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CONCORD

STUDY REPORT

**Labour Market Analysis and Identification of Potential Trainers
in Satu Mare County**



**Promoting a Sustainable Collaboration
Across borders to Collectively Boost
the Economies of Three HU-RO-UA
Crossborder Regions**

**PARTNERSHIP
WITHOUT BORDERS**

ages The logo for ages, consisting of the word "ages" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, followed by a graphic of three stylized human figures in green and blue.

Table of Content

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 1.1 General Context of the CONCORD Project | 3 |
| 1.2 Purpose and Role of the Study Report | 5 |
| 2. Research Methodology | 6 |
| 2.1 Methodological Framework and Research Limitations | 6 |
| 2.2 Types of Tools Used | 7 |
| 2.3 Target Groups | 7 |
| 3. Respondent Profile | 8 |
| 3.1 Profile of NGOs | 8 |
| 3.2 Profile of Educational Institutions | 9 |
| 3.3 Profile of Teachers and Trainers | 12 |
| 3.4 Profile of Employers | 13 |
| 4. Labour Market Needs Analysis | 17 |
| 4.1 Recruitment Needs | 17 |
| 4.2 Challenges in Recruitment | 24 |
| 4.3 Recruitment Channels Used | 27 |
| 5. Analysis of Vocational Training Needs | 30 |
| 5.1 Skills Shortages and In-Demand Occupations | 30 |
| 5.2 Existing Training Practices | 32 |
| 5.3 Barriers to Training | 36 |
| 6. Identification of Potential Trainers | 38 |
| 6.1 Typology of Identified Potential Trainers | 38 |
| 6.2 Areas of Specialisation | 39 |
| 6.3 Availability for Involvement | 40 |
| 7. Level of Collaboration and Local Networks | 43 |
| 7.1 Cooperation between Schools and Companies | 43 |
| 7.2 The Role of NGOs | 44 |
| 7.3 Openness to Cross-Border Cooperation | 44 |
| 7.4 Needs for Coordination and Harmonisation | 45 |
| 8. Conclusions | 46 |
| 9. Recommendations | 48 |
| 10. Annexes | 50 |

1. Introduction

1.1 General Context of the CONCORD Project

The CONCORD project aims to promote sustainable cross-border cooperation between Romania, Hungary, and Ukraine in order to address common labour market challenges in the regions of Satu Mare, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, and Zakarpattia. These regions face issues such as high unemployment, depopulation, and a shortage of skilled labour, with the situation in Zakarpattia being further aggravated by the armed conflict. The project activities include seminars, workshops, and pilot actions for vocational training, exchange of experience, and transfer of best practices among partners and stakeholders. Through this project, particular emphasis is placed on the use of a trilingual online platform, www.laboro.ro, designed to facilitate job matching and access to employment opportunities. The platform will support both companies and job seekers, including Ukrainian refugees temporarily or permanently settled in Romania and Hungary. The project also includes the identification of potential trainers (masters, teachers, experienced employees, etc.), individuals with practical expertise who can support employees or potential employees through short training and upskilling sessions tailored to workplace requirements. These individuals can contribute to aligning vocational training with the needs of local employers, helping to reduce the gap between labour supply and demand. The sustainability of the results is ensured through the development of a joint cooperation plan, aimed at supporting the continued functioning of the tools created and developed.

Despite contextual differences, the labour markets in Romania, Hungary, and Ukraine share a number of common characteristics that directly influence employment levels, economic competitiveness, and the ability of the workforce to adapt to current economic demands.

A first common element is demographic ageing and the decline of the working-age population. In all three countries, the share of employed persons aged over 50 is estimated at approximately 30–35% of the total workforce, indicating increasing pressure on employment systems and an urgent need to replace the workforce through the training of new generations and the reskilling of adults. This trend is particularly pronounced in peripheral and rural areas, where youth migration to urban centres or abroad has led to a significant labour shortage.

At the same time, the labour markets of the three countries face a paradox: labour shortages coexist with unemployment, highlighting mismatches between available skills and those required by employers. These imbalances are particularly visible in sectors such as technical and industrial occupations, healthcare, logistics, and digital jobs, where the demand for qualified personnel exceeds the available supply.

Rural and peripheral areas in Romania, Hungary, and Ukraine similarly face lower employment rates, lower job quality, and limited access to continuous vocational training opportunities. The lack of adequate educational infrastructure, distance from training centres, and limited financial resources of employers contribute to maintaining these territorial disparities.

Another common element is the low level of adult participation in lifelong learning and training programmes, which remains below 10% in all three countries. This situation significantly limits

the ability of the workforce to adapt to technological and economic changes, reducing professional mobility and the chances of labour market reintegration for low-skilled individuals or those at risk of exclusion. These similarities highlight the existence of common pressures that transcend national borders and require coordinated, integrated, and cross-border responses. Projects such as CONCORD address these challenges by promoting cooperation among relevant labour market actors, harmonising vocational training tools, and developing joint solutions to increase employment and workforce adaptability in the cross-border region.

Unemployment remains a persistent issue, particularly among low-skilled individuals, young people, and rural populations, where employment opportunities are limited and poorly diversified. At the same time, the ongoing depopulation process, driven by both external and internal migration, population ageing, and declining birth rates, leads to a reduction in the active population base and increasing imbalances between labour supply and demand. These developments directly contribute to the shortage of skilled labour, which is strongly felt in technical, industrial, services, construction, logistics, and healthcare sectors, where employers face significant difficulties in identifying suitable personnel.

The situation is further exacerbated by the impact of the war in Ukraine on the labour market, which has caused massive job losses, forced displacement of the active population, and disruptions in career paths, affecting both the Zakarpattia region and the labour market balance in neighbouring regions of Romania and Hungary. In this context, the challenges mentioned cannot be addressed in isolation, but require coordinated solutions adapted to the cross-border context, based on institutional cooperation, skills development, and the effective use of existing human resources.

For the purpose of this study, relevant labour market actors (employers, vocational and technical education institutions, non-governmental organisations) were consulted through online (Google Forms) and offline questionnaires, as well as through discussions based on the questionnaires. The aim of this activity was to identify potential trainers from various professional fields and to assess the needs, problems, and trends in the field of employment in the target area in Romania, namely Satu Mare County.

The data collection activity was supported by relevant organisations and structures at local and regional level, such as Rotary Club and the German-Romanian Economic Association for the North-West Region, Satu Mare, which facilitated access to the business environment and other stakeholders. As a result of this activity, detailed information was collected regarding the needs and difficulties faced by employers, particularly from the perspective of the qualification level of employees and potential employees, and potential trainers were identified.

In addition, relevant data were collected regarding the development perspectives of companies, their hiring intentions for the upcoming period, and the forms of collaboration between companies and local educational institutions, particularly vocational schools and technological high schools.

More details about the activities of the AGES Association and the CONCORD project can be found at: www.ages.ro and <https://concord.ages.ro/>

1.2 Purpose and Role of the Study Report

The present study report aims primarily to analyse the situation of the labour market and the vocational training needs in Satu Mare County, within the context of the CONCORD project. The report is based on data collected through questionnaires administered to employers, educational institutions, teachers, skilled workers, and relevant non-governmental organisations, and aims to provide a realistic and up-to-date overview of the challenges, needs, and opportunities in the field of employment.

By identifying mismatches between the demand and supply of skills, labour shortages in specific occupations, and local human resources with training potential, the report supports the development and implementation of harmonised vocational training tools adapted to the real needs of the labour market.

At the same time, the results of the study form the basis for the establishment of local trainer groups (teachers, specialists, and experienced skilled workers), who will contribute to improving workforce skills, particularly among low-skilled individuals or those at risk of exclusion. The study also aims to identify potential trainers (teachers, skilled workers, specialists) and labour market needs in the target region, in order to support the development of professional skills and employment.

Furthermore, the study report may play an important role in strengthening cooperation among relevant labour market actors, namely employers, educational institutions, NGOs, and local authorities, by facilitating the exchange of information, best practices, and experiences at cross-border level. By integrating the conclusions and recommendations formulated, the report contributes to ensuring the sustainability of the CONCORD project results, supporting the further development and use of the online platform for job matching and vocational training, as well as clarifying medium- and long-term intervention directions for increasing employment and cohesion in the labour market of the targeted region.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ✚ Identification and analysis of the needs of employers in Satu Mare County, in order to support the development of the job matching platform laboro.ro;
- ✚ Identification of teachers, mentors, skilled workers, and specialists from various fields, recognized at local level for their experience and professionalism, whether active or retired;
- ✚ Analysis of the level of collaboration between schools, NGOs, and companies;
- ✚ Assessment of openness to cross-border cooperation.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Methodological Framework and Research Limitations

The research methodology was developed in order to obtain as clear and relevant a picture as possible of the labour market situation in Satu Mare County, with a focus on identifying potential trainers, employer needs, and the relationship between the economic environment, the education system, and the non-governmental sector. The research was conducted throughout 2025, in accordance with the implementation schedule of the CONCORD project and with the specific objectives of the activity related to the development of local studies, targeting information related to the period 2023–2025 and requesting opinions regarding the following year. Data collection took place over several months and was organised in successive stages, including the distribution of online and offline questionnaires to employers, educational institutions, teachers, and non-governmental organisations, as well as discussions based on the questionnaires in order to clarify and deepen the responses. The phased approach allowed the data collection process to be adapted to the availability of respondents and facilitated the collection of relevant qualitative information regarding the functioning of the labour market at the local level.

The methodological approach was a mixed one, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in order to capture both general trends and contextual aspects and the concrete experiences of the actors involved. Data collection took place within a defined period established by the project partners, which included both the phase of questionnaire distribution and the clarification discussions related to them, as well as the centralisation of the information obtained.

The geographical area of the research was Satu Mare County, including both urban and rural localities. From an economic perspective, several sectors of activity were covered, such as production, trade, services, manufacturing industry, logistics, construction, and technical fields, in order to reflect the diversity of the local economic structure.

The results of the study should be interpreted taking into account certain methodological limitations:

- ✚ The response rate, which varied depending on the target group and the availability of participants, influencing the volume of data collected.
- ✚ Sectoral representativeness, as some economic sectors are better represented than others, depending on the willingness of employers to participate in the research.
- ✚ Availability of qualitative data, which in some cases was limited by respondents' time constraints or by their reluctance to discuss certain sensitive issues.

Despite these limitations, the applied methodology made it possible to obtain a relevant dataset, providing a solid basis for analysing the labour market situation and for supporting future initiatives related to the continuation of the CONCORD project.

2.2 Types of Instruments Used

For data collection, research instruments were selected according to the specific characteristics of the target groups and the objectives pursued:

- ✚ **Online questionnaires (Google Forms) and offline questionnaires**, used as the main data collection tool. These allowed the rapid distribution of questions to a large number of respondents and the efficient centralisation of responses. The questionnaires addressed aspects such as skills needs, recruitment difficulties, interest in vocational training, and the willingness to become involved as trainers.
- ✚ **Informal discussions**, conducted with some representatives of employers, educational institutions, and NGOs based on the questionnaires, aimed at clarifying certain responses.

2.3 Target Groups

In order to obtain an integrated perspective, the research targeted the main categories of actors directly or indirectly involved in the functioning of the labour market and vocational training processes in Satu Mare County:

- ✚ *Employers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises* from various economic sectors such as production, construction, services, trade, transport, and HORECA. Their involvement aimed at identifying skills shortages, difficulties encountered in recruitment and staff retention processes, as well as medium-term development prospects and hiring intentions. The information provided by employers offered a realistic picture of labour market requirements and of the concrete needs for vocational training.
- ✚ *Educational institutions and teachers*, represented by school principals, members of management boards, and teachers from high schools, with a focus on vocational and technical education institutions, in order to analyse training capacity and the relationship with the economic environment. Through the involvement of this group, the study aimed to evaluate the training capacity of the local education system, the fields of specialisation offered, and the degree to which they are adapted to the requirements of the economic environment. At the same time, existing forms of collaboration with employers were analysed, as well as the barriers that limit the development of more stable and effective partnerships.
- ✚ *NGOs active* in the social, educational, and employment fields, which carry out activities supporting labour market integration, work with vulnerable groups, and implement training and counselling programmes. The involvement of NGOs made it possible to identify the specific needs of vulnerable groups, the types of services provided (counselling, mediation, training, mentoring), and their potential to contribute to the implementation of integrated employment and social inclusion measures.

3. Respondent Profile

3.1 Profile of NGOs

- **Fields of activity**

The four NGOs participating in the study operate in various fields, with a predominant focus on:

- ✚ social inclusion and support for vulnerable groups;
- ✚ education and vocational training, including non-formal learning activities;
- ✚ career counselling and guidance;
- ✚ employment and socio-professional integration;
- ✚ community and local development.

Most organisations adopt an integrated approach, combining social activities with educational and employment components, which allows them to respond more effectively to the needs of their beneficiaries. In many cases, NGOs are not limited to a single field of activity but operate in a cross-cutting manner, adapting their interventions according to the needs of the community.

- **Types of beneficiaries**

The non-governmental organisations surveyed within the CONCORD project address a wide range of beneficiaries who are in situations of vulnerability or at increased risk of social and professional exclusion. The main categories of beneficiaries identified are:

- ✚ Persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including individuals with low incomes or without stable income;
- ✚ Unemployed and inactive persons, especially individuals with low levels of qualification or with professional skills insufficiently adapted to labour market requirements;
- ✚ Young people, including those not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), who are at the beginning of their careers;
- ✚ People from rural areas and disadvantaged communities, where access to employment and training opportunities is limited;
- ✚ Persons belonging to vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, members of the Roma community, single parents, or other categories facing difficulties in socio-professional integration;
- ✚ Refugees and displaced persons, particularly from Ukraine, who face language, administrative, and skills recognition barriers in the labour market.

Qualitative data collected from NGOs indicate that Ukrainian refugees do not represent a homogeneous group in terms of labour market integration. Highly qualified individuals tend to migrate to other countries, while those remaining in the region are predominantly extremely

vulnerable individuals with limited resources and trauma associated with the conflict. Their integration requires complex and sustained interventions that go beyond simple job mediation.

