocational training, unlike the upper secondary education subsystem.

The alternance training sub-scheme is one pathway of the vocational training subsystem that allows young people to follow a number of days of theory every week at the vocational training provider and complement his/her training in a company. Depending on the occupation profile and the level of entry, duration ranges from one year to three years and up to six.

The certificates that can be achieved in the vocational training subsystem are:

- (a) apprenticeship certificate (*Certificat d'apprentissage*) for most of the occupation profiles;
- (b) CQ6 for some occupation profiles;
- (c) CQ7 for a minority of occupation profiles.

2.1.3. Governance of the two sub-schemes

In French-speaking Belgium, the education subsystem is governed by FWB, while competences in the vocational training subsystem are given to Wallonia and, for the French-speakers in Brussels, to COCOF ⁽²²⁾. As a result, there are three distinct political authorities with competence for vocational education and vocational training in Belgium-FR, linked either to the communities or the regions:

- (a) the French Community or Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FWB) (French-speaking population in Wallonia and in Brussels) responsible for vocational education in Brussels-Capital Region and in the Walloon Region;
- (b) Government of Walloon Region, responsible for vocational training in the Walloon Region;
- (c) COCOF (French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region – French-speaking population in Brussels) responsible for vocational training in Brussels-Capital Region.

The scheme is organised via:

- (a) the Centres d'éducation et de formation en alternance (CEFA) in Walloon Region and Brussels-Capital Region;
- (b) the Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises (IFAPME) in Walloon Region;
- (c) the Espace formation PME (SFPME) in Brussels-Capital Region.

CEFA are the centres that provide alternance within the education subsystem in the French-speaking Community (Federation Wallonia-Brussels). CEFA are always administratively attached to a secondary school and work as a structure common to several secondary schools, which organise technical or vocational education. However, CEFA are only in charge of the alternance education sub-scheme. There are 43 CEFA centres

⁽²²⁾ See list of abbreviations.

in total, of which five are in Brussels ⁽²³⁾ and 38 in Wallonia ⁽²⁴⁾. Some CEFA are active in more than one province and each CEFA has multiple locations within provinces. CEFA can belong to any education network ⁽²⁵⁾ and they are in charge of accrediting the training companies.

IFAPME is a vocational training provider for SMEs in the French-speaking area of the Walloon Region, with strong centralised management and organisation. From an administrative point of view, it is a regional public service. It was historically built on a private basis in collaboration with the employers' organisation and was later split into two separate institutions, IFAPME and SFPME.

IFAPME has created a network of regional services and training centres ⁽²⁶⁾ that work hand-in-hand with each other:

- (a) the IFAPME training centres are the most visible face of the network. These centres organise only IVET courses in alternance training, the related evaluations and examinations. The centres were established as non-profit organisations. They are spread over 16 sites throughout Wallonia. There are eight of them and they have autonomy of operation, under the rules established by the Walloon government and IFAPME. IFAPME also offers free information and training sessions for tutors supervised by a teacher and stakeholders from the IFAPME network ⁽²⁷⁾;
- (a) the purpose of the IFAPME regional services is very different. They are local decentralisations of the Walloon administration. No apprenticeship contract can be concluded without the intervention of regional service staff. They are also in charge of accrediting companies. Apprentices are in contact with an IFAPME service to manage their contracts and with a centre for everything related to their courses.

SFPME works under the umbrella of the COCOP and is responsible for: subsidies, coordination and accreditation of the training centre ⁽²⁸⁾; the

⁽²³⁾ List of CEFA in Brussels: http://ccfee.be/fr/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=72:cefa-cza&Itemid=257

⁽²⁴⁾ List of CEFA in Wallonia: http://enseignement.catholique.be/segec/index.php?q1=&qq=&qqq=&q=TRI=1&code_option=&f=3&det=1&id=1762&TYPE=2

⁽²⁵⁾ In the French Community, there are three education networks: public education managed by the Community, government-aided public education run by municipalities or provinces; government-aided private education, typically catholic schools or alternative schools which apply specific teaching methods.

⁽²⁶⁾ More information about IFAPME: www.ifapme.be/decouvrir-l-ifapme/l-ifapme-en-wallonie.html

⁽²⁷⁾ More information: www.ifapme.be/tutorat.html

⁽²⁸⁾ In Brussels, there is only one SFPME vocational training centre, the EFP spread over several locations. SFPME is competent for every student enrolled in EFPME training centre (French-speaking or not) and for all apprentices who sign a contract with a company located in the

development of training standards, valid only in Brussels, and training tools; the support of apprentices by ensuring that alternance is run smoothly in companies; and the accreditation of training companies.

Table 1 provides an overview of the main stakeholders in relation to the apprenticeship scheme, be it in the vocational education subsystem or in the vocational training subsystem.

Table 1. Main stakeholders in alternance

Political authority	For vocational education in Wallonia + Brussels: French Community (FWB)	For vocational training:	
		In Wallonia: Region	In Brussels: COCOF
Provider	CEFA	IFAPME	SFPME
Sub-scheme	<i>enseignement secondaire en alternance (alternating education)</i> ⁽¹⁾ : vocational education that combines general education in a school and professional practice in the workplace	<i>formation en alternance (alternating training)</i> ⁽²⁾ : vocational training which combines general and/or vocational training in a training centre with vocational training in the workplace	

⁽¹⁾ Communauté française (1991).

⁽²⁾ Conseil régional wallon (2003).

Source: Cedefop.

Vocational qualifications achievable in vocational education and vocational training for the French-speaking part of Belgium are developed by the *Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications* (SFMQ) (French-speaking service for trades and qualifications). SFMQ brings together the main VET stakeholders: the public employment services (PES), the social partners, all VET providers, the operators for socio-professional integration ⁽²⁹⁾, the Skills Validation Consortium (*Consortium de validation des compétences*, CVDC) for Belgium-FR.

The objectives of the SFMQ are ⁽³⁰⁾;

territory of Brussels-Capital. More information about EFP of SFPME: <https://ccfee.be/fr/alternance-a-bruxelles/efpme-sfpme>

⁽²⁹⁾ Centres d'insertion socio-professionnelle (CISP) and organismes d'insertion socio-professionnelle (OISP).

⁽³⁰⁾ More information at: www.sfmq.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1554

- (a) to create occupational profiles (basis for all vocational education and vocational training provision) that reflect the reality of occupations;
- (b) to create training profiles that correspond to the occupational profiles and thus ensure the consistency of the relevant training with the needs of the labour market;
- (c) to provide education and training providers with common training profiles and to allow permeability between education and training providers, ensuring that learners' prior learning is taken into account and helps promote their mobility;
- (d) to establish a link between the profiles and the structures of the PES and to improve consistency between the education and training system and job offers;
- (e) to have common references and language for all partners: social partners, public employment services, and vocational education and training providers and professionals.

2.1.4 Participation

About 48% of students in upper secondary education in French-speaking Belgium are enrolled in vocational education (115 018 out of 239 780), either in the full-time vocational secondary education stream or in *enseignement secondaire en alternance* (Section 2.1). If we consider the students in CEFA plus the students in IFAPME and SFPME, we can say that approximately 6.4% of learners in upper secondary vocational education and 13% of learners in vocational training are in *formation en alternance* ⁽³¹⁾. Yet, there is high variation among providers: in the school year 2015/16, CEFA learners (9 376) represented circa 61% of all learners in *Formation en Alternance*, over 9% of VET students and 4% of students in upper secondary education (Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Administration générale de l'Enseignement, 2017) ⁽³²⁾. Although data are not directly comparable, as they refer to different time periods, IFAPME and EFPME learners generally represent the remaining 39% of all learners in *Formation en Alternance*.

⁽³¹⁾ Figures for February 2016:

- 124 762 students enrolled in the transition full-time education
- 99 677 students enrolled in the qualification stream (VET, fulltime education)
- 15 341 students enrolled in *Formation en Alternance* of whom:
 - 9 376 in CEFA
 - 223 in IFAPME (31.12.2016)
 - 742 in EFPME (31.12.2014).

⁽³²⁾ For more information, see data in IFAPME (2017), p. 9 and ff. and in Bassin EFE (2016).

Across Belgium, the share of students aged 15 to 19 following a VET programme is 60%, higher than in Belgium-FR and the EU average of 47% ⁽³³⁾. But the share of IVET students that participated in combined school and workplace-based learning is much lower (6.4%) than the estimated EU average (28%) ⁽³⁴⁾.

2.2. Harmonisation of apprenticeship sub-schemes: work in progress

A process of harmonisation of the two sub-schemes of *Formation en Alternance* started since the school year 2015/16, with the aim of streamlining its complexity; it is about to be concluded. Within this process, the three political authorities with competence for education/training in Belgium-FR concluded a framework cooperation agreement on *Formation en Alternance* on 24 October 2008 which was modified by an addendum dated 27 March 2014. Nearly seven years later, in July 2015, three decrees were approved, one at each level of power, implementing the framework cooperation agreement on *formation en alternance*. The most important innovation in the agreement is that the same rules apply to the two sub-schemes – *enseignement en alternance* and *formation en alternance* – independently of the provider, i.e. for apprentices and companies working with CEFA and for IFAPME or SFPME alike; for example, rules about working conditions, access requirements, company accreditation and incentives. The agreement also laid the basis for the creation of a new institution: *Office francophone de la formation en alternance* (OFFA), (see more information about this body in Annex 2) ⁽³⁵⁾.

