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Erasmus+ Key Action 3

GET INVOLVED IN EP4A: EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIPS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Needs Analysis Report – Croatia

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRADES AND CRAFTS, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES – ANALYSIS

The study was conducted with a questionnaire completed by craftsmen and SMEs with a permit (license) for implementing practical training and apprenticeship exercises for up to two years and craftsmen and SMEs that have no such permit.

The first part of the survey was to collect general information (name of the crafts business / enterprise, address, the county of headquarters, number of employees, type of activity performed, information on involvement in apprenticeships and information on permit (license) possession for implementing practical training and apprenticeship exercises). The aim of the second part of the survey was to gain insight into the attitudes of employers regarding apprenticeships, the costs and benefits of providing and/or opening new apprenticeship places, as well as insight into possible solutions to increase the appeal of apprenticeship among trades, crafts businesses and SMEs.

The study sample included craftsmen and SMEs from 63 professions in all counties of the Republic of Croatia. The study was conducted through a Google Forms questionnaire. 759 responses were returned.

The largest number of responders comes from Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (16.8%); the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County (11.4%), Krapina-Zagorje County (7.4%), Istria County (7.1%), and Koprivnica-Križevci and Vukovar-Srijem Counties (6.6%).

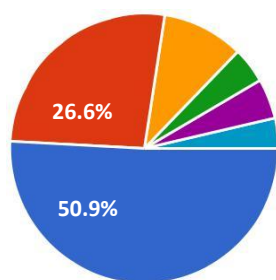
Table 1 Completed questionnaires by county:

County	Completed questionnaires (number)	Completed questionnaires (%)
Zagreb County	43	5.7%
Krapina-Zagorje	56	7.4%
Sisak-Moslavina	40	5.3%
Karlovac	32	4.2%
Varaždin	23	3%
Koprivnica-Križevci	50	6.6%
Bjelovar-Bilogora	16	2.1%
Primorje-Gorski Kotar	127	16.8%
Lika-Senj	2	0.3%
Virovitica-Podravina	39	5.2%
Požega-Slavonia	10	1.3%
Brod-Posavina	28	3.7%
Zadar	5	0.7%

Osijek-Baranja	18	2.4%
Šibenik-Knin	17	2.2%
Vukovar-Srijem	50	6.6%
Split-Dalmatia	44	5.8%
Istria	54	7.1%
Dubrovnik-Neretva	23	3%
Međimurje	37	4.9%
City of Zagreb	43	5.7%

Most responders are employers that employ 1-2 employees (50.9%), followed by 3-5 employees (26.6%), and they perform activities of personal services (19.9%), catering and tourism (10.6%), electrical professions (10.3%), automotive professions (9.6%) and manufacturing trades and crafts in the field of metals (8.5%).

Graph 1. Number of employees:



1-2	385	50.9%
3-5	201	26.6%
6-10	74	9.8%
11-15	33	4.4%
15-30	36	4.8%
More than 30	28	3.7%

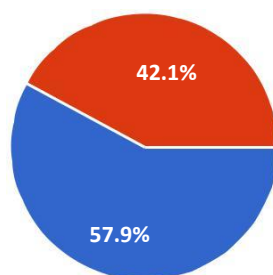
Table 2 Activity:

Activity	Completed questionnaires	Completed questionnaires (%)
Production crafts – food and drink	40	5.3%
Production crafts – textiles	24	3.2%
Production crafts – leather and fur	4	0.5%
Production crafts – wood	50	6.6%
Production crafts – metals	64	8.5%
Other production crafts	21	2.8%
Service crafts – automotive	73	9.6%

Service crafts – electrical	78	10.3%
Service crafts – the repair and maintenance of facilities, installations: gas, water, air conditioning	63	8.3%
Catering and tourism	80	10.6%
Trade	49	6.5%
Hairdressers, beauticians, pedicurists	151	19.9%
Other	60	7.9%

Just over half of the responders (57.9%) already participated in apprenticeship schemes, while 42.1% never have. The results correspond with the fact that 58.8% possess permits (licenses) to implement practical training and apprenticeship exercises, while 41.2% have no such permit.

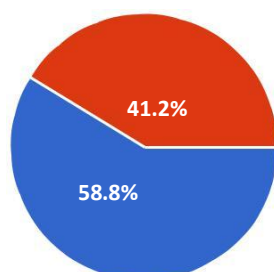
Graph 2. Question: Have you participated in apprenticeship schemes?



