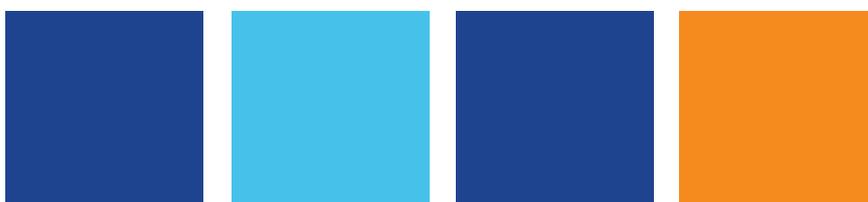

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY
IN APPRENTICESHIPS: FOCUS
ON LONG-TERM MOBILITY
DENMARK



Please cite this publication as:

Andersen, O.D. (2020). *International mobility in apprenticeships: focus on long-term mobility: Denmark*. Cedefop ReferNet Thematic Perspectives.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/international_mobility_apprenticeship_Denmark_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf

Author: Ole Dibbern Andersen

Reviewed by Cedefop

© University College Copenhagen (Cedefop ReferNet Denmark), 2020

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

The thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) systems provided in 'VET in Europe' reports. The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda.

Thematic perspectives provide national overviews of specific themes in a common format and offer comparative dimension across the EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. They are available at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives>

This thematic perspective was prepared based on data/information from 2018-2019.

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of Cedefop.

Thematic perspectives are co-financed by the European Union and ReferNet national partners.

ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 27 Member States, plus Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop's work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>



#refernet

Contents

Contents.....	3
Foreword.....	4
Executive summary.....	5
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	6
Chapter 2. Exogenous factors influencing the mobility of apprentices at the upper secondary level	8
2.1. Economic sectors and actors	8
2.2. Dynamics of the demand for and supply of skills at the medium occupational level	9
2.3. Attitude of employers towards training.	10
2.4. International qualifications: existence and extent	10
2.5. Other relevant factors (e.g. level of interest in foreign languages).....	11
Chapter 3. The link between the apprenticeship scheme design and apprentices' mobility.....	13
3.1. Apprenticeship type (e.g. system or mode of delivery).....	13
3.2. Apprenticeship governance (at the strategic, decision-making level)	13
3.3. Duration of apprenticeships, especially of in-company training.....	14
3.4. Organisation of alternation	16
3.5. Type of contract and status of apprentices.....	16
3.6. Remuneration	18
3.7. Provisions regarding occupational health, safety and social insurance	18
3.8. Curriculum / training standards specification	19
3.9. Use of validation in apprenticeships	20
Chapter 4. Lessons learnt from existing policies, initiatives and projects concerning apprentices' mobility	21
Chapter 5. Conclusions	24
Abbreviations	26
References.....	27

Foreword

This article discusses long-term mobility in the context of the Danish apprenticeship system.

The issue of mobility has acquired a high priority in political debates over how to form and develop an apprenticeship system for Denmark, and many efforts have been made to establish a well-functioning system of mobility for apprentices.

Based upon interviews with key individuals ⁽¹⁾, desk research and statistical data, the article provides an overview of the enablers and disablers that affect the Danish mobility program (PIU).

The PIU program is a Danish mobility program that allows pupils in Danish vocational education and training to take up traineeships abroad once they have completed the basic course ⁽²⁾ of their education. Through the scheme, the Danish employer or the student himself can obtain financial support for the abroad stay. Traineeships abroad provide the pupil with experience and skills that the pupil can use to seek internships as well as jobs in both Denmark and abroad.

The scheme applies to:

- (a) all pupils in vocational education and training, including *Eux* ⁽³⁾, in technical and commercial schools, agricultural schools and social and health schools, etc., once the basic course has been completed ;
- (b) pupils in school internships at a traineeship centre;
- (c) all with apprenticeship in Danish companies.

A PIU stay can take place anywhere in the world. The student can take his or her entire internship (i.e. the work-based component) abroad or just part of it. However, the stay must last at least one month.

The PIU program is financed by the AUB ⁽⁴⁾. AUB grant helps (in whole or in part) to cover the student's expenses in connection with the stay. If the student has a Danish internship, the grant from AUB will be paid to the Danish employer. Conversely, if the pupil does not have a Danish internship, the grant is paid from AUB to the pupil himself.

¹ The key informant has been with Special Consultant/International Adviser Lars Møller Bentsen, Ministry of Higher Education and Science/Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education who had been interviewed several times.

