

APPRENTICESHIP

HUBs

IN AGRO-FOOD SECTOR



IO1- A3. Developing an apprenticeship hub model – quality assurance framework

Developed by Trebag Ltd



Erasmus+

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Introduction

Apprenticeships have generally been recognised as an important factor in employability of young students in vocational education and training. The Apprenticeship Hubs project aims to increase the offer of high- quality apprenticeship positions in agriculture and food sector, by engaging small farms and small enterprises in food industry. To achieve this objective, the project have created apprenticeship hubs at different European cities to work on three interrelated priorities:

- Awareness raising of agricultural and food industry small enterprises on the benefits of apprenticeship, at company level and society level.
- Capacity building of actors involved in apprenticeship in the related sector (farmers, employers and VET centres), through targeted actions, methods and instruments.
- Social networking of actors involved, through established social media.

Moreover, the local apprenticeship Hubs are to network and cooperate at European level, with the objective to promote transnational mobility and apprenticeships.

In order to ensure sustainability of the Hubs, a set of quality assurance standards are necessary to be put in place. The aim of quality assurance of the Hubs is to ensure proper and up-to-date information is kept in the system, to ensure smooth use of the system, to ensure procedures are kept and to resolve any issues that may emerge.

The aim of the present phase is to develop a transnational apprenticeship hub model in the agro-food sector. The hub is to act as a point for communication, service and knowledge exchange between the educational institutes (VET providers, schools), businesses and employers. A general transnational framework is offered which can be adapted to local needs and requirements. The model covers a variety of parameters at the structural, organisational, human resources, procedures, quality assurance and material resources level. With the help of this model new bodies in Europe could plan, set up and run their own apprenticeship hubs in agrofood section.

The apprenticeship hub model has been set up as the result of the cooperation of the expert team of Apprenticeship Hub model project including stakeholders and experts in the field of education, business, and stakeholder representatives (chambers) as well as quality

management. The model is based on the findings of the research phase on apprenticeships in the agricultural sector and a set of case studies collected by the expert body of partner organizations. The model also counts on the expert body workshop on the quality framework and process analysis taking place in Athens, Greece on 3 August 2019.

Project scope & background

According to recent studies¹ emigration from Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe (CESEE) has been unusually large, persistent, and dominated by educated and young people. However, after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s, the next decades featured even larger and more persistent east-west migration flows. This was even more intensive in the Southeastern European (SEE) economies. Many emigrants have been well-educated and young; their outflow has affected badly the already adverse demographic trends in CESEE. Moreover, emigration appears to be permanent, with indications of only limited return migration so far and with primarily youngsters leaving their home countries. The significant outflow of skilled labour has reduced the size of the labour force and productivity, adversely affecting growth in sending countries and slowing per capita income convergence. With this trend, emigration appears to have reduced competitiveness.

Furthermore, the rate of young unemployment is even higher when we examine rural areas that deal almost exclusively with the primary sector. The SMEs (mainly of the agro-food sector) operating in these areas employ mainly an aged, mostly low skilled and low educated population. Therefore, a strong need arose in the context of local authorities to generate employment and development at the local level, through enhancing local SMEs as well as exploring local natural resources. In order to achieve mentioned, SMEs need to have some sort of professional assistance because so far, they have been unable, despite their expressed need, to find young employees, specifically trained to fit their own needs, with fresh new ideas, reliable both in the short and in the long term and easily adaptable to their specific business culture.

Nevertheless, responsibility for this rather bad situation does not lie solely with the mentioned SMEs. Young people who still choose to stay in their homeland do not have the necessary knowledge which would allow them to successfully integrate into existing trades. The mismatch of competences provided in VET schools and those demanded by the labour market in these countries is one of the reasons for this imbalance between states in surrounding. Therefore, there is a strong need of agro-food VET schools to comply with the needs of local industry and to achieve good scores of employment of their graduates.

The problems that arise in Croatia are shared also by the countries from its surroundings. According to the EUROSTAT's data from 2016, the high unemployment rate of young people (15-24) characterizes also Italy (37,8%), Greece (47.3%) and Hungary (12.9%). In order to tackle this issue, several partners from the respective countries have come up with possible solution. Under the guidance of Zadar County Rural Development Agency, seven partners from four countries have started with the implementation of "Apprenticeship HUBs in agro-

¹ IMF: Emigration and its Economic Impact on Eastern Europe
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1607.pdf>

food sector” project. This project aims at developing partnerships between VET providers and companies in the agricultural and small food industry sectors. These partnerships will be supported by Apprenticeship Hubs, operating through local development agencies, agricultural cooperatives, chambers, social partners and other similar organizations. The aim of these hubs is to promote work-based learning of students of agro-food VET schools by working as apprentices in small and medium sized agro-food farms, cooperatives and industries.

Exposure, experience, practice and increased productivity are among the benefits that these workers can discover. The apprentice gains experience from being able to perform work and get involved in tasks without being exposed to the risks normally found on a job site. Learning from the ground up helps to create a focused apprentice. Each task that an apprentice undertakes can be practiced until the apprentice can do it correctly. Plus, conducting on-the-job training with an apprentice provides an extra set of hands needed in most work-site situations. This way, the apprentice can contribute to the job while continuing to learn. For those who train apprentices – and for their companies as a whole – the benefits of an apprenticeship program can include greater employee retention and the continuous development of safe work behaviours and procedures. A great number of apprentices will choose to stay with a company that has invested time and resources into training them; this kind of effort helps to instill a sense of loyalty in apprentices. Continuously developing safe work behaviours and procedures is another important aspect of training apprentices. Trainers must work closely with apprentices to ensure they’re learning to do the work safely and accurately. Trainers also must ensure they’re teaching safe behaviours to apprentices. In time, trainers who do a good job help add to the workforce highly skilled employees who care about doing things the right, safe way.