Yes 438 57.9%

No 319 42.1%

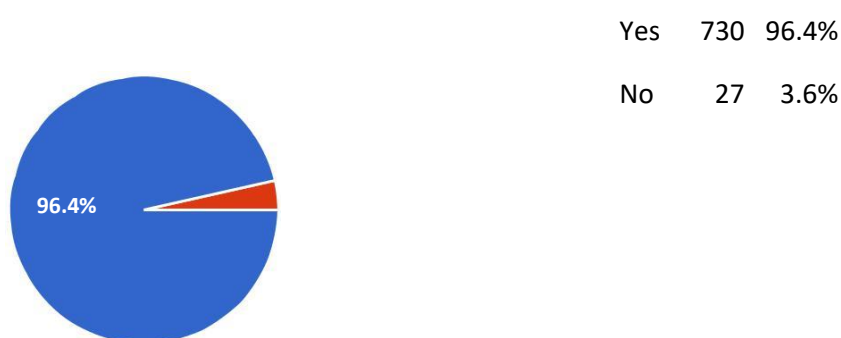
Graph 3. Question: Do you have a license to implement practical training and apprenticeship exercises?



Yes 445 58.8%
No 312 41.2%

When asked if they know what “apprenticeship” is, 96.4% of respondents gave a positive response, while only 3.6% do not know what the term means. This result is not surprising given that Croatia has a long tradition of “crafts” education and that a portion of education was related to apprenticeship for a number of years.

Graph 4. Question: Do you know what “apprenticeship” is?



The majority of respondents (83.9%) thinks that “apprenticeship” exists in Croatia, while a smaller number (8.7%) thinks it does not exist or does not know (7.4%). This result may be explained by differing understanding of the term “apprenticeship”. The interview results show that employers most often associate “apprenticeships” with practice in the business sector (regardless of the hours or manner of implementation).

Graph 5. Question: Do you think it exists in your country?

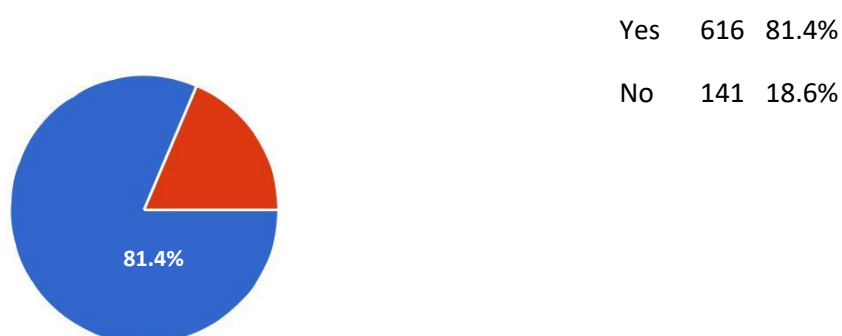


More than 80% of respondents would take on an apprentice. Here are some of the reasons provided: the fact that they were apprentices themselves; that taking an apprentice creates

an opportunity to employ a qualified worker tailored to the employer's company; that apprenticeships transfer knowledge to younger generations and adds to the employer's staff; that apprentices can help in the work; that apprenticeships are an investment into the future; that quality vocational training is not possible without a sufficient number of hours spent in practice and that young people need help in developing work habits. Some of the employers pointed out that knowledge has no weight if it is not transferred to another and that employers get a sense of pride from providing apprenticeships. The employers gave some of the following statements: "Transferring knowledge makes you better. To teach a young person and make them a good worker – PRICELESS". Other employers are aware that, unless they themselves get involved in the education process, there may be a lack of qualified young people who will be able to continue and develop the work.

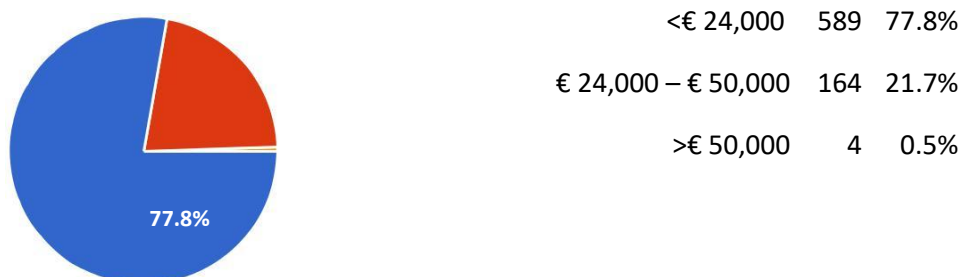
18.6% of employers would not take on apprentices primarily because of irresponsibility, lack of interest and motivation for the occupation they selected, bad communication between schools and employers, too small a number of hours for apprenticeship, a lack of incentives to take on apprentices, lack of work, inadequate working hours (split shifts) and field work, but also because of the time that has to be spent working with an apprentice, for fear of future competition, and discontinuous practical training in the company. One employer that has 25 years of experience in apprenticeship said that the apprenticeship system has collapsed in the last few years and actually no longer exists in Croatia.

Graph 6. Question: Would you take on an apprentice?



A large number of employers, 77.8% estimates that the minimum "costs" associated with engaging in apprenticeship (costs of mentoring staff, training, technical equipment, pension and health insurance, etc. – per year) are less than EUR 24,000, 21.7% think the costs are between EUR 24,000 and EUR 50,000, while only 0.5% think the costs are greater than EUR 50,000. The different estimations of apprenticeship costs can be explained by the fact that apprenticeship has different costs in different professions.