OFFA is the body in charge of steering and coordinating *Formation en Alternance* in Belgium-FR. The board of directors of OFFA is composed of representatives of vocational education and vocational training, and

⁽³³⁾ See indicator 1010 (IVET students as a percentage of all upper secondary students) in Cedefop (2017).

⁽³⁴⁾ See indicator 1020 (students in work-based upper secondary IVET) in Cedefop (2017).

⁽³⁵⁾ Although not formally linked to alternance, it is worth mentioning that in 2017 the same signatories of the framework cooperation agreement on *Formation en Alternance* signed a pact covering only education, called *Pacte d'excellence*. The aim of the pact is to strengthen the quality of education for all students by postponing the choice between general and vocational education at the end of the third year of secondary education, instead of the second year as was previously the case. However, the Pacte d'excellence says little if anything about alternance as a valued study option.

representatives of unions and employers' organisations from both Brussels and Wallonia. Its functions and role are essential to both strategic and design levels of alternance, as well as at the implementation level.

A number of features have been harmonised between the two sub-schemes, as provided by CEFA and IFAPME/SFPME.

Both sub-schemes are part of compulsory education and target the same population, i.e. all young people aged 15 to 25. They are also open to students from age 15 who have completed at least the first two years of upper secondary education, until 18 or, if they have not finished their compulsory education by the age of 18, until 25 (and 364 days).

Students do not need to have signed a contract to enrol in alternance at CEFA, IFAPME and SFPME. Before the reform, mostly in CEFA ⁽³⁶⁾ the young person had more than three months following enrolment with a VET provider to find a company placement; those who did not find one were sent back to fully school-based vocational education.

In both sub-schemes, irrespective of the VET provider with whom the student is enrolled, alternance is underpinned by a common alternance contract signed by the company and the young person. The VET provider supervises the signature and receives a copy: in the old system the VET provider was one of the signatories. This contract stipulates rules for remuneration, working hours, days off, benefits, social security, insurance and includes the training plan, which is drafted by the VET provider. In practice, though, along with the common contract, VET provider-specific contracts – signed by the company, the VET provider and the apprentice – that existed in the past are still used, although rarely. These are: socio-professional integration contracts (*contrats d'insertions socio-professionnelle* – CISP) specific to CEFA, and the alternance contracts specific to the SFPME and the IFAPME).

The content of *formation en alternance* provision always combines technical, theoretical and practical courses related to the final qualification, with general education: French, mathematics, commerce, law.

The individual training plan should always mention the apprentice's learning path and skills to be acquired, both through in-company training and training organised by the VET provider. The individual training plan is divided into three levels of competence, A, B, and C, where A is the lower level. The transition from one level to another is subject to approval of the apprentice and company, done by the teachers or trainers at the VET providers and it is linked to increase in remuneration.

⁽³⁶⁾ The same practice was sometimes followed in IFAPME, which minimises the novelty of the reform for IFAPME on this point.

Apprentice remuneration is determined by competence level. The learner receives monthly remuneration, fixed at the time of signing the alternance contract, that progresses as the level increases. As of 1 September 2018, the minimum ⁽³⁷⁾ monthly gross amounts are:

- (a) for a learner at level A: EUR 270.94 (17% of RMMMGM) ⁽³⁸⁾;
- (b) for a learner at level B: EUR 382.51 (24% of the RMMMGM);
- (c) for a learner at level C: EUR 510.02 (32% of the RMMMGM).

Neither of the sub-schemes normally allows direct access to higher education, except where the apprentice aims at achieving a CESS (upper secondary education certificate) ⁽³⁹⁾. However, apprentices may access entrepreneurship training in IFAPME or SFPME (*formation chef d'entreprise*), which could be considered as higher education or as further training after upper secondary school.

All VET providers should verify, before a contract is concluded, that companies applying to provide Alternance Training placements meet the anticipated accreditation requirements, including having a tutor who has the competence to train an apprentice (each VET provider accredits the training companies with which it works). The VET provider checks again after the contract is concluded, also to ensure that the training plan is implemented and that proper equipment is available to the apprentice.

Employers' rights and obligations related to the content of contracts (working time, holidays, illness, injuries, contract termination provisions, social security contributions, and wages) are legally stipulated. Apprentices' working conditions are regulated in a federal law of 1971, according to which an apprentice is considered a regular worker like any other. Obligations regarding content and quality of the in-company training are stipulated in the individual contracts. OFFA drafted a vade mecum to provide information and clarifications on rights and obligations to apprentices, companies, providers, institutions, the public in general. This vade mecum ⁽⁴⁰⁾ foresees the following obligations for companies:

⁽³⁷⁾ Entrepreneurs who wish to grant their learners higher wages are free to do so. However, apprentice remuneration is cumulated with family allocations within certain limits: a higher remuneration for the apprentice can mean a lower income for the family.

⁽³⁸⁾ RMMMGM stands for *revenu minimum mensuel moyen garanti*: guaranteed minimal average monthly income.

⁽³⁹⁾ In CEFA, only a minority (around 20% of the learners) obtain this certificate (CESS). Learners in vocational education may get the CESS certificate mostly if they do an extra year and pass their exams.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ OFFA (2007).

- (a) make sure that the apprentice receives the training plan so that he or she is well prepared for the intermediary assessment;
- (b) prepare the apprentice for the execution of the profession of his choosing;
- (c) make sure the apprentice is integrated in the company;
- (d) give the apprentice tasks that are related to the training plan and to the profession of his/her choice, safeguard his/her health and personal integrity;
- (e) take care of the necessary insurances for the apprentice;
- (f) respect legislation and regulations on apprentice status;
- (g) train the apprentice for the requested number of hours and weeks;
- (h) pay remuneration to the apprentice.

Several differences, though, still exist among the two alternance sub-schemes (in vocational education and in vocational training), as summarised by Table 2.

Table 2. Differences between the vocational education alternance sub-scheme (CEFA) and the vocational training alternance sub-scheme (IFAPME and SFPME)

Scheme	Enseignement secondaire en alternance (alternating education) ⁽¹⁾	Formation en alternance (alternating training) ⁽²⁾
Provider	CEFA	IFAPME/SFPME
Ratio time spent in a training centre/ workplace weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • three or four days in company • 15 hours at CEFA (eight if only qualification certificate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four days in company • eight hours in a IFAPME/SFPME centre (12 hours in 1st year)
Duration	Depending on starting level and the purpose of training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mainly two years • up to six years 	Depending on starting level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mainly three years • up to six years

Scheme	Enseignement secondaire en alternance (alternating education) ⁽¹⁾	Formation en alternance (alternating training) ⁽²⁾
Provider	CEFA	IFAPME/SFPME
Training content and learning outcomes	<p>Two options ⁽³⁾:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternating education which aims at the same learning outcomes and certifications as full-time vocational education (Article 49); • alternating education based on occupational profiles and training profiles (Article 45). 	<p>In the training centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical, theoretical and practical courses related to the profession based on occupational profiles and training profiles; • general knowledge courses: French, mathematics, commerce, law, contemporary world.
Certificates that may be awarded by each VET provider	<p>In CEFA, it is possible to achieve three levels of Article 49 certificate: Certificate of sixth year of studies of vocational secondary education (<i>CE6P, Certificat d'études de sixième année de l'enseignement secondaire professionnel</i>), (indirectly ⁽⁴⁾) Certificate of upper secondary education (<i>CESS, Certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur</i>) Qualification certificate for the sixth/seventh year of study (<i>Certificat de qualification de sixième/septième année</i>). These are equivalent to EQF level 3 or 4. And Article 45 certificates, which are recognised by the professional community but not equivalent to Article 49 certificates ⁽⁵⁾: Vocational skills certificate (ACP, <i>Attestation de compétences professionnelles</i>) Specific vocational certification (<i>CQS, Certificat de qualification spécifique</i>).</p>	<p>In IFAPME and SFPME it is possible to achieve the following certificates, which are apprenticeship-specific, i.e. they cannot be delivered by other schemes ⁽⁶⁾:</p> <p>Certificate of apprenticeship (<i>Certificat d'apprentissage</i>), which allows the apprentice to enter the labour market quickly and validly and also to continue training in the IFAPME entrepreneurship course ⁽⁷⁾.</p> <p>Certificate of Apprenticeship (<i>Certificat d'apprentissage</i>) corresponding to the qualification certificate for full-time education (<i>Certificat de Qualification de l'enseignement de plein exercice, CQ</i>), only for some courses ⁽⁸⁾.</p> <p>This certificate gives additional possibilities, including the access, via social promotion or full-time education, to training units allowing to obtain the certificate of higher secondary education (CESS) which authorises entry into higher education.</p>

⁽¹⁾ Conseil de la Communauté française (1997).

⁽²⁾ Conseil régional wallon (2003).