To summarize written we can say that the promotion of apprenticeship practice in the network of agro-food SMEs will have beneficial impact on VET students, as they will acquire knowledge and skills required by the labour market and they will be adept to start smoothly their careers. It will be beneficial also to the agro-food industry as SMEs of the sector will benefit from the knowledge of VET students, their freshness of mind, eagerness to work and be developed, their flexibility to adapt to the company’s needs and the lower wages they will have to pay. Through apprentices, there will be infusion of “young blood” in small farms, cooperatives and food processing SMEs. Good selection of apprentices and good matching with SMEs of the agro-food sector, which is the task of Apprenticeship Hubs, is crucial to this end. VET schools will also benefit from the promotion of apprenticeship schemes as they will improve their training programmes based on the feedback from the SMEs and the students using these schemes. Therefore, target groups of the project can be grouped as follows:

- Support staff that will be a link between VET providers and companies of agricultural sector in the field of apprenticeship;
- VET providers in agricultural sectors, including VET schools at lower and upper secondary level, VET centres of post-secondary level providing initial or further VET, agricultural Chambers, local or regional authorities and other stakeholders that provide training in the sector of agriculture;
- Farms, small and micro food industry companies;

- VET students of agriculture.

About apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are considered a form of Work Based Learning and part of the Vocational Education and Training. Apprenticeships are a proven means that eases the transition from education and training into the work market. They provide employability skills and competences and enhance the competitiveness and productivity of companies and workplaces. In addition to preparing for employment, apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning contribute also to the personal development of an individual and increase social inclusion.

Although apprenticeships are considered a valuable form of Work Based Learning with benefits for all parties involved, their positive effects on labour market conditions and youth employability depend on their quality. High-quality apprenticeships can make a positive contribution to combating youth unemployment by fostering skills acquisition and securing smooth and sustainable transitions from the education and training system to the labour market. Furthermore, quality apprenticeships encourage active citizenship and social inclusion by integrating people of different social backgrounds into the labour market, they develop the skills of people and elevate their professional capacity, they mitigate skills mismatch, they ensure that apprenticeships are primarily a learning experience and they follow monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Quality of apprenticeships has been the topic of extensive work at EU, at national and at international level in recent years. EU organisations and the EU Commission have published a plethora of articles and have introduced quality frameworks for apprenticeships, aiming at raising the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships. All these publications have some common elements and principles regarding quality in apprenticeships, which are needed to be incorporated in the quality framework part of the apprenticeship hub model. Beyond these set of quality principles and indicators, the new dimensions and criteria system for planning, establishing, running and monitoring the apprenticeship hub itself should be set up. As our research has revealed, this is a relatively new area and there are just a few examples in place throughout the EU. The existence of such a hub and its accompanying quality description within the agro-food sector is not found, therefore our hub model will have a pioneer role in this field.

Apprenticeship Hubs as a solution for identified shortcomings

In the first chapter of this documents the existing situation in partner countries and background that led to the development of a project idea were explained, however one has to wonder if this is the most appropriate solution. That is, whether the problem of emigration and young people's lack of interest in agriculture, which itself is at a very poor developmental stage, could have been addressed differently?

One of the main reasons lies in the lessons learned through benchmarking. It is not a coincidence that countries using the dual educational system have a very low youth unemployment rate, which is supported by the data provided in December of 2016 by Statista. Countries such as Germany (6.5%) and Austria (10.5%) have a much lower youth unemployment rate than the countries covered by the “Apprenticeship HUBs in agro-food sector” project. It could be easily said that the role of apprenticeships of students in VET has

been universally recognized as an important factor in employability and in the relevance of training with labour market needs. Although apprenticeship in this context seems like a logical choice to find solutions to the earlier mentioned shortcomings, it still needs to be emphasized that most apprenticeship offers come from large companies and the public sector. Yet, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of European economy providing employment, economic development and social cohesion. For instance, in 2010 Croatia had over 233.000 agricultural holdings with an average size of 5.6 hectares per holding, employing 229.200 persons or 14.9% of the total workforce (according to the EUROSTAT census). These figures are more or less similar in all of the countries that are represented in this project (in Hungary and Greece about a quarter of the active workforce is employed within small and medium agricultural holdings). Therefore, it could be said that farming in these countries is very much a family affair.

The engagement of agricultural SMEs in apprenticeship schemes is expected to contribute to better employment chances of students and graduates and better qualifications matching the needs of the small farms. The best way to involve agricultural SMEs in apprenticeship schemes is through their involvement in daily operations carried out by so called Apprenticeship Hubs. From the perspective of a technologically advanced society, it is important to emphasize how these hubs can (and should) be considered as some kind of “rural digital hubs”. In this sense, hubs can be an important tool at local level for overcoming the double digital divide suffered by many rural areas. These hubs can do this by offering physical space where a range of business and community support services can be offered to interested stakeholders. Therefore, rural digital hubs can strongly enhance the ability of a local area to realise its latent potential by enabling it to take advantage of modern digital opportunities. However, to be successful, rural digital hubs must be carefully planned and appropriately scaled to the local situation and needs. All of the organizational levels and structural characteristics of potential Apprenticeship Hubs will be discussed within the next chapter of this draft.

Benefits for users of the Apprenticeship Hub:

- Accessing new business or markets as a result of working with the assistance of HUB;
- Business support provided through the HUB;
- Trading and collaboration with other users;
- More efficient and effective working practices through using the HUB;
- Extending the scope and range of users' services, etc.