² See Section 3.1.

³ See Section 1.

⁴ AUB, the employers' reimbursement scheme, is an independent institution managing a number of tasks related to VET (and apprenticeship) in-company training.

Executive summary

This article discusses the enablers and disablers that are active in the context of mobility within the Danish apprenticeship system ⁽⁵⁾ (see the introduction about apprenticeship within VET in Denmark).

Denmark and its apprenticeship system are favoured by a national program encouraging mobility, the so-called PIU program, which aims to support apprentices in going abroad for learning.

The main aim of the article is to analyse this system in the light of a number of VET-external and VET-internal factors: the economic situation in Denmark, the structure of the programs, the supporting mechanisms in PIU, and the overall perception and assessment of mobility learning among employers and apprentices, and in the policy discourse.

This article presents updated figures on mobility activity and provides elements to reflect on how this trend will develop in the years to come.

⁵ See Section 1 for a discussion of how the apprenticeship system is part of the Danish VET system.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Although VET programmes are offered in several variations in Denmark, building on different legal frameworks, there is no doubt that the main pathway through VET is constituted by the apprenticeship scheme, founded and developed since the beginning of VET education and training in Denmark.

More than 95% of participants in Danish VET are involved in this kind of scheme, leaving only a small percentage for “alternative” VET pathways, such as the “new master apprenticeship programme” (*ny mesterlære*), in which the alternation between learning venues is not applied, or the few college-based VET programmes without work-based learning in a company.

Seen over a long historical period, the Danish VET system has been quite stable in maintaining apprenticeship as the basis for almost all its VET. A handful of major reforms have modified and developed the VET system since its modern foundation in the period after the Second World War, but the core of the VET system has remained the same throughout: that is, apprentices are offered a training period of three to four years, alternating between periods of school-based learning and periods of work-based learning in a company.

As such, the model represents a unique Danish compromise connected to the development of the Danish welfare state after the Second World War. The apprenticeship system is partly governed by social partners, represented partly in professional committees, and partly by the state, which influences the content and form of the school-based periods and finances most of the costs for VET providers.

In spite of its stability, however, the Danish apprenticeship system has managed to develop continuously and was even able to win the prestigious Carl Bertelmanns Prize in 1999 for being the most innovative VET system in the world.

This recognition was and still is a reminder of how much the Danish apprenticeship system must adapt to external influences of different kinds, for example, the influence of new forms of technology, new learning philosophies or – and this is what is discussed in this article – of demands for internationalization and openings towards new inspirations from around the world.

One example of the system’s capacity to adapt, is the new programme *Eux*. Recently this new programme, combining vocational and general upper secondary programme, i.e. a traditional apprenticeship with an upper secondary education, has given young people new opportunities for VET competences, besides the main

pathway. *Eux* incorporates apprenticeship into a broader educational programme and is attracting growing popularity among young people ⁽⁶⁾.

As a relatively small country, Denmark has always survived through international orientation and cooperation, and the apprenticeship system has reflected this need in many ways throughout its history. From the Middle Ages, for example, Danish craftsmen (*navere*) have gone abroad looking for jobs and new experiences, bringing new and important cultural inspiration back home with them again along the way.

The question of the degree to which Danish society (including the apprenticeship system) should strengthen international orientation and relations or focus on national cooperation is a daily theme in Denmark's public media.

This article will try to place the question of (long-term) mobility in the apprenticeship system into the context of this complex discussion, and hopefully clarify the forces working in this field.

⁶ In 2018, 30% of VET applicants from basic school wanted an *Eux* programme.

Chapter 2.

Exogenous factors influencing the mobility of apprentices at the upper secondary level

2.1. Economic sectors and actors

As noted in Section 1, Denmark has historically been a society with a high degree of international orientation and cooperation. From the Middle Ages, Danish artisans have worked abroad, bringing Danish handicrafts and working culture to foreign countries and bringing back home new ideas about artisanship, design and materials. Of special interest, here is the Danish shipping sector, which has had a huge impact on Danish self-perceptions as a nation of internationally oriented people doing business and performing cultural exchange with many nations all over the world.

The Danish kingdom was to a great extent built upon the wealth brought home by the large Danish merchant fleet operating in international waters. This aspect of Danish history still has a role to play in Danes' understanding of themselves as living in intense contact with the countries surrounding Denmark. Denmark is still a nation of shipping, led by the largest Danish company, Mærsk, but since the flourishing of shipping and trade in the eighteenth century, many large companies have established themselves on the international scene. This is the case for companies in the medical and green tech sectors, and more recently the robotics sector (7).

