

Employee Skills Gap Survey Malta

Background

In an attempt to respond to the key challenges related to the economic crisis and demographic changes in societies, European education policies and programmes have been encouraging reforms that aim to improve the education systems' efficiency to decrease youth unemployment rates, and develop graduates' social capital, as well as their knowledge, skills and competences needed in a competitive labour market. With its general objective of providing support toward the achievement of the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Erasmus + programme has furthermore specific objectives in the field of education and training, namely "to improve the level of key competences and skills with particular regard to their relevance for the labour market and their contribution to a cohesive society, in particular through increased opportunities for learning mobility and through strengthened cooperation between the world of education and training, and the world of work."¹ This is in line with the Bucharest Communiqué in 2012 ² which sheds the light on the need to develop the personal and professional skills of graduates through tighter cooperation between the students, the educational institutions and the employers.

The overall project

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education as the National Agency for the Erasmus+ KA3 project: Support to the implementation of EHEA Reforms, has undertaken a number of activities supporting the implementation of the Bologna Process in Malta with a strong involvement of the National Team of Bologna Experts.

The main rationale of these activities was to address the two central challenges for Malta's higher education system as identified in the Bologna implementation report (EACEA, 2012); the low higher education attainment and participation rates and the quality assurance system which is still consolidating. The project targets these two challenges through separate initiatives. In brief, the project consists of a graduate tracer survey, research on skills supply and demand in the Maltese labour market, and training sessions for higher education providers on the implementation of Bologna Process tools.

This information sheet focuses on the employee skills gap survey. The main objective of this study was to collect solid evidence about the number of employees in different sectors of the Maltese economy, recent recruitments, types of vacancies that are hard to fill and the reasons for such situations. It also aimed to collect data on the level of qualification held by employees in different sectors of the Maltese economy, their knowledge, skills and competences as well as their training needs during their employment.

¹ European Commission (2013) 2014 Annual Work Programme for the Implementation of Erasmus+, the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport.

² Ministers of Higher Education (2012) Making the Most of our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area, Bucharest Communiqué, EHEA Ministerial Conference, Bucharest

Research questions

Through this research data on the following issues was collected;

1. What skills needs exist in the Maltese labour market? What differences exist across the sectors of the economy regarding recruitment activities?
2. To what extent are some sectors of the economy finding it more difficult to recruit staff than others and why?
3. Do staff qualifications differ in level across different sectors of the economy?
4. How do employers perceive recent graduates who are recruited in their companies in terms of preparation for the labour market?
5. Does the staff in different sectors of the economy require retraining or upskilling?
6. What skills do employers feel need improvement among their employees?

Objectives

The data collected through this research shall provide insights on the following;

1. Information on skills shortages in the labour market to facilitate decision making of policy makers and education providers, career guidance professionals as well as students and their families about areas of study and levels of qualifications sought in the labour market
2. Provide important feedback to education providers on the knowledge, skills and competences required in different sectors of the economy in order to evaluate the relevance of the their study programmes to the labour market
3. Advise stakeholders on the needs of the labour market
4. Assess the impact of on-going reforms of the education system in Malta
5. Provide a basis for future systematic and periodic employee skills gap surveys in Malta

Methodology

The survey was carried out as an online survey and followed up by telephone interviews. It targeted both private enterprises as well as the public sector from all sectors of the economy in Malta. The survey has been designed drawing on the questionnaire used for the employer skills survey carried out in the United Kingdom in 2013 and in consultation with the National Coordinator for the Bologna Process Professor Tanya Sammut Bonnici. The employers' associations and the National Team of Bologna Experts were consulted to ensure the relevance of the questionnaire.

The survey questions cover the following topics:

1. General information about the organisation responding to the survey;
2. Recruitment and recruitment difficulties;
3. Hard to fill vacancies;
4. Demand for skills or skills gaps;
5. Upskilling and workforce development;

Responses were held in the strictest confidentiality and the respondents' identity will be kept anonymous as no identifying information will be used in the final report.

The data collection was conducted in the first half of 2016 and the findings were presented in July 2016. A full report of the study will be published online.

Role of employers' associations

The NCFHE requested the collaboration of employers' associations in Malta to ensure that the survey covers all sectors of the economy and companies of all scopes and sizes. The employers' input was also crucial for the data analysis stage. They were invited for the launch event in July 2016 and their input and recommendations were collected in workshops by the different economic sectors.

Should you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Christine Scholz at christine.scholz@gov.mt or by phone on 23 810 120.