Graph 7. Question: How would you estimate the minimum cost* associated with engaging in apprenticeship (per year)?



It is worrying that a large number of employers, 78.3%, have no knowledge of any form of financial aid (state grants, subsidies from chambers and associations, bank soft loans to support the apprentice) that would motivate them to take on an apprentice in their crafts business or SME. 32.7% have knowledge of some of the forms. However, some of them think that the required documentation is too complicated, that it requires too much paperwork, that aid is given only to a selected few or they are not overly interested in applying.

Graph 8. Question: Do you have knowledge of some form of financial assistance that would motivate you to participate in apprenticeship as a crafts business or SME? (state grants, subsidies from chambers and associations, bank soft loans to support the apprentice)



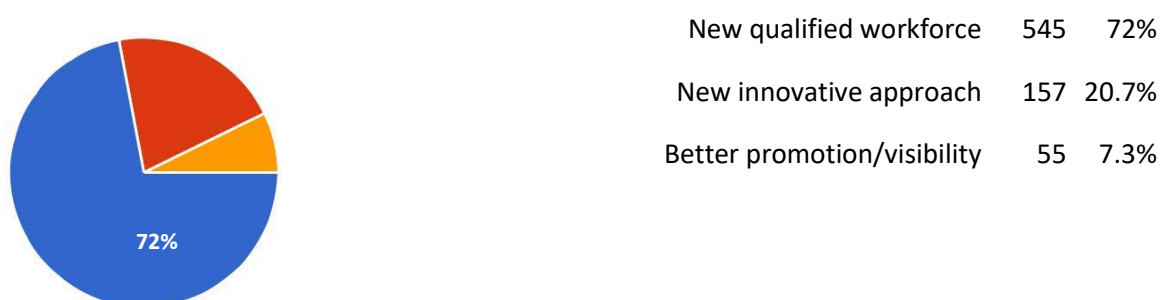
The largest number of respondents, 39.1%, estimate that more than 50% of crafts businesses and SMEs would continue with the apprenticeship schemes for more than three years, 26.8% think that somewhere between 25 and 50% of crafts businesses and SMEs would do that, 19.6% think the number is between 15 and 25%, and 14.5% think that less than 15% of crafts businesses and SMEs would continue with the apprenticeship schemes for more than three years. The result points to the fact that a large number of respondents estimate, despite numerous obstacles, that a significant number of crafts businesses and SMEs would participate in apprenticeship.

Graph 9. Question: How many crafts businesses and SMEs do you think would continue with the apprenticeship schemes for more than 3 years?



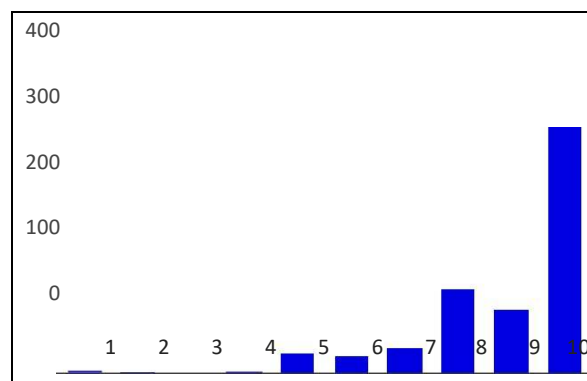
The opportunity to obtain new qualified workforce is the greatest motivation for taking on apprentices among crafts businesses and SMEs. However, a certain number of respondents think that there is a need for an innovative new approach to the apprenticeship process, which would motivate them to take on apprentices.

Graph 10. Question: What do you think would motivate you to take on an apprentice at your crafts business or SME?



The fact that there is great hope for the development of apprenticeship in the Republic of Croatia is also shown in our respondents' estimates, which show that over 60% of respondents gave the highest marks (9 and 10) to the importance of support for the apprenticeship scheme for the future of the labour market, which actually shows that a large portion of the respondents recognize the importance of active involvement in vocational education.

Graph 11. Question: On a scale between 1 (the least) and 10 (the most), how important is support for the apprenticeship scheme for the future of the labour market in your country?



Response	Number of responses	Number of responses (%)
Least important: 1	5	0.7%
2	2	0.3%
3	1	0.1%
4	3	0.4%
5	33	4.4%
6	29	3.8%
7	43	5.7%
8	136	18%
9	105	13.9%
Most important: 10	400	52.8%

INTERVIEWS WITH CRAFTS, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES – ANALYSIS

After the survey, expert associates for education in regional chambers of trades and crafts conducted interviews with crafts businesses and SMEs in order to gain additional insight into the results obtained by the questionnaires, especially regarding the costs and benefits of apprenticeships from the perspective of crafts businesses and SMEs. A semi-structured interview was used for the study; it contained a list of questions or key points that expert associates for education had to cover. The questions were mostly open and the respondents could answer as they wished, without their response having to fit within a particular “box”.