- (³) Conseil de la Communauté française (1997). It defines the priority tasks of basic education and secondary education and organising the structures to achieve them; we speak about 'alternance Article 49' and 'alternance Article 45'.
- (⁴) Learners in vocational education, including in enseignement secondaire en alternance, may get the CESS certificate mostly if they do an extra year and pass their exams.
- (⁵) More information in Conseil de la Communauté française (1997) and at:
www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23823
- (⁶) See: www.ifapme.be/formation-apprentissage.html#c15047
- (⁷) IFAPME provides an entrepreneurship programme, which is a management course for future self-employed. This programme has a long tradition and is reputable as the programme one should follow to become an independent, self-employed skilled worker. The programme also improves the skills of those who become employees in management roles in small and medium-sized enterprises.
- (⁸) Hairdresser, baker, tiler, coach work repairer, retailer, roofer, aestheticians, central heating installer, sanitary and plumbing contractor, mason and concrete worker, car mechanic, carpenter, plasterer, restorer (1 September 2015).

Source: Cedefop.

A man and a woman are working together in a workshop. The man, on the left, has blonde hair and a beard, wearing a blue jacket over a plaid shirt. The woman, on the right, has brown hair tied back, wears safety glasses and a plaid shirt. They are both looking down at a small object the man is holding. In the background, there are blue and green gas cylinders and various tools on a workbench.

3. Challenges to realising the potential benefits of *Formation en Alternance*

Challenges to realising the potential benefits of *Formation en Alternance*

Based on the information provided by stakeholders in the two rounds of interviews, this chapter analyses the main challenges the scheme is facing, which reflect broader challenges at system level. The evidence provided is indicative – since it is based on a modest number of interviews – but is nonetheless able to provide valuable insights into thinking about possible actions (Chapter 4) to improve the scheme (its function, identity, and value) and cooperation between stakeholders.

3.1. The impact of incomplete reform on the scheme

The reform process (Section 2.2) aims at harmonising the two sub-schemes to ensure similar conditions and comparability, necessary for the purpose of mobility between the two sub-schemes and more generally between the two subsystems. Some – mostly formal – aspects of the scheme have been harmonised, the more important ones being the introduction of a common type of contract and related contractual aspects, a common overall structure of the training plan, and same criteria for company accreditation by VET providers. The harmonisation of these aspects seems to trigger both positive and negative reactions, particularly from the VET providers, as illustrated below.

3.1.1. Aim of the reform

The complexity of *Formation en Alternance* in French-speaking Belgium, mostly due to the existence of different providers, promotes competition at various levels:

- (a) between providers of vocational education (CEFA) and providers in vocational training (IFAPME/SFPME), since all three organise education and training in alternance;

- (b) between CEFA administratively attached to schools of different educational networks ⁽⁴¹⁾ but present in the same municipality (or area);
- (c) between French-speaking and Dutch-speaking providers, especially in Brussels where both language groups with their own structures live next to each other, but also in neighbouring municipalities, where French-speaking pupils can take part in Dutch speaking centres and vice versa.

The harmonisation reform aims at ensuring that the two sub-schemes function according to the same rules. The opinions of some interviewees suggest that there is confusion in relation to the purpose and effects of the reform, which is sometimes understood about merging the two sub-schemes.

The VET professionals interviewed see advantages in having two different sub-schemes, in that each provider has its own strengths, pedagogical vision, didactical approach, types of trainers, number of training days in the centre, and types of certificate. In theory, this should increase the possibility of finding the best match between providers and apprentices. However, interviews suggest that many VET professionals working in one sub-scheme have ideas about the other scheme that may not necessarily be correct. For example, some VET teachers believe that there are still differences in the sub-scheme elements that were harmonised by the reform. They think, for instance, that different rules apply to remuneration and requirements to be a tutor in the workplace. A few among the interviewees from CEFA have the impression that the changes were tailored more to IFAPME than to CEFA, and that the former has more freedom in interpreting the rules; this is not confirmed by evidence.

3.1.2. The common contract

All stakeholders interviewed assessed positively the harmonisation of some formal aspects of the scheme: the contract (*contrat d'alternance*) which includes a training plan; the setting of remuneration by level of competence across all providers; the status of the apprentice (employee); holidays, days of leave; and trial period. Since the formal aspects of the two sub-schemes are harmonised, apprentices and employers should be able to base their choice between IFAPME/EFPME and CEFA on aspects such as pedagogical concepts and didactic approaches.

However, some VET providers claim that having the contract signed only by the apprentice and the employer ⁽⁴²⁾ has changed the power balance

⁽⁴¹⁾ See footnote 25.

⁽⁴²⁾ VET providers now sign only the training plan, while they used to sign the alternance contracts too.

between training providers and companies, moving it towards the labour market side. As the training centres are no longer contracting parties, they have (or perceive) less room and flexibility to control the quality of the apprenticeship provision and how the training plan is implemented.

Since the reform, students who want to enrol in the alternance vocational training sub-scheme (IFAPME or SFPME) do not need to have signed a contract with a company before enrolling in an IFAPME or SFPME training centre ⁽⁴³⁾. This admission requirement, apparently looser compared to the past, seems to allow access to IFAPME and SFPME to less motivated young people or disorientated ones, while these training centres claim that they used to attract 'stronger' students, including young people with the ambition of becoming entrepreneurs ⁽⁴⁴⁾. To meet the different needs of students, IFAPME or SFPME have to organise ad hoc classes and training (such as on how to search for a contract or to present themselves in the company), and set up accompanying measures, as well as creating new functions dedicated to students with particular needs. This may have resulted in changed balance of power between the vocational training subsystem and labour market side.

Some VET provider professionals (teachers) perceive the reform as bringing about a loss of flexibility in the scheme. The procedures required before the learner can actually start his/her training in the company seem to be more lengthy and rigid (accreditation, drafting a contract that includes a training plan, social security measures) when it would be important to respond quickly to the demand of employers for apprentices.

Employers also said that the new rules are not always advantageous for companies, which have expectations that the scheme be flexible enough to be adapted to upcoming demands or changes in the labour market and in their companies.

Further, the harmonisation generated uncertainty about how the new rules for the scheme work among training centre professionals (of all providers in both sub-schemes). It is difficult for them to give correct information to the apprentices, their parents and to employers, despite the supporting documentation provided by OFFA ⁽⁴⁵⁾. For example, VET provider

⁽⁴³⁾ Students never needed a prior in-company to access CEFA courses. The same practice, though, was sometimes followed in IFAPME too. This minimises the novelty of the reform for IFAPME on this point.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ See footnote 7 in Table 2.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ OFFA receives questions from training providers, companies, learners, parents, institutions, universities, and the general public.

professionals expressed doubts about aspects that, although they were not regulated before and now are regulated, are unclear such as:

- (a) how to determine the duration of the alternance contract?
- (b) who determines the competence level of the student (which is necessary to determine the remuneration) and how?
- (c) how exactly should one interpret the rules regarding holidays, etc.?
- (d) who is allowed to be a tutor in the workplace?
- (e) who may end the contract and how?

3.1.3. The training plan

As foreseen by the harmonisation process, the individual training plan is part of the alternance contract. All stakeholders interviewed are in favour of an individual training plan, since this should guarantee the alignment of training at the VET provider with training in the company. However, both employers and VET provider professionals admit this is sometimes difficult to realise in practice, especially due to the different speeds at which learning happens in both locations: often apprentices advance much quicker in the company than at the VET provider. As a result, there is often only a weak link between training at the VET provider and training in the company, and training plans may be standardised and not always tailored to the individual needs of apprentices.

According to teachers in VET providers, in some cases the training plan is consulted regularly and followed up. Sometimes, apprentices draw the employer's attention to the training plan, or ask teachers/trainers to elaborate on the skills to be acquired in the company. In other cases, though, the training plan is not much more than a formal document that is not really used. Much seems to depend on the willingness and motivation of the parties concerned to use it properly.

In terms of training content, companies mentioned that VET providers could work more on concrete practical cases of the sort that young people may face in companies, to stimulate their reflections in view of their placement at the workplace.

3.1.4. Company accreditation

VET providers are in charge of accrediting companies which intend to offer apprenticeship placements to their students. It is also up to the VET providers to take the initiative to withdraw a company's accreditation. In practice, accreditation is usually not withdrawn, but providers may decide

no longer to collaborate with a company and discourage apprentices to conclude an alternance contract with it.

VET providers see accreditation, as well as withdrawing it, as a too big responsibility, since teachers do not always have enough information to take such decisions. This is particularly true in the case of CEFAs, because they are education-based organisations without direct or consolidated links with companies (unlike IFAPME and SFPME). VET providers consider the criteria they have to respect for company accreditation introduced by the reform too formal (such as having the necessary organisation and equipment, respecting the regulations in force, having a 'competent' tutor without further specifying ways to prove this) and not adequate for guaranteeing training quality in the first place (for example, such criteria do not consider the alignment between training at the VET provider and in the company). Several VET providers interviewed mentioned that, in addition to the accreditation criteria, they also use their own criteria to decide whether or not they would recommend a company to their apprentices (such as by assessing the culture of the company).

VET providers also find it difficult to check whether a company is already accredited or not by other VET providers. Although one accreditation would be enough and should, in principle, be shared through OFFA, the same company may be accredited more than once, by several providers. These are reluctant to share contacts in the companies they accredit with other providers, even for the same sub-scheme, especially when apprenticeship places are difficult to find. Interviewees indicated that it often happens that a company is contacted by different providers within a few days because providers do not have a clear view of the network of companies that other providers have access to so there is confusion among employers. VET providers expressed a wish for a database with all accredited companies to be easily accessible to all ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

3.2. Function, identity and value

The interviews suggest that there is a challenge in terms of unclear function, identity and value of the scheme *Formation en Alternance*, partially linked to the incomplete harmonisation (Sections 2.2 and 3.1).

