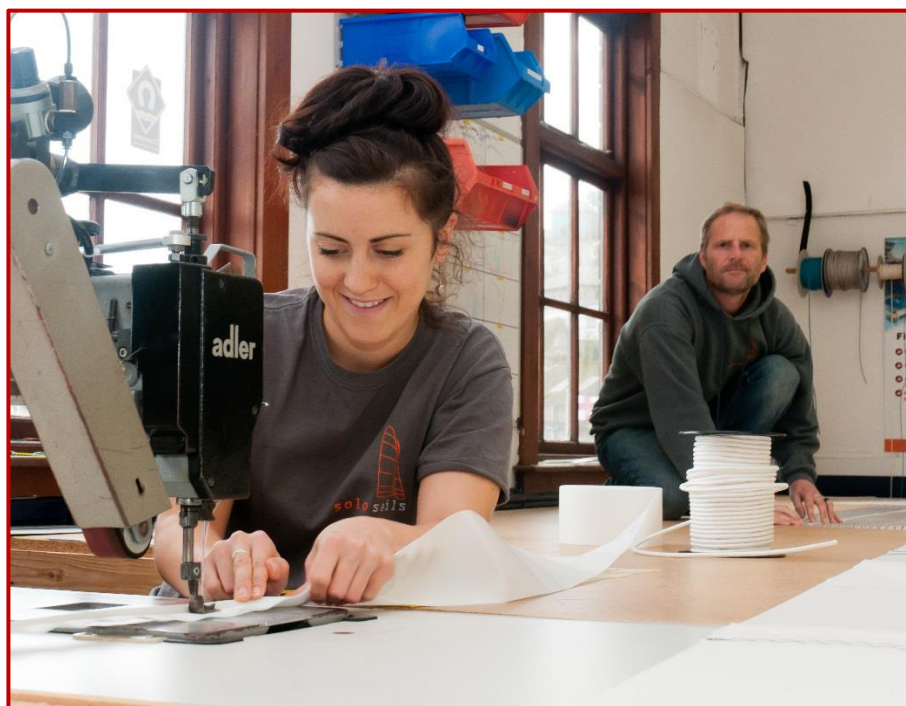


## Services for Apprenticeships (SERFA)

### Erasmus+ Project

# National Report on Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Slovenia



Prepared by Mateja Hergan and Darko Mali,

**Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (CPI)**

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# 1. Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning in Slovenia – Status Quo

## 1.1 Legal Framework

The legal framework for VET programs at the upper secondary level is the Vocational Education Act from 2006 (ZPSI-1<sup>1</sup>) and is conceptually based on the Guidelines for preparation of VET programs at upper secondary level that were renewed in 2016. However, recently new legal framework has been prepared.

Work-based learning is a mandatory part of the educational programmes at upper secondary level (it was set as the maintenance of good characteristic and correction of earlier legislation, in which there were two parallel paths to vocational education: school path and apprenticeship, that had some elements of employment, but it did not succeed in practice). It means that a part of all VET programs is carried out in companies. The overall length of practical training (practical training consists of practical lessons in schools and work-based learning in companies) is defined in an educational program and varies according to the type of the program. There are 4 types of VET programmes at the upper secondary level:

- Short vocational upper secondary education (2 years): 35-40% of educational programme is intended for practical training, of which 4 weeks (152 hours) for work-based learning in companies.
- Vocational upper secondary education (3 years): 40% of educational programme is intended for practical training, of which at least 24 weeks<sup>2</sup> (912 hours) and not more than 53 weeks for work-based learning in companies. It means that all programmes have a prescribed minimum length (24 weeks) of practical training in companies, but in the case a student has an individual agreement with a company, the length of practical training can be extended to maximum 53 weeks.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO4325>

<sup>2</sup> The extent of work-based learning varies in some programmes (eg. in the program gastronom-hotelier there are 29 weeks of WBL instead of 24 to begin with. (1102 hours).

- Technical upper secondary education (4 years): 15% of the educational program is intended for practical training, of which 4 - 8 weeks (152 - 304 hours) for work-based learning in companies.

- Vocational technical education (2 years, after vocational upper secondary programmes; enabling 3-years programmes graduates' vertical transition): 10% of the educational program is intended for practical training, of which 2 weeks (76 hours) for work-based learning in companies.

In 2016 Guidelines for the preparation of VET programmes were renewed<sup>3</sup> and two paths of three-year programmes were introduced: school path and apprenticeship; the latter is to be favoured for certain sectors like rare occupations and professions in limited demand. In apprenticeship at least 50 % of the programme is carried out as WBL in companies and at least 40 % of the total educational program is carried out in the school (including all general educational subjects). Both paths (school and apprenticeship) are equivalent regarding the level of education and vocation achieved.

The development and piloting of apprenticeship system is part of the large ESF project called 'Reform of Upper-secondary Vocational Education'. This project started in March 2017 and covers elements of the Upper-secondary VET reform. The main objectives of this project are:

- The development of models to support companies regarding WBL
- The development of flexible and individualized teaching approaches/learning paths
- Pilot implementation and evaluation of apprenticeship system
- Update of school-based VET (the needs of the companies)
- Preparation of catalogues for WBL (define WBL outcomes)
- Improvement of the training programme for mentors in enterprises (basic and advanced)

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<sup>3</sup> More information about the new guidelines compared to the previous:  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/slovenia-new-guidelines-vet-programme-development>

The project deals with different fields of development:

1. Development of bases for the preparation and implementation of two new models of upper secondary VET (more individualized school-based system and apprenticeship system). Regarding this topic the following tasks will be conducted:

- Development of the methodology for updating existing programs or developing new educational programmes
- Development of the methodology for the preparation of catalogues for practical training (learning outcomes for practical training)
- Development of a new concept for assessment and finishing education
- Development of recommendations for the preparation of implementation curricula
- Development of training programme for in-company mentor

2. The development and piloting of the apprenticeship model where following tasks are planned:

- development of the apprenticeship model;
- training the education providers and development different materials and tools;
- piloting apprenticeship model.

3. The development and piloting of model for a more individualized school-based system where following tasks are planned:

- development of a model for more individualized school-based system;
- train the education providers and development of different materials and tools;
- piloting of this model.

1.4 Empowerment of chambers, unions and other supporting institutions

- The development of a single model of support and counselling the companies to provide practical training
- Training and production of material for consulting and support

- Register of training places
- Promotion of new models

#### 1.5 Evaluation of new models

- All development activities and the introduction of both new models will be regularly monitored and evaluated. The annual report will be prepared and forwarded to the Council of Experts for VET and the relevant ministries.

Ministry of Education, Science in Sport issued a Decision on implementation of pilot introduction of apprenticeship, which was approved by Council of Experts for VET. Pilot introduction of apprenticeship will begin in the school year 2017/2018, for 4 programs at 6 upper-secondary VET schools:

- Joiner
- Gastronomy and Tourism
- Stonemason
- Metal Sharper-Toolmaker

The development of the methodologies, piloting and monitoring will be run by CPI.

In this report we will provide information separately for WBL in current arrangements and for the new implementation of apprenticeship. In both cases we will refer to the 3-years upper secondary VET programmes.

##### *1.1.1. Responsibilities*

VET in Slovenia falls entirely under the jurisdiction of Ministry for Education, Science and Sport, but there are some social partnerships in some phases (eg. preparation of vocational standards, which are adopted by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs acting on a proposal of Council of Experts for VET).

