

Reform of the State Employment Service

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Conclusions

The State Employment Service remains a secondary channel for job seekers and employers.

The main channels for both the public and employers are personal contacts and job websites.

One-third of the target audience surveyed (39%) had used the employment services provided by the Employment Centres. However, almost all respondents are aware of this option; only 3% are unaware of the existence of the Employment Centres. The vast majority opt for personal contacts (69%–73%) and job sites (54%–77%).

Only 2% of employers consider the State Employment Service (SES) to be their main recruitment channel, whilst 45% prefer websites (Work.ua, Robota.ua, etc.) Overall, just over half of employers (60%) work with the SES, although some of them do not do so on a regular basis (31%). The results of the survey of employers who do not cooperate with the SES on a regular basis show that the main reasons for this are dissatisfaction with the outcome of the collaboration, candidates not meeting business needs, and employers' use of alternative channels for recruiting candidates.

There is a gap between the declared trust in the State Employment Service and its perception as an effective channel for finding work, on the one hand, and the willingness to use it in practice, on the other.

Various sections of the population report a high level of trust in the State Employment Service (SES) – between 73% and 84% of different target audiences either fully or partially trust the SES; between 61% and 82% rate the SES quite highly as an effective resource for finding a good job.

At the same time, a positive attitude towards the State Employment Service does not translate into a willingness to use its services: when actually looking for work, potential clients generally do not consider the State Employment Service as a channel for finding employment. This is largely due to persistent prejudices and a negative information background shaped by their own or others' experiences of dealing with the State Employment Service.

There is an imbalance between supply and demand in the labour market.

Employers report a shortage of candidates – the vast majority (67%) stated that it is difficult (rated 4–5 on a 5-point scale) to find staff for their organisations. Meanwhile, those seeking work or interested in changing jobs face difficulties in finding relevant vacancies, whilst the SES struggles with a limited number of vacancies that meet the needs of different categories of clients. Furthermore, the

results of mystery shopping reveal significant variations in the number of vacancies available and a lack of diversity in vacancies to meet different client needs. All of this points to an insufficiently effective matching of supply and demand in the labour market.

There is a reputational barrier and a stereotypical perception of the State Employment Service (SES) among both the general public and employers.

As part of the study, which utilised mystery shopping and qualitative research, it was found that respondents often mentioned having a biased attitude towards the State Employment Service prior to their first visit, or before considering this channel for job seeking. Similarly, among employers, some do not use the services of the Employment Service due to preconceived notions about its work, whilst actual experience of engaging with it is often more positive: for example, 58% of employers who have had experience of interacting with the SES agree that the employment service understands employers' needs, compared with just 20% of those who have not interacted with it.

The quality of communication between clients and SES representatives is generally rated positively. At the same time, the overall level of satisfaction with cooperation with the SES is largely determined by the final outcome of the service received, which is currently inconsistent.

A study using mystery shopping revealed that all respondents rated staff communication positively (scores of 4–5 on a 5-point scale); however, the quality of advice and satisfaction with interactions with the SES depend to a large extent on the specific adviser and the available pool of vacancies. Whether a client returns to the SES depends on their first contact and the outcome of that interaction. Clients who were offered irrelevant vacancies, or only one or two options with unattractive working conditions, became disheartened by this job-search channel and decided to use other channels in future (friends and job sites).

Career counselling and personalised support are not used systematically.

Although SES staff report that career counselling is widely used – 75% of SES representatives surveyed state that career counselling is provided to most or almost all clients – the results of mystery shopping showed the opposite: interaction was largely limited to job matching. Support and counselling tend to be the initiative of individual specialists rather than the work of the institution as a whole. In Lviv and Kyiv, specialists paid more attention to this and were more motivated; in other cities, however, the experience was less positive, with the provision of services feeling somewhat 'perfunctory'.

Within the State Employment Service (SES) system, there remains a gap between the strategic vision of success and the actual criteria used to assess performance.

According to State Employment Service staff, the main indicators of the SES's success should be client satisfaction (82% of all respondents) and employer satisfaction (72%). SES staff assess the success/effectiveness of their work based on the achievement of planned targets/assigned tasks and duties (28%), the number of people placed in jobs (28%) and work with employers/filling vacancies (24%). However, these criteria vary depending on the position, which indicates a lack of a unified vision regarding the priorities and ultimate objectives of the SES's activities.

Testing research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. The State Employment Service performs a predominantly administrative rather than a service-oriented function – this hypothesis has been partially confirmed.

The results of the mystery shopping show that the SES is already moving beyond a purely administrative role. At the same time, this practice is not systematic, depends to a large extent on the individual specialist, and has not yet become a uniform standard of operation for the institution. Furthermore, interaction with the SES is largely limited to providing a few job vacancies without career counselling or comprehensive client support.

Hypothesis 2. The level of personalisation of services is insufficient – hypothesis confirmed.

75% of the SES representatives surveyed state that career counselling is used with most or almost all clients. The vast majority of the SES representatives surveyed agree with the statements regarding the potential for providing high-quality services to clients. Almost all (95%) of the surveyed SES representatives agree with the statement that clients' needs are properly taken into account when planning services. The vast majority (93%) are able to take clients' individual needs into account in their work, and existing procedures also allow for the provision of personalised support to clients (91% of respondents agree fully or to some extent with this statement).

Although the SES staff report making extensive use of career counselling and taking clients' individual needs into account, the results of the mystery shopping show the opposite. Individual career plans were not drawn up in any of the mystery shopping, and interaction was largely limited to matching clients with available vacancies. Retraining and professional development were mostly merely mentioned as a potential option without any further exploration. A personalised approach was observed only in some cases and depended on the initiative of the individual specialist.

Hypothesis 3. Interaction with employers is fragmented – hypothesis confirmed.

60% of employers have worked with the State Employment Service over the past two years, but half of them have not done so on a regular basis. The main reasons for not engaging on a regular basis are a failure to achieve the desired outcome, candidates not meeting business needs, and the use of alternative recruitment channels. At the same time, the results of mystery shopping also showed that some vacancies are out of date or contain incomplete information about working conditions, which further complicates the effective matching of employers' and jobseekers' needs.

Recommendations

The key direction for the development of the State Employment Service should be its transformation from an institution that primarily administers the employment process into a modern, service-oriented career centre. This approach involves providing personalised support to clients, actively partnering with employers, and focusing not only on the formal number of placements but also on the quality and sustainability of outcomes for both jobseekers and businesses.

Recommendations for achieving this:

- **Move from simply matching job vacancies to providing systematic career guidance.**

Mystery shopping research has shown that the quality of service provision depends to a large extent on the individual specialist. In the most successful cases, staff actively supported the client; however, in most instances, interaction was limited to job matching during the initial consultation. It was precisely in those cases where State Employment Service (SES) clients received a more personalised approach that they wished to continue

working with the SES and rated the quality of its work positively. It is therefore important, during the initial interaction, to familiarise clients with all the opportunities and services available through the State Employment Service: training and retraining, career planning, assistance with creating or improving CVs, programmes for specific population groups, and so on. This will help standardise the quality of service across all regions, eliminating instances of ‘perfunctory’ service provision or regional imbalances. Clients will also feel they are receiving personalised support, which will reduce their churn following the very first irrelevant job vacancy

- **Strengthen cooperation with employers, attract new employers to collaborate, and expand the pool of current vacancies.**

Employers report a shortage of candidates, yet very few use the State Employment Service as their primary channel. At the same time, jobseekers and State Employment Service staff face a lack of opportunities in the labour market. Attracting new employers to collaborate, improving the quality of service delivery and effectiveness to reduce the proportion of irregular collaborations will enable the employment service to gain access to higher-quality vacancies, making it more attractive to qualified jobseekers

- **Shift the focus of the State Employment Service’s performance assessment towards outcomes for clients and employers.**

Employment Service staff regard client and employer satisfaction as the key indicators of success; however, they predominantly assess their own work against the achievement of targets and the number of placements. It would be advisable to gradually strengthen the role of service quality indicators and user satisfaction in the system for evaluating the Service’s performance. At present, specialists are focused on quantitative targets, which encourages a formalistic approach (‘just to tick the box’). A shift in priorities will compel staff to focus on the quality of the match between candidates and vacancies. This will lead to increased trust in the SES as a reliable HR partner

- **Include information on training, retraining and professional development opportunities as a mandatory part of the initial consultation with an Employment Service client.**

The results of mystery shopping showed that very little attention is paid to this topic during consultations with specialists: a significant proportion of clients are not informed of this opportunity at all, and details are provided

only in response to a client's own enquiry. This means that some clients are unaware that these services are available and do not consider training as a form of support from the State Employment Service. Improving jobseekers' skills will enable them to better meet employers' needs, whilst retraining will provide a new workforce.

- **Develop a separate image/communication strategy for employers and for members of the public who have no experience of interacting with the State Employment Service.** Research has shown that perceptions of the State Employment Service are based largely on stereotypes rather than on actual experience. As these audiences are not covered by the employment centres' feedback mechanisms, specific tools are needed — such as information campaigns and case studies of successful collaboration — aimed at overcoming the image barrier, rather than merely improving the service itself. This will help attract new participants to the system who previously ignored the opportunities offered by the state due to these myths.

Abbreviations and acronyms

State Employment Service (SES)

EC – Employment Centre

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

TA – Target audience

Chapter 1. The role of the State Employment Service amongst other job search channels

Job search strategies: qualitative research

There are two key ways of searching for vacancies:

A) Through information from acquaintances. They can offer advice and inspire trust as close friends, as they genuinely intend to help.

B) Through job sites, as they are convenient and user-friendly, making the search process straightforward. Most respondents use them when looking for a job. They inspire confidence because people are certain that these sites are widely used and that real employers use them:

‘Right now, if we take the obvious example of Work.ua, there’s a huge, wide range of different specialisms available. And the specialisms currently shown on this screen have also come up. You just need to know how to search and set up your job search properly to find a role that suits you or that you’re looking for. In other words, the criteria need to be clear. Just like this – it’s structured. Location, job, hours, responsibilities, and so on. As shown here.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

However, most respondents face difficulties when looking for work. For men aged 25 and over, these difficulties are linked to the mobilisation process, which restricts their freedom of movement and, consequently, narrows the range of potential vacancies:

“It’s the mobilisation situation. It’s also the case that many men don’t go out onto the streets.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

“And as he says, he got through the medical assessment in three hours. I’ve got a mate who got drafted – he’s stuck in Zhytomyr with no contact. And another one ended up in the National Guard – so he’s filming TikTok videos on his phone. It’s down to luck.” (Unemployed man, aged 35–44)

Men identify proximity to home and mandatory employee mobilization deferment as key criteria for choosing a job.

“I’m interested in the mobilization deferment, plus how it’ll be formalised.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

*“Yes, there’s mobilization deferment. I’ve seen it. In that case, I might consider it.”
(NEET man, aged 25–29)*

“I would also agree that this is mobilization deferment. Because yes, this is the first point.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

In the view of respondents who had recent work experience, the situation in the country as a whole is difficult, and this affects their search for attractive vacancies. The primary factor is a loss of trust in job vacancies where, according to the respondents, the full list of tasks is not always described and the pay is not fixed:

‘[After the full-scale war] they increased the workload and cut the pay. And as my acquaintances and friends have told me, many of them have faced a similar situation. That is, staff cuts, increased responsibilities and reduced wages. So it’s actually a sad situation here. It’s as if there are jobs, but at the same time there aren’t. That’s sort of how it works.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

‘As [name of another respondent] said, many companies are cutting staff. And then they pile the responsibilities onto one person. It’s the same here in our city. At the same time, the salary stays the same, or even goes down.’ (NEET man, aged 25–29)

Some respondents have experienced this first-hand:

“Take, for example, a sales assistant. What was my job at first? I’d simply approach people and tell them about a particular product they were interested in. That was the extent of my job. Later, cleaning was added, as well as receiving goods against delivery notes and checking the goods. Although that was done by a completely separate person. Also added... You see, three tasks. Receiving, unloading, loading. If there were any large deliveries... Also online orders. We didn’t do that before. There were separate people at desks who processed them. That was added to our workload as well. And naturally, it was enough to drive you mad throughout the day. Running back and forth. And dealing with people, accepting orders, processing orders, dispatching them, receiving goods. Of course, three responsibilities or one responsibility.” (NEET man, aged 25–29)

‘For the one salary they promised. They promised one salary, one set of duties, and then they pile on, say, 150 duties, and some fines, some... well, they cut your pay. That’s it, this deception by employers – that’s also very unpleasant.’ (Woman from a vulnerable group, aged 46)

They also face deception regarding working conditions:

'Well, they say it's a flexible timetable – I can see "rotating shifts" here, right? But when you ask about the rotating shifts, most companies only offer a specific timetable that suits them. So, for example, it says "rotating", right? And I think that means shift work or a 2-on-2 rota. But when you ring them, they tell you it's 4-on-5, for example, or 6-on-1'
(NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Salaries are very low, there are lots of responsibilities, and the demands on staff are constantly increasing. So you find a vacancy, but the effort required to do the job isn't worth it. Because of this, it's mostly middle-aged men (aged 25–55), who've already had a disappointing experience of looking for work on their own, who tend to look for vacancies through acquaintances and former colleagues:

'Again, let's say a relative is a driver. Again, what sort of job did he land? City drivers don't earn as much as a person does. I won't say how much it is. And, again, this vacancy wasn't advertised anywhere; it wasn't on any websites, nowhere. It was just a stroke of luck to get it through a personal connection.' (NEET man, aged 25–29)

'I got mine through contacts. Local ones. Because I'm limited in terms of travelling for now.' (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

"It doesn't always work out on websites. It's mostly through personal connections."
(Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

Women are more likely to look for work on themed Telegram and Instagram channels, where they can ask people questions. They, too, tend not to place complete trust in job search websites (Work.ua, Robota.ua):

'I'm not at all prepared to look for work through these agencies [referring to job search websites], where the same vacancies keep appearing with inflated salaries and unclear terms and conditions. I mean, it's all just... well, it's not clear what it's all about.'
(Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Looking for work on these sites turns into a painstaking search for a suitable option, tailored to personal circumstances and requirements regarding the workplace, the team and the sector, involving a careful selection of acceptable vacancies from a general list that people do not trust and find unappealing.

