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



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Author: João Barbosa (DGERT)

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CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

In Portugal, upper secondary VET consists of two main pathways.

A **school-based pathway**, in which education and training in school context predominates, with a comparatively lower training component at work context, occurring usually at the end of the programme. It includes different kinds of programmes. However, the most relevant are professional programmes (*cursos profissionais*) (Ordinance 235-A/2018, of August 23), ruled by the Ministry of Education and attended by around 93% of all the students in school-based VET. Professional programmes aim at providing learners with the required vocational education and training to develop personal and professional skills to perform a job and to pursue further studies and/or training (at post-secondary or higher education). They last for three years and the total learning hours (summing up school-based and workplace) varies between 3 100 and 3 440, depending on the qualification they award. Work-related training is foreseen within an agreement between the school and the enterprise and corresponds to 19% to 24% of the overall programme hours.

An **alternance pathway**, with alternating periods of education and training at VET centres and at the workplace, with relatively balanced lengths and a balanced distribution of work context learning hours over the program. The alternance training pathway is the Portuguese apprenticeship scheme and consists of various programmes (*cursos de aprendizagem*) (Ordinance 1497/2008, of December 19), ruled by the Ministry of Labour and last about 3 years.

The main features of apprenticeship scheme are as follows:

i. Current programmes offer

Apprenticeship programmes develop qualifications included in the National Catalogue of Qualifications (NCQ), within the National Qualifications System (NQS). Currently there are 145 qualifications distributed in 39 education and training areas.

ii. Training providers

Public Employment Service (IEFP) vocational training centres are the main apprenticeship providers. These, can be (i) set up and directly managed by IEFP or (ii) set up jointly by IEFP and employers' associations, companies, or trade unions and autonomously managed by them under protocol with IEFP (protocol centres).

In addition to the IEFP centres network, other types of organisations may participate in the apprenticeship programmes, such as external training organisations (public or private accredited organisations) that deliver the school-based education and training components and monitor the work context training.

The network of training providers and courses offered are coordinated, at national level, by the central department of IEFP and, at regional level, by regional delegations (five across the country). However, provided they comply with the regulations, protocol centres and external training providers enjoy an important degree of autonomy in the way they manage their programmes.

Any public or private company and other employers that provide workplace training is titled as alternance support organisation (ASE).

iii. Curricular structure and training time

Apprenticeship programmes are based on a strong interaction between different education and training components (sociocultural, scientific, technological and workplace training) and environments (VET centres and companies).

The total training length varies between 2 800 and 3 700 hours distributed in three periods. The duration of workplace training varies between 1 100 and 1 500 hours (about 40.5% of the total training time), depending on the respective qualification requirements. The weekly workload varies between 30 and 35 hours. Table 1 shows the structure and training times of apprenticeship programmes.

Table 1. Apprenticeship programmes structure

	Period 1*	Period 2*	Period 3*	Total **
Socio-cultural training component (Languages, Culture and Communication; Citizenship and Society)	350	225	200	800
Scientific training component (Basic Sciences - depending on the programme)	150	150	100	400
Technological training component (Technologies)	400	300	300	1000
Practice training component (Workplace)	300	550	650	1500
TOTAL	1200	1225	1250	3700

Source: author

* Reference time in hours

** Maximum hours

iv. Workplace training

Workplace training is based on an individual activity plan which sets the competencies to be acquired and/or consolidated and the professional activities to be performed. Workplace training occurs in alternance with the other training components, carried out in one of the following ways: a block at the end of each training period; broken down into small blocks throughout each training period; with a weekly or monthly frequency.

v. Final evaluation exam

The conclusion of the programme includes the completion of a final evaluation exam consisting of an integrated set of practical activities held before a jury constituted for this purpose. The final evaluation exam lasts between 12 and 18 hours, depending on the competences to evaluate.

vi. Apprenticeship contract

A specific training contract is mandatory. That means a written agreement between the apprentice and the training provider in which the provider assumes the responsibility to deliver the agreed training programme and the apprentice commits to attend training and perform all the activities that are part of it ⁽¹⁾. The training contract sets the amounts of social support (allowance) to be awarded to the apprentice, if it is the case. It also sets apprentices rights for personal accident insurance, under the responsibility of the training provider ⁽²⁾. The contract does not generate, or title subordinate labour relations and it expires with the conclusion of the training.