In current situation, schools carry out the majority of the tasks for the WBL implementation. There are some tasks foreseen for Chambers in the ZPSI-1 law, but in practice social partners, schools and companies rarely recognise their role. For the

purposes of the WBL implementation schools keep and maintain their own lists of companies they established good cooperation with. If student don't find a company on their own, they can select one from this list. Organisers of WBL<sup>4</sup> check the quality and suitability of workplace and often visit students during the WBL.

In the new Apprenticeship Law the role of chambers is enhanced and their tasks are as follows:

- Draw up and publish a call for apprenticeship places.
- Supply data to schools.
- Cooperate with schools and employers in the preparation of training plans in accordance with educational programmes.
- Cooperate in the preparation of national catalogues for WBL.
- Check the suitability of the working conditions and equipment for the verification of the apprenticeship places.
- Prepare the proposition of training programmes for mentors and refer it to the CPI.
- Provide trainings for mentors.
- Keep records in accordance with this Act.
- Are actively engaged in helping apprentices find employers.
- Carry out guidance services for employers.
- Honour the commitments arising from the agreements and report to the Ministry of Education once a year.
- Organise the implementation of intermediate examinations.
- Mediate between the employer and the apprentice in case of disputes.
- Carry out individual promotional activities to promote apprenticeships and perform other tasks provided for in this Act.

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<sup>4</sup> Organiser of WBL is systemized workplace at schools for the purposes of WBL, described in good practices.

### *1.1.2. Professions and Branches*

In Vocational Education Act (2006) there are no differences in professions or occupational groups concerning WBL; the arrangements are the same for all VET programmes.

In the new guidelines, that are the base for the Apprenticeship Law (2017), apprenticeship is aimed to support the certain sectors like rare occupations and professions for which there is little demand. However there is no mention of specific sectors or occupational groups. The vocations chosen for the first year pilot of apprenticeship are listed on p.5.

### *1.1.3 Curricula*

Curriculum for upper secondary VET programmes comprises general subjects (responsibility of Institute for Education), modules (this are “professional units” of the programme, based on vocational standards; responsibility of CPI) and practical training, which is carried out as practical training in schools and WBL in companies. Professional part of curriculum is revised if necessary, when vocational standards are revised. There is a reform of VET programs approximately every 10 to 15 years and revision of curriculums is also the part of it.

Only 80% of curricula for VET programmes is prescribed at the national level. The remaining 20 % is so called “open curricula”, that schools prepare themselves or in cooperation with companies in the area. “Open curricula” is the opportunity for schools to include contents in need in their local labour market.

Please note: for WBL in companies, there are no curricula defined at national level. To start WBL at an employer, the company, school and student sign a learning agreement, which contains vocational competencies the students will acquire during practical training in accordance with the educational programme and the time and schedule of



work-based learning. However, as evaluations of CPI has shown, in practice work plan or work-tasks for WBL are prepared by schools.

For the implementation of the new apprenticeship system, a methodology for preparation of catalogues of knowledge is being prepared by CPI and will be implemented and monitored in foreseen piloting. These catalogues of knowledge for WBL will contain learning outcomes to be achieved during practical training in real work environment.

#### *1.1.4 Remunerations*

In status quo the remuneration to student for WBL should be a part of learning agreement (ZPSI-1), based on existing sectoral collective agreements<sup>5</sup>. However, at state level we don't have any statistic or a proper insight, how many companies actually pay students for their work and how much is the award. As evaluations have shown, there are different practises in this field.

According to the new Apprenticeship Law apprentices' remuneration should be included in the learning agreement and as well payment period, payment date and method of payment of apprenticeship awards, costs related to the work and any other payments. The law also states, that apprentice's award shall not be less than 250 € in the first year, 300 € in the second year and 400 € in the third year for full working month (payment is proportional to the number of work hours in the particular month. It can be higher, if it is so stipulated in collective agreement).

#### *1.1.5 Formal and Qualificatory Requirements for Trainers*

In-company mentors must possess:

- professional education in the appropriate field,

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<sup>5</sup> However, remuneration for practical training is not included in all sectoral agreements.

- appropriate number of years of work experience<sup>6</sup>
- pedagogical/andragogical training.

The pedagogical/andragogical training program for in-company mentors that is usually used was prepared by CPI and takes 50 hours of candidate hours, of which 24 are contact hours and 26 hours are for individual work. Training programs are provided by schools and chambers. Certificates are issued by the individual provider and are not limited in time, so there is no recertification of mentors. In the ESF project 'Reform of Upper-secondary Vocational Education' new programs to train mentor are going to be developed.

Having an appropriate mentor is one of the conditions for the verification of the learning workplace. The others are material conditions - material used on the workplace itself as well as equipment, depending on the occupation. If the conditions are satisfied, competent Chamber shall issue a certificate and the company shall be entered in the register of training workplaces.

#### *1.1.6 Assessment*

Basis for the assessment in VET schools are the Rules on assessment in upper secondary schools. The final assessment of WBL in companies is made by the organiser of WBL in the school on the basis of in-company mentor's written opinion and evaluation of a pupil's report/logbook. The assessment has a two stage scale: passed / not passed.

If WBL in a company is prolonged (in this case a part of practical lessons are carried out in the company) students' performance is assessed by a professional teacher at school according to five-step rating scale and is entered into the grade book under the relevant professional module. Some schools prepare some kind of evaluation sheet for in-company mentors, containing different elements to evaluate students. In most cases, these elements are related to the student's attitude to work. However, practices

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<sup>6</sup> The number of years of work experience required for mentors depends on the level of education achieved and the type of VET programme of the student.

in this field vary; there is no common framework or guidelines on national level. Teachers take into account the opinion/evaluations of in-company mentors, but the final word in the assessment has teacher of professional module.

Once during the apprenticeship, as a rule at the end of the second year, an interim exam takes place at the employer in the presence of the mentor and the representative of competent Chamber. The aim is to verify the effectiveness of achieving the necessary skills and knowledge according to the training plan, but it is not assessed. At the same time, the implementation of training is checked and the employer is advised on further practical training of an apprentice.

Final exam is conducted by the schools Examination Commission. The representative of employers can be present as well, but has no active role.

## 1.2 Institutional Framework / Involvement of Stakeholders

### 1.2.1 National Authorities

The higher authority in the field of VET education is Council of Expert for VET (comprised of 15 VET stakeholders<sup>7</sup>). Their main jurisdictions are:

- to confirm catalogues of knowledge and examination catalogues for professional theoretical subjects and master craftsman exam,
- to set the extent and content of WBL at companies 2-years and 3-years upper secondary programmes,
- to define the content of the interim exams,
- to approve handbooks and teaching aids for professional modules,
- to propose to the competent minister: VET programmes and norms and standards for VET schools and school workshops.

Schools, chambers and companies are responsible for the implementation of WBL. Chambers carry out verification of training places, run and update registers of training places in companies, publish announcements of training places for every school year, provide interim exams for students with prolonged duration of WBL (which are very rare) and carry out pedagogical-andragogical training for in-company mentors. However, in current situation the role of chambers is mostly not recognised and schools carry out the majority of work.

Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (CPI) has counselling and supporting roles for the WBL implementation. In the scope of two projects, guidelines for the implementation of WBL were prepared (for in-company mentors, students and organiser of WBL; separately), as well as a web page for in-company mentors, where

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Organisation and Financing of Education Act one chairman and 14 members. 5 members are proposed by Ministries (of which 2 by Ministry of Education), 5 are proposed by competent Chambers and 4 by unions.

they can find simple instruction what is needed for WBL in company, the procedures to be taken and the samples of the documentation needed.