Residents of small towns and villages are particularly sceptical, as they rely on their own understanding of the local labour market. They do not believe that

employers in their small community could offer salaries at the levels stated in the adverts. As a result, such vacancies are often perceived as exaggerated or fraudulent. Furthermore, the range of available vacancies in small towns and villages is significantly narrower due to the limited number of employers, lower economic activity and reduced demand for a wide range of services. Whilst large cities offer a variety of vacancies in the service sector, retail, major construction and logistics, in small communities the choice is usually limited to a few sectors, most often related to agriculture.

'It's very difficult in the village. Especially now, as we're in the frontline zone; it's very hard to find that sort of work here. Although you can get a job driving a tractor or a combine harvester, or any job that needs people, the options are limited. You're limited by where you live.' (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

"Well, you can look for these jobs in towns, but not in rural areas." (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

"The main thing is location – where you are, where the work is." (Unemployed man, aged 55–64)

"I'd like to say that all these jobs are so urban, for the city. But here I am, sitting and thinking, where can you go in the village? Here, too, you need good health, physical fitness and knowledge of many trades. But nobody's going to come to the village; nobody will, nobody will, nobody will live there." (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

"For our town, that's an unrealistic amount of money. Yes, maybe some people do earn those sort of wages, but they're qualified specialists; ordinary workers don't get wages like that. It's just, you know, ridiculous really. Nobody here offers 40–50 thousand. It's mostly the minimum wage. If it's a highly skilled job, then 20,000. At a push, 20–25, up to 30,000." (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Experts' comments confirm that job-search channels vary significantly depending on the size of the town or city.

'The way people look for work will differ depending on the settlement... in large cities, people are more likely to search on job-search websites and social media... in small towns, it's often word of mouth, because there's usually just one large company in the community, and everyone knows someone who works there, so that's how it tends to work.'
(Expert 2, work.ua)

"...and actually, these physical media—like poles and walls. In smaller towns, this starts to work better. They're looking for workers. These are local employers"

(Expert 1, work.ua)

People of retirement age and those with a disability face significant challenges. They do not consider jobs requiring physical labour as viable options for themselves, which means they are aware of far fewer vacancies, which are, moreover, difficult for them to find:

“Every profession has its own unique aspects. You have to, as they say, master that profession thoroughly. But for us pensioners, that’s already difficult. If only there could be a website for pensioners where, say, you could go online, click on ‘pensioner looking for work’, and the site’s administrator would immediately suggest something suitable. If there were a website like that, it would be great for pensioners.” (Unemployed woman, aged 65+)

It’s particularly difficult for people with a disability, because in some cases employers won’t even consider them:

‘I completely agree, because what you post on Work.ua is mostly not reliable. I submitted my CV to an employer on Work.ua. And the conditions there were simply ideal for me. Take someone with a disability, and that’s it – not a peep. In other words, they simply don’t respond. They brushed me off, saying: ‘We’ve received your CV, we’ll look at it and that’s it’ (Man from a vulnerable group, aged 43)

So, the key criteria are salary and a convenient working schedule. For people with special needs, their physical condition must be taken into account, along with the realistic possibility of involving them in the work. However, due to negative experiences, respondents of all ages and genders are reluctant to trust job vacancies completely and assume that working conditions may differ from those described during the recruitment process.

Job-search strategies: a quantitative study

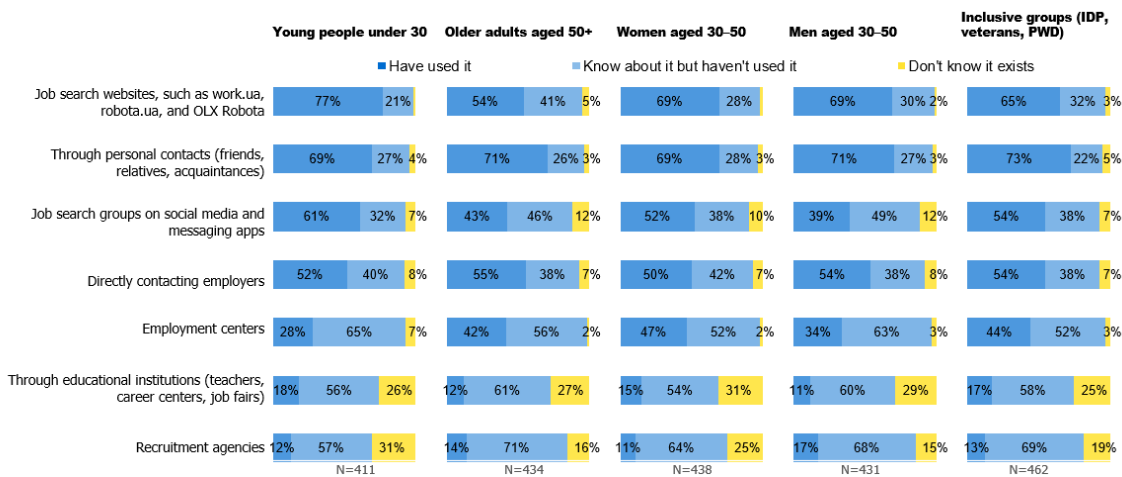
The data from the quantitative survey confirm the experiences of participants in the focus group discussions. The most common sources, organisations and platforms that assist with employment are personal contacts (friends, relatives, acquaintances) (70% of respondents overall used this source, with the highest usage rate among inclusive groups at 73%) and job sites such as work.ua, robota.ua and OLX Robota (67% of all respondents used this source, with the rate

among the target audience ranging from 77% among young people under 30 to 54% among older people aged 50+) (Fig. 1).

A third of respondents (39%) had used the services of employment centres to find work; however, virtually all respondents were aware of this option, with only 3% unaware of the existence of employment centres. Employment centres are most popular as a source of employment among women aged 30–50 (47 per cent), and least popular among young people (28 per cent) and men aged 30–50 (34 per cent) (Fig. 1).

Educational institutions are the least well-known source of employment: between 25 per cent of people in inclusive groups and 31 per cent of women aged 30–50 are unaware that such a source exists (Fig. 1).

Fig.1 . Please read the list of the following resources, organizations, and platforms that assist with job placement and indicate to what extent you are familiar with each one? (% of responses, mass survey¹)

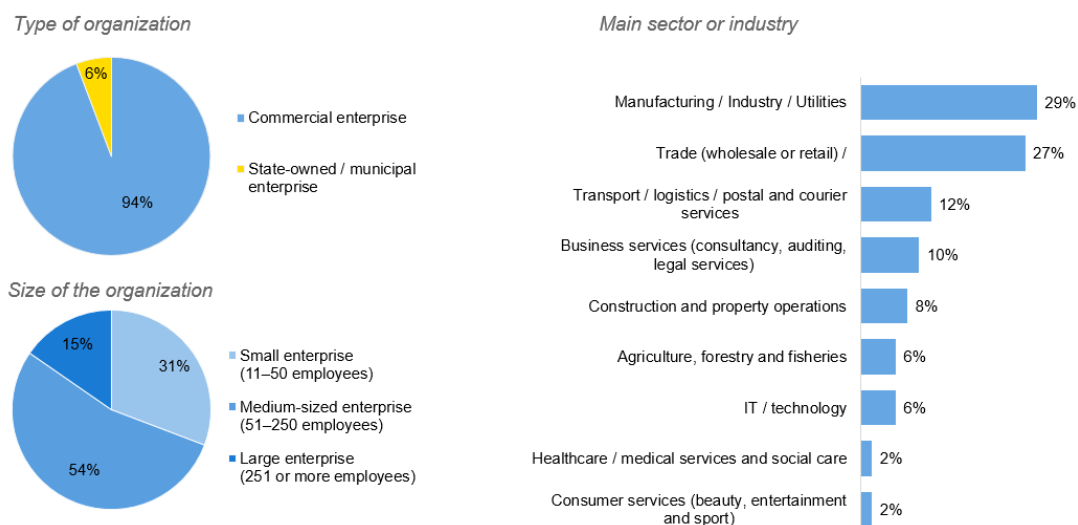


¹ Here and throughout, unless otherwise stated, the survey data are based on the total number of respondents

Recruitment channels: employer survey

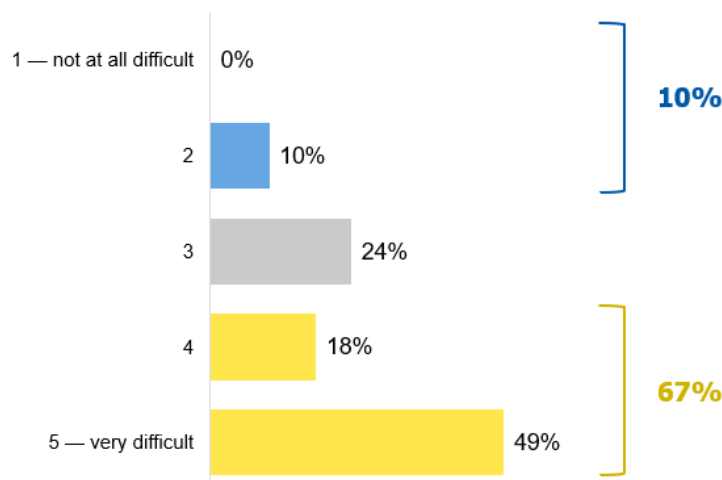
Another key player in the labour market is the employer.

Fig.2 . Profile of employers surveyed: type of organisation, size, main sector or industry (% of responses, employers)



Among employers, a clear majority (67%) stated that it is difficult (rated 4–5 on a 5-point scale) to find staff for their organisation (Fig. 3).

Fig.3 . How difficult is it for your organization to find staff at present? (% of responses, employers)



The most common difficulty is a shortage of candidates (61% of employers mentioned this) (Fig. 4).

