

# Cooperation between employment centers, vocational education institutions and employers

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The labour market, employment and vocational training research is being implemented by Info Sapiens within the framework of the Multi Donor Initiative Skills4Recovery, which is jointly co-financed by the European Union, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Denmark, and is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Solidarity Fund PL (SFPL).

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## Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

**Cooperation between employers and the State Employment Service (SES) remains largely situational and focuses almost exclusively on finding candidates to fill vacancies.**

Most employers contact the Employment Service to fill a vacancy (58% of all respondents), a further 10% do so for training purposes, whilst interaction with the Service occurs for other reasons. Among employers who have not cooperated with the Employment Service, the Service's basic services are the best known. For instance, 86% are aware of the option to receive assistance in selecting candidates for vacancies, 81% know about advice on the labor market situation, and 76% are aware of the option to advertise vacancies. In contrast, awareness of other services is significantly lower: only 48% are aware of legal advice for employers, 33% of opportunities for training and reskilling staff, and 29% of training vouchers. This indicates that employers predominantly associate the State Employment Service with recruitment, whilst a significant proportion of other business support tools remain little known. Consequently, the State Employment Service's potential as a comprehensive partner for business is only partially realized.

**One of the key problems in the cooperation between the State Employment Service and employers is the inefficiency and lack of effectiveness of the State Employment Service's recruitment services (which is the main reason for contacting the State Employment Service).**

67% of employers experience significant difficulties in finding staff for their organizations (rated 4–5 out of 5). Cooperation with the State Employment Service yields poor results: only 6% of employers managed to fully fill their vacancies through the employment service, whilst 33% failed to fill any vacancies at all, and the remaining 45% had partial success (they submitted several vacancies and managed to fill some of them). Over 60% of employers are dissatisfied with the quality of candidates and the speed at which vacancies are filled (ratings of 1–3 out of 5).

**One of the barriers to interaction that renders the State Employment Service's job vacancy database an outdated resource is the lack of feedback and interaction between the SES and employers.**

This is confirmed by evidence from both sides: representatives of the State Employment Service and its clients. State Employment Service specialists note that employers often fail to report the results of interviews with referred candidates

or that vacancies have been filled, making it difficult to establish effective communication.

The experiences of clients who have sought work through the SES confirm this problem. Mystery visits revealed: out-of-date vacancies (closed, even though they appear as open in the SES database); mismatched conditions or a lack of information about conditions (actual working conditions differed significantly, with no details provided on working conditions or schedules); a shortage of vacancies (employers complain of staff shortages, yet jobseekers see only a few vacancies during their visits).

**Perception Gap: There is a gap between the assessments of SES representatives and employers regarding the quality of cooperation and understanding of market needs.**

91% of SES staff believe that the employment service understands employers' needs; however, only 58% of employers who have had experience of interacting with the SES agree with this, and only 20% of those who have not interacted with it. 92% of SES staff are convinced that they respond quickly to business enquiries, whilst employers' assessments on this issue are significantly lower: 52% and 10% respectively. This discrepancy highlights the gap between the reality faced by employers and the State Employment Service's perception of the system's effectiveness, as well as an even wider gap between the State Employment Service's image among employers and the Service's own representatives' perception of their work with employers. This area requires a great deal of work. This highlights the need to regularly seek feedback from employers and adjust approaches to engagement.

**At the same time, the quality of interaction directly with SES staff is rated highly, despite the systemic problems mentioned above.**

The vast majority of employers surveyed who have interacted with the State Employment Service are satisfied (ratings of 4–5 on a 5-point scale) with the ease of contact (87%), the quality of communication (84%), the competence of State Employment Service staff (81%), the clarity of processes (74%), and the speed of service (71%). This may indicate that staff lack the tools or knowledge to provide services effectively and efficiently.

**There is a perception barrier and a stereotypical view of the SES.**

Some employers do not use the services of the State Employment Service due to preconceived notions about its work, whilst the actual experience of interacting with it is often more positive. For example, only 20% of employers agree (fully or

to some extent) that the State Employment Service has a good understanding of employers' needs, the rest of those surveyed disagree or give a neutral assessment; 15% of employers agree that the SES's services are up to date, whilst the rest similarly disagree or give a neutral response; only 10% of employers agree that the SES responds quickly enough to business enquiries. At the same time, ratings among those who have interacted with the State Employment Service, whether regularly or not regularly, are significantly higher, as on average almost half of employers agree with these statements.

**In the area of training, cooperation between employers and vocational education institutions remains limited.**

Only 15% of employers have collaborated with vocational education institutions to train or retrain staff. Only one in five employers agrees with the statement that they are sufficiently involved in shaping training programs (19%, ratings of 4–5 on a 5-point scale), and that such programs provide practical skills (18%). Although there is a demand among employers for training or retraining – as 58% of organizations have needed to retrain or upskill their staff over the past 12 months – the vast majority opt for in-house training (50%) or courses (40%), whilst vocational education institutions account for only 3%. The main reasons for not opting for vocational education programs are that organizations prefer to train staff themselves (36%) or that the programs do not meet their needs (27%).

**Testing of research hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1. Interaction between stakeholders is unsystematic** – hypothesis confirmed.

The research findings indicate that cooperation between employers, the State Employment Service (SES) and vocational education institutions is predominantly sporadic.

Only 29% of employers use the services of the SES regularly. At the same time, 40% have not contacted the employment service at all in the last two years, indicating that a significant portion of the market is excluded from the state employment ecosystem.

Employers view the State Employment Service solely as a recruitment channel (58% of enquiries), ignoring a wide range of other services (legal advice, market analysis, grants, training), some of which they are simply unaware of.

Cooperation between businesses and vocational training institutions remains at a low level — only 15% of employers have had experience of such interaction. At the same time, each of the labor market participants (the State Employment Service and employers) has a different view of the effectiveness of interaction with vocational training institutions, which indicates the absence of a single, systematic

model of cooperation. 89% of SES representatives stated that cooperation between the SES and VET institutions is effective; however, the results of ‘mystery visits’ showed that clients are given almost no information about training opportunities during their initial consultation. Only 19% of employers agreed that they are sufficiently involved in the development of training programs, whilst SES representatives rated employers’ involvement in program development significantly higher – 72% stated that employers are sufficiently involved.

**Hypothesis 2. Training programs often do not meet the current needs of the economy** – hypothesis confirmed.

Only 18% of employers agree that vocational education programs provide the necessary practical skills, and only 20% believe that they meet the needs of the labor market.

Further evidence of this is the priority employers place on in-house training: in 58% of organizations, where there has been a need to retrain staff over the past 12 months, they opted for in-house resources (50%) or training courses (40%). The main reasons for not using vocational education programs are that they train staff themselves (36%) or that the programs do not meet their needs (27%).

There is also a marked disparity in the perception of vocational education between representatives of the State Employment Service and employers: 67% of State Employment Service representatives state that there have been positive changes in the approaches to designing vocational education programs over the past year, whilst the business sector rates the quality of these programs significantly lower.

**Hypothesis 3. The role of the employment service as an intermediary is limited** – hypothesis confirmed.

Despite a wide range of services, employers predominantly view the Employment Service merely as a channel for sourcing candidates (58% use it for this purpose). Among the employers surveyed, the Employment Service manages to fully fulfil a request in only 6% of cases. One in three employers (33%) was unable to fill a single vacancy through this channel.

There is a noticeable ‘supply-demand’ imbalance: employers complain of a shortage of candidates, whilst jobseekers, during mystery visits, report a lack of vacancies in the Employment Service’s database. This confirms that the Employment Service is currently failing to act as an effective communication hub between the parties.

The results of the mystery visits revealed that the State Employment Service’s staff do not work in a systematic manner: a significant proportion of clients are not informed about training opportunities. Assessments of the quality of vocational

training programs by employers and State Employment Service representatives differ significantly.

The State Employment Service is not yet fully fulfilling its role as a coordinator between employers, the vocational education system and jobseekers.

### Recommendations

- **Strengthen the system for proactively engaging and onboarding new employers to collaborate with the State Employment Service, paying particular attention to small businesses.** The study showed that a significant proportion of employers have not approached the State Employment Service at all over the past two years, with a higher proportion of small enterprises among them. At the same time, it is precisely small business representatives who have limited resources for researching government programs, adapting specific categories of employees and interacting with state institutions. Therefore, simplifying cooperation through process automation, minimizing bureaucratic procedures and providing advisory support could increase their engagement with the State Employment Service's services. It is important to build a dialogue based on trust, where employers view the State Employment Service as a genuine partner, rather than a regulatory body with a mountain of paperwork or an outdated and unnecessary channel for recruiting candidates. This will encourage a greater number of employers to collaborate with the SES. As a result, the SES will expand its pool of vacancies and become a more valuable resource for clients.
- **Strengthen systematic interaction between the State Employment Service, employers and vocational training institutions.** Research has shown that cooperation between labor market participants is fragmented; therefore, it is necessary to develop permanent mechanisms for joint planning of staffing needs and training programs. This will enable the synchronization of workforce training with actual needs
- **Strengthen employers' involvement or provide them with mechanisms to influence the development and updating of vocational education programs.** This will enhance the practical value of training and ensure that programs align with the real needs of the labor market. Consequently, it will boost business confidence in vocational education and encourage organizations to send staff for retraining at state institutions rather than relying solely on internal resources.

