Training Opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe

Summary results of the HELP training needs analysis 2009

Higher Education Learning Partnerships
TEMPUS Project No 144596
2009-2012
The Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) project consortium comprises the University of Novi Sad (Serbia), J J Strossmayer University of Osijek (Croatia), Szent Istvan University in Szarvas (Hungary), Polytechnic University of Timisoara (Romania) and the Telford College of Arts and Technology (United Kingdom). The main objective of the HELP project is to establish learning partnerships between higher education and business to promote dialogue on the skills training agenda in Central and Eastern Europe.

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- The Nature of Skill Shortages
- Proportion of Businesses Offering Training
- Type of Training Most Often Organised
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- How Training is Selected
- Types of Training Most Difficult to Find
- Rating of the University One Stop Shop Strategy

FINAL COMMENTS
Introduction

Over the past two decades Central and Eastern Europe has experienced unprecedented economic, social and political change. The process of transition has required significant adaptations at all levels of the economy and society. Much progress has been achieved throughout the region in the privatisation of State enterprises which has opened up new economic space to the private sector, especially SMEs. In parallel, the region has witnessed changing shares of employment in agriculture, manufacturing and the service sector. This in combination with occupational changes has given rise to the need for new or adapted skills in the labour market.

Most relevant to the HELP project are those new skills needed by enterprises and their labour forces that contribute to encouraging innovation, increasing competitiveness and raising productivity. This is especially true in the SME sector where the share of total employment is increasing. However, the reform of adult learning and skills training in Central and Eastern Europe has been slow. Rates of participation in training continue to lag behind average levels in the European Union. This needs to be addressed if Europe as a whole is to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. Training must not be seen as an option but rather a fundamental component of good business practice. By improving competitiveness at different levels, training enables businesses to realise their goals more efficiently and effectively. The bottom line is that training directly affects business profitability.
A main concern of the HELP project is to raise awareness of the importance of training in successful business. As part of the project a training needs analysis (TNA) was undertaken in Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia to understand better the training situation in the region. It explored employers’ attitudes towards training, current training practices and the nature of current skill shortages. A summary of the results is presented here. The close correspondence of the results between countries suggests the pressing need to increase the availability of and access to demand-driven training. One way to realise this is for education institutions to work more closely with business in mutually beneficial partnerships structured around training and business development. In this way, the relevance of education and training can be improved and applied towards improving business productivity, employment opportunities and regional prosperity.
Executive Summary

Key findings of the TNA were that:

- training is valued by business;
- training is taking place but is not necessarily integrated into the business development strategy in smaller enterprises;
- businesses value training which leads to quick and positive changes in efficiency;
- the most common training offered is to increase the effectiveness in operating machinery and technology in the workplace;
- training at the level of management tends to focus on strategic planning and organisational skills and is typically provided in-house;
- a key training area identified is the improvement of soft skills such as problem-solving, decision making and team working;
- businesses prefer graduates with a combination of practical skills and applied knowledge;
- businesses value both qualifications and experience when recruiting new workers;
- the businesses surveyed confirmed an interest in developing partnerships with universities and colleges;
- university-business links require improved channels of information and communication to function and develop such as the One Stop Shop model which provides a single point of contact;
- partnership working is a very new concept in the HELP region and will require stronger emphasis and support for stakeholders to cooperate around a common agenda;
- the initiative to promote partnership working must come from universities.
HELP for Skills Training in Central and Eastern Europe

The HELP Project

Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) is a three year project funded by EU Tempus. Tempus supports the modernisation of higher education between the European Union and surrounding countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East.

The main objective of the HELP project is to establish learning partnerships between higher education and business to promote dialogue on the regional skills training agenda. It brings together universities and social partners in:

**Croatia**
- J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek
- IPK Kandit d.d (Confectionery)
- Pivovara Brewery Osijek

**Serbia**
- University of Novi Sad
- Carlsberg Serbia
- Centre of Strategic Economic Studies

**Hungary**
- Szent Istvan University (Szarávas)
- Gallicoop Poultry Hatching and Processing Company Ltd
- Körös-Völgye Alapítvány (Foundation to Support SMEs)

**Romania**
- Polytechnic University of Timisoara
- SC Balbeary Treatment Buzias SA (Mineral Water)
- Agora University
- Ministry for SME, Commerce, Tourism and Liberal Professions

**United Kingdom**
- Telford College of Arts and Technology
Why Training?

The geographical area covered by the project corresponds to those regions of Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia located within the Great Plain region. This common geography was an important factor in the identification of the project since the region as a whole faces similar problems associated with economic and social transition. The traditional economy of the Great Plain is predominantly agro-based and continues to suffer from agricultural decline, skill shortages and associated unemployment.