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Currently, OFFA is working on such an online database (see Annex 2 for more details); it will be available early 2019.

3.2.1. Unclear function and identity of both sub-schemes

There seems to be a lack of clarity about the function of the scheme: in principle, stakeholders at the institution level agree that it should combine both education and training goals and employment goals. In practice, views and perceptions differ among stakeholders at the implementation level. Some see it mainly as a means to a quicker transition from school to the labour market and also to reach government employment targets. Others point to the educational function and consider the scheme as an opportunity for the social inclusion of young people with lower levels of cognitive competence, often from disadvantaged backgrounds or at risk of dropping out of the education subsystem.

There is also difficulty among providers, learners and their parents, and companies in distinguishing between the two sub-schemes.

The interviews with apprentices made it clear that the choice to take up one of the sub-schemes often depends on occasional factors or on practical considerations such as the distance between home and the training centre and accessibility by public transport; it is not always based on the relative merits of the two sub-schemes and their providers. According to the interviewees, word of mouth is very important in influencing the choice of one sub-scheme or the other: most apprentices referred to their family, friends and, in some cases, teachers in school-based education when explaining how they got to know the provider where they were enrolled. Some of the apprentices compared the two sub-schemes, but in their choice is generally based on limited information and they cannot explain the differences between the two. Most of the apprentices interviewed would recommend the sub-scheme they chose to others, but they warn that it is not easy: working in a company is demanding and can be hard, and in the training centre apprentices regularly have to prove general and vocational knowledge, alongside various competences.

Employers cannot always tell the difference between the two sub-schemes. They often know only the details of the sub-scheme which their apprentices are enrolled in, and they are not able to compare it with the other sub-scheme. When asked why they selected one of the two sub-schemes, employers often referred to having been trained by that provider themselves, or their choice was based on coincidence or (not necessarily correct) assumptions about the sub-schemes and about the profile of students enrolled in one or the other.

Differences between the two sub-schemes still exist also in relation to how each provider promotes *Formation en Alternance* to attract learners.

Stakeholders from CEFA mention that alternance has great visibility in IFAPME, since it is the traditional core business of that provider and they have an efficient centralised communication service. Each CEFA, on the other hand, has to organise its own promotional activities (such as orientation days, produce leaflets, create an attractive website) and cannot benefit from promotion at a higher, more central level. CEFA centres do not share a common mode of operation, since they are always linked to different full-time education schools, of which they are only a small department. CEFAs have consequently developed networks that operate in their geographic areas to manage good relations with companies.

The most important problem in the promotion of *Formation en Alternance* is that the public (parents, pupils, and teachers) consider it as a pathway with low social status, compared to other education options. Professionals in the VET providers agree that apprenticeship training is often not a positive choice: many learners enrol after repeated failures in school-based education because they do not like school or do not like to study, because they prefer acquiring practical knowledge more than theoretical knowledge, or because teachers in school-based education advise continuing their school career in such schemes. This is consistent with the reasons given by the apprentices during the interviews; besides the fact that being able to work, earn a salary and gain experience is considered attractive for them.

3.2.2. Lack of transparency in the value of the corresponding certificates

A major issue closely linked to function and identity, is that the scheme can lead to many different certificates and the value of each is not always clear, making the choice difficult or arbitrary. Certificates in the vocational education subsystem seem to have a higher value than those in the vocational training subsystem.

3.2.2.1. Too many different certificates?

Most stakeholders claim that there is a need for SFMQ⁽⁴⁷⁾ to work faster: there is still a multitude of qualifications and certificates, and it is not always clear how these relate to one another, especially since the qualification structure (the repository and organisation of qualifications and how they relate one another) is not yet fully developed. Several stakeholders mentioned the complicated structure of certification in both alternance sub-schemes and

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Section 2.1.3.

talked about the need to bring about greater harmonisation ⁽⁴⁸⁾. The creation of a shared certification system seems to be hampered by the fact that the competence for handing out qualifications belongs solely to the French Community and the debate about further harmonisation of qualification involves broader political discussions.

Interviews with apprentices made it clear that for them it is difficult to understand the differences between certificates. This is a problem mainly in CEFAs, which award a greater number of certificates with different values (see Table 3 for a list of certificates achievable in CEFA). Apprentices often could not answer detailed questions about the certificate they would receive, nor did they know whether it would give them access to further (higher) education. Some other apprentices, instead, regretted their choice of selecting apprenticeship training after they realised that the type of certificate they will be awarded is less valued and provides fewer opportunities to make a career (for example, within the government, police and military, but also in the for-profit sector where many jobs are regulated), or that they will not be able to continue further education at a higher level.

Efforts are being made within VET providers in both sub-schemes to give sufficient information regarding the value of the certificates; as this is difficult for system users to understand, it does not always have an impact on learners' choices. Also, learners who choose a sub-scheme do not always pay sufficient attention to the labour market value of their certificate.

In theory, there is also a possibility to progress from apprenticeship in both sub-schemes to higher education but, in practice, it is rare that apprentices obtain the certificate giving access to higher education (CEES certificate), also because the scheme is valued less than school-based education and is considered to be the lowest track in the entire education and training system.

Many stakeholders expressed the need for more clarity, in particular for 'outsiders' of the system to inform students, parents and employers about what paths can be followed. Several key questions would need an answer. How are the (parts of the) individual training plan related to each other? Which parts of the training lead to certificates and what is the value of these certificates (in terms of access to other training programmes)? Is it possible to start in CEFA and to continue at IFAPME and vice versa? How is the transition taken care of? The same questions arise regarding the transitions

⁽⁴⁸⁾ SFMQ is in charge, among other things, of harmonising qualifications and this is considered positive by stakeholders, who actually want this process to go faster. Stakeholders also agreed that the task of SFMQ is not an easy one.

between the scheme and other learning pathways (such as going back to full-time secondary education or to continue in adult education after alternance).

3.2.2.2. *Unclear value in the labour market*

VET providers in both sub-schemes generally consider that apprentices' chances of finding a job should be good, especially in the first years after completion, since their training is normally targeted to the demands of the labour market. However, this is not always the case: for example, where apprentices have a low education level with little theoretical background, and job applicants with a higher education level are, where available, preferred by employers. The lower education level of apprentices – sometimes combined with poor employability skills – is likely to increase their chances of becoming unemployed. This is especially so after they have been in the labour market for a few years. To help apprentices find their way into the labour market, training centres often refer apprentices to public employment services for further support.

Many apprentices interviewed said they hoped to be hired by the company that is training them. Some employers declared that they hire apprentices with the principal aim to train a future worker. Unfortunately, this was not always the case: many employers and trade union representatives interviewed stated that apprentices are considered, in their company, as relatively cheap labour and are not always hired after training. In this respect, members of the education and training community expressed the wish that apprenticeship training provide students with a set of knowledge, skills and competence that goes beyond the short-term needs of companies, so that they can have the possibility to grow and develop their skills and careers and successfully participate in lifelong learning.

In practice, in many cases, employers experience apprenticeship training interruptions or terminations during the training period due to problem factors such as the progress of the apprentice, motivation and/or attitudes. It is also the case that employers' expectations are higher than apprentices' levels of performance, skills, work attitudes, general knowledge, even if they successfully complete the apprenticeship training. This seems to be due to the fact that the scheme is viewed as a last resort, which young people choose after having failed in one (or more) of the better-valued forms of full time school-based education. Employers and unions' representatives also reported that entrants into the labour market from school-based training have a higher level of vocational competence and have more theoretical knowledge, which generates better learning abilities and compensates for

lack of work experience. In this connection, some policy-makers pointed out that employers are in favour of extending the core curriculum of alternance training to more general knowledge. Despite the difficulties experienced, employers still see the scheme as a valuable pathway for young people to access the labour market, especially thanks to the work experience gained and, in those cases when the apprentice was willing to learn, performed well and showed motivation and a good attitude to work. This conviction recurs especially in the opinion of employers in sectors with bottleneck professions and with a focus on creating a strongly developed training structure (as in the construction sector).

3.3. Competition and cooperation

3.3.1. Competition

The complex organisation of the scheme, with two different sub-schemes each one associated to different rules, providers and certificates, promotes competition at various levels for students as well as for employers. This competition is not only between providers of the two different sub-schemes of *Formation en Alternance* but between *Formation en Alternance* and other schemes such as those organised within adult education centres and the public employment services.

In the opinion of stakeholders (employers, providers and institution representatives) the scheme's regulation creates internal competition among vocational education providers and vocational training providers at the upper secondary level for the same pool of learners and companies. Internal competition takes place at two levels: between school-based programmes within secondary schools and *Formation en Alternance* delivered by CEFA, IFAPME and SFPME; and between CEFA and IFAPME/SFPME.

Box 3. Drivers of competition between CEFA, IFAPME, and SFPME

1. *Formation en Alternance* is a relatively small scheme in number of participants (Section 2.1) spread across the two sub-schemes and three providers.
2. The funding system that supports VET providers is based on their number of students. As a result, each provider tries to attract as many learners as possible. This sometimes causes competition and tensions between the





providers and this works against good-quality orientation of the apprenticeship provision.