- **Expand informing among employers regarding all the opportunities offered by the State Employment Service (SES).** The focus should be on both employers who already collaborate or have collaborated with the SES and those who do not. For the latter group, an information campaign could be launched, highlighting training or retraining opportunities, grants, free consultations and workshops as possible options. Research has shown that most employers are more familiar with recruitment services, whilst other business support tools remain significantly less well known. Armed with the necessary knowledge and tools, businesses will begin to use the State Employment Service as a comprehensive support tool, which will, in particular, help organizations secure the resources needed to support the integration of specific groups.
- **Introduce a regular process for gathering feedback from employers.** Significant discrepancies between the assessments of employers and those of the Public Employment Service indicate the need for continuous monitoring of business satisfaction and the use of this data to improve the work of the employment service. Effective monitoring can serve as a tool to promptly rectify service shortcomings and enhance cooperation between all stakeholders in the labor market.
- **Develop a separate branding/communications strategy for employers who have no experience of working with the State Employment Service.** Research has shown that almost a third of employers who have not approached the State Employment Service are not prepared to do so under any circumstances, and their perception of the State Employment Service is based largely on stereotypes rather than actual experience. As this segment is not covered by existing feedback mechanisms, it requires specific tools — 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 state-provided opportunities due to misconceptions
- **Include information on training, retraining and professional development opportunities as a mandatory part of the initial consultation with a State Employment Service client.** The results of mystery visits have shown that, during consultations with specialists, very little attention is paid to this topic: 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 of the availability of these services and do not consider training as a form of support from the State Employment Service. Awareness of these services could increase the number of vouchers issued and help employers fill vacancies more effectively through the reskilling of candidates

## Acronyms and abbreviations

**State Employment Service - (SES)**

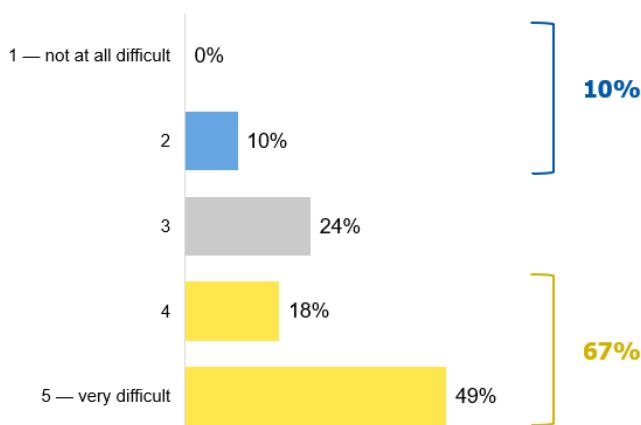
**EC - Employment Centre**

**VO - Vocational education**

## Chapter 1. Employers' needs in the labor market

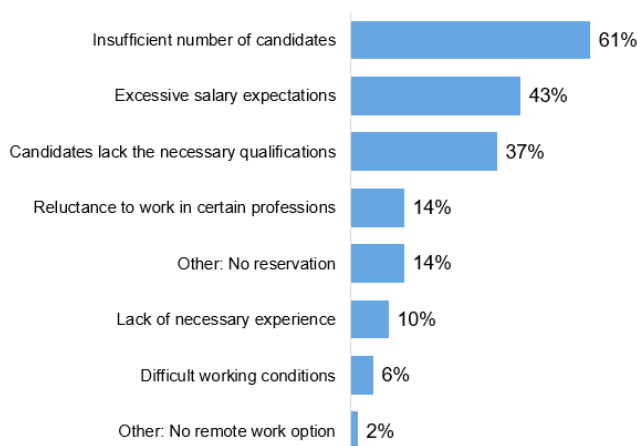
Overall, the vast majority of employers surveyed (67%) stated that it is difficult (rated 4–5 on a 5-point scale) to find staff for their organization (Fig. 1). In terms of trends, there is a noticeable difference depending on the size of the organization: small enterprises find it most difficult to recruit staff, whilst large enterprises find it easiest.

**Fig. 1 . How difficult is it today to find staff for your organization? (% of responses, employers<sup>1</sup>)**



The most common difficulties arise from insufficient number of candidates (61% of employers mentioned this), excessive salary expectations (43%) and a lack of staff qualifications (37%) (Fig. 2).

**Fig.2 . What difficulties arise most frequently? (% of responses, employers)**



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

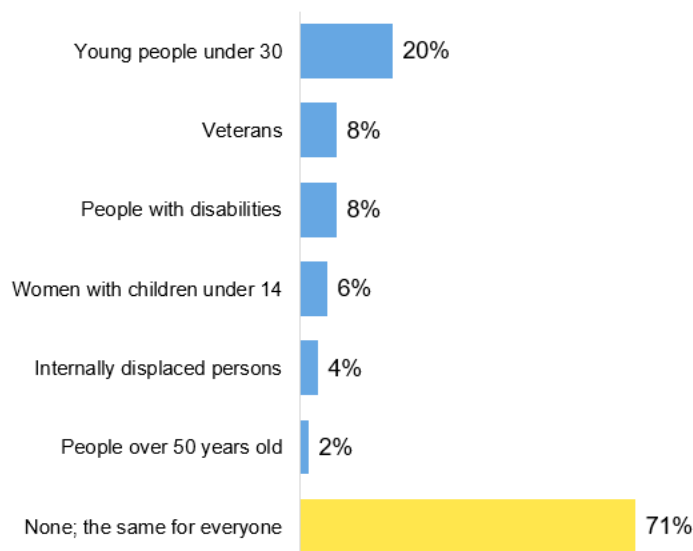
It is also worth noting that small businesses find it most difficult to recruit staff, as they face several specific challenges, stemming from the scale of their operations. These include a lack of information about the company and its reputation in open sources (which, according to the expert, is increasingly becoming an important criterion for job seekers), the absence of a dedicated recruitment specialist, and limited resources for developing and implementing systematic policies.

*“According to our internal research, candidates are increasingly scrutinizing employers even before applying for a vacancy. 75% of respondents pay attention to reviews from former employees, 52% read the job description, 46% look for information about the company on social media, and 41% review online articles about the employer. At the same time, salary remains the main criterion when choosing a job, whilst for men, the possibility of booking time off is an additional important factor.”*  
(expert, robota.ua)

At the same time, the results of mystery visits reveal a shortage of vacancies at the State Employment Service. Those seeking work often find only a few vacancies that do not meet their criteria, preferences or physical capabilities. In other words, we see employers' needs and a shortage of staff on the one hand, and at the same time a potential opportunity to address this need by establishing the right kind of interaction between players in the labor market.

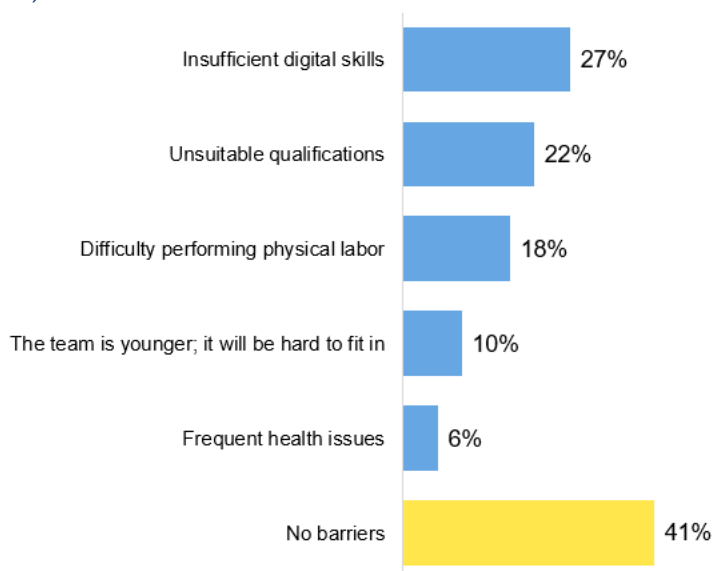
According to the results of a survey of employers, the overwhelming majority (71%) state that they do not expect any additional costs or organizational efforts when recruiting and integrating specific target groups. However, among those who did identify a category of employees requiring specific costs and attention, young people under 30 topped the list (20% of all employers) (Fig. 3).

