

# Skills Audit Survey, Bucharest, 2003

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The methodology of the study – designed by the Department for Education and Employment in Great Britain – was recommended by the European Training Foundation (ETF). The study was conducted with the support of ETF.

The study approached the following areas: economic environment in which companies operate and the impact on human resources development policies, characteristics and trends of workforce skills, vocational training for employees and human resources recruitment.

## Survey research methods

### 1. Questionnaire-based survey

### 2. Interview-based survey

1. The **questionnaire** employed was a variant of the tool designed by the Education and Employment Department of Great Britain. The purpose was to see how employers identify training needs and provide training and development of employee skills. The initial questionnaire was designed in view of an extensive survey, co-ordinated by Salford University. For the narrower purpose of the present survey however, the original tool has been adapted to national/regional issues and particularities, while some of the queries have been eliminated.

Regarding the **identification of skills**, the survey focused on the following key areas/issues:

- **Workforce characteristics and staff turnover** (employee fluctuation, causes that affect workforce stability in the opinion of employers and improvement measures, relationship fluctuation – training needs, strategies for increasing productivity).
- **Characteristics and trends of workforce skills** (deficit of workforce skills against labour market demand, occupational/operational areas where lack of skill is manifest, skills evaluation at company level, relationship between workforce skills and company performance, how surveyed companies deal with workforce deficit).

- **Recruitment and filling vacancies** (types of recruitment, recruitment of fresh graduates, current and anticipated difficulties in filling vacancies).
  - **Company policies in human resources development and training activities** (evaluation of employee training needs, training strategy and the necessary resources, relation of training strategy with the general company development plan, access to training, main training methods and CVT providers).
2. The **interview was used to collect** qualitative information. The interviews were held with employers or their representatives and focused on the same issues as those identified in the questionnaire-based survey, with emphasis on aspects related to: evaluation of skills and training needs, human resources training and development strategies and opportunities, types of skills required by employers, procedures for employee selection, recruitment and evaluation.

**Interviews were held with 10 employers/employers' representatives** in north-east Romania and Bucharest.

## **Selection and characteristics of the sample**

The sample included a number of 100 enterprises/companies, the majority of which (80%) are located in Botosani, Suceava, Bacau, Neamt, which are counties from the North-East development region of Romania. The remaining 20%, taken as a pilot sample for comparative analyses purposes were selected from Bucharest, the capital city of Romania. As no significant differences emerged however between the two development regions with respect to the aspects taken into consideration, the analysis was performed on the entire set of companies.

The criteria taken into account when selecting the sample of companies and according to which a well-balanced distribution of companies was attempted, were the following:

1. Field of activity – the indicator was the main economic activity performed by the enterprise;
2. Type of company; it was defined according to the size and degree of independence (autonomy in decision-making). Based on this criterion, the companies covered by the survey fall into the following categories: company that operates in a single location; branch of a company headquarters; regional head office with branches in other locations and central head office with branches in other locations;
3. Company size; the indicator used was the no. of employees (less than 50; between 50 and 250 and more than 250);
4. History; the indicator used was the period since the enterprise is functioning (less than 5 years; between 5 and 10 years and more than 10 years);

5. Form of property; the indicator used was the type of capital – private or state owned.

## **Criteria and indicators used in the study**

For the purpose of the present study, the term skills denotes those employee competencies that meet job requirements. In Romania, these skills are specified by the occupational standards.

The analysis of employee skills in terms of how they are actually put to use in the workplace is detailed on the following topics:

- extent to which employers are concerned with developing the skills of their employees;
- requirements for the workforce and relation with business environment;
- general situation of skills at company level and deficit of certain types of skills;
- skills assessment at company level.

Regarding the shortage of skills, the following aspects were focused by the survey:

- shortage of skills by types of occupations and operational areas; types of skills shortages (basic skills – numeracy, literacy, computer literacy; specific skills – technical skills, client relationship skills, management and supervisory skills and other types of skills, such as: computer literacy, creativity and initiative on the job, ability to implement total quality management (TQM), teamwork skills, communication and relationship skills, language skills);
- methods to cover skills gaps;
- expected skills shortage.

Regarding skills assessment, the survey focused on:

- assessment of employee skills;
- frequency of evaluation;
- skills assessment methods;
- external support in skills assessment.

Regarding the workforce recruitment the study has attempted to identify:

- recruitment policies (internal or external)
- recruitment of graduates by levels of education and occupational groups

- opportunities for practical instruction and apprenticeship
- in enterprises in the companies surveyed and the manner in which they relate to various workforce categories (graduates of secondary or higher education; highly qualified or trainees) and the methods used for filling vacancies. The survey also focused on investigating the main motivations and reasons underlying options of recruitment strategies in the companies covered by the survey.

Regarding the topic of filling vacancies, the study has attempted to identify:

- difficulties encountered;
- overcoming difficulties in personnel recruitment;
- measures for increasing a company's recruitment capacity;
- forecast for filling vacancies.

The survey attempted to detect the level of turnover in the companies included in the survey, future trends as well as the manner in which personnel turnover stimulates managers' motivation to raise the level of skills in the company.

The survey made separate analyses of the turnover caused by employees' decision to leave the company (voluntary turnover) and the one caused by personnel restructuring (conditioned). At the same time, the survey aimed to identify the types of institutions (profile, size, etc.) and occupational groups most affected by personnel turnover as well as the opinions of managers in surveyed companies with high rates of personnel turnover, to determine the causes of this occurrence.

# **Social Impact of Continuing Vocational Training, Bucharest, 2001**

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The general goal was to design a methodology for evaluating the social impact of continuing vocational training. The dimensions envisaged were: employability promotion, knowledge, abilities and professional skills improvement, active citizenship promotion.