Apprenticeship programmes lead to a double certification – a professional certification and an upper secondary education diploma at EQF level 4 (ISCED 354), within the scope of the National Qualifications System (Decree-law 396/2007, of December 31, amended and republished by Decree-Law 14/2017, of January 26).

Summing up school years 2015-2016 to 2017-2018, the latest with official statistics available, students attending VET programmes were 41.5% of upper secondary level students. Of them, 83.7% attended school-based VET

⁽¹⁾ The entity responsible for the work-based training does not sign the contract. However, it should demonstrate technical and organizational capacity, to have an adequate working environment and occupational hygiene and safety conditions and the necessary technical, human and material resources. All these conditions are verified when the entity applies to be an ASE. Although not compulsory, a cooperation agreement may be concluded.

⁽²⁾ It covers accidents occurring during and due to training and correlative activities, in the place where it takes place, including study visits, during the direct route between homes, place of training and return any which is the transportation means used.

programmes and 16.3% attended apprenticeship programmes (about 6.8% of the total of students attending upper secondary education) ⁽³⁾.

⁽³⁾ Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics (2019), *Educação em números* (education in figures), p. 40 (Adapted. Own calculations).

CHAPTER 2.

Exogenous factors influencing mobility of apprentices at upper secondary level

2.1. Economic sectors and actors

Portugal is a small economy, in the context of EU28, since the estimated Portuguese GDP for 2018 represented 1.2% of total EU28 GDP (201 530,5 and 15 869 095,6 million euros respectively). The most prominent sectors, representing 62.5% of GDP are trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities (25%), public administration; defence; education; human health and social work activities (19.1%); manufacturing; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (18.4% of GDP) ⁽⁴⁾.

Portugal is also an increasingly open economy, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1. Internationalization of the Portuguese economy

	1995	2006	2016
Degree of openness	62.3	73.71	82.09
Degree of exposure to international trade	26.05	30.73	36.38
Export intensity	12.11	14.38	19.43

Source: INE (Statistics Portugal), Portuguese National Accounts, data issued by PORDATA

(www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Grau+de+abertura+total+e+por+produto-2275)

(www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Grau+de+exposiçã+ao+comércio+internacional+total+e+por+produto-2276);

(www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Intensidade+expostadora+total+e+por+produto-2277)

The most relevant export sectors in 2016 were textiles, clothing and leather (11%), transport equipment (10.8%), transport and storage services (9.5%) and food, beverages and tobacco industry (8.1%) ⁽⁵⁾. Incoming tourism had a huge

⁽⁴⁾ PORDATA

([www.pordata.pt/Europa/Valor+acrescentado+bruto+total+e+por+sector+de+atividade+econ%C3%B3mica+\(Euro\)-3270](http://www.pordata.pt/Europa/Valor+acrescentado+bruto+total+e+por+sector+de+atividade+econ%C3%B3mica+(Euro)-3270)) (Consultation 2019.08.29).

⁽⁵⁾ PORDATA([www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Exporta%C3%A7%C3%B5es+de+bens+e+servi%C3%A7os+total+e+por+produto+\(base+2011\)-2291](http://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Exporta%C3%A7%C3%B5es+de+bens+e+servi%C3%A7os+total+e+por+produto+(base+2011)-2291)) (Consultation 2019.08.29).

increasing in the last decade (2008-18: from 7 440.1 to 16 613.99 million euros) ⁽⁶⁾.

