

euTalent

Business in Europe Hosting Apprenticeships for Youth

Baseline report

Tailored support to SMEs:
findings and recommendations



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Supporting SMEs to offer more and better quality apprenticeships

Introduction

About

EUTalent is a project funded by the European Commission and run by CSR Europe and its 12 national partners for the purpose of supporting SMEs to offer more and better quality apprenticeships. The High Engagement partners – Business Leader Forum (Czechia), FACE (France), Foretica (Spain), Responsible Business Forum (Poland), Sodalitas & Impronta Etica (Italy)- have offered tailored support to 100 SMEs to improve their apprenticeships:

Phase I: ex-ante assessment

After the formation of the pilot group (20 SMEs per country), each SME took the online assessment tool and was provided with a benchmark report, assessing their internal apprenticeships systems in these 5 areas: Governance, Recruitment, Quality of learning, Quality of training and Working conditions. In this way (partner) and the SME identified gaps and areas of improvement and, from then on, they have been working together to improve their structures for offering quality apprenticeships.

Phase II: tailored support

The support offered to these 100 SMEs has been mainly through:

- Elaboration of personalized Roadmaps to give recommendations based on the benchmark results.
- A series of webinars to have a more substantial exchange and share good practices.
- 1 to 1 meetings and phone calls to solve doubts in the process and reach their objectives.
- The engagement and active role of key local stakeholders.

Phase III

After the tailored support, a second round of assessments will take place in order to check the improvements done in the SMEs and the impact of the worked done with the pilot group.

Purpose of the baseline report

The present report showcases the results of the first round of assessments done with the first group.

Therefore, the baseline report is focus on the 3 aspects below:



The pilot group

Information

The most represented sectors among the pilot SMEs are business and IT and production, both chosen by 3 companies. Two companies chose respectively sport & fitness and engineering & electrical as their area of activity. Hospitality & travel, beauty & wellbeing, charity & volunteering, creativity – media & arts and finance were each chosen by one company. 5 enterprises chose other, without specifying; nevertheless 3 of them were connected to education.

Results

The average general score based on the results of all 20 companies was 57% with 98% being the best score among the companies and 1% being the lowest. Average and best scores in each area were respectively: 52% and 100% in „Governance“; 53% and 100% in „Recruitment & job transition“; 66% and 100% in „Quality of training“; 88% and 100% in „Quality of training“; 56% and 93% in „Labour conditions“.

Challenges and Strengths' Analysis

An area with the lowest average score was „Governance“ which seems to be interesting as it may be considered a basis for providing apprenticeships and. Half of the pilot SMEs lacked in multi stakeholder approach and cooperation with the educational institution. What is interesting 14 out of 20 companies did not provide policy or even guidelines for apprentices.

Another most common challenge is lack of established number of apprentices in the company – the situation is visible in 16 companies which seems to be the biggest issue in „Recruitment & job transition“, noticeable even among highest scoring companies.

When analysing labour conditions it is very visible that only 2 companies offered remuneration to apprentices. What is interesting those are not highest scoring companies. The problem with money and social security is very common among the companies.

The most common challenge in the area regarding the „Quality of learning“ is providing additional training opportunities. It is worth noting that not all of the pilot SMEs offer apprenticeships so it is hard to expect them to provide any additional training. Still, this is the area that should be worked on.

In the „Quality of training“ the most challenging was the quality of supervision, but it's worth noting that most companies scored well in this area (with exception of SMEs who don't carry any apprenticeships programme).

The biggest strength when consider apprenticeships seems to be providing apprentices with a qualified trainer – only two companies do not have them. Also the same amount of companies declare some kind of interaction with apprentices on regular basis. This contributes in general to quality of training being the strongest area. What is also interesting 17 companies consider complaints channel important and create them for apprentices. Enabling job transitions is a trait functioning in 16 companies.

Countermeasures

There were 20 Roadmaps prepared, one for every pilot SME. They were tailored for less and more advanced companies and recommendation varied from setting up goals for apprentices to enabling them to work on their own project. Companies who were more advanced were encouraged to get their programmes to the next level by i.e. establishing relationships with local organizations or partner companies.

Representatives of the companies were assured that they may contact RBF with any question, problem or idea.

Experts experienced in the fields of apprenticeship and/or SMEs were invited to webinars, stakeholder meetings and national workshop. Entrepreneurs were enabled to gather from experiences and ideas of small, medium and big companies, compare problems and solutions which, for example, included creating partnerships with other companies or hiring young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There was a special folder created on google drive with recordings of webinar and all of the promotional materials that can be accessed only by pilot SMEs.

Conclusions and recommendations

The main challenge for us as a coordinator is lack of time and resources in SMEs (not only the pilot ones) to get actively involved in the programme and communication. Therefore it seems extremely difficult to involve companies in project activities.

The main problem inside the companies when thinking of apprenticeships programme, which is visible in results of the questionnaire and after and during the meetings and webinars, is lack of systemic support from governmental bodies and institutions. Companies often lack in possibilities of hiring young people and provide them with payment without the support of the state. As we try to promote high quality of apprenticeships, we suggest to find fundings for remuneration but also to try and give apprentices more in terms of education and training, let them also treat apprenticeships as a way of getting to know the field, provide them with some recommendations for future employees. We suggest that there is more to offer and investing in young talents is in reality creating own's future workforce and/or loyal clients, while contributing to resolving some global, or better said, national problems with youth unemployment.

Another important issue we try to promote among especially pilot SMEs is the idea of partnerships, not only with VET providers, but also with institutions, business organisations and, finally, other companies, which may result in solving for example logistics issues.



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