**Fig.3 . For which categories of employees does the organization expect the greatest additional costs or organizational efforts when recruiting and onboarding? (% of responses, employers)**



Looking more closely at the category of people aged over 50, only 2% of all employers stated that this group requires the greatest additional costs or organizational effort. However, certain barriers to employment do exist, in particular insufficient digital skills, an unsuitable qualifications, and difficulty performing heavy physical labor (Fig. 4).

**Fig.4 . What are the main barriers to employment for people aged over 50? (% of responses, employers)**



Research findings show that there is a need for additional resources to support certain sections of the population. Given the situation in the labor market, there is a need to develop systematic solutions to help integrate different sections of the population into the labor market.

*“In my view, as the labor shortage grows and the population ages, businesses will increasingly focus on a candidate’s skills, potential and motivation, rather than on their age or other formal characteristics. At the same time, to achieve real change, systematic efforts by both employers and the state are crucial: developing retraining programs, supporting inclusive employment, adapting workplaces, combating stereotypes and fostering a culture of equal opportunities. It is precisely this comprehensive approach that will enable us to gradually reduce instances of discrimination in the labor market.”*  
(expert, robota.ua)

“Large” employers have more opportunities and resources to implement internal recruitment and adaptation policies for specific groups, whereas micro and small companies rarely have dedicated specialists (recruiters, HR professionals) or the additional resources to set aside time specifically for integrating vulnerable groups into the company, including training, adaptation, support, and so on.

*“Large businesses, of course, can afford to hire [people with different needs], because they have the budgets, the staff and the resources, and they take a more progressive view on such issues. When it comes to small and medium-sized businesses, particularly in the regions, it is much more difficult for them. More often than not, the owner is the manager, the accountant and a one-man band all rolled into one.*

*At the same time, small businesses are often more socially oriented, but they cannot afford to hire certain categories of employees. To generate turnover, they need people who will be here and now, working actively and fully involved in the process. They cannot afford, for example, a reduced working day. It’s easier for them to channel some of their funds into a social initiative, but they cannot slow down their work processes simply because they are small”*  
(expert, UVF)

Therefore, responsibility for building this system lies not only with employers, but is shared comprehensively amongst all players in the labor market: the government (ministries), the State Employment Service, vocational training centers and alternative training programs.

## Chapter 2. Experience of cooperation and barriers to interaction between employers and the State Employment Service

### 2.1. Interaction with the State Employment Service: Employer Survey

Regarding employers' experience of interacting with the State Employment Service over the past two years, 29% use the Service's services regularly, whilst nearly a third (31%) have contacted the Service 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 organization's needs, as well as the fact that other recruitment channels were used (Fig. 5).

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

**Fig.5 . What experience has your organization had of working with the State Employment Service over the last two years, if any? (% of responses, employers)**

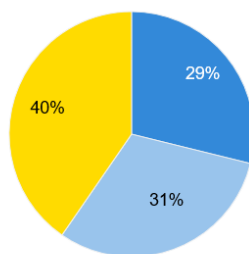
**Why has cooperation with the State Employment Service not become regular? (% of responses, employers, among those who contact the State Employment Service irregularly)**

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

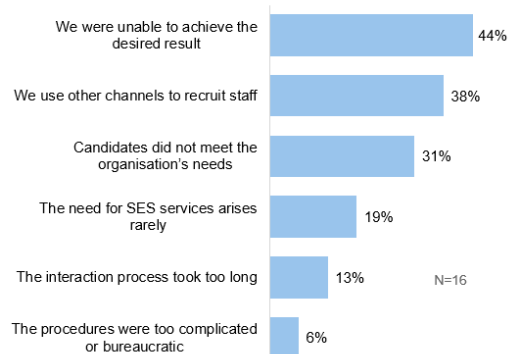
■ We use the State Employment Service's services regularly

■ We have contacted them once or several times, but do not cooperate with them regularly

■ We have not contacted the State Employment Service over the last 2 years

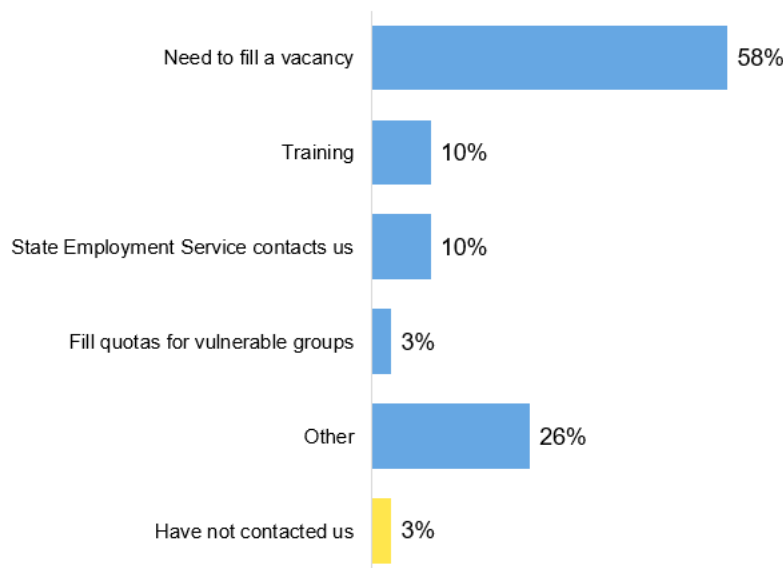


Q: Why has cooperation with the State Employment Service not become regular?



Most employers contact the State Employment Service to fill a vacancy (58% of all respondents), whilst a further 10% do so for training purposes (Fig. 6).

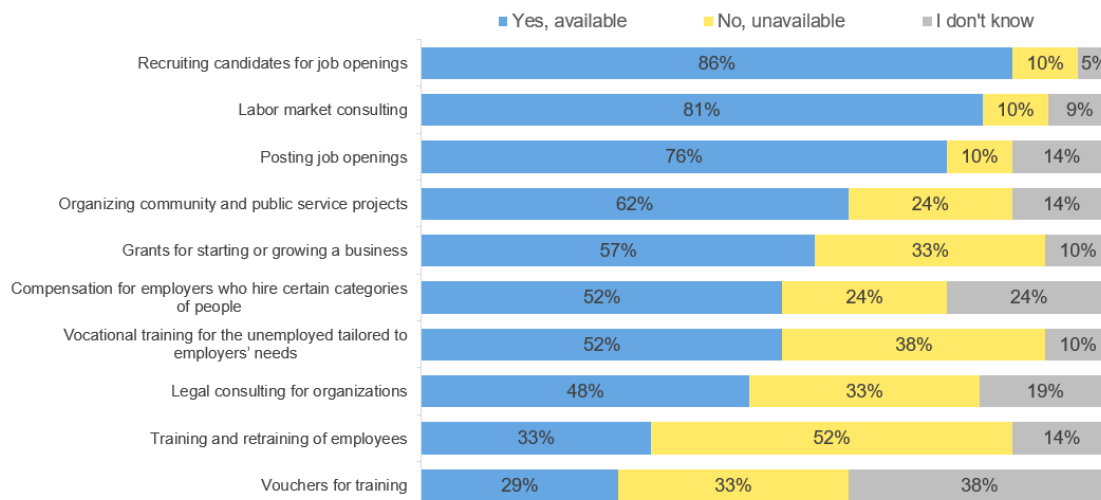
*Fig.6 . In what circumstances does your company contact the State Employment Service? Open-ended question (% of responses, employers, among those who contact the State Employment Service irregularly)*



However, if we look at the list of services provided by the State Employment Service to employers, it is extremely wide-ranging; filling vacancies being just one of many; the list includes providing information on the state of the local labor market, key trends and processes; organizing seminars on employment for specific groups of the population; various legal consultations; advising individuals on the organization and conduct of business activities; and the prevention of insured events, etc. These are the capabilities available to the State Employment Service, yet this potential remains untapped.

Further evidence of a lack of awareness regarding the full range of services offered by the State Employment Service is provided by the distribution of responses among employers who have not interacted with the State Employment Service regarding which of the listed services are available from the State Employment Service. Employers are least aware of opportunities such as those relating to training, retraining, training subsidies, legal advice and various benefits or grants (Fig. 7). In other words, employers mainly associate the State Employment Service with candidate recruitment and job vacancy advertising.