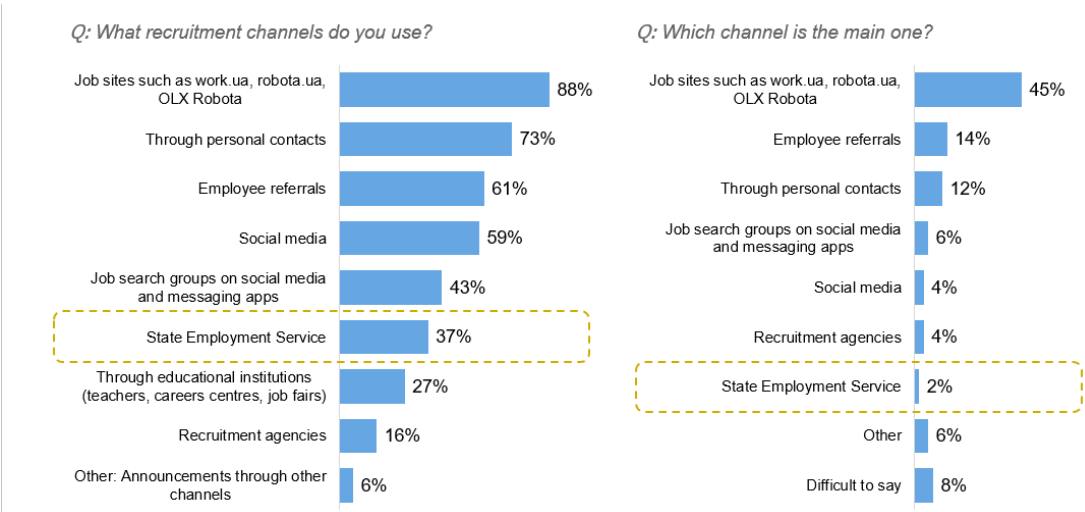
Fig.4 . What difficulties arise most frequently? (% of responses, employers)



A third (37%) turn to the State Employment Service to find staff. At the same time, other channels are the most popular: job sites such as work.ua, robota.ua and OLX Robota (88%), personal contacts (73%), employee referrals (61%) and social media (59%) (Fig. 5). It is also interesting to note that large employers are significantly more likely to incorporate the State Employment Service into their recruitment process, whilst for small businesses this channel remains considerably less popular.

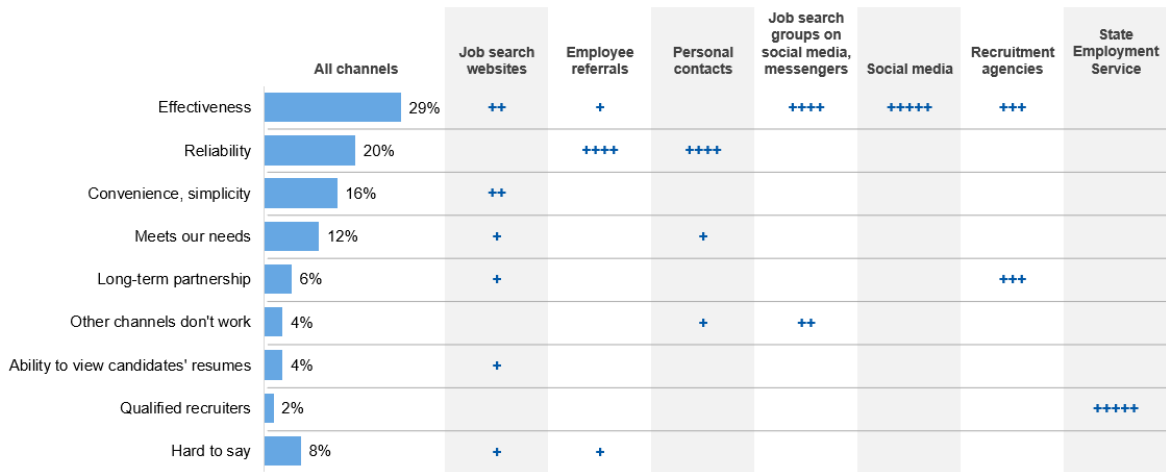
When it comes to the main channel for finding candidates among employers, the State Employment Service ranks last (2% of all employers surveyed), whilst almost half (45%) opt primarily for job sites (Fig. 5).

Fig.5 . What recruitment channels do you use? Which channel is the main one? (% of responses, employers)



The main reasons why employers chose one primary channel over another for recruiting candidates are effectiveness (number of candidates) (29%), reliability (20%), and convenience and simplicity (16%) (Fig. 6).

Fig.6 . Why do you choose this particular channel for recruiting staff? (% of responses, employers)



The results of quantitative and qualitative research, as well as the employer survey, indicate that the State Employment Service is a well-known tool in the labour market, but not a popular channel for finding vacancies or employees. For both groups in the labour market (the general public and employers), it ranks significantly behind job sites and personal recommendations.

There are a number of reasons why different sections of the population do not turn to the State Employment Service. Among the main reasons are the greater speed and convenience of alternative job-search channels compared to visiting an employment centre, the widespread perception that the State Employment Service predominantly offers low-paid and less attractive vacancies, and concerns among some men regarding the possible consequences of contacting the State Employment Service in relation to mobilisation.

“As for reputation, it’s worth understanding why a person should spend their time going there [to the employment centre].... Well, of course, men who are evading military service won’t turn to the state right now for several reasons. It is also clear that, well, the calibre of employers and their job offers may not be as high as on paid platforms and paid communication channels: social media, job search websites – all those things. At the same time, the state employment service used to pay a certain amount of money to the unemployed. And so, those who are interested in this might well be keen to turn to it. I can’t say at the moment, for example, to what extent this has been communicated by the state.”
(expert, work.ua)

At the same time, the survey results highlight a structural imbalance in the labour market. On the one hand, employers report an acute shortage of candidates, whilst on the other, the population faces significant difficulties in finding work. For its part, the State Employment Service also faces a shortage of vacancies for various categories of jobseekers. Consequently, this indicates that the issue is not so much a lack of demand or supply in the labour market, but rather the inefficiency of matching the two. It is the State Employment Service that has great potential to work in this area – acting as an intermediary between employers and those seeking work or interested in a career change, whilst providing high-quality services to both parties. Experts also highlight this problem – the communication gap between employers and jobseekers – employers have a better understanding of the market but fail to effectively communicate their value proposition; jobseekers are unaware of the real opportunities available (salaries, retraining courses); the State Employment Service has the potential to act as the connecting link.

Chapter 2. Assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the State Employment Service's activities

2.1. Clients' experiences of interacting with the State Employment Service: experiences and pain points

Experiences of contacting the State Employment Service: qualitative research

Older people do not turn to the State Employment Service because they have already had negative experiences – in their youth, the State Employment Service provided outdated job vacancies: excessively low pay, offers irrelevant to their existing experience, and uninteresting and difficult jobs. They had to attend interviews in person, which took up a lot of time and was inconvenient.

Among those who have looked through the vacancies on the State Employment Service, attitudes are also negative due to low wages and uninteresting professions (those with low prestige, such as a cleaner or a street sweeper) or jobs that simply do not relate to their areas of interest or specialism.

'I went to the centre. Of course, I did that when I was young and in a managerial role. Then, as it happened, our company was wound up – to put it bluntly. So I decided to go to the employment centre. And from being a manager, I ended up as a street cleaner. I worked with a broom. That was my 'reward' for all that' (Man from a vulnerable group, aged 41)

'Yes, I have a friend, a neighbour, who worked as an economist her whole life, in the same job. She had a year left until retirement, but they started cutting jobs, and she had to register with the State Employment Service. And over the course of that year, they told her to take a course to become a painter and plasterer. I mean, if someone's worked as an economist all their life, right? And then, in their later years, to become a painter and plasterer?' (NEET woman, aged 30–34)

Young people under 25 do not see going to the State Employment Service as an attractive prospect, because they believe they are more likely to find a better job – one that pays more and is personally interesting to them – on their own. Young people do not trust the State Employment Service. This is primarily because they know very little about it. For example, everyone has heard of Work.ua and OLX Robota, but very few have heard of the State Employment Service; their impressions of it are based on guesswork and extrapolation from their (mostly negative) experiences of seeking assistance from other government agencies.

Some recall stories of the State Employment Service's attempts to provide retraining opportunities for those unable to find work. However, the training conditions were too inconvenient, so the programmes were not in demand:

'Oh, you know what else was difficult? The Employment Service offered – they said that, well, if you're on maternity leave – yes, I arrived in 2014, and I haven't worked since, and I was on maternity leave with my eldest for six years, almost seven. My youngest was born when she was seven – there's exactly a seven-year age gap between them. So, even before the war, before it turned into a full-scale conflict, the Employment Service offered retraining. But, you see, how? We were living in a modular housing settlement in Kharkiv at the time, and they offered it to all the women living there, but nobody could actually manage it... well, we were willing, but the conditions were such that it was difficult to attend the courses... We had to travel halfway across the city, taking trolleybuses and buses to the metro – it's a long way – and then the metro itself. And from there, a bus would take us from the outskirts... from the edge of the city to Derhachi... Well, when we worked it out, we had to leave at about half past five – or six. Or was it seven o'clock? I can't quite remember now, but it was something like that – we had to leave very early, at about six o'clock in the morning, to get there for those courses. And those courses lasted... well, about six months. That's a long time. And when we asked, 'Where are we supposed to put the children?', well, how are you supposed to manage with the children when you have to leave for the courses at 6 am and stay until 3 pm? That means catching the bus at four-something, and you don't get home until the evening' (Woman from a vulnerable group, aged 46)

For older people, the State Employment Service offers a very limited range of specialisms, which do not appeal to respondents:

"I went to our local employment centre in the Sviatoshynskyi district, where I live. I went in, and she asked me how old I was. That was the first thing she asked; she didn't even ask for my documents. I said I was 48, or thereabouts. And she said, 'Goodness, we've got loads of vacancies for you.' She handed me an A4 sheet, covered in offers just like these. And mostly cleaning jobs. So at 48, that's all we're considered for" (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

Respondents are only willing to consider vacancies from the State Employment Service as a last resort:

'It's not that they won't take us on, but as we said earlier – it's not prestigious, they won't understand. And that's a last resort, when there's no bread to eat.' (Unemployed woman, aged 45–54)

People with special needs interact with the State Employment Service to obtain documents; for some, attempts to find work have been unsuccessful – there were no job offers that a person with a disability could manage.

In the experience of some respondents, the State Employment Service may ignore applications from people with disabilities:

“I’ve never applied before. This time, having been granted disability status, I applied. They said they’d find something and call me straight away. And that was it – that’s exactly what they said...”

A year and a half ago” (Man from a vulnerable group, aged 41)

The State Employment Service is not popular amongst the general public. Older people associate it with incompetent assistance due to negative experiences of previous dealings, whilst young people view it as a waste of time, having heard stories from older colleagues beforehand.

Experience of interacting with staff at the State Employment Service and the Employment Centres: mystery shopping

In total, 11 mystery shopping campaigns were carried out as part of the study in various regions of Ukraine: Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Lviv and Odesa. During the fieldwork phase, difficulties arose in recruiting ‘mystery shoppers’ – a significant proportion of those seeking work refused to visit the State Employment Service or local employment centres. One of the main reasons was a reluctance, even during the first visit, to submit a set of documents, be added to a database, or provide a large amount of personal information, given their doubts that the visit would be productive or useful. This difficulty in recruitment already indicates the existence of a bias against the State Employment Service among potential clients.

Mystery shopper profile

#	City	Age	Gender	Vulnerable group	Education	Specialism	Official work experience
1	Dnipro	61	Ch	Yes	Vocational and technical education	Architectural Technician	16–20 years
2	Lviv	47	M	Yes	Higher education	Economics	16–20 years
3	Kyiv	39	F	No	Higher education	Designer	1–5 years
4	Odessa	28	F	Yes	Vocational and technical education	Commercial activities	1–5 years
5	Lviv	56	F	No	Vocational and technical education	Food industry technologist	6–10 years
6	Kyiv	27	F	No	Vocational and technical education	Computer Typist and Accountant	6–10 years
7	Kryvyi Rih	20	M	No	Secondary general education		Up to 1 year
8	Kyiv	36	F	No	Higher education	Bachelor's degree in forestry and landscape management	6–10 years
9	Lviv	53	F	Yes	Vocational and technical education	Cookery	16–20 years
10	Zaporizhzhia	56	F	Yes	Vocational and technical education	Junior nurse	21–30 years
11	Kyiv	55	F	No	Higher education	Psychologist	11–15 years

Appointment details

#	City	Which of these help make access easier?	Was it clear to you who to contact?	Was there a queue?
1	Dnipro	Ramp or lift for wheelchairs Tactile paving Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Parking available near the building	Yes, we asked a member of staff (security)	No
2	Lviv	Ramp or lift for wheelchairs Button to call a member of staff for assistance Tactile paving Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Parking available near the building	Yes, as indicated on the information signs	No
3	Kyiv	Ramp or lift for wheelchairs Tactile paving Information signs duplicated in Braille Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Lifts	Yes, on information signs	No
4	Odessa	Ramp or wheelchair lift Information signs duplicated in Braille Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through	Yes, we asked a member of staff (receptionist)	No
5	Lviv	Ramp or lift for wheelchairs Button to call a member of staff for assistance Tactile paving Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Parking available near the building	Yes, as indicated on the information signs	No
6	Kyiv	Button to call a member of staff for assistance Information signs duplicated in Braille Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Parking available near the building Lifts	Yes, we asked a member of staff (the receptionist)	Yes, 15 minutes
7	Kyiv	Ramp or wheelchair lift Tactile paving Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Parking available near the building Lifts	Yes, according to the information signs	Yes, 40 minutes
8	Kyiv	Ramp or wheelchair lift Tactile paving Information signs duplicated in Braille Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Lifts	Yes, on information signs	Yes, 1.5 hours
9	Lviv	Ramp or wheelchair lift Button to call a member of staff for assistance Tactile paving Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Parking available near the building	Yes, as indicated on the information signs	No
10	Zaporizhzhia	Doorways wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Availability of parking near the building	Yes, we asked a member of staff (receptionist)	No
11	Kyiv	Ramp or lift for wheelchairs Tactile paving Information signs duplicated in Braille Doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through Lifts	Yes, from the information signs	Yes, I had to come back the next day