It is expected that the small size of the Portuguese economy when compared with EU or other EU countries economies, as well as its growing internationalization, enhance short and long-term mobility, particularly in training areas related with the most internationalized sectors. Training areas in such sectors, where apprenticeship is offered but there is not yet mobility of apprentices, include as textile, clothing, footwear and leather industry (12 programmes); tourism and leisure (4 programmes); hospitality and food (4 programmes) and transportation and logistics (2 programmes).

A good example that internationalization and openness of the economy favours mobility is the fact that mobility has a long tradition (regardless if it is funded or not by the ESF) when the training provider has close connections with branches of international companies or with international associations. This is, for example, the case of the Portuguese branch of VW and of Portuguese-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Câmara de Comércio e Indústria Luso-Alemã*), that own certified training centres offering apprenticeship programmes.

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

The supply of mid-level skills has grown steadily over the last decade. The number of VET learners in the professional and apprenticeship programmes increased from 107 022, in school year 2008-09, to 138 591, in 2017-18. However, the evolution of this growth was quite different between the two pathways. While it remained relatively stable in professional programmes since 2012-2013 (around 115 000 learners), the evolution was quite different in the apprenticeship programme: increasing between 2008-09 and 2013-14 (from 13 584 to 35 400 trainees); decreasing between 2013-14 and 2017-18 (from 35 000 to 21 869 trainees) ⁽⁷⁾. If these trends continue, a decrease of mobility in apprenticeship can be expected, regardless of its duration (short or long-term), unless specific measures are implemented to counteract it.

⁽⁶⁾PORDATA(<https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Balan%3%a7a+de+viagens+e+turismo+exporta%3%a7%3%b5es+por+alguns+pa%3%ades+parceiros+comerciais-2650>). (Consultation 2019.08.29).

⁽⁷⁾ Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics (2019), *Educação em números (education in figures)*, p. 40.

According to CEDEFOP ⁽⁸⁾, some of the main trends in sectoral employment are the decline of non-marketed services sectors; the stagnation of distribution and transport and manufacturing sectors; the increase of other business services and hotels and food service sectors. An increase of demand is also expected for occupations such as ICT professionals, customer service clerks, personal service workers and food preparation assistants. In fact, Portuguese companies already secure skilled workforce for these occupations through apprenticeship programmes provided by employer's associations training centres ⁽⁹⁾.

Regarding the demand for and supply of skills, the expectation is that the share of demand of medium-qualified workers will increase 3 p.p. between 2021 and 2030 (from 23% to 26%). In EU28, this share will remain relatively high, despite some decrease (from 47%, in 2021, to 45% in 2030).

Provided these trends continue, it may be expected some increases in apprentices' mobility, resulting from the increase of training provision in medium-level qualifications related with the occupations in demand, in which there is actual apprenticeship offer in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF): ICT (3 programmes); personal services (9 programmes) ⁽¹⁰⁾; food preparation (5 programmes) ⁽¹¹⁾.

⁽⁸⁾ *2018 Skills Forecast Portugal* (www.cedefop.europa.eu/bg/publications-and-resources/country-reports/portugal-2018-skills-forecast)

⁽⁹⁾ For instance:

- CECO-Training Centre for Commerce (promoted by CPP-Confederation of Commerce and Services of Portugal).

- CFPSA-Food Sector Training Centre (promoted by ACIP-Commerce and Industry of Bakery, Pastry and Similar Association, ACCCLO-Association of Meat Traders in the Municipality of Lisbon, AIPAN-Northern Bakery, Pastry and Similar Industries Association and AHRESP-Hospitality, Food and Similar Portuguese Association, among others).

- CINEL- Electronics Industry, Energy, Telecommunications and Information Technology Training Centre (promoted by ANIMEE-Portuguese Association of Electric and Electronic Sector Companies and ACIE-Association for International Business Competitiveness).