- **Role in labour market integration**

The NGOs participating in the study play an important role in facilitating the integration of beneficiaries into the labour market, acting as intermediaries between job seekers, employers, and education and vocational training institutions. The main types of interventions identified include:

- ✚ Information and career counselling regarding employment opportunities, career orientation, and the adaptation of professional pathways to labour market requirements;
- ✚ Support for the development of basic and transversal skills such as communication skills, responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and adaptability;
- ✚ Mediation between beneficiaries and employers, including support in identifying available jobs and facilitating direct contact with the economic environment;
- ✚ Involvement in vocational training and retraining programmes, carried out either directly or in partnership with training providers, vocational schools, or other local actors;
- ✚ Support for medium- and long-term integration through mentoring, monitoring of labour market insertion, and complementary social support;
- ✚ Collaboration with public institutions, schools, and companies, contributing to the creation of local support networks for employment and inclusion.

Through these activities, the NGOs participating in the study contribute to reducing unemployment, increasing employment levels, and improving workforce adaptability, playing an important role in developing sustainable solutions for labour market integration in the cross-border region. NGOs also have the potential to become key partners in promoting vocational training, identifying potential trainers, and supporting vulnerable groups in the cross-border area.

3.2 Profile of Educational Institutions

- **Types of schools**

The educational institutions participating in the research, through the 15 teachers who responded to our request, are predominantly represented by technological high schools and vocational schools, which play a central role in the initial training of the workforce at the local level. These institutions provide training for students in various trades and technical

specialisations, having strategic importance in meeting the labour market needs of Satu Mare County.

- **Fields of specialisation**

The fields of specialisation identified within the surveyed educational institutions cover a wide range of technical and vocational specialisations adapted to the local economic structure. The main fields include:

- ✚ mechanics and mechanical processing;
- ✚ electrical installations;
- ✚ construction and technical installations;
- ✚ textile manufacturing and light industry;
- ✚ wood processing and furniture production;
- ✚ public catering and tourism (HORECA);
- ✚ other technical fields and related services..

A significant number of the responding teachers indicated that, in addition to their teaching activities, they also possess direct practical experience in their fields of specialisation, which represents an important advantage for their involvement in applied vocational training activities and in the trainer groups proposed through the CONCORD project.

- **Existing collaborations with the economic environment**

Data collected from educational institutions highlight the existence of functional but limited forms of collaboration, both in scope and level of formalisation, between schools and the local economic environment. These collaborations are mainly concentrated around compulsory practical training placements and, to a lesser extent, dual education programmes.

The most frequently mentioned form of collaboration is the organisation of student internships within local companies, particularly for students from technological high schools and vocational schools. The responding school directors and teachers indicated that schools collaborate with companies in fields such as construction, light industry, textile manufacturing, furniture production, installations, and services. These partnerships allow students to gain practical experience in real working conditions; however, the duration and intensity of internships are often limited, and the involvement of companies varies significantly.

Some educational institutions reported partnerships within dual education programmes, carried out with a limited number of companies. These collaborations are positively appreciated by respondents, as they provide students with access to modern equipment, technologies, and procedures, while also allowing employers to train future employees. However, the expansion of dual education is hindered by the limited number of companies willing to engage on a long-term basis, limited administrative resources, and coordination difficulties.

Some schools also mentioned occasional collaborations with the economic environment, such as:

- ✚ student visits to companies;
- ✚ presentations of trades and professions;
- ✚ participation of company representatives in educational events or career guidance activities.

These initiatives are perceived as useful for student orientation, but they are not integrated into a systematic framework of cooperation and depend largely on the individual initiative of teachers or school management. Both directors and teachers emphasised a high level of openness to expanding collaboration with the economic environment, particularly in adapting curricula to labour market requirements and involving employers in practical training processes. The main difficulties mentioned in developing such collaborations include lack of time, limited resources of both schools and companies, and the absence of a coordination mechanism that would facilitate the relationship between schools and companies.

At the same time, the collected data show a high level of openness on the part of educational institutions to expand and strengthen collaboration with employers, in order to adapt training programmes to the real requirements of the labour market.

Work opportunities for pupils and students, in the form of internships, practical placements, or seasonal work, are used by some employers as a tool to cover temporary staffing needs, as well as a way to familiarise young people with workplace requirements at an early stage. However, the lack of structured frameworks for collaboration with educational institutions limits the potential of this type of employment to contribute to long-term labour market integration..

Table No. 1. Existing collaborations between educational institutions and the economic environment

| Type of Collaboration | Type of Collaboration | Type of Collaboration | Type of Collaboration |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mandatory practical training placements | Mandatory practical training placements | Mandatory practical training placements | Mandatory practical training placements |
| Dual education | Technical and industrial sectors | Low–medium | Implemented with a small number of companies; appreciated but difficult to expand |
| Student visits to companies | Various economic sectors | Low | Occasional activities with an orientation role |
| Presentations of trades and professions | Construction, industry, services | Low | Dependent on the individual initiative of teachers |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------------|---|
| Employer participation in school events | Various | Low | Lacking continuity or long-term planning |
| Collaboration for career guidance | Technical and service sectors | Low–medium | Important role in informing students, but lacking a substantial practical component |

The table highlights that practical training placements represent the main channel of collaboration between schools and the economic environment, while more advanced forms of cooperation, such as dual education or the involvement of employers in the educational process, remain limited. Existing collaborations are largely occasional and insufficiently coordinated, which reduces their impact on aligning students' skills with labour market requirements.

3.3 Profile of Teachers and Trainers

- **Technical and professional fields**

The teachers and trainers identified within the study are active in a variety of technical and professional fields, reflecting the economic structure and labour market needs of Satu Mare County. The fields mentioned by respondents mainly include:

- ✚ mechanics and mechanical processing;
- ✚ electrical engineering and electrical installations;
- ✚ construction and technical installations;
- ✚ textile manufacturing and light industry;
- ✚ wood processing and furniture production;
- ✚ public catering, tourism, and services (HORECA);
- ✚ other related technical and professional fields..

This diversity of specialisations represents an important resource for the development of training programmes adapted to the real needs of local employers and for the establishment of the trainer groups envisaged within the CONCORD project.

- **Practical experience versus teaching experience**

The analysis of the responses shows that a significant number of the identified teachers possess dual experience, both teaching and practical, having previous or simultaneous professional activity in the technical fields they teach. This practical experience, acquired in companies, workshops, or other local economic structures, is perceived as a major advantage, as it enables a

more applied approach to the training process and a better alignment between educational content and labour market requirements.

At the same time, there are also teachers whose professional path has been predominantly educational, with limited experience in the economic environment. This situation highlights the need for experience exchanges and stronger collaboration with the business environment, in order to update professional skills and adapt teaching methods to new economic and technological realities.

3.4 Profile of Employers

Company size and location

The analysis of the structure of the employers participating in the study, based on company size, highlights a high proportion of small enterprises, which represent the dominant category in the analysed sample. Most of the surveyed companies have between 11 and 50 employees, reflecting the economic characteristics of Satu Mare County, which is marked by a significant presence of small and medium-sized enterprises.

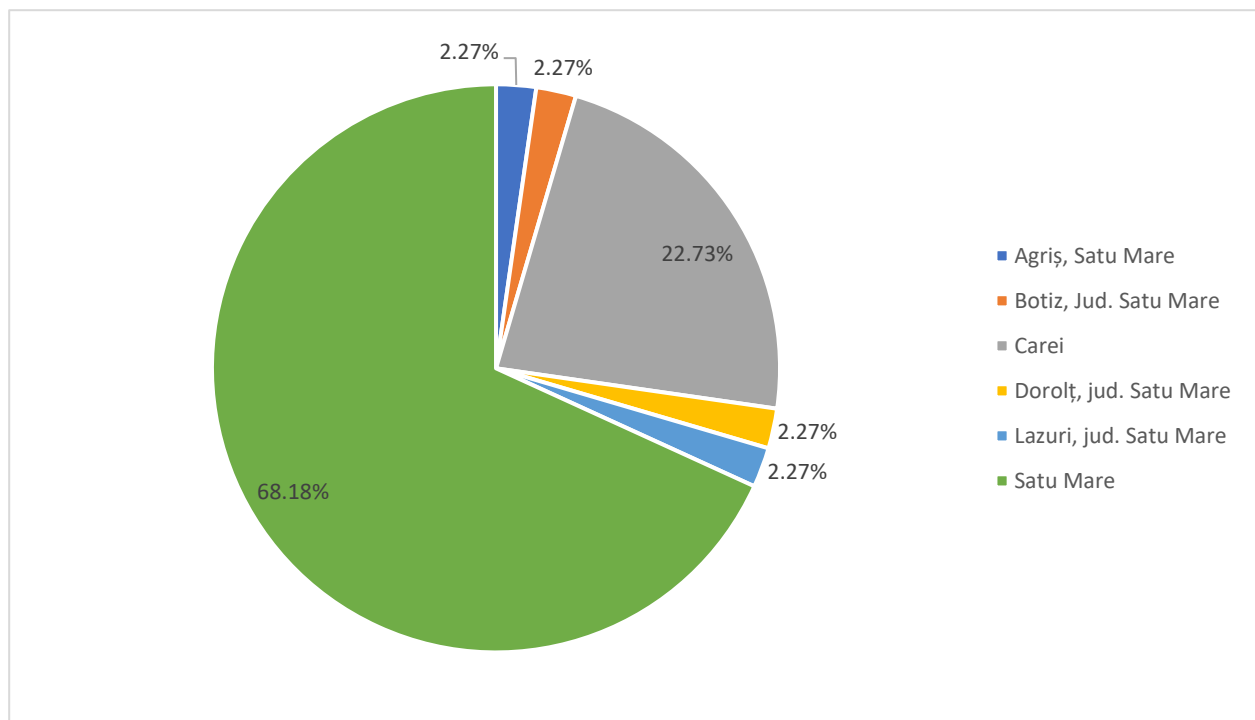


Chart No. 1. Geographical distribution of the surveyed companies

At the same time, the presence of a relevant number of medium-sized and large enterprises ensures a balanced perspective on recruitment and vocational training needs at the local level. The study also included micro-enterprises (1–10 employees), as well as medium-sized and large enterprises (over 50 employees), providing a comprehensive view of recruitment and training needs. This diversity allows for a relevant analysis of the challenges and opportunities faced by

companies, particularly in terms of access to qualified human resources and the capacity to invest in staff training.

The analysis of the structure of the employers participating in the study, based on a sample of 44 companies, highlights a dominant share of small enterprises. Thus, 22 companies, representing 50% of the total respondents, reported having 11–50 employees, confirming the key role of small enterprises in the economy of Satu Mare County. Micro-enterprises, with 1–10 employees, are represented by 8 companies, corresponding to 18.2% of the total surveyed firms. Medium-sized enterprises, with 51–100 employees, are represented by 6 companies (13.6%), while large enterprises, with over 100 employees, account for 8 companies, representing 18.2% of the sample.

Economic sectors

From the perspective of economic sectors, the surveyed companies operate in a wide range of fields, reflecting the diversity of the local economic structure. The most represented sectors are construction and installations, followed by the textile and garment industry, transport and logistics, trade, and HORECA—sectors that frequently face shortages of skilled labour and high staff turnover. At the same time, the study included companies from fields such as furniture production, metal processing, agriculture, legal, financial, and healthcare services, contributing to a comprehensive picture of the demand for professional skills in Satu Mare County. The varied distribution of responses highlights the need for differentiated interventions in vocational training and supports the relevance of developing programmes tailored to the specific characteristics of each economic sector.

From a quantitative perspective, the most represented sector is Construction and Installations (9 companies), accounting for 20.5% of total respondents. This is followed by the Textile Industry, with 7 companies (15.9%), a sector characterised by constant labour demand and high workforce mobility. The Transport/Logistics and Other Services sectors are each represented by 5 companies, corresponding to 11.4% each. Trade is represented by 4 companies (9.1%), while Furniture Production and HORECA each account for 3 companies (6.8% per sector). Additionally, companies from Legal Services and Healthcare are represented by 2 companies each (4.5%), while sectors such as Financial/Accounting Services, Printing/Industrial Services, Metal Processing/Mechanics, and Agriculture are each represented by 1 company, accounting for 2.3% of the total.

Table No. 2. Main fields of activity of the surveyed companies

| Field of Activity | Number of companies |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Construction / Installations | 9 |
| Textile Industry / Garments | 7 |
| Transport / Logistics | 5 |
| Other Services | 5 |
| Trade | 4 |
| Furniture Production | 3 |
| HORECA / Food Services | 3 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Legal Services | 2 |
| Healthcare | 2 |
| Financial / Accounting Services | 1 |
| Printing / Industrial Services | 1 |
| Metal Processing / Mechanics | 1 |
| Agriculture | 1 |
| Total Companies | 44 |

Experience in Recruitment and Training

The data collected from employers indicate that most companies in Satu Mare County have significant practical experience in recruitment and training processes; however, this experience is largely informal and short-term oriented, as a response to the constant shortage of labour.

Regarding recruitment, employers stated that it represents a recurrent process, often carried out under pressure due to the difficulties in identifying qualified personnel and the high staff turnover. Most companies have experience using online platforms, personal recommendations, and informal networks, but the effectiveness of these methods is perceived as limited, especially for positions requiring technical skills or practical experience. Employers frequently mention situations in which candidates do not meet job requirements, fail to attend interviews, or leave their jobs shortly after being hired.

In the field of vocational training, most employers have experience with internal, on-the-job training, considered the most accessible and fastest solution for integrating new employees. This usually consists of direct instruction provided by experienced employees or company management and is strictly adapted to the specific requirements of the job. Although this form of training is appreciated for its practical character, employers acknowledge that it is often unstructured and dependent on the availability of internal staff, and does not always lead to the acquisition of formally recognised skills.

Employers' experience with external training is more limited and mainly concentrated among medium-sized and large enterprises. These companies have participated in courses or professional development programmes organised by authorised providers; however, they frequently reported a lack of alignment between these programmes and the real needs of economic activity, as well as the high associated costs. As a result, external training is used occasionally, mainly for mandatory certifications or for key personnel.