In Slovenia we have only national authorities<sup>8</sup> and currently there is no authority to carry out the control of WBL in companies with any kind of financial consequences. Chambers and CPI report to the competent Ministry concerning the funding. However, organisers of WBL visit students during the WBL and some schools reported they have experiences with moving student to another company, when they were dissatisfied with companies' approaches to WBL.

According to the new Apprenticeship Law, Labour Inspection and the Inspection responsible for education are competent for the infringement of the apprenticeship contract. Fines for companies and Chambers are defined as well.

Inspectorate of Labor, and the inspectorate responsible for education

### *1.2.2 Social Partner Institutions (Chambers, Trade Unions)*

For the role of Chambers see 1.2.1 (current role) and 1.1.1 (the role in the new apprenticeship). The role of Trade Unions in status-quo arrangement is not active, but they in the new system they are included in this fields:

- A representative of trade unions is one of the members of the board that will monitor the implementation of the apprenticeship in the country.
- Trade unions representatives will be included in ad hoc commissions, established in case rights of apprentices will be violated.

### *1.2.3 VET Institutions*

The schools are, in practice, responsible for the majority of the tasks for WBL implementation (see above), especially the organiser of WBL, systematised workplace

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<sup>8</sup> We have left out Chapter 1.2.2 Regional authorities in this report.

at schools for the implementation of WBL (we have described this position at schools in good practices).

Some schools have an intercompany training centre, which forms part of a school or school centre's organisational structure. There are currently 20 such centres for different sectors in Slovenia. Intercompany training centres encompass various target groups, and represent a link between education, training, the economy and development in the local area. Implementation of vocational modules takes part and, partly, work-based learning also take place in them. In the area of agriculture, WBL can also be carried out entirely on school premises.

#### *1.2.4 Companies*

According to ZPSI-1 providers of VET programs are schools together with companies. In this law are included as well responsibilities of companies. Duties of an employer who enters into a learning contract are in particular:

- to enable students to acquire vocational education,
- to take care that student regularly attends school and other mandatory educational tasks,
- to enable to student at least six vacant days to prepare for the final exam, in addition to holiday,
- to pay student the agreed remuneration,
- to concern the safety at work and the health of the student,
- to acquaint student with the safety regulations at work,
- to take care about good relations among students and workers,
- to control how the student runs the prescribed documentation for WBL,
- to meet all the contract agreed obligations.

The last paragraph of the same article states that the employer can assign the student only the tasks that ensure the acquisition of professional competences in accordance with the educational programme.

For the implementation of WBL companies must be verified by Chambers (see above, 1.1.5). In practice, the most common reason of companies to take student for practical training is the favour to the school, student's parents or student. Schools are in a bit unfavourable position towards companies, because they have to ensure practical training in companies (WBL is the part of the educational programme, for which they issue final certificate), so they cannot afford to be consistent regarding all the conditions.

For the new apprenticeship venue of educational programmes, obligations of companies are extended in the Apprenticeship Law:

- to refer the apprentice to the educational organisation that implements the apprenticeship form of a training programme in the field of the contract in accordance with the training programme,
- to ensure a quality practical training at a verified apprenticeship workplace,
- to enable the apprentice to fulfil the obligations under the educational progra at the school,
- to pay the remuneration till the 15<sup>th</sup> in the month as defined by this law to a bank account, open in the Republic of Slovenia,
- to ensure the reimbursement of expenses related to apprenticeship at the level set by collective agreement, namely, for transportation to and from the training place, reimbursement of expenses for food, the reimbursement of mission expenses, an add-in when it is defined in the collective agreement binding to the employer;
- to ensure the apprentice the protective equipment,
- to ensure the safety and health at work,
- to protect and respect the apprentice's personality and concern and protects his privacy,
- to consider the adjustments referred to in the decision pursuant to the Act, which governs the provisions for children with special needs,
- to enable the apprentice in accordance with the school calendar a leave of at least six working days to prepare for the final exam,
- to assign to the apprentice only tasks which are set out in the education programme to achieve the learning objectives of the practical training at company,

- to keep records of labour and social security in accordance with the law,
- to provide medical examinations, which correspond to the risk of occupational safety and health,
- to registers an apprenticeship agreement in the competent Chamber,
- to meet other duties related to the contract of apprenticeship.

The evaluation of CPI<sup>9</sup> indicated that in general the schools establish good cooperation with the companies and do their best to maintain the good relationships. Among the best practices of the schools that have well set up WBL area are courses for trainers in companies. The schools prepare interesting topics for in-company mentors. Schools think that contacts beyond the needs of the WBL are necessary for good cooperation with the companies. Companies also find good cooperation with the schools to be a necessity when it comes to training of youth. Employers expect from students a positive attitude, interest, curiosity; expert knowledge is at the bottom, if mentioned at all.

## **1.3 Financial Implications**

### *1.3.1 Cost Responsibility*

Financing of upper secondary schools is founded by the state (Ministry of Education), calculated per student on the basis of ZOFVI (Organisation and financing of education Act) and criteria and standards issued by the Ministry of Education. Total funding is specified in a financing agreement signed by the Ministry and the school for each budget year. In school year 2015 there was 1,907 million euros spent for education in

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<sup>9</sup> CPI (2012). *The role of Chambers, schools and employers in the course of work-based learning in vocational and professional education and work-based learning for students of vocational colleges. In the evaluation were included schools with well organised WBL and the companies they established good relationships with. The same evaluation showed as well, that young people are a welcome help in some companies, even though these companies did not employ anyone for longer time.*



Slovenia (4,9 % of GDP), of which 1 % of GDP was spent for upper secondary education (general and VET). However, more precise data for upper secondary VET or WBL are not available.

For the WBL in companies health insurance for the students' time in companies is paid by the school (money is received from Ministry of Education); the company covers material expenses for workplace, the protective equipment for the student, remuneration, transport and food costs during the work-based learning. Detailed data about the expenses or the share of companies that actually pay students' remuneration are not available.

In the apprenticeship model of reimbursement of costs for companies is envisaged during the time of the project (till 2022): costs for the medical examination, social and health insurance; costs for transport and food for the apprentice; €2000 for the 56 weeks of WBL in company in three years<sup>10</sup>. However, long term (public) reimbursement of apprenticeship costs is not yet agreed.

### *1.3.2 Public Funding*

Chambers carry out tasks in the field of work-based learning under public authorization granted by the Ministry of education (verification of learning work places, running a register of learning workplaces etc.); the amount is not available.

In the Apprenticeship Law funding of the tasks of the competent Chambers shall be provided from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia, and also from other projects funds based on public tender. At the moment, financial framework is being prepared and there are no further details available.

In the past there were financial stimulation for companies to increase their involvement in practical training of students within the project »Co-financing incentives for employers to provide work-based learning in educational programs leading to a vocational qualification«, which was funded by the European Social Fund and

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<sup>10</sup> Source: webpage of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia ([https://www.gzs.si/skupne\\_naloge/izobrazevanje/vsebina/Javna-pooblastila/Vajeni%C5%A1tvo](https://www.gzs.si/skupne_naloge/izobrazevanje/vsebina/Javna-pooblastila/Vajeni%C5%A1tvo))

The amount is more estimation and it is not based on any written document.

implemented by means of annual public tender. Between 2008 and 2014 companies received 17.703.802,55 € for co-financing or reimbursement of the cost of mentor and student rewards. Fundings were intended for companies<sup>11</sup>, but a part of it was for the school (€ 50 for each incentive), in which students<sup>12</sup> were enrolled in (for guidance, information and coordination of mentors, administrative and technical support in preparing the documentation for the application to public tender).

