

European Apprenticeship RoadMap

“A survey analysis: Mapping of European apprenticeship systems and experiences from the labor markets point of view in 7 European countries”



Countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway, France,
North Macedonia, Italy, and Spain



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PROJECT INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

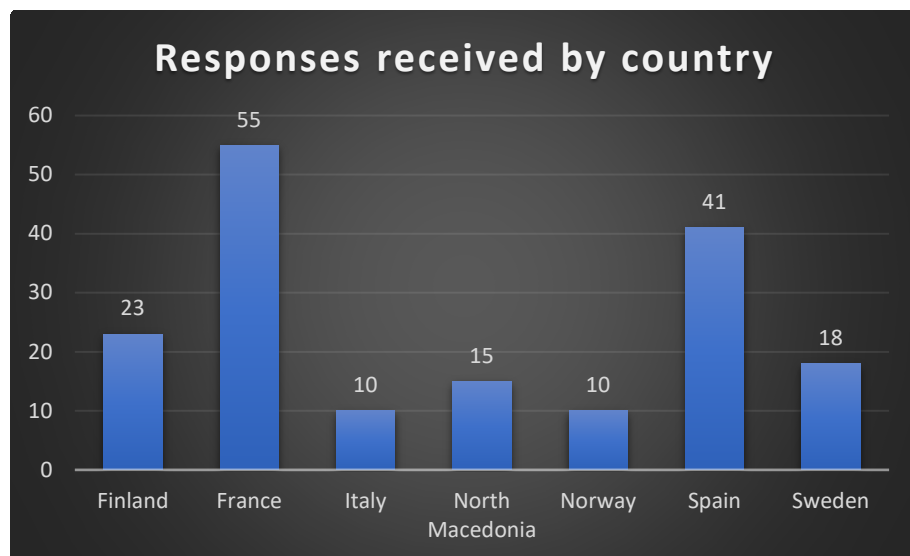
In the context of apprenticeship training the labor market plays a very important part. It is through the work tasks the apprentice is learning by training, with support of a mentor at the workplace. There are differences concerning the apprenticeship training between the European countries that makes it difficult to compare and understand the system and the procedures. One of the objectives in the Erasmus+ funded project “Access to Work-Based Learning Abroad – European Apprenticeship RoadMap” is to better understand the European apprenticeship systems, also by experience. An apprenticeship mapping-survey was sent out to regional companies among the partner countries, to follow up on the objectives. The survey covers different aspects of the apprenticeship training and is for example exploring the mindset of the labor market concerning this system and if there are some parts that might need improvements.

The survey also consists of questions concerning the experience with both national and international apprenticeships, both to gather valuable information about procedures, routines and needs but also for comparison - since the national and international apprenticeship routines may differ. The project members have therefore planned, created, and executed an online survey in Google Forms and the results will be presented in this analysis. The intended target group potentially benefiting from the results of this survey is for example the project partners, teachers, and trainers (in VET-education, adult education, higher education, and social enterprises) and other stakeholders involved in Work-based Learning and/or supporting inclusion.

PART 1 - INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

To get a good basis for this survey the project partners decided on the aim that at least 10 companies (in total 70 respondents) per country should answer the survey, covering several sectors. The concerned countries were Finland (and Aland Islands), Sweden, Norway, France, North – Macedonia, Italy, and Spain. The partners choose to what companies they sent the survey, preferably to companies within various sectors. The survey was also translated to several different languages, and it was done both online and through telephone. Responding companies in the survey reached a total amount of 172 companies, which exceeded the aim with great results and gave the analysis a broader base.

Graphic 1.1: The distribution of the respondents



The survey was sent out to a minimum of 10 companies per partner (9 partners in 7 countries) and a total of 172 companies answered. Most answers were received from France, with 55 companies responding to the survey. From Spain 41 companies answered, and from Finland and the Aland islands 23 companies took part in the survey. Sweden got answers from 18 companies, North Macedonia 15 companies and Italy and Norway 10 each.

Table 1.2: Sector of activity of the respondents

Sectors of activity	Finland	France	Italy	North Macedonia	Norway	Spain	Sweden	Total per sector
Agricultural and Aquacultural Sector	1	30	1	-	-	-	3	35
Business and administration	2	5	1	1	2	3	2	16
Education	2	3	1	-	2	2	1	11
Electricity and Electronics	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	6
Health Sector	9	-	2	-	1	2	3	17
Industry and Technology	4	-	-	11	1	14	9	39
IT, Communication, Computer Sciences	1	-	4	1	1	6	-	13
Marketing and Commerce	3	10	1	1	1	5	-	21
Hotel, catering, tourism	1	4	-	1	2	1	-	5
Others	-	3	-	-	-	2	-	9
Total per country	23	55	10	15	10	41	18	172

There is a broad variety of sectors answering the survey, with the Industry and Technology sector being the largest one with 22,67% of the answers (39 companies). The Agricultural and Aquacultural sector (20,35 % and 35 companies) and the Marketing and Commerce (12,21% and 21 companies) also were well represented in the survey. Overall, a good representation from many different sectors and countries.