Benefits for the local area:

- Attracting new businesses and creating employment;
- Attracting new residents, including families of entrepreneurs and young people, generating new income for the area, and improving basic services;
- Strengthening the local community and improving partnerships;
- Improving the image, identity and strategic vision of rural areas, etc.

In context of the expected benefits that should be achieved within the operation of the Apprenticeship Hubs, project partners aim to promote work-based learning and apprenticeship in agricultural sector. The specific objectives that should be met by doing so by the end of project are:

- to increase the offer of high-quality apprenticeship places in agricultural and food sector, by engaging small farms and small food industries in apprenticeships;
- to build sustainable partnerships between VET providers and employers/farmers at local and transnational level;
- to build capacity of VET providers and employers/farmers in organising and hosting apprenticeships;
- to increase transnational mobility and work placements of VET students in agriculture.

To put it simply, primary purpose of the Apprenticeship Hub is to provide support services to VET providers, companies and VET students on organising apprenticeships by matching offer and demand for apprenticeships. In the long run, despite the difficulties and possible obstacles faced, it should bring good results and ensure fruitful cooperation between all the interested stakeholders so the transnational mobility and work placements should be facilitated, simultaneously raising the offer of apprenticeship places locally and transnationally. In order to achieve that, the Apprenticeship Hubs, that will be situated in the 4 countries involved in project (1 per country), should be focused on running the tasks related to three main groups, as follows:

- Awareness raising of agricultural and food industry SMEs on the benefits of apprenticeship, both at company and at a society level;

- Capacity building of actors involved in apprenticeship (farmers, employers and VET centres), through targeted actions, methods and instruments;
- Establishing VET-company partnerships at local and European level and networking of actors involved, through a web platform and social media.

Some of the potential benefits that Apprenticeship Hubs could bring to the individuals and businesses that use their services were mentioned earlier. The benefits of Apprenticeship Hubs can be seen from two perspectives. There are benefits for the individuals (VET students and other young people of the area) and “businesses” (VET providers and SMEs) using the hubs’ services. However, there are also broader and ultimately more significant benefits to the local area and consequently for the achievement of rural development objectives. The bottom line is that Apprenticeship Hubs can strongly enhance the ability of a local area to realise its latent potential by enabling it to take advantage of modern digital opportunities, primarily in the sense of connectivity that facilitates everyday operations.

Apprenticeship Hubs are expected to produce to a lesser extent similar impact at national level, as they are going to serve a broader audience of SMEs, which will address to them asking for apprentices, than the local ones and VET students that may come from different locations. In future, Apprenticeship Hubs could play a key role in creating an enabling environment for local businesses by expanding its activities, doing so by providing a point for additional support, the development of digital skills and various business networking opportunities. Capitalising on this potential can enable many people who would prefer to live in rural areas but are “forced” to work in urban areas, to find an alternative professional path in rural areas, either through more regular remote working or establishing a business in the rural area. This can bring more people and more sustainable local economies, reversing cycles of decline and creating further business opportunities in meeting growing local demand. The potential to use Apprenticeship Hubs as a mean to attract people to live and work in rural areas has been a strategic target of many similar initiatives.

Apprenticeship HUBs

... operate at local level

... implement the awareness raising strategy and plan in order to attract (persuade) farms and agro-food SMEs in receiving apprentices. It can make it more realistic for young people to work in rural areas, thus reducing pressure towards out-migration.

... organize local workshops for VET providers and companies so they act as a meeting point for local business people, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and skills, and creating new possibilities for business and community networking.

... can become the focal point for providing a range of crucial business and community services, including targeted business and entrepreneurship support.

Setting up the Apprenticeship Hub

Within this chapter it's important to point out to the distinction that characterizes the nature of Apprenticeship Hubs itself. That is, although the project partners aim to yield fruit on transnational level (to do so, model of Apprenticeship Hub has to be universal in some way, i.e. transferrable and appropriate for different beneficiaries internationally), it's essential that the focus is put on the local characteristics of the regions involved in project. These hubs will act at local level, supporting the involved actors and at transnational level, increasing opportunities for mobilities. Hubs will operate, as structures providing specific services, within existing organisations that have a scope to promote local development and support vocational training in rural areas.

In order to achieve above mentioned and reconcile the two objectives/levels targeted (local and international) it is extremely important to set the structure of the Model of Apprenticeship Hubs in the appropriate way, which will ensure that the Model itself is applicable in rural areas of project partners' countries (although they are situated in close geographic surrounding, they all share some differences between them). i.e., to be successful. Apprenticeship Hubs must be carefully planned and appropriately scaled to the local situation and needs. Furthermore, their practical implementation raises specific challenges, including estimating and identifying relevant financial and human resources for setting up the Hub, engaging the local community and attracting target groups and providing the right services that respond to local needs.

The main steps of setting up the Apprenticeship Hub are:

1. Securing the necessary conditions (broadband, building etc.) – as already mentioned, hubs within this project will operate within existing organisations (project beneficiaries) so compliance with this requirement shouldn't take too much time and effort;
2. Engaging the local community and being committed initiator - a strong initiator organisation has to back the Apprenticeship Hub initiative, often led by experienced people with years and years of practice in international EU projects, which is the case

with more or less all the partners in the project. Setting up Apprenticeship HUBs requires strong local commitment (and considerable investment) and therefore, the commitment of local leaders or lead organisations is crucial for their success;

3. Ensuring the necessary financial, technical and human resources. Since in the case of “Apprenticeship HUBs in agro-food sector” funding is provided through public sources (e.g. national and EU funding), the focus should be put on human resources. Setting up the hubs typically requires 1 to 2 full-time staff primarily responsible for managing the project. Typical skills needed for setting up the hub include management skills, strategic planning, marketing and PR, funding knowledge, financial management and business support knowledge.