For the renovation of VET system, a part of which is the pilot implementation of apprenticeship, there is approximately 2.7 million € provided by the end of 2021, of which 2.1 million € is of European Social Funds. At the same time there is approximately €28.4 million (of which €22.7 million is from EU funds) foreseen for stimulating the companies to cooperate in work-based learning, as well in the apprenticeship form.

In the period 2016-2022 there is a funding for the pedagogical-andragogical courses for mentors to students of upper secondary VET and higher vocational schools. Courses are provided by a consortium of VET schools, higher vocational schools and Chambers. The total value of the project is € 1.090.000, co-financed by European Social Fund.

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<sup>11</sup> Eg. the average value of incentives in 2010-2013 was €688, but it differed by types of educational programs:  
- between € 550.00 and € 1,250.00 per student enrolled in vocational upper secondary education (for all 3 years),

- between € 800.00 and € 1,250.00 per student in higher vocational education (for 2 years).

<sup>12</sup> Students of upper secondary VET programmes and students of higher vocational schools.

## **2. Support Services for Companies – Status Quo**

### **2.1. Supporting Institutions**

#### *2.1.1 Public Institutions*

Public institutions giving support to companies for WBL are schools and their organisational units Intercompany Training Centres and CPI. As mentioned above, schools are the main players in this field.

#### *2.1.2 Social Partnership Institutions*

For providing tasks for WBL, Chambers have a public authorisation, as described in previous chapters. Currently, 3 Chambers have this authorisation:

- Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia,
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and
- Slovenian Chamber of Commerce.

#### *2.1.3 Private Institutions*

Private institutions do not play a role in giving support for the implementation of WBL, in the past there were some private businesses providing trainings for in-company mentors.

### **3. Experience and Needs of Enterprises: Results of the Company Survey**

#### **3.1. Target Groups Chosen for Survey**

Target groups for the survey about the companies' needs regarding work-based learning were companies, especially SMEs. To reach the targets groups for the survey, we have used the following channels:

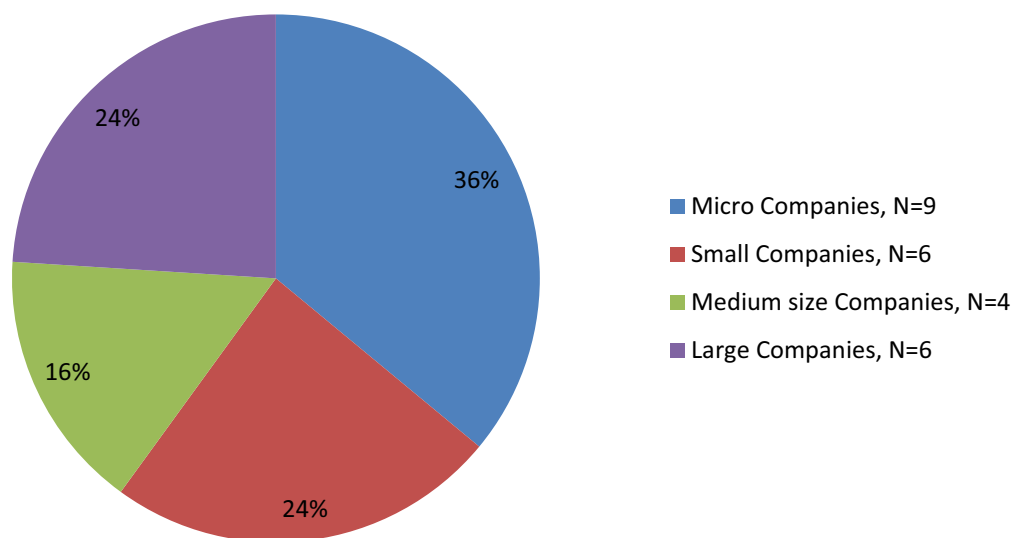
- Sending e-invitation to the survey to the list of companies of Chamber of Crafts,
- Sending e-invitation for the survey to the list of companies of Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia,
- Sending e-invitation for the survey to the list of companies of School Centre Nova Gorica,
- Sending e-invitation for the survey to the list of companies of School Centre Velenje,
- Sending e-invitation for the survey to the list of companies of School Centre Novo mesto,
- Presentation of the SERFA project with the invitation for the survey was included to the newsletter to members of Advantage Austria, Slovenia.

In total, 25 companies completed the survey.

### 3.2. Statistical Profile of Participants

Out of 25 participants in the survey, the majority (76 %) come from SMEs, of which 36 % come from micro companies (<10 employees), 24 % from small companies (<50 employees) and 16 % from medium sized company (<250 employees). 6 participants (46 %) work in big size company (250+ employees). See Chart 1 on next page.

Chart 1: Participants in the survey, according to the company size, N=25



Among the participated companies, there is no prevailing industry:

- 3 participants (12 %) come from each of the following sectors: Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment; Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment and »other«.
- 2 participants (8%) come from each of the sectors: Manufacture of electrical equipment; Manufacture of machinery and equipment; Mining and quarrying, other economic services and Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles.
- 1 participant comes from followings sectors: Traffic; Water supply and waste disposal; Specialised construction activities; Manufacture of wood and of products of wood and cork, except furniture, manufacture of articles of straw and plaiting and Manufacture of wearing apparel.

40 % of the surveyed companies at the time of survey didn't have students on work-based learning and 52 % didn't have any interns. The majority of participants, who have students on WBL or interns, have 1-5 students (36 %) and 1-5 interns, see Charts 2 and 3 below.