**Fig.7 . Which of the listed services can be obtained from the State Employment Service? (% of responses, employers, among those who have NOT interacted with the State Employment Service)**



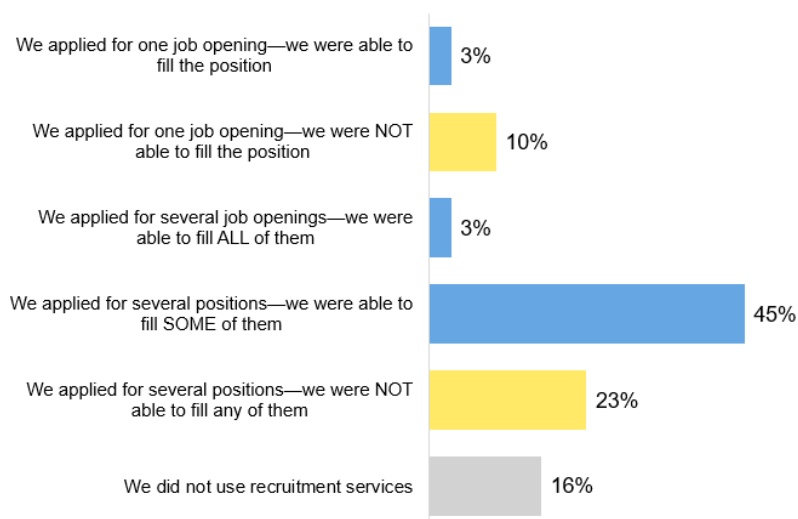
Similarly, an expert noted that those who approach the Employment Service with questions about compensation are those who are aware of the other benefits of working with the Employment Service.

*“And again, employers who are more aware of this know the specific benefits of using the employment service. These might include tax incentives, or perhaps financial payments – or rather, not payments, but compensation. And they, of course, make use of this.”*

*(Expert 1, work.ua)*

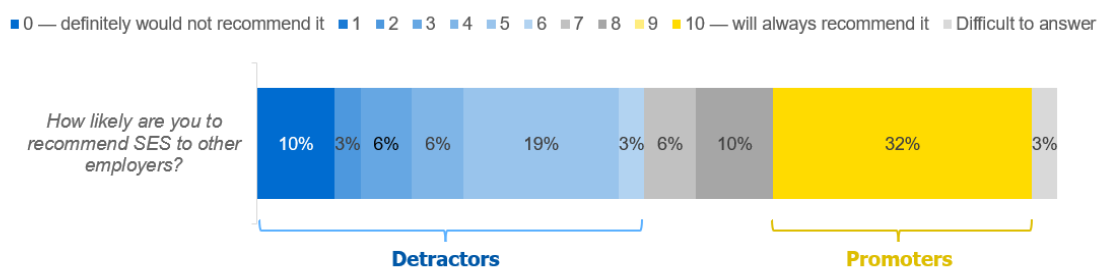
So, as expected, and as previously noted, the most common enquiry to the State Employment Service is specifically regarding the filling of vacancies. As for the success rate of these enquiries, only 6% of employers fully filled their job openings (either submitting a single job opening and filling it, or submitting several and filling them all), 33% of employers did not fill any of their job openings at all (they submitted one job opening and did not fill it, or submitted several and did not fill any of them), whilst the remaining 45% achieved partial success (they submitted several job openings and filled some of them) (Fig. 8).

**Fig.8 . Were you able to fill the vacancy(ies) thanks to the State Employment Service? (% of responses, employers, among those who interacted with the State Employment Service)**



The data reveal a problem that requires a more detailed investigation into the causes of this lack of success in order to build a better and more effective relationship between the SES and employers. After all, it is precisely this experience that leads employers to stop using the SES, and explains why the willingness to recommend SES (NPS) is low. Among those who have interacted with the State Employment Service, only a third are willing to recommend it to other employers, whilst almost half are not (Fig. 9).

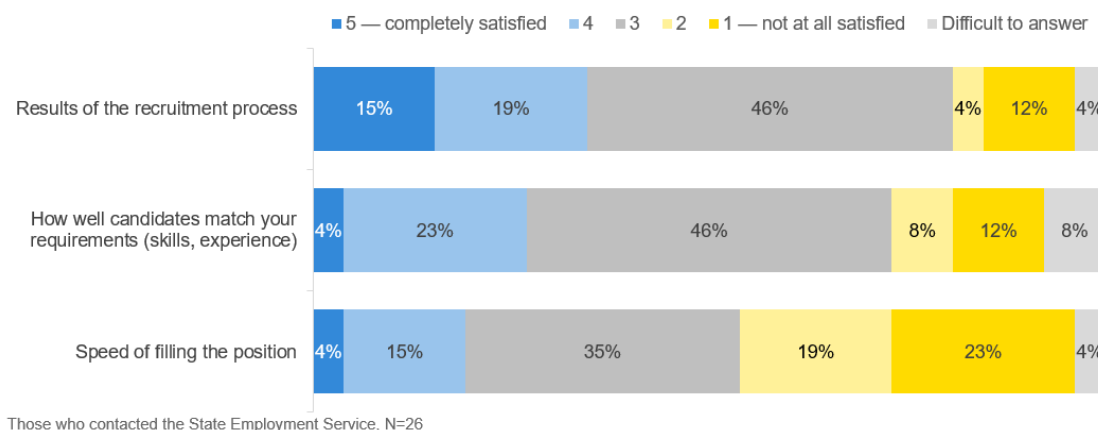
**Fig.9 . How likely are you to recommend the SES to other employers? (% of responses, employers, among those who have interacted with the SES)**



$$\text{NPS (\% promoters - \% detractors)} = -16\%$$

Looking more closely at recruitment experiences, more than half of employers remain dissatisfied with the recruitment outcomes, the suitability of candidates for the role, and the speed at which vacancies are filled (ratings of 1–3 on a 5-point scale) (Fig. 10).

**Fig.10 . Please rate your recruitment experience: how satisfied are you?** (% of responses, employers, among those who have interacted with the State Employment Service)



The main problem in working with the State Employment Service is the lack of candidates (Fig. 11). However, this does not so much indicate a shortage of labor in the labor market as it highlights an imbalance between supply and demand. Employers report a shortage of candidates, whilst the results of mystery visits show that jobseekers or those interested in changing jobs face difficulties in finding relevant vacancies.

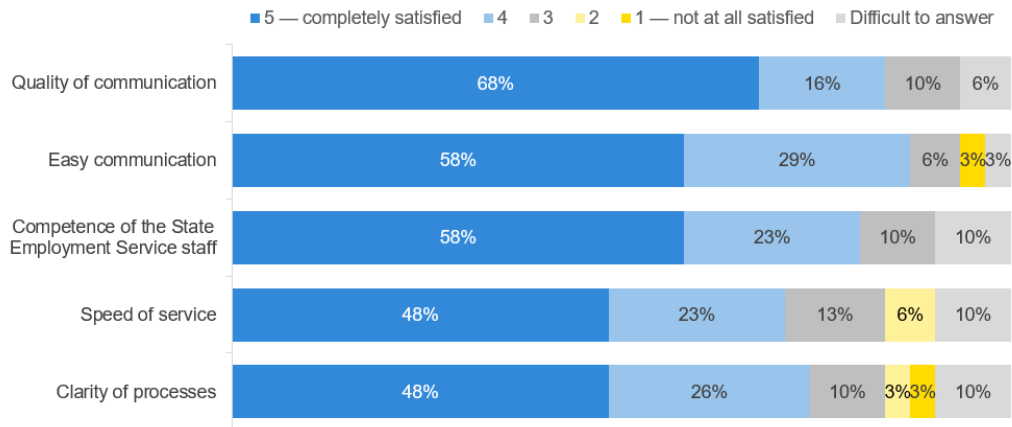
**Fig.11 . What were the biggest problems encountered during cooperation?** (% of responses, employers, among those who interacted with the State Employment Service)



Despite systemic issues regarding interaction with the State Employment Service and the quality and speed of staff recruitment, the quality of direct interaction with State Employment Service staff is rated highly. The vast majority of employers

surveyed, who have interacted with the State Employment Service, are satisfied (ratings of 4–5 on a 5-point scale) with the ease of communication (87%), the quality of communication (84%), the competence of State Employment Service staff (81%), the clarity of processes (74%), speed of service (71%) (Fig. 12).

Fig.12 . How would you rate the quality of your interaction with SES staff? (% of responses, employers, among those who have interacted with the SES)

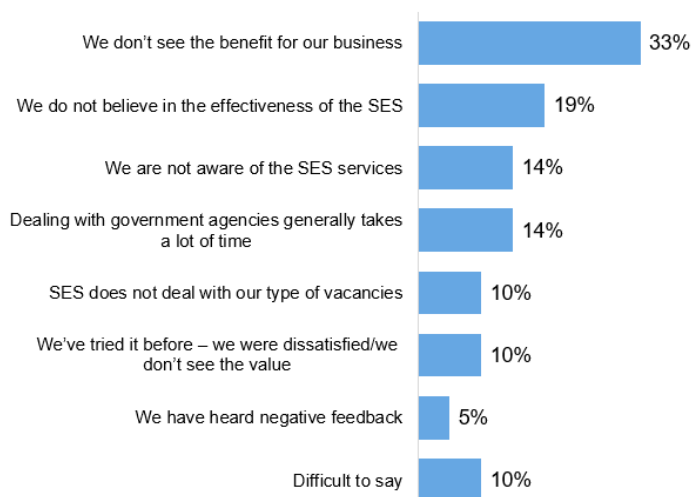


Employers’ interaction with the State Employment Service is largely limited to recruitment, whilst the potential of the service’s other offerings is underutilized. Despite high ratings for the quality of communication and the work of the Employment Service’s specialists, it is precisely the low effectiveness of candidate selection and the difficulties in filling vacancies that are most likely to be holding back the development of regular cooperation and reducing employers’ willingness to recommend the Employment Service to others.