A total of 250 interviews were conducted in the following counties:

EP4A – interviews (24 February 2017)	
Counties	Completed interviews
City of Zagreb and Zagreb County	33
Bjelovar-Bilogora	9
Dubrovnik-Neretva	16
Istria	18
Krapina-Zagorje	12
Šibenik-Knin	16
Virovitica-Podravina	15
Požega-Slavonia	7
Primorje-Gorski Kotar	114
Zadar	10
TOTAL	250

The interview included the following question categories:

- **General awareness about apprenticeship**
- **The main obstacles to participation**
- **Motivation to participate and how it could be enhanced**

General awareness about apprenticeship

➤ *What do you understand under apprenticeship?*

The largest number of respondents associate the term “apprenticeship” with the skills needed for future occupation and think that “apprenticeship” means: to train a student for an occupation, to train young people to work independently in their profession, to teach the job to an interested person, a tool to transition from school to employment, acquiring skills and habits in the future development of a person through life and the organization of work. It is also interesting that some of the respondents emphasised that “apprenticeships” helped acquire skills such as: work ethics, attitude and respect for clients.

A large number of respondents interpret “apprenticeship” as practice, and also use the terms “school practice”, “professional practice”, “practical lessons”, “practical training” and “practical vocational education”. They also often characterised “apprenticeship” as the process in which the apprentice learns to put into practice the things they have learned in theory.

Some of the respondents associated the term “apprenticeship” with training for crafts and stated that apprenticeship is the most important part of crafts education, because apprentices learn the craft from older, more experienced and more skilled Master Craftsmen, as “apprenticeship” in Croatian (“naukovanje”) means “to study the craft”.

The fourth category of respondents associated apprenticeship with the term “work” and they thought that apprenticeship means introducing apprentices to work ethics, learning while working and in the workplace, practical work in a work environment and working to learn.

Finally, some of the respondents associate the term with education and think that apprenticeship is an important part of secondary education as the training of students, education/training of young people, learning while studying, learning alongside school, learning intended to prepare the child for work in the occupation for which they receive education.

➤ *Do you know the vocational education system in your country?*

Most of the respondents said that they were familiar with the vocational education system. Only four respondents are quite familiar with the system. Some characterised their familiarity with the terms “somewhat”, “rather”, “roughly” and “mostly”. Approximately 5% of the respondents said that they were not familiar with the vocational education system, or that they were insufficiently or superficially familiar with it (only the basic features). Some of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with vocational education and said that the system is very bad, with too little practical training and too many ambiguities.

- *Have you come across any campaign targeting crafts businesses and SMEs to participate in the apprenticeship scheme?*

Most respondents had never encountered such a campaign, and if they have (a small number of respondents), it was mostly through regional chambers of trades and crafts or through schools.

- *In general, do you consider apprenticeship a useful practice?*

The positive outcome is that many of the respondents (176) think that apprenticeship is useful practice, also stating that apprenticeship was necessary, absolutely / extremely / very useful and indispensable. They think that, without apprenticeship and without practice, there will be no future Master Craftsmen and that apprenticeship is the only right way to train a future employee and potential craftsman. However, they also said that our system does not provide apprenticeship in the true sense of the word.

The main obstacles to participation

- *What is putting the crafts businesses and SMEs off participation in apprenticeship schemes?*

In addition to the current situation in our country, which they think generally fails to encourage entrepreneurship, they also listed a number of obstacles that are putting crafts businesses and SMEs off of participating in apprenticeship schemes.

The largest portion of respondents lists the lack of interest, motivation, gratitude and independence among students, as well as their inadequate behaviour. Furthermore, they state that the students lack knowledge, have bad manners, are apathetic, indifferent, immature, impolite and have no work ethic. Problems with the parents of apprentices are also a significant factor making apprenticeship schemes unappealing. It is also interesting that several respondents listed rumours that they have heard about unmotivated apprentices, as well as bad first impressions when apprentices came to practice.

For some of the respondents, another factor is the additional obligations and burdens of apprenticeship. They said that apprenticeships were time-consuming and required a lot of commitment. They also reported financial burdening and problems with paperwork. In this regard, they mentioned the lack of state incentives for all those who decided to get actively involved in the education process, especially because they are required to pay their apprentices.

Some of the respondents are aware of the employer's great responsibility for apprentices who are exposed to dangers in the work process and have also listed this as something that

might deter them from participating in apprenticeship schemes. They think that craftsmen and SMEs are not protected from liability in the case of student injury.

Lack of work and an unfavourable economic situation are also factors that affect the employers' motivation to participate in apprenticeships.

Finally, some of the respondents said that the education system as it is now is not adapted to the apprenticeship program, that acts and by-laws are not harmonized, that there is too little practical training, that communication between schools and employers is not good, that there is a lack of apprentices and that the lack of involvement of relevant institutions in resolving current problems is a great deterrent.

➤ *What are the "costs" of participation?*

From the responses we received, it can be concluded that respondents did not understand the question. However, most respondents said that time, or more precisely time wasted on unmotivated apprentices, is the price paid by those involved in apprenticeships. Then they listed the costs of materials, tools and devices, but the cost is not expressed in financial terms. The respondents also listed the costs of issuing a permit (license), as well as the paperwork necessary to obtain it. Respondents are also afraid of losing customers because the students' impoliteness, lack of interest, arrogance and passivity threaten their business.

