

euTalent

Business in Europe Hosting Apprenticeships for Youth

Progress 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.

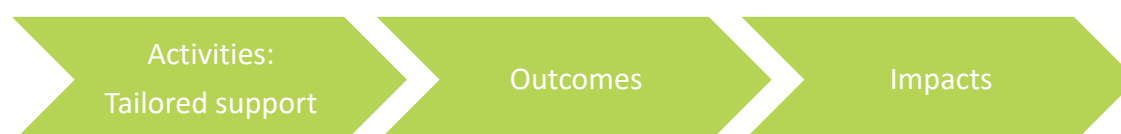
Phase III

After the tailored support, a second round of assessments took 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 progress report

The present report showcases the work done on the 20 SMEs and the progress achieved during the project regarding their apprenticeships systems. It includes also the findings, learnt lessons and encountered challenges in engaging SMEs.

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



The pilot group

Information

20 companies have been involved in the initial phases of the project. Professional Services & IT are the two sectors with a broader representation (5 professional services, 4 IT) other companies develop media or marketing activities, industrial services, chemical products or wine. Some of them are companies with a better understanding of CSR and sustainability issues. Others focus the program on human resources Up to 35% are Forética members

Results

RESULTS 1st round of assessments

Average 20 companies (global) : 67.30
Average per area: Governance 68.75, Recruitment 72.55, Quality of training 72.20, Quality of learning 58.00, Labor conditions 67.35

RESULTS 2nd round of assessments

Average 20 companies (global) : 70,95
Average per area: Governance 68.40, Recruitment 75.55, Quality of training 78.00, Quality of learning 59.70, Labor conditions 72.35

CONCLUSIONS

We can identify a slight improvement in the average rating of the group (7%). This shift is mainly due to the efforts of four companies that have worked hard in order to improve the quality of their apprenticeships - increased overall values from 20 to 53%-. On the other hand, three companies have a worse assessment than in the 1st round that took place, approximately, in the October-December period in 2017. The reason could be related to a change in the person in charge of filling in the tool, an unclear policy of apprenticeships management or a still immature human resources process approach.

The main reason that justifies the stagnation of eight companies that have not been able to progress in the field is the lack of resources and the understanding of this kind projects as long term procedures that cannot be changed within a short period of time. We have been able to gather this feedback thanks to the one to one calls we have carried out with the participants of the pilot.

The area with a better performance compared with the results of the first round of assessments it is the “quality of learning”. The most outstanding aspect regarding this improvement has to do with the soft skill training, which is the most accessible and affordable tool to grow within this area.

The area with less advance has been the “selection and recruitment process”, probably because it was already one of the strongest areas for Spanish pilot SMEs.

Generally speaking, SMEs had the perception that filling in the tool twice did not imply an added value for them. This is why we had to insist many times in order to succeed and, in some cases, we had to fill it in together. Some suggestions pointed out that another type of questionnaire could have been more useful.

Challenges and Strengths' Analysis

Challenges

In average, the human resources assets that are weaker for pilot companies are related to not having developed (i) a policy in terms of the apprenticeships' governance, (ii) opportunities of developing a project on their own, (iii) compensation issues and (iv) opportunities of additional training.

Strengths

On the other hand, the most outstanding human resources assets are (i) the fact of having a training responsible for the apprentices, (ii) a multistakeholder approach, (iii) transparency in the recruiting process, and (iv) the existence of a formal contract.

Countermeasures

After having identified these challenges and strengths in the different companies that comprise the pilot, the team thought that the most potentially useful measures could be communication and training.

This is the reason why:

- ✓ We have sent them **emails** with broader information related to the challenges they present in average
- ✓ We have focused the last **two pilot webinars** on making them understand the challenges they present and the importance of tackling these issues and we have explained them different best practices of both other big companies and SMEs.
- ✓ We have focused the **internal posts** in our LinkedIn group on informing them about opportunities in Spain and Europe, developed by other organizations that area also working on vocational training, in order to make them aware of the importance of the issue and to give them the chance of participating in other programs, awards or events.

Conclusions and recommendations

The status of the sample that represent these 20 companies give us the opportunity to better understand how SME's are doing in Spain regarding the penetration and the quality of apprentices. Although in Spain this type of contracts (dual or vocational training) is not that developed as in other European countries, there are good examples that showcase their benefits.

When looking at how mature Spanish companies are compared to other European countries that are also participating in EU Talent we have realized that we are –more or less depending on the asset- at the same level as others. This is good news because we are witnessing an improve on the hiring and training conditions that labor contracts for young people include.

In order to improve their practices towards the central issue of this program, it could have been helpful to have more available time available due to the fact that it took a long time, more than forecasted, to gather the 20 SMEs. This why we are not sure about the positive results the second round of assessment we will carry out between September and October will show.

Another problem faced when engaging with companies was the lack of incentives. Due to their size and scope, having visibility in a European website, or even in Forética's website was not enough. Another one was that improving in this area of work was not a priority. The crisis in Spain has impacted into SMEs a lot and most of them are just thinking in surviving.

On the one hand, some of the companies that took the test told us that they did not see the usefulness of the results and they were not always were able to connect to the webinars or read carefully our emails because they were really busy with their business as usual.

On the other hand, there are some others that are really grateful about having had the opportunity to participate in the project and they have told us that the materials and information, shared with them and uploaded in the different platforms we have used, has been really helpful for making them advance in this area.

We think this project has been a really good starting point for working with SMEs so as to help them to take advantage on the value that young talent can create for them. It is also interesting to support and advance with public administrations and other relevant stakeholders on the serious matter that young unemployment represents for Spain.

We are sure that when we put together all the opinions gathered in the national workshop and stakeholder meetings and when we have the results from the second round of assessments from the pilot companies we will be able to draw a better picture of the project as a whole and the situation that lives Spain in terms of apprenticeships and vocational training.



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