⁽¹⁰⁾ It includes specific programmes in the following training areas: Beauty Care; Health Care; Persons and Property Protection; Children and Young People Support Services; Social Work and Guidance.

⁽¹¹⁾ It Includes specific programmes in the following training areas: Hospitality and Food; Food Industry.

2.3. Attitude of employers towards training

In Portugal, in 2017, 99.9% of companies were small and medium-sized (1 259 234 of 1 260 436 in total), percentage that remains stable since 2004 ⁽¹²⁾. In general, large companies have training structures, integrated or not in human resources departments. These companies strongly value the training of their employees and some of them even have their training structures accredited. In contrast, small and medium-sized companies have difficulties in providing professional training to their employees, probably with the exception of those with high technology intensity and low employment intensity.

Table 3 shows that in Portugal, the relationship between the size of the companies and the provision of training is very strong, when comparing with EU28, since in Portugal large companies provide training to more 12% of their employees than European large companies do. However, we should note that Portuguese companies, regardless of their size, provide training to 21% more of their employees than European companies do.

Table 3. **Share (%) of employees participating in CVT courses by company size class (2015)**

Enterprise size class	PT	EU28
Small	±32	±30
Medium	±45	±38
Large	±60	±48

Source: EUROSTAT, CVTS, dissemination database, data issued by Cedefop (2019). *Continuing vocational training in EU enterprises: developments and challenges ahead*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 73. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/704583> (adapted)

With regard specifically to apprenticeship, companies of all sizes participate. However, as providers report ⁽¹³⁾, small and medium-size ones tend to do it more. Maybe because larger ones, having training structures, prefer to invest in the requalification and upskilling of their own employees.

Another factor to consider is the level of qualification of the employers that, as shows table 4, is relatively low. In fact, in last five years, employers holding higher education degree reached a maximum value of 23%, while the minimum value for those who do not even hold lower secondary education is 30.1%. We can also

⁽¹²⁾ Source: INE (Statistics Portugal), Integrated Business Accounts System (IBAS), data issued by PORDATA, (www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Empresas+total+e+por+dimens%c3%a3o-2857) (Consultation 2019.08.29) (own calculations)

⁽¹³⁾ Whenever the operators are referred to as a source, the information was obtained by interview specifically made for this paper.

conclude that, despite some improvement registered, employers holding less than upper secondary education (currently compulsory) remains significantly above 50%. Even more, the level of qualification of employers is significantly lower than that of employees: 23% reaching a higher education degree (vs 28, 5%); 30.1% below lower secondary education (vs 22.2%); above 50% holding less than compulsory education (vs 42, 6%) ⁽¹⁴⁾. This may significantly affect the employers' investment in training of their employees, in general, and in apprentices, in particular, since low-qualified adults tend to value less training than high-qualified ones¹⁵ and employers are certainly not an exception.

Table 4 **Employers' level of schooling**

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Below lower secondary education	N	82 000	72 600	67 200	72 600	70 900
	%	35.0	33.3	30.6	32.2	30.1
Lower secondary education	N	54 100	52 100	53 700	54 200	49 900
	%	23.1	23.9	24.5	24.0	21.2
Upper-secondary and post-secondary non tertiary	N	43 800	46 500	46 700	52 700	61 200
	%	18.7	21.3	21.3	23.3	26.0
Higher education	N	52 300	45 900	50 300	45 200	52 400
	%	22.4	21.0	23.0	20.0	22.3
Total		234 000	218 200	219 500	225 700	235 400

Source: INE (Statistics Portugal), Labour Force Survey, data issued by PORDATA (www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Trabalhadores+por+conta+pr%c3%b3pria+como+empregadores+total+e+por+n%c3%advel+de+escolaridade+completo+-1719)

In Portugal, companies or employers participate in apprenticeship as alternance support organisations (ASE, providing the practice in work context). They do not lead the process unlike other countries where employers or employers' associations directly lead and provide apprenticeship. Thus, these factors do not directly affect mobility of trainees. However, they certainly have indirect effects on it, since valuing mobility relates with valuing training and skills acquisition. This

⁽¹⁴⁾ Source: INE (Statistics Portugal), Integrated Business Accounts System (IBAS), data issued by PORDATA, (www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Trabalhadores+por+conta+de+outrem+total+e+por+n%c3%advel+de+escolaridade+completo-1386) (Consultation 2019.08.29) (own calculations).