Some of the respondents think that the price of apprenticeship is not large because no price is too great if they achieve a good result.

Motivation to participate and how it could be enhanced

➤ *What benefits for crafts businesses and SMEs in apprenticeship schemes as perceived by them?*

Most respondents see the benefits of apprenticeship in training quality and qualified workers and stress that it is useful to educate their future employee, or a quality employee, from the beginning, and to train them to be able to perform the necessary activities independently immediately after completing education.

A large number of respondents said that apprentices are a great help in their work even while they are in training and that they see a great benefit in that. While a smaller number of respondents see no benefit, some of them are aware of the social responsibility of their crafts businesses and SMEs; they said that they see the benefits of apprenticeship in helping young people learn and continue their work, in improving the quality of performance and raising the level of the educational structure in society.

➤ *What would motivate crafts businesses and SMEs to participate in apprenticeship?*

Most of the respondents said that financial incentives would certainly motivate them to participate in apprenticeship. However, a large number of them said that it does not have to be money for their training, but that they would find extremely helpful incentives to procure material or raw material and equipment necessary to train apprentices, incentives for occupational safety, compensation for damage to devices caused by students, or paid water or electricity. Some of the respondents also listed various forms of exemptions or a reduction in fiscal levies for their business in general. However, some believe that mentors from the business sector should be paid to train students.

Some think that better cooperation between the relevant institutions, parents and employers, a different school system, more hours for training, a change in the manner of practice (week after week) and each education stakeholder taking responsibility would greatly affect their greater motivation to participate in apprenticeships.

We should also not disregard the general situation in the economy. Some of the respondents specifically noted that more work, or greater volume of work and the ability to expand their operation would motivate them to take on apprentices.

Finally, an important factor for taking on apprentices is the motivation and interest of apprentices themselves for the occupation for which they enrolled.

➤ *What are the needs of crafts businesses and SMEs in this regard?*

In addition to aid for material and equipment procurement and other forms of financial incentives and aids, as well as motivated students, as already mentioned by participants as factors for their motivation to participate in apprenticeship, some of the craftsmen and SMEs have, for the first time, stated the need for education in terms of acquiring new skills that follow the developments in their profession and in the technology used in their work, as well as seminars on training apprentices, or how to approach adolescents and work with them.

A large number of respondents stressed the need for a better system of vocational education, an increase in hours of practical training, more efficient communication, a better-organised system for training apprentices and shared concerns and engagement by all apprenticeship stakeholders with a clear aim – to create an expert. They especially stressed the need for greater and better cooperation between all the stakeholders in the system.

Finally, some of the respondents stressed the lack of time as a problem for quality training of apprentices.

➤ *What kind of support/service would they find useful?*

This is certainly financial aid (in various forms) for crafts businesses and SMEs that participate in apprenticeship, the financing of mentors that train apprentices, the development of various types of exemptions and a reduction in contributions.

Respondents also mentioned grants for students in the form of scholarships, covering travel and food expenses, and awarding students.

Many respondents mentioned that they need support from the education system, which should connect the schools and workshops better and more, and that the system needs to implement more hours of practical training, in which they expect school support.

Finally, they expressed the need for their own training.

In addition, the respondents stressed the following:

Apprenticeship has lost the importance it used to have, the children are uninterested, the parents are not encouraging children to pursue craft occupations, the public and state attitude towards crafts is very bad and there are not enough incentives or appreciation.

I think that vocational occupations are extremely underestimated today and that there is not sufficient investment in the development of quality vocational education, professional teaching staff and programs. The students' motivation for enrolling in vocational education is mainly driven by the desire to complete education without much effort and they reach the market unprepared for the work challenges awaiting them there, without knowledge, new ideas, competitive spirit, proactive attitude or work ethic.

It is not necessary to award money; support may come in the form of exemptions in a fair system with clear rules. We now have a system in which each institution operates independently. They are not connected... "The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing" and we expect the "head" to successfully do the job?!

FOCUS GROUP – REPORT

Project activity: **Interviewing the focus group**

Theme: **“Improving the apprenticeship system”**

Location: **Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, Ilica 49, Zagreb**

Time: **24 February 2017, 11 A.M. To 3 P.M.**

Aim: **Expand on the information obtained by surveying and interviewing craftsmen and entrepreneurs**

Moderator: **Maja Jukić, dipl. ing. el.**

Five craftsmen participated in the focus group meeting:

1. **Nikola Ričković;**
2. **Zlatko Tkalčević;**
3. **Franjo Trumbetaš;**
4. **Tomislav Pudić;**
5. **Marija Kartela.**

The craftsmen introduced themselves in accordance with the defined questions:

1. **Name and surname;**
2. **Work experience;**
3. **Permit (license);**
4. **Experience with apprenticeship.**

Nikola Ričković

Work experience: owner of a craft business for final works in the construction “Kvil”, a craftsman for a year and a half, worked at his father’s craft for 20 years, mostly engaged in the construction of metalware

Permit (license): YES

Experience with apprenticeship: Apprentice plumbers and assistant plumbers, there are mostly no apprentices for tinsmiths and roofers, lack of students is a general problem.