Assessment of the specialist

(Please rate the specialist you spoke to (if there were several specialists, please rate the one who provided the most informative advice) and your overall impression of the visit. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'terrible' and 5 is 'excellent')

#	City	Politeness	Friendliness	Clarity of explanations	Overall impression (taking into account the consultation, queues, waiting areas, etc.)
1	Dnipro	5	5	5	5
2	Lviv	5	5	5	5
3	Kyiv	5	5	5	5
4	Odessa	4	4	4	4
5	Lviv	5	5	5	5
6	Kyiv	5	5	5	5
7	Kyiv	4	4	4	4
8	Kyiv	5	5	5	5
9	Lviv	5	5	5	5
10	Zaporizhzhia	4	4	5	5
11	Kyiv	5	5	5	5

An overview of the stages of interaction and an assessment of its effectiveness

#	City	Stages of interaction	Details of the interaction	Experience of interaction – effectiveness
1	Dnipro	The Employment Centre initial consultation – Employer	One visit to the Employment Centre. Only one job vacancy was offered. Spoke to the employer; poor working conditions. Reluctance to return to the Employment Centre due to a lack of confidence that they would be able to help.	Negative
2	Lviv	The Employment Centre initial consultation	One visit to the Employment Centre, receiving advice on services and job vacancies	Positive
3	Kyiv	The Employment Centre initial consultation	One visit to the Employment Centre. Introduction, detailed consultation on available vacancies, training options, and an offer to help with the CV. Plans to return with a full set of documents.	Positive
4	Odessa	The Employment Centre initial consultation – Employer – Call	Several visits to the Employment Centre. Initial visit. Was given employers' contact details – rang them, nothing was suitable.	Positive

		from the Employment Centre – Follow-up visits to the Employment Centre	Call from the Employment Centre regarding the status of contact with the employer. Follow-up visit to the Employment Centre to register. Scheduled consultation and visit to help with CV preparation	
5	Lviv	The Employment Centre initial consultation – Employer – Call from the Employment Centre	One visit to the Employment Centre. Job vacancies were suggested. Spoke to the employer. Awaiting an offer from the employer. A call from the Employment Centre regarding the status of the interaction with the employer: to find out how things are going and whether any assistance is required.	Positive
6	Kyiv	The Employment Centre initial consultation	One visit to the Employment Centre. Job vacancies were offered. However, the terms are not attractive.	Mostly positive
7	Kyiv	The Employment Centre initial consultation	One visit to the Employment Centre. Offers of irrelevant vacancies that do not meet my needs and criteria. Reluctance to return to the Employment Centre due to a lack of confidence that they will be able to help.	Negative
8	Kyiv	The Employment Centre initial consultation – the Employment Centre conference – the Employment Centre follow-up visit	Several visits to the Employment Centre. Offers of irrelevant vacancies. Attended a conference organised by the Employment Centre. Follow-up visit to the Employment Centre to register. Considering the possibility of a follow-up visit for career guidance. Considering the option of taking a short-term course.	Mostly positive
9	Lviv	The Employment Centre initial consultation – the Employment Centre follow-up visit – the Employment Centre conference – the Employment Centre follow-up visits	Several visits to the Employment Centre. Initial visit. We didn't manage to cover everything (as the working day had ended), so a follow-up visit was scheduled. Follow-up visit to the health centre to complete the consultation and register. Attended a conference organised by the Employment Centre. Regular visits every two weeks to search for vacancies in line with needs and preferences.	Positive
10	Zaporizhzhia	The Employment Centre initial consultation – Employer	One visit to the Employment Centre. Only one job offer was provided. Spoke to the employer; poor working conditions. Reluctance to return to the Employment Centre due to a lack of confidence that they would be able to help.	Negative
11	Kyiv	The Employment Centre initial consultation – the Employment Centre conference	Several visits to the Employment Centre. No specialist was available on one day, so I went back the next day. Initial consultation. Review of job vacancies, detailed advice on opportunities and grants. Attended a conference organised by the Employment Centre. Next visit scheduled to discuss grants	Positive

Quality of customer service

Overall, our 'mystery shoppers' found their experience of interacting with employment service staff to be predominantly positive, despite the preconceptions they had going in (due to previous negative experiences, the experiences and stories of acquaintances, the general image and established stereotypes regarding the State Employment Service and public services).

Respondents noted the politeness and friendliness of the staff. The genuine interest shown by some specialists (as observed in Lviv and Kyiv) in helping clients, their willingness to listen to their needs, discuss various employment options and maintain further contact was particularly well received.

The most positive experience was when an employment centre specialist went beyond the formal scope of her duties: she independently telephoned employers, checked the validity of vacancies and working conditions, selected a variety of vacancies in line with the person's previous experience, and provided follow-up support after the visit (Lviv).

In some cases, the interaction was 'formal': clients were offered only one or a few vacancies without being given any details about them or the working conditions. Clients were expected to meet the employer and discuss the details – including pay, working hours and duties – 'on the spot'. This effectively marked the end of the interaction, as, on the one hand, clients were not motivated to return given the outcome of their first visit, and, on the other hand, the specialists did not initiate any follow-up support.

Customer journey research

The research showed that a typical client journey consists of several consecutive stages:

- initial consultation and document review;
- clarification of the client's experience, preferences and constraints. However, the quality of this stage depends on the specialist; it can be carried out either 'formally' or with a personalised approach, with an effort to understand the client and provide high-quality services. There is also a clear focus on education and formal work experience;
- job matching;

depending on the availability or lack of vacancies

- referral to employers;
- referral to a conference organised by the employment centre (in some cases), followed by a return visit with further job matching
- further follow-up with the employment centre (does not always take place; depends on the individual employment centre adviser).

A positive practice was the consideration of clients' individual circumstances – for people with disabilities, advisers took medical restrictions into account; for older people, they considered their ability or inability to perform physical labour.

However, it is worth noting that although some of the mystery shoppers were people with disabilities or people over 50, none were informed of the existence of specific programmes for them.

As regards **the job matching stage**, experiences varied: some clients were provided with a wide range of vacancies, complete with explanations and the opportunity to choose, or – in the absence of current vacancies – an action plan (Lviv and Kyiv), whilst others were offered only one or a few vacancies without detailed information on job responsibilities, salary levels or working conditions. In several cases, it became apparent during the meeting with the employer that the vacancy offered less attractive conditions than expected: night shifts, additional duties, and a low take-home pay after tax. It is worth noting that, following this experience, the respondents were not keen to return to the employment centre and decided to look for work in future through personal contacts or other channels.

There are also variations in the level **of follow-up support**, which depends on the individual adviser. In some cases, the adviser would ring the client themselves after visiting employers to enquire about the outcome of the search, whilst in others they would simply tell the client to come back if the offer wasn't suitable, as they might be able to find something else.

The results show that the employment service is generally able to take clients' individual circumstances into account, but this depends on two factors:

- the available pool of vacancies;
- the specialist's motivation to provide assistance in a service-oriented manner, rather than merely going through the motions.

Furthermore, based on the observations of several mystery shoppers, it was felt that, although the advisers try to provide as much information as possible, there is a sense of information overload, chaos and a lack of structure. "Everything is dumped on you and you have to sort it out yourself, work out what to choose and what to make use of." In other words, there is a lack of a clear roadmap and guidance.

In most cases, **career counselling** effectively boiled down to selecting relevant job vacancies. A comprehensive, personalised career plan was not drawn up in any of the cases; some respondents had heard about this from the counsellor during their session, whilst others had not heard anything at all. Only one respondent was told that they would return to drawing up the plan during the next consultation, following discussions with employers.

Training and retraining. Clients learnt most about training opportunities at conferences organised by the employment centre, to which they were referred by specialists (based on the experience of mystery shoppers in Kyiv and Lviv). One of the main disappointments for clients in Kyiv was that specialist training centres for practical training are often located in other regions. Although accommodation and travel are covered, the need to travel to another city for a certain period is a significant inconvenience, given that they have families and domestic responsibilities they cannot leave behind. On a positive note, however, they highlighted that state-recognised documents are issued upon completion of the courses, rather than simply a 'certificate printed on a printer'.

At the same time, very little attention was paid to this topic during consultations with specialists; a significant proportion of clients were not told about this opportunity at all, nor was it mentioned, and when a client raised the issue themselves, they were briefly informed that, if necessary, they could be referred to the courses, and that such an option existed – without any details regarding specialisms, opportunities, and so on. In Dnipro, there was a case where a client was refused free retraining because they had not been in employment for the past seven months. To access free programmes, proof of insurance contributions over a specific period is required.

The research findings indicate that during their initial interactions with the State Employment Service, clients are either inadequately informed or not informed at all about opportunities for training, retraining and upskilling. As a result, some clients may be unaware of the availability of these services and may not consider them as one of the support options offered by the State Employment Service

Thus, **the following factors** can be identified **as reducing the effectiveness of employment centres**:

- an insufficient number of vacancies that meet the individual needs of different categories of jobseekers;
- a number of outdated job vacancies, and a lack of information or details about vacancies at the employment centre itself (working conditions, working hours, actual income levels, additional duties);
- inconsistent quality of advice provided by different specialists;
- a lack of systematic, personalised career support for the majority of clients, as in most cases clients were not properly informed about career plans and retraining opportunities during their interactions.

At the same time, positive case studies demonstrate that some of these issues can be mitigated through the proactive efforts of individual specialists; in other words, the tools are available.

Thus, the research findings indicate that the strength of the EC lies in the human factor — the professionalism, friendliness and motivation of the specialists, and the availability of tools to deliver services effectively and to a high standard; however, its weaknesses include a lack of information about opportunities and a low level of professional support — clients' cases are simply closed once, rather than followed up.

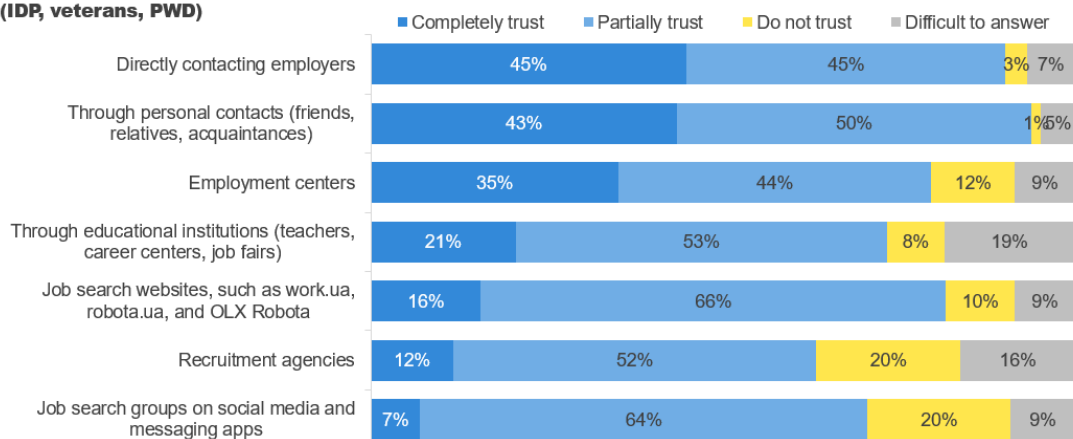
All the 'mystery shoppers' at the EC were people who were genuinely looking for work; however, following their interactions, three (Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, Zaporizhzhia) declined to continue working with the EC and ruled out this channel for job-seeking (no longer within the scope of the study), three are potentially considering the possibility of continuing their engagement, whilst the remainder are actively continuing to work with the SES outside the scope of the study (Lviv, Kyiv), although they admitted that whilst looking for work prior to the study, they had not considered the SES as one of the channels for meeting this need.

Assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the State Employment Service's activities: a quantitative study

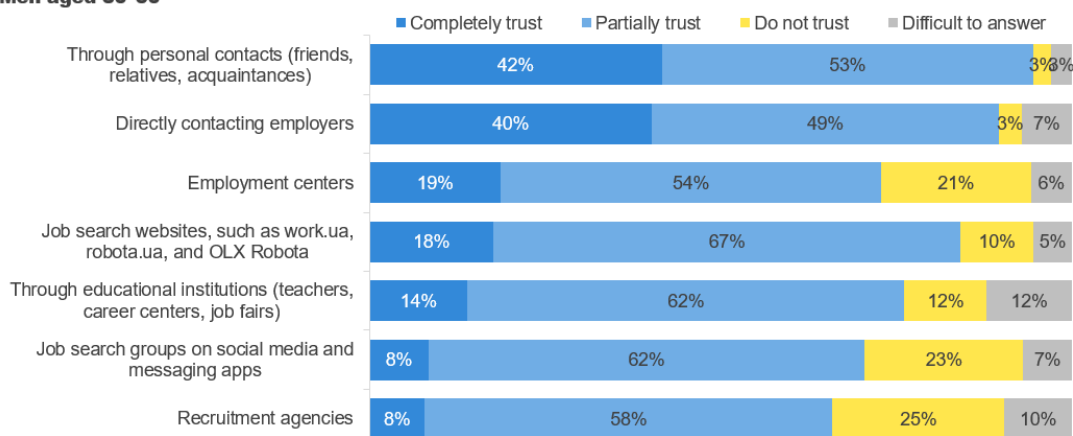
In terms of trust, the SES has a predominantly positive reputation (trusted fully or partially) among 73–84 per cent of various target audience groups. However, the SES ranks behind channels such as personal contacts (93–95 per cent), direct approaches to employers (88–92 per cent) and job websites (74–85 per cent), which enjoy the highest levels of trust (Fig. 7).

Fig.7 . How much do you trust these sources? (% of responses, mass survey)

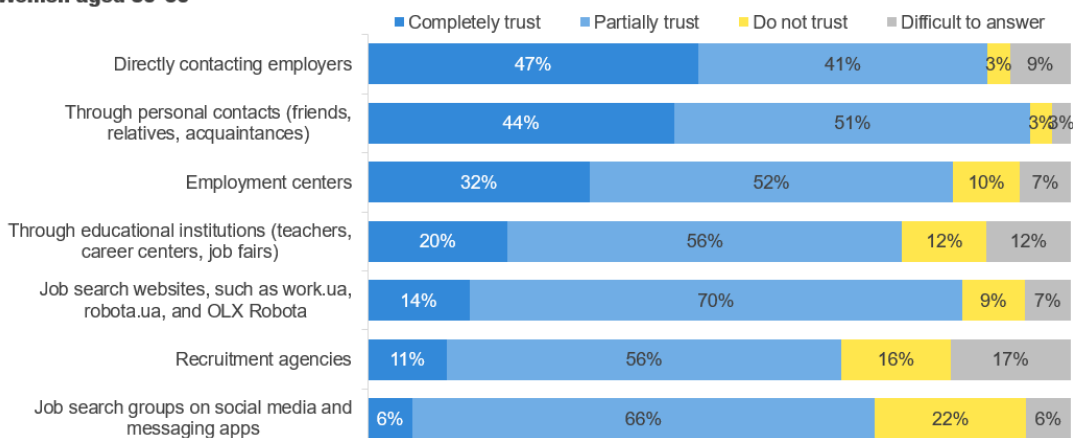
Inclusive groups (IDP, veterans, PWD)

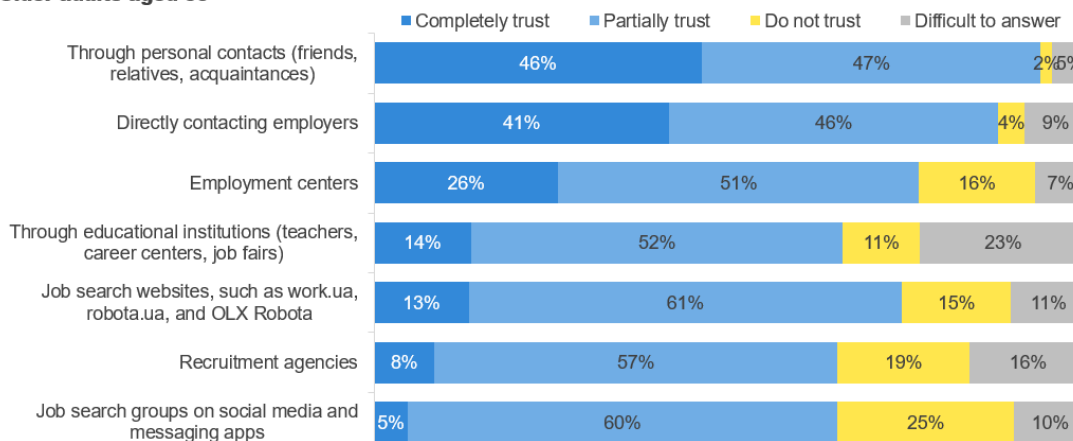
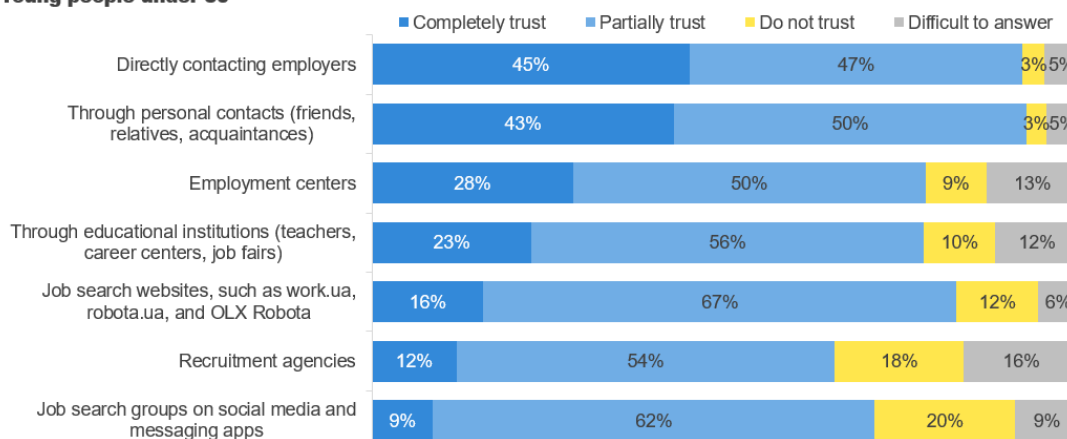


Men aged 30–50



Women aged 30–50

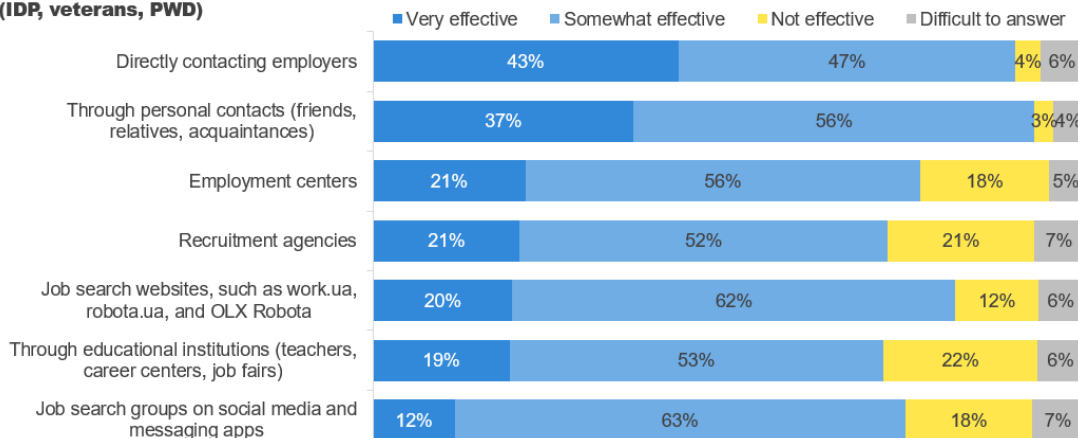


Older adults aged 50+

Young people under 30


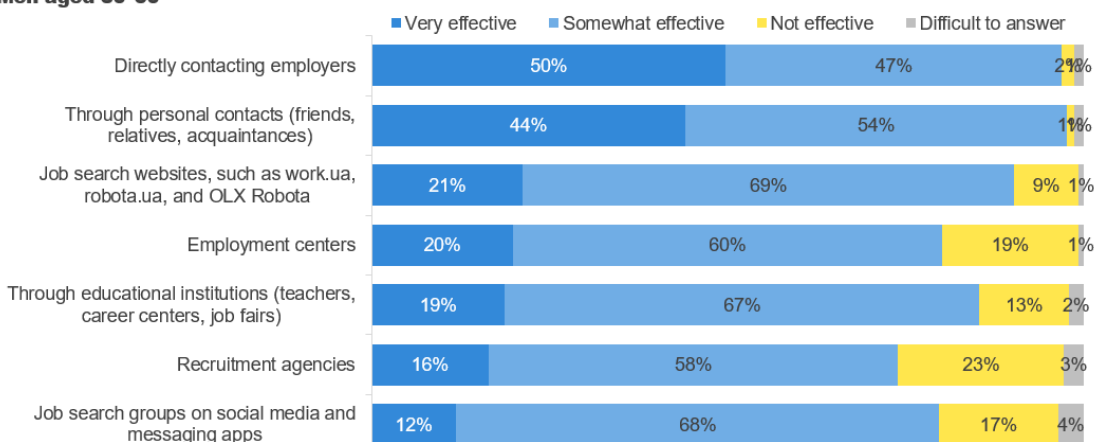
Assessments of effectiveness show a similar trend to the level of trust. Three-quarters of respondents believe that the employment centres help, either fully or partially, to find a good job. At the same time, one in five rates them as ineffective. It is interesting to note that, among the identified target groups, the lowest effectiveness ratings are found among older people (36% rate EC an ineffective source), whilst among young people this figure stands at 11 per cent, among men and women aged 30–50 it is 21%, and 18% among groups requiring additional inclusive support (Fig. 8).

Fig.8 . How would you rate the effectiveness of these sources? To what extent do they help you find a good job? (% of responses, mass survey, among those who are aware of or have used these sources)

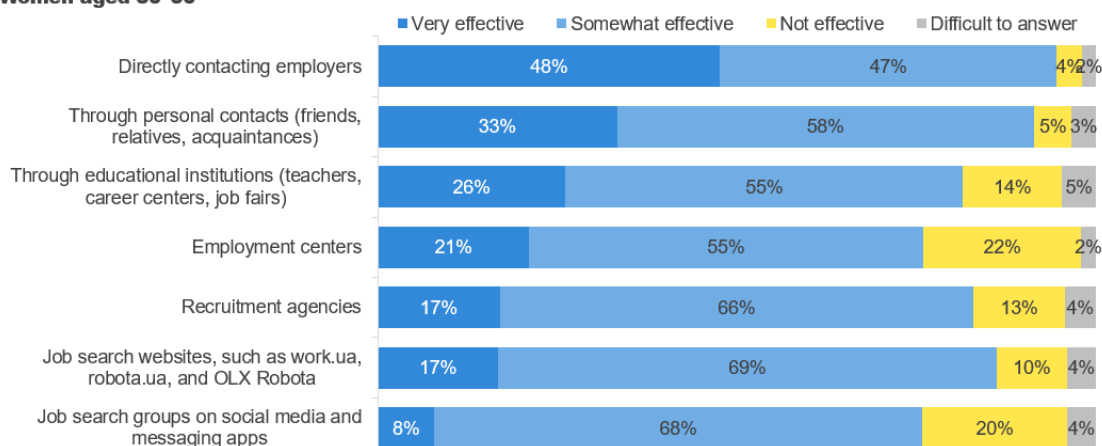
Inclusive groups (IDP, veterans, PWD)