⁽¹⁵⁾ We can infer this from the participation rate of low-skilled adults in job-related education and training. In fact, 77% of the adults do not participate, of which only 66% do not want to participate and 11% want to participate but for whatever reason cannot (PIAAC, 2012-2015).

relationship is somewhat confirmed by the fact that all apprenticeship trainees in mobility registered between 2015 and 2017 belong to protocol training centres jointly set up by Public Employment Service (IEFP) and companies or employers' associations, but autonomously managed by latter ⁽¹⁶⁾. It is also confirmed by the fact, reported by providers, that training centres related with larger companies (especially those ones having close links with international companies) tend to be more willing to let their apprentices have a period abroad and more prepared to receive apprentices from abroad.

2.4. International qualifications existence (and extent)

In Portugal, there are very few international qualifications, namely in the area of welding. They only award partial certification and it cannot be said that they interfere with mobility. However, the fact that Portuguese NQF levels are aligned with the EQF ones can facilitate mobility, regardless of its duration (short-term or long-term).

2.5. Any other relevant factors.

Some other relevant factors may influence mobility such as political, organisational, or individual factors. Regarding **political factors**, some training providers report that it is becoming increasingly difficult to establish mobility partnerships with organisations in countries that, in the last years, have been implementing more restrictive immigration policies. Those providers report that this difficulty is more evident in professions where unemployment is most significant in those countries and, for this reason, apprentices can be regarded as future potential competitors to local workforce.

In respect to **organisational factors**, some training providers mention that integration into strategic partnerships for mobility with VET centres and/or companies abroad is a strongly enhancing element. Since, in addition helping the placement of trainees, it streamlines the entire pedagogical and bureaucratic process involved and optimizes the allocation of resources.

Training providers report some relevant **individual factors** that can negatively influence mobility such as the characteristics of the apprentices (low age, maturity and social competencies) and foreign language skills, especially for

⁽¹⁶⁾ Information inferred from data provided by the Erasmus+ National Agency based on the typology of the sending organisations.

mobility in countries where English is not widely spoken. Particularly regarding social factors, the fact that some apprentices come from disadvantaged social backgrounds may also affect their mobility possibilities, either because they and their families value this type of activity less, either for financial reasons (e.g. greater urgency to get a job quickly).

Finally, they report that the absence of a tradition in Portugal for young people to have life experiences outside the family context makes some families reluctant to let their children go abroad, especially for long periods.

CHAPTER 3.

The link between the apprenticeship scheme design and apprentices' mobility

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

Apprenticeship is one of the main VET pathways that differs from the other main VET pathway (professional courses) by some features, namely (a) the weight of workplace training (about 40.5% vs a maximum of 24%) and (b) the organization and distribution of workplace training (alternance periods along the programme vs concentration at the end of it). However, both pathways share some features, namely (a) the main purposes (to award an education and training certificate and to qualify for employment) and (b) the training standards (qualification referentials included in the National Catalogue of Qualifications). Both the specific features of apprenticeship and those it shares with professional courses are likely to challenge mobility, in particular long-term one.

With regard to workplace training, its weight (duration) and its alternating distribution throughout the training programme can make long-term mobility difficult, as it significantly reduces the possibility to apprentices go abroad during the programme.

On the other hand, as one of the main purposes of apprenticeship is to qualify for employment there is a pressure to apprentices to get a job as soon as possible, which reduces their possibilities of going abroad when the programme is over.