Work-based training predates formal education. Its importance lies in the passing on of skills and knowledge and has been recognised since the earliest of times. Training is a learning process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, sharpening of skills, concepts, rules or changing of attitudes and behaviours to enhance the performance of people in work and life. In a world where change is happening more regularly and dramatically training is critical to instil the skills and knowledge to perform competently in the workplace. A general rule of thumb is that the amount of training required is at least as much as the amount of change that has occurred.

Untrained or poorly trained workers cost significantly more to support than well trained workers. This is true from the perspective of individuals and the companies in which they are employed. Generally, people without adequate skills will not progress as fast as those with proper training in their careers. Similarly, companies with better trained workforces will be more profitable and grow more rapidly.
Reasons to train for businesses include to:

- increase productivity
- increase profitability
- promote innovation in the workplace
- increase adaptability to change
- increase competitiveness

Reasons to train for employees include to:

- increase job satisfaction
- improve self-image
- improve personal esteem
- increase adaptability to change
- increase employability and potential for promotion

Skill constraints undermine productivity and prolong the economic and social transition process. More serious effects on the general population in Central and Eastern Europe have been structural unemployment, low rates of economic growth and the emergence of poverty and social exclusion. However, participation in relevant skills training and adult education throughout the region continues to lag behind European Union averages (Table1). Data for Serbia are not included in this table but adult education and training are particularly underdeveloped. Additionally, high unemployment rates do not provide incentives to employers to develop employees and public resources for labour market training are scarce¹.

¹ Serbia - European Training Foundation Country Plan 2009
Table 1
Lifelong Learning - Percentage of the population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training

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(1) Refer to the Internet metadata file (http://europe.eu.int/estat/ref/infol/pdcw/en/educ/educ_base.htm).
Source: Eurostat (tsiem080)
Project Objectives

The objectives of the HELP project are to establish higher education learning partnerships (HELPs) in Central and Eastern Europe between higher education and enterprises at the local level to:

- identify and prioritise the main learning and training needs to promote local enterprise development;
- share experience of local HELPs at the regional level and explore existing models of partnership for knowledge exchange between education and enterprise;
- to increase the availability of relevant information at the regional level on the nature and extent of skill shortages affecting economic development;
- prepare learning and training programmes within HELPs tailored to local enterprise development needs and priorities;
- pilot, monitor and evaluate the learning and training programmes, especially the potential for sustainability based on private provision;
- disseminate results widely, particularly at the regional policy-making levels to support economic transition within South Eastern Europe.

The first year of the project focused on establishing a HELP in each partner country. Within the European Union, partnership working has become systematically embedded into policies, programmes and projects as the dominant “way of working”. Partnerships are decentralised structures that empower stakeholders by moving governance and decision-making closer to the local level. In this way, location-specific approaches can be encouraged to match more accurately local skills development to the specific requirements of businesses.
Partnership Working

The notion of partnership working is new to the HELP region and meetings with stakeholders sought to encourage broad participation. Stakeholders include representatives from the private sector, central and local government, training organisations, communities and civil society. HELP has brought these diverse groups together within each partner country to generate a shared vision of new opportunities in education and training. Around this vision the work of HELP is to extend positive support for local economic development by improving the match between skills requirements and training provision at the local and regional levels.

The dialogue with stakeholders has been informed and supported by a TNA undertaken in each of the HELP countries. The purpose of this analysis was to provide insights into the nature and extent of the skills training requirements within the region.