Table 1.3: Size of company of the respondents

Size of the company	Finland	France	Italy	North Macedonia	Norway	Spain	Sweden	Average
10 or less	22%	58%	50%	53%	50%	32%	6%	40%
10-25	26%	20%	30%	27%	0%	22%	0%	19%
25-50	22%	9%	0%	13%	10%	7%	17%	11%
50-100	17%	0%	10%	7%	0%	12%	6%	7%
More than 100	13%	13%	10%	0%	40%	27%	72%	23%

The size of the companies is showing that more small companies took part in the survey and 40% of all companies that answered have 10 or less employees. One exception from this is the Swedish companies, since 72% of the companies answering were in fact large companies, with more than 100 employees.

PART 2 – INFORMATION ABOUT NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS

This part of the surveys is split into two groups:

- Companies that never had a paid apprentice (where the aim was to e.g., explore what the main reasons of that was)
- Companies that already had or currently have a paid apprentice/apprentices (with the main aim to gather valuable insights of the experiences e.g., reason why they employ an apprentice and how an apprenticeship is established and handled in the companies).

Table 2.1: Percentage of companies having already hired an apprentice per country

	Finland	France	Italy	North Macedonia	Norway	Spain	Sweden	Average
The company never had an apprentice	9%	5%	40%	100%	30%	39%	39%	37%
The company has already hired an apprentice	91%	95%	60%	0%	70%	61%	61%	63%

All respondents but from one country, North Macedonia, has experience in domestic apprenticeships, France companies the most and Italy the least. The reason for the lack of experience in North Macedonia is because there is no national apprenticeship training system in place. But it's interesting to know that 73% of the North Macedonia companies already had trainees, called "practicants".

Table 2.2: How apprenticeships are established in each country

	Finland	France	Italy	North Macedonia	Norway	Spain	Sweden	Average
Number of apprentices employed per year								
1 - 2	76%	81%	83%	73%	29%	72%	64%	68%
3 - 5	24%	12%	17%	18%	14%	16%	36%	20%
6 or more	0%	8%	0%	9%	57%	12%	0%	12%
Duration of the apprenticeship period								
6 months or less	19%	0%	0%	64%	0%	44%	36%	23%
6 months to 1 year	33%	12%	33%	18%	0%	52%	18%	24%
1+ years	43%	88%	67%	0%	100%	4%	45%	50%
None of above	5%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Age of the apprentice								
Under 18	19%	25%	0%	9%	0%	0%	18%	10%
18 - 29 years old	48%	75%	100%	73%	100%	100%	73%	81%
30-49 years old	33%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	9%	9%
Responsible for insurance during the apprenticeship period								
The employer	76%	88%	100%	64%	71%	24%	36%	66%
The VET provider	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	72%	64%	22%
The apprentice	0%	0%	0%	9%	14%	0%	0%	3%
The authorities /government	0%	0%	0%	18%	14%	4%	0%	5%
I don't know	48%	12%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	10%