Finally, the fact that apprentices have to accomplish universal training standards to get a qualification (academic and professional), as stated at topic 3.1.8 below, may not facilitate mobility, since it is not always easy to compare curricula from different countries. Especially in the case of mobility at training centres and when the sending country and / or the receiving one do not have qualifications designed based on learning outcomes or do not apply the ECVET.

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

Despite the work of Erasmus+ National Agency in promoting mobility, there is not an explicit national plan or strategy for mobility in VET, not in school-based nor in apprenticeship schemes. Therefore, the main conditions for the implementation of mobility programmes are willingness, flexibility and autonomy of the training providers, as well as the importance they give to it. Mobility programmes are time and resources consuming and, for this reason, they are not possible without strategic involvement of training provider's management structures.

Good practices referred by some providers are the creation of a team to promote and support mobility and the setting up of national and international partnerships. This is only possible when the providers have flexibility and autonomy to do so, as it is the case of protocol centres and external training organizations set up by employers or employers' associations. Probably this is an important reason why, for the period 2015-2018, all mobility occurs only in these kinds of providers.

Another reason why flexibility and autonomy may enhance mobility is that it allows the inclusion of mobility periods in curriculum planning and implementation. Although it seems that providers still do not sufficiently consider this possibility.

3.3. Duration of apprenticeship and of the company placement in particular

The long duration as well as the heavy workload of all education and training components may somewhat restrict mobility as they require the presence of learners in VET centre and/or in company, alternatively, along the entire program. However, as referred in topic 3.1.1 above, restrictions to mobility relate more with its organisation and distribution over the training plan. The spreading of all education and training components, including the ones delivered at the workplace, over the three years/periods can seriously affect long-term mobility, since apprentices have, in general, to attend, simultaneously and for a long time, the sociocultural and scientific components (covered in training providers), not only the components potentially covered by mobility (technological and in workplace training). Workplace training is often planned at the beginning of the entire programme. Therefore, companies are counting on apprentices for given periods and may not easily be able to change schedules.

In addition, not everyone in a class can be placed in mobility and the training provider must ensure that all trainees comply with the entire training plan. What may not be easy to arrange, although it is possible.

3.4. Organisation of alternance

The organisation of alternance may be the main constraint to long-term mobility, since apprentices have to change permanently between different training contexts (VET centre and company). Comparing with apprenticeship programmes (alternance pathway), professional programs (school-based pathway) have longer periods of mobility:

- 22.8% against 9.0% in 61-90 days class (1338 in 4548 against 27 in 299).
- 9.7% against 5.0% in 90< days class (441 in 4548 against 15 in 299) (see table 5, Chapter 4).

Certainly, one relevant reason is the fact that work-based training in school-based VET is more concentrated at the end of the programme. In addition, in many cases of apprenticeship, a workplace training plan supposes the continuity of trainees in the same company, even if accomplished in different departments at different training periods.

Finally, especially in areas of difficult recruitment, some companies providing workplace training intend to hire trainees at the end of the programme and do not easily agree with their placement in mobility programmes. Moreover, it should be noted that employability is an important criterion to decide about public funding of apprenticeship programme and, for this reason, providers may not be in the position to make any decisions that allegedly call it into question, i.e. to send apprentices to mobility and this way slowing down their entry into the labour market and thus reduce their immediate employability chances.

3.5. Type of contract and status of apprentices

Mobility, nevertheless its duration (short-term or long-term), is not restricted by the type of contract, since it is not an employment but a training contract. Even when mobility occurs in countries where apprenticeship contracts are employment contracts, it makes no difference, because the rules of the Portuguese apprenticeship scheme still apply to apprentices in mobility. The status of apprentices does not block mobility either, since they are learners and not workers.

Therefore, they have no labour or contractual obligations other than those set out in the training contract.