That said, it must be noted that these large companies represent just the tip of the iceberg. Underneath is a big "bottom" of small and medium-sized companies, typical for Danish companies generally, and usually not having the same international attitudes and orientation.

In other words, the Danish context is split between (large) companies with a tradition of competence in international trade and (small) companies mainly producing goods and services for the domestic Danish market.

It should be obvious from this that views regarding the importance of the mobility of apprentices differ from sector to sector, and opinions differ accordingly. Typically, a big company with an international profile will consider mobility a necessity in order that apprentices are educated and are able to stay in contact with international markets and cultures. For a small or medium-sized company

⁷ More than 3 000 Danish companies have subsidiaries abroad and there are between 1.3 and 1.4 million persons employed in Danish subsidiaries abroad.

mobility is not so obvious but could be seen rather as an obstacle. But there will, of course, be many exceptions to this pattern.

2.2. Dynamics of the demand for and supply of skills at the medium occupational level

After the economic crisis of 2007-15 the Danish economy is now in a situation of growth, and the demand for skilled workers is consequently high. A number of prognoses have predicted a lack of people with medium-level competences, the most pessimistic predicting a deficit of 70 000 skilled workers by 2025 ⁽⁸⁾.

According to Statistic Denmark a growing number of companies in both construction, industry and service industries are facing a shortage of labour and the fact that the number of young people applying for apprenticeships for relevant occupations relevant is stagnant, contributes to a rather pessimistic scenario in terms of skills gap in these sectors.

This situation is, of course, the reason behind many initiatives in the field of the apprenticeship system. A reform of the VET system in 2014, followed by a comprehensive revision in 2018, represent the most directly political actions taken to solve skills gap the problems. These two initiatives aimed to raise the number of young people coming directly from primary school into apprenticeship programmes, as well as recruit more adults to VET programmes. A major tripartite agreement in 2016 aimed to provide 8 000 to 10 000 internships each year in order to attract young people to the apprenticeship programmes.

The political system is very much aware of the importance of creating a more attractive apprenticeship system in Denmark and uses a broad variety of means to obtain this goal. A reform of practical training centres (*praktikcentre*, Section 3.5) in 2011 for learners without a company contract, enabling them to complete their education, grants for companies signing up more apprentices than rated, and “fines” for companies signing fewer apprentices are just a few examples of these initiatives.

However, realising that the official political goals of raising the rate of applicants for apprenticeships and improving the completion rate are hard to achieve, the political system has opened itself up to other ways of solving the problem of a lack of skilled workers

⁸ The Economic Council of the Labour Movement (2016).

2.3. Attitude of employers towards training.

As mentioned in Section 2.1, the profiles of Danish companies differ considerably, including employers' attitudes towards the training of their employees.

Figures from Eurostat shows that around 38% of Danish companies are involved in IVET, giving Denmark a position beyond the EU-28 average of 30% ⁽⁹⁾.

Generally speaking, large companies – those with international orientation – typically have the potential for and an understanding of the importance of both initial (apprenticeships) and continuing education and training and will normally have implemented upskilling programmes for employees with upper-secondary and post-secondary education. For small and medium-sized companies this occurs less often. Continuing education and training for this group of employees is more likely to be spontaneous and to depend on the financial conditions in the company.

In order to improve the level of continuing training for small and medium-sized companies, the government has launched programmes for the upskilling of employees and for using academic professionals as “breakwaters” in order to implement and organise more systematic approaches to the education and training of people with this background.

In line with this, regional and EU funding has supported companies in the important new orientation from considering continuing education and training as an expense to seeing it as an option for developing the company's foundations and ensuring its stability.

2.4. International qualifications: existence and extent

Programmes leading to international qualifications are widespread in Denmark, but the picture is a highly varied one.

The tendency to obtain international qualifications is often connected to higher levels of education, as in masters and PhD programmes, where it can be a compulsory part of the programme. At lower educational levels these options are rarer, but nonetheless they can be incorporated in, for example, professional bachelor's programmes, such as a semester abroad as an integral part of the programme.

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Vocational_education_and_training_statistics&oldid=451347

Although in the apprenticeship system the tendency to acquire international qualifications is limited, it is supported intensely politically as a way of inspiring young people to expand their professional and cultural horizons.