3. There is limited coordination and no mechanisms in place to match apprenticeship supply and demand between the three providers and the labour market (e.g. adjust curricula based on local needs). Stakeholders pointed to the tension between offering training courses that attract learners but are not in high demand in the labour market, and offering training courses that easily lead to jobs but which are not attractive for learners or require competences at a higher level that cannot be expected from the target population for apprenticeships. Stakeholders consulted in this review generally agreed that the creation of OFFA is a great step forward, supporting dialogue between education and training, but more can be done to coordinate supply and demand.

Source: Cedefop.

Competition could, in theory, improve the quality of apprenticeship provision with providers clearly positioning their strengths (pedagogical vision, didactic approach, type of trainers, number of training days in the centre, type of certification and so forth), allowing employers and students to find the provider best suited to the apprenticeship training they want to pursue. Several of the interviewees saw clear benefits in having two different sub-schemes exactly for this reason. Nevertheless, the context in Belgium-FR shows that this is not always the case and such competition creates inefficiencies. Having two sub-schemes and three providers for *Formation en Alternance* leads to a non-rational use of resources. Cases were identified where several providers are catering for the same region. As indicated by one of the interviewees: 'In Charleroi, there is a street where CEFA and IFAPME each have a hairdressing section, where both are experiencing difficulties in filling their classes with a sufficient number of students'. This oversupply of provision on the provider side does not only lead to a lack of clarity for students, their parents and employers (Section 3.2), but also to inefficient spending of public money, especially when the number of apprentices is limited and each provider has only small classes (economies of scale are not realised). This also inhibits efficient use of resources, making it hard for several providers to invest and work with the newest equipment, materials, techniques, and machines in the training centre, as well as teacher and trainer continuous training, ultimately hampering the quality of training provision.

Although harmonisation is under way, providers still compete on differences that are not yet resolved, such as the difference between the number of days in school between CEFA and IFAPME (one or two days versus three days at school); so, for the same salary, employers have a young person who is working one or two days more. Also there is difference between CEFA and IFAPME/SFPME in teacher competences: it is indicated that teachers at IFAPME/SFPME have extensive professional experience but have had a limited pedagogical and didactical background. In CEFA, all teachers are well-qualified with regard to pedagogy and didactics but are not well acquainted with enterprises.

The review also shows that the offer of training places in companies varies widely across sectors: some offer plenty of training places (such as in the construction sector), while placements are scarce in others and providers compete to find companies.

The marketing of the scheme to companies is mostly carried out by training providers, and some struggle with this task (see Section 3.2). Strategies are necessary to find places for apprentices in companies. Several actors are making efforts to find places, such as the providers themselves, platforms for concertation and cooperation such as the *Bassin EFE* (IBEFE) ⁽⁴⁹⁾ and OFFA and the actors managing the sectoral training funds.

Overall, stakeholders interviewed confirmed that there is tension between maintaining high standards in the quality of the training in the company and finding and keeping companies willing to train apprentices. Since there is a shortage of training places in companies in some places and sectors, VET providers sometimes make concessions on the quality of training provided. At the same time, providers are reluctant to start withdrawal procedures, so

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Instance Bassin Enseignement Formation Emploi (IBEFE) is a consultative body set up in 2015 that brings together the local actors of education, training, employment and the social partners. There are 10 of them: nine in Wallonia and one in Brussels. Each one has a Chamber of Education (Chambre Enseignement) and a Chamber of Employment-Formation (Chambre Emploi-Formation). Each 'bassin' corresponds to a defined geographic area. IBEFE's mission is to:

- (a) maintain dialogue and consultation between all actors in VET, social and professional integration, companies and social partners in the region;
- (b) collect, synthesise, cross-reference data, analyse, commission studies, and produce an analytical and prospective report according to a common methodology (analytical support);
- (c) establish a list of 'common themes' or priority sectors and disseminate it;
- (d) transmit information, render opinions, formulate guidelines (programmatic support);
- (e) establish 'synergy hubs' that bring together various actors to develop concrete actions (operational support);
- (f) integrate the functioning of its Chambers (existing and future).

it is possible for a company to hire an apprentice but not entirely fulfil their obligations and comply with the rules.

Competition for in-company training places also exists between apprentices and students from other parts of the education and training system that seek work placements, such as school-based education (offering trainees that do not have to receive remuneration), higher education, and training centres of the public employment service. These also partly serve other, older target groups and other purposes (such as the PES and adult education centres), but they are still in competition for training places at the company.

3.3.2. Cooperation between employers and companies

Cooperation is a relevant form of non-financial incentive, which companies consider important. However, cooperation between VET providers and employers still needs improvement. The stakeholders interviewed underlined the importance of finding a way for VET providers and companies to work together with shared goals for the apprentices, with clear understanding of what the provider will teach and what the workplace will do and how those two tracks are leading to one certificate. This includes the need for shared assessment of the apprentices and quality control for both the provider and the workplaces.

Interviews with VET providers revealed that the support they provide to companies is considered as too limited by employers. Besides what companies receive from the labour market actor ⁽⁵⁰⁾, they get support from VET providers at the start of the apprenticeship training to complete the paperwork, to understand the rights and obligations of all the parties concerned, and to use the individual training plan that is part of the contract. Once the apprentice has started his or her training in the company, the contacts between the provider and the company are restricted to a few visits a year, ranging from two to five. The visits serve to follow up on the apprentice's progress and address any administrative issues that may arise. A larger number of visits often results from problems regarding the apprentices and their activities in the company, or the behaviour of the employer or tutor. In this case, support consists of advice provided by

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Sectoral training funds and commercial payroll and HR service providers support companies by informing, coaching, giving administrative help, providing practical tools for the development of training programmes, coaching and evaluation). Besides this kind of support, the construction sector has recently started with the organisation of a web-based learning community among tutors of different companies in their sector. In the latter case, peer learning is seen as a new way to strengthen the training quality in companies.

the VET provider, mediation between the apprentice and the employer, or actions targeted at the behaviour and attitudes of the apprentice.

The formal involvement of companies in the assessment of the apprentice is non-existent, despite the large share of time the apprentice spends in the company. Employers complained that their assessment of apprentices at the workplace is not taken into account in the assessment by the VET provider. Employers also face difficulties in assessing apprentices because the training plans are often not tailor-made to apprentice needs: an employer may give positive feedback if the apprentice is able to perform well in the company, even when the apprentice cannot perform all tasks mentioned in the training plan in the company. If apprentices have learnt specific competences in the company that are not part of the curriculum or if they have already reached a higher level, these competences are not valued or made visible. The training centre checks the progress of the apprentice in the company a few times a year (in general through a discussion with the employer/workplace tutor on the company's premises) and can take only this into account when grading the apprentice, but this is not equivalent to a formal assessment and is not part of the final assessment. Nevertheless, some experimentation takes place to involve tutors more in the assessment, such as the pilot of IFAPME to support tutors in the assessment of their apprentices.

Few formal quality control mechanisms are in place to assess the quality of training at the workplace. There is tension between maintaining high standards in training quality in the company and finding and keeping companies willing to train apprentices. IFAPME regional services provide the opportunity to get training to become a certified tutor with a 'certificate of supervisor' (Section 2.2), but this is optional, though it could become mandatory. There are also tutorship programmes for employers or tutors provided by sector organisations with a long tradition in apprenticeship, such as construction and the automotive sector, but they are not compulsory and not all employers take part (especially smaller companies that often do not allow time for this).

When a company does not comply with the requirements (specified by law plus those indicated in OFFA's vade mecum, see list in Section 2.2) and does not fulfil its obligations or provides low quality training or a too limited variety of competences (according to the teacher from the VET provider), the providers often decide to terminate the contract before its end, and to stop the collaboration with the company, without leading to a withdrawal of the accreditation.

3.4. Conclusions

Formation en Alternance aims at providing young people with an alternative to school-based studies, where they can obtain a formal qualification and accomplish compulsory education. However, in many cases young people enrol in *Formation en Alternance* as a second option, after they failed other school options (general education, technical education, school-based VET). As interviewees point out, the group of students attracted by *Formation en Alternance* have often had a difficult school experience, they lack motivation, and have individual problems etc. The main driver for learners' and parents' choices at this level is for young people to accomplish compulsory education and get a certificate. There are situations where employers use *Formation en Alternance* as an employment tool (to recruit or to manage high labour picks, as employers themselves stated during the interviews). In this case as well, the scheme may not be their first choice as they may use other similar schemes (apprenticeships for adults or active labour market measures).

These factors signal a number of main interconnected challenges that may explain the low levels of participation and low status of *Formation en Alternance* both in CEFA and in IFAPME/SFPME:

(a) Set 1 of challenges: function, identity, value

- (i) Unclear function (education or employment function): there is a *de facto* inconsistency between the two main the socio-economic functions of *Formation en Alternance* and, accordingly, its ultimate purpose: education and training linked to compulsory education and leading to a formal qualification for young people versus employment and recruitment tool for companies. This inconsistency may reflect the different expectations of the various stakeholders: VET providers on one hand and employers on the other, but also different employers. Different expectations may lead to differences in the training efforts in companies, with sometimes low-quality firm-specific training as opposed to high-quality training with sectoral or wider labour market relevance.
- (ii) Unclear identity: there is difficulty among providers, learners and their parents, companies, and other actors in distinguishing between *Formation en Alternance* delivered by CEFA and by IFAPME/SFPME, both formally (in terms of characteristics) and substantially (in terms of certificates achievable). At system level, there is lack of transparency about how each of the qualifications provided by the two sub-

schemes (CEFA and IFAPME/SFPME) is related to other qualifications, as well as their labour market value and the possibilities for entry to further education. As a result, learners' choices (between CEFA and IFAPME/SFPME) often depend on coincidences or practical considerations, such as the travel distance between home and the training centre and accessibility by public transport. Considering the employment function that companies associate to *Formation en Alternance*, they cannot easily distinguish and choose between this scheme and other training and employment options. Companies are mostly aware of some striking differences (such as the number of days spent in the workplace and the level of the apprentices) but not of the details of each scheme.