Contact: 091/5387957, kvil@inet.hr

Zlatko Tkalčević

Work experience: owner of the craft business “Metaloplast” for making objects from plastic products and metal

Permit (license): NO, because it is not a Master Craftsman occupation

Experience with apprenticeship: He believes the general problem is lack of interest or people moving abroad

Contact: 091/7678800, tkalcevic.z@gmail.com

Franjo Trumbetaš

Work experience: owner of a craft business for sheet metal installation and production “Bovje” (family craft since 1922) – plumbing and tinsmithing activities, the production of water treatment devices

Permit (license): YES

Experience with apprenticeship: takes apprentices – problems with the students’ lack of interest, a special problem being the parents that support the students’ lack of responsibility towards work (even demanding payment even though the student did not attend practice) – for apprenticeship efficiency, proposes one day of practice for one day of school, with the student knowing that he or she has to attend and work; the motive for taking on apprentices is the possible employment of quality workers because those who are good get a job after completing school (one in four students proves to be good)

Contact: 091/1805952, bovje@zg.t-com.hr

Tomislav Pudić

Work experience: owner of the construction craft business “Tomislav Pudić”

Permit (license): YES

Experience with apprenticeship: the best workers are those willing to do physical work, even though they were not schooled for the job but learned it through work; apprentices usually choose other easier occupations so they need to be stimulated; it is necessary for practice to take place outside of school, in a real work environment

Contact: 091/5155827, tomopudic@gmail.com

Marija Kartela

Work experience: owner of the beauty salon “Paola”

Permit (license): pending

Experience with apprenticeship: there is considerable competition; there are now numerous courses without proven quality, they are easily passed and there is consequently a lot of black market work that constitutes unfair and illegal competition of mostly questionable quality

Contact: 098/9038125, studio.paola386@gmail.com

Manner of participant selection: the invitation to participate was sent to selected crafts businesses and SMEs that did not participate in interviews and that met the set criteria (had no licence or had little experience with apprenticeship). We selected participants from the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County.

The craftsmen’s main message: Apprenticeship for crafts should be carried out by craftsmen!

After the craftsmen introduced themselves, we posed the questions that were the starting points for discussion in order to arrive at specific recommendations to improve the apprenticeship system.

1. How many hours of apprenticeship would be necessary to master the competencies in your field of work? How many hours of practical training with a craftsman is needed to acquire the necessary competencies?
2. How do you propose practical training should be organised in a crafts business – what size blocks and depending on the years of apprenticeship?
3. What are the craftsman’s costs for the time allotted for the apprentice, the material needed for work, etc.?
4. What is the benefit of apprenticeship?
5. What would motivate you to take on apprentices?
6. What would pose a problem for you in taking on apprentices?
7. What would help you take on apprentices, and what would help while they train in your craft?
8. What do you propose to make the licensing process better and more accessible?
9. What do you wish the chambers would take on in terms of administrative tasks? How would that reduce your burden?
10. Responsibility for apprentices – what would help you feel less burden in this regard?

11. What do you suggest in terms of compensation provided to students during apprenticeship?
12. To what extent would you find training on working with apprentices helpful and what do you think is most needed in this area?
13. How could students be motivated to choose education for craft occupations?
14. What do you expect from schools and parents?

Regarding the number of hours prescribed for apprenticeship, all of the craftsmen agree that the number of hours prescribed in the unified model of education program for crafts is sufficient and that the same number of hours should be applied to all programs for crafts education, which is currently not the case with classic (school) programs. A good example of this problem is the occupation of beautician according to the classic model of education, with only one day of practice per week prescribed. In this specific case, they propose practice of at least two days a week in the first year, which is then increased by half a day or one day with each year of learning.

Craftsmen agree that the first semester of first grade needs to be carried out in school, in order for students to pass occupational safety and acquire basic knowledge of the tools and materials, as well as safe procedures and work.

A general proposal for **organising apprenticeship** is for students to spend one week in school followed by one week of practice with a craftsman from the second semester onwards. Another good option is for students to spend one day in school and one day in practice. One of the proposals is to have practical training in parallel with school classes (school in one shift, practice with a craftsman in the other), even though craftsmen are aware that the motivation to enrol in programs for craft occupation would then diminish, given the load. One of the proposals is to introduce summer practice of 30 days.

Craftsmen believe that schools should coordinate and distribute the practical training of students in such a way that it ensures the **continuity of practical training**. The problem craftsmen currently have is that three students will attend practice on the same day, and no one will attend the following week. They also emphasise the importance of preparing and educating students in schools so that they apply the rules of etiquette and professional communication during practice, and especially in contact with other employees and/or clients.