Bearing in mind everything written, it’s easy to conclude that one of the main characteristics that will mark future Apprenticeship Hubs is multifunctionality. The provision of a wide range of services through one location has been shown to add value in generating sufficient “energy” around a specific hub to create new community and business opportunities.

Finally, the role of a mediator should also not be underestimated in turning the Hubs from a physical space providing digital opportunities into a human space, which facilitates collaboration between individuals and organisations at all levels. Human factor is one of the factors that prevail possible disadvantages and complications faced during the operation and thus ensure the sustainability of Apprenticeship Hubs in the agro-food sector. However, this sustainability will primarily depend on:

- The effectiveness of pilot Apprenticeship Hubs up to that moment, or, in other words if they are able to recruit new companies, facilitate matching between VET institutions and local companies of the agro-food sector, facilitate networking and provide support to apprenticeship;
- Cost/benefit they can produce;
- Resources they need to operate. In the project it is previewed that the operating apprenticeship hub staff will be already employed staff of institutions;
- The general context as far as both the economy and SMEs of the sector and apprenticeship policies, laws, certification, quality assurance, mobility, ECVET etc. are concerned.

Typical challenges of setting up the Apprenticeship HUB (and some obstacles possible in the future)

- Make relevant stakeholders aware about the added value of the Apprenticeship HUBs in rural areas: it could be found challenging to demonstrate young people/entrepreneurs that available services and support will allow them to build a future in rural areas;
- Change the image of “reality” and ensure visibility of the hub and its services: possible solutions could be sessions at larger business events taking place across the region, in order to reach the large audiences and to achieve wider visibility;
- Ensure access to the services for a wider audience: perhaps different events should be planned much in advance and live streamed to make it accessible to a wider audience across the region, as well as make sessions available after the meeting;
- Lack of availability of immediate public funding could be an issue in the future.

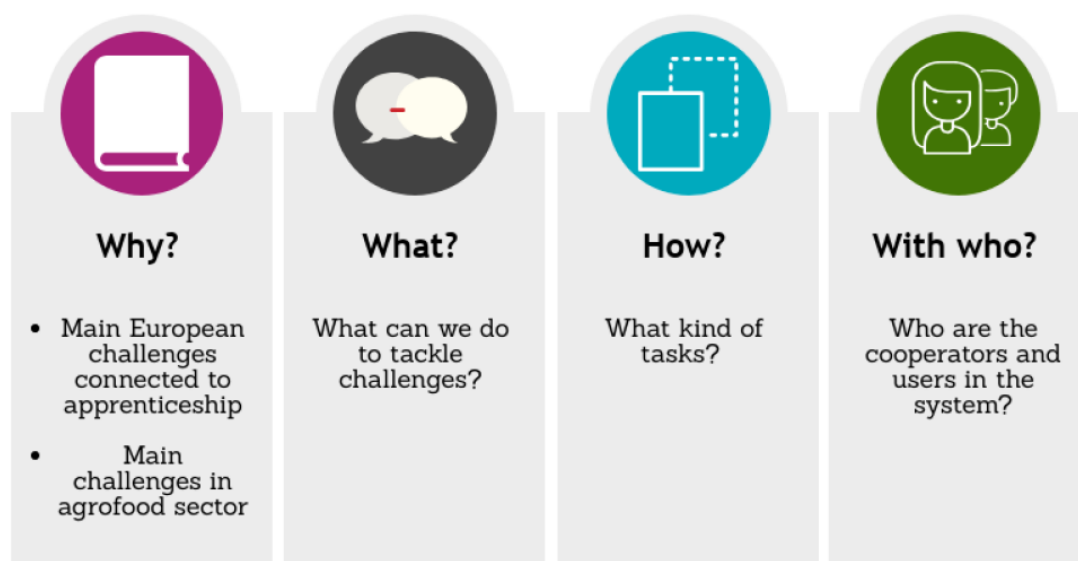
Main elements of the model

To set up an apprenticeship hub a lot of criteria have to be met. These can be put into the following categories

- **Rationale (WHY)** – the reasons and the legislative, social, economic background should be mapped to decide about the main needs and their environment. Challenges and aims are defined.
- **Scope (WHAT)**– the apprenticeship hub will have to be adapted to local needs and possibilities. Further objectives are to be defined within the agro-food sector and a tailor made programme is to be set, which serves the needs of the beneficiaries
- **Process (HOW)** – a clear plan about how to build up and how to operate the hub needs to be made. This includes structural and organizational aspects and steps where resources and actors and quality assurance are also considered
- **Users (WHO)** – human resources as well as beneficiaries and external contributors need to be mapped. The organization needs to know what positions it has to establish for the new role of setting up and running a hub. Also the beneficiaries of the hub should be clarified, which includes actors in an apprenticeship procedure and their quality criteria

The infograph below shows which are the main elements that we have to consider before setting up a hub.

Create a HUB model



Rationale

Creating an apprenticeship hub l'art pour L'art is not a decent idea. It requires a lot of resources, planning and operational structure to set up and plan such a service. It should serve the needs of those beneficiaries who are targeted. To fulfill these criteria, a set of challenges are listed below. You can refer to this list as a starting point to check it against the reality and context of your future hub.