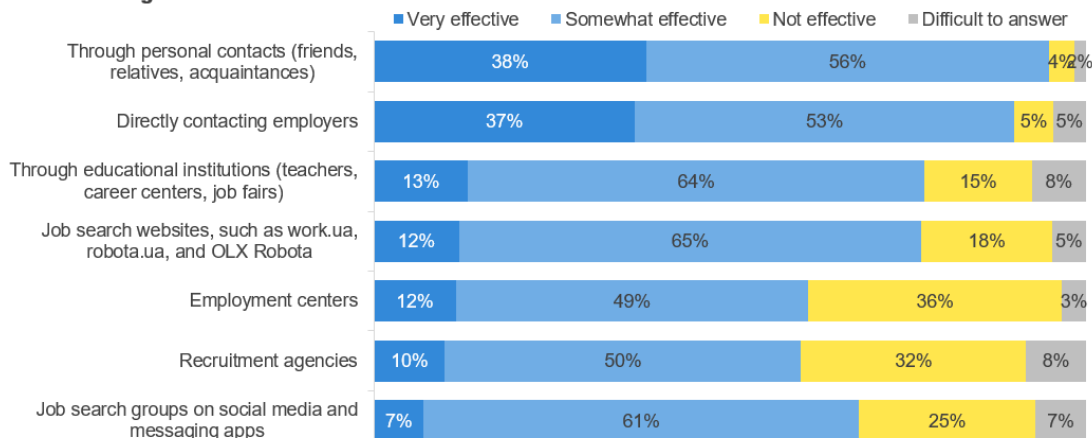
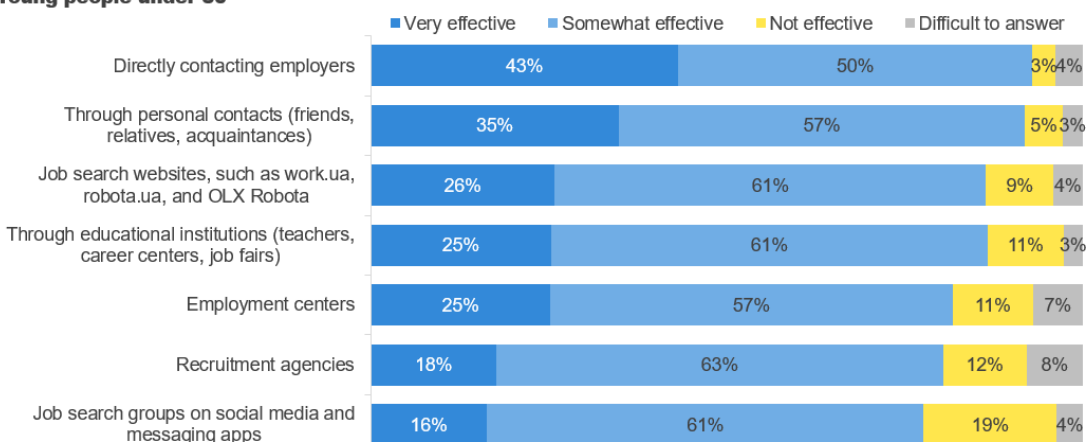


Men aged 30-50



Women aged 30-50



Older adults aged 50+

Young people under 30


The results of qualitative and quantitative research, as well as mystery shoppers, show that although a significant proportion of respondents express trust in the EC and believe in its effectiveness, in reality, when the need arises to look for work - they do not regard the EC as one of the main channels, hold a biased view, or, when discussing the EC in more detail, recount their own negative experiences or those of their acquaintances.

At the same time, as the expert points out, in addition to job search, the SES has the potential to promote alternative services that are no less important and in demand on the labour market – such as counselling, retraining and assistance with re-entering the labour market.

“I would treat scepticism towards the SES with caution. It is often linked not only to actual experience, but also to general perceptions of public services. At the same time, for some jobseekers, the SES can be an important source of support, particularly when a

*person needs not just a job vacancy, but also advice, retraining or help with returning to the labour market.”
(expert, robota.ua)*

2.2. Employers' experience of interacting with the State Employment Service: employer survey

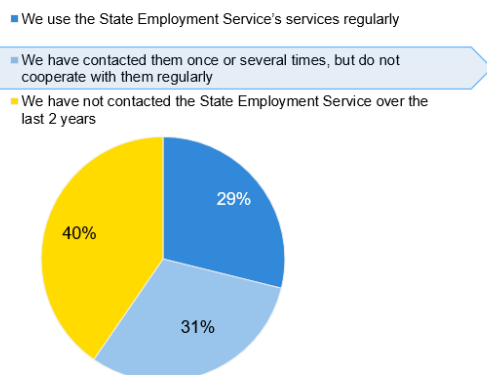
As regards employers' experience of interacting with the SES over the past two years, 29% use its services regularly, whilst nearly a third (31%) have contacted the SES once or several times, though this has not led to regular cooperation. The main reasons for this irregularity were that the desired result was not achieved or that candidates did not meet the organisation's needs, as well as the fact that other recruitment channels were used (Fig. 9).

In terms of trends, it is also observed that, among small enterprises, the proportion of those that have not contacted the SES cover the past two years is significantly higher than among medium-sized and large enterprises.

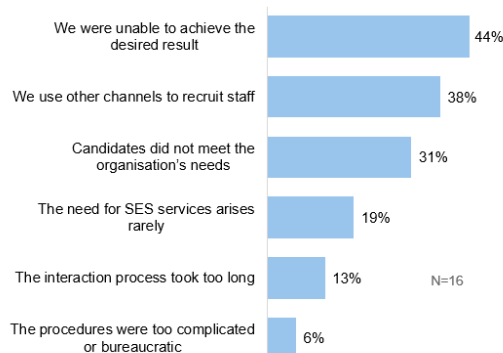
Fig.9 . What experience has your organisation had of working with the State Employment Service over the last two years, if any? (% of responses, employers)

Why has cooperation with the State Employment Service not become regular? (% of responses, employers, among those who do NOT interact regularly with the State Employment Service)

Q: What experience has your organization had of working with the State Employment Service over the last 2 years, if any?

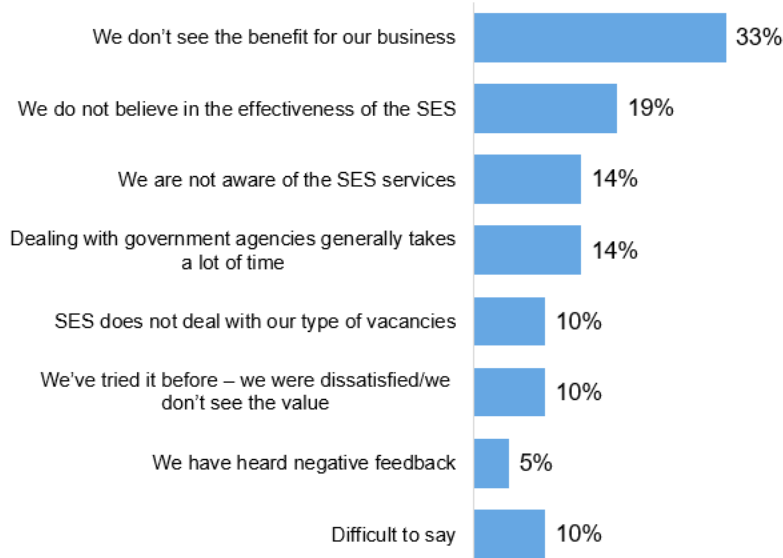


Q: Why has cooperation with the State Employment Service not become regular?



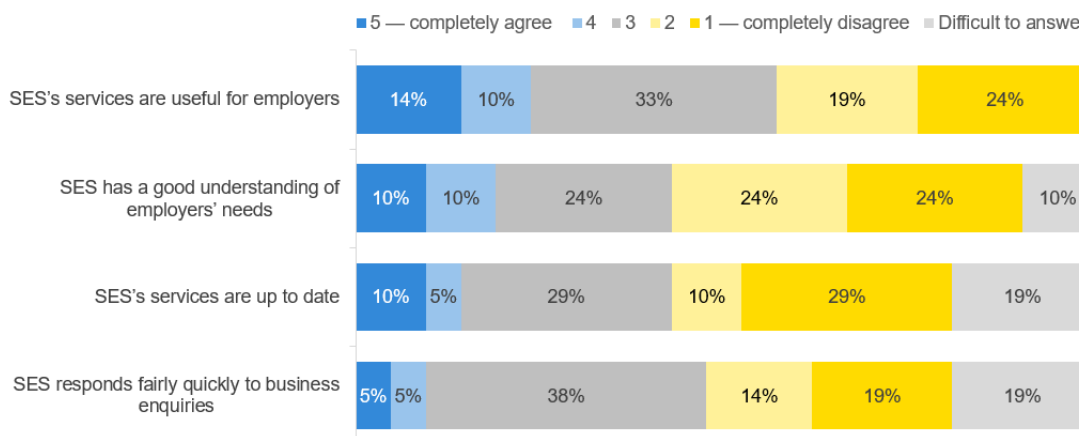
40% have not contacted the SES at all over the past two years (Fig. 9), and the main reason cited is that they do not see any benefit for their business (Fig. 10).

Fig.10 . Why has your organisation not contacted the State Employment Service? (% of responses, employers, among those who have not interacted with the State Employment Service)



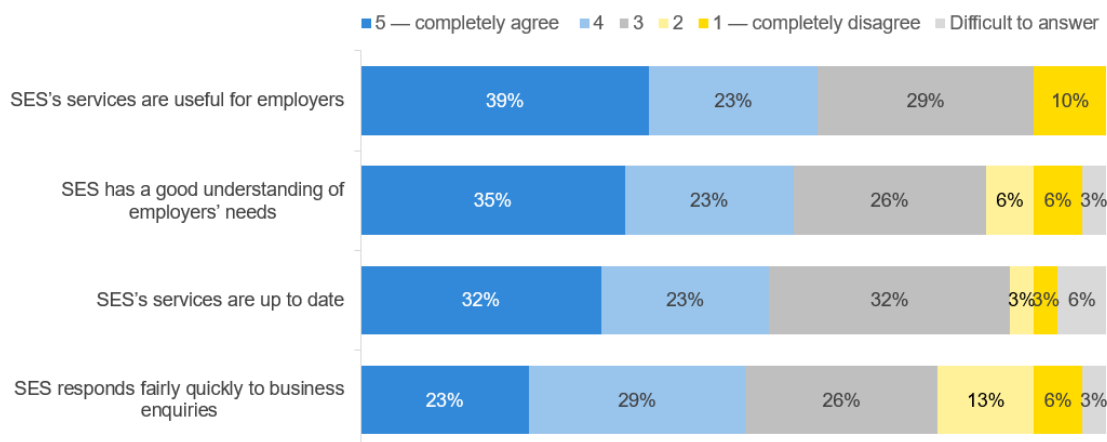
A notable issue is the image of the SES among employers, particularly among those who have not engaged with it. For example, only 4 out of 21 employers agree (fully or to some extent) that the SES has a good understanding of employers' needs, whilst the rest of the respondents either disagree or give a neutral assessment; 3 out of 21 employers agree that the State Employment Service's services are up to date, whilst the others similarly disagree or give a neutral response; only 2 out of 21 employers agree that the SES responds quickly enough to business enquiries (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11 . To what extent do you agree with the statements? (% of responses, employers, among those who have not interacted with the State Employment Service)



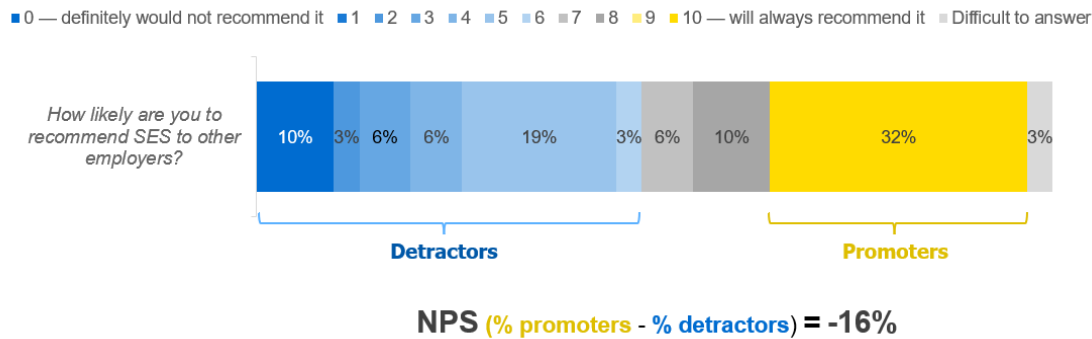
At the same time, the ratings among those who have interacted with the SES, whether regularly or irregularly, are significantly higher, as on average almost half of employers agree with these statements (Fig. 12).