Before the actual enrolment, during an occupation medicine exam, the student's ability to acquire certain qualifications should be more thoroughly checked, so that students who are allergic to dust, are afraid of heights or the like do not come to practice where those are regular working conditions.

Craftsmen agree that all those involved in organizing and implementing apprenticeships (students, parents, schools, craftsmen, the guild, the chamber of trades and crafts, relevant ministries and institutions) should be well informed and aware of their rights and obligations and it should be ensured that everyone involved adheres to what is prescribed. It is necessary to precisely define what the student should master during the apprenticeship based on an agreement with the school, which should give the craftsman a learning program and outcomes the apprentice should achieve during a particular year of apprenticeship and education.

They proposed meetings between teachers, apprentices, parents, representatives of the chamber and guild and the craftsman (especially at the start of apprenticeship in each school year) in order to agree on the prescribed rights and obligations of each stakeholder in advance. It is also necessary to ensure that school teachers visit the students in practice during their apprenticeship and continuously communicate with the craftsman implementing the apprenticeship. In addition to quality apprenticeship for the student, the teachers would thus constantly be in touch with the real world of work, the innovations in business and the developments in the profession. In the event of the introduction of external verification of achievements for a particular craft qualification, which is very consistent and that would not allow for the issuance of certification on acquired qualifications with achievements prescribed for a given qualification, the assumption is that the overall responsibility of all the stakeholders involved in the apprenticeship would significantly improve and that apprentices, school teachers and craftsmen would have to invest a lot more effort into the apprenticeship.

This would also be **the most important help during apprenticeship, but also a motivation to take on apprentices that would be most useful.**

Specification of costs arising from an apprenticeship:

- The time of the Master mentor supervising the work of the apprentice,
- Training for new technologies (especially when work is prohibited without certification, e.g. for work with dangerous substances, on a particular machine, etc.)
- Work clothes and/or protective equipment,
- Changing and storage area,
- Tools and supplies for work,
- Hot meal,
- The insurance of equipment and the apprentice,
- Compensation for the apprentice's work.

Even though craftsmen stress that costs are less important and that they are willing to bear them alone because they want to **enable the transfer of knowledge and expertise to**

younger generations and to have a worker at the end of the apprenticeship process (which is also the most important benefit of apprenticeship), it is necessary to consider how this problem could be systematically resolved. This is a necessary condition for the sustainability of the apprenticeship concept because the current situation in which the craftsman bears all or almost all costs is not a long term solution. Several times during the focus group meeting, it was stressed that craftsmen prefer to hire those they “raise” themselves.

For that same reason, they first decide to obtain the license in order to be able to take on apprentices.

Due to the insufficient motivation of students for work in certain professions and the usual enrolment into school for a certain profession because of the inability to enrol in the desired profession, apprentices usually do not create added value and are an additional burden and concern in the craftsman’s regular operations, which **is also the biggest problem in the apprenticeship process**. It is common that craftsmen do not have enough time for quality work with an apprentice due to the complex situation on the market and the struggle for survival.

It is certainly important for apprentices to keep their own work log, which the craftsmen would then check and sign. This would also help the apprentices because it would give them the opportunity to become aware of what they did and to reach a deeper understanding and memory of what they have learned through their own interpretation. They also think that a specialist such as a “consultant for education” trained to help craftsmen in the apprenticeship process, who would visit apprentices during practice, would be of great help.

As for assistance by the chamber, craftsmen think the best solution would be to return the responsibility for record keeping, administration and care for apprenticeship to the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts because this would lead to better communication between the schools, craftsmen and apprentices, and they would be relieved of some of the administrative activities. This would also help develop systematic monitoring of all stakeholders in the apprenticeship process. In addition, if the state would ensure the payment of apprentice insurance and additional protection for equipment, machines and space, **the responsibility for the apprentices would be shared**. They expect the chambers and guilds to monitor the licensing and relicensing of craftsmen and the quality of apprenticeship implementation.

As for **the payment of apprentices for work performed during apprenticeship**, the apprentices would primarily need to comply with the provisions of the Apprenticeship Contract, one of which prescribes regular attendance of practical training and dedication during apprenticeship. The craftsmen propose that apprentices are paid directly by the relevant ministries or the chamber and not by the craftsman, based on the work log

completed by the student and confirmed and submitted by the craftsman. They explained this proposal with the fact that, even though they use available subsidies for apprenticeship given out by the ministry responsible for crafts, payments to apprentices constitute an additional burden in an administrative sense.

The training they deem necessary involves the use of equipment and the application of new technologies, especially with regards to safe work. Sometimes craftsmen provide and pay for such education for apprentices to enable them to participate in the work process instead of just observing. Since some of the apprentices are students with special needs, craftsmen could benefit from training that would better prepare them to work with such students so that craftsmen could help them reach their full potential.