Chart 2: Current number of students on WBL in the company, N=25

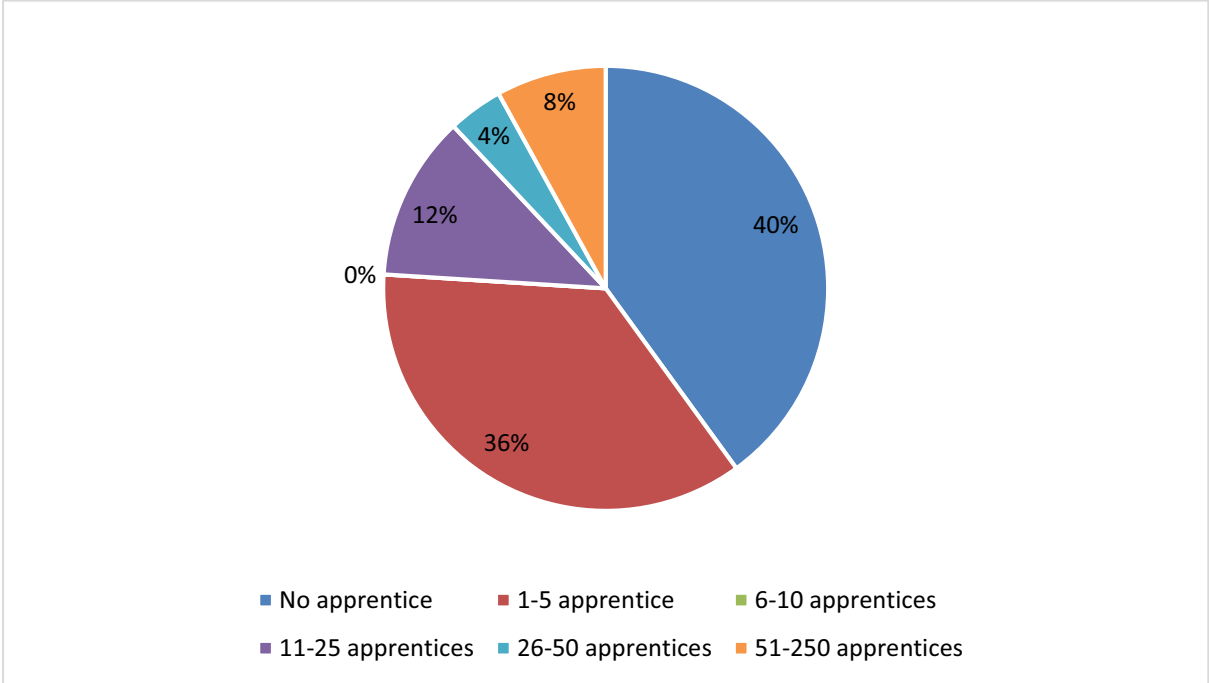
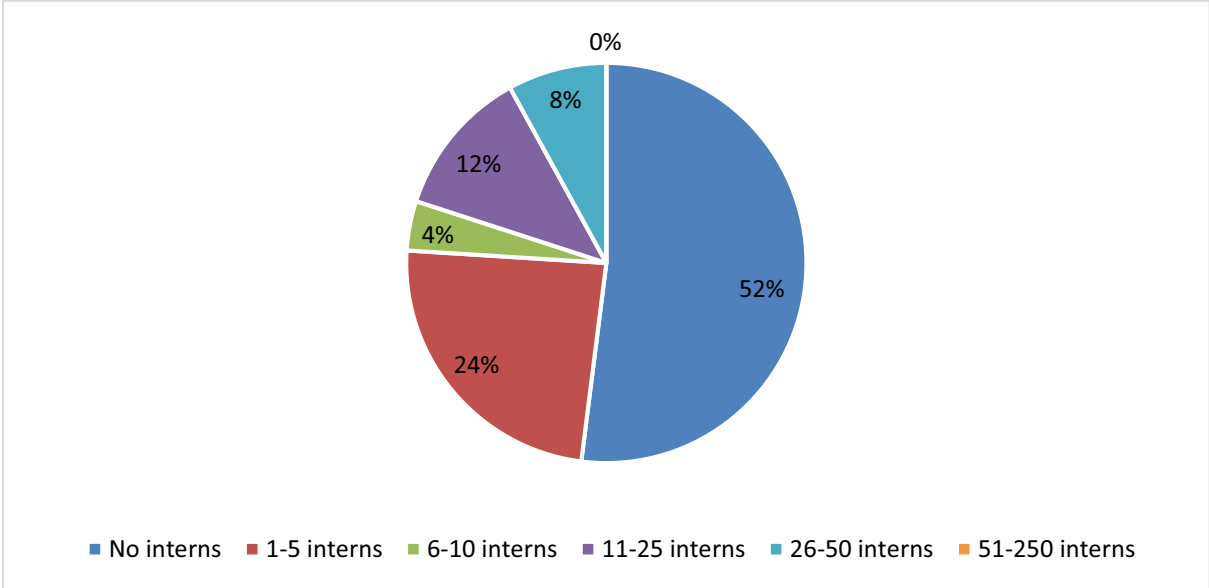
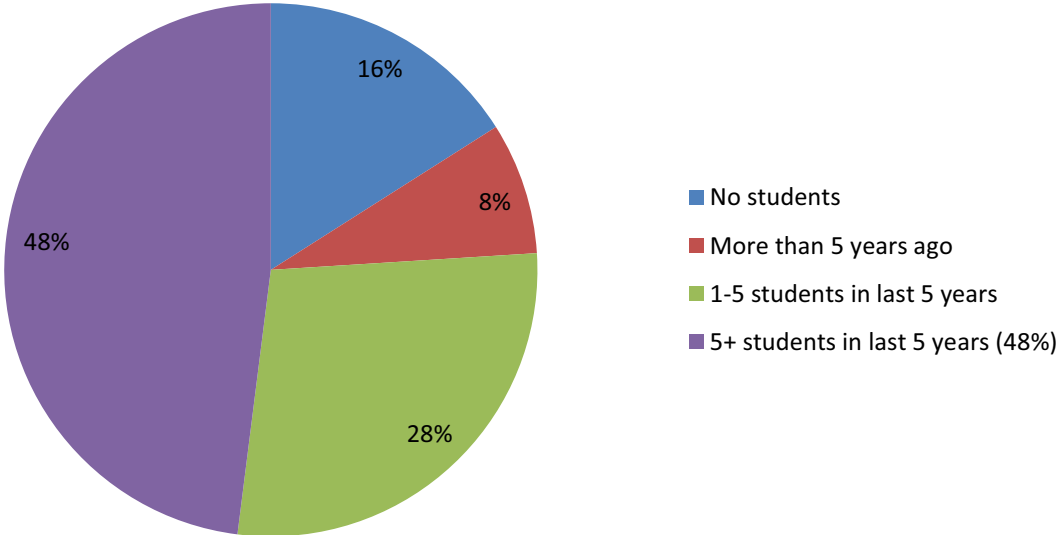


Chart 3: Current number of interns in participating companies, N=25



However, more than three quarters of participating companies cooperated in work-based learning in the past (86%), while 16% have never had a student on practical training (See Chart 4).

Chart 4: Companies having students on WBL in the past



### 3.3. Reasons for not Offering Apprenticeships / Internships

The question “What are the reasons for not offering apprenticeships in the last five years” was answered by 6 participants.

The most important reasons (participants marked them either “especially important” or “very important”) not to have a student on practical training were:

- Other business priorities, 5 participants.
- Too many regulations, 4 participants.
- Too much (or complicated) bureaucracy, 4 participants.
- Specialized personnel requirements are met by training the existing staff, 4 participants.
- Training is too complex, 3 answers.
- We do not have any experience in this field / We do not know how to approach this task, 3 answers; at the same time 2 persons marked this answer as less important.
- Lack of experience in implementation of apprenticeship, 3 answers. At the same time, 2 participants marked this answer as less important.
- Benefit of training on our own is too small, 3 answers.

Among all the statements, the less important reason for not having a student on practical training was “No need for skilled workers” ( $\bar{\varnothing}=3,25^{13}$ ). Considering all gained answers we might get an insight, that participating companies are in need for skilled workers, but have “other business priorities” and insufficient knowledge and experience how to recognize apprenticeship as an opportunity for their long-term development. Our previous experiences from CPI’s other projects and evaluations showed, that companies do not recognise the apprenticeship as a chance to skill/train their future employees as well. We see Serfa project as a good opportunity to raise the awareness of companies about the benefits that apprenticeship can offer to them.

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<sup>13</sup>  $\bar{\varnothing}$  means weighted arithmetic mean; on scale 1 to 4; on which  $\varnothing=1$  means especially important and  $\varnothing=4$  means at least important. However, we have to keep in mind the total numerus of companies before making any generalization.