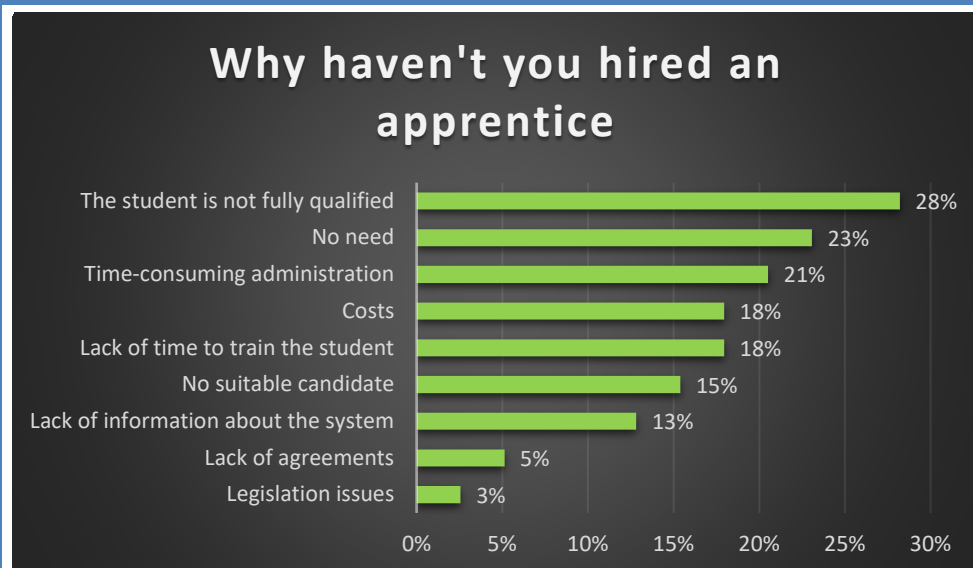
Companies usually employ 1 to 2 apprentices aged generally from 18 to 29 years. One exception is Norway, since the companies taking part in the survey employs more than 6 apprentices. In Finland, it is more common to find older apprentices in companies (33%). The duration of the apprenticeship is country dependent from less than 6 month to more than a year. This comes probably from differences in apprenticeship systems. For instance, France or Italy have long-term apprenticeship (more than a year) because it lasts the duration of the training. In Finland, the duration of the apprenticeship depends on the need of the company, so the periods can vary from short to longer contracts.

Graphic 2.3: Main reasons of hiring an apprentice



The main motivation for companies to hire an apprentice is to make a civic commitment by giving opportunity to a student. On almost the same level, the second reason is based on the company's needs: to find new employee fix termed or for in definitive duration. Finances are not among the top main reason for hiring an apprentice, it is more about the company needs and willingness to support the apprentices gaining real work experience.

Graphic 2.4: The main reasons why companies never had an apprentice



According to the survey results it seems that the companies are mostly looking for students with already some competence and qualification. The results also show that there is a lack of time to put on training the student where also the administration that comes with the apprenticeship plays a role. This is one of the most important aspects of the apprenticeship where the apprentices are being trained by the companies to become qualified, through a mentor. According to the results the VET-providers should also increase the knowledge about the apprenticeship system and support the companies in finding suitable candidates. Almost one fourth of the responding companies didn't at the moment have a need for new employers.

PART 3 - INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS

In this survey, covering both national and international apprenticeship, only six companies responded to having experience of international apprenticeship. These companies are from Finland, Sweden, and Italy.

Out of the 172 companies that took part in this survey, was it very few companies that had experience from international apprenticeship periods, in total only 3,5% out of all companies.

In this part of the survey all the respondents were asked about their experiences in international apprenticeships. The questions are also focused on gathering input and information about the practicalities that the companies feel need to be in order when hosting an international apprentice. By investigating the experiences and needs the project members can gather valuable responses and information and to discuss, evaluate and reflect over the results. This survey is also important because it gives indications on development needs of the outcomes of other results and activities in the project. Two outcomes of the project are an Apprenticeship guide (in support of both apprentice, VET-provider and company) and website, where the input from this survey is taken into consideration as for example the need of more and easily accessible information.

Table 3.1: Profile of the respondents having international apprentices

	Finland	Italy	Sweden
Sector of activity			
Education	1		
Health Sector	3		
Hospitality		1	
Agriculture			1
Size of the company (number of employees):			
10 or less		1	
10 to 25	4		
50 to 100			1
On average, how many international apprentices do you employ yearly?			
1 to 2	3		1
3 to 5	1		
6 or more		1	
Generally, what is the duration of the international apprenticeship period?			
6 months or less	1	1	
Between 6 months and 1 year			1
1+ years	3		
How old are they on average?			
18-29 years' old		1	1
30-49 years' old	4		

The sectors and the receiving companies are very different. Three of the companies receiving international apprentices are within the health sector, one from the educational sector, one in hospitality and one in agriculture. The size of the companies varies between 10 and 100 employees. The general duration of the international apprenticeship has been between under six months up to over a year. This shows that international apprenticeships are well suited in different sized companies, and in different sectors.

One interesting finding from the survey is that nearly 70% of the apprentices were between 30 and 50 in age, whereas in comparison with the domestic apprenticeships where under 30 were most common.

Graphic 3.2: Vision of the companies regarding international apprentices



One of the questions in the survey was about what the companies saw as positive aspects of the international apprentices. Here the companies could choose multiple answers. The companies saw several advantages with apprentices, both internally and externally. Most of the companies thought that international apprentices are a source of recruitment and a way of bringing new knowledge but also a way to strengthen the internationalization of the company, by for example creating more visibility through this new network.

