

# Executive Summary



## Refining HE Apprenticeships with Enterprises in Europe

### Introduction

High rates of youth unemployment and a mismatch between current skills requirements and existing academic curricula have prompted the need to promote and expand work based learning and apprenticeships programmes in Europe. However, to reintegrate and synchronise the “working and the learning worlds” is a challenge at all levels, from policy making to higher education or industry perspectives. Taking into account these socio-economic peculiarities of current Europe, **euцен** (European university continuing education network) decided to submit an application for financial support under the Key Activity 3 funding programme “*VET-Business partnership on apprenticeships/work based learning*” (Call EACEA-40-2016).

The proposal was conceived to include seven different EU countries representing different realities and two different type of participants from each of these seven countries: a university and an association of SMEs or Chamber of Commerce. Apart from these 14 organisations, the proposal included two transversal associations: one very much linked to the higher education sector (**euцен**) and the other much more in contact with businesses (Fundació Bosch i Gimpera). Each of these 16 organisations formed the full consortium of partners of **ApprEnt - Refining higher education apprenticeships with enterprises in Europe**.

### The project

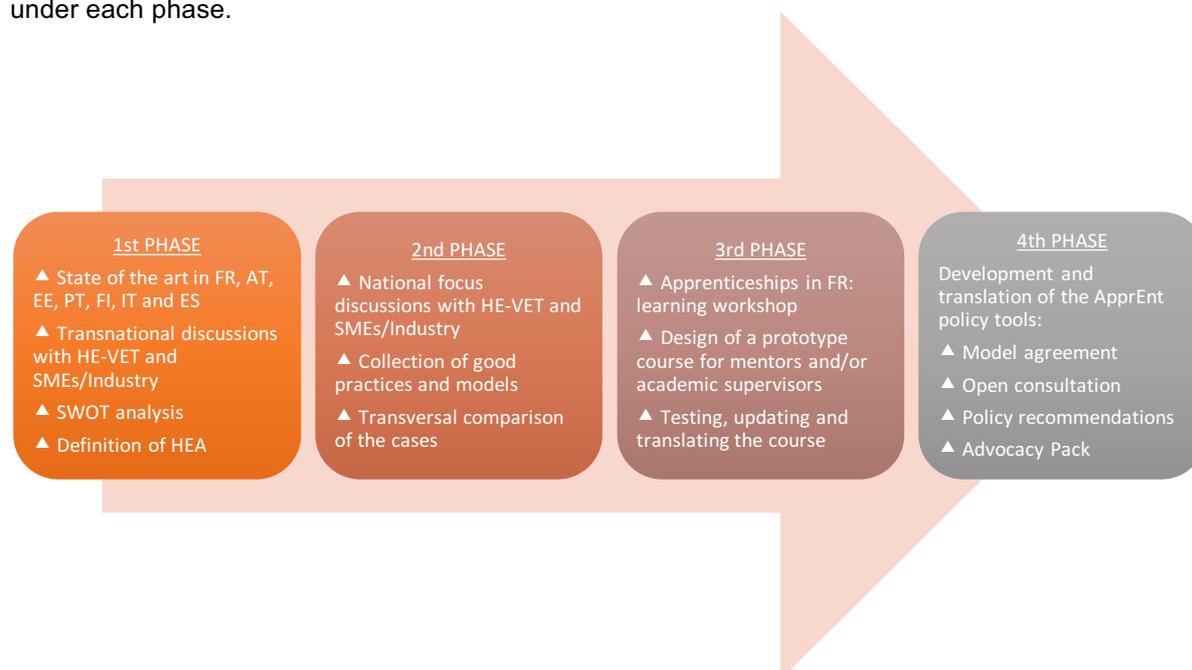
**ApprEnt** started 15 October 2017 and finished in 15 October 2019. During these two years, **ApprEnt** generated collaboration opportunities between the worlds of education and business, enhancing partnerships that involved companies, higher education institutions as vocational education and training providers, and other relevant stakeholders such as public authorities, representatives of learners and mentors and academic supervisors of students, etc. The ultimate aim was to promote the establishment of work-based learning and especially apprenticeship schemes.

**ApprEnt** has produced a number of tools to help organisations or institutions interested to develop apprenticeship schemes or to collaborate with others who already have these schemes in place. The tools can assist users to reflect about their environment and improve these schemes.

### Project approach

The **ApprEnt** project has a research-based approach, starting with some desk research, discussion about findings at different levels, transversal analysis and finally development of the project tools.

The figure below shows the flow of work throughout the project and the different tasks developed under each phase.



## Main outputs

Although the project has developed a number of outputs that can be of help to understand what are higher education apprenticeships and their peculiarities (including 7 national reports, a SWOT analysis, 33 case studies and their transversal analysis) there are four main *ApprEnt tools for Higher Education Apprenticeship in Europe* to be highlighted:

- ▲ *Training for Mentors and Supervisors of Higher Education Apprenticeship programmes. A Generic Structure for a Continuing Professional Development Course* – the project has found out that mentoring within higher education apprenticeship is rather different and particular: not all the professionals mentoring/supervising students in this type of schemes are prepared for the job. Training of these professionals is not only necessary but essential to help students
- ▲ *Guidelines for a Higher Education Apprenticeship Model Agreement – Advice to make your own model agreement suitable for all parties* – this set of guidelines explains the key points that should be included in a model agreement to protect and enhance the participation of the three parties (student, university and enterprise) in a higher education apprenticeship programme
- ▲ *Advocacy Pack on Higher Education Apprenticeship: By learning you teach. By teaching you learn* – this pack includes a general description and five flash cards, each addressing a different target audience: Policy makers, Higher education institutions, Enterprises and industry, Students, Mentors and academic supervisors. Whereas higher education apprenticeship is appreciated as a powerful tool to offer focused experiences in real working places, not everyone knows the potential and benefit of these schemes – this pack can help presenting these programmes and becoming their ambassador
- ▲ *ApprEnt Policy Recommendations for a better European Higher Education Apprenticeship model* – only political decisions can make higher education apprenticeship a reality: policy makers are key for the regulation and implementation of these programmes. The policy recommendations pin down the ten most important issues that policy makers should take into account regarding higher education apprenticeship programmes – these ten key areas should be harmonised in all the EU countries in order to facilitate mobility and recognition

The above four outputs are available in 8 languages (English, French, German, Spanish, Estonian, Finnish, Italian and Portuguese). All the outputs of *ApprEnt* are open source and available in the project website <http://appr.ent.eucen.eu/tools>

## Conclusions

Higher education apprenticeship programmes are the bridge between University and Business knowledge. Closer collaboration and coordination between these two worlds would improve results in terms of employability and matching of skills and knowledge to the current requirements of industry, thus contributing to a better cost/benefit ratio.

However, these programmes require more resources, as well as special attention and preparation from universities and enterprises. Developing trust between all parties involved, making tools available to work better, and training the professionals that work with apprentices is essential. The creation of transversal regulations that facilitate the mobility of students and the recognition of these programmes is also a crucial point.



Publisher: **eucen**, Barcelona, Spain, 2019, <http://www.eucen.eu>

**Citation:** Carme Royo, Francesca Uras, Lucilia Santos on behalf of the consortium (Ed.) (2019): *ApprEnt Executive Summary* on behalf of the **ApprEnt** consortium © The **ApprEnt** consortium, 2019

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