It is also important to consider those employers who have not engaged with the SES, the reasons for avoiding this recruitment channel, and any preconceptions that may exist.

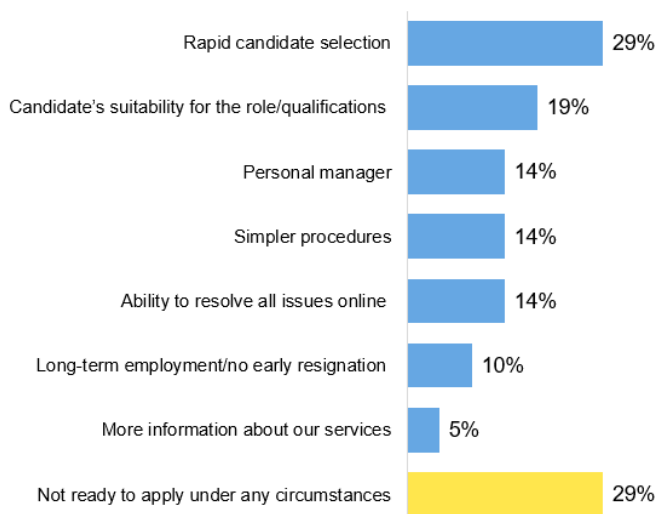
40% of the employers surveyed had not approached the State Employment Service at all over the past two years, citing as the main reason that they did not see any benefit for their business; they also noted that they did not believe in the effectiveness of the State Employment Service, and that dealing with government agencies generally takes a lot of time (Fig. 13). It is important to note that all these reasons are more a matter of perceptions and stereotypes than of well-founded grounds.

**Fig.13 . Why has your organization not approached the State Employment Service? (% of responses, employers, among those who have NOT interacted with the State Employment Service)**



Perceptions of the State Employment Service are fairly entrenched. Indeed, almost a third of the employers surveyed who had not dealt with the State Employment Service in the last two years stated that they were not prepared to approach it under any circumstances. For half of them, the key factors are the speed and quality (meeting requirements) of candidate selection – it is under these conditions that they would be prepared to contact the State Employment Service (Fig. 14).

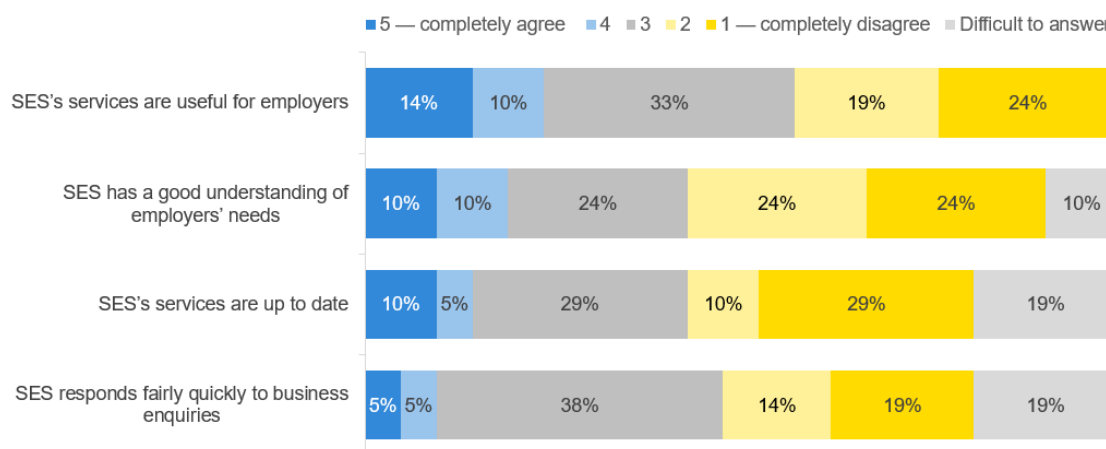
**Fig.14 . Under what conditions would you be prepared to contact the State Employment Service? (% of responses, employers who have NOT interacted with the State Employment Service)**



Thus, a notable problem is the image of the State Employment Service among employers, particularly among those who have not interacted with it.

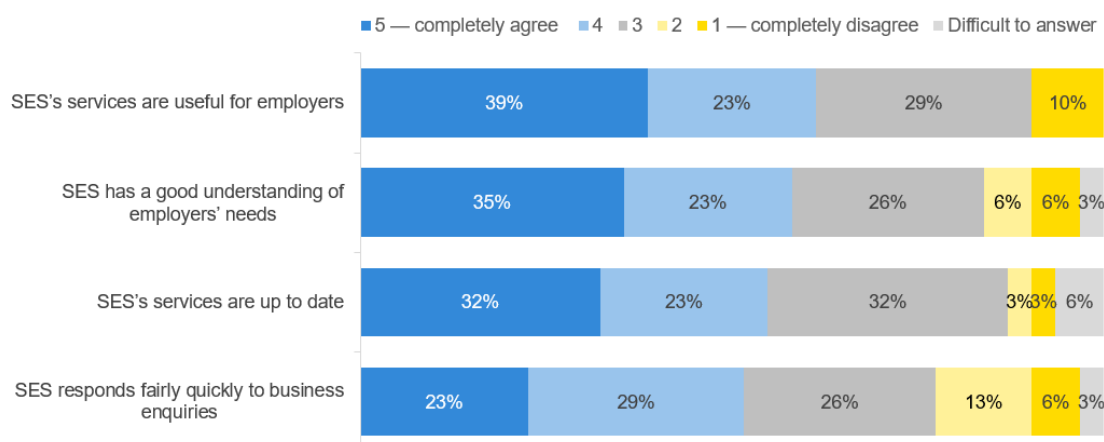
Further evidence of this is provided by the following data: only 4 out of 21 employers who had not interacted with the State Employment Service agree (completely or to some extent) that the State Employment Service understands employers' needs well; the rest of the respondents either disagree or give a neutral assessment; 3 out of 21 employers agree that the State Employment Service's services are up to date; the others similarly disagree or give a neutral response; only 2 out of 21 employers agree that the State Employment Service responds quickly enough to business enquiries (Fig. 15).

**Fig. 15 . 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 State Employment Service, either regularly or irregularly, in recent years are significantly higher, as on average almost half of employers agree with these same statements (Fig. 16).

**Fig. 16 . To what extent do you agree with the statements?** (% of responses, employers, among those who have interacted with the State Employment Service)



The results of the employer survey indicate that employers' interaction with the State Employment Service remains limited and predominantly irregular.

At the same time, the survey revealed a difference in perceptions of the State Employment Service depending on whether respondents had personal experience of interacting with it. Employers who have worked with the employment service 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 State Employment Service's services due to preconceived notions about its work, whilst actual experience of working with it is more positive. At the same time, even amongst those who have worked with the Employment Service, the level of willingness to recommend it to other employers remains low, indicating a need to improve quality and effectiveness, particularly in the area of staff recruitment (which is a key concern).

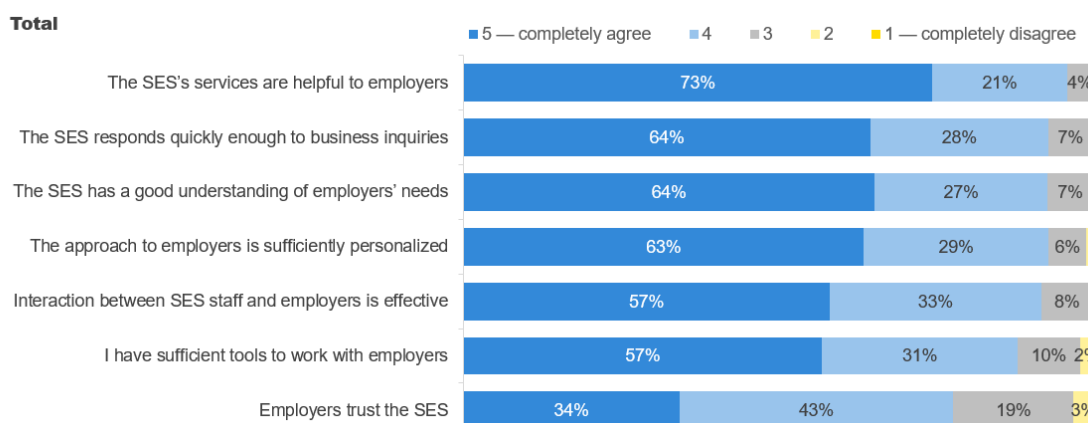
## 2.2. Interaction with employers: Survey of SES representatives

Almost all SES representatives believe that the SES provides high-quality and effective services to employers, possesses sufficient information about the labor market, and has a sufficient range of tools for working with employers.