In addition, some employers have experience collaborating with educational institutions, particularly through the organisation of internships or participation in dual education programmes. This experience is generally evaluated positively; however, it remains limited in scope and continuity, depending largely on the individual initiative of companies and on the capacity of educational institutions to respond to the needs of the economic environment.

- **Willingness to Participate in Training Activities**

The data collected from employers indicate a tendency of openness and interest in participating in vocational training activities aimed at adults, low-skilled individuals, or employees who require further professional development. There is willingness to participate in:

- ✚ short theoretical and practical training sessions;
- ✚ pilot programmes for the development of professional skills;
- ✚ mentoring activities and the transfer of best practices;
- ✚ collaboration with local companies to adapt training content to the specific needs of employers.

At the same time, some respondents mentioned certain conditions for their involvement, such as time availability, recognition of training activities, or the existence of an organised and predictable framework. In this context, the CONCORD project provides a favourable framework for capitalising on existing expertise, facilitating connections and contributing to the creation of sustainable vocational training mechanisms in the cross-border region.

4. Labour Market Needs Analysis

4.1 Recruitment Needs

Types of employees sought

The analysis of the data collected within the study highlights a correlation between company size and the typology of recruitment and vocational training needs identified by employers. Companies of different sizes face distinct challenges, determined by their organisational capacity, available resources, and the specific nature of their activities.

Discussions based on the questionnaires with representatives of the economic environment and the non-governmental sector highlight a series of labour market needs that consistently appear across different fields of activity and types of organisations. These needs are closely linked to skills shortages, dysfunctions within the vocational training system, and the behaviour of the available workforce.

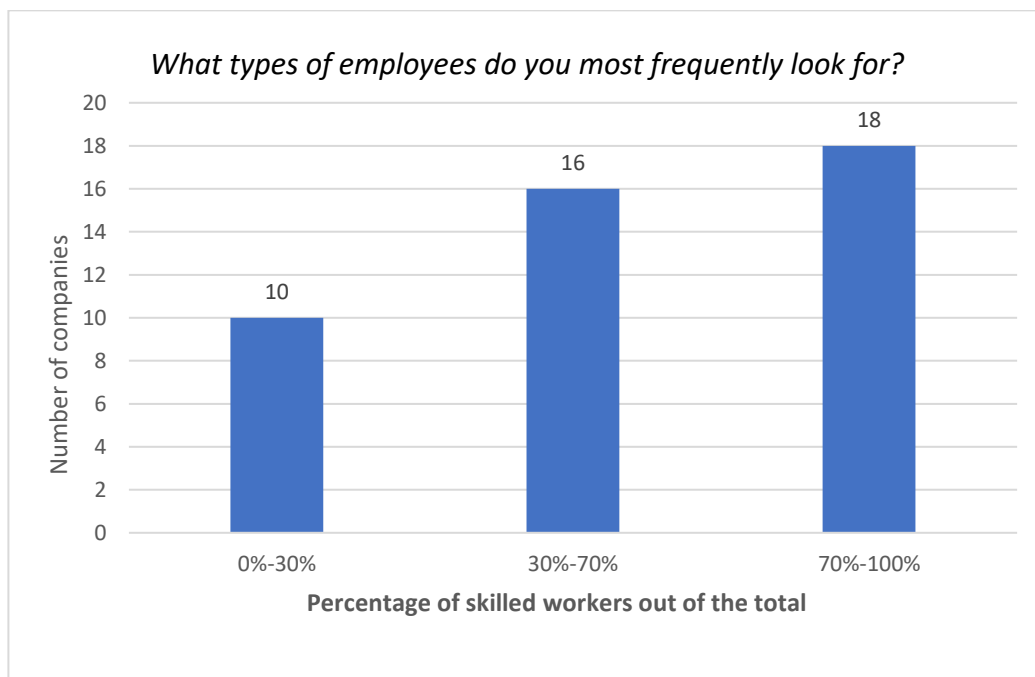


Chart No. 2. Types of employees sought by companies

Micro-enterprises and small enterprises (1–10 and 11–50 employees respectively), which represent the majority of the companies participating in the study, frequently face difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel, as they have limited resources for selection processes and for internal employee training. These companies generally express a higher openness towards external or partnership-based training, showing interest in practical training programmes adapted to the immediate needs of their activities, as well as support from local trainers or vocational education institutions. For these firms, the shortage of technical skills and the lack of personnel with practical experience represent the main obstacles to development.

Medium-sized enterprises (51–100 employees) show a constant need for recruitment, particularly in technical and production fields, but they have a greater capacity to organise internal training activities. Nevertheless, these companies report difficulties in identifying qualified trainers and in adapting training content to technological developments, which is why they are interested in collaboration with external trainers, vocational schools, and other companies to organise joint training programmes.

In the case of large enterprises (over 100 employees), recruitment needs are often better planned and integrated into medium- and long-term human resource strategies. These companies more frequently use structured internal training and are interested in improving the advanced skills of existing employees. At the same time, they face challenges related to staff retention and the continuous adaptation of skills to technological requirements, and they are open to partnerships with educational institutions and involvement in dual education or pilot programmes.

Thus, the results of the study show that, regardless of company size, the need for a qualified and adaptable workforce is a common concern, although the preferred solutions differ depending on the employers' capacities.

A recurring concern in discussions with employers is the shortage of skilled labour, particularly in sectors such as HORECA, manufacturing, garments, construction, and logistics. Company representatives emphasised that there is a constant demand for personnel, but the number of candidates possessing real professional skills is very limited. In the hospitality sector, for example, employers estimate that only a small proportion of students completing training programmes become employable ("students and graduates coming from schools or courses do not master basic practical skills"; "almost complete retraining at the workplace is needed"; "many young people quickly drop out or fail to adapt to the pace and discipline in HORECA"; "school provides diplomas but does not guarantee real working skills").

Discussions with employers based on the questionnaires also revealed the existence of a concrete demand for very short-term work (a few days or one to two weeks), particularly for activities such as handling, assembly, unloading, or logistical support. These needs arise occasionally, depending on deliveries, orders, or specific projects. Although the demand is real, employers point out difficulties related to the legal framework and the lack of flexible instruments for mediating this type of work. This type of employment could represent an important opportunity for low-skilled individuals, refugees, or beneficiaries of NGOs if suitable mechanisms were available.

A particularly notable finding is the openness of employers towards people over the age of 45. Contrary to common perceptions, age is not considered a major obstacle; rather, willingness to learn and adapt is valued. This finding indicates significant potential for employment and reskilling measures targeting adults.

At the same time, companies in the production and industrial sectors emphasised that the need for qualified personnel is permanent, and that the lack of such personnel affects their capacity for expansion and operational efficiency.

How often did you recruit new employees in the years 2024–2025?

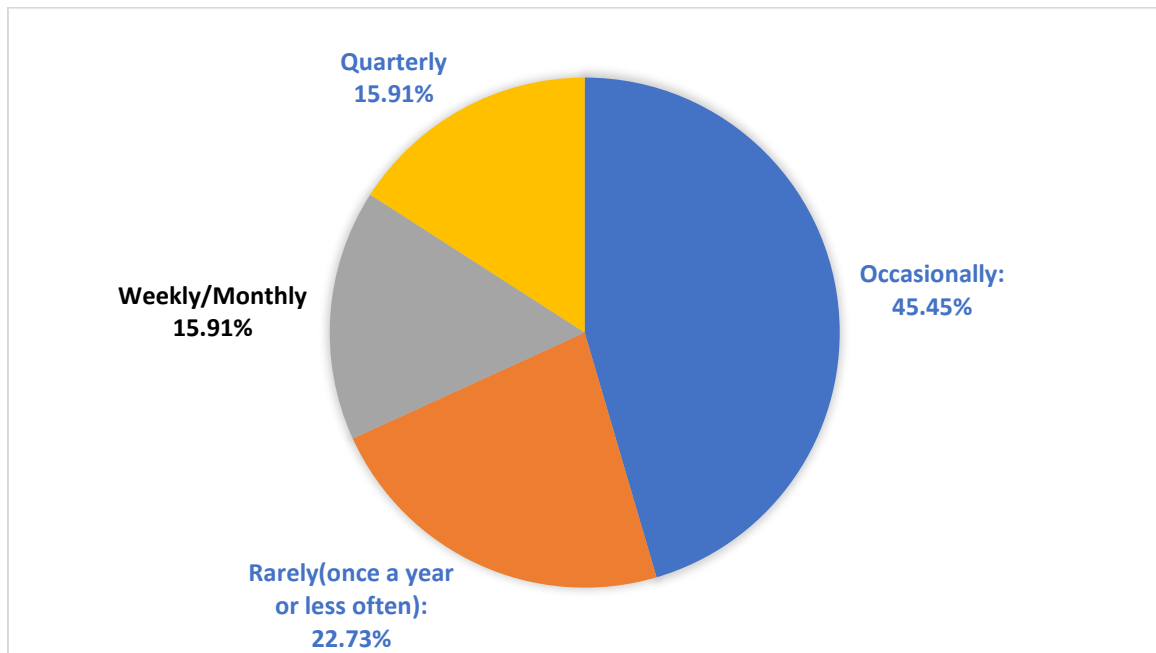


Chart No. 3. Frequency of recruiting new employees in the period 2024-2025

The chart above highlights a certain frequency of recruitment processes among the surveyed employers during the period 2024–2025. The largest share is represented by employers who recruit occasionally (45.45%), indicating recurring needs to supplement their workforce. This situation is particularly characteristic of small and medium-sized enterprises, which face staff turnover and difficulties in retaining employees in the long term.

A significant percentage of employers (22.73%) stated that they recruit rarely (once a year or less often), which may suggest either a relatively stable workforce or limitations in the development of their economic activities. At the same time, 15.91% of companies recruit weekly or monthly, while a similar percentage reported quarterly recruitment, reflecting a constant demand for labour in certain economic sectors characterised by high turnover or chronic staff shortages.

🚦 Hiring trends for the coming years

The data collected from employers indicate a general trend of stability and moderate growth in hiring in the coming period, particularly in the dominant economic sectors of Satu Mare County. According to respondents' estimates for the following year, 47.7% of companies expect their recruitment needs to remain at a similar level to the current one, while 27.3% anticipate an intensification of recruitment processes. These results suggest that, for approximately three quarters of employers (75.0%), the demand for labour will remain stable or increase in the coming years.

At the same time, 15.9% of companies stated that they do not anticipate the need to recruit additional staff, while only 9.1% expect a decrease in hiring needs. This category is mainly

represented by companies that either have a stable workforce or face development constraints or economic uncertainties.

Hiring trends are closely linked to the shortage of skilled labour reported by most employers, particularly in sectors such as construction and installations, the textile industry, transport and logistics, furniture production, and HORECA. In this context, the growth or maintenance of labour demand depends on the availability of qualified workers and on companies' ability to adapt their recruitment and vocational training strategies.

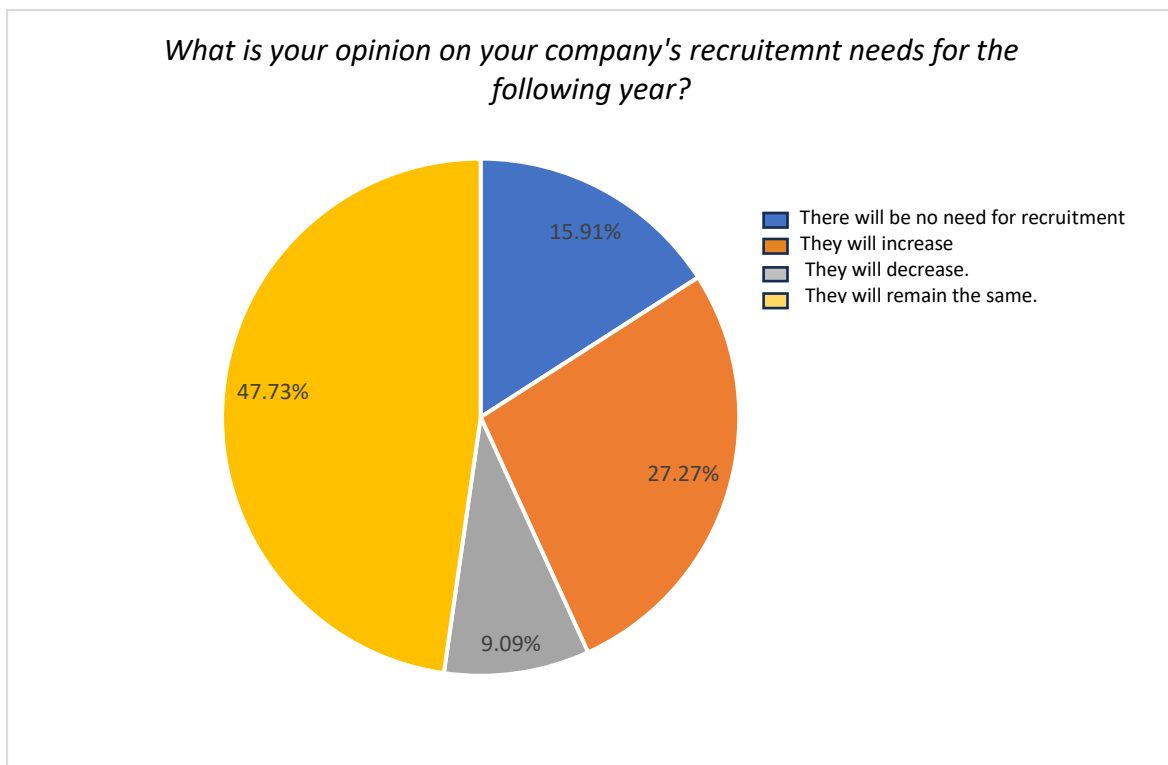


Chart No. 4. Companies' recruitment needs

The comparative analysis of hiring trends, in relation to company size, highlights significant differences in employers' behaviour and outlook. Small enterprises (11–50 employees) are those most frequently anticipating the maintenance or increase of recruitment needs in the coming years. These companies are characterised by a high degree of flexibility, but also by increased vulnerability to the shortage of skilled labour, which drives them to actively seek recruitment and training solutions.