The existence of the national Danish PIU program (*Praktik i udlandet*) (“Practice abroad”) ⁽¹⁰⁾ as a part of apprenticeships and different EU and Nordic programmes, in combination with the Erasmus+ programme ⁽¹¹⁾, supports learners to a certain ⁽¹²⁾ extent in obtaining elements of international qualifications ⁽¹³⁾. However, some observers feel that these programmes are used too little and propose more effective campaigning and better conditions for learners going abroad.

2.5. Other relevant factors (e.g. level of interest in foreign languages).

The limited use of mobility options, especially for apprentices, is among professionals in VET schools normally understood as reflecting a lack of cultural curiosity, but it often has other reasons. Employers may tend to keep the apprentice in the company in busy periods, or the apprentice can tend to perceive the conditions for going abroad as being too little attractive.

Another relevant factor is the impact on migration on the labour market dynamics and the political positions associated to it. The question of accepting and training immigrants is politically controversial in Denmark

At one end of political spectrum, arguments are brought forward in favour of improving the conditions for foreign workers in Denmark, such as allowing them public support in cases of unemployment. At the other end of the spectrum, the opposite argument is found, namely prioritising Danish unemployed people, their training and improving VET programmes for adults.

Politics has also addressed the specific issue of creating new VET opportunities for immigrants, such as the IGU programme (2016), i.e. a two-year programme combining practical training in both school and a company. However,

¹⁰ The PIU program is only available for apprentices taking a main programme. Main programmes are specific programmes following the two introductory basic programmes of typically 20 weeks each.

¹¹ In VET, the Erasmus+ programme is mostly used for VET students on the basic courses, but it can also be used in the main programmes.

¹² [Elever på erhvervsuddannelser skal ud i Europa](#)

¹³ Another such programme is the Denmark-USA programme.

a significant part of the political spectrum would like to see this programme closed down in order to reduce the number of foreigners in the country.

Chapter 3.

The link between the apprenticeship scheme design and apprentices' mobility

3.1. Apprenticeship type (e.g. system or mode of delivery)

As mentioned above, Danish apprenticeships is mainly delivered in dual programmes combining school-based training with work-based learning in a company. This “main pathway” in the apprenticeship system means that a typical apprentice will follow an outline educational curriculum consisting of one or two basic courses (depending on the student’s entry level), followed by a number of main courses alternating with practical training in one or several companies.

Basically, this model of delivery contains two areas of possible mobility elements. An apprentice can choose to do part of his or her school-based learning abroad or do part of the practical training abroad. Both are optional and both are used, but to different extents.

Although the main pathway in VET, namely apprenticeships, is described as consisting of fixed modules, this does not mean that an apprentice is required to do a whole module (school- or work-based) abroad if he or she goes abroad. On the contrary, students can ask for shorter or longer periods abroad. It will often make sense – for example, for the younger and more insecure learner – to begin with a shorter period of mobility to get the feel of how things work.

In relation to mobility, Danish apprenticeship is designed and practised very flexibly, giving VET schools and training companies optimal structural conditions for arranging mobility.

3.2. Apprenticeship governance (at the strategic, decision-making level)

The Danish apprenticeship governance system can broadly be described as involving a division of responsibility between the Ministry of Education, which manages the existing legal framework, the national trade committees ⁽¹⁴⁾ for the practical planning and supervision, and the relatively independent VET providers as the final designers and suppliers of apprenticeship programmes.

¹⁴ See <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/denmark>, Section 7.

These three levels are highly coordinated. Political initiatives related to mobility can be decided at a central level in the Danish Parliament and communicated by the Ministry of Education through the existing channels. as for example AUB (Footnote 4). The national trade committees, responsible for the professional content in the apprenticeship programmes, will then decide how and to which extent the specific initiatives should have impact on a certain apprenticeship programme. Eventually, the national trade committees will inspire local training committees, established at the individual VET schools, to implement such programmes.

The high level of coordination that characterises this governance model is likely to be a favourable condition for designing mobility in apprenticeship.

3.3. Duration of apprenticeships, especially of in-company training

Apprenticeship in Denmark, as described above, is organised in relatively fixed modules. Over time, a series of reforms have modified the duration of apprenticeship programs and consequently the duration of the periods of school-based and work based learning.