Specifically, the training needs analysis surveyed the:

- general satisfaction of business with the knowledge and skills of existing graduates;
- perception of business concerning the nature and extent of skill shortages;
- practice and attitude of business towards training;
- training needs of business and the preferred means of organisation.
In all survey areas there was positive interest in the HELP project, its objectives and the planned activities. However, the potential contribution of training to business competitiveness by increasing innovation and efficiency appears not always to be fully appreciated. Many businesses view training as a cost to be reduced (especially during the current recession) rather than an investment in human capital that would yield positive benefits in the longer term. Thus, an important future activity of the HELP project will be to raise awareness of the link between training and business competitiveness.

In terms of developing and sustaining links with the private sector, the TNA identified the establishment of a university One Stop Shop. A One Stop Shop offers a single point of contact for businesses seeking to work with higher education for training, research and other specialist services.

The Lisbon Strategy and the subsequent Europe 2020 Strategy of the European Union are based on a consensus among Member States to make Europe more dynamic and competitive. Important elements of these strategies are to promote:

- smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation
- sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy
- inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion
Key to the success of these is the quality of human capital. Human capital may be defined as the health, strength, education, training, and skills that people bring to their jobs. Its quality influences the level of productivity and economic growth of a country or region. One of the main initiatives of Europe 2020 is an agenda for new skills and jobs. This is to be achieved by modernising labour markets and empowering people by developing human capital throughout the lifecycle to increase participation and better match supply and demand, including labour mobility.

The quality of human capital can be improved through education and training in schools, universities and adult education. In this respect, the preparation and delivery of relevant education and training coupled with widening access to opportunities for skills development to facilitate lifelong learning form key elements of the Lisbon and Europe 2020 Strategies. In this way, society as a whole will be more able to adapt and benefit from economic and social change.

The TNA was designed to inform an understanding of the ways these challenges may be approached in the Great Plain region of Central Europe. It was prepared and tested between the four HELPs to reflect and incorporate the interests and concerns from different parts of the region. This report provides a summary of the TNA to disseminate the main results and inform the ongoing dialogue on the skills training agenda at different levels in the European Union.
Croatian Results

Business Sectors Surveyed

All food companies from Eastern Slavonia were invited to participate. Food companies from other parts of Croatia which employ graduates were also included. The distribution of companies by size that participated in the Croatia TNA:

- Micro: 4.4%
- Small: 6.7%
- Medium: 26.7%
- Large: 62.2%

Business Response

Most companies were positive about the project although some had reservations as to whether the objectives could be achieved. Most companies, especially smaller ones, were enthusiastic about the prospect of cooperation. A few companies had no interest in becoming partners and did not want to participate in the TNA.
Chart 1

Importance attached to qualifications and experience by employer according to different work categories in Croatia

For higher level employment categories, the businesses surveyed considered a combination of qualifications and experience important in the workplace. Work experience alone was considered more relevant to the employment of unskilled workers.
Assessment of the Skills of University Graduates

Nearly all of the businesses surveyed (96%) employed people with a university degree. Their assessment of the different types of skills of graduates is presented below (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

Most employers were satisfied with the willingness of graduates to learn, their theoretical knowledge and communication skills. The lowest levels of satisfaction were expressed for the organisational and practical skills of graduates.

Chart 2
Assessment by businesses of the skills of university graduates
Skills and Experience

Businesses were asked if they had problems in finding people with adequate qualifications and/or experience. Where problems were indicated the nature of these was further explored.

Chart 3
Adequacy of worker qualifications and experience

**Adequacy of worker qualifications**
- Yes: 42%
- No: 58%

**Adequacy of worker experience**
- Yes: 71%
- No: 29%

**Skill shortages**
- Business skills
- Organisational skills

**Skill shortages**
- Leadership
- People skills
Assessment of Skills in the Workplace

Businesses were asked to rate the relative importance of different skills in their place of work (1 = not very important to 5 = very important).

The most important skills indicated were organisational, leadership and communication but these are often lacking. The lowest ranking in importance in the workplace was soft skills.

Chart 4
Relative importance of skills in the workplace
Training Programmes

Most businesses indicated a willingness to invest in training programmes. The objectives of training programmes had the strongest influence on businesses when choosing training. The lack of appropriate programmes revealed by the TNA is a key opportunity for HELP to develop new training. Training programmes are mostly organised in-house. Training needs are most often determined by a training needs analysis.