Micro-enterprises (1–10 employees) generally adopt a more cautious approach, with some indicating that they do not anticipate additional recruitment in the near future. This trend is correlated with limited expansion capacity and reduced financial resources, as well as a focus on stabilising the existing workforce. However, even in the case of these companies, the lack of skills is perceived as a significant issue.

For medium-sized and large enterprises (over 50 employees), hiring trends are more closely linked to development plans and medium-term investments. A significant proportion of these companies expect an increase in recruitment, especially for technical and specialised positions,

but condition hiring on the availability of qualified labour and the efficiency of recruitment processes.

From the perspective of economic sectors, the most pronounced hiring trends are identified in Construction/Installations, the Textile/Garment Industry, Transport/Logistics, and HORECA—sectors where staff shortages are significant and labour demand remains constant or is increasing. Employers in these sectors anticipate, to a greater extent than the average, maintaining or increasing recruitment volumes, particularly for skilled workers, technicians, and personnel with practical experience. In contrast, specialised service sectors (legal, financial, healthcare) and certain segments of trade show more stable trends, with occasional recruitment and a stronger focus on retaining existing staff. These sectors are less affected by seasonal fluctuations but also face difficulties in identifying personnel with specific skills..

Openness to employees from other countries

The results of the study highlight a significant openness among employers towards hiring individuals from other countries as an alternative solution to address labour shortages. A considerable number of surveyed companies stated that they are willing to employ foreign workers, particularly in sectors where the shortage of qualified personnel is acute and staff turnover is high. Employers expressing this openness also mentioned certain specific conditions, such as:

- possession of the professional skills required for the position;
- availability for medium- or long-term employment;
- compliance with legal requirements regarding the right to work;
- in some cases, knowledge of the Romanian language or willingness to attend language courses.

In the current context, marked by the impact of the war in Ukraine, the employment of refugees or Ukrainian citizens is perceived by some employers as an opportunity to address labour shortages, while also contributing to their socio-professional integration. However, respondents also reported certain challenges related to language barriers, administrative procedures, and the recognition of qualifications obtained in other countries.

A total of 25% of respondents stated that they are open to hiring individuals from Ukraine and/or Hungary, subject to certain conditions. An additional 11.36% indicated openness to hiring individuals from Ukraine and/or Hungary, as well as from other Asian countries (such as Nepal or Pakistan), under clearly defined conditions, reflecting an expansion of recruitment areas in response to labour shortages. Furthermore, 6.82% of employers expressed willingness to hire individuals from Asian countries under certain conditions. At the same time, 22.73% of employers explicitly stated that a person's country of origin is not a recruitment criterion, reinforcing the conclusion regarding openness to foreign labour.

Are you open to hiring people from other countries?

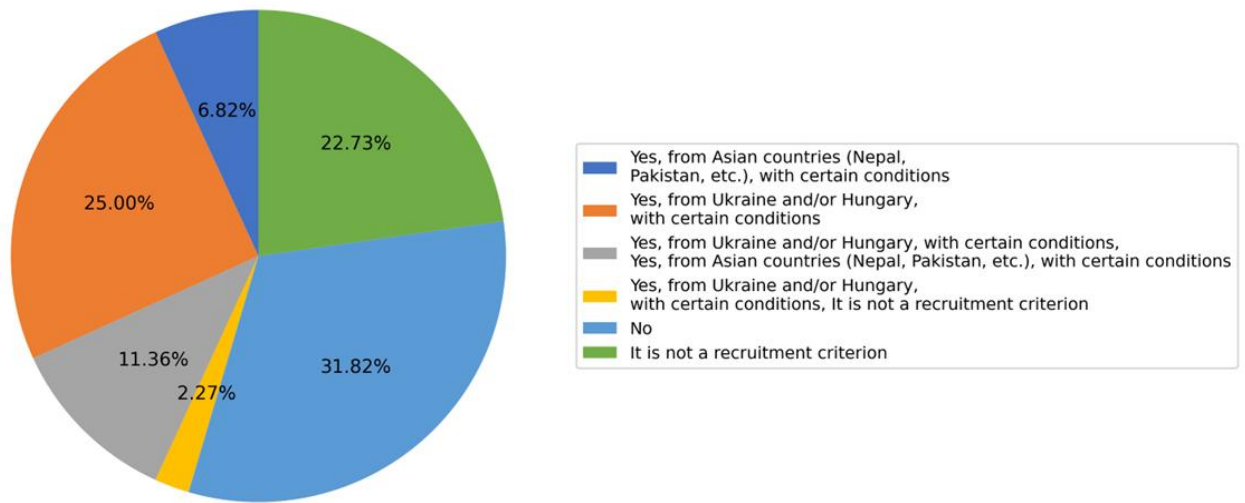


Chart No. 5. Willingness to hire people from other countries

The data indicate that openness towards hiring employees from other countries is increasing; however, the effectiveness of this solution depends on the availability of support instruments for integration, such as tailored vocational training, language courses, and labour market mediation mechanisms. In this context, the CONCORD project and the development of the Laboro.ro platform can directly contribute to facilitating cross-border recruitment and to the sustainable integration of foreign workers into the local economy.

🚦 Economic constraints influencing hiring and training

The analysis highlights that, although there are individuals available for employment, employers report significant difficulties related to actual willingness to work, compliance with basic rules, assumption of responsibilities, and maintaining a consistent level of performance. This discrepancy between the availability of labour and its capacity to meet the concrete requirements of jobs affects the efficiency of recruitment and professional integration processes.

At the same time, there is a low level of trust among employers in traditional vocational training systems, particularly formal training predominantly based on theoretical components. Many employers consider that these forms of training do not sufficiently respond to the real needs of economic activity and do not ensure the practical skills required for rapid workplace integration. In this context, there is a clear preference for practical training carried out directly in the work environment, through mentorship and applied learning, tailored to the specifics of each economic sector.

The data also confirm that the relationship between educational institutions and the economic environment is often dependent on individual initiatives rather than on stable institutional frameworks. Existing collaborations are, in many cases, occasional and time-limited, lacking clear mechanisms for continuity and coordination. This situation reduces the effectiveness of training

processes and limits the ability of the education system to dynamically adapt to labour market requirements.

Another frequently mentioned aspect in the analysed documents is the overload of small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent the majority of employers in the region. These companies face a lack of time, financial resources, and dedicated personnel for managing human resources and training activities. As a result, there is a high openness towards shared, cooperative solutions that would allow the organisation of vocational training activities in collaboration with other employers, educational institutions, and local trainers.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that migration and workforce instability have become important features of the labour market, significantly influencing employer behaviour. High staff turnover and the frequent departure of employees to other regions or countries reduce companies' willingness to plan long-term investments in vocational training. This context highlights the need for flexible interventions adapted to local realities, enabling the development of professional skills in an efficient and sustainable way.

In certain economic sectors, particularly in HORECA, employers face significant economic pressures that directly influence hiring and training decisions. Labour costs represent a very high share of total company expenses, often exceeding levels considered sustainable in relation to turnover and operational costs, such as raw materials. This situation is further intensified by the seasonal nature of the activity, which forces employers to retain staff throughout the year, even during periods of low activity. As a result, companies' capacity to consistently invest in recruitment and vocational training is limited, and overall profitability is affected.

Beyond the shortage of skilled personnel, employers also report recurring issues related to the quality of the young workforce, which go beyond technical skills. Frequently mentioned challenges include responsibility, discipline, compliance with work rules, and the ability to collaborate in teams—factors that negatively affect the integration and retention of new employees. In this context, some employers show reluctance towards hiring young people, considering that the effort required for integration and training is not offset by their stability in employment.

At the same time, the research results highlight a significant mismatch between the vocational training system and the real requirements of the labour market, particularly regarding the practical component of training. Employers note that training is often too theoretical and insufficiently adapted to real economic conditions, while the lack of instructors and mentors with practical experience limits the effectiveness of the educational process. This situation leads to difficulties in ensuring a steady flow of workforce prepared for actual job requirements.

Another critical issue is the lack of workforce retention, which directly affects employers' willingness to invest in vocational training. Although companies make efforts to train young employees, a significant proportion leave their jobs or even the sector shortly afterwards, leading to the loss of investments made and perpetuating staff shortages. This dynamic highlights the need for more flexible training mechanisms, oriented towards immediate results and supported by mentorship and continuous support processes.

In this context, employers emphasise the importance of integrated interventions that go beyond the traditional approach based solely on training courses. Solutions are needed that combine the development of professional skills with organisational support, cooperation between companies, educational institutions and trainers, as well as mechanisms for resource sharing. The CONCORD project addresses these needs by promoting cross-border cooperation, leveraging the expertise of local trainers, and developing common tools that contribute to increasing employment and workforce adaptability in the target region.

The data also indicate that the use of atypical forms of employment is limited, with a significant share of employers considering these options irrelevant for their activity. This situation reflects both the operational specificity of certain sectors, where physical presence and fixed schedules are essential, and a limited capacity to adapt to flexible work models, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises.

Teleworking and part-time employment are used to a moderate extent, particularly in administrative and service activities, where the nature of work allows greater flexibility. In contrast, these forms are difficult to implement in production, construction, or operational services, which limits their expansion across the local economy.

4.2 Recruitment Challenges

The recruitment process represents one of the main challenges reported by employers in Satu Mare County, being influenced by systemic, economic, and demographic factors that affect the functioning of the local labour market. The research results highlight difficulties in identifying and attracting suitable personnel, both in terms of professional skills and in terms of employee availability and stability.

Table No. 3. Types of recruitment challenges and their frequency

| Problem Category | Examples of questionnaire responses | Frequency |
|--|---|------------------|
| Lack of qualified personnel | "lack of qualified personnel", "we cannot find trained staff", "shortage of skilled workers", "lack of experienced specialists" | most frequent |
| Lack of transversal skills (soft skills) | "lack of seriousness", "lack of responsibility", "lack of discipline", "lack of involvement" | very frequent |
| High staff turnover | "employees do not stay long", "high turnover", "employees leaving abroad" | frequent |
| Lack of practical experience | "lack of experience", "do not know the trade", "do not know how to operate equipment" | frequent |
| Lack of interest in the profession/work | "lack of interest", "do not value the job", "not motivated" | frequent |
| Low level of basic education | "lack of basic math skills", "lack of schooling", "do not understand requirements" | occasional |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------|
| Mismatched salary expectations | “inadequate financial expectations”, “labour market competition” | occasional |
| Other situations / no reported issues | “we have no problems” | occasional |

Lack of qualified personnel

The analysis of employers’ responses highlights the existence of recurring and persistent problems in the recruitment process, which affect companies’ ability to fill vacancies and support their development plans. The most frequently mentioned difficulties refer to the lack of qualified personnel, the deficit of transversal skills, and high staff turnover—issues that manifest with varying intensity depending on the sector and company size.

The most significant problem reported by employers is the lack of qualified personnel, especially for technical trades and occupations requiring specific practical skills. Employers in sectors such as construction and installations, the textile industry, transport and logistics, furniture production, and HORECA reported major difficulties in identifying candidates who possess both the required formal qualifications and adequate practical experience.

This situation is correlated with several factors, including the ageing workforce, the migration of skilled workers to other regions or abroad, and the mismatch between initial vocational training and current labour market requirements. In many cases, employers are forced to invest additional resources in training new employees or to accept prolonged periods during which positions remain unfilled..

Lack of transversal skills

In addition to technical skills, employers frequently reported a lack of transversal (soft) skills among candidates, which makes their integration and retention within organisations more difficult. Among the most commonly mentioned deficiencies are responsibility, work discipline, communication skills, teamwork, adaptability, and respect for working schedules. This issue is particularly evident among young people, low-skilled or unskilled workers, and individuals without prior stable work experience. Employers emphasised that, in the absence of these basic competencies, even individuals with technical qualifications face difficulties adapting to job requirements, negatively affecting productivity and team stability.

Staff turnover

Another major issue identified is the high level of staff turnover, especially in sectors characterised by demanding working conditions or less competitive salaries. Employers reported that, in many cases, employees leave their jobs shortly after being hired, either to move to other companies or to go abroad in search of higher incomes.

High staff turnover generates additional costs for companies, both through the need to restart recruitment processes and through repeated investments in training new employees. This situation particularly affects small and medium-sized enterprises, which have limited resources and for which the loss of qualified personnel has a significant impact on business continuity.

Discussions also highlighted workforce instability, manifested through high turnover and seasonal migration. Employers indicated that many workers prefer temporary employment abroad, even under uncertain conditions, rather than stable jobs in Romania.

NGOs emphasised that this choice is influenced by perceptions related to wage levels, mindsets, and a lack of formal education, which further complicates long-term integration into the local labour market.

In addition, discussions with employers from sectors such as logistics, warehousing, and unskilled labour revealed that candidates failing to attend interviews without prior notice is a frequent issue with direct impact on recruitment processes. Employers report that this leads to time losses, operational disruptions, and discourages the initiation of new recruitment processes. The phenomenon is perceived not only as a lack of professional competence but also as a serious deficit of responsibility and respect towards employers, being associated with a low level of work culture and career orientation.

Furthermore, qualitative data highlight a recurring behaviour among candidates, consisting of applying for positions that do not match their actual level of competence or experience. Employers frequently mention situations where individuals without relevant education or experience apply for management roles, specialised technical positions, or jobs requiring advanced skills. This phenomenon indicates a lack of understanding of real job requirements and poor self-assessment, which reduces recruitment efficiency and consumes significant employer resources.

Labour mobility

Discussions with employers and other local stakeholders highlight that occasional or seasonal work abroad is a common phenomenon, especially among individuals with low or medium levels of qualification. Many workers choose to temporarily leave the local labour market to work in other countries, attracted by higher incomes, even for relatively short periods. This temporary mobility creates discontinuities in professional careers and affects workforce availability at the local level.

Employers report that repeated departures for work abroad generate instability within work teams, difficulties in planning activities, and additional recruitment and integration costs. Even when workers return to the country, they do not always return to the same employer or sector, reducing the effectiveness of previous investments in vocational training. In this context, employers become more reluctant to invest in long-term staff development.