Challenges and aims

- **Promotion:** The agricultural sector is not very popular with younger generation. Apprenticeship hubs could take up as a mission the promotion of the sector and its accessibility by easing the processes of learning and practice and by providing an link between educational providers and the world of businesses. Its double mission includes the promotion of the apprenticeship itself as well as the agro-food sector.
- **Connecting stakeholders:** By providing means for sharing information and connecting people either in terms of physical or online platform, the hub provides a useful platform for exchanges and networks. It is the intermediary body between students, educational providers and businesses in the sector. Ideally it runs a database on the potential actors in an apprenticeship procedure.
- **Information and know how:** The hubs not only provide a service to connect apprenticeships with their place of practice, but they are the treasure of the information about important issues in the field including knowledge about the legislative background, documents about apprenticeships, database on stakeholders and knowledge

in the sector etc. When establishing a hub, this aspect should also be considered. In case of a physical presence a small library of the most important documents, in case of an online platform a knowledge base section with relevant links would be useful. A hub could also provide services in trainings, educations and could fulfil community aspects by running an informal platform for its users.

Scope

After mapping the various challenges which give a reason for setting up a hub, we need to define its main scope and within the scope the main tasks it should fulfil. These are to be adapted to the market demands as well as the needs of beneficiaries. The functions of the hub could fall into 6 main categories:

1. Knowledge and know-how transfer
2. Promotion
3. Intermediation
4. Depository
5. Network
6. Assessment

To understand the above functions in detail, our expert board has collected a more detailed list of potential services. Please see the below list for reference and tick those services and tasks which you would like to dedicate to your hub. Of course, services and tasks could be modified and adapted to your local/regional needs and new tasks might also emerge, which the below list does not contain:

- ☐ Promotion of the agro-food sector
- ☐ Promotion of apprenticeship
- ☐ Promotion of the hub and its services
- ☐ Creating a network in the sector
- ☐ Providing learning/training possibilities
- ☐ Providing guidelines on apprenticeship
- ☐ Running a database on businesses hosting apprentices
- ☐ Running a database on educational providers sending apprentices
- ☐ Running a database on potential apprentices
- ☐ Acting as a learning centre (eg. providing trainings)
- ☐ Information center (consultants, document depository)
- ☐ Running a platform for online services and matching beneficiaries
- ☐ A hub in its social meaning (meet-ups, gathering, conferences etc)
- ☐ Consultancy on sector-specific issues/on apprenticeship-related issues
- ☐ Influencing policy making
- ☐ Innovation potentials/incubation
- ☐ Needs assessment
- ☐ Matching interests
- ☐ Knowledge transfer

- ☐ European/international dimension
- ☐ Providing Quality assurance framework

To fulfil the above objectives with success and to the satisfaction of all beneficiaries, the hubs need to meet a set of quality criteria. These depend on the challenges the hub would face and the tasks it has set as mission. These could include:

Apprenticeships should:

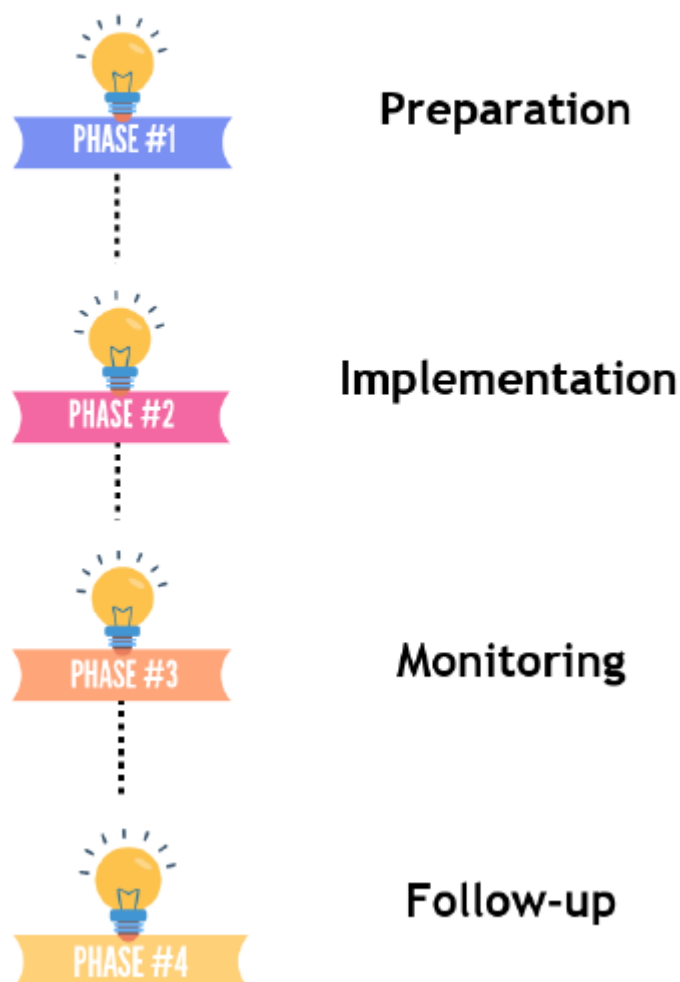
- ✓ Be built on the basis of national law, regulations and/or collective bargaining agreements.
- ✓ Provide good quality training in the workplace, with in-company mentors trained for this purpose.
- ✓ Have comprehensive learning outcomes defined, which should be agreed by the employers and VET providers.
- ✓ Provide appropriate career guidance, mentoring and learner support before and during the apprenticeship to ensure successful outcomes.
- ✓ During apprenticeships, VET providers should provide assistance to students.
- ✓ Guarantee high quality and safe working environments
- ✓ Include insurance in line with national legislation.
- ✓ Cater for the real employment and skills needs of employers.
- ✓ Ensure that apprentices are paid by the employer for the period of training
- ✓ Be primarily a learning experience thus should never lead to job replacement.
- ✓ Be competence-based and have a duration which enables apprentices to attain the appropriate standards.
- ✓ Ensure equal access, promote gender balance and tackle discrimination.
- ✓ Have robust quality assurance procedures.
- ✓ Have quality assurance approaches in place, including a process allowing a valid and reliable assessment of the learning outcomes.