At the present time, a typical Danish apprenticeship program lasts about four years (some are shorter, some are longer), but it can be prolonged in case of learning difficulties or other challenges. The duration of an apprenticeship program provides good opportunities for periods of mobility, whether mobility comes at the beginning, middle or end of the programme ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Looking at the school-based component of apprenticeships, the programme consists of introductory basic programmes and main programmes. The two introductory basic programmes of twenty weeks each are designed to give broad insight in the relevant occupational field (for example, building and construction) and a period abroad is perfectly in line with this purpose. The Ministry of Higher Education and Science ⁽¹⁶⁾ (*Uddannelses og Forskningsministeriet*), which is responsible for the management of mobility programmes, estimates that VET schools tend to place more mobility periods in the first of the two basic courses

¹⁵ In some business programmes, there is an agreement to reduce the duration of the in-company learning period to one year (normally two years) if the company training is done abroad. In addition, some Danish VET schools offer on-line main courses, enabling VET students to do the whole main programme abroad.

¹⁶ Interview with Special Consultant/International Adviser Lars Møller Bentsen, Ministry of Higher Education and Science/Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education, 1.5.2019.

(*Grundforløb 1*) because of the less demanding number of learning objectives here compared to the second basic course, where the preparation and examinations for the main courses are challenging and time-consuming. However, according to the statistics, the second basic course is still the most frequent period for undertaking mobility (Erasmus+). On the contrary, it would be more demanding fitting the occupation-specific training content of the main programmes in a mobility period.

As a result of the latest reform of the apprenticeship system (2014), limiting the time for the two introductory basic courses ⁽¹⁷⁾ from up to sixty weeks down to twenty weeks each, the potential for periods of mobility has been reduced. The time for the basic courses has been shortened in order to “speed up” learners and in order to reduce the costs for the initial periods of apprenticeships. However, this is likely to have a negative impact on the options for mobility in the long-term, due to the fact that the major part of mobility tends to be arranged during the time devoted to the introductory basic courses.

Another result of the reform can be observed in the *Eux* business programmes ⁽¹⁸⁾, where the new arrangement consisting of a whole, coherent study year after the basic course has opened up longer mobility periods (typically under Erasmus+ funding), up to three weeks ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Looking at the work based learning component of apprenticeships, the duration of periods can differ from sector to sector ⁽²⁰⁾, and the work based learning can be spread over, for example, two different companies. A typical undivided period of work based learning will have a duration of four to six months, which as such allows both long- and short-term mobility as part of the PIU program.

Typically, a learning mobility period is arranged on the basis of the student's own wishes. He or she finds a company abroad and is hired for a period by it. In some cases, the lack of in-company placements for apprenticeships, might force students to go abroad for longer work based learning periods, or even for the whole company-based part of the programme.

¹⁷ The basic courses are the introductory courses in the very beginning of an apprenticeship programme.

¹⁸ See Section 1.

¹⁹ According to interview with with Special Consultant/International Adviser Lars Møller Bentsen, Ministry of Higher Education and Science/Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education.

²⁰ The number and the duration of the periods with work based learning is regulated in ministerial orders.

3.4. Organisation of alternation

The central principle of the Danish apprenticeship system is the interaction between periods of school-based learning and periods of work-based learning. This principle is enfolded by intense cooperation between schools and companies, described in the legal framework for apprenticeships, which defines how and to what extent the two organisations are expected to communicate and co-organise programmes and support individual learners.

A Danish apprentice has an individual education plan, and VET schools and companies are obliged to draw one up for each student, thus providing the best possibilities for achieving coherence between the two learning areas. The arrangement is based upon schools' and companies' interpretation of the learning outcomes in the ministerial curricula and the transformation of these to educational plans communicated and evaluated in a digital platform.

In the case of an apprentice going abroad for study or work based learning, it is therefore essential that the same level of interplay and coherence can be achieved. Normally the VET school will be in charge of the practical work of organizing the framework and content of the mobility period. In line with this, the VET school is responsible for evaluating the mobility periods and for reporting this to Ministry of Higher Education and Science or the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education.

Integrating mobility periods into an educational plan for an apprentice should thus be understood as an operation to replace one learning element with another, thus respecting the legal framework of the dual system, with its efforts to establish training of an optimal degree of coherence. This means that the implementation of a mobility period in the educational plan for an apprentice should provide the apprentice with the same level of competences as he or she would have had in case of doing the period in Denmark.