- (iii) Educational and occupational value: besides getting an upper secondary qualification, which may be achieved in different other ways, it is unclear why a learner should opt for *Formation en Alternance*. It is true that in this scheme pupils learn by doing, which might appeal to some learners, but the school-based programmes have a stronger educational value and a better image. The scheme's labour market outcomes are promising in the short-term but this might not apply in the long-term. It is also not clear whether the different types of qualification are related to different labour market outcomes. In conclusion, the selling point of the scheme, besides learning by doing, is unclear in terms of education and labour market outcomes upon graduation.

(b) Set 2 of challenges: competition

- (i) Internal competition: providers at the upper secondary level compete for the same pool of learners and companies. Internal competition is at two levels:
 - between school-based schemes within secondary schools and *Formation en Alternance* delivered by CEFA, IFAPME and SFPME;
 - between *enseignement secondaire en alternance* in CEFA and *formation en alternance* in IFAPME/SFPME.

In the absence of clear and proven educational and/or occupational added value, *Formation en Alternance* will continue to remain second option (in relation to school-based programmes). The provision of apprenticeships by three providers may lead to an insufficiently rational use of resources (including small classes; limited resources for investing in the practice area/laboratory).

- (ii) External competition: this applies between *formation en alternance* and other schemes. Employer perceptions of the scheme (e.g. with regard to the educational and employment function and the value generated) results in employers often hiring candidates from other schemes instead of learners from *Formation en Alternance*. This turns into more limited opportunities for apprentices in *Formation en Alternance*.



4. Rethinking the apprenticeship scheme in French-speaking Belgium

Rethinking the apprenticeship scheme in French-speaking Belgium

4.1. Mid- and long-term scenario: work on the vision

In the long-term, it is recommendable to work on a clearer and shared vision on the function, identity and value of *Formation en Alternance*, clarifying its place in the VET system and in relation to lifelong learning strategies. This would also support the policy-makers' intention to make alternance a quality option (*une filière d'excellence*) at the upper secondary level.

A debate about *Formation en Alternance*, concerning its systemic organisation and management, should address the following questions:

- (a) what are the objective(s) of the policy? The objectives must be determined from the needs of young people for a good education, on the one hand, and meeting economic demand (employers, sectors, regional) on the other, reckoning with the expected evolution of the labour market;
- (b) for which occupations/programmes do we need alternance at upper secondary level? Should it be an alternative route to school-based vocational education and vocational training available for many, if not all programmes? Or should it be a system that is available for certain occupations for which alternance is the best or maybe the only way to acquire the competences?
- (c) depending on the answers to the above questions, which are the target groups of alternance? Whatever the choice, it is important that target groups are, in principle, identified on the basis of their assets, as in their specific motivation or abilities, rather than of their deficits (the young at risk of dropout);
- (d) what are the responsibilities of each stakeholder in providing alternance for the future? And who is best placed/equipped to do what is needed?

This debate could result in an umbrella policy framework and overarching legislation to build a system around the scheme. To achieve this goal, policy-makers could find inspiration in the principles and ideas of the harmonisation

reform process started in 2015 (Section 2.2) and use the 2017 *Pacte d'excellence* (see footnote 35) as a starting point. The inspiring approach to a more comprehensive VET system should also include alternance as a fully fledged and positive educational option.

In the long run, thorough reflection on the future of VET is also necessary. Companies and employer representatives should be heard about how to make education correspond more to labour market evolution and how to integrate new ways of studying that echo new ways of working. This should ultimately lead to engaging more employers and their representatives also in alternance.

4.2. Short-term scenario: improvements to existing sub-schemes

4.2.1. Improve certificate transparency

All stakeholders who expressed an opinion on this welcomed the creation of a body dedicated to qualifications and certificates, the SFMQ (Section 2.1.3 and footnote 48), and recognised the difficulty of its task. The modular system developed by SFMQ seems to be working in terms of standardising the content of different qualifications and also being the first stepping stone in increasing transparency and facilitating mobility across various subsystems (vocational education, vocational training, adult education) to achieve the same type of certificates or clearly comparable certificates.

In all cases, stakeholders emphasised the importance of transparency and alignment of the certificates across the two different subsystems: of particular importance is the transparency and alignment of certificates achieved in the vocational training subsystem. This alignment is crucial to allow apprentices permeability (particularly for those from the vocational training subsystem) to higher education. Building bridges between the two sub-schemes and particularly between general education (giving access to higher education) and alternance training is of utmost importance for the young people involved.

Until the quality and value of each type of certificate achievable in *formation en alternance* is clearly recognised, guaranteed and measured, permeability between subsystems and permeability to higher education will not be possible. Employers will continue to prefer hiring graduates with a school-based certificate rather than apprenticeship graduates.

Currently, CEFA/IFAPME/SFPME are implementing a cross-diagnosis project to assess the quality of the work-based learning component of the

Alternance Training scheme and the related assessment approaches. This should also increase trust between the three providers in relation to the quality of learning and assessment ⁽⁵¹⁾.

4.2.2. Improve cooperation between stakeholders

Agreement and cooperation, also at the practical level, between the stakeholders involved in the Alternance Training scheme are inescapable preconditions to overcoming the challenges it seems to be facing (see paragraph 3.3).

It is recommended that providers cooperate more among themselves and that their offer for *Formation Alternance* becomes more transparent for employers, young people and their parents.

A possible tool for cooperation between CEFA, IFAPME/SFPME is a shared database with all accredited employers, so that young people can arrange their own in-company placement. OFFA is currently establishing such a database as well as an online platform on the offer of *Formation en Alternance*, planned, at the time of the review, for February 2019 (more information in Annex 2). OFFA could play a key role in supporting and steering the cooperation between providers.

Another solution is the establishment of a one-stop shop (one desk) for information about the providers' training offer and for guiding young people in their choice. This desk could be organised not only for *Formation en Alternance*, but for the whole education and training options (providing neutral information on apprenticeship as an alternate choice). The recently set up *Cité des métiers* ⁽⁵²⁾ could play a role in this, together with the municipalities.

Box 4. Examples of cooperation between providers and with companies

CEFA and IFAPME developed joint projects, such as one in Namur, where the two providers agreed to work together on the examination for the certificate of 'mentor wood frame'. An IFAPME a trainer and a CEFA teacher validate together the certification of all young people from both sub-schemes.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Results of this project were not available at the time of the review.

⁽⁵²⁾ *Cité des métiers* offer information and guidance about all different trades and professions. It does this by offering an open access multimedia area, events and collective activities with its partners (information sessions, discovery tours, workshops, conferences) and individual advice.

A positive example could come from the Advanced Technology Centres, in which the Government invested EUR 26 million to set up an inter-network and regional project, accessible to students from both sub-schemes, in which VET providers cooperate to align their training provision.

Source: Cedefop.

It also seems crucial to improve employer engagement. Employers should be fully informed about the Alternance Training scheme and its sub-schemes, but also be able, through their representative, to shape the training content of alternance, based on sectoral or occupational skill needs, and be involved in the assessment of apprentices.

- (a) The support of VET providers and intensive contact with the teachers is a relevant non-financial incentive for all companies, especially small ones. However, providers are not always sufficiently equipped for playing this role. Employers must receive clear information about what they can expect from a CEFA, IFAPME or SFPME student and within which limits they can work with them (including working time, level of responsibility, supervision).
- (b) VET providers could work with companies and their representative associations at sector level to set up a methodology for high-quality workplace-based training and to equip in-company tutors with the necessary tools to implement training plans and evaluate apprentice learning outcomes.
- (c) The role and qualification of company tutors as motivated and skilled professionals is crucial. IFAPME offers training for company tutors which leads to a 'certificate of supervisor'; this is optional but it could become mandatory for all companies offering placements for *Formation en Alternance*. Possible inspiration could also come from the pilot project that IFAPME implemented to support in-company tutors in the informal assessment of their apprentices (Box 4).
- (d) Existing bodies, such as the Observatory for Qualification, Trades and Technologies created within the framework of the *Pact d'Excellence* (see footnote 35 and '*le bassin EFE*' (see footnote 49), could serve as platforms to connect company needs and training provider supply better and build trust between stakeholders.

More could also be done to promote the alternance training scheme as an attractive choice within VET, positively framing it to (future) apprentices and employers, by sharing the experience of individuals who made a career after an apprenticeship, as well as the benefits of apprenticeships in terms labour market outcomes. The aim should be clearly showing that it is an alternative, but an equally valuable choice compared to the school-based route: not a route for those that fail in regular education, but a route for those that prefer to learn by doing on the work-floor. Raising standards for in-company learning (such as setting stricter requirements for tutor competences, better use of training plans, avoiding repetitive tasks) could also contribute to higher quality learning experience and the status of the apprenticeship scheme.