Process

When we decide about the creation of an apprenticeship hub a clear plan about how to build it up and how to operate it needs to be made. This includes structural and organizational aspects and steps where resources and actors and quality assurance are also considered.

The creation of the hubs starts with a preparatory phase when challenges and needs are discovered and aims and objectives as well as related tasks are defined. In the implementation phase the steps of operating a hub are established. The physical and online environments are set up, human resources, tasks and positions are defined, data is collected and stakeholders are gathered. It includes a lot of structural and operational aspects, which we detail in operational manual (see the section below.)

Process of national apprenticeship hub model creation



To be able to provide examples and thus ease the setting up of your own model each participating country in the project provided a model description (see in Annex). For detailed description of the process and procedures you can find more information in the Apprenticeship Hubs operation manual.

Users

When setting up and running a hub human resources as well as beneficiaries and external contributors need to be mapped. The organization needs to know what positions it has to establish for the new role of setting up and running a hub. Also, the beneficiaries of the hub should be clarified, which includes actors in an apprenticeship procedure and their quality criteria. At planning the future users of the hub, the following main groups should be considered.

- Sending : Education institutions/VET providers
- Hosting : Companies, agricultural organizations

- Apprentice (students or apprentices-to-be)
- Others: chambers, ministries, parents, etc.

The ones who are likely to be most involved as beneficiaries in the hub are VET providers and companies. Their quality assurance is important and therefore a set of quality standards are described below.

Quality standards for VET providers

The VET provider should:

- ✓ Organise apprenticeships based on a recognised and certified apprenticeship scheme that leads to recognised qualifications
- ✓ Take into account the skills needs of the labour market.
- ✓ Cooperate potentially with social partners to design and implement apprenticeships
- ✓ Ensure that the offered apprenticeship is primary learning experience and does not lead to job replacement
- ✓ Make sure, there is an agreement between apprentice, employer and VET provider.
- ✓ Make sure, that the agreement describes the tasks, arrangements, duration, reimbursement, insurance and learning objectives.
- ✓ Have in place a monitoring system for the companies
- ✓ Have established procedures for the quality management and evaluation criteria of the apprenticeship
- ✓ Monitor the processes associated with apprenticeship and gathers relevant data
- ✓ Provide career guidance, mentoring and learner support, before and during the apprenticeship

Quality standards for companies and organisations involved in apprenticeships

The company should:

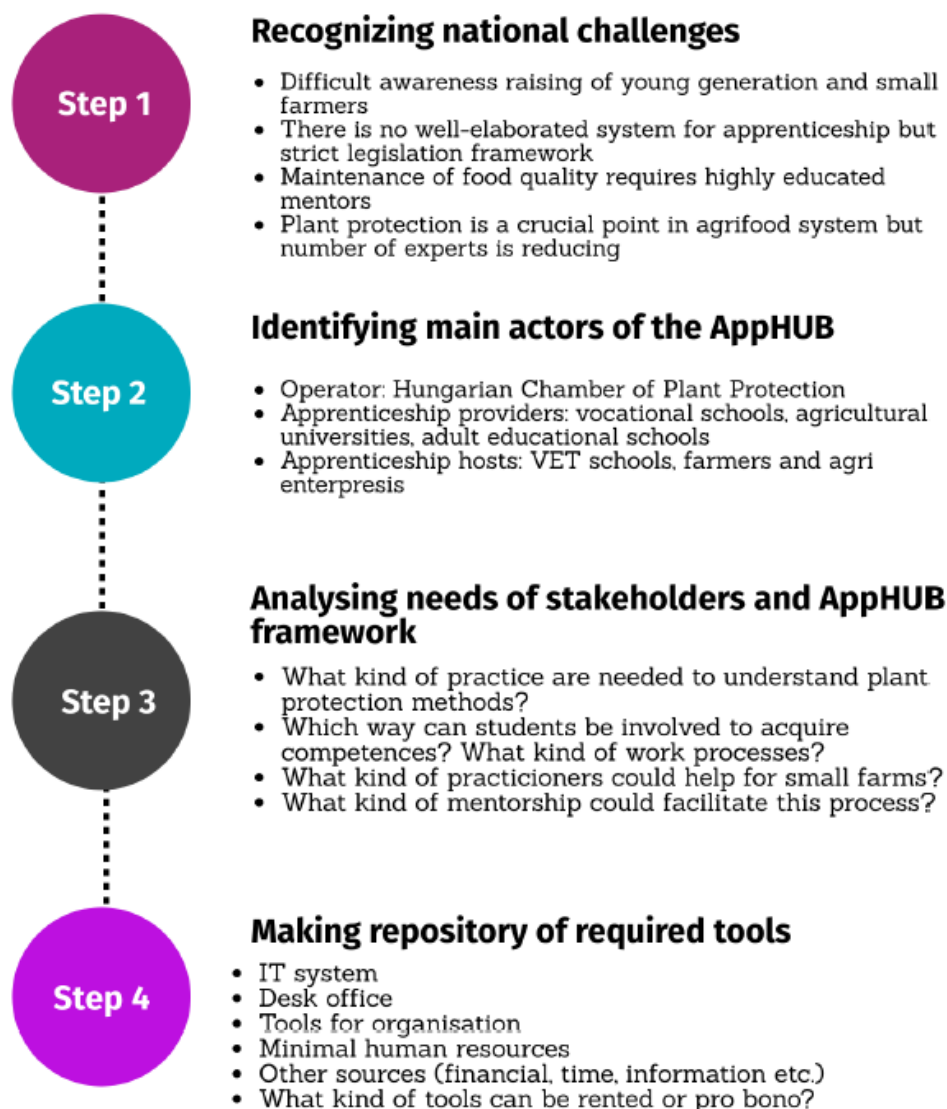
- ✓ Offer apprenticeship opportunities, based on an established apprenticeship scheme
- ✓ Take into account the future needs of the labour market and the need for innovation
- ✓ Offer equal opportunities to apprentices
- ✓ Offer apprenticeship that is primarily learning experience and does not lead to job replacement
- ✓ Sign the agreement between apprentice, employer and VET provider
- ✓ Have established procedures for the quality management of the apprenticeship
- ✓ Monitor the processes associated with apprenticeship and gathers relevant data