3.5. Type of contract and status of apprentices

The Danish apprenticeship system is fundamentally built upon a private employment and training contract model. To complete an apprenticeship program, the apprentice must sign a contract with one or, in some cases, several companies. The contract states that the apprentice is employed by the company (apprentices therefore have the status of employees) and receives a salary during his or her education and training – both in school periods and periods of work based learning. The timing of the signing of the contract differs, but normally it must be signed

before the beginning of the main programme ⁽²¹⁾. Sometimes apprentices will have a contract even before beginning the basic course ⁽²²⁾.

However, apprenticeship can happen also without in-company learning (see below). For apprentices without contracts with an employer, the so-called “practical training centres” (*praktikpladscentre*) can offer practical training, equivalent to the in-company training component, at the VET school in order to enable students to complete their apprenticeship programmes. Students in these programmes can go abroad for learning as well and in the same companies as apprentices with a contract.

The problem with the lack of in-company placements has become less serious since the end of the economic crisis with more companies offering opportunities for work-based learning to apprentices, but it is still an issue in the political debates surrounding apprenticeships in Denmark. Recent initiatives have been taken to implement a guarantee for practical placements (*praktikpladsgaranti*) in order to attract more young people to apprenticeships, and for the time being a number of apprenticeship programmes have received such a guarantee ⁽²³⁾.

For apprentices with a signed contract, the decision regarding a possible mobility period to a company abroad must be approved by the employer. For apprentices without a contract, it is up to the VET school to judge whether it is appropriate for a student to go abroad either for work based- or school based learning.

In practice, the VET school will perform a prior authorisation of the training content in the company abroad and will also assess whether the student will be able to return to his Danish apprenticeship program at a professionally relevant level.

The use of an employment contract in the Danish apprenticeship system is essential to understand the use of mobility options in Denmark. Being on a contract as a part of apprenticeship has the consequence that employers must find a mobility period that is relevant for the individual student before accepting him or her. VET schools and the Ministry of Education can promote mobility in order to enhance the professional, cultural and personal development of apprentices, but the employers have the last word.

²¹ See Footnote 8.

²² See Footnote 8.

²³ In professional fields where a big labour demand is expected, employers have decided to establish so called “advantage programmes” including a guarantee for work based learning in a company (based on a signed training contract).

3.6. Remuneration

If an apprentice on a main course ⁽²⁴⁾ wants to go abroad, he or she must find an employer willing to pay a salary for the whole period. If an apprentice is sent abroad by a Danish company and the salary is lower than the salary that Danish apprentices are entitled to under their training contracts, then the AUB ⁽²⁵⁾ will cover the difference and pay the Danish company. If the company abroad does not pay any salary, the AUB's reimbursement to the Danish company will be reduced.

Besides the salary, a Danish apprentice is entitled to receive some financial support from AUB covering expenditure for travelling and housing.

This is possible due to the national PIU program (*Praktik I Udlandet / Practice abroad*) – a unique Danish system. The PIU program is financed collectively by the employers and was put in place to ensure funding for apprentices going abroad. The maximum amount per year is DKK 32 000 (EUR 4 300).

This is important for the practical training aspect of apprenticeship. For the school-based part, the schools will typically apply for Erasmus+ funding for apprentices. This is, of course, the case during the apprenticeship programme itself (mostly in the introductory basic courses), but some VET schools are planning to arrange long-term mobility periods for graduates immediately after the final examination (journeyman's test). One of the largest Danish VET schools is planning this for graduates in the practical training centre (*Praktikpladscenter*), i.e. without the involvement of a company.

3.7. Provisions regarding occupational health, safety and social insurance

The systematic approach to mobility activities in Denmark, within the framework of the AUB system and the PIU guidelines, is complemented by a well-functioning system of insurance. Danish apprentices going abroad have a number of services available to them concerning occupational health, safety and social insurance. In general, students are protected during work and study periods by Danish laws on workers' compensation and social security, but they are encouraged to buy basic insurance abroad that covers leisure, travel and theft, although this is not compulsory.

²⁴ Main courses are courses following after the basic courses.

²⁵ See introduction.

Incoming students and apprentices can enjoy the same health insurance as Danish citizens if they acquire the EU health insurance card. Students from non-EU countries can stay for a maximum of one year, during which time they are covered by the social security regulations.

If an apprentice is sent abroad by a Danish company, then their liability insurance is covered by the sending company. If the apprentice signs a contract abroad, then the company abroad is responsible for the liability insurance. There are still issues pending regarding liability insurance when a VET institution sends a student abroad.