Table 3.3: Training a student: the mentor, the VET-provider, and the assessment

	Finland	Italy	Sweden
At the workplace, the apprentice:			
Has one appointed mentor for the whole apprenticeship	3	1	
Has different mentors, depending on the task	1		1
Has the mentor been offered guidance from the foreign VET provider?			
No, it is not needed	3		1
No, but that would be useful	1	1	
The communication with the foreign VET-provider has been:			
Overall, it met my expectations	3		1
It didn't meet my expectations	1	1	
What was your involvement in the learning outcomes as an employer (tasks, goals for the apprenticeship period)?			
We planned the activity according to the learning outcomes	3	1	1
We were not informed about the learning outcomes	1		
Were you involved in the assessment of the learning outcomes?			
Yes	4		1
We want to be more involved		1	

The mentors at the companies did not, in most cases, get any guidance from the foreign VET-provider but indicated that it could have been useful. The communication with the international VET-provider was mostly good and met the expectations of the companies. Another positive aspect is that the companies were well involved in the planning and the assessment of the activities according to the learning outcomes, only one company responded to not being informed about the learning outcomes nor the assessment.

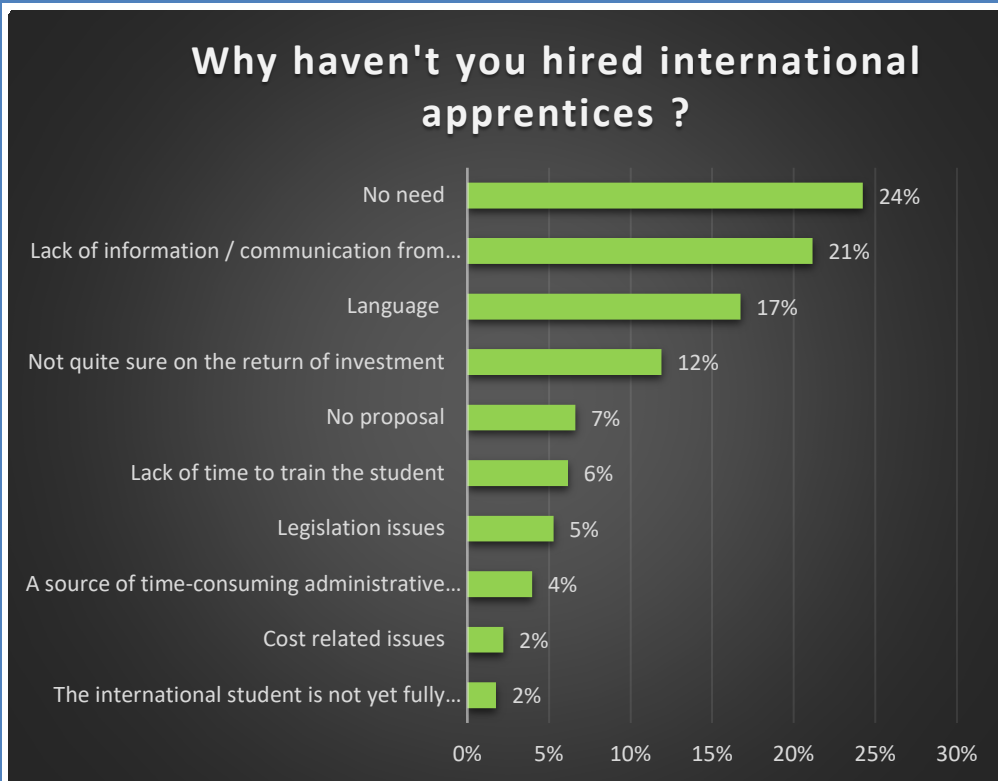
Table 3.4: Employment conditions: salary, occupational safety, insurance

	Finland	Italy	Sweden
What was needed in order to pay the salary to the international apprentice?			
A fixed address in your country	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social security number	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
National bank account	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Already Finnish citizen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tax registration		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who is responsible for occupational safety and insurance during the international apprenticeship period?			
The employer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
What is the retribution of the international apprentices?			
A regular salary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apprenticeship salary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The student has lived here, food free	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study loans from country of student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The company received a refund	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
There is a national agreement on salary level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The results show that the apprentices generally need so have a fixed address in the country, a social security number and in some cases a national bank account and register for taxes. These are matters that may affect the company's ability to receive an international apprentice if they are not in place. In all six cases of international apprenticeships, it was the employer that had the responsibility for occupational safety and insurance during the international apprenticeship period.