Chart 5

Business training plans

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Does your business have regular training programmes?</th>
<th>Training budgeted in annual business plan?</th>
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<tr>
<td>NO 38%</td>
<td>NO 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES 62%</td>
<td>YES 75%</td>
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</table>

Chart depicting the percentage of businesses with and without regular training programmes and whether training is budgeted in the annual business plan.
Chart 6
Reasons for no business training

Why do businesses not organise training programmes for their employees?

- No need for training: 58%
- Lack of required training programmes: 32%
- Lack of finances: 10%
- Other: 0%

Chart 7
Problems finding suitable training programmes

- No problems: 60%
- I am not offered what I need: 29%
- I am uncertain where to look: 11%
- Other: 0%
Of those surveyed a majority confirmed that a One Stop Shop would contribute significantly to meeting the training requirements of their business (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree).
Conclusions from Croatia

- Stakeholder meetings provided insights into the training issues in the local business sector.

- Most of the businesses were interested in participating in the HELP project.

- The survey indicates that for employment at managerial level both qualifications and experience are important while for manual workers experience is more relevant.

- Larger businesses tend to have regular training programmes and in most cases this is provided in-house.

- A key factor in choosing training is the objectives of the programme.

- In general the businesses surveyed are willing to establish partnerships with the university but the university needs to be more flexible and provide a range of training programmes.
Serbian Results

Business Sectors Surveyed

The main sectors surveyed were agriculture, metal processing, wholesale and services. The distribution of businesses by size that participated in the Serbian TNA:

- Micro: 14.6 %
- Small: 33.3 %
- Medium: 29.2 %
- Large: 22.9 %

Business Response

Interest in the HELP project was satisfactory with nearly all companies positive towards the project aims and objectives. The general willingness of businesses to participate in the TNA and to cooperate with HELP was more variable.
Chart 9

Importance attached to qualifications and experience by employer according to different work categories in Serbia

For higher level employment categories, the businesses surveyed considered a combination of qualifications and experience important in the workplace. Work experience alone was considered more relevant to the employment of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.
Assessment of the Skills of University Graduates

Nearly all the businesses surveyed employed graduates. Their assessment of the different types of skills of graduates is presented below (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

Employers were generally satisfied with the willingness of graduates to learn in the workplace and with their theoretical knowledge. Less rated were communication skills, with the lowest levels of satisfaction expressed for organisational and practical skills.

Chart 10
Assessment by businesses of the skills of university graduates
Skills and Experience

Businesses were asked if they had problems in finding people with adequate qualifications and/or experience. Where problems were indicated the nature of these was further explored and are listed below.

Chart 11
Adequacy of worker qualifications and experience

Adequacy of worker qualifications

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Adequacy of worker experience

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<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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Skill Shortages
Organisational
Business
Analytical
Soft

Skill Shortages
Organisational
Business
Analytical
Leadership
Assessment of Skills in the Workplace

Businesses were asked to rate the relative importance of different skills in their place of work (1 = not very important to 5 = very important).

The most important skills indicated were management and organisational skills. However, adequate organisational skills were often lacking.

Chart 12
Relative importance of skills in the workplace
Training Programmes

Businesses were asked if they organised training and where this was taking place whether this provision was made in the annual business plan. Training was mostly organised in-house for middle and top level management.

Chart 13

Business training plans

Does your business have regular training programmes?

| YES 69% | NO 31% |

Training budgeted in annual business plan?

| YES 84% | NO 16% |
Chart 14
Reasons for no business training

Why businesses do not organise training programmes for their employees?

- No need for training: 37%
- Lack of required training programmes: 19%
- Lack of finances: 44%

Chart 15
Problems finding suitable training programmes

- No problems: 25%
- I am not offered what I need: 66%
- I am uncertain where to look: 9%
Of those surveyed a majority confirmed that a One Stop Shop would contribute significantly to meeting the training requirements of their business (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree).
Conclusions from Serbia

- Businesses do need training!

- Business would like to develop links with universities.

- The TNA confirmed there is potential for the HELP project to deliver training in partnership with local business.

- Highlighted areas for training are organisational, soft and analytical skills.

- The majority of businesses are prepared to invest in training if it improves efficiency and profitability.

