



Commission takes action to improve the quality of traineeships in the EU

Brussels, 20 March 2024

Quality traineeships can help young people gain practical work experience, learn new skills and eventually find a good quality job. For employers, they are an opportunity to attract, train and retain talent. A quality traineeship requires fair and transparent working conditions and an adequate learning content.

The EU's 2014 Quality Framework for Traineeships set out 21 quality principles to ensure high-quality learning and working conditions. In its 2023 evaluation of this Council Recommendation, the Commission found that it had a positive impact on the quality of traineeships in the EU. However, the Commission's evaluation also found room for improvement and both the Conference on the Future of Europe and the European Parliament called on the Commission to improve traineeships.

Today, the European Commission is taking action and is proposing to **improve working conditions for trainees, including pay, inclusiveness and quality of traineeships in the EU**. The initiative consists of:

- a **proposal for a Directive** on improving and enforcing working conditions for trainees and combatting regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships; and
- a **proposal to revise the 2014 Council Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships** to address issues of quality and inclusiveness, such as fair pay and access to social protection.

In 2019, the latest available reliable data, there were an estimated 3.1 million trainees in the EU. Approximately half of all trainees (1.6 million) were enrolled in paid traineeships.

Boosting rights for trainees

The proposed Directive will help Member States improve and enforce good quality working conditions for trainees, as well as combat regular employment relationships disguised as traineeships.

Key elements of the proposed Directive include:

- **the principle of non-discrimination**, ensuring that trainees are treated equally in terms of working conditions, including pay, compared to regular employees, unless different treatment is justified on objective grounds, such as different tasks, lower responsibilities, work intensity or the weight of the learning and training component.
- **ensuring traineeships are not used to disguise regular jobs**, through controls and inspections, with Member States using duration as a possible aspect to assess whether this is the case, and by asking companies to share traineeships' numbers, durations and working conditions.
- **allowing workers' representatives to engage on behalf of trainees** to secure their rights.
- **requiring Member States to ensure channels for trainees to report malpractice** and poor working conditions.

Fairer and more inclusive traineeships

The reinforced Council Recommendation applies to **all** trainees regardless of their employment status, including traineeships that are part of formal education and training curricula and those required for accessing specific professions.

Key elements of the revised Council Recommendation include:

- **recommending fair pay for trainees**.
- **ensuring access to adequate social protection for trainees**, including appropriate coverage in line with national legislation of the Member State.
- **appointing a mentor**, to provide trainees with targeted support and advice.

- **promoting equal access to traineeship opportunities**, through reaching out to people in vulnerable situations and by ensuring that workplaces are accessible for trainees with disabilities.
- **allowing for hybrid and remote working**, by ensuring trainees receive the equipment needed.
- **increasing employability** by additional career guidance and incentives to traineeship providers to offer trainees a regular position after their traineeship.

These new elements are in addition to what already exists in the 2014 Quality Framework for Traineeships Recommendation, such as having clear vacancy notices, providing a written agreement before the start of the traineeship setting out the terms, making sure traineeships are not excessively long or repeated, ensuring that the learning experience is a core part, guaranteeing the health and safety aspects, and promoting their recognition afterwards.

Next steps

The Commission's proposed Directive will be discussed by the European Parliament and the Member States. Once the proposed Directive is adopted by the co-legislators, Member States will have two years to incorporate it into national law.

The Council Recommendation will be presented to the Council for consideration and adoption. Following this, the Commission will support Member States in implementing the Recommendation and will invite them to provide updates on national initiatives, reforms, best practices and statistics.

Background

The EU's [2014 Quality Framework for Traineeships](#) sets out 21 quality principles for traineeships that Member States are recommended to put into practice to ensure high-quality learning and working conditions. In its [2023 evaluation](#) of this Council Recommendation, the Commission found that it had a positive impact on the quality of traineeships in the EU. At the same time, the evaluation found room for improvement in applying, monitoring and enforcing the framework's quality principles.

It is estimated that there are around 3.1 million trainees in the EU (among them 1.6 million paid trainees) and the demand for traineeships is expected to grow at least by 16% by 2030. According to a [2023 Eurobarometer survey](#), 78% of young Europeans did at least one traineeship and 68% said they found a job afterwards. 21% of respondents did a traineeship in another Member State, marking a significant increase since 2013 (9%).

Today's package follows up on the [European Parliament resolution of June 2023](#), calling the Commission to update the 2014 Quality Framework; the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), where EU citizens asked the Commission to ensure quality traineeships; and the [European Year of Youth](#). It also contributes to implementing the [European Year of Skills](#) and complements the [reinforced Youth Guarantee](#) and other Commission initiatives supporting youth employment.

For More Information

[Questions & Answers on improving the quality of traineeships in the EU](#)

[Proposed Directive](#)

[Proposed Council Recommendation](#)

[Impact assessment](#)

[Commission's 2023 evaluation of the 2014 Recommendation](#) on a Quality Framework for Traineeships

[Commission's page on traineeships](#)

[European Year of Skills](#)

[Eurobarometer survey on traineeships](#)

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Quotes:

"Today's package will promote quality traineeships across the EU, helping young people to access better opportunities to transition from education to the workplace, and assist businesses in finding, training and recruiting young talent. We want to create more opportunities across the board and offer paid traineeships that are accessible to all young people regardless of their socio-economic background. By improving this access as well as the quality of traineeships, we are also seeking to alleviate labour and skills shortages, helping companies to thrive and young people to find jobs that match their skills and interests. This in turn will help to create a more inclusive and dynamic labour market for young people in the EU."

Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People - 20/03/2024

"Traineeships can be a great way for young people to get a first work experience, learn new skills, and build their network. However, they must be quality traineeships, meaning there's a clear learning objective, they are paid, and the trainees can receive mentoring and guidance to help them transition to the world of work. We also need to make every effort to make traineeships more accessible and inclusive, they should not be just for a privileged few. Every young person in Europe deserves a good start to their working lives."

Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights - 20/03/2024

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