3.6. Remuneration

There is not remuneration of the apprentices by the participating companies. Nevertheless, they can receive financial support (allowances), mostly guaranteed by the ESF. It can include scholarships for professionalization and purchase of school supplies, food and transport allowances or even housing allowance. Training providers report that these do not constraint mobility, regardless of its duration. On the one hand, because in the selection of apprentices to be sent abroad, one of the criteria is to assure equal opportunities. On the other hand, because Erasmus+ grant is considered as enough for learners to participate.

But still, the lack of remuneration may be a constraint to mobility, especially long-term one, because apprentices are under pressure to get a job as soon as possible, sometimes by the companies in which they attend workplace training.

3.7. Provisions on occupational health, safety and social insurance

There are no issues as such that restrict mobility, regardless its duration. Since the apprentice is not a worker but only a learner, there are no additional social security rights to transfer (or to lose) when abroad. On the other hand, sending organisations provide an insurance that covers, namely, travel between host and sending country, accidents during training and in travel to and from training place, and health, hospitalization and repatriation expenses. It may be a mobility-specific insurance or an extension of apprenticeship contract insurance. When mobility occurs in a European country, trainees can also benefit from European Health Insurance Card.

3.8. Curriculum / training standards specification

Curriculum and training standards specification is not *per se* a constraint to mobility, regardless its duration (long-term or short-term), because all qualifications are in the NQC. However, the design of all qualifications based on learning outcomes may facilitate mobility in the future, since it will facilitate comparative analysis of the sending and host organizations curriculum. This is an ongoing

process that has already been applied to several qualifications in education and training areas such as hotel and restaurant, tourism and leisure, trade, management and administration and secretarial and administrative work.

3.9. Use of validation in apprenticeships

In general, validation of apprentices learning abroad is an issue only if eventual difficulties are not overcome in advance through a proper negotiation of learning agreements by sending and receiving organisations. When reported, difficulties relate less with the mobility duration (short-term or long-term) than with mobility activity type. In the case of mobility in companies, there is no problem at all, since professional activities are well set in advance (jointly by both organisations) and the sending organisation ensures the follow-up of trainees, in person or at a distance. It was reported as a good practice, when the sending organisation coincides the first week of mobility of both trainees and staff. In the case of mobility in VET centres, it is a little more difficult, because in some cases curricula may be quite different either in content, in sequential organisation, or in duration. The implementation of the National Credit System for VET in line ECVET will surely contribute to overcome this difficulty. However, unlike Portugal, not all member-states use it yet.

CHAPTER 4.

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

In Portugal, mobility of VET trainees is very low since, between 2015 and 2017, only about 1.2% of them participated in mobility abroad (5 338 of 441 533). However, there are significant differences related to the modality of VET and to the kind and duration of mobility. Concerning to VET modality, it seems that professional programmes facilitate or promote mobility more than apprenticeship programmes: 1.4% (5 086 of 369 452) versus 0.4% (302 of 72 08) of participants, respectively. Concerning the duration, long-term mobility (90> days) is lower in the apprenticeship scheme than in professional programmes (4.9% and 8.7%, respectively). However, long-term mobility is generally more difficult and very low in both options. Concerning the kind of activity, all long-term mobility occurs in enterprises (VET-Comp), regardless of the type of programme. In apprenticeship programmes, there is mobility practically only in companies, regardless of its duration (99%), while mobility in VET centres (VET – School) occurs more in professional programmes, even it is lower than mobility in companies (10.6% and 89.4% respectively). Table 5 provides a more detailed picture of mobility of VET learners.