- Most businesses felt that a One Stop Shop would be helpful in linking with universities for training and other business needs.
Hungarian Results

Business Sectors Surveyed

Given the importance of agriculture in the region most of the companies were from the agricultural and food sectors. The distribution of businesses by size that participated in the Hungarian TNA:

- Micro: 36.5%
- Small: 36.7%
- Medium: 15.1%
- Large: 13.7%

Business Response

The general response of the businesses surveyed was very positive. Just under half of those surveyed were interested in cooperating with the HELP project and slightly more were interested in exploring training possibilities.
Chart 17
Importance attached to qualifications and experience by employer according to different work categories in Hungary

For higher level employment categories, the businesses surveyed considered a combination of qualifications and experience important in the work place. Work experience alone was considered more relevant to the employment of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.
Assessment of the Skills of University Graduates

Most of the businesses surveyed employed graduates. Most were satisfied with the theoretical knowledge, organisational and communication skills (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied). Willingness to learn and practical skills were less rated.

Chart 18

Assessment by business of the skills of university graduates

![Chart showing assessment of skills by businesses](chart.png)
Skills and Experience

Businesses were asked if they had problems in finding people with adequate qualifications and/or experience. Where problems were indicated the nature of these was further explored and are listed below.

Chart 19

**Adequacy of worker qualifications**
- **YES**: 54%
- **NO**: 46%

**Adequacy of worker experience**
- **YES**: 82%
- **NO**: 18%

**Skill shortages**
- Organisational skills
- Management skills
- Analytical skills

**Skill shortages**
- Leader skills
- Soft skills
- People skills
Assessment of Skills in the Workplace

Businesses were asked to rate the relative importance of different skills in their place of work (1 = not very important to 5 = very important).

The most important skills identified by the survey are management and organisational skills. However, these skills are often the most lacking.

Chart 20

Relative importance of skills in the workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management skills</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational skills</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical skills</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business skills</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer skills</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader skills</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People skills</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft skills</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Training programmes

In most cases, training for middle-management is organised externally in the areas of strategic planning and organisational skills. On-the-job training is provided in-house to help semi-skilled and unskilled workers use machinery and technology more effectively in the workplace. Training needs are usually determined by the regular evaluation of worker performance.

Chart 21

Business training plans

Does your business have regular training programmes?

- Yes: 34%
- No: 66%

Training budgeted in annual business plan?

- Yes: 76%
- No: 24%
Chart 22
Reasons for no business training

Why do businesses not organise training programmes for their employees?

- No need for training: 51%
- Lack of required training programmes: 21%
- Lack of finances: 28%

Chart 23
Problems finding suitable training programmes

- No problems: 23%
- I am not offered what I need: 8%
- I am uncertain where to look: 69%
Of those surveyed a majority confirmed that a One Stop Shop would contribute significantly to meeting the training requirements of their business (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree).
Conclusions from Hungary

- Businesses do need training!

- Business would like to develop links with universities.

- The TNA confirmed there is potential for the HELP project to deliver training in partnership with local business, typically medium to large companies.

- Highlighted areas for training are organisational, management, analytical and soft skills.

- The majority of businesses are prepared to invest in training if efficiency and profitability improved noticeably.

- Most businesses felt that a One Stop Shop would be helpful in linking with universities for training and other business needs.
Romanian Results

Business Sectors Surveyed

The survey covered diverse sectors such as transport, tourism, food, construction, consultancy, printing, training, motor vehicle and beauty salons. The distribution of businesses by size that participated in the survey:

- Micro: 56%
- Small: 38%
- Medium: 2%
- Large: 4%

Business Response

Despite the difficult economic situation in Romania at the time of the survey businesses were, in general, willing to invest in training programmes in the future. There was strong interest in the HELP project.
Chart 25
Importance attached to qualifications and experience by employer according to different work categories in Romania

For all categories of employment the businesses surveyed considered a combination of qualifications and experience as important in the workplace.
Assessment of the Skills of University Graduates

Most of the businesses surveyed employed graduates. Nearly all businesses were satisfied with their organisational skills, willingness to learn in the workplace, theoretical knowledge and their communication and practical skills (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

Chart 26
Assessment by businesses of the skills of university graduates
Skills and Experience

Businesses were asked if they had problems in finding people with adequate qualifications and/or experience. Where problems were indicated the nature of these was further explored and are listed below.