However, these figures differ significantly from employers' responses. For instance, 92% of SES representatives stated that the SES responds quickly to business enquiries (Fig. 17). Among employers who have interacted with the State Employment Service, only half agree with this statement (Fig. 16), whilst among those who have not interacted with the State Employment Service, only one in five agree (Fig. 15). 91% of State Employment Service representatives stated that the

Service has a good understanding of employers' needs (Fig. 17); however, as with the previous statement, these figures are significantly lower among employers (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16). This difference highlights the gap between the reality faced by employers and the SES's perception of the system's effectiveness, as well as an even wider gap between the SES's image among employers and the SES representatives' own perception of their work with employers. This area requires a great deal of work.

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



Despite the SES representatives' claims of effective collaboration with employers, they also highlight a number of difficulties that arise when working with businesses:

- Communication barriers and a lack of feedback. This is one of the most pressing issues in their joint work. Experts note that employers often fail to report the results of interviews with referred candidates or whether vacancies have been filled, making it difficult to establish meaningful communication.

*'Lack of feedback'*

*"Employers' reluctance to make contact (usually due to a lack of time and a heavy workload)"*

*'Employers often fail to report the results of interviews with candidates referred to them, fill vacancies independently via commercial websites and "forget" to remove them from the service's records'*

- Mistrust of state institutions and stereotypes. Cooperation is often hampered by prejudices against the State Employment Service:

- Stereotypes about candidates: employers often believe that the State Employment Service only has unmotivated or low-skilled workers
- Negative past experiences: bias stemming from previous unsuccessful attempts to fill vacancies or complex procedures

*‘Personally, I notice a general mistrust of the state and its capabilities’*

*“The stereotype that the Employment Service only has unskilled workers”*

*“Employers do not trust the Employment Service due to past negative experiences, particularly with filling vacancies and the quality of candidates referred”*

*‘Outdated stereotypes and a reluctance to cooperate with the employment service due to previous negative experiences’*

- Bureaucracy and complex procedures. The process of accessing services is often perceived as too complicated due to:
  - Excessive paperwork: the large volume of paper documents, reports and certificates required to receive compensation or grants deters businesses seeking speed and flexibility
  - Length of processes: decisions on payments can take months (for example, due to being tied to quarterly reporting), which does not meet the needs of fast-paced businesses

*‘The mechanisms for implementing compensation programs are very complex, and there are many conditions employers must meet to receive them’*

*“The greatest difficulty is the excessive bureaucratic burden on employers. The need to prepare and submit a large volume of paper documentation, reports and certificates significantly slows down the process of interaction”*

*“Employers’ reluctance to spend time on paperwork (for example, to claim compensation) due to fears of additional inspections”*

*‘The decision-making process for granting compensation payments is too lengthy due to its link to quarterly reporting’*

- Difficulties relating to legalization and reporting
  - Informal employment: people avoid formal employment (particularly men, due to the risks associated with mobilization) and, consequently, refuse to cooperate with the State Employment Service so as not to reveal the true figures

- Fear of the government: people avoid cooperation due to fear of inspections (tax audits, grant monitoring)

*‘Concealment of actual wage levels, incomplete job descriptions... Illegal employment’*

*“Quite a few employers avoid formally hiring men so as not to have to submit data to the Labor Exchange and the Social Security Service”*

*“When the issue of employment arises, some employers refuse to provide confirmation or even force clients to deregister with the Social Security Service first”*

- The psychological aspect and the ‘intrusiveness’ of the service. Sometimes the Employment Service’s own activity creates difficulties due to information overload (calls, letters, offers).

*‘We put a lot of pressure on them and constantly push our services; they’ll soon be shying away from us.’*

*“Employers sometimes refrain from cooperating with the employment service due to its excessive intrusiveness.”*

*“During the war, businesses have no financial ‘buffer’ and no time to invest in training young people, those aged 50+, or mothers returning from maternity leave. They demand immediate productivity.”*

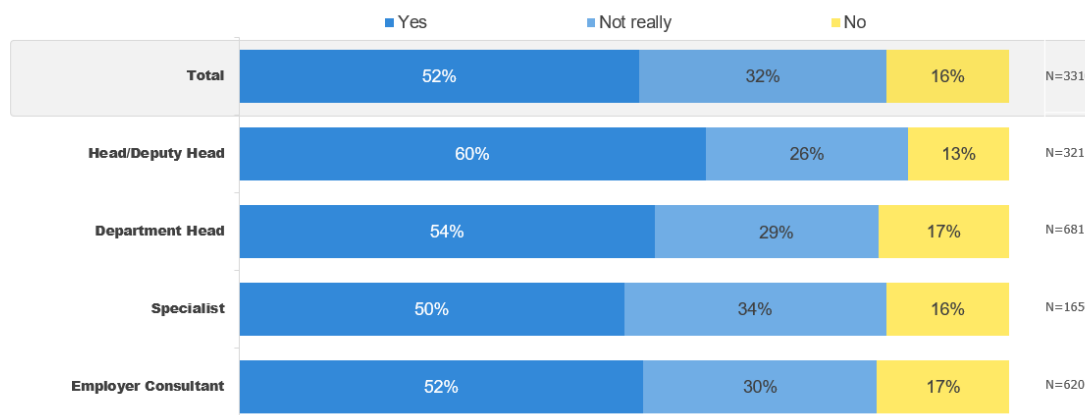
The most pressing issue highlighted by representatives of the State Employment Service – a lack of feedback and communication – is also borne out by the experiences of the Service’s clients. Our mystery shoppers encountered problems where the vacancy offered was no longer relevant, had already been filled, or the terms differed slightly or significantly.

Consequently, the main challenge in this collaboration is to establish a dialogue based on trust, where the employer views the State Employment Service as a genuine partner, rather than a regulatory body with a mountain of paperwork or an outdated and unnecessary channel for sourcing candidates. On the one hand, employers need to be more open to dialogue and collaboration, and be prepared to invest time in this; on the other hand, the State Employment Service needs to better understand the needs of businesses and the labor market.

It is also worth noting that half of the SES representatives surveyed (52%) stated that the approach to different categories of employers differs, whilst a further third (32%) said that it does not differ significantly (Fig. 18). Furthermore, the size of

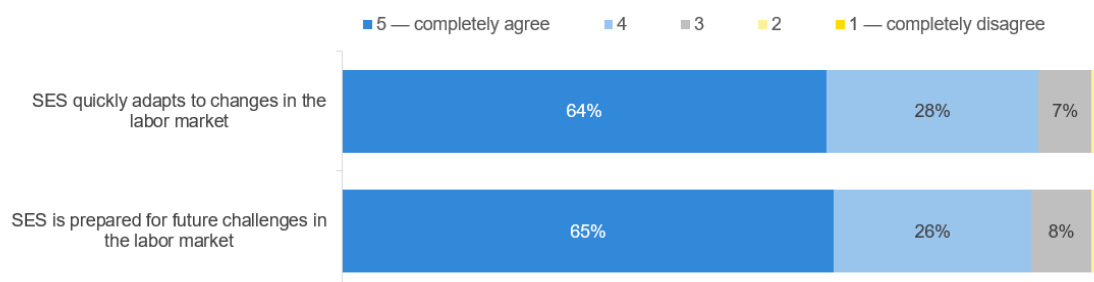
businesses varies significantly in terms of the nature of their activities, recruitment practices, and so on.

**Fig. 18 . Does the approach differ for different categories of employers? (% of responses, State Employment Service)**



Overall, almost all representatives of the labor market indicate that the labor market adapts quickly to changes in the labor market (92% completely or somewhat agree with this statement), and that the labor market is prepared for future challenges in the labor market (91% completely or somewhat agree with this statement) (Fig. 19).

**Fig. 19 . To what extent do you agree with the statements? (% of responses, SES)**



These figures contradict the views of employers, who nevertheless rate the adaptability of jobseekers to changes in the labor market significantly lower. Experts also note that employers still have the best understanding of the market, and that interaction between employers and jobseekers is not yet fully established to enable a high-quality exchange of knowledge.