There is legislation ensuring that VET students and apprentices involved in international learning mobility have appropriate access to protection in terms of labour standards and safety. Both EU and non-EU incoming students can benefit from the same labour protection as nationals of the same status (VET learners) through the existing labour regulations.

With reference to relevant provisions regarding occupational health, safety and social insurance, this system that provides clear regulation seems to enable and support effectively learning mobility periods in the Danish apprenticeship system.

3.8. Curriculum/training standards specification

The Danish apprenticeship system works through descriptions of training standards (in terms of learning outcomes) in the curricula for the specific apprenticeship programmes.

For the school-based part of apprenticeship programmes abroad, the VET institution, the student and the receiving institution outline the knowledge, skills and competences that are relevant for the period abroad. The Danish VET institution will communicate with the receiving institution abroad and outline a plan for the stay and discuss this with the apprentice.

In the case of in-company training abroad, the VET school in charge of the student's main programme will outline the learning outcomes and do a prior authorisation of them in the period abroad.

It is obvious that this clarity and transparency in the apprenticeship system concerning learning outcomes is an important enabler of mobility.

3.9. Use of validation in apprenticeships

Danish apprentices involved in international learning mobility have easy access to the recognition of learning acquired abroad.

The VET school has the responsibility for approving the apprentices learning outcomes. In the PIU program this will often happen by means of a dialogue-based assessment of what he or she has learned abroad, as there is no requirement for written documentation.

In the Erasmus+ programme, this approval will often take the form of a kind of certificate.

Chapter 4.

Lessons learnt from existing policies, initiatives and projects concerning apprentices' mobility

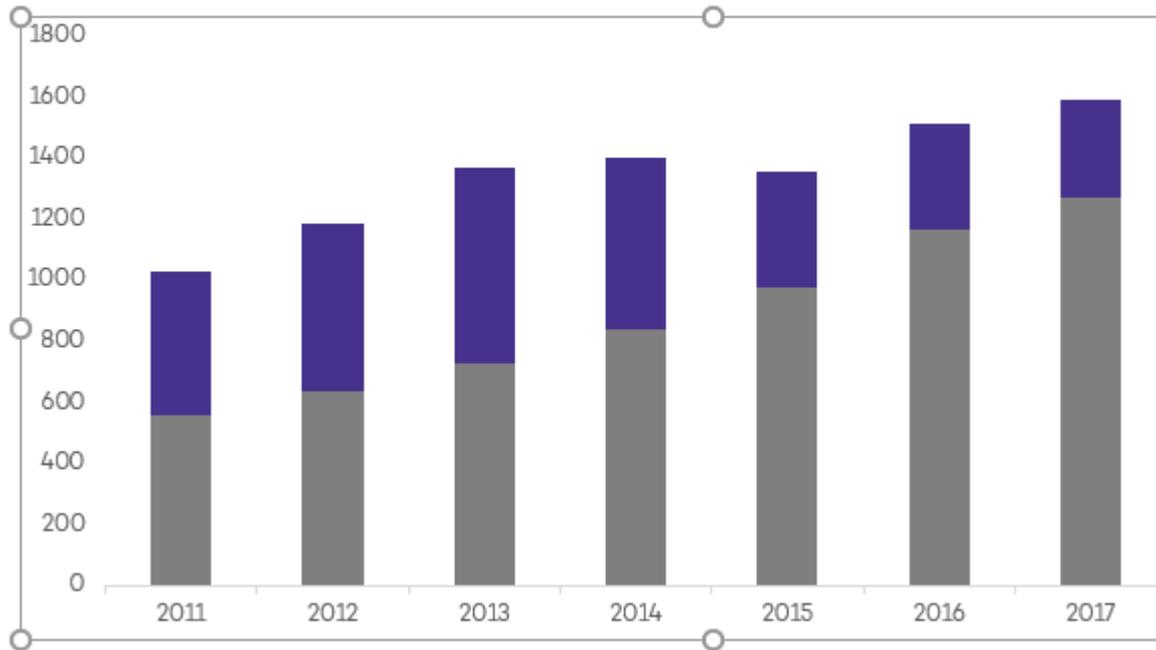
In spite of the disablers identified above (the reduction of time in the basic programmes, the employers' tendency to keep apprentices in-house in busy times), the unique Danish PIU program created to support mobility in apprenticeships has an apparent tendency to attract a growing number of VET students. There is no official evaluation of the Danish PIU system, but the Ministry of Higher Education and Science provides updated statistical data concerning activities in the system.