### 3.4. Reasons for Training Apprentices / Interns

For participants of the survey coming from companies that had a student on WBL (N=19) the most important reason to take a student for WBL is the concern for the future manpower, as we can see from the first three most important answers (see Table 1): training can be tailored according to the needs of company ( $\bar{x}$ =2,06)<sup>14</sup>, assuring appropriate skills in long term ( $\bar{x}$ =2,28) and no skilled workers available at the labour market ( $\bar{x}$ =2,41).

The second group of answers that participants find important shows their social awareness: to contribute to youth unemployment reduction ( $\bar{x}$ =2,53) and responsibility for labour market in the region ( $\bar{x}$ =2,58). The least important reason to take students on WBL are financial implications ( $\bar{x}$ =3,24). For 9 participants (47,4%) cost-effectiveness of training is less important factor.

Table 1: The most and the at least important reasons to take on a student on WBL

Answer	Especially / very important (%)	Rather important (%)	$\bar{x}$
Apprentices can be trained according to the needs of the company	73,7	15,8	2,06
Securing the long-term professional needs	57,9	31,6	2,28
No adequate skilled workers available on the labour market	52,6	31,6	2,41
Apprenticeships help to reduce youth unemployment	47,4	31,6	2,53
For reasons of responsibility for the labour market in our region	42,1	42,1	2,58
<i>The training of apprentices is generally more cost-effective than searching for suitable specialists</i>	26,3	15,8	3,24

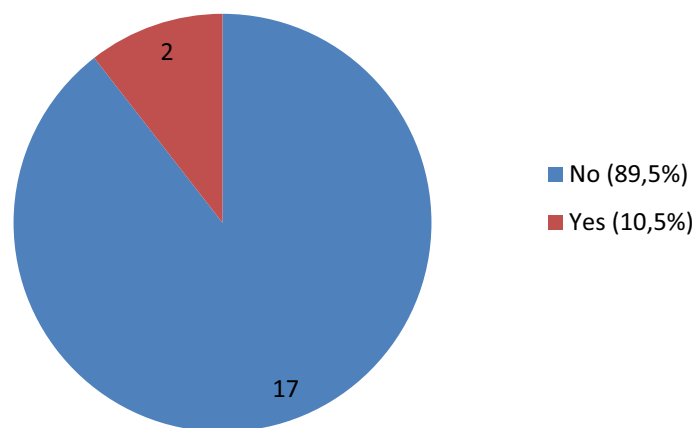
Although the sample is too small to make any kind of generalisation, the insights from collected data are encouraging. They show the shift in the right direction, in the country with no successful apprenticeship tradition, where the last implementation of apprenticeship in late 90's did not succeed in practice and was abandoned few years later.

<sup>14</sup> See Footnote 7 for  $\bar{x}$  clarification. For detailed distribution of responses see Chart 8 in Annex.

### 3.5 Recruitment of Apprentices / Interns: Problems, Challenges and Needs

17 out of 19 respondents (89,5 %) answered that they didn't have any problems with the recruitment of students for work-based learning.

Chart 5: Any problems in recruitment process? (N=19)



Results for this question, even on a very small sample, are not surprising and show a wider picture in the field. In current state companies quite rarely choose the students on their own. In the majority of cases (as evaluation of CPI have shown) the school sends them a student (students choose a company from a list of companies kept and maintained by a school WBL organiser). In-company mentors meet the student at the beginning of WBL for the first time. So, companies are not actually in charge of the recruitment, rather they are contacted by the students (or schools).. The challenge in our country is slightly elsewhere: how to enable the company to do their own recruitment and choose the right candidate?

For two companies having problems, the most important issues when recruiting the student were:

- Lack of resources and time-consuming dimension of apprenticeship schemes.

- Our staff has not been prepared for the implementation of the recruitment process.
- The personal / social competences of the applicants were / are insufficient.
- The basic school competences of the applicants were / are insufficient.
- The practical understanding or basic practical skills of the applicants were / are insufficient.

These answers were marked as “especially important” or “very important” by both participants reporting problems with recruiting students. None of the listed options stand out as less important.

Responses of both participants answering this question reflect the same the situation usually encountered in this field across the country. Companies (especially those which do not cooperate in practical training of youth) do not recognise their role in professional training of the youth and don't see the apprenticeship as an opportunity for themselves. Consequently, they are not willing to invest (time and otherwise) in apprenticeship. This situation is the consequence of the general mind set in Slovenia that all kinds of education and training are the responsibility of the school system<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, there is a constant complaint that graduates lack of competences in need on the labour market, which is also supported with the Serfa survey: the following three most important answers are related to insufficient competences of students.

### **3.6 Support Received**

One participant (out of two) received support regarding recruitment of the student. Support was received from national authorities, local authorities, other companies and representatives of interest in the form of general advice, advice on funding opportunities and information on funding opportunities. However, the received support was evaluated as “rather not” helpful.

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<sup>15</sup> There are as well some exception to this general view, in sectors (eg. hairdressers, gastronomy and tourism) and regional (eg. the region Štajerska, near Austria).

### 3.7 Need for Support

The majority of respondents marked they would like to receive support in almost all the aspects of implementing the WBL (see Chart x below).

The Chart 6 on the next page presents the needs for support to companies regarding apprenticeship, according to the importance. Percentages show the share of participants that market stated options as “especially important” or “very important”.

According to E+ Serfa project survey, the most welcome support for companies are:

- Information and advice on funding opportunities (both having  $\bar{\varnothing}=2,24^{16}$ ).
- Support for funding opportunities.
- Information on the organization of training alliances for the apprenticeship.
- Assistance in the formal handling of apprenticeship (teaching or apprenticeship contract, insurance notifications, remuneration).
- Counselling for the organization of training alliances for the apprenticeship