The retribution of the international apprentice varied mostly between a regular and/or an apprenticeship salary with all responses highlighting the fact that there are national agreements bound on salary for apprentices.

Graphic 3.5: Main reasons not hiring an international apprentice



The companies that did not have any experience from international apprentices answered a question concerning why they haven't hired international apprentices. Almost 25% answered that they currently don't have need for this. The lack of information and/or communication from the apprentice VET provider(s) was also a challenge for almost as many respondents. 17% acknowledged that lack of knowledge in the domestic language as a reason.

Graphic 3.6: Main reasons to hire an international apprentice



The main advantage for the companies that say they are willing to hire international apprentices is the extended knowledge that comes with the apprentice. Through international contacts the company receives new perspectives and knowledge that can develop their own company by transferring this to the employees of the companies. The companies also see the international apprentices as a source of recruitment, which can lead to strengthening of international networks and connecting businesses throughout Europe. Despite these benefits, almost a quarter of the respondents are not interested in hiring an international apprentice.

Graphic 3.7: Required conditions to hire an international apprentice



The most important requirement for the companies when accepting apprentices is that they have a good linguistic level in the domestic language. This can impose a challenge for the student interested in an apprenticeship, but where one option could be basic language course beforehand. Companies are very interested in the students having good technical knowledge and that their subject knowledge in the field is relatively high. The third most important condition for accepting an apprentice appears to be the possibility to some form of financial support for the company.

Graphic 3.8: What could encourage companies to hire international apprentices



The most important thing for the company is to get help to find a suitable candidate and to get access to a European working base. A lot of companies are looking for a good cooperation with the VET-provider to find suitable candidates. If Europe can create a common European system for apprenticeship with less bureaucracy this would also facilitate the companies to hire an international apprentice. Financial help or a bonus to the receiving companies are also very important.

PART 4 – SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

All participants and VET-providers in the project have carried out surveys in their regions among employers within their established contact networks. The result is therefore connected to the selection of known employers in each region and countries and cannot be seen as an overall national result. Furthermore, there is also a possibility that some answers to some extents are culturally colored according to the different conditions of each country. Despite this has the extensive number of respondents in the survey to the project led to valuable insights and information.

In the survey, we see that the business areas that are most positive about domestic apprenticeships are in industry, technology, and agriculture, and in most countries, it is mainly small companies that offer apprenticeships. Sweden deviates as it is primarily larger companies that offer apprenticeships. Whereas concerning international apprenticeships we see that the majority has been in health sector in middle sized companies.

The survey also shows that there is a positive attitude to offer both domestic and international apprenticeships. There could be indications that the apprenticeships could increase in the future rather than decrease, because of both the many listed advantages the companies saw, and the wish for more information. In North Macedonia there is not yet possible to have apprenticeships in the form that the other participating countries are able to offer. Analyzing the conditions in the various countries, we see a clear majority of countries where the entrepreneurs take responsibility for e.g., insurance and a healthy working environment for the apprentice. The exception is Spain and to some extent Sweden where VET providers are responsible for ensuring a safe working environment and insurance. In some countries certain financial benefits are available for domestic apprenticeships. In France, there are possible tax reductions for the

employers, that also could play an encouraging role in accepting an apprentice. However, the question about tax reductions and international apprentices remains open. The most common length of training domestic apprentices is about one year, and most companies accept one to two apprentices per year. However, Norway deviates by often accepting five to six apprentices per company per year. In most countries, apprenticeships are aimed at students who are up to about 30 years old, but some countries such as Sweden and Finland, it is possible to retrain without clear upper age limit. Regarding international apprentices the difference was visible regarding age, where the most common was between 30-50 of age, and of length since the apprenticeships mostly were signed for over 1 year of length.

The main reason why companies have so far chosen not to employ any domestic apprentices is that they believe the skills of the apprentices is too low and that the companies possibly do not understand their role in an apprenticeship. When it comes to international apprentices, we see one of the reasons to be the lack of need in recruiting new apprentices, but also an uncertainty about the possibilities. And in France, Spain, and Norway, it is not possible to accept apprentices from other countries for the moment. The most important requirement for the companies for accepting international apprentices is a good linguistic level in the national language. The apprentice needs to be able to communicate in the used language, and this should be considered early in the discussion about possibilities.

What the companies clearly signaled in the survey was the need of more information but also help in finding suitable candidates. A lot of companies are looking for more cooperation with VET-providers to find suitable candidates. For the companies considering hiring international apprentices could a common European system for international apprenticeships, with less bureaucracy, support the realization of international apprenticeships.