Fig.12 . To what extent do you agree with the statements? (% of responses, employers, among those who have interacted with the State Employment Service)



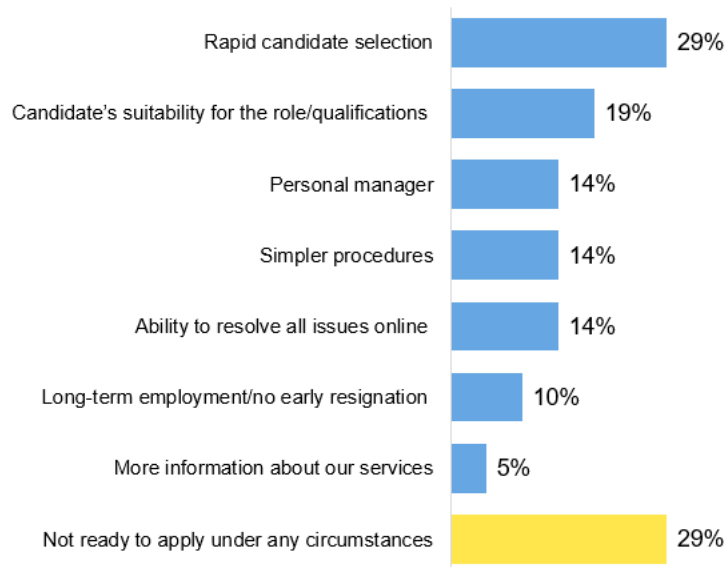
However, among those who have interacted with the SES, only a third are willing to recommend it to other employers (promoters), whilst almost half of employers are not willing to do so (critics) (Fig. 13).

Fig. 13 . *How likely are you to recommend the State Employment Service to other employers?*
(% of responses, employers, among those who have interacted with the State Employment Service)



It can also be assumed that among some of the employers who have not interacted with the SES, there are certain preconceptions about the SES, as nearly a third stated that they are not prepared to contact the SES under any circumstances (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14 . *Under what circumstances would you be willing to contact the State Employment Service?* (% of responses, employers, among those who have NOT interacted with the State Employment Service)



The results of the employer survey indicate that employers' interaction with the State Employment Service remains limited and largely irregular. The main reasons for this are dissatisfaction with the results of candidate selection, the mismatch

between applicants and business needs, and employers' use of alternative channels for sourcing candidates.

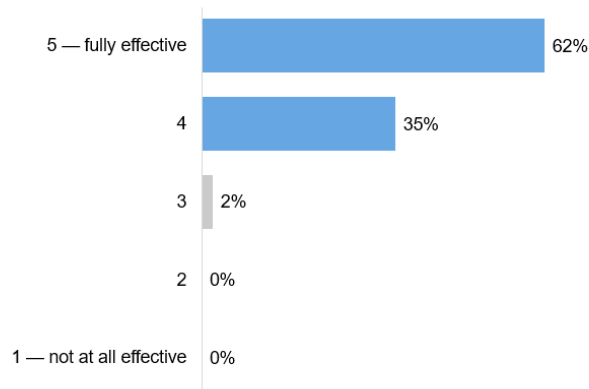
At the same time, the study revealed a difference in perceptions of the SES depending on whether respondents had personal experience of dealing with it. Employers who have worked with the SES rate its work more highly than those who have never used its services. This points to the existence of a perception barrier: it can be assumed that some employers do not use the services of the SES due to preconceived notions about how it operates, whilst their actual experience of working with it is more positive. At the same time, even amongst those who have worked with the SES, the level of willingness to recommend it to other employers remains low, indicating a need to improve quality and effectiveness.

2.3. Internal assessment of the State Employment Service's activities: a survey of State Employment Service/Employment Centre representatives

As part of the study, the quality and effectiveness of the SES's activities were also assessed directly by the SES staff and representatives themselves.

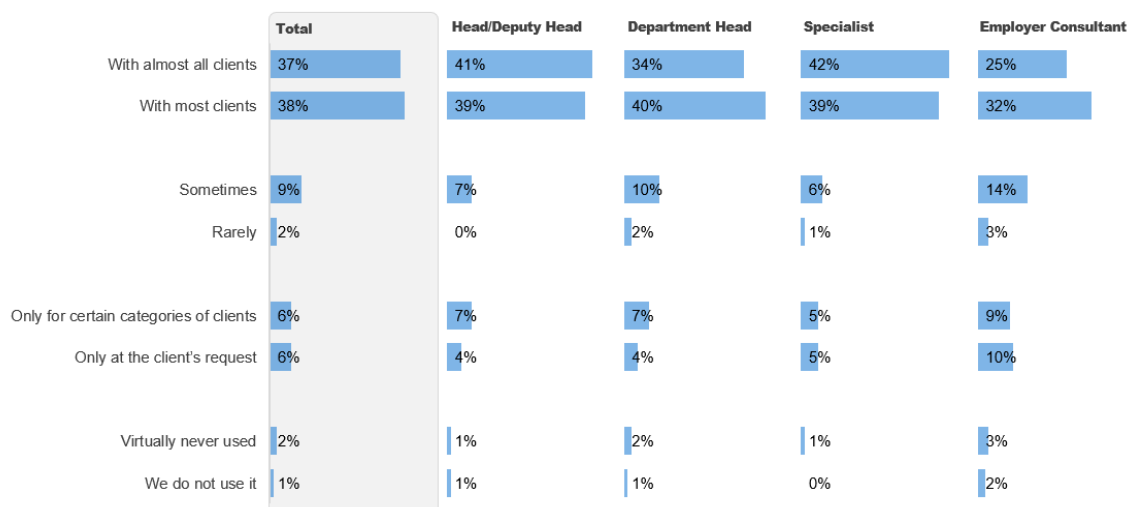
Overall, SES staff rate the success/effectiveness of their work highly: the vast majority (62%) consider it fully effective, whilst a further third (35%) consider it somewhat effective (Fig. 15).

Fig. 15 . How would you rate the success/effectiveness of your work? (% of responses, State Employment Service)



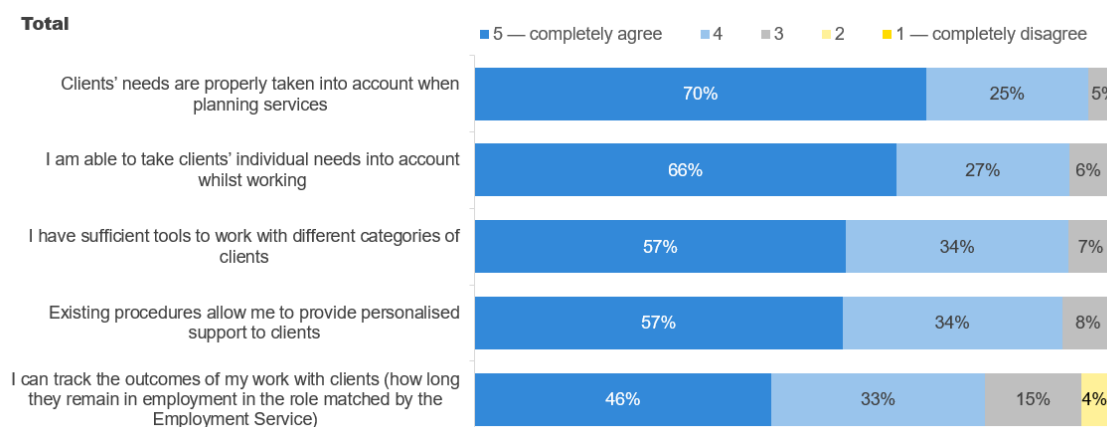
75% of the SES representatives surveyed state that career counselling is used with most or almost all clients (Fig. 16).

Fig. 16 . How often do you use career counselling when working with clients? (% of responses, SES)



Almost all (95%) of the SES representatives surveyed agree with the statement that clients' needs are adequately taken into account when planning services. The overwhelming majority (93%) are able to take clients' individual needs into account in their work; furthermore, existing procedures allow for the provision of personalised support to clients (91% of respondents agree fully or to some extent with this statement) and there are sufficient tools available to work with different categories of clients (likewise 91%) (Fig. 17).

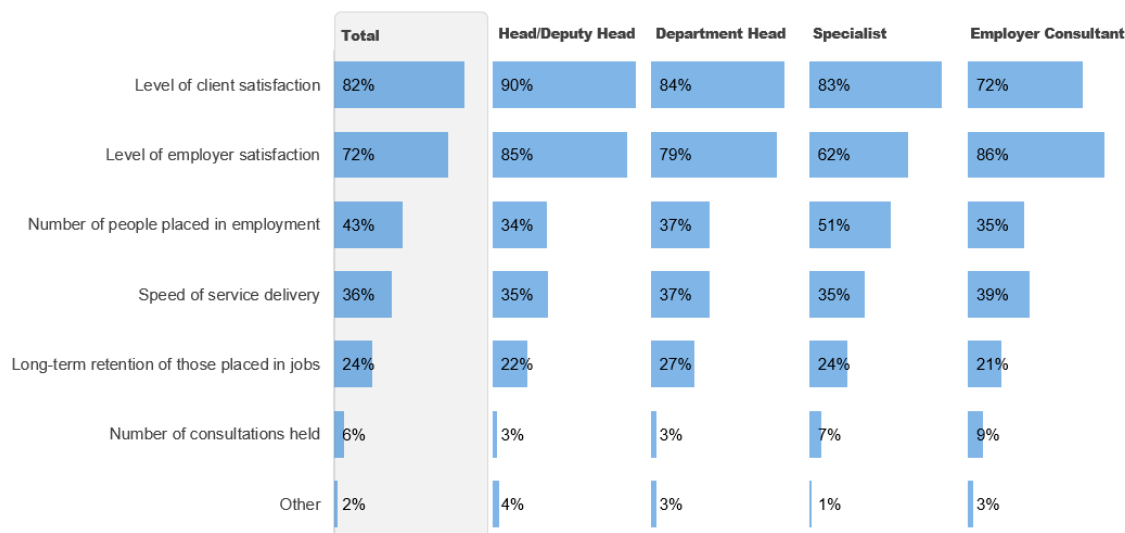
Fig. 17 . To what extent do you agree with the statements? (SES, % of responses)



According to the SES staff, the key indicators of the SES's success should be the level of client satisfaction (82% of all respondents) and the level of employer satisfaction (72%). Responses vary slightly depending on the SES employee's

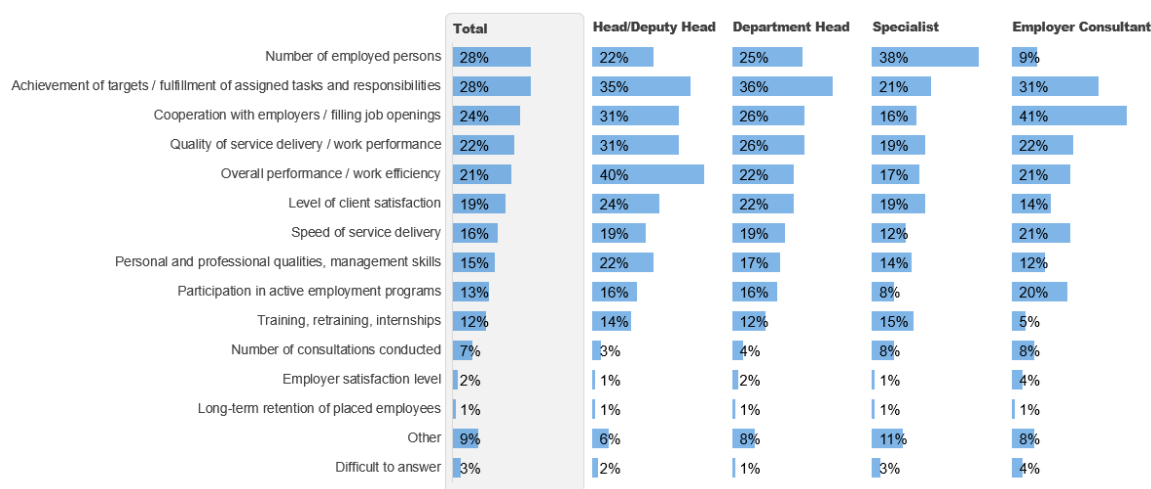
role: specialists place greater emphasis on the number of people placed in jobs compared with other staff (51% vs 34–37% respectively), whilst they place less emphasis on the employer satisfaction rate compared with others (62% vs 79–86% respectively) (Fig. 18).