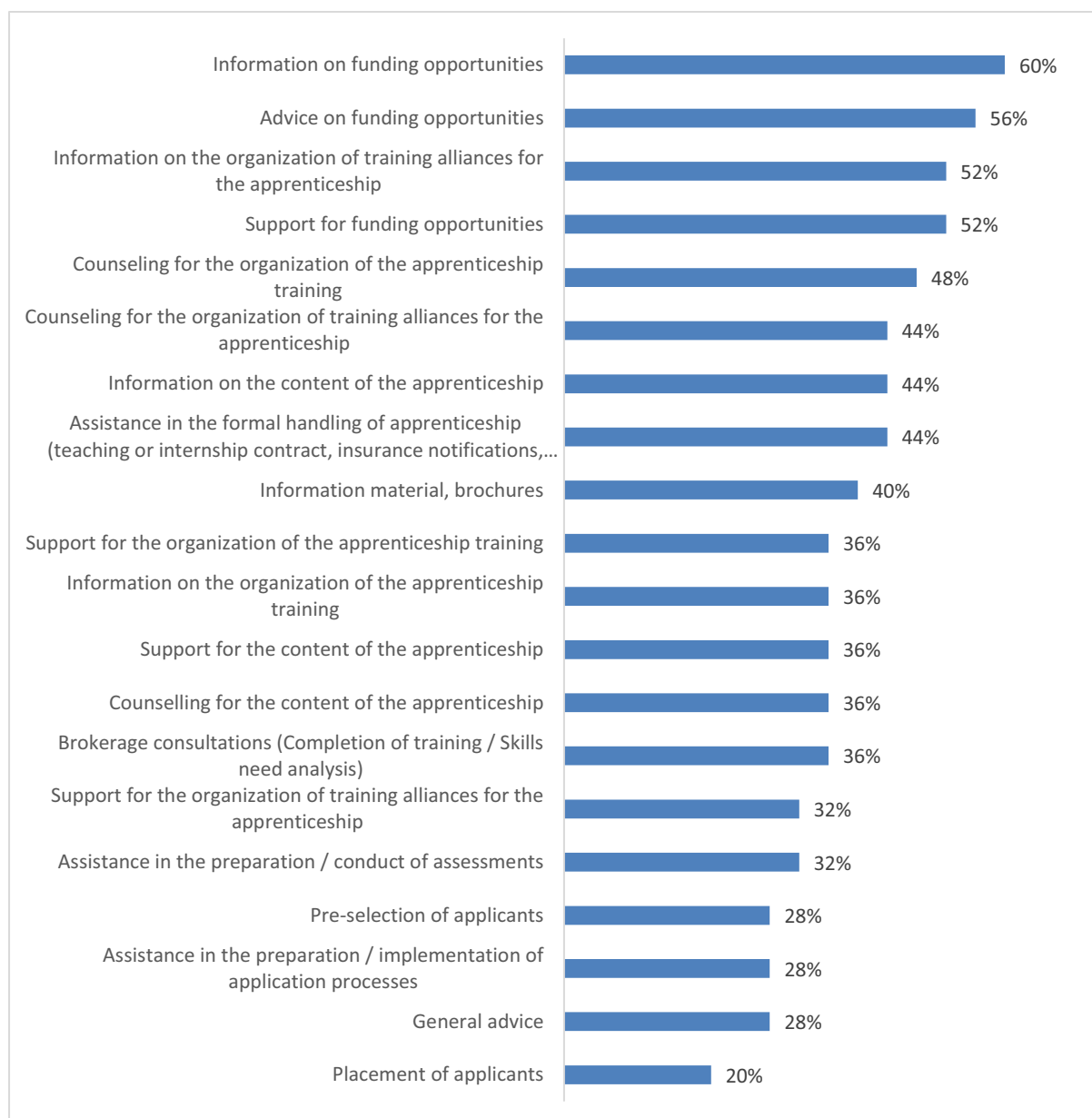
For companies WBL is funded more or less through the projects and there are still open issues on funding the new apprenticeship (Chapter 1.3). So, the top two need in Chart 6 below are not surprising. But, the surprise is in high interest regarding information/counselling on organisation training alliances, because we don't have them (yet). We can assume, respondents are interested in new approaches in order to train young people.

The minor interest for participated companies is for the help in placement of applicants in the company ( $\bar{\varnothing}=3.13$ ).

Chart 6: Need of support in preparation and implementation of WBL (% of answers marked as especially/very important)

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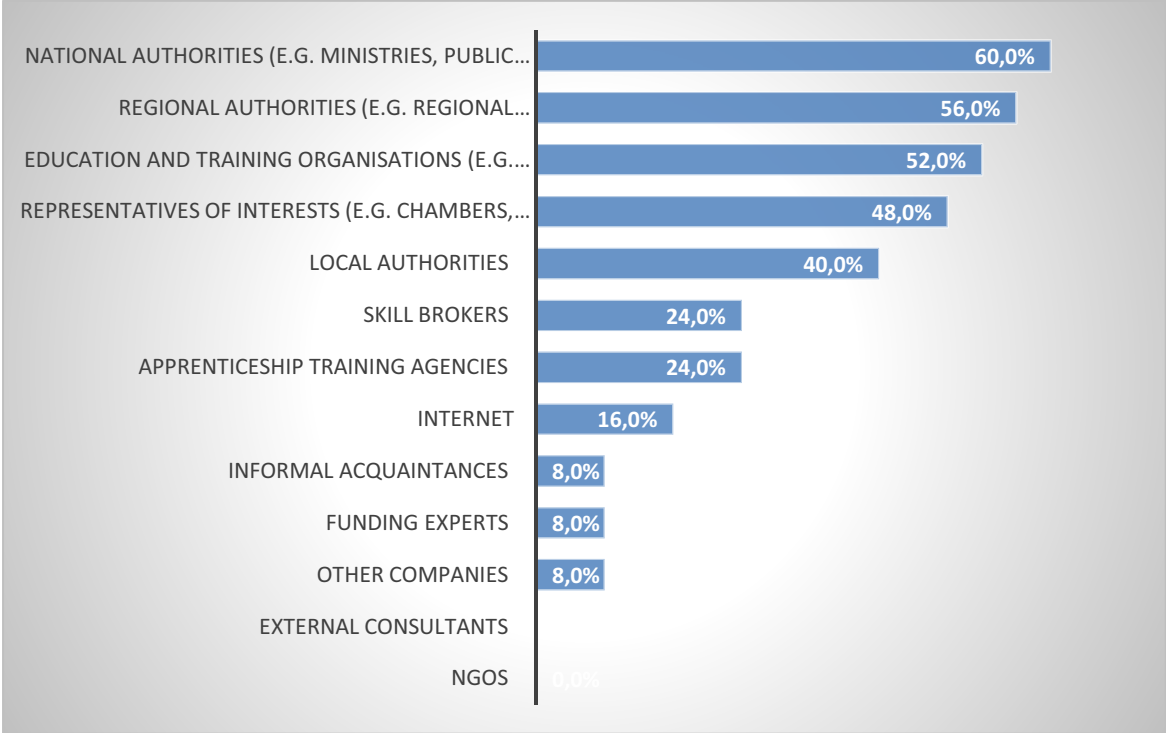
<sup>16</sup> $\bar{\varnothing}$  means weighted arithmetic mean; on scale 1 to 4; on which  $\bar{\varnothing}=1$  means especially important and  $\bar{\varnothing}=4$  means at least important. However, we have to keep in mind the total numerus of companies before making any generalization.



Respondents see the main sources of the support in national and regional authorities and do not expect any kind help from NGOs and external consultants. Good news for Serfa project is, that 36 % of respondents would like to receive Brokerage Consultation; even there is no such practice in Slovenia. For further information for the importance of each option, see Chart 9 in Annex.

40 % of the surveyed companies agreed to be offered Serfa project services.

Chart 7: By whom would you like to receive the support? (in %)



## 4. Conclusion

In Slovenia schools are responsible for most of the tasks regarding arrangement and preparation of WBL in companies as well as for quality assurance. As evaluations of CPI have shown, the majority of information and guidance for companies is provided by the schools.

The Serfa survey results show<sup>17</sup> that surveyed companies, who have no experiences with WBL, need properly skilled workers. We could assume that they do not expect those needs to be fulfilled by offering the apprenticeships; because the most frequent very important reason for not having apprentices those participants chose is “other business priorities”. The next reasons by importance are lack of knowledge regarding training procedures, regulations and bureaucracy. This gives the Serfa project an opportunity to spread awareness among the companies that by offering apprenticeship they can train their own employees.

Companies that have (or had) students on WBL are aware of the advantages of practical training of youth, especially in meeting their specific and long term professional needs that they cannot fulfil with the workers on labour market. Surveyed companies have chosen social responsibility as the second most important category of their motivation for training young people. This point of view is however not common in the country as previous projects, evaluations and public debate about the new apprenticeship law have indicated, but it presents the direction to be fostered, within the Serfa project as well.

Most participants do not cite any problems with recruitment of students, which is not surprising, considering the usual selection procedure of companies for WBL. Answers of the companies that have problems with the recruitment show the well known picture in our country: the companies are unwilling to invest into the practical training (investment of time and skills of employees to train students) and complain about the

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<sup>17</sup> According to the numerus of surveyed companies we cannot make any generalization, but we can get an insight in the field of interest.

insufficient competences of the youth at the same time. This gap could be well addressed through the Serfa communication strategies.