4.3. Conclusions

To address the challenges that the apprenticeship scheme under analysis was facing at the time of the review, Cedefop formulated two scenarios, based on analysis of the field work findings.

In a mid- and long-term scenario, it is recommendable to work on a clearer and shared vision on the function, identity and value of *Formation en Alternance*, by clarifying its place in the VET system and in relation to lifelong learning strategies. Policy-makers should discuss what are the main policy objectives and the function of alternance, by considering whether it can still be offered for all students, in all sectors, for all occupations. This could result in an umbrella policy framework and overarching legislation to organise the whole VET system, including alternance as a fully fledged and positive VET alternative. In the long term, thorough reflection on the future of VET and the role of employers within it is also necessary.

In a short-term scenario, it is possible to work on improvements to the existing sub-schemes: first, by increasing transparency in the certificates achievable in both subsystems and the options for learner mobility across subsystems and to further education; then, by improving cooperation between stakeholders in the alternance scheme, i.e. among the three providers and between providers with employers.



Abbreviations

ACP	<i>attestation de compétences professionnelles</i> [vocational competences certificate]
CEFA	<i>centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance</i> [Centre for education and apprenticeships]
CE6P	<i>certificat d'études de sixième année de l'enseignement secondaire professionnel</i> [certificate of sixth year of studies of vocational secondary education]
CESS	<i>certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur</i> [certificate of upper secondary education]
CISP	<i>centres d'insertion socio-professionnelle</i> [Socio-professional integration centres] and <i>Contrat d'insertion socio-professionnelle</i> [Socio-professional integration contract]
COCOF	<i>Commission communautaire française</i> [French Community Commission]
COPROFOR	<i>Commission de profil de formation</i> [Commission for training profiles]
COREF	<i>Commission du référentiel d'occupation</i> [Commission for occupations reference]
CQ	<i>certificat de qualification</i> [Qualification certificate]
CQS	<i>certificat de qualification spécifique</i> [Specific qualification certificate]
CSC	<i>Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens</i> [Confederation of Christian Unions]
CVDC	<i>Consortium de validation des compétences</i> [Consortium for competences validation]
EFPME	<i>Espace formation pour les petites et moyennes entreprises</i> [Training space for small and medium enterprises]
EQF	European qualifications framework
FGTB	<i>Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique</i> [General Federation of Belgian Labour]

FOREM	<i>Office Wallon de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi</i> [Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment]
FWB	Fédération Wallonia Bruxelles
IFAPME	<i>Institut Wallon de Formation en Alternance et des Indépendants et Petites et Moyennes Entreprises</i> [Walloon Institute of Alternance Training and of Independent and Small and Medium Enterprises]
OFFA	<i>Office Francophone de la Formation en Alternance</i> [Francophone Office of Alternance Training]
ONSS	<i>Office National de Sécurité Sociale</i> [National Social Security Office]
OISP	<i>organismes d'insertion socio-professionnelle</i> (Brussels)
PES	public employment services
SFMQ	<i>Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications</i> [French service of trades and qualifications]
SFPME	<i>Service formation pour les petites et moyennes entreprises</i> [Training service for small and medium enterprises]
SMEs	<i>small and medium-sized enterprises</i>
UCM	<i>Union des Classes Moyennes</i> [Union of medium classes]
UWE	<i>Union Wallonne des Entreprises</i> [Union of Walloon enterprises]
VET	vocational education and training

References

[[URLs accessed 8.2.2019]

- Bassin EFE (2016). *Cadastre 2016 de l'offre francophone d'enseignement qualifiant et de formation professionnelle en Région de Bruxelles Capitale: année de référence: 2014* [Register 2016 of the Francophone offer of qualifying education and vocational training in the Brussels-Capital Region : reference year: 2014]. www.spfb.brussels/sites/default/files/asset/document/plan_formation_Bruxelles_2020_cadastre.pdf
- Cedefop (2017). *On the way to 2020: data for vocational education and training policies: country statistical overviews: 2016 update*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research papers; No 61. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5561
- Council of the European Union (2018). *Recommendation on a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships*. Brussels, 15 March 2018; interinstitutional file No 2017/0244 (NLE). <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6779-2018-INIT/en/pdf>
- Communauté française (1991). *Décret organisant l'enseignement secondaire en alternance* [Decree organising secondary education in alternance]. Decree of 3 July 1991. www.gallilex.cfwb.be/fr/leg_res_01.php?ncda=16421&referant=I01
- Conseil de la Communauté française (1997). *Décret définissant les missions prioritaires de l'enseignement fondamental et de l'enseignement secondaire et organisant les structures propres à les atteindre* [Decree defining the priority mission of basic education and of secondary education and organising the structures to attain it]. Decree of 24 July 1997, updated on 9 October 2018. www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23827&do_id=401
- Conseil régional wallon (2003). *Décret portant constitution d'un Institut wallon de formation en alternance et des indépendants et petites et moyennes entreprises* [Decree about the constitution of a Walloon institute for alternance training and autonomous workers and of small and medium enterprises]. Decree of 17 July 2003. <https://wallex.wallonie.be/PdfLoader.php?type=doc&linkpdf=4042-3370-271>
- IFAPME (2017). *Rapport d'activité 2017* [Activity report 2017]. www.ifapme.be/fileadmin/documents/partage/downloads/pdf/IFAPME_Rapport-d-activite-2017.pdf

Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, Administration générale de l'Enseignement (2017). *Les indicateurs de l'enseignement 2017* [The indicators of education 2017].

www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=28089&navi=4532
www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=0&navi=2264

OFFA (2007). Vade-mecum relatif à la formation en alternance [Vade-mecum of alternance training], version of 27 April 20017. *Moniteur Belge*, No 82689, 7.9.2017. www.offa-oip.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Vade-mecum-officiel-27-04-2017-publi%C3%A9-au-MB.pdf

Parlement de la Communauté française (2016). *Décret portant assentiment à l'accord de coopération entre la Communauté française, la Région wallonne et la Commission communautaire française concernant le service francophone des métiers et des qualifications* [Decree approving the cooperation agreement between the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission concerning the French-speaking service for trades and qualifications]. Decree of 10 December 2015. www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/42051_000.pdf

Websites

CEFA

- Certificates delivered by CEFA
www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=23823
- List of centres in Brussels http://ccfee.be/fr/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=category&id=72:cefa-cza&Itemid=257
- List of centres in Wallonia
http://enseignement.catholique.be/segec/index.php?q1=&qq=&qqq=&q=&TRI=1&code_option=&f=3&det=1&id=1762&TYPE=2

IFAPME

- Certificates delivered by IFAPME
www.ifapme.be/formation-apprentissage.html#c15047
- List of services and centres in Wallonia
www.ifapme.be/decouvrir-l-ifapme/l-ifapme-en-wallonie.html
- Training for in-company tutors at IFAPME
www.ifapme.be/tutorat.html

ONSS - Instructions administratives ONSS - 2018/4 [administrative instructions]
www.socialsecurity.be/employer/instructions/dmfa/fr/2018-4/instructions/persons/specific/apprentices.html

SFMQ www.sfmq.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1554

SFPME - List of services in Brussels. <https://ccfee.be/fr/alternance-a-bruxelles/efpme-sfpme>

Cedefop analytical framework

Table A 1. **Cedefop thematic country reviews on apprenticeships: analytical framework**

Distinguishing features:

- systematic long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre;
- an apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance);
- an employer assumes responsibility for the company-based part of the programme leading to a qualification.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
Distinguishing features	systematic long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an education and training institution or training centre that leads to a qualification
	an apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage)
	an employer is responsible for the company-based part of the programme
1. Place in the ET system	1.1. Apprenticeship is defined and regulated in a legal framework.
	1.2. Position of apprenticeship in relation to other learning paths is clear.
	1.3. Apprenticeship offers both horizontal and vertical pathways to further specialisation or education at all levels.
2. Governance structures	2.1. Roles and responsibilities of the key players (the State, employers' organisations, trade unions, chambers, schools, VET providers, companies) at national, regional, local levels are clearly defined and distributed: decision-making, implementation, advisory, control
	2.2. Employer organisations and trade unions are actively engaged at all levels.
	2.3. Employer organisations, trade unions, and companies understand and recognise the importance of apprenticeships for a skilled labour force (i.e. social responsibility).
	2.4. One coordination and decision-making body is nominated.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
3. Training content and learning outcomes	3.1. Qualification standards and/or occupational profiles exist, are based on learning outcomes and are regularly evaluated and updated.
	3.2. Curricula and programmes are developed based on qualification standards and/or occupational profiles.
	3.3. The content, duration and expected outcomes of company and school-based learning are clearly distributed and form a coherent sequence.
	3.4. There are provisions for adjusting part of curricula to local labour market needs.
	3.5. (Minimum) requirements to access apprenticeship programmes are stipulated.
	3.6. Final assessment covers all learning outcomes and is independent of the learning venues.
4. Cooperation among learning venues	4.1. There is cooperation, coordination and clear distribution of responsibilities among the venues as well as established feedback mechanisms.
	4.2. A school, a company and an apprentice together develop a training plan, based on the curriculum.
	4.3. If a company cannot ensure the acquisition of all required learning outcomes for the company-based learning as defined by the curriculum, there are arrangements to compensate for that (for example, intercompany training centres, cooperation of companies, etc.).
	4.4. One of the venues takes up (is designated by law) the coordinating role in the process.
	4.5. It is clear who is responsible for the administrative tasks related to the company-based part of the programme (for example, checks the suitability of the accredited training enterprise, technically and personnel-wise, is responsible for logging of apprenticeship contracts, etc.).