As for the **promotion of craft occupations and motivating students for apprenticeships**, they propose the promotion of craft occupations in primary schools, starting from 5th grade. In this, they are especially counting on the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts and its resources for promotional and informational activities and public communication. They think it is important to promote scarce occupations and the opportunity to have a job immediately after completing education (a current example is construction). They also propose organising partial apprenticeship abroad through projects financed from EU funds, which they consider an important motivating factor for apprentices. Promotion should also include presenting the quality of Croatian products and raising awareness of the need to protect those products. In any case, from the craftsmen's point of view, future apprentices need to be motivated more than the craftsmen, and it is necessary to devise the promotion of honest, professional work. In such promotion, all available media have to be used, such as social networks, websites, newspapers, radio and television, but the state should also organise student visits to craft workshops both at home and abroad.

Summary of focus group statements

Statement 1: How to increase the supply of apprenticeships

*Craftsmen think the best solution would be to return the responsibility for record keeping, administration and care for apprenticeship to the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts because this would lead to better communication between the schools, craftsmen and apprentices, and they would be relieved of some of the administrative activities. This would also help develop systematic monitoring of all stakeholders in the apprenticeship process. In addition, if the state would ensure the payment of apprentice insurance and additional protection for equipment, machines and space, **the responsibility for the apprentices would be shared**. They expect the chambers and guilds to monitor the licensing and relicensing of craftsmen and the quality of apprenticeship implementation.*

Statement 2: How to increase the social responsibility of crafts businesses and SMEs

Craftsmen agree that all those involved in organising and implementing apprenticeships (students, parents, schools, craftsmen, the guild, the chamber of trades and crafts, relevant ministries and institutions) should be well informed and aware of their rights and obligations and it should be ensured that everyone involved adheres to what is prescribed. They proposed meetings between teachers, apprentices, parents, representatives of the chamber and guild and the craftsman (especially at the start of apprenticeship in each school year) in order to agree on the prescribed rights and obligations of each stakeholder in advance. It is also necessary to ensure that school teachers visit the students in practice during their apprenticeship and continuously communicate with the craftsman implementing the apprenticeship. In addition to a quality apprenticeship for the student, the teachers would thus constantly be in touch with the real world of work, the innovations in business and the developments in the profession.

The conclusion is that the respondents see the benefits of apprenticeship in helping young people learn and continue their work, improving the quality of work performance and raising the level of the educational structure in society.

Statement 3: How to strengthen the WBL and the apprenticeships system

It is certainly important for apprentices to keep their own work log, which the craftsmen would then check and sign. This would also help the apprentices because it would give them the opportunity to become aware of what they did and to reach a deeper understanding and memory of what they have learned through their own interpretation. They also think that a specialist such as a “consultant for education” trained to help craftsmen in the apprenticeship process, who would visit apprentices during practice, would be of great help.

Statement 4: Increased competitiveness of crafts businesses and SMEs at the national and European level

*Even though craftsmen stress that costs are less important and that they are willing to bear them alone because they want to **enable the transfer of knowledge and expertise to younger generations and to have a worker at the end of the apprenticeship process (which is also the most important benefit of apprenticeship)**, it is necessary to consider how this problem could be systematically resolved. This is a necessary condition for the sustainability of the apprenticeship concept because the current situation in which the craftsman bears all or almost all costs is not a long term solution. Several times during the focus group meeting, it was stressed that craftsmen prefer to hire those they “raise” themselves. They see the benefits of apprenticeship in training quality and qualified workers and stress that it is useful to educate their future employee, or a quality employee, from the beginning and to train them to be able to perform the necessary activities independently*

immediately after completing education. They emphasise that apprentices are already a great help on the job while in training; they see great benefit in that and consider it to be a way of increasing their own competitiveness on the market.

Statement 5: The enhanced standing and recognition of crafts businesses and SMEs as good employers, and more broadly among their clients, suppliers and other key stakeholders

Emphasis is placed on systematic promotion on all levels, from the local to the regional and national levels. It is important to have a motivating effect, especially on apprentices so that they can become interested in the professions they are studying for, as well as on other stakeholders in the system in order for them to provide quality support for crafts businesses and SMEs in improving their reputation and recognition.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is a need for systematic support for crafts businesses and SMEs in the area of apprenticeship in terms of partnerships between all stakeholders, as well as ensuring the recognition of crafts businesses and SMEs as important stakeholders in the apprenticeship system. Therefore, it is very important:

- 1. To **define accurately psycho-physical requirements for specific qualification** in the process of proposing qualification standards, and before the student enrolls in the education for that qualification to thoroughly check if the student possesses the performance ability for that qualification according to the proposed qualification standards.*
- 2. **It should not be allowed that a different, alternative formal education model with less hours of practical training than apprenticeship in JMO exists.***
- 3. All stakeholders involved in the apprenticeship need to have **clearly assigned roles, i.e. rights and obligations** and to secure that all adhere to that.*
- 4. Considering that there are apprentices who are also **students with special needs**, it would be needed to **secure training** for tradesmen and craftsmen in order to better prepare them for working with those students and to help them achieve their full potential.*