

# **Impact study of international mobility among young apprentices**

Report on progress as at 1 June 2013

## ***Plan for a counterfactual study***

The impact study of international mobility among apprentices, managed by the agency Europe Education Formation France (2°2f) and implemented by the Centre d'études et de recherche sur les qualifications (Céreq), is a large-scale project that draws on various types of data. A statistical survey is being carried out among apprentices who have been internationally mobile; it includes a questionnaire to be completed prior to the stay abroad, a second questionnaire to be completed on return and follow-up questionnaires to be completed every three months. In the autumn of 2013, a control sample, taken from administrative files, will also be surveyed on line in order to provide a comparison group for the mobile apprentices, thus making it possible to evaluate the impact of the stay abroad on their subsequent career trajectories. At the same time, individual case studies will be carried out among the mobile apprentices in order to analyse in greater depth their experiences abroad and thereby supplement our analysis of the questionnaires.

## ***1000 apprentices included in the protocol***

To date, the first questionnaire, which will be closed in mid-July 2013, has received almost 1,200 responses. Even though some of the responses cannot be used, the target of including at least 1000 apprentices in the protocol will be achieved. More than 800 apprentices were invited to fill in the questionnaire on returning from their trips abroad and almost half have done so. This result, which can be regarded as a very satisfactory one given the chosen survey mode (on line), is the fruit of an extensive follow-up and contact-making exercise and the involvement and commitment shown by the partners in the study and the apprentice training centres (CFAs) concerned.

Conducted on a continuous basis, the survey currently includes some 900 apprentices from almost 120 apprentice training centres. Most of them (1 out of every 2) are level IV apprentices and young men (60 %).

## ***Mobility well supported***

Most of the stays (9 out of every 10) are organised on a group basis and 86% of the apprentices make no mention of any administrative difficulties in making the preparations for their trips. Few other difficulties are mentioned, with three quarters of the apprentices stating they were supported by their employers, while 70% of them had already been abroad and had sufficient foreign language skills to do so.

As far as financial support for the stays abroad is concerned, the situation is more diverse, since one third of the apprentices stated they would not be receiving any assistance and 43% that they would have to contribute personally to the funding of their trips. The average amount of support received is about 850 euros.

The majority of apprentices express satisfaction with their experience abroad when they return. More than 90% declare themselves satisfied or very satisfied with the guidance they received, workplace relations and integration into the foreign country; professional and linguistic benefits were a little less highly rated, with 20 to 25% expressing dissatisfaction.

Overall, however, very few apprentices declare themselves dissatisfied with this experience, and they very often assess it very positively, as the answers to the open questions show. The great majority state they encountered no difficulties at all during their stays; among those who do mention difficulties, most are of a linguistic nature. In the vast majority of cases, preparations had been made ahead of the trip with the assistance of the training establishment.

*'To have been able to travel abroad thanks to the support I received from the apprentice training centre and the financial assistance from the government that covered the main costs of the stay was a rare and valuable opportunity for me to expand my horizons and confirm me in my choice of occupation. I have wonderful memories of this unusual experience, which I really hope I will be able to repeat.'*

### ***The stay abroad : source of much satisfaction***

While most of the apprentices are convinced, on their return, that their stay abroad will improve their employability, this is due mainly to the additional professional experience they were able to acquire and only secondarily to any linguistic benefits, as some responses clearly show:

*"Progress with the language and more knowledge and different experiences in my profession.'*

*"I learnt new working techniques.'*

*"A different way of doing the same job.'*

The apprentices also feel that an experience that takes them away for a time from their usual work has positive effects: dealing successfully with this experience is regarded positively.

*"The autonomy, the team work, the difficulties of understanding and the fear of adventure."*

*"Discovering the world of work in another country, having to adapt."*

*"Both professionally and socially, this trip made us all change and develop."*

Moreover, the stay abroad tends to confirm apprentices in their choice of career. Nevertheless, it will be noted that at the end of their stays almost one third want to change employer, a result that is definitely worth further investigation in the course of the qualitative surveys.

Another aspect of the positive experience of the stay is that many apprentices (63%) would like to repeat the experience and 45% of them say they would like to work in another country in future.

*“New technical and cultural skills and knowledge. More autonomy, more self-confidence, I came to realise that with a little English and Slovak I managed to communicate with the others. I’m considering going abroad again alone or with a few others to work or for a holiday.”*

*“This stay was very beneficial for me, both personally and professionally. I hope to go abroad again very soon during my training and afterwards to work.”*

This more ‘qualitative’ approach based on open-ended questions included in the questionnaire filled in following the stay abroad leads us to believe that the apprentices who go abroad experience their stay positively and often perceive it as likely to have beneficial effects on their subsequent career trajectories. The next phases of the study will seek, therefore, to validate this feeling statistically and to investigate it in greater depth through the case-study approach.