- ✓ Ensure safe working conditions for apprentices and complies with relevant rules and regulations
- ✓ Provide career guidance, mentoring and learner support, during the apprenticeship, to ensure successful outcomes
- ✓ Allocate a mentor/trainer for the apprentices
- ✓ Ensure the training of the in-company mentors/trainers on pedagogical skills
- ✓ Reimburse apprentices according to collective agreements, or a national and/or sectoral minimum legal wage
- ✓ Negotiating quality objectives – Developing Quality awareness
- ✓ Improving cooperation among learning venues, maintaining regular contact with the VET Provider or school, checking on the collaboration between the learning venue partners regularly, binding agreements on the form the collaboration takes
- ✓ Qualifying teaching personnel: trainers should be technically competent and impart training contents comprehensibly being aware of methods for it
- ✓ Assisting in the transition in initial vocational education and training
- ✓ Improving the quality of learning adapting method of training and pedagogical approach to the profiles and needs of the trainees, integrating them into real work and business processes
- ✓ Securing learning outcomes agreeing on learning goals and evaluating them at regular intervals, providing for feedbacks at the end of the different learning phases

Other actors, like apprentices' parents, parents associations, politicians etc could also be important stakeholders in the process. However, their involvement is subject of local conditions and their role could be optional, therefore quality criteria is not established for their involvement.

Annex

Annex1.

*The Hungarian example of an apprenticeship hub model in the agro-food sector***Process of national apprenticeship hub model creation**