The data indicate that occasional work abroad is often linked to a lack of local professional development opportunities and to the perception that informal experience gained abroad is more valuable than participation in structured training programmes. This situation weakens the connection between workers, employers, and the local vocational training system, further exacerbating the shortage of stable, skilled personnel.

In this context, the need for interventions that provide viable alternatives to temporary migration becomes evident, through the creation of practical, relevant, and rapidly applicable training

opportunities aligned with the real needs of local employers. The CONCORD project can contribute to reducing the negative impact of this phenomenon by developing professional skills locally and increasing the attractiveness of employment in the cross-border region.

4.3 Recruitment channels used

Effectiveness of online platforms

The results of the study show that employers use a combination of formal and informal recruitment channels, adapted to company size, field of activity, and the qualification level of the workforce sought. The effectiveness of these channels varies significantly, being influenced by the availability of the local workforce and the degree of match between candidates' skills and job requirements.

The chart below highlights that employers primarily rely on informal and digital channels for recruitment. The most frequently used channels are personal and employee referrals and online job advertisements. These two channels dominate the recruitment process, reflecting companies' need for fast, flexible, and low-cost solutions. The use of social media ranks second, being preferred especially for rapid recruitment or for positions that do not require complex qualifications. Internal recruitment is mentioned to a lesser extent, suggesting limited opportunities for internal promotion or a lack of eligible staff for advancement. Institutionalised channels, such as collaboration with educational institutions and recruitment events, are used only marginally.

The limited mention of the Laboro.ro platform indicates that it is still in an early stage of use, but also confirms its significant development potential, given the identified need for integrated recruitment and vocational training tools.

Table No. 4. Frequency of use of recruitment channels

| Recruitment Channels | Examples of questionnaire responses | Number of mentions |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Personal / employee referrals | "employee recommendations", "personal connections" | 57 |
| Online job postings | online ads, company website, OLX, eJobs | 56 |
| Social media | Facebook, social networks | 19 |
| Internal recruitment | promotion of existing employees | 9 |
| Educational institutions | high schools, educational partnerships | 5 |
| Recruitment events | job fairs, workshops | 4 |
| Job mediation platforms | agencies, other online platforms | 7 |
| Laboro.ro platform | explicitly mentioned | 3 |

Online recruitment platforms and social media represent some of the most frequently used recruitment channels, especially by small and medium-sized enterprises. Employers value these tools for the speed of publishing job offers, access to a large number of potential candidates, and relatively low costs. However, the effectiveness of online platforms is perceived as variable, with many employers noting that a high number of applicants does not necessarily translate into a sufficient number of suitable candidates.

A commonly mentioned issue is the lack of relevant skills among applicants, as well as a low level of interest or availability for long-term employment. In this context, online platforms are considered particularly useful for recruiting unskilled workers or for quickly filling positions, but less effective for roles requiring technical qualifications or specific experience.

The analysis of recruitment channels used by employers highlights significant differences depending on company size and economic sector, reflecting both available resources and the specific characteristics of the workforce sought.

Table No. 5. Recruitment channels used by employers according to company size

| Company Size | Predominantly Used Recruitment Channels | Perceived Effectiveness | Observations |
|---|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Micro-enterprises (1–10 employees) | Online platforms, informal networks, personal referrals | Low–medium | Quick access to candidates, but poor skills match; difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel |
| Small enterprises (11–50 employees) | Online platforms, local job postings, occasional collaborations with schools | Medium | Highest shortage of qualified personnel; increased interest in alternative recruitment and training solutions |
| Medium-sized enterprises (51–100 employees) | Online platforms and collaborations with educational institutions | Medium–high | Greater openness to internships and internal training; recruitment oriented towards the medium term |
| Large enterprises (over 100 employees) | Collaboration with schools, direct recruitment, online platforms | High | More structured recruitment processes; interest in stable partnerships and training programmes |

In the case of micro-enterprises (1–10 employees) and small enterprises (11–50 employees), recruitment is mainly carried out through online job platforms, informal networks, and personal referrals. These companies value the speed and low costs of online channels, but frequently report low effectiveness in identifying qualified personnel, especially for technical trades. In such cases, recruitment often focuses on unskilled or low-skilled workers, who subsequently require on-the-job training.

Medium-sized and large enterprises (over 50 employees) use a more diversified range of recruitment channels, combining online platforms with direct collaboration with educational

institutions, participation in internships, dual education programmes, or the recruitment of graduates. These companies place greater importance on the predictability and quality of the recruitment process and are more open to investing in the vocational training of new employees.

From the perspective of economic sectors, companies in Construction/Installations, the Textile/Garment Industry, Transport/Logistics, and HORECA make intensive use of online channels and informal networks, but report a low rate of match between the demand and supply of skills. In these sectors, collaboration with educational institutions is perceived as insufficiently developed, although it is recognised as a potential solution for reducing the shortage of qualified personnel.

In contrast, specialised service sectors (legal, financial, healthcare) and some companies in trade rely more on targeted recruitment, carried out through online channels or professional networks, with more specific requirements regarding candidates' qualifications and experience.

In this context, the development of the Laboro.ro platform within the CONCORD project responds to the need for integration and increased efficiency of recruitment channels, offering a common tool adapted to the regional and cross-border context. The platform has the potential to be used both by small companies, which lack dedicated recruitment resources, and by larger companies interested in accessing a broader pool of candidates and collaborating with trainers and educational institutions.

The correlation between recruitment channels, company size, and economic sectors highlights the need for a differentiated approach, in which digital tools, educational partnerships, and labour mediation mechanisms are used in a complementary manner—an objective directly supported by the activities of the CONCORD project.

Surveyed employers show increasing distrust in the effectiveness of traditional recruitment channels, especially paid online platforms. Issues such as unsuitable CVs, candidates failing to attend interviews, and a lack of seriousness are frequently mentioned. In this context, employers express the need for local and specialised labour mediation tools capable of filtering candidates and facilitating contact with motivated and job-ready individuals.

The role of educational institutions

Educational institutions, particularly technological high schools and vocational schools, play an important but still underutilised role in recruitment processes. Collaboration with schools mainly takes place through the organisation of internships, dual education programmes, or the direct recruitment of graduates. Employers who have such partnerships appreciate the advantages of this channel, such as early interaction with students, the possibility to train them according to company needs, and easier integration into the workforce.

At the same time, the study data indicate that the relationship between companies and educational institutions is often occasional and limited, being affected by the lack of a structured coordination framework and the limited resources of both parties. Strengthening these partnerships is perceived by employers as an important solution for reducing the shortage of qualified personnel in the medium and long term.

The role of the Laboro.ro platform

In the context of recruitment challenges, the development and expansion of the Laboro.ro platform represents a relevant opportunity to improve labour mediation processes in the cross-border region. The platform is designed as an integrated tool to facilitate connections between employers, job seekers, as well as potential trainers and providers of skills.

Employers express interest in using a dedicated platform adapted to the regional context, which would provide access to better-informed and better-prepared candidates, including from other regions or countries. The translation of the platform into Ukrainian and its cross-border expansion are perceived as significant advantages, particularly in the context of integrating Ukrainian refugees and increasing labour mobility.

5. Analysis of vocational training needs

5.1 Shortage occupations and skills

- **Priority technical fields**

The analysis of responses provided by employers, corroborated with information obtained from educational institutions and non-governmental organisations, highlights significant shortages in professional skills that affect companies' ability to recruit and retain suitable personnel. These shortages are evident both in technical occupations and in transversal skills, which are essential for labour market integration and stability.

The most pronounced shortages are identified in technical and production fields, which represent key pillars of the local and regional economy. Employers consistently reported a lack of qualified personnel in the following priority areas:

- Construction and installations (plumbers, electricians, painters, carpenters, welders), where demand for skilled workers consistently exceeds available supply;
- Textile and garment industry, particularly for experienced operators, tailors, garment workers, and personnel capable of working with specialised equipment;
- Metal processing and mechanics, where occupations such as mechanical fitters, CNC operators, mechanics, and technicians are in short supply;
- Transport and logistics, especially professional drivers, warehouse staff, and workers with logistics skills;
- Furniture production and wood processing, with shortages of carpenters, machine operators, and personnel with practical skills;
- HORECA, where the lack of qualified personnel (chefs, kitchen assistants, waiters) is intensified by high staff turnover.

These fields are characterised by a strong reliance on practical skills, which cannot be acquired solely through theoretical training, thus increasing the need for applied vocational training and the involvement of trainers with direct practical experience.

Missing skills

In addition to the lack of specific technical qualifications, employers frequently reported deficiencies in transversal skills, considered essential for employee integration and retention. The most commonly mentioned missing skills include:

Technical skills:

- correct use of specific machinery and equipment;
- ability to read and interpret technical documentation;
- compliance with occupational health and safety standards;
- adaptation to new technologies and work processes.

Transversal (soft) skills:

- responsibility and work discipline;
- respect for working hours and assigned tasks;
- communication and teamwork skills;
- adaptability and willingness to learn;
- resilience and ability to work under demanding conditions.

The lack of these skills affects not only recruitment processes but also workforce stability, contributing to high staff turnover and increased costs for employers in integrating new employees.

A major gap is evident between the skills taught in the education system and those required in practice. Employers reported that many candidates lack basic work procedures, proper use of tools, and adherence to professional standards specific to each occupation. In several sectors, it was emphasised that training should be predominantly practical, carried out in properly equipped environments and under the guidance of specialists with direct field experience. The lack of such a practical approach is perceived as one of the main causes of the mismatch between labour demand and supply.

The identification of shortage occupations and skills highlights the need to develop vocational training programmes tailored to priority sectors, combining practical technical training with the development of transversal skills. The CONCORD project addresses these needs by promoting collaboration between employers, educational institutions, and local trainers, contributing to reducing skill gaps in the cross-border labour market.

In addition to technical skills, the data reveal an acute need for transversal skills such as responsibility, discipline, rule compliance, and teamwork. Employers, especially in HORECA and services, reported major difficulties in working with young people under the age of 35, who show reluctance towards authority, lack of involvement, and professional instability.

Data from the HORECA sector also reflect strong criticism of the existing training system. Employers state that only a very small percentage of graduates are employable, and that the training received is inadequate and lacks a real practical component. Concrete examples of incorrect training and the lack of competent instructors are mentioned. This perception explains the chronic shortage of qualified personnel in the sector and the reluctance to collaborate with the formal education system.

NGOs working with individuals from disadvantaged communities confirmed these findings, indicating that labour market integration requires a long-term process of developing work behaviour, not just acquiring technical skills. At the same time, information from NGOs highlights the existence of a significant number of individuals with real practical skills acquired informally or through work abroad, especially in construction and agriculture. However, the lack of basic education, functional illiteracy, and the absence of formal qualification documents represent major barriers to formal labour market integration.

5.2 Existing training practices

The analysis of current vocational training practices shows that employers in Satu Mare County use a combination of formal and informal methods for skills development, adapted to available resources and the specifics of their activities. Although there are local training initiatives, these are often insufficiently aligned with the real needs of the labour market, which limits the effectiveness of skills development processes.

Data obtained from employers in production, garment manufacturing, and the furniture industry highlight that, in many fields, trades are highly company-specific. Although job titles are similar, work procedures, equipment used, and internal standards differ significantly. In this context, employers do not necessarily require full training in a specific occupation, but rather the acquisition of general basic skills, which can later be adapted and specialised within the workplace. This finding suggests the need to orient vocational training towards transferable skills, followed by practical specialisation within companies.

Preferences regarding the type of training

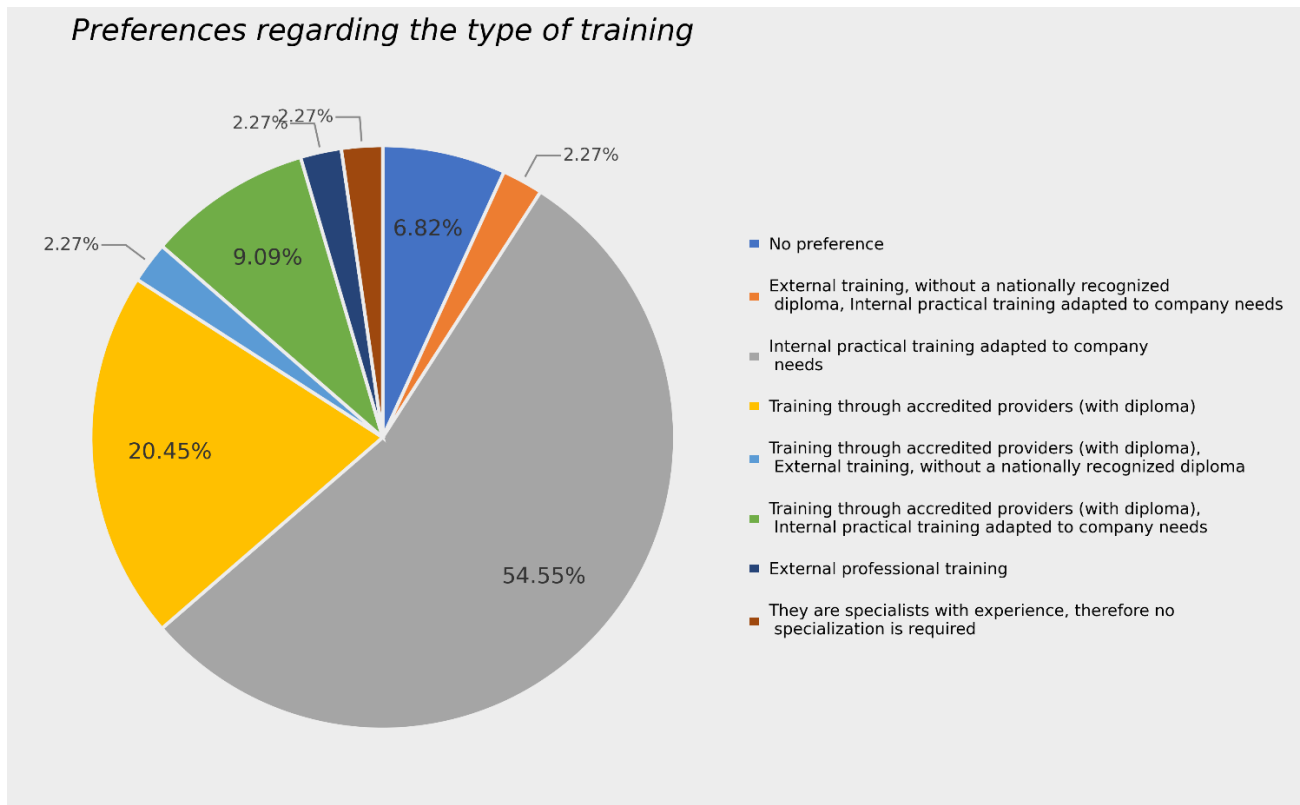


Chart No. 6. Employers' preferences regarding the type of training

✚ Internal training

Internal training is the most frequently used training practice, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises. It is generally carried out at the workplace, through the direct instruction of new employees by experienced staff or by their supervisors. Employers value this type of training for its flexibility and low costs, as well as for the possibility of quickly adapting the training content to the specific requirements of the job. However, internal training is often unstructured, depending largely on the availability and competencies of the individuals providing the instruction. The lack of standardised programmes, teaching materials, and formal recognition of the acquired skills limits the long-term impact of this type of training.