Fig. 18 . In your opinion, what should be the main indicator of the success of the SES? (% of responses, SES)



SES staff assess the success/effectiveness of their work based on the achievement of planned targets/assigned tasks and duties (28%), the number of people placed in jobs (28%) and their work with employers/filling vacancies (24%). Moreover, the criteria vary depending on the position: managers and deputies are guided to the greatest extent by the indicator of overall performance/effectiveness (40% vs 17–22% among other positions), heads of departments by the achievement of planned targets (36%), employer consultants – by performance in working with employers/filling vacancies (41% vs 16–31% among other roles), and specialists – by the number of people placed in jobs (38% vs 9–25%) (Fig. 19).

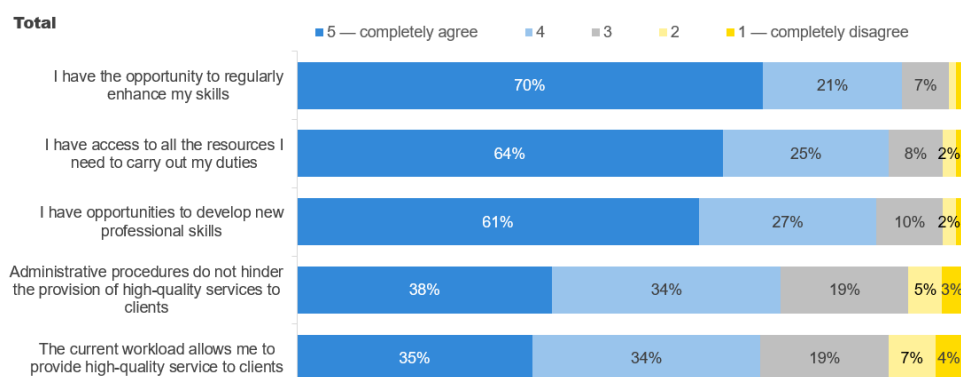
Fig.19 . What indicators or criteria do you use to assess the success/effectiveness of your work? (% of responses, State Employment Service)



For the vast majority of SES representatives surveyed, their current workload allows them to provide high-quality service to clients (69% of respondents fully or somewhat agree with this statement), however, there is a difference in responses between those working in regional centres and those in other localities: 17% of SES representatives from regional centres disagree (completely or to some extent) that their current workload allows them to provide high-quality service to clients, compared with 8% from other localities.

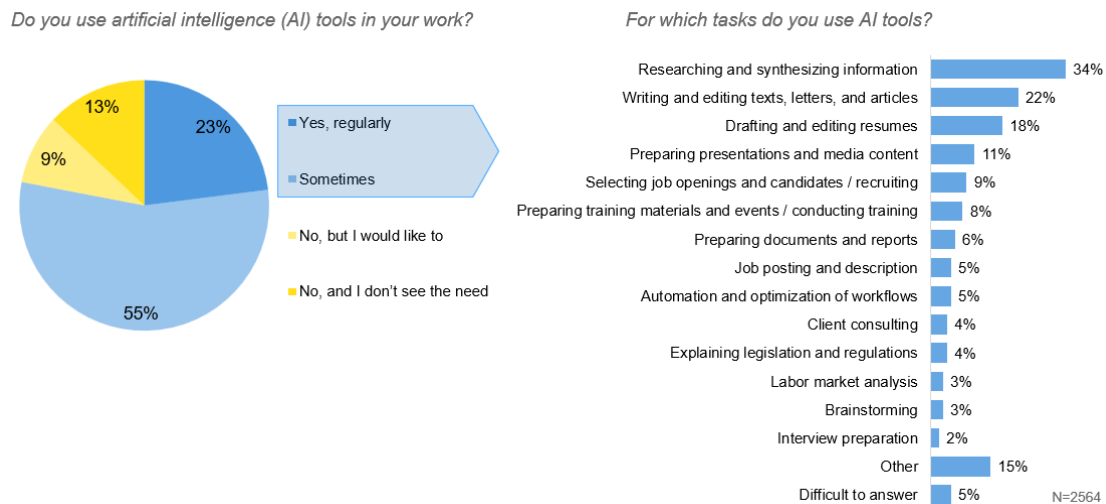
Almost all surveyed SES staff have the opportunity to regularly upgrade their skills (91% fully or somewhat agree with this statement) and have opportunities to develop new professional competencies (88% fully or somewhat agree with this statement) (Fig. 20).

Fig.20 . To what extent do you agree with the statements? (% of responses, SES)



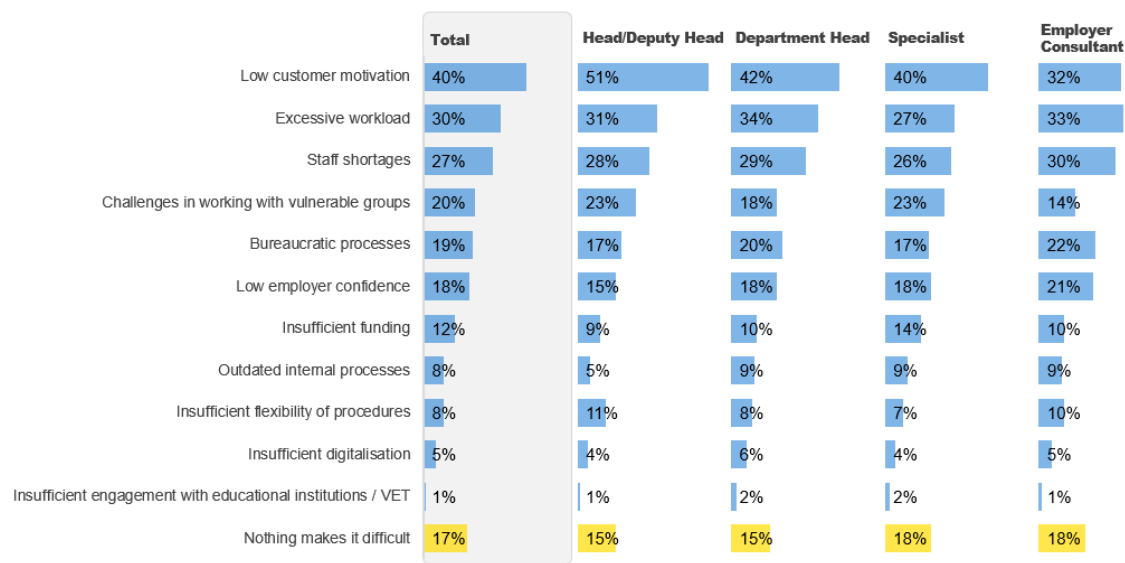
Almost one in four (23 per cent) of SES employees regularly use artificial intelligence tools in their work, with a further 55% using them occasionally. Of these, 34% use them to search for and summarise information, whilst 22% use them to write and edit texts, letters and articles (Fig. 21).

Fig.21 . Do you use artificial intelligence (AI) tools in your work? (% of responses, SES)



It is worth noting that there are a number of factors which nevertheless hinder the effective operation of the SES. In general, SES staff are more likely to attribute difficulties in their work to external factors and resource constraints than to the internal organisation of the service's work. The most frequently cited factors are low client motivation (40%), excessive workload on staff (30%) and staff shortages (27%) (Fig. 22).

Fig.22 . Overall, which factors pose the greatest challenges to the effective operation of the State Employment Service? (% of responses, SES)



The survey results indicate that representatives of the State Employment Service generally assess their own performance and the service’s institutional capacity positively. Staff believe they have sufficient tools to work with clients on a personalised basis, take their individual needs into account and make extensive use of career counselling in their practice. However, the results of mystery shopping contradict these findings, as career counselling in most cases effectively amounted to simply matching clients with job vacancies. A comprehensive individual career plan was not drawn up in any of the cases; some clients heard about this from the counsellor during their consultation, whilst others were not informed at all. Similarly, individual needs are not systematically taken into account. This depended largely on the individual adviser, as some clients were offered one or more vacancies that were only somewhat suited to their qualifications; they were advised to contact the employer directly to discuss the details, and the interaction ended there.

SES representatives also note that they have opportunities for their own training and development. Furthermore, modern digital tools are gradually being introduced into the service’s work — the vast majority of staff already use, or occasionally apply, artificial intelligence tools.

Another important aspect is the assessment of work performance. The survey of the SES representatives reveals a certain discrepancy between the strategic vision (what should be considered an indicator of success) and the actual assessment criteria (the criteria or indicators used for evaluation). Whilst staff cite client and employer satisfaction as the main indicators of the SES's effectiveness, they predominantly assess their own work in terms of meeting targets, the number of people placed in jobs, and the filling of vacancies. This indicates that the system remains focused on quantitative performance indicators. It is also worth noting that assessments vary depending on job role, which suggests that different levels of SES staff have differing views on the ultimate goal and priorities of the SES's activities.

Appendix 1. Methodology

WP1. Focus group discussions

Method: Focus group discussions (FGDs)

Format: online

Sample: 10 FGDs

Target audiences:

- [1] NEET young people (not in employment, education or training), various age groups
- [2] Unemployed people who are ready to take up employment, various age groups
- [3] Vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, demobilised veterans, single parents)

All FGD participants are currently not in work but are considering the possibility of finding employment (levels of motivation and job-search activity vary: from actively seeking work to passively considering opportunities). Each group includes at least two respondents with IDP status.

Geography: They reside throughout Ukraine, except in the temporarily occupied territories (TOT) and areas of active hostilities, or in areas where the security situation does not allow for a safe place of residence for the entire duration of the FGD.

Fieldwork dates: 27 May 2026 – 3 June 2026

Details:

No.	Target group	Gender/age	Date
1	NEET youths	Males, aged 16–19	3 June 2026
2	NEET young people	Women, aged 20–24	3 June 2026
3	NEET young people	Men, aged 25–29	27 May 2026
4	NEET young people	Women, aged 30–34	27 May 2026
5	Unemployed	Men, aged 35–44	28 May 2026
6	Unemployed	Women, aged 45–54	28 May 2026
7	Unemployed	Men, aged 55–64	29 May 2026
8	Unemployed	Women, aged 65 and over	29 May 2026
9	Vulnerable groups	Women aged 18 and over	2 June 2026
10	Vulnerable groups	Men, aged 18 and over	2 June 2026

WP2. Stakeholder survey

Method: Interviews

Target audiences:

- [1] Experts: In-depth interviews via the ZOOM online platform
- [2] Employers: telephone interviews
- [3] Representatives of the State Employment Service and Employment Centres: the survey was conducted in two stages:
 - [I] – an email campaign sent to the State Employment Service and Employment Centres to gather quantitative data and contact details for follow-up
 - [II] – telephone interviews

Sample size: 100+ interviews

Fieldwork dates: June–July 2026

Geography: Interviews were not conducted in the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol, the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and other areas under occupation, nor in territories where Ukrainian mobile network coverage is unavailable.

WP3. Mass survey of target audiences

Method: Online survey using the CAWI method

Sample: 5 surveys, each comprising 400 (or more) respondents.

Survey specifications:

Survey 1. Young people, men and women (aged up to 30), who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in work but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on the slides: 'Young people under 30'

Survey 2. Men and women aged over 50 who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in work but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on the slides: 'Older people aged 50+'

Survey 3. Women aged 30–50 who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in work but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on slides: 'Women aged 30–50'

Survey 4. Men aged 30–50 who meet the following criteria:

- are unemployed,
- or are in employment but are dissatisfied with their current situation,
- do not rule out the idea of changing their profession.

Label on slides: 'Men aged 30–50'

Survey 5. Groups requiring additional inclusive support (internally displaced persons, veterans, people with disabilities)

Label on the slides: 'Inclusive groups (IDPs, veterans, people with disabilities)'

Fieldwork dates: June–July 2026

Geography: Residents throughout Ukraine, excluding the temporarily occupied territories and areas of active hostilities

Caveats: The specific nature of the online panel survey method should be taken into account. There may be a systematic bias in the sample towards people who are more digitally literate and more active. Consequently, the estimates obtained through the CAWI survey should be interpreted as the upper limit of the values for the indicators under study. Further research using other methods may be useful and could reach a wider audience.

WP4. Mystery shopping

Method: Mystery shopping – unannounced visits

Sample: 11 mystery shopping campaigns

Profile of 'mystery shoppers':

- [1] NEET young people (not in education, employment or training)
- [2] Unemployed people
- [3] Vulnerable groups of unemployed people

Fieldwork dates: 11 June 2026 – 27 July 2026

Geography: Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Lviv, Odesa

Details: The initial visit was made to the Employment Centre. The mystery shopper then went through all the stages of the process provided by the Employment Centre, with the aim of assessing how the employment system functions through this job-search channel (as well as the mechanisms for retraining and upskilling).