Chart 27

Adequacy of worker qualifications and experience

- **Skill Shortages**
  - Organisational
  - Analytical
  - Management
  - Soft

- **Skill Shortages**
  - Organisational
  - Communication
  - Customer
  - Business
Assessment of Skills in the Workplace

Businesses were asked to rate the relative importance of different skills in their place of work (1 = not very important to 5 = very important).

The most important skill identified by the survey is the ability to deal with customers. However, this soft skill is often the most lacking.

Chart 28
Relative importance of skills in the workplace
Training programmes

Businesses were asked if they organised training and where this was taking place whether provision was made in the annual business plan. In most cases, training is organised in-house for middle or low level employees. This included on-the-job training, customer services, presentation skills and workplace technology.

Chart 29
Business training plans

- **Does your business have regular training programmes?**
  - **YES**: 32%
  - **NO**: 68%

- **Training budgeted in annual business plans?**
  - **YES**: 66%
  - **NO**: 34%
Chart 30
Reasons for no business training

Why do businesses not organise training programmes for their employees?

- No need for training: 29%
- Lack of required training programmes: 44%
- Lack of finances: 27%

Chart 31
Problems finding suitable training programmes

- No problems: 30%
- I am not offered what I need: 40%
- I am uncertain where to look: 30%
Of those surveyed a majority confirmed that a One Stop Shop would contribute significantly to meeting the training requirements of their business (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree).

Further, that through a One Stop Shop, universities could extend their partnerships at the local and regional levels to match better their training provision to the actual needs of businesses.
Conclusions from Romania

- Businesses do need training!

- Businesses are willing to invest in training because they have become aware of the importance of skilled employees to success in the market place.

- Businesses identified the need to develop more service-oriented relationships with customers. This represents a key area for training development and emphasises the general importance of soft skills highlighted throughout this report.
Training Needs Comparison of the HELP Region

Figure 1
Survey sample size by country

Sample size, a total of 193 companies

Hungary:
- micro: 9
- small: 28
- medium: 10
- large: 3

Romania:
- micro: 28
- small: 19
- medium: 1
- large: 2

Croatia:
- micro: 2
- small: 3
- medium: 12
- large: 28

Serbia:
- micro: 7
- small: 16
- medium: 14
- large: 11
Assessment of Graduate Skills

Chart 33

Regional comparison of graduate skills

In all HELP regions the technical skills of graduates received the lowest average rating (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

In Romania the willingness to learn was rated the highest but in other regions theoretical knowledge received the highest average rating.
The Nature of Skill Shortages

Figure 2
Regional skill shortages

1. **Leadership skills**
2. Organisational skills
3. Management skills
4. Soft skills

1. **Organisational skills**
2. Communication skills
3. Customer skills
4. Business skills

1. **Leadership skills**
2. Communication skills
3. People skills
4. Business skills

1. **Organisational skills**
2. Soft skills
3. Business skills
4. Analytical skills
Training is most often provided **in-house**, except for Hungary where this is contracted externally.
Type of Training Most Often Organised

Figure 4
Regional training categories

1. Workplace technology
2. Strategic planning/organisational skills
3. Conflict management
4. Supervisor/management skills

1. Customer service
2. Presentation skills
3. Workplace technology
4. Strategic planning/organisational skills

1. Workplace technology
2. Supervisor/management skills
3. Presentation skills
4. Strategic planning/organisational skills

1. Workplace technology
2. Strategic planning/organisational skills
3. Supervisor/management skills
4. Customer service
Reasons for NOT Organising Training

Figure 5
Training constraints

Most businesses are prepared to invest in training if this leads to noticeable improvements in efficiency and profitability.
How Training is Selected

Figure 6
Training criteria

1. Programme objectives
2. Price

1. Programme objectives
2. Facilitator/presenter

1. Price
2. Programme objectives
Types of Training Most Difficult to Find

Figure 7
Regional training opportunities

1. Workplace technology
2. Supervisory/management skills

1. Customer services
2. Strategic planning/organisational skills

1. Management skills
2. Strategic planning/organisational skills

1. Workplace technology
2. Strategic planning/organisational skills
Rating of the University One Stop Shop Strategy

Chart 34
Regional importance of One Stop Shops

Most of the businesses surveyed felt that a University One Stop Shop would be helpful in organising their training requirements (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree). This would provide a single point of contact for business interested in cooperation with universities. Further, through a One Stop Shop, universities could extend their partnerships at the local and regional levels to match better their training provision to the actual needs of businesses.
Final Comments