For surveyed companies the financial aspect is the least important motivation for accepting a student for practical training, which does not contradict the most important needs to support for companies, where top needs are related to funding opportunities. Funding for companies is mostly project based and there are constant changes. Here we also have to take into account that in Slovenia there are no calculations on cost/benefit ratio available. Other most important needs for the companies that could be addressed within Serfa project are assistance in formal handling of apprenticeship and counselling for the organization of training alliances for the apprenticeship, especially for SMEs.



# Annex

Chart 8: What are the reasons you have taken on an apprentice before?

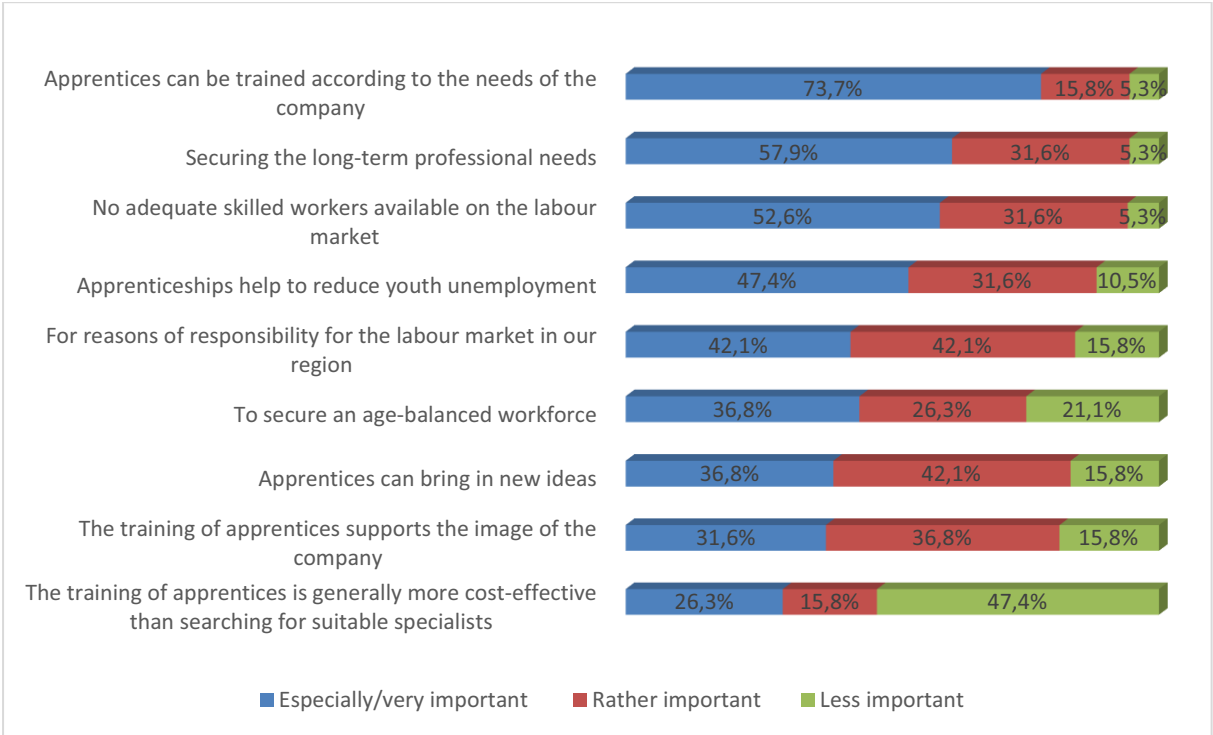
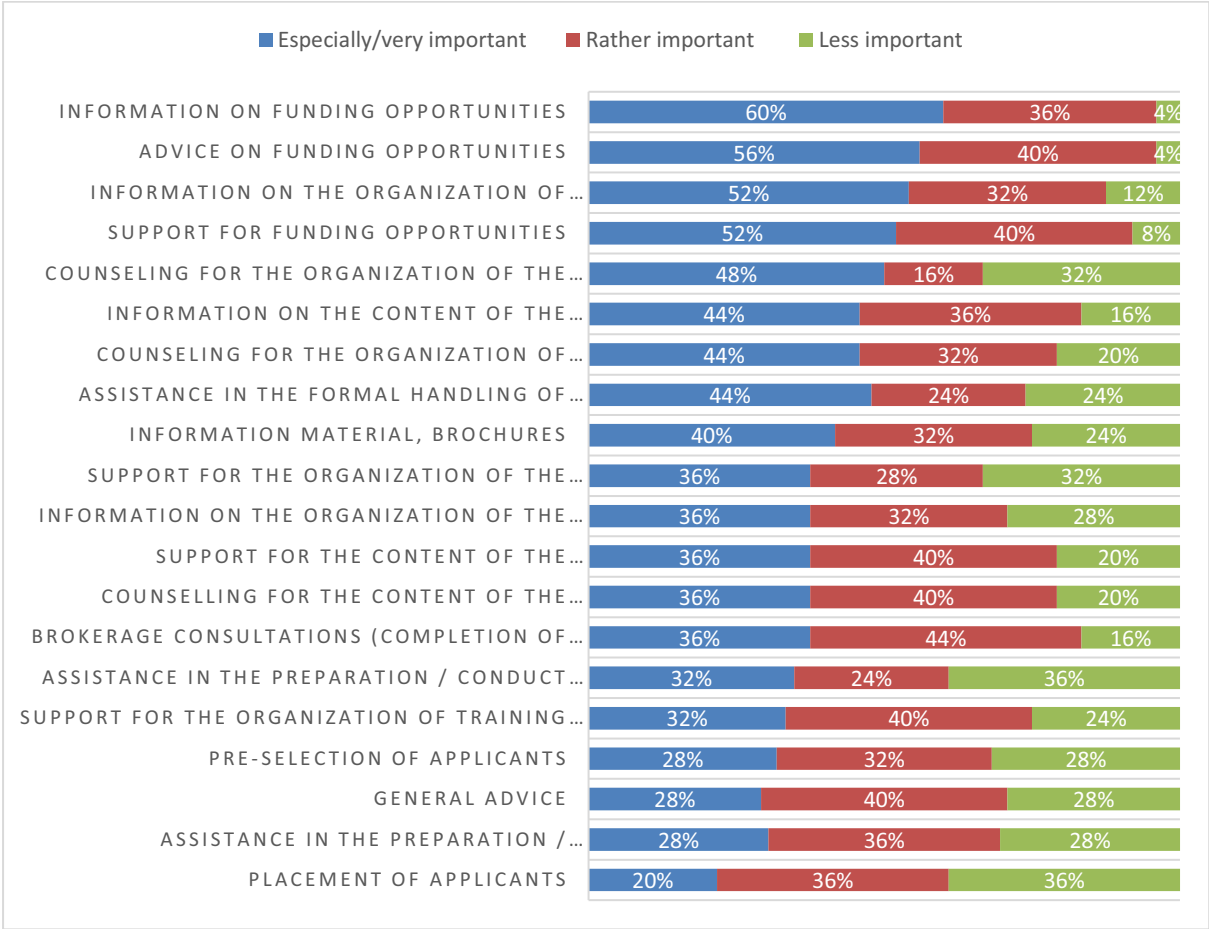


Chart 9: What kind of support would you like to receive in the preparation and implementation of apprenticeships?



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