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European Regional
Development Fund



Apprenticeship or Work-Based Learning (WBL) in Estonia

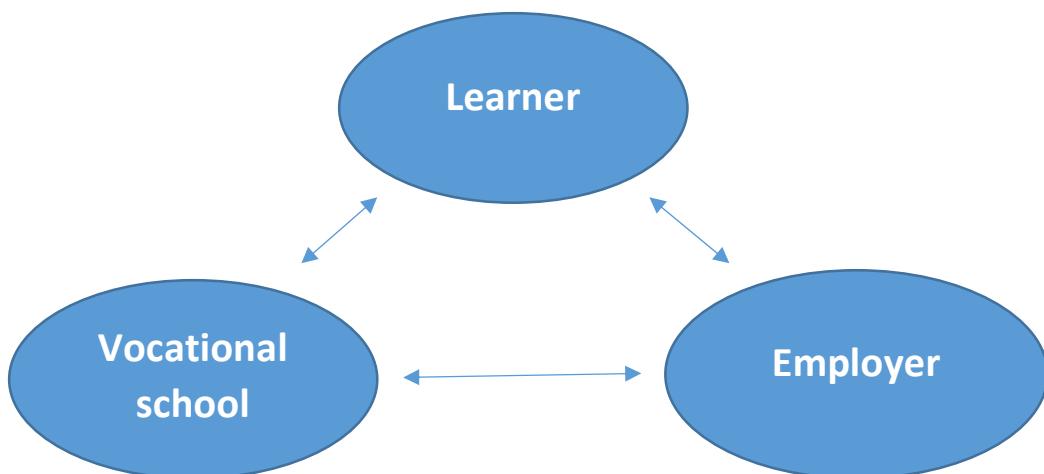
Introduction

Apprenticeships or workplace-based learning is a form of vocational education where the share of learning in a company, i.e. at work, is significantly higher than usual and makes up at least 2/3 of the total study. Apprenticeship is study format which rises as a result of effective cooperation of a VET institution, a student and an employer.

The basis for apprenticeship is a VET curriculum. Learners perform tasks under the supervision of a supervisor at the workplace, which help him / her to achieve the learning outcomes described in the curriculum. Besides this, theoretical learning is organized at a corresponding VET institution.

Apprenticeships are regulated by the [Decree](#) on work-based learning of the Minister of Education and Research.

Stakeholders and their roles



Learners

In apprenticeships learning is primarily practicing. Compared to traditional learning, the advantage of apprenticeship is that a learner acquires necessary work experience and has a chance to stay at the same company to work after the end of the study. One can do apprenticeship both when starting studies at a VET institution or already working in a company.

All the usual rights of a vocational level student apply to apprentices as well. They get a students' ID, they can apply for study grants and transport compensation. An apprentice is also provided with a free school lunch or an allowance if he / she has no secondary education and is up to 20 years old.

An apprentice is paid a salary by the company that may not be less than the minimum wage established by the Government of Estonia. If there is a valid employment contract between an apprentice and a company, no extra payments for studies are applied.

An apprentice has to:

- participate in theoretical studies at a VET institution and practical training at a company according to the school curriculum;
- follow the instructions and requirements given by teachers and supervisors regarding the relevant WBL curriculum;
- comply with the rules of internal work and occupational safety established at the company and do everything possible to ensure the preservation of the employer's property.

Upon completion of the curriculum, the apprentice receives a certificate and can take a vocational examination (if there is no vocational examination, then a school examination), just like all other vocational students.

Employers

Apprenticeship system enables employers to improve the qualifications of their employees and help to recruit new employees. Companies can train employees who have exactly the skills that they need.

In apprenticeships, the employer is primarily responsible for carrying out the practical part of the studies.

Before the launch of work-based learning, the VET institution checks and assesses the conditions at the company to make sure that it is ready to meet the curriculum objectives and ensure the occupational safety and health of a learner. The assessor also finds out which learning outcomes, described in the curriculum, can be acquired at the company and which need to be acquired at school or another company.

If a company wants to offer apprenticeships to train current employees or find new ones, it is first necessary to think about what knowledge and skills the employees need. In cooperation with a VET institution, a suitable curriculum is selected that meets the employer's needs. In exceptional cases, it may be even necessary to develop a completely new curriculum. The roles and responsibilities of the parties in conducting the learning are then agreed upon. When planning the workload and tasks of an apprentice, it must be taken into account that an apprentice must not only carry out his / her work at the company but also study theory at school.

