



## **A QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR TRAINEESHIPS IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTRICITY SECTOR**

### **AN AGREEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

As social partners we are concerned about high levels of unemployment in Europe (25%). Youth unemployment remains persistently high. Numbers increased following the financial and economic crisis. As employers and trade unions in the European electricity industry we want to create working and learning opportunities for young people in our sector. A sector which is in the midst of the greatest transition it has ever witnessed thanks to the shift to a low-carbon electricity system, heightened customer services and new business models.

Our aim is to encourage young people to work in our industry and to improve their perspective for a job aimed also at realising the business objectives. We want future young workers to find the European electricity industry a safe and pleasant place to work in, offering a great standard and qualified learning experience, innovation and learning that will contribute to their future careers, and incentivise them to decide for our sector as their future workplace.

In our **Framework of Actions on Competencies, qualifications and anticipation of change** we determined that: "Ensuring that young workers enter the electricity sector is vital for the future of our industry."

As the Council Recommendation "A Quality Framework for Traineeships" determines:

*"A smooth transition from education to employment is crucial for enhancing the chances of young people on the labour market. Improving young people's education and facilitating their transition to employment are necessary for achieving the Europe 2020 headline target of aiming to reach a 75% employment rate of women and men aged 20-64 by 2020. Guideline 8 on the employment policies of the Member States calls on the Member States to enact schemes to help young people and in particular those not in employment, education or training find initial employment, job experience, or further education and training opportunities.*

*There is evidence that links exist between the quality of the traineeship and the employment outcome. The value of traineeships in easing the transition to employment depends on their quality in terms of learning content and working conditions. Quality traineeships bring direct productivity benefits, improve labour market matching and promote mobility, notably by decreasing search and matching costs both for enterprises and for trainees".*

Traineeship programmes are understood as a limited period of work practice which includes a learning and training component, undertaken in order to gain practical and professional experience with a view to improving employability and facilitating transition to regular employment. As such they aim at getting a well-trained workforce and contribute to the development of the company while securing the specific skills that are needed in the company. They offer people in education or recently graduated an opportunity to consolidate theoretical knowledge and put it into practice, enhance technical and soft skills and develop sound professional competences.

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### **AGREEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR**

This non-legally-binding Social Partner agreement determines the standards of quality and working conditions a traineeship should fulfil in the European electricity sector.

Taking into account:

- ❖ The rapidly changing political and technological environment in the electricity sector as well as the demographics change,
- ❖ The high youth unemployment rate and the commitment on the side of employers not to use young and qualified workers as cheap workforce in Europe instead of gaining a genuine training experience,
- ❖ The importance of preventing precarious work (increase of precarious employment forms especially amongst young workers/workers entering the labour market),
- ❖ The benefits of promoting a learning environment at the workplace,
- ❖ The fact that a traineeship can lead to a win-win situation for both the employer and the trainee, in qualifying and gaining a new qualified workforce and providing an attractive working environment,
- ❖ Previous work of the European social partners in the electricity sector to assist young future workers (Joint statement EURELECTRIC/EPSU/IndustriAll Europe '[A quality framework for traineeships](#)', 2013),
- ❖ The importance of influx of young and skilled workers,
- ❖ The Commission initiative,
- ❖ The Council recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships adopted on 14 March 2014.

The European Social Partners for the electricity sector:

- ❖ Agree on the following framework conditions defining the traineeship standards that apply to all trainees in the sector. These standards refer to working conditions of trainees in the individual companies as well as the educational content of the traineeship and are further defined in the following,
- ❖ Recommend their national affiliates to implement the major elements that shape the quality of traineeships and their learning outcomes. The social partners will discuss at national level how to transpose it into their relevant regulations,

- ❖ Agree to exchange and promote best practices as regards learning and training objectives in order to help trainees acquire practical experience and relevant skills and to help companies in the electricity sector to learn from each other,
- ❖ Agree to dedicate the necessary support, programs, financial and human resources to this purpose. The necessary means will be defined in each country in accordance with national regulation and already existing initiatives and practices.

## **TRAINEESHIP AGREEMENT**

A traineeship agreement should be written and should indicate the educational objectives, adequate working conditions, rights and obligations, and a reasonable duration for traineeships to ensure a quality learning programme and learning environment. The traineeship agreement should be subject to regular assessments by the supervisor and the trainee in order to promote the best possible learning outcome.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS**

### *Preventing precarious work*

Important aspect and goal of traineeships is to prevent situations that young people end up in precarious work; i.e. a situation that young people have to take up several jobs or work irregular and too many hours to earn a 'living wage', lack of social security coverage, the presence of health and safety or occupational risks, little or no remuneration and/or compensation, a lack of clarity on the applicable legal regimes, and the excessively prolonged duration of the traineeship.

The rights and working conditions of trainees under applicable EU and national law, including limits to maximum weekly working time, minimum daily and weekly rest periods and, where applicable, minimum holiday entitlements, will be respected.

National law and collective agreements apply for trainees.

