

# 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

The most represented sector among the pilot SMEs is *business and IT*, which has been chosen by 5 companies. 3 companies represent *production* and two of them 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

1st ROUND OF ASSESSMENT: The average general score based on the results of all 20 companies was 59% 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“; 57% and 100% in „Quality of learning“; 56% and 93% in „Labour conditions“.

2nd ROUND OF ASSESSMENT: The average general score based on the results of all 20 companies was 62% with 91% being the best score among the companies and 6% being the lowest (6 Times higher than in the first round of assessments). Average and best scores in each area were respectively: 64% and 100% in „Governance“; 59% and 100% in „Recruitment & job transition“; 67% and 100% in „Quality of training“; 59% and 88% in „Quality of learning“; 59% and 87% in „Labour conditions“.

## Challenges and Strengths' Analysis

The general score after the 2nd round of assessments was higher than at the beginning of the project – 62% in comparison to 57% at the beginning.

The lowest score has also risen from 1% to 6%.

What is saddening is that the positive change happened only in 5 companies (one company scored lower – 86% in comparison to 88% - it added some solutions but also renounced some previous activities). Although the difference is visible, it is not satisfying that it happened only in less than a 1/3 of the companies. The changes described below may refer only to 30% of the pilot SMEs.

All scores regarding respective areas (Governance, Recruitment & job transition; Quality of learning; Quality of training; Labour conditions) has risen.

The highest scoring area after the 2nd round resulted to be „Quality of training“ (only 1% more). The area remains the strongest. . The biggest issue still remains the problem with supervision, which often might derive from lack of additional resources.

The biggest improvement might be noticed in the „Governance“ area (12%). 30% of the companies improved at least one aspect of this area.

Remaining areas obtained the same result – 59%.

Lack of established number of apprentices remains the biggest challenge in „Recruitment & job transition“ although it changed for example in the company that improved the most, which might be seen as further step in rising quality of apprenticeships.

In the area of „Quality of learning“ the biggest challenge still remains the possibility of additional trainings. This also might be a question of money. Just like in the case of lack of remuneration for apprentices.

The biggest strength is the area of governance, which includes multistakeholder approach and cooperation with educational institutions. Qualified trainer remains to be the strongest aspect in the companies providing apprenticeships.

## 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.

The subjects of webinars, stakeholder meetings and national workshops revolved around general benefits of apprenticeships, importance of partnerships and young talents and were presented mostly by people connected to business. Possibility of discussion and networking was provided, so that participants had a possibility of gaining from each other's experiences.

## 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.

It is worth noticing that one company from pilot SMEs got particularly involved not only in passive participation, but also actively promoted the project and its experiences regarding apprenticeships. They gained from proposed activities, which for sure partially resulted in changing their score from 65% to 93%. What is more, in the spirit of sharing their knowledge, they shared their practices and shared their experiences during stakeholder meeting, answering questions and advising their colleagues from other companies and VET providing institutions.

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.



The logo features the letters 'eu' in a stylized, lowercase font. The 'e' is light blue and the 'u' is a lime green. Below this, the word 'Talent' is written in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font.

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