In order to carry out the training, it is necessary that the employer:

- appoints a supervisor who has completed internship supervision training and who supervises and assesses the apprentice based on the objectives set in the curriculum;
- provides the apprentice with suitable work tasks (if necessary, they are discussed with the VET institution), the performance of which helps to achieve the learning outcomes set in the curriculum;
- enables the apprentice to study at school by relieving him / her of any work for the company for that period;
- provides the apprentice with working conditions that meet the requirements of occupational health and safety, as well as materials and tools necessary for the performance of tasks.

VET institution

The vocational education institution has a leading role in the implementation of apprenticeship studies. The VET institution is responsible for the organization and quality of teaching. It selects the curriculum in cooperation with the company (if necessary, develops a new one) and prepares the deployment plans of the curriculum modules for conducting apprenticeships.

The VET institution is obliged to evaluate the study conditions in the internship place in cooperation with the employer in order to make sure that the internship place is ready to meet the objectives of the curriculum and to ensure the requirements of occupational health and safety.

The VET institution is responsible for the appropriate qualifications and competences of supervisors (both at school and company). If necessary, organizes and funds the training of company supervisors.

In case of apprenticeships, VET institutions have the right to apply RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) process to learners, i.e. the recognition of previous studies and work experience. The aim of RPL is to make visible and value all human knowledge and skills, regardless of where they have been acquired. RPL is a process through which a person can have their previous study and work experience recognized.

Apprenticeship as a process

Preliminary activities

Employer

- wants to train the current and new staff
- sets contacts with VET institutions

VET institution

- wants to train students in WBL
- finds and talks to employers

Preparatory activities

VET institution, employer

- selection of a suitable curriculum, in exceptional cases, development of a completely new curriculum
- specification of the deployment plan of a curriculum modules
- evaluation of placement

VET institution

- application to the Ministry of Education and Research to commission WBL learner vacancies

VET institution, employer

- training of employer's supervisors
- notification and enrollment of learners

VET institution, employer, learner

- signing a trilateral contract

Studies

VET institution, employer, learner

- studies

VET institution

- technical organization, grants
- reporting

Learner

- vocational or school exam

Apprenticeships at Ida-Virumaa VET Centre

Ida-Virumaa VET Centre has quite a long experience in WBL studies. The VET Centre cooperates with numerous companies in Ida-Viru county and elsewhere in Estonia to organize WBL in various spheres – metal, wood and construction industries, energetics and chemical industry, tourism and service, textile and economics. In 2019 Ida-Virumaa VET Centre was recognized by the National Agency as a high-quality WBL provider and received a Quality Certificate for 4 years.



Cargo-handling, WBL curriculum, 60 ECTS, 1 year

Level: secondary vocational education

Language of instruction: Estonian and Russian

Learning outcomes:

The curriculum seeks to ensure that a learner acquires knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable him/her to work in cargo-handling, creates prerequisites for continuous studies and lifelong learning.

Curriculum learning outcomes:

A learner

- has acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes to work as a cargo-handler;
- can perform loading and unloading work and mooring work in accordance with the occupational health and safety requirements;
- treats his / her work responsibly, recognizes the need for personal and professional development;
- applies ergonomic and safe work techniques and uses personal protective equipment, computers and communication equipment as intended;
- is open to cooperation and participates in teamwork, develops social and self-relevant competencies and supports mutual communication;
- solves problems arising in work, if necessary under supervision;
- understands the need for teamwork and communicates correctly with teammates;
- is able to obtain information about further studies and job opportunities and plans his/her career;
- improves his/her professional skills and participates in lifelong learning.

Requirements for enrollment: basic education (obligatory 9 classes).

Documents issued upon termination: graduation certificate and grade sheet.

Curriculum structure:

Primary modules (51 ECTS)

- Career planning and entrepreneurship basics, 6 ECTS
- Port work without mechanisms, 10 ECTS
- Work with a forklift truck up to 5000 kg, 8 ECTS
- Ensuring work environment safety, 2 ECTS
- Work with rolling stocks, 5 ECTS
- Working with specialized equipment and port cranes in specialized terminals, 8 ECTS
- Container handling, 4 ECTS
- Handling of bulk goods with cargo handling equipment, 4 ECTS
- Port equipment construction and operation principles, 4 ECTS

Optional modules (9 ECTS)

- Ship-building, 3 ECTS
- Professional English, 3 ECTS
- Professional Estonian, 3 ECTS
- Use of computer, 3 ECTS

A learner can choose optional modules of up to 9 ECTS