### *Compensation*

The traineeship agreement is to stipulate the compensation to be provided pursuant to the relevant collective agreement. If no collective agreement is in place, the compensation should be agreed upon between all relevant parties (trainee, trade unions and employers) if applicable, according to national law and practice.

### *Working hours*

The traineeship agreement is to stipulate the working hours applicable. Where there is a Collective Agreement in place, its conditions concerning working hours should cover trainees.

### *Health and Safety*

The training provider undertakes to provide the necessary information and training on health and safety for the trainee as provided for the permanent staff so he or she will work safely. The agreement is to stipulate this training as well as the commitment of the trainee to follow the health and safety instructions he or she receives.

## **EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE**

A traineeship is a form of education. Therefore, a key part of the traineeship is the educational content of the agreement. The intention is not to replace workers by employing trainees for unskilled tasks. In the words of the Council of the EU:

*A quality traineeship must offer a solid and meaningful learning content. This means, inter alia, the identification of the specific skills to be acquired, supervision and mentoring of the trainee, and monitoring of his/her progress. The tasks assigned to the trainee should enable these objectives to be attained*

## **SUPERVISOR**

A supervisor should be designated to guide the trainee through the assigned tasks, monitoring and assessing his/her progress. Companies should ensure that the supervisor is trained and skilled to be a mentor. Mentors should be motivated and have the time and resources to do their job.

## **DURATION & TERMINATION**

A traineeship lasts maximum six months. A traineeship maybe extended if justified and taking into account national practice including the information and consultation with workplace representatives.

The trainee or the traineeship provider may terminate it by written communication, providing advance notice of an appropriate duration in view of the length of the traineeship and relevant national practice.

## **CROSS BORDER MOBILITY**

Social partners will facilitate the cross-border mobility of trainees in the European Union *inter alia*, by clarifying the national legal framework for traineeships and establishing clear rules on hosting trainees from, and the sending of trainees to, other Member States and by reducing administrative formalities.

## **TRAINEES WORKING IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY WILL BE PROVIDED WITH:**

- A written traineeship agreement: *Content of traineeship agreement will address at least the above mentioned issues*
- A supervisor/mentor/coach
- Insurance: *The traineeship provider provides coverage in terms of health and accident insurance as well as sick leave*

## **VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION OF TRAINEESHIPS**

The relevant social partners will promote a proper recognition and validation of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during traineeships. Employers commit to provide the trainee with a qualifying certification recognizing and validating the knowledge, skills and competences the trainee has acquired during the traineeship.

## **MISCELLANEOUS AND NON-REGRESSION CLAUSE**

Some companies might already have an agreement in place that stipulates some or all of the provisions laid down in this agreement. The trade unions, and where relevant, in cooperation with the workplace representatives, and employers will commit to review these agreements so as to verify if these

agreements reflect the standards of this agreement adequately. If this is not the case, the social partners will commit to updating the agreements so as to reach an adequate standard.

The non-regression clause of this agreement applies: This European agreement shall not be used to lower standards and protection available in existing national or company level agreements. Its intention is to have an upwards standardisation effect to ensure young future workers (trainees) find the European electricity industry a safe and pleasant place to work in, offering a great standard and qualified learning experience, innovation and learning that will contribute to their future careers, hopefully in our sector.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

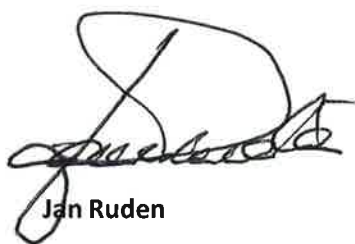
This agreement offers a set of minimum quality standards that should be applied both at company and sector level. This agreement is a non-legally binding agreement and therefore it does not constitute an agreement in terms of Article 155 TFEU. It commits the national member organisations of EURELECTRIC, EPSU and IndustriAll Europe to promote the implementation of the agreement. Hence, the detailed traineeship conditions at company level should be subject of discussion between the social partners, employers and trade unions, according to national practices, taking into account the corresponding collective agreements and any other relevant regulations that apply.

## **VALIDITY OF THIS AGREEMENT AND MONITORING**

This agreement commits the national members of EURELECTRIC, EPSU and IndustriAll Europe to promote traineeships in their member state and will be valid for a period of three years. The Social Partners will evaluate the agreement after three years to determine if it has contributed to achieve the specified aims and objectives.

During the three-year period we will be monitoring its implementation regularly in the context of the European sectoral social dialogue committee for electricity.

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**EURELECTRIC** represents the common interests of the electricity industry at pan-European level. Our current members represent the electricity industry in over 30 European countries. We also have affiliates and associations on several other continents

**industriAll European Trade Union** is the voice of industrial workers all over Europe. It represents 6.9 million workers across supply chains in manufacturing, mining and energy sectors on the European level

**EPSU** is the **European Federation of Public Service Unions**. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 250 trade unions across Europe. EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local, regional and central government, in all European countries including the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. It is the recognised regional organisation of Public Services International (PSI).