## Chapter 3. Cooperation with vocational education institutions

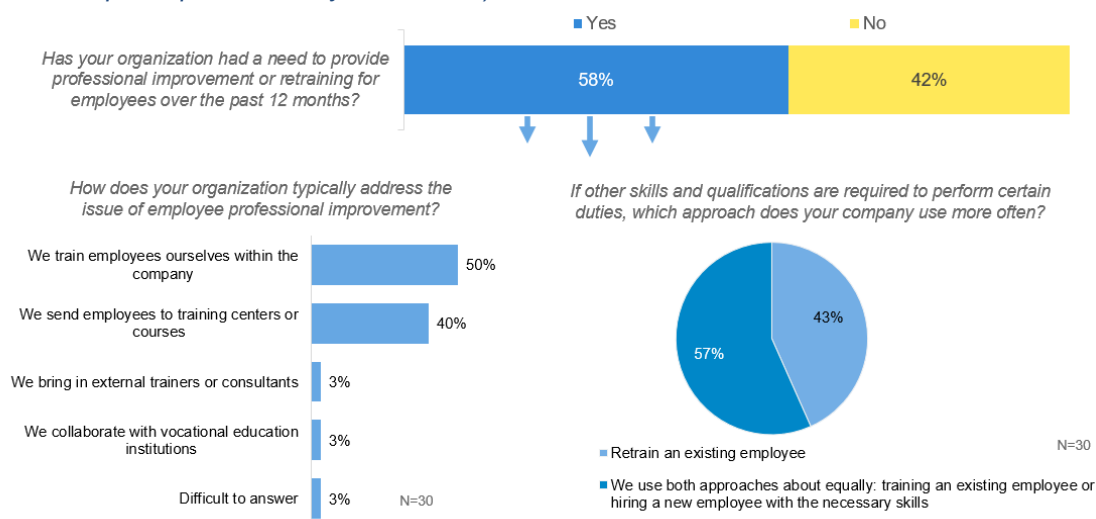
### 3.1. Experience of training and retraining employees: Employer survey

Just over half of the employers surveyed (58%) had a need for professional improvement or retraining of their staff over the past 12 months. This was usually addressed either through in-house training within the company or by sending staff to training centers or courses. Cooperation with vocational education and training providers occurred only in isolated cases (Fig. 20).

**Fig.20 . Has your organization needed to provide further training or retraining for staff over the last 12 months? (% of responses, employers)**

**How does your organization usually address the issue of staff professional improvement?** (% of responses, employers, among those who have had a need to improve professionally/retrain staff)

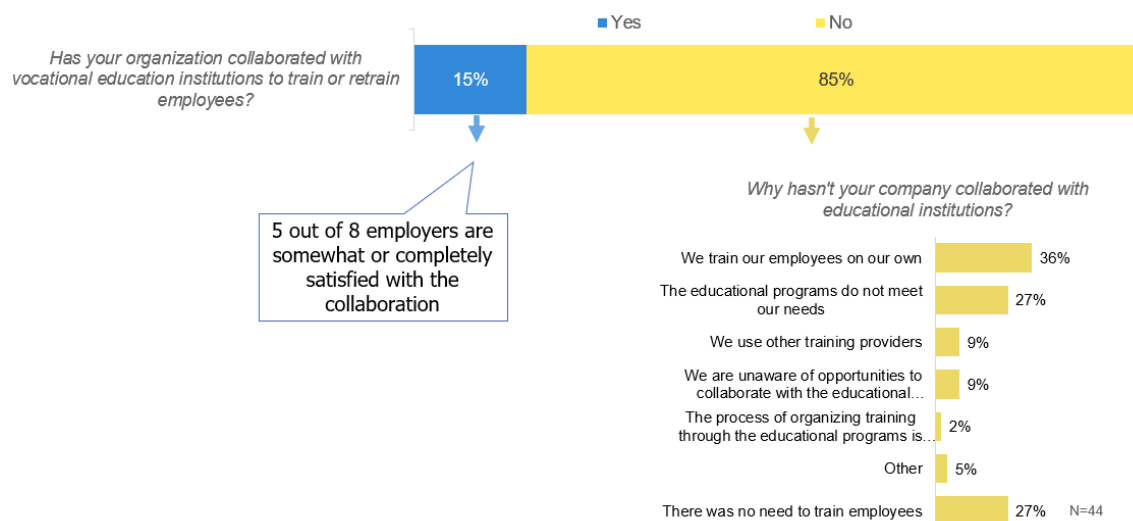
**If different skills and qualifications are required to perform certain duties, which approach does your company use most often?** (% of responses, employers, among those who have had a need to improve professionally/retrain staff)



Overall, across the entire period, 15% of employers collaborated with vocational education institutions to train or retrain employees. Furthermore, 5 out of 8 employers were completely or somewhat satisfied with this collaboration. The main reasons for not collaborating were: a preference for training staff on their own (36%), or that VET programs did not meet business needs (27%) (Fig. 21).

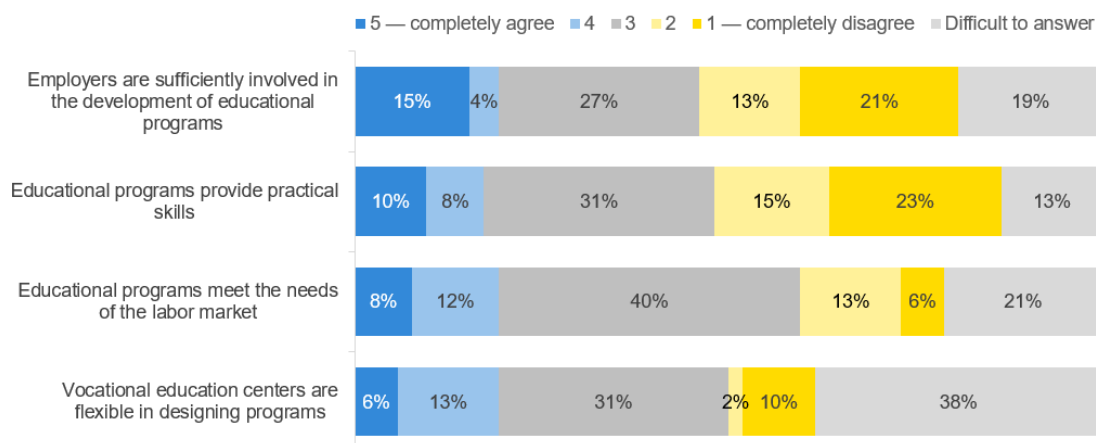
**Fig.21 . Has your organization collaborated with vocational education institutions to train or retrain employees? (% of responses, employers)**

**Why did your company not collaborate with vocational education institutions? (% of responses, employers, among those who did not collaborate with vocational education institutions)**



There is a marked issue regarding the perceived quality and effectiveness of training programs: only one in five employers agrees with the statement that they are sufficiently involved in the development of educational programs (19%, ratings of 4–5 on a 5-point scale), that such programs provide practical skills (18%), meet the needs of the labor market (20%) and that VET institutions are flexible in designing programs (19%) (Fig. 22). It is important to note that the statement that training programs provide practical skills receives the most negative assessment, which indicates problems with perceptions of the quality of VET programs.

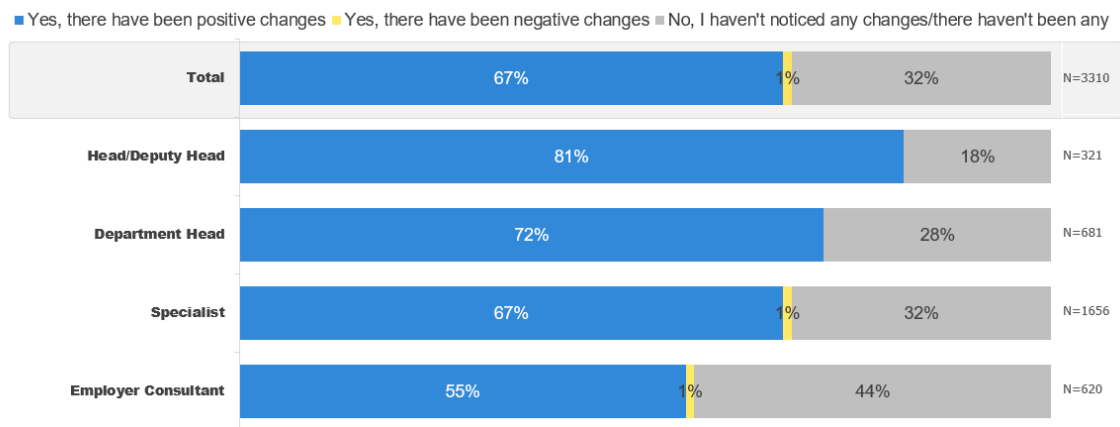
**Fig.22 . To what extent do you agree with the statements? (% of responses, employers)**



### 3.2. Experience of interacting with vocational education institutions and study programs: Survey of State Employment Service representatives