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
5. Participation of and support to companies	5.1. Rights and obligations of companies providing training are legally stipulated.
	5.2. There are strategies, initiatives in marketing apprenticeship and informing companies of benefits of taking apprentices, related responsibilities and available incentives.
	5.3. There are minimum requirements for companies willing to provide apprenticeship places and/or an accreditation procedure.
	5.4. Companies, especially SMEs, receive non-financial support to implement apprenticeships.
	5.5. There is recognition, and even award, for companies that provide quality apprenticeships.
	5.6. Employer organisations play a key role in engaging and supporting companies.
6. Requirements and support to teachers and in-company trainers	6.1. Companies have to assign a qualified staff member (tutor) to accompany apprentices.
	6.2. There are stipulated requirements for qualification and competences of an apprentice tutor.
	6.3. An apprentice tutor in a company has to have qualification in the vocation he/she trains for.
	6.4. An apprentice tutor in a company has to have some proof of pedagogical/didactic competence.
	6.5. There is provision of training for in-company trainers to develop and update their pedagogical/didactic and transversal competences and for teachers to update their technical competences
	6.6. There are mechanisms for cooperation and exchange between in-company trainers and VET teachers in schools.
	6.7. There is a clear indication of who (teacher or trainer) has ultimate responsibility for apprentices' learning.

Areas of analysis	Operational descriptors
7. Financing and cost-sharing mechanisms	7.1. Apprenticeship companies pay wages and cover indirect costs (materials, trainers' time).
	7.2. The State is responsible for financing VET schools and/or paying grants to engage apprentices.
	7.3. The duration and organisation of apprenticeships are such that they allow companies to recuperate the investment through apprentices' work.
	7.4. There are incentives (subsidies, tax deductions) to encourage companies to take on apprentices, generally and/or in specific sectors or occupations.
	7.5. Employer organisations and trade unions cover part of the costs (direct and/or indirect).
8. Quality assurance	8.1. Quality assurance system covers apprenticeship.
9. Apprentice's working and learning conditions	9.1. Rights and obligations of apprentices are legally stipulated, both for working and learning.
	9.2. There is a reference point (responsible body) that informs the apprentice of the rights and responsibilities of all parties and supports him/her in the event of problems.
	9.3. An apprentice has an employment contract with the company and enjoys all rights and benefits of an employee and fulfils all responsibilities.
	9.4. An apprentice is protected in the event of company failure (bankruptcy, for example) to provide training.
	9.5. An apprentice has access to guidance and counselling services.
10. Responsive-ness	10.1. There are institutional procedures that allow apprenticeship to respond to or to anticipate the needs of the labour market.
	10.2. Outputs and outcomes of apprenticeship are regularly monitored and evaluated.
	10.3. Ex-ante and/or ex-post impact evaluation of apprenticeship are in place.

Source: Cedefop.

ANNEX 2

Background information about the scheme *Formation en Alternance* in Belgium-FR

A.2.1. Definition of the term ‘apprentice’ in French-speaking Belgium

With regard to social security ⁽⁵³⁾, the federal authority has created a generic definition of the apprentice. Excluding apprentices bound by an employment contract or a special apprenticeship contract for the disabled, apprentices are all persons who are bound by a contract to an employer as part of a *Formation en Alternance*, if the formation meets all of the following conditions:

- (a) the training pathway is carried out partly in the workplace and partly within or at the initiative and under the responsibility of an education or training institution; these two parts together aim to carry out a single individual training plan and, to that end, agree and alternate regularly;
- (b) the training pathway leads to a vocational qualification;
- (c) the part carried out in the workplace provides an average work duration of least 20 hours a week annually, excluding holidays and vacations;
- (d) the part carried out within or at the initiative and under the responsibility of an education or training institution, provides annually:
 - (i) at least 240 hours of training for young people subject to compulsory part-time education (NB: age 15-18);
 - (ii) at least 150 hours of training for young people no longer subject to compulsory schooling (18+).

These hours can be calculated as a proportion of the total duration of the training programme. If a person is exempted from a course by

⁽⁵³⁾ This section is based on information from the Office National de Sécurité sociale (ONSS) – the National Office for Social Security. ONSS 2018/4 - Instructions administratives - Apprentis, formation en alternance [administrative instructions concerning the status of apprentices in *Formation en Alternance*]: www.socialsecurity.be/employer/instructions/dmfa/fr/2018-4/instructions/persons/specific/apprentices.html

- the education or training institution, the hours that should have been spent there count towards the total of 240 or 150 hours;
- (e) the two parts of the training are conducted under and covered by a learning contract of which the employer and the young person are part. Training can be conducted as part of several successive contracts provided that:
 - (i) the minimum number of hours of training in the education or training institution reach the required minimum;
 - (ii) the full pathway, composed of various successive contracts, is guaranteed and monitored by the operator responsible for the training;
 - (f) the contract provides a financial reward for the young person, which is paid by the employer and is to be considered as remuneration.

A.2.2. OFFA (*Office francophone de la formation en alternance*)

The harmonisation process goes under the aegis of OFFA, which is the sole coordinator of *Formation en Alternance* in Belgium-FR. OFFA was created in September 2015 as a public interest body with its headquarters in Brussels and the mission of steering alternance in Belgium-FR. The board of directors of OFFA is composed of the main stakeholders: representatives of vocational education and vocational training, representatives of unions and employers' organisations from both Brussels and Wallonia.

The main mission of OFFA is to:

- (a) propose to the Governments all measures useful for the development of alternance;
- (b) guarantee the apprentice's status of employee and relative benefits (e.g. social security coverage) and the mobility of the learner in alternance;
- (c) ensure transparency between supply and demand for alternance contracts in collaboration with providers and professional sectors (social partners);
- (d) organise the overall promotion of Alternance Training;
- (e) ensure coordination at the local level between Alternance Training providers in the two subsystems in information and guidance for young people;
- (f) decide on the granting financial incentives for alternance to companies;
- (g) design tools and indicators for overall evaluation of the scheme in consultation with all the providers.

OFFA carries out these assignments from within their own team and by convening working groups in which various external stakeholders participate.

The establishment of OFFA went hand-in-hand with the implementation of the common alternance contract (Section 2.2). This was to harmonise the rules governing different sub-schemes as implemented by different VET providers and eventually create the conditions for learner mobility between different VET providers.

OFFA has developed a common accreditation system for companies that replaces the specific accreditation criteria of the various providers. This accreditation determines the minimum conditions that a company must meet in order to train young people, such as having the necessary organisation and equipment, respecting the regulations in force, and having a competent tutor. The accreditation procedure has to be finished within three months. Accreditation is also necessary to receive financial benefits. Accreditation can be refused, suspended or withdrawn if the company does not meet requirements or does not comply with the requisite obligations.

OFFA also has a mission to inform, promote and develop *Formation en Alternance*. It has set up several channels to inform various stakeholders, such as the vade mecum alternance, designed and regularly updated by OFFA and its partners; this is available on the website www.offa-oip.be. OFFA is also available to answer questions from VET providers, institution professionals and the general public, via their email address info@offa-oip.be. Some answers to these questions are provided in the FAQ section of the OFFA website.

OFFA and its partners have set up a socio-legal working group bringing together experts from different partners (such as legal services of labour unions and union of social secretariats) and various social institutions in labour law and social security. Problematic situations that arise and which are not adequately addressed in the vade mecum are analysed in this working group, which provides a coherent interpretation of the legislation or proposes amendments to the legislation and regulations to the supervisory authorities, in order to solve the problem raised.

Still in development are:

- (a) an interactive and unique alternance platform with the constitution and articulation of databases necessary for the management of courses and Walloon financial incentives. It will include a matching component between the supply and demand of apprenticeships and will allow greater transparency of developments in this area. The platform will also

represent a quantitative and qualitative monitoring tool for alternance in French-speaking Belgium;

- (b) a cartographic localisation tool for the alternance training offer in Brussels and Wallonia.

OFFA also must ensure the value of certificates awarded by contributing to their recognition in the public sector and the establishment of bridges to other certification systems (CESS, CQ6, bachelor), so it takes part in the working groups of SFMQ.



BE

FLASH THEMATIC COUNTRY REVIEW ON APPRENTICESHIPS

BELGIUM

French-speaking region



This publication is the final report of the flash thematic country review of apprenticeships in French-speaking Belgium. Cedefop initiated the review, which took place between October 2017 and October 2018, and looked at the apprenticeship scheme at upper secondary level. This report presents the key findings and suggestions for action to develop apprenticeship training at upper secondary in the medium and long term. The underlying analysis largely relies on information collected from different categories of stakeholder at different levels, and in-depth discussions with a national panel of experts. The report presents suggestions for action organised under mid- and long-term scenarios. These include developing a comprehensive vision and a clearer identity of the scheme within the education and training system, by working on an umbrella legislative framework; and a short-term scenario, to improve the existing apprenticeship scheme, mostly by improving certificate transparency and by working on cooperation among training providers and between the latter and companies.

4174 EN – TI-03-19-277-EN-N – 10.2801/067083



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu



Publications Office
of the European Union

ISBN 978-92-896-2872-3



9 789289 628723