✚ External training

External training is used to a lesser extent and is preferred mainly by medium-sized and large enterprises, which have more substantial financial resources. It includes employees' participation in courses organised by authorised vocational training providers, workshops, or professional development programmes. Employers, however, report a number of obstacles in accessing external training, such as high costs, the sometimes limited relevance of courses to the real needs of the company, and the lack of trainers with practical experience. The collected data reveal a pronounced distrust towards external providers. Criticism concerns the lack of practical experience of trainers, the overly theoretical content of courses, and the fact that their organisation often depends on reaching a minimum number of participants. Employers provide

concrete examples of courses that did not lead to real improvements in employees' skills. These experiences explain the preference of most companies for internal training and their reluctance to participate in external programmes. As a result, external training is used mainly for specific qualifications or certifications, and less for the development of basic skills or for shortage occupations.

Dual education and practical training

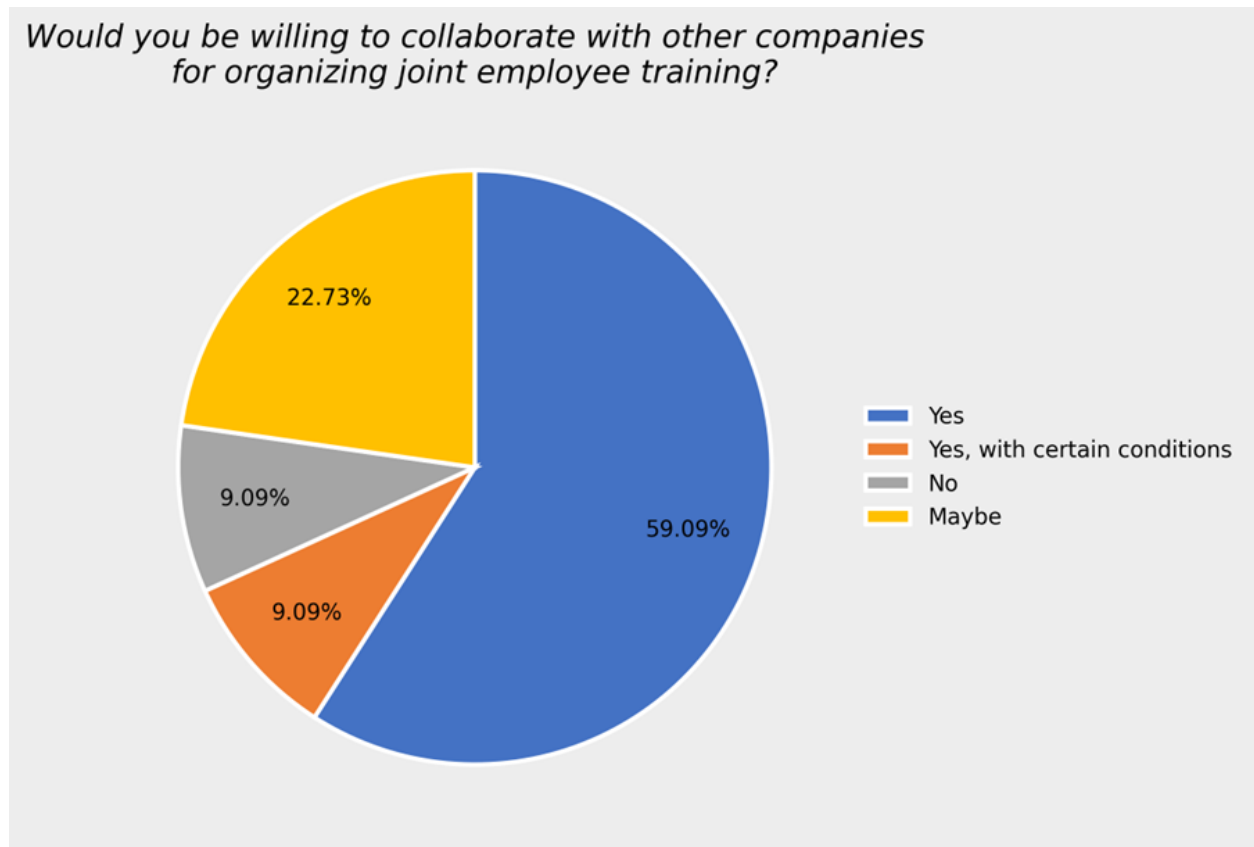


Chart No. 7. Willingness to collaborate with other companies for organising employee training

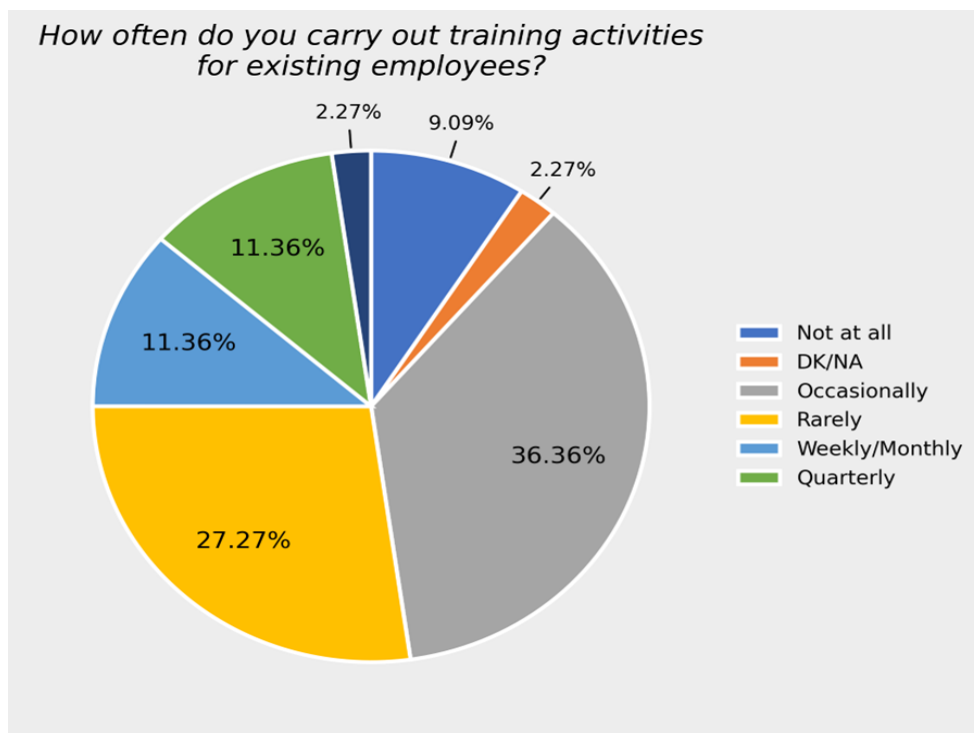
Dual education and practical training represent forms of collaboration with high potential, but which are still insufficiently exploited. Some companies, especially in technical and industrial fields, collaborate with technological high schools and vocational schools to organise internships or dual education programmes, offering students the opportunity to gain practical experience in real working conditions. Employers involved in such partnerships appreciate their medium- and long-term benefits, such as the early training of future employees, reduced recruitment costs, and faster integration of graduates. However, the expansion of these practices is limited by factors such as the lack of a stable coordination framework, bureaucracy, limited company resources, and the low number of students interested in technical trades.

In the case of micro-enterprises (1–10 employees) and small enterprises (11–50 employees), internal training represents the main, and often the only, method of developing employees’ skills. This takes place in an informal manner, at the workplace, and is delivered by experienced employees or company management. Although this approach allows for rapid adaptation to job requirements and involves low costs, it is limited by the lack of formal training structures and the absence of official recognition of acquired skills.

Medium-sized and large enterprises (over 50 employees) make greater use of external training, particularly for technical specialisations, mandatory certifications, or the upskilling of key staff. These companies have more substantial financial and logistical resources and show a higher level of interest in structured training programmes. However, even in their case, employers report difficulties related to the relevance of available courses and their alignment with the concrete needs of economic activity.

Chart No. 8. Frequency of Training Activities for Existing Employees

The data indicate that continuous professional training is generally not a systematic process, but rather an occasional one, driven by immediate operational needs. Most companies report that they conduct training activities rarely or only when a specific need arises, such as the introduction of new equipment, adaptation to specific technical requirements, or the onboarding of new employees. A smaller number of employers mention conducting training on a regular basis, this practice being more common among medium-sized and large companies, which have more developed internal resources and structures.



Which of the following statements are true for your company?

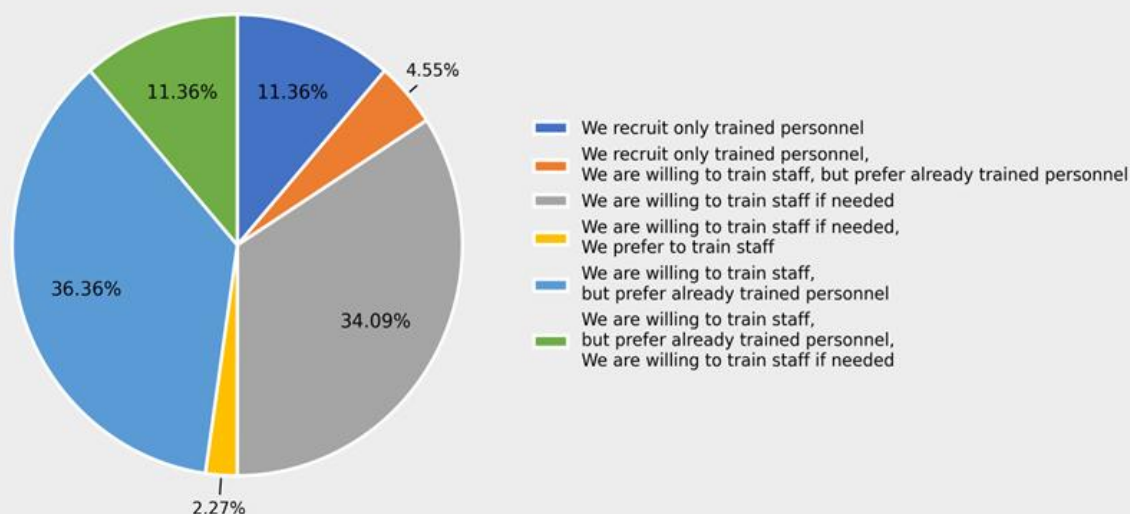


Chart No. 9. Training Practices of Companies

In conclusion, the existing training practices indicate the presence of a foundation of experience that can be further strengthened; however, a more coherent and coordinated approach is needed to increase their effectiveness. The CONCORD project can directly contribute to improving training practices by developing pilot programmes, involving local trainers, and facilitating collaboration between employers, educational institutions, and other relevant stakeholders, thereby supporting the alignment of workforce skills with the labour market requirements in the cross-border region.

5.3 Barriers to Training

The analysis of responses provided by employers and other actors involved in the skills development process highlights the existence of significant barriers in organising and accessing vocational training, which limit companies' ability to invest consistently in human resource development. These barriers are closely linked to company size, economic sectors, and the specific characteristics of the local labour market, and they mainly take the form of high costs, lack of available time, and a shortage of qualified local trainers.

Costs

Costs associated with vocational training represent one of the main obstacles mentioned by employers, especially micro-enterprises and small companies. These costs include course participation fees, trainers' fees, logistical expenses, as well as indirect costs generated by employees' absence from the workplace during training.

Employers point out that, in the absence of financial support mechanisms or subsidised training programmes, investment in training is often postponed or limited to strictly necessary instruction for current operations. This situation particularly affects technical and productive sectors, where practical training is essential but requires significant financial resources.

A major obstacle highlighted by interviewed employers is the combination of direct and indirect training costs. Representatives of small and medium-sized companies mentioned that participation in external courses involves not only training fees but also productivity losses caused by employees' absence. In some cases, external training providers organise courses only if a minimum number of participants is reached, a condition difficult to meet for a single company, thus limiting access to training relevant to specific business needs. Additionally, in sectors such as production and HORECA, employers emphasised that high labour costs relative to profit margins reduce companies' capacity to invest further in training.

Lack of time

Another major barrier is the lack of available time for training, both from the employers' and employees' perspective. In many companies, especially in sectors characterised by intensive activity or high seasonality (construction, transport, HORECA, industry), work schedules do not allow for allocating dedicated training periods without affecting productivity.

Employers noted that the difficulty of temporarily replacing employees attending training, as well as the pressure to meet contractual deadlines, limits the possibility of organising structured training programmes. As a result, training is predominantly carried out informally, at the workplace, without systematic planning or clear skill development objectives.

Representatives of companies in production, trade, and services indicated that training new employees involves specific procedures tailored to each company's internal workflows and quality standards, making frequent recruitment and training difficult. For this reason, many firms prefer to retain existing employees and avoid continuous recruitment and training of new staff, focusing instead on workforce retention.