The latest figures ⁽²⁶⁾ show a steady increase in the number of PIU mobility apprentices in VET, as shown in Figure 1.

²⁶ Source: Employers' Reimbursement Scheme (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag*), 2019.

Figure 1. Activity in PIU 2011-17 (with a contract – without a contract)

PIU students 2011-2017



Although some educational observers consider the percentage of apprentices going abroad to be too low for a country like Denmark, it is worth noting that the PIU program is apparently able to attract a growing number of apprentices and as such seems quite successful.

Looking at the duration of the (long-term) mobility periods, the figures below show this pattern:

Table 1. Duration of mobility periods (2017)

3 months	3-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	24 months
18%	21%	39%	12%	10%

NB: Figures comprise apprentices with and without a Danish training contract.

Obviously, periods of a duration of seven to twelve months are preferred by companies and apprentices, followed by shorter periods of three to six months. There is no research explaining the reasons behind this pattern, but it is likely to assume that employers and students will tend to prefer the medium-term periods because they offer the opportunities for a certain degree of professional immersion and the resulting linguistic upskilling.

As discussed above, the latest VET reform has reduced the potential for mobility periods, especially long-term mobility. It will therefore be interesting to see whether the tendency to increase activity in the PIU program can continue for 2018, when the effects of the reform will have their full impact.

Chapter 5.

Conclusions

The design of and legal framework underpinning Denmark's apprenticeship system enables mobility in many respects, as do other supporting mechanisms such as the provisions for social security, rules about the remuneration and the potential for recognition of learning abroad.

Besides, mobility in the context of the Danish apprenticeship system is very well supported by the existence of a national program (PIU) that is designed to ease the mobility of apprentices.

In connection with the Erasmus+ programme and other existing programmes, the PIU program lays the groundwork for learning mobility in the apprenticeship system. As a consequence of Denmark's involvement in international political and educational organisations ⁽²⁷⁾ and Denmark involvement in the single market in the EU and other international markets, the political system is focused on the importance of Danish apprentices' active involvement in mobility.

The Danish apprenticeship system is probably embedded in one of the most conducive systems in the EU – the PIU program –that mobility figures from the Ministry of Research show a clear tendency to increase. Participation in the PIU program is indeed increasing, and a majority of apprentices in long-term mobility stay abroad for between seven and twelve months.

Despite this growth trend, Danish educational observers tend to conclude that the level of mobility among apprentices could be higher. An explanation for the still relatively low level of activity could be found in the following issues:

- (a) Danish VET providers find it difficult to fully exploit the possibilities provided by the PIU program because of the restraints ⁽²⁸⁾ on companies abroad in hiring Danish apprentices;
- (b) most apprenticeship contracts are signed with employers representing small and medium-sized companies which are not always highly motivated regarding international cooperation and often have limited experience of and expertise in arranging mobility.

On the other hand, the consequences of the latest VET reform and the economic developments in Denmark are likely to strengthen the disablers of

²⁷ E.g. OECD and UNESCO.

²⁸ VET providers report that it is a very demanding job to find in-company training placements of Danish apprenticeships, probably because of foreign employers' preference of national apprentices with good language skills.

mobility in the years to come. The tightening up of the VET system as such, and especially the reduced duration of the introductory basic courses in apprenticeships, as well as the high level of activity in the companies, due to Denmark's booming economy, will probably influence employers to keep their apprentices at home.

Abbreviations

AUB	Arbejdsgivernes uddannelsesbidrag (<i>The Employers Reimbursement Scheme</i>)
EU	European Union
Eux	Kombineret erhvervsuddannelse og studentereksamen (<i>Combined vocational and general upper secondary</i>)
IGU	Integrationsgrunduddannelsen (<i>Basic Integration Education</i>)
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
PIU	Praktik i udlandet (<i>Practice abroad</i>)
VET	Vocational education and training (<i>Erhvervsuddannelse</i>)

References

PIU-Sekretariatet <https://piugb.designdev1.dk/>

Ministry of Higher Education and Science (2019). *Programmes supporting cooperation and mobility*.
<https://ufm.dk/en/education/programmes-supporting-cooperation-and-mobility>

Likeindenamrk.dk <https://lifeindenmark.borger.dk/coming-to-denmark/study-in-denmark>

EDU International universitetsstudier <https://edu-danmark.dk/english>