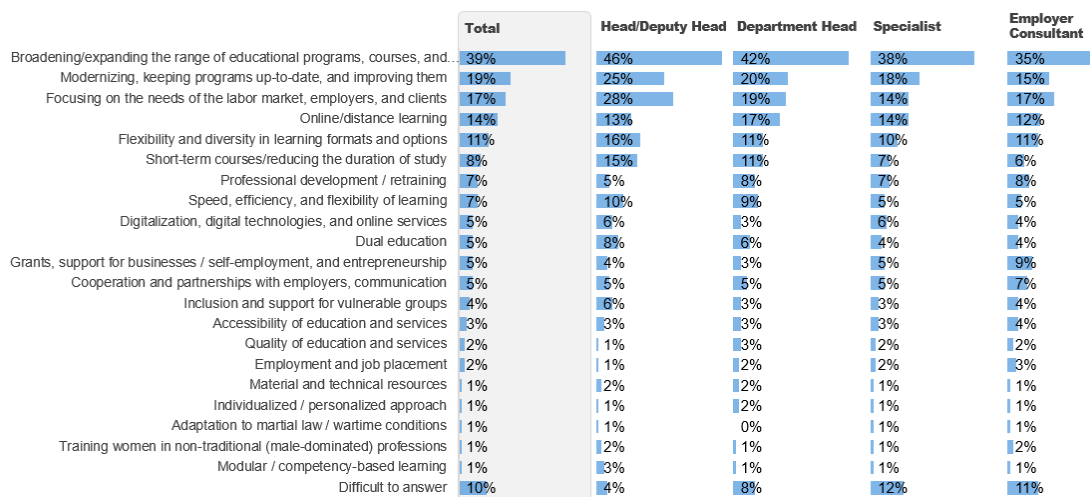
As part of the study on vocational education, a number of questions were also put to representatives of the State Employment Service. When asked “Have the approaches to designing programs at vocational education programs changed over the past year?”, 67% indicated that positive changes had taken place, whilst 32% stated that they had not noticed any changes or that none had occurred. However, responses varied depending on job title. The highest proportion of respondents indicating that positive changes had taken place was among heads and deputy heads, whilst the lowest was among employer consultant, where 55% noted positive changes and 44% stated that no changes had taken place (Fig. 23).

Fig. 23. In your experience, have the approaches to designing vocational education (VE) programs changed over the past year? (% of responses, DSZ)



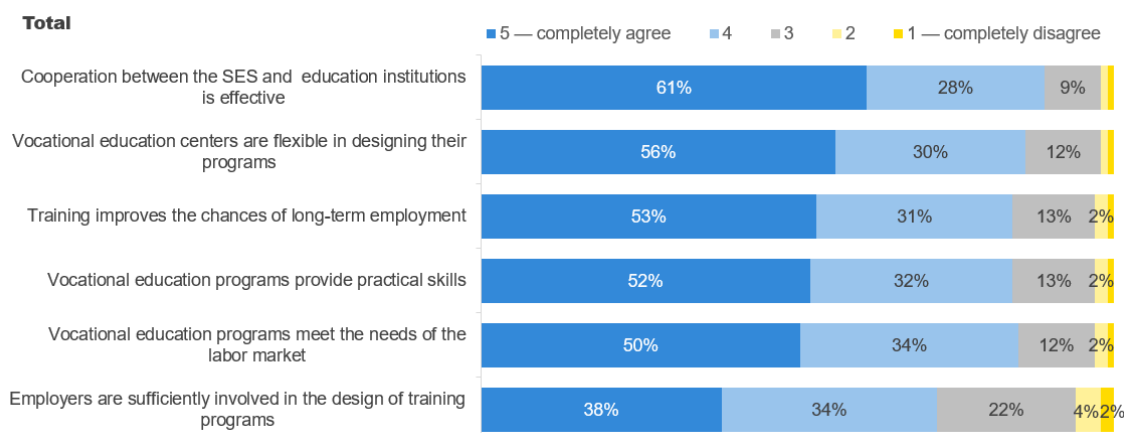
Looking in more detail at the specific changes that have taken place, the top responses include: expanding the range of educational programs and courses; modernizing and improving programs; and focusing on the needs of the labor market and its stakeholders (Fig. 24).

Fig. 24. What positive changes have taken place? (% of responses, State Employment Service, among those who indicated that positive changes had taken place regarding the design of programs at vocational education centers)



Representatives of the State Employment Service view vocational education programs and curricula as effective, flexible, high-quality, responsive to market needs, and such that employers are sufficiently involved in their development (Fig. 25).

**Fig. 25. To what extent do you agree with the statements? (% of responses, SES)**

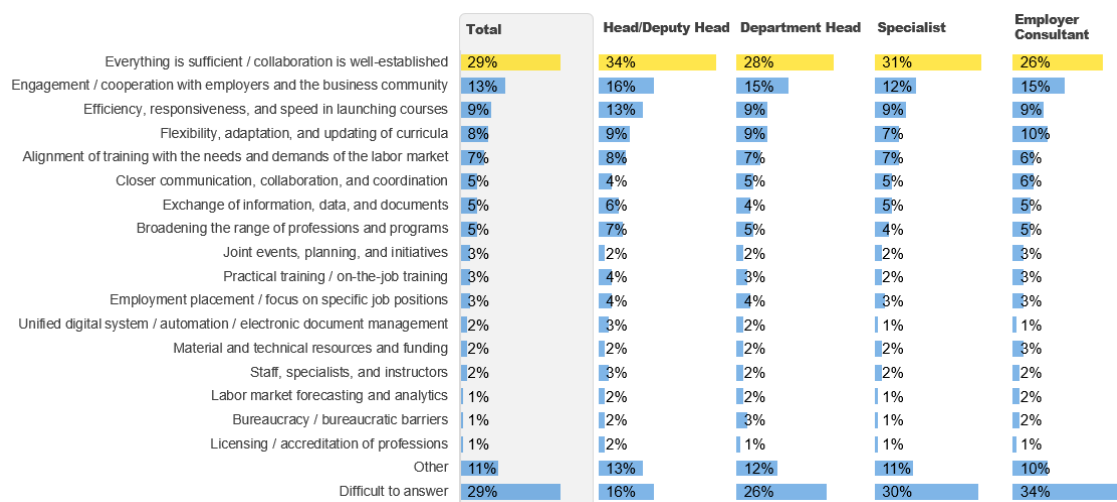


However, these figures contradict employers' experiences. As discussed earlier, only one in five employers agrees with the statement that they are sufficiently involved in the development of training programs (19%, ratings of 4–5 on a 5-point scale), that such programs provide practical skills (18%), meet the needs of the labor market (20%) and that VET providers are flexible in designing programs (19%) (Fig. 22).

This indicates either a lack of genuine understanding of employers' needs and labor market requirements, or a lack of information about the activities of vocational education and training institutions.

When asked about the State Employment Service's collaboration with vocational education centers, almost a third of the State Employment Service representatives surveyed (29%) believe that the level of collaboration is sufficient, whilst a further 29% found it difficult to answer. Only 13% noted that the greatest shortcoming in cooperation is the lack of engagement and cooperation with employers and the business community (Fig. 26). However, this very lack of engagement is clearly evident from the conclusions above regarding the difference in assessments of vocational training programs by business representatives and SES representatives.

**Fig. 26. What is most lacking in the SES's interaction with vocational education centers?**  
(% of responses, SES)



As part of the study of the SES's activities using mystery visits, one of the key focuses was to understand how actively clients are informed about opportunities for training, retraining and upskilling. The topic of vocational training and courses is mentioned, but the level of detail and accessibility of services varies significantly depending on the city, the specialist and the client's individual situation.

Clients received the most detailed information about training opportunities at conferences organized by the Employment Service, to which they were referred by advisers (based on the experience of mystery visitors in Kyiv and Lviv). One of the main disappointments for clients in Kyiv was that specialist training centers for practical training are often located in other regions. Although accommodation and travel expenses are covered, the need to travel to another city for a certain period is a significant inconvenience, given that clients have families and domestic responsibilities they cannot leave behind. On a positive note, however, clients

highlighted that state-recognized 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 recorded instance where a client was refused free retraining because they had not been in employment for the past seven months. To access free programs, proof of insurance contributions for 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 professional improvement. 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.

## Appendix 1. Methodology

### RP1. 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, demobilized 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 young people | 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 Centers: the survey was conducted in two stages:
  - [I] – an email campaign sent to the State Employment Service and Employment Centers to gather quantitative data and contact details for follow-up
  - [II] – telephone interviews

**Sample:** 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.

## RP3. 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, both 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 field of study.

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 field of work.

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.

#### **RP4. 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 an employment center. Following this, the mystery shopper went through all the stages of interaction provided by the employment center, with the aim of assessing how the employment system functions through this job-search channel (as well as retraining and upskilling mechanisms).