In the case of NGOs working with individuals from disadvantaged communities, the lack of time is compounded by the need for a lengthy process of adaptation and discipline-building before beneficiaries can become productive.

Lack of local trainers

The shortage of qualified local trainers is a significant barrier, especially for practical training in technical trades. Employers and educational institutions report difficulties in identifying trainers who combine relevant practical experience with appropriate pedagogical skills and availability for adult training activities.

In the absence of local trainers, companies are forced to rely on external providers, which increases costs and reduces the flexibility of training programmes. This situation is particularly acute in rural and peripheral areas, where access to training resources is limited. At the same

time, there are experienced specialists—both active and retired—who could contribute to training but are not integrated into an organised and recognised framework.

Discussions consistently highlighted the shortage of local trainers with relevant practical experience capable of delivering applied skills. Employers in HORECA pointed to the low quality of training provided by the formal education system and the lack of instructors familiar with real working conditions. Initiatives to organise hospitality training courses have failed due to accreditation difficulties and the lack of suitable trainers.

In the textile and manufacturing industries, company representatives stated that trades cannot be effectively taught in schools due to the lack of practical experience among teachers, emphasising the need for trainers directly from the economic sector. There is a clear need to create practical training spaces and involve locally recognised skilled workers.

6. Identification of Potential Trainers

The analysis of data collected through questionnaires and follow-up discussions highlights the existence of significant potential among local trainers who can contribute to the development of professional skills in the target region. These trainers come from diverse backgrounds—educational, economic, and community—and possess relevant practical experience that is currently underutilised.

A recurring finding is the essential role of informal trainers and specialists with practical experience, such as skilled workers, master craftsmen, or retired professionals. Employers and local actors perceive them as more relevant and effective in training compared to purely theoretical trainers, due to their direct understanding of real working conditions. This supports the need to better leverage existing local practical expertise.

6.1 Typology of Identified Potential Trainers

Teachers with practical experience

An important category of potential trainers consists of teachers from technological high schools and vocational schools who, in addition to their teaching activity, have direct practical experience in the technical fields they teach. Questionnaires indicate that a significant share of teachers have previously worked in companies or are engaged in practical activities alongside teaching.

However, discussions with employers reveal that not all teachers are perceived as sufficiently connected to current labour market realities, and training delivered exclusively in schools is sometimes considered insufficiently practical. Teachers who combine pedagogical and practical experience are seen as valuable resources, capable of both transmitting theoretical knowledge and contextualising it according to real employer needs. This category can play a key role in

developing structured training programmes and strengthening the link between education and the business environment.

Active skilled workers

A second major category consists of active skilled workers—qualified professionals with extensive practical experience, employed in local companies or working independently. Data from employers in construction, textiles, furniture production, and HORECA show that workplace training is often carried out by these workers, who transfer practical skills to new employees.

NGOs working with disadvantaged communities have also identified informally recognised skilled workers who acquired competencies through practical work, including abroad, in fields such as construction, agriculture, or baking. Although they may lack formal certifications, they are valued for their real practical skills and ability to perform in complex work environments.

The main limitation of this group is the lack of pedagogical skills and an organised framework for involvement in training. With appropriate support, active skilled workers can become key practical trainers, especially for short-term, skills-oriented training programmes.

Retired specialists

A third category includes retired or semi-retired specialists—individuals with solid professional experience in technical or productive fields who are no longer actively employed. Data indicate the existence of such professionals (former technicians, engineers, skilled workers) who may be willing to engage in training activities under flexible conditions.

Employers and NGOs consider this group an underutilised resource, benefiting from long-term experience and greater availability. Retired specialists can contribute not only to technical training but also to transmitting work culture, discipline, and professional responsibility—areas frequently identified as lacking among new employees.

6.2 Areas of Specialisation

The analysis of the collected data highlights that the identified potential trainers cover a wide range of technical and professional fields, closely linked to the current needs of the labour market in Satu Mare County and the cross-border region. The areas of specialisation reflect both the local economic structure and the sectors in which employers report a shortage of qualified personnel.

Employers emphasise that the demand for skilled labour remains high, while identifying well-trained skilled workers is becoming increasingly difficult. Among the areas of specialisation that require skilled workers capable of sharing knowledge are:

- Construction and installations, including occupations such as plumber (sanitary, gas, heating), electrician, welder, carpenter, painter, sheet metal worker;
- Textile and garment industry, including sewing operators, tailors, textile machine operators and personnel with quality control skills;

- Metal processing and mechanics, with specialisations such as mechanical fitter, CNC operator, maintenance mechanic;
- Furniture production and wood processing, including occupations such as carpenter, machine operator, furniture assembler;
- Transport and logistics, especially professional drivers and personnel with logistics skills;
- HORECA, where there is a shortage of skills for cooks, kitchen assistants, waiters and service staff..

Discussions with employers show that it is increasingly difficult to identify skilled workers who possess practical competencies, acquired either through direct professional experience or through long-term activity in local companies or abroad. The data highlight that these practical competencies are considered much more relevant by employers than formal qualifications, especially for technical trades. In this context, there is a need for alternative recruitment solutions, using methods such as organising workshops involving companies, meetings with representatives of educational institutions, as well as individual discussions with potential candidates and other relevant actors on the labour market.

6.3 Willingness to Engage

The collected data indicate a high level of willingness among potential trainers to get involved, with the note that this involvement is conditioned by the existence of an organised, flexible framework adapted to the local context.

Most of the identified potential trainers have expressed their willingness to participate in short-term training sessions focused on concrete skills that can be applied immediately. This type of training is considered the most effective both by trainers and employers, especially for low-skilled individuals or for the rapid integration of new employees.

There is significant openness to involvement in pilot vocational training programmes, tested on a small scale and adapted to the specific needs of certain sectors or companies. Trainers appreciate the opportunity to contribute to defining the training content and to adjusting it along the way, based on direct feedback from practice.

Would you be interested in some employees of your company, who need additional training, participating in a pilot vocational training programme (free of charge)?

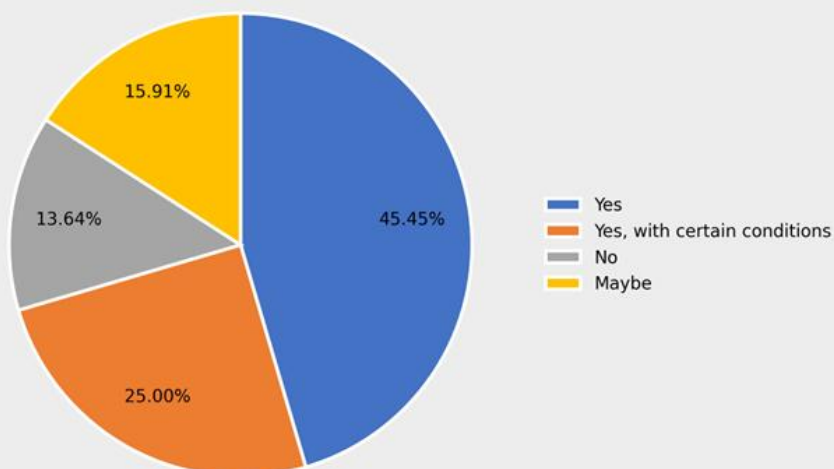


Chart No. 10. Willingness to Participate in Pilot Training Programmes

Both representatives of educational institutions, as well as employers and NGOs, show interest in direct collaboration, within which training is carried out in partnership, in real work environments or in community centres. NGOs are perceived as important intermediaries, especially in working with individuals from vulnerable groups, while companies are seen as providers of the practical context necessary for training.

At the same time, responses from the surveyed companies indicate a high level of interest and openness among employers towards involvement in the activities of the CONCORD project and towards the concept of “training groups for the development of professional skills.” More than half of the surveyed companies (54.55%) expressed a clear willingness to participate in meetings with the project team, demonstrating the responsiveness of the business environment to partnership-based vocational training initiatives.

Would you be willing to participate in a meeting with members of the CONCORD project team, to learn more about the concept of 'training groups for the development of professional skills'?

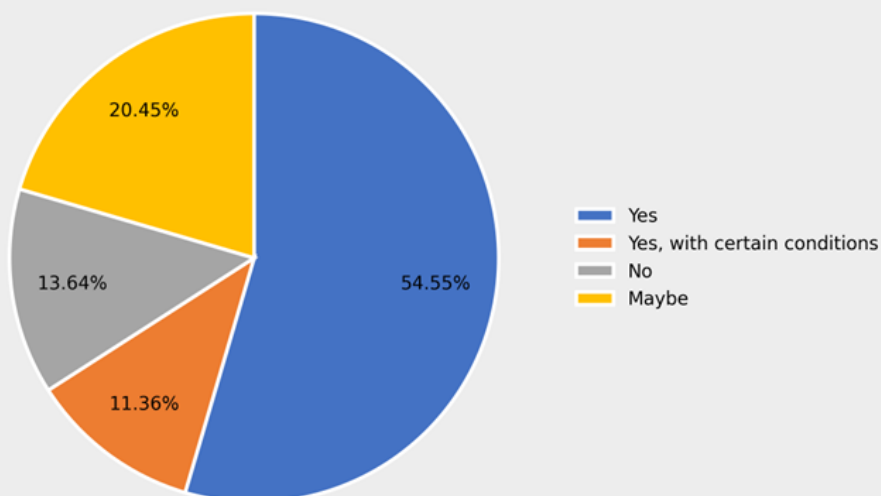


Chart No. 11. Willingness to Participate in a Meeting with Members of the CONCORD Project Team

If responses such as “Yes, with certain conditions” (11.36%) and “Maybe” (20.45%) are also included, it can be observed that approximately 86% of employers show at least a potential openness towards participating in such meetings. This category reflects an interest conditioned by aspects such as time availability, relevance of the topic, or concrete benefits for the company, suggesting the need for a flexible approach tailored to employers’ needs.

The relatively small percentage of companies that responded negatively (13.64%) indicates that reluctance towards partnership-based training initiatives is not dominant, but rather linked to specific constraints or lack of resources. Overall, the results confirm a high potential for establishing training groups and for involving employers in the pilot activities of the CONCORD project, providing a solid basis for organizing information and consultation meetings with the local business environment.

7. Level of Collaboration and Local Networks

7.1 Collaboration between Schools and Companies

Does your institution have formal collaborations with local companies?

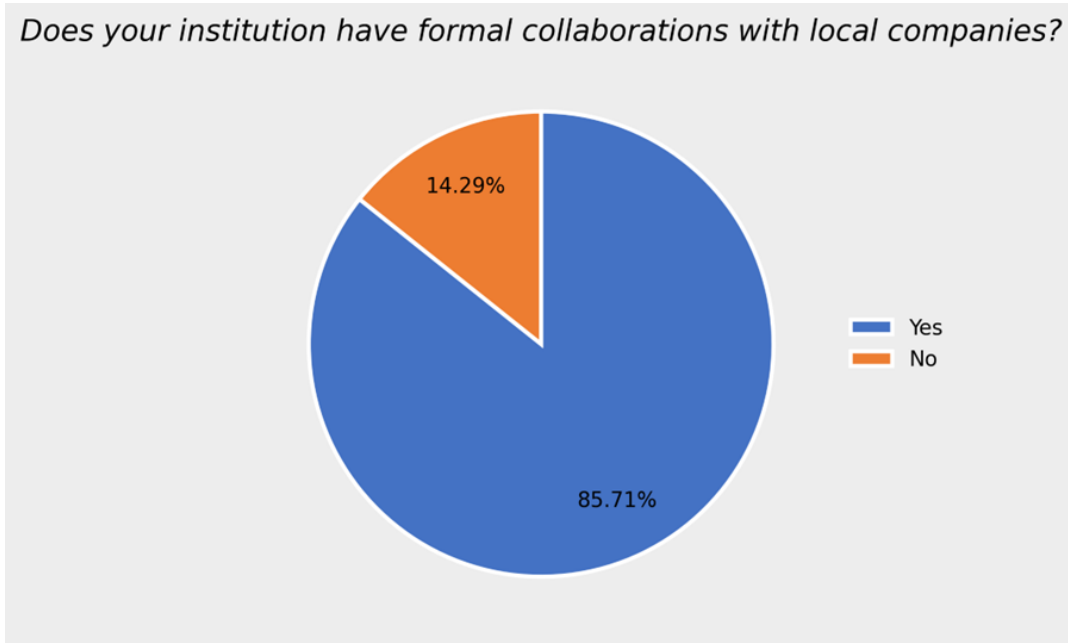


Chart No. 12. Collaboration between Schools and Local Companies

Collaboration between educational institutions and companies exists, but is largely occasional and ad hoc. The most common forms of collaboration are internships and, in some cases, dual education. Employers appreciate these collaborations, but point out the lack of systematic coordination and difficulties in adapting educational content to the real requirements of the labour market.