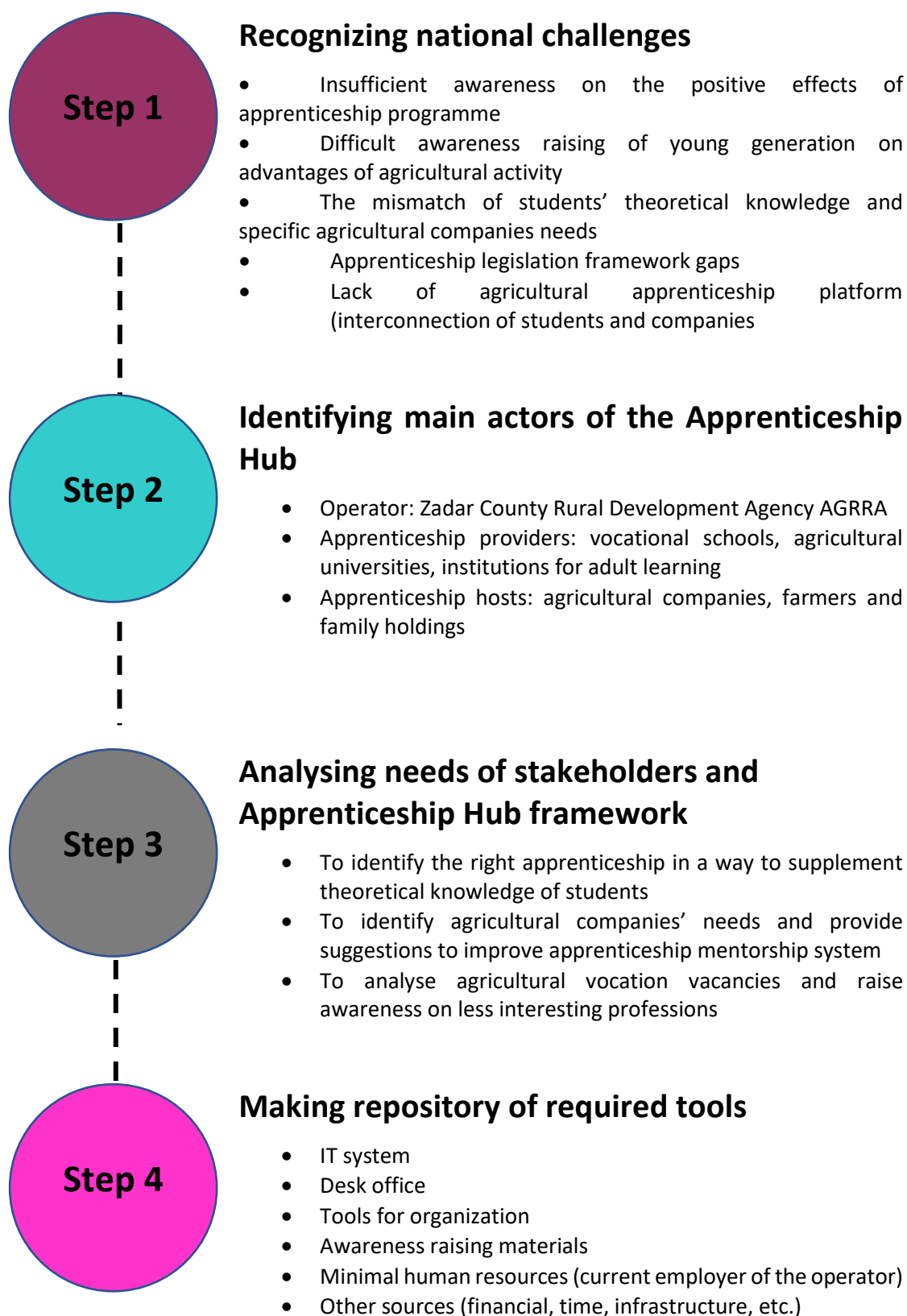
Actors in Hungarian HUB model

- Students in VET schools who are looking for summer vacancies and training possibilities
- Students from agricultural universities
- Local small farmers
- Local social cooperatives
- SME's
- Cooperatives
- Plant protection engineers
- Input providers



45%

of farmers did not participate in agricultural education.

Annex2***The Croatian example of an apprenticeship hub model in the agro-food sector***



Actors in Croatian Hub Model

- Students in VET schools who are looking for training possibilities
- Students from agricultural universities
- Local agricultural companies, farmers, family holdings and agricultural cooperatives
- SMEs

Annex3***The Greek example of an apprenticeship hub model in the agro-food sector*****Step 1****Recognizing national challenges**

- Insufficient awareness on the positive effects of apprenticeship programme both for the students and the employers
- Lack of information on the wide range of activities and opportunities in the agricultural sector
- The mismatch of students' theoretical knowledge and specific agricultural companies needs
- Legislation framework gaps regarding apprenticeships in the agricultural sector
- Lack of an apprenticeship platform (interconnection of students and companies) dedicated to agricultural sector
- Difficult access of young people in rural areas to apprenticeship programmes
- Due to the high unemployment rate in Greece new incentives must be given in order for young people to stay in rural areas and work in the field of agriculture

Step 2**Identifying main actors of the Apprenticeship Hub**

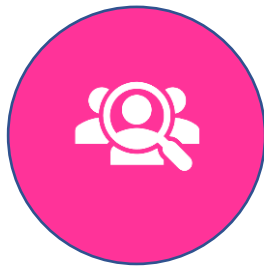
- Operator: Institouto Agrotikis kai Synetairistikis Oikonomias INASO-PASEGES
- Apprenticeship providers: vocational schools (IEK, EPAS, EPAL), agricultural universities
 - Apprenticeship hosts: agricultural companies, agricultural cooperatives, farmers and family holdings

Step 3**Analysing needs of stakeholders and Apprenticeship Hub framework**

- To match the theoretical knowledge that the students have already acquired with the most appropriate and relevant apprenticeship
 - To identify agricultural companies' needs and provide suggestions to improve apprenticeship mentorship system

Step 4**Making repository of required tools**

- IT system
- Desk office
- Tools for organization
- Awareness raising materials
- Minimal human resources (current employers of the operator)
- Other sources (financial, time, infrastructure, etc.)



Actors in Greek Hub Model

- Students in VET schools who are looking for training possibilities
- Students from agricultural universities
- Local agricultural companies, farmers, family holdings and agricultural cooperatives
- SMEs in the agrofood sector

Annex4***The Italian example of an apprenticeship hub model in the agro-food sector*****Step 1****Recognizing national challenges**

- Engaging Entrepreneurs and particularly SME's in Apprenticeships
- Raising awareness on the positive effects of apprenticeship programmes among Schools, VET Providers, parents, youngers
- Strategic use of vocational guidance in order to broaden aspirations, challenge stereotypes
- Rising quality of apprenticeship programs supporting in-companies training, trainers skills
- Supporting both matching among SME's, Schools/VET Providers and apprentices and cooperation between learning venues
- Improve apprenticeship cost-benefit balance through system design, support and capacity building

Step 2**Identifying main actors of the AppHub**

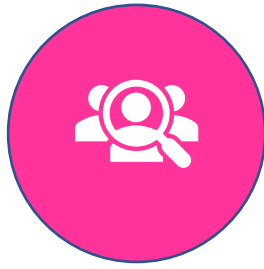
- Operator: Tuscany Region
- Apprenticeship providers: VET Providers, Agricultural Schools
- Apprenticeship hosts: VET Providers, Agricultural Schools, Farmers, Agricultural companies and cooperatives, wine sector companies

Step 3**Analysing needs of stakeholders and AppHub framework**

- Identifying agricultural companies' needs in terms of skills required that could be addressed by apprenticeship programs
- Supporting matching among Agricultural SME's, Schools/VET Providers and apprentices
- Supporting Schools/VET Providers in designing the apprenticeship program in cooperation with Agricultural SME's
- supporting in-companies training, trainers skills accordingly to the agriculture and agro food sectors needs

Step 4**Making repository of required tools**

- IT system
- Desk office
- Tools for organization
- Minimal human resources
- Other sources (financial, time, infrastructure, etc.)
- What kind of tools can be rented or pro bono?



Actors in Tuscany Region Hub Model

- Students in VET Providers/schools looking for apprenticeship programs
- Students from agricultural schools, ITS
- Agricultural, Agro Food, Wine Sector Companies, SMEs, Cooperatives