The purpose of the TNA was to understand better employer attitudes and practices towards training in the Great Plain region of Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Serbia. The results of the TNA presented in this report provide an overview of this situation and highlight some important areas for cooperation between the education and business sectors. There is some correspondence in the results between the countries surveyed implying a degree of comparability in training practices across the region.

The results suggest that training is an important part of business practice. It tends to be offered primarily to middle management to improve business planning and organisation. However, training plans are not always structured and integrated formally into business and human resource development. This needs to be addressed if productivity and competitiveness at the local and regional levels are to converge with EU averages. In this respect, training should be extended to employees at all levels to increase their effectiveness in the workplace. Businesses with well trained workforces will be more profitable and grow more rapidly.

The main reasons identified for not providing training were the cost and the difficulty in finding suitable training courses. The process of transition continues across Central and Eastern Europe, the negative effects of which have been compounded by the recent global financial crisis. This has encouraged businesses to become more cautious with many expenditures and investments reduced or postponed. However, rather than cutting training expenditure businesses should be seeking to obtain better value from their training budgets. There are some general principles to ensure that training impacts positively in the workplace.
First, training needs to be planned and integrated with other management systems. Training decisions need to be made with reference to performance targets, strategic planning processes and career development initiatives. Training must be structured and managed so that it is clearly linked to specific workplace outcomes. In addition to planning, following-up on training is essential to reinforce and implement what has been learned. There must be opportunities to use new skills and practices in the workplace. Finally, infrastructure must be in place to support the application of what has been learned. The required tools and systems must exist if the skills developed by the training are to be combined and applied effectively.

Obtaining better value from training should be a shared responsibility between businesses and training providers. Businesses need to identify the specific changes expected in the workplace so that an appropriate training plan can be prepared with the provider. A training plan focused on the skill development needs of a particular business strategy will enable a company to be more innovative (and hence more competitive) through the improved orientation and motivation of their employees. Thus, training plans will be more able to support business development strategies if they are prepared in cooperation with training providers. This was identified by the TNA as a point for initial engagement between the business and education sectors. Additionally, such engagement should be mediated through a One Stop Shop. One Stop Shops facilitate cooperation by providing a single point of contact for businesses seeking specialist knowledge and skills training from education institutions.
Mutually beneficial partnerships between the education and business sectors based around training can lead to other positive outcomes. Businesses can increase access to the specialist knowledge and facilities of education institutions for marketing, technology and product development. This can be especially advantageous in the SME sector where most small firms have limited resources for business development. Education institutions can grow capacity for market-oriented work and increase the relevance of the courses offered to meet better the needs of businesses and their employees. Together with opportunities for practical placements this can increase the employability of students. Business links can also create new sources of income through privately funded research and the testing and application of new technologies.

The role of training in successful business and as a component of lifelong learning needs greater emphasis and support at the policy-making level. The overall objective of an adult learning strategy must be to improve competitiveness in the economy and the labour force by raising average skill levels. This can increase people’s capacity to adapt to and benefit from economic and social change. At the social level, adult education seeks to encourage equity and participation but this remains one of the most neglected elements of education systems in the TNA survey countries. As noted in this report, participation rates in adult education remain below the EU15 and EU27 averages.
In conclusion, efforts to raise productivity and enhance social and economic welfare in Central and Eastern Europe must focus on increasing the supply of and access to opportunities for adult learning and training. In this respect, there is a clear role for government at all levels to raise awareness and increase participation rates. This must be coupled with financial support to make training more affordable for individuals and businesses and to reflect the value of adult learning to society and economy as a whole. Increasing the flexibility and responsiveness of adult learning, especially that offered by higher education institutions will make significant contributions to developing the knowledge-based economy. Moreover, this will offer a more coherent and integrated response to economic concerns of competitiveness and employability, and social issues of poverty and social exclusion within Central and Eastern Europe.