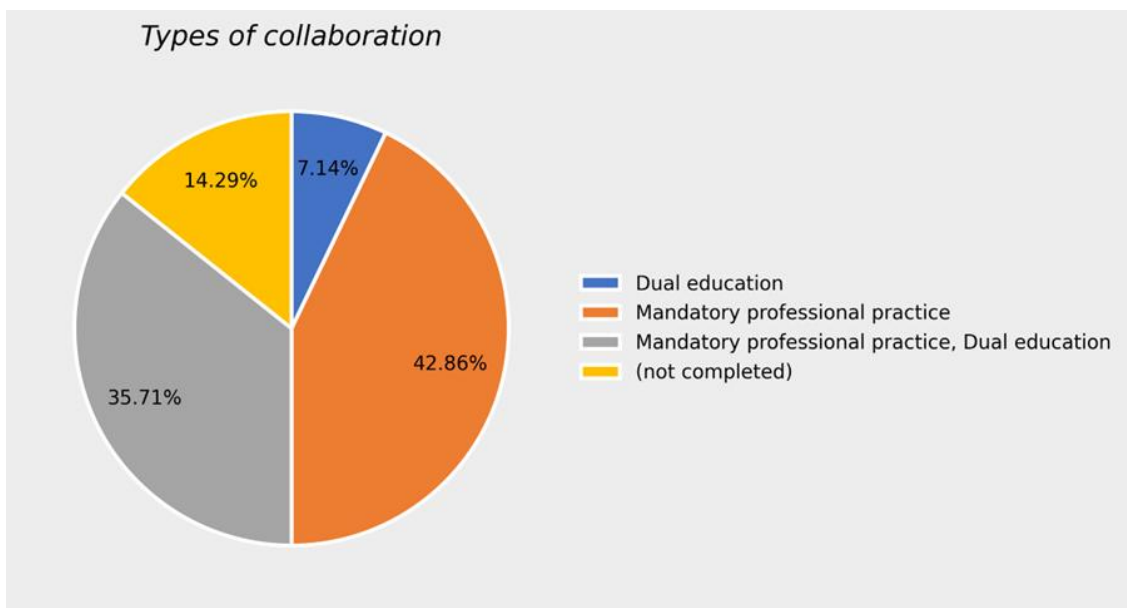


Chart No. 13. Types of Collaboration between Schools and Local Companies

7.2 The Role of NGOs

NGOs play an essential role in facilitating integration into the labour market, especially for individuals from vulnerable groups. They provide counselling, basic training, mediation, and social support, complementing the interventions of employers and educational institutions. The data analysis highlights that NGOs are often the only actors capable of ensuring the continuity of the professional integration process.

In addition to counselling, mediation, and social support activities, data collected from non-governmental organisations show that they also fulfil a key intermediary role between labour market requirements and the actual capacity of beneficiaries to adapt. NGOs often act as “translators” of employers’ requirements, adapting professional language and expectations to the level of individuals with low education or limited experience. This function is particularly important as many beneficiaries do not concretely understand what a stable job entails in terms of schedule, discipline, and responsibility.

At the same time, NGO interventions target not only initial job placement but also the stabilization of work behaviour in the medium term, through the development of daily routines, responsibility, and sustained motivation. Data show that the professional integration of individuals from vulnerable groups is a gradual process requiring constant support, and NGOs are often the only actors able to ensure this continuity. At the same time, the analysis also highlights the limitations of NGOs, driven by dependence on temporary funding, lack of accredited trainers, and limited institutional resources, which underlines the need for stable partnerships and a strengthened cooperation framework.

Although NGOs cannot replace specialized vocational training providers, their role is essential in preparing beneficiaries to participate in such programmes and in ensuring an effective transition to the labour market. The data indicate that NGOs also play an important role in reducing the tendency to abandon jobs or engage in occasional work abroad, by maintaining contact with beneficiaries and providing support during periods of instability.

7.3 Openness to Cross-Border Cooperation

Employers, educational institutions, and NGOs all express a clear openness to cross-border cooperation, particularly in the context of labour shortages and increased mobility. There is interest in exchanging good practices, developing joint training programmes, and using shared tools such as the Laboro.ro platform for recruitment and training.

The collected data show that openness to cross-border cooperation is perceived by NGOs not only as an economic opportunity but also as a socio-professional necessity, especially in the context of integrating refugees and mobile labour force. NGOs emphasize the importance of exchanging experience in working with hard-to-employ individuals, as well as access to functional models of training and mediation from other regions or countries. At the same time, respondents highlight that the mere exchange of good practices is insufficient in the absence of common working tools that enable effective cooperation. There is a clearly expressed need for shared

databases, harmonized training procedures, and common digital tools to support both recruitment and professional integration. In this context, the Laboro.ro platform is perceived by NGOs and other stakeholders as an operational tool with cross-border potential, capable of supporting concrete cooperation, not just communication between partners.

7.4 Needs for Coordination and Harmonization

A common element identified across all categories of respondents is the need for a coordination and harmonization mechanism for existing initiatives. Data analysis shows that one of the main dysfunctions of the current system is the lack of a functional coordination mechanism between schools, employers, NGOs, and trainers. Currently, these entities often operate in parallel, with collaborations being occasional and dependent on individual initiatives or informal relationships. NGOs particularly feel the absence of a “coordination node” to centralize information on labour market needs, training supply, and available human resources.

In addition, the data indicate a lack of harmonization in language and expectations among the involved actors. Employers formulate technical requirements that are difficult for beneficiaries to understand, educational institutions use an abstract educational language, and job seekers interpret the real requirements of work differently. This lack of coherence affects the efficiency of the professional integration process and highlights the need for a common working framework.

Several employers, especially from industry and production sectors, explicitly expressed the need for a person or structure that would ensure a permanent link between the economic and educational environments. This function would be responsible for collecting up-to-date information on labour market needs, translating it into an accessible language for educational institutions, and facilitating the adaptation of vocational training. The absence of such a role is perceived as a major cause of the mismatch between education and the economy.

In this context, the CONCORD project is perceived by local stakeholders not only as a one-time initiative but as an opportunity to create a stable and predictable framework for cooperation, enabling the coordination of existing initiatives, harmonization of training and mediation tools, and sustainable use of local resources. Strengthening this framework can significantly contribute to improving the efficiency of labour market interventions and ensuring their continuity after the project’s completion.

8. Conclusions

The study carried out within the CONCORD project provides a detailed overview of the labour market situation in Satu Mare County, in correlation with the challenges and trends identified at the level of the cross-border region. The analysis of data collected from employers, educational institutions, teachers, trainers, and non-governmental organisations highlights the existence of persistent problems, but also significant local resources that can be leveraged through coordinated and partnership-based interventions.

One of the main conclusions of the study is the existence of a major gap between the demand for and supply of skills on the labour market, particularly in technical and productive sectors. Employers in construction, textile industry, manufacturing, transport and logistics, furniture production, and HORECA constantly face difficulties in recruiting qualified personnel, despite high and relatively stable labour demand. The lack of candidates with real practical skills and relevant experience limits companies' ability to grow and maintain competitiveness.

At the same time, the study highlights the limited use of atypical forms of employment, such as telework, part-time work, or job sharing, with most employers considering these options irrelevant for their activity. This rigidity in work organisation reduces the capacity of the local labour market to absorb certain categories of workers and to respond flexibly to labour shortages. The results also show a significant openness among employers towards hiring workers from other countries as an alternative solution to labour shortages, especially in sectors where the lack of qualified personnel is acute and staff turnover is high. In the context marked by the impact of the war in Ukraine, the employment of refugees or Ukrainian citizens is perceived by some employers both as an opportunity to address labour shortages and as a contribution to their socio-professional integration. However, there are also difficulties related to language barriers, administrative procedures, and the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad.

The study shows that recruitment challenges are not incidental but reflect structural dysfunctions of the labour market. The most frequently reported difficulties include the lack of qualified personnel, deficits in transversal skills (responsibility, discipline, adaptability), high staff turnover, and lack of practical experience. These issues are exacerbated by external migration, workforce ageing, and the preference for seasonal work abroad instead of stable local employment. These challenges are further intensified by economic pressures faced by employers, particularly in sectors with seasonal activity, where high labour costs and the need to retain staff throughout the year limit the ability to invest consistently in recruitment and training. Qualitative data indicate that labour shortages are not only quantitative but also functional, with employers frequently facing a lack of real availability for work, instability, and difficulties in medium-term integration.

Another important aspect highlighted by the study is the mismatch between vocational training and the real needs of employers. The education system and continuing vocational training mechanisms often fail to provide applied skills adapted to the concrete requirements of jobs. Employers report that graduates of vocational schools and training courses often require

additional on-the-job training, and that formally acquired skills are not sufficient for rapid and effective integration into work activities.

Vocational training is predominantly carried out internally, at the workplace, especially in micro and small enterprises, due to high costs and limited access to relevant external training providers. Although this internal training is appreciated for its practical nature, it is often unstructured and does not lead to formal recognition of acquired skills. At the same time, external training is used to a lesser extent, being perceived as insufficiently adapted to companies' real needs and difficult to access due to costs and provider conditions. These constraints disproportionately affect small and medium-sized enterprises, which have limited resources and the greatest need for flexible and shared training solutions.

The study highlights the existence of major obstacles in organising vocational training, related to costs, lack of available time, and the shortage of local trainers or resource persons with practical experience. These obstacles particularly affect SMEs and limit their ability to invest consistently in employee skill development. In addition, in rural and peripheral areas, access to vocational training is even more limited, which increases territorial disparities in the labour market.

At the same time, the study identifies a significant potential of local trainers that is currently underutilised. Teachers with practical experience, active craftsmen, and retired specialists represent important resources for the development of professional skills, especially in shortage occupations. Their willingness to engage in training activities is high, provided that there is an organised, flexible framework adapted to the local context.

The analysis of collaboration levels shows that relationships between schools, companies, and NGOs exist but are occasional and insufficiently coordinated. Collaborations are largely ad hoc and dependent on individual initiatives, lacking a stable mechanism for coordination and harmonisation. NGOs play a crucial role in integrating individuals from vulnerable groups into the labour market, but their interventions are limited by resources and the absence of a broader cooperation framework with the economic and educational sectors.

The study reveals a clear openness to cross-border cooperation among all categories of respondents, particularly in the context of labour shortages and increased mobility. There is interest in exchanging good practices, developing joint training programmes, and using shared tools for recruitment and labour mediation. In this context, the development and expansion of the Laboro.ro platform is perceived as a tool with high potential to facilitate recruitment, training, and professional integration, including for foreign workers and Ukrainian refugees.

Therefore, the study results confirm that labour market issues in Satu Mare County are complex, interconnected, and systemic, requiring integrated and coordinated interventions. The CONCORD project directly addresses the identified needs by providing a framework for strengthening collaboration between employers, educational institutions, trainers, and NGOs, as well as for harmonising training and labour mediation tools at the cross-border level. The implementation

of targeted interventions has the potential to reduce skill gaps, increase employment, and strengthen labour market cohesion in the target region.

9. Recommendations

Leveraging the Expertise of Identified Potential Trainers

It is recommended to establish groups of local trainers based on the typologies identified in the study: teachers with practical experience, active craftsmen, and retired specialists. The process of forming these groups should take into account relevant practical experience, field of specialization, and willingness to engage. It is recommended to organize initial orientation sessions to ensure a unified approach to the training process and to adapt content to the real needs of employers. The involvement of local trainers can contribute to reducing the skills gap and increasing the relevance of vocational training programmes.

Development and Testing of Applied Vocational Training Programmes

To test and adjust the proposed interventions, it is recommended to implement pilot vocational training programmes focused on the identified priority technical sectors (construction, textiles, metal processing, transport, HORECA). Pilot programmes should be short-term, with a strong emphasis on practical components and the development of transversal skills. Direct involvement of employers in designing training content and evaluating results is recommended, so that programmes can later be replicated and scaled at regional and cross-border levels.

Promotion of the Laboro.ro Platform

It is recommended to actively promote and systematically use the Laboro.ro platform as a central tool for labour mediation and for connecting project stakeholders. The platform should be used for:

- ✓ publishing job offers;
- ✓ promoting training opportunities;
- ✓ connecting employers with potential trainers;
- ✓ facilitating cross-border recruitment..

The expansion of the platform through a Ukrainian-language version contributes to the integration of individuals from other countries and supports labour mobility in the cross-border region.

Strengthening Partnerships between Schools and Companies

To reduce the gap between education and labour market requirements, it is recommended to strengthen and expand partnerships between educational institutions and the economic sector. These partnerships should go beyond occasional collaborations and include employer

involvement in defining competencies, organizing internships, developing dual education, and updating curricula. Local and county authorities can play an important role in facilitating these partnerships and creating a favourable framework for cooperation.

✚ Supporting Continuous Training

It is recommended to promote continuous vocational training as an essential tool for adapting the workforce to economic and technological changes. Local stakeholders, including public authorities and relevant organisations, should support access for employees and job seekers to flexible training programmes, including through information, facilitation of access to resources, and, where possible, financial support. The involvement of NGOs in this process is essential, especially for working with vulnerable groups.

✚ Leveraging the Role of NGOs in Labour Market Integration

It is recommended to actively involve non-governmental organisations in implementing training and labour mediation activities, especially for individuals from vulnerable groups. NGOs play a key role in:

- ✓ career counselling and guidance;
- ✓ development of basic skills and work behaviour;
- ✓ supporting the integration and stabilization of beneficiaries in the labour market.
- ✓ Collaboration between NGOs, employers, and trainers can contribute to increasing the chances of medium- and long-term professional integration.
- ✓ Continuous updating of the trainer database.

It is recommended to periodically update the trainer database to reflect labour market changes and to integrate newly available human resources. This database should be correlated with the Laboro.ro platform and used as an operational tool for planning training activities, promoting available skills, and facilitating collaboration between trainers, employers, and other relevant stakeholders.

✚ Creating a Coordination and Harmonization Mechanism

It is recommended to create a coordination mechanism to facilitate cooperation between employers, schools, trainers, and NGOs. This mechanism should support:

- ✓ information exchange regarding labour market needs;
- ✓ harmonization of language and expectations among stakeholders;
- ✓ joint planning of training activities;
- ✓ effective use of existing local resources.

The limited use of atypical forms of employment indicates the need for interventions that support more flexible work organisation, especially through information, exchange of best practices, and development of solutions adapted to local needs. In this regard, the CONCORD project can contribute to promoting flexible employment and training models that facilitate labour market access for young people, low-skilled individuals, and those undergoing professional transition. The CONCORD project provides the necessary framework to initiate this mechanism and to test cooperation models that can continue beyond the project's completion.

10. Annexes

- Questionnaires used
- List of identified resource persons

Project Title: Promoting a Sustainable Collaboration Across Borders to Collectively Boost the Economies of Three Crossborder Regions

Acronym: CONCORD

The CONCORD project aims to promote sustainable cross-border cooperation between Romania, Hungary, and Ukraine to address common labour market challenges in the regions of Satu Mare, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, and Zakarpattia.

Project ID: HUSKROUA/23/S./3.1/025

The project is implemented by AGES Association in partnership with “Ötlet a Vidékért Egyesület” (Hungary) and TES Fund (Ukraine).

Geographical coverage:

- Satu Mare
- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg
- Zakarpattia

Project website: <https://concord.ages.ro/>

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