The specific goals were:

1. Identify a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators relevant for evaluating the social impact of CVT;
2. Starting from identified indicators, design evaluation tools for all key players that have joint responsibilities in providing continuing vocational training and, in the long run, lifelong education: individuals themselves, employers and social partners, the community and training providers;
3. Apply and validate evaluation tools on survey target groups corresponding to all the set levels of impact.

## **Research methodology**

The method of investigation was the survey based on multiple-questionnaires.

The evaluation questionnaire designed for direct CVT beneficiaries (trainees) was aimed at general information and context variables referring to the individual (sex, age, level of education, trade/profession, job status, graduated courses, etc.), information on employability and increase in individual and collective competitiveness (effects of training programs on professional insertion – in the case of unemployed – developed professional and social competencies, development of active attitudes on the labour market, etc.) on-the-job

participation (work management, initiative in current job and in improving work relationships).

The evaluation questionnaire designed for companies requested general information related to human resources, company/enterprise policy on human resources development (the existence of a strategy for continuing training of employees, organised training programs, non-formal forms of education, etc.), the impact of CVT on individual and collective competitiveness (professional and social competencies developed in CVT programs, career progression, etc.), on-the-job participation (activity management, initiative in current professional activity and improvement of work relationships).

The evaluation questionnaires designed for training providers. They comprise general information (type of provider – public/private, etc. – curricula offer, developed competencies, material and human resources and information related to the professional insertion of graduates of CVT programs (in the case of courses organised for the unemployed).

## **Structure of the sample**

The survey was conducted in the South-East region (the counties of Constanta, Braila, Galati, Tulcea and Vrancea) and Bucharest.

The sample of investigated beneficiaries was made up of 250 subjects (40-45 subjects by each county) and was structured by 3 categories:

- Young graduates of pre-university education under 25 years of age, who were not employed at all before attending CVT courses;
- Unemployed adults under 40 years of age, graduates of pre-university education who had had a job before becoming unemployed;
- People who are employed, graduates of pre-university and higher education, who have attended several training programs.

The group included an equal number of subjects from each of the three specified categories.

The period of reference for attended CVT courses, for all three categories of beneficiaries, is 1st January – 31st December 2000.

The sample contained a number of 30 companies/enterprises (5 from each county). The selection criteria was as follows:

- Form of property: public, private companies/enterprises as well as joint ventures;
- Company size: medium-sized companies (under 250 employees) and large companies (over 250 employees);

- Period of operation: at last two years;
- Involvement in training programs: companies/enterprises that have their own training centres; companies/enterprises with active policies for human resources development, that resort for this purpose to various training providers; companies/enterprises lacking constant preoccupation with training of personnel.

The continuing vocational training centres, 38 in all (6-7 in each county) were selected based on the following criteria:

- Status of provider: public or private
- Type of provider: educational units with accountabilities in the field of CVT; regional centres of the Ministry in charge (e.g. Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity) with CVT accountabilities; training centres in certain companies/enterprises; other institutions (independent centres, non-governmental organisations, etc.)

Regarding the identification of skill needs, the criteria and the corresponding indicators used in the study were:

- (a) Employability and increase of individual and collective competitiveness
  - (i) Professional insertion of graduates of continuing training programs:
    - Number/rate of job (re) integration of graduates according to a series of characteristics (age, sex, profession, sector of activity, type of attended program and initiative of participation);
    - Average length of time (in months) between graduation of a training program and finding a job (depending on the above mentioned criteria).
  - (ii) Professional competencies:
    - Types of professional competencies acquired (technological, methodological, participatory/contribution skills);
    - How the new acquired skills are/could be used at the workplace;
    - Effects of practising of the new competencies on the job (productivity, quality, efficiency, competitiveness);
    - Correspondence between professional competencies developed during training courses and the needs of various direct beneficiaries (participants to the courses) and indirect beneficiaries (companies).
  - (iii) Basic social competencies (ratio in different types of programs):
    - Types of basic social competencies (communication, entrepreneurial, computer literacy, language skills, self-evaluation, evaluation of work environment);

- Correspondence between social competencies developed during training courses and the needs of direct beneficiaries (participants to courses) and indirect beneficiaries (companies).

(iv) Professional mobility:

- Availability for changing jobs within the company ;
- Availability for changing the workplace outside the company;
- Availability for changing trade/profession;
- Availability for attending other training programs in order to improve job (re)integration.

(v) Geographical mobility:

- Availability for geographical mobility for the purpose of job integration;
- Availability for geographical mobility with a view to professional advantages (career development, higher salary, better work conditions, etc.).

(vi) Active attitude on the labour market:

- Active job search;
- Flexibility regarding the openings available on the labor market (reluctance regarding the openings available on the labor market);
- Availability for entrepreneurship (micro-businesses, SMEs);
- Involvement in free-lance activities (micro-businesses, SMEs).

(b) Participation on the job

(i) Management of the activity:

- Understanding company socio-economic issues on medium and long term;
- Improve organisation/planning of the individual activity according to the organizational needs;
- Observe work discipline;
- Observe work ethics.

(ii) Initiative in current job:

- Degree of involvement in:
  - Perceiving deficiencies in current activity;
  - Correct noticed deficiencies;
  - Become involved in decision-making;

- Participation to formal activities aiming at improving the company activity (quality workshops, efficiency/ productivity workshops, innovation workshops);
  - Innovative behaviour on the job.
- (iii) Initiative in improving work environment (workspace, work conditions).
- (iv) Initiative to improve work relationships:
- Availability for dialogue and communication;
  - Develop team leadership skills in work teams;
  - Transfer of work knowledge and experience in the team;
  - Involvement in conflict resolution;
  - Attitude of mutual help and co-operation in the group;
  - Participate/organise joint work activities;
  - Membership in professional, employers and trade union associations.