Table 5. **VET learners in mobility** (2015-2017)

	School-based VET (1) (Number of mobility days)					Apprenticeship (1) (Number of mobility days)					TOTAL
	≤30	31-60	61-90	90>	Total	≤30	31-60	61-90	90>	Total	
VET-COMPANY	1123	1946	1038	441	4548	174	83	27	15	299	4847
	69.4	98.3	99	100	89.4	98.3	100	100	100	99	90.0
VET-SCHOOL	494	33	11	----	538	3	----	---	----	3	541
	30.6	1.7	1.0	----	10.6	1.7	----	----	----	1.0	10.0
TOTAL	1617	1979	1049	441	5086	177	83	27	15	302	5388

Source: Erasmus+ National Agency (own calculations)

These categories are not in the original data. We inferred them from the typology of VET sending organizations involved. Therefore, there may be a slight margin of error. On the other hand, in relation to 6.8% of the trainees, it was not possible to identify the typology of sending organization.

Bearing in mind the relevance of mobility for the acquisition of both soft and technical skills and for the increase of employability, these figures demonstrate the need for a national strategy to promote mobility of VET trainees. Especially those attending apprenticeship programmes either because their level of mobility is lower or because this is justified by the very nature and purpose of apprenticeship. Such a strategy should build upon these figures.

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusions

In Portugal, there are two VET pathways. A school-based one (where the main programme is the professional programme) and an alternance one (apprenticeship scheme). Learners' mobility is low in both pathways, regardless of its duration (short-term or long-term). However, it is even lower in apprenticeship programmes whether it is short-term or long-term mobility.

There are also differences regarding the type of mobility activity. In apprenticeship, mobility occurs almost only in companies. In professional programmes, there is some mobility in VET centres, although there is also more mobility in companies.

Some exogenous factors may positively condition mobility, regardless of whether it is short-term or long-term, such as the small dimension and the internationalization of the Portuguese economy. These features will possibly boost mobility, since they impose permanent exchanges and interactions with other economies, in particular in the EU, which can facilitate people's mobility including for training.

The structure of the Portuguese business system, composed almost exclusively by small and medium-sized companies, can possibly affect mobility in a negative way, since it makes it difficult the employers to focus on training and value it. The fact that the qualification level of Portuguese employers is relatively low, when compared to their counterparts from other Member-States, potentiates this difficulty.

Dynamics of skills demand and supply may affect mobility, positively or negatively, depending on the occupations related with medium-level qualifications that will increase or decrease.

Finally, there are other exogenous factors possibly affecting mobility such as political (migration policies in hosting countries), organisational (type and level of involvement of providers' management structures), individual (age, maturity, social skills and foreign languages competencies of the trainees) and cultural ones (family resistance to mobility caused by the absence of a tradition of young people living abroad).

Some obstacles to mobility have to do with the very nature of the apprenticeship scheme, being mainly the following:

- (a) The absence of a national specific strategic plan for promoting VET mobility, which made it depending on the will, autonomy and value given to it by each provider.
- (b) The pressure for apprentices to get a job as soon as possible after graduation, either by their families, or the companies that have trained them during apprenticeships, or by VET providers, as employment is a relevant criterion for public funding and mobility slow down their entry into the labour market reducing the immediate employability rate.
- (c) The organisation of alternance, which depends on the spreading of the various training components over three years, may be the main obstacle to long-term mobility, since trainees have to change between education and training environments (VET centre and company) permanently and all along the programme. This often results from a workplace training plan set at the very beginning of the programme and makes companies to count on apprentices early on, what may not give “space” to mobility, at least long-term mobility. However, this obstacle can be removed, at least partially, if mobility is anticipated and integrated into curriculum planning and implementation.

Abbreviations/Acronyms

- ASE - Alternance Support Entities
- CEDEFOP – European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
- ECVET - European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
- EQF – European Qualification Framework
- ESF - European Social Fund
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- ICT – Information and Communication Technologies
- IEFP – Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (Public Employment Service)
- ISCED – International Standard Classification of Education
- NCQ – National Catalogue of Qualifications (Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações)
- NQF – National Qualifications Framework (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações)
- NQS – National Qualifications System (Sistema Nacional de Qualificações)
- VET – Vocational Education and Training

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