

Analysis of young adults' competences and employers' requirements

Study Report

prepared under *Young adults In the labour market* project and
Erasmus Programme + KA2 Strategic Partnership

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern labour market imposes new requirements on a future employee both in Poland and in other EU countries. What matters is not only theoretical knowledge, education and practical competences but also social competences conceived as a personal potential of an employee. Employers expect candidates to be independent in organising their work, creative in what they do, resourceful, conscientious and consistent. Teamwork and high work motivation are greatly appreciated.

Employers hiring university and secondary school graduates observe that young adults lack social competences. It so happens that a young man is positively verified during a job interview, he/she starts work but finds it difficult to keep it due to interpersonal and self-organisation issues.

To avoid a series of failures in professional career of young adults moving into the labour market, it is necessary to build personal and social competences outside the formal educational system. Personal competences are developed in the process of social training which we observe when a person gets involved in social activities and tasks; our formal educational system, however, does not provide too many of such activities. Thus social training should be introduced in a form of special coaching sessions, interpersonal training and workshops making it possible to perfect specific social skills.

The study conducted under *Young adults In the labour market* project and Erasmus Programme + KA2 Strategic Partnership with the participation of 60 secondary school students, 60 university students and 15 employers shows that the level of social and personal competences of young adults moving into the labour market does not correlate with employers' expectations.

This report is based on findings from surveys and contains a detailed analysis and summary of resulting conclusions. Recommendations drawn on the basis of these conclusions will ultimately be utilized in preparation of a training programme focused on developing personal and social competences in young adults.

1.1 Social competences as determinants of success in the labour market

Transformation to the modern society resulting from changes in social, economic, scientific and technical conditions made it necessary for young adults to depict a wide range of competences. These are competences needed to live an independent and responsible life in the world and in Europe.

Competences are defined as a *cluster of someone's knowledge, abilities or responsibilities*,¹ or else as:

the ability and readiness of an individual to do a job at a certain level (cited in O. H.Tenkins)

teachable ability to do things well, necessary skills to solve problems (cited in D. Fontana)

*special quality expressed by demonstrating the ability of an appropriate behaviour at a level set by social standards in the context of the need for and consequences of such a behaviour as well as taking responsibility for this particular behaviour.*²

Social competences, in other words social intelligence, social abilities or skills, are among most desirable human competences.

In social psychology, social and interpersonal competences are described, among others, as:

ability to attain social and personal goals while keeping good relations with your partner,

cognitive and emotional ability contributing to adaptation of an individual to a given social environment- understood as the ability to make a necessary influence on other people in social situations,

*complex abilities to cope in social situations of a given type, attaining goals in social life, building emotional relations with people - understood as creating, developing and keeping relationships and getting social support*³.

Social competences are conditioned by personal traits, temperament, general and emotional intelligence. Social competences are developed in the process of social training when an individual gets involved in social activities, situations and tasks. Social training can both be natural and intentional. We witness natural training when we get involved in task-oriented and social situations. Social competences can also be developed or increased in the course of planned social training. This training can take the form of special training sessions, interpersonal trainings or workshops.

Mastering social intercourse skills is an important determinant of life and personal satisfaction. A high level of these competences results in better adaptation to changes in life, higher flexibility in behaviour and attitude in various social situations and lower fear and depression index as well as the feeling of loneliness. Interpersonal skills and abilities have an enormous influence on lower fear and depression index and the feeling of loneliness. Interpersonal skills and abilities have an enormous influence on the quality of work and professional success and, in case of young adults, are an important factor in their job recruitment process.

¹ 2 Słownik języka polskiego PWN, Warszawa 1994, s. 977

² W. Strykowski, J. Strykowska, J. Pielachowski, Competencies of a modern school teacher, Poznań 2003, s. 22-23

³ <http://www.psychologia.net.pl/>

1.2. The concept of key competences

The concept of key competences was introduced at the time Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning was issued.

The European Parliament defined competences as *a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context.*⁴ In the context of this definition competences are understood as an effective application of knowledge using your skills and abilities. In the recommendations of the European Parliament referring to European qualifications for lifelong learning framework, competences are categorized in terms of autonomy and responsibility. They mean *proved ability to apply knowledge, abilities and personal, social and methodological skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training.*⁵

The European Union has defined eight key competences which are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context needed for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.⁶ Thus, they play an essential role in individual life both in learning processes and in social and professional life.

The key competences are:

communication in the mother tongue
communication in foreign languages mathematical competence and basic competences
in science and technology digital competence
learning to learn
social and civic competences
sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
cultural awareness and expression.

Social and civic competences are defined as those including a full range of all forms of behaviour that equip young adults in skills enabling them to participate in social and professional life in an effective and constructive way, to cope in difficult situations and to resolve conflict where necessary. They also should prepare an individual to participate in

⁴ RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)

⁵ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning

⁶ RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC), Journals of Law (Dz.U.) 394,30.12.2006

civic life fully, equip her/him in knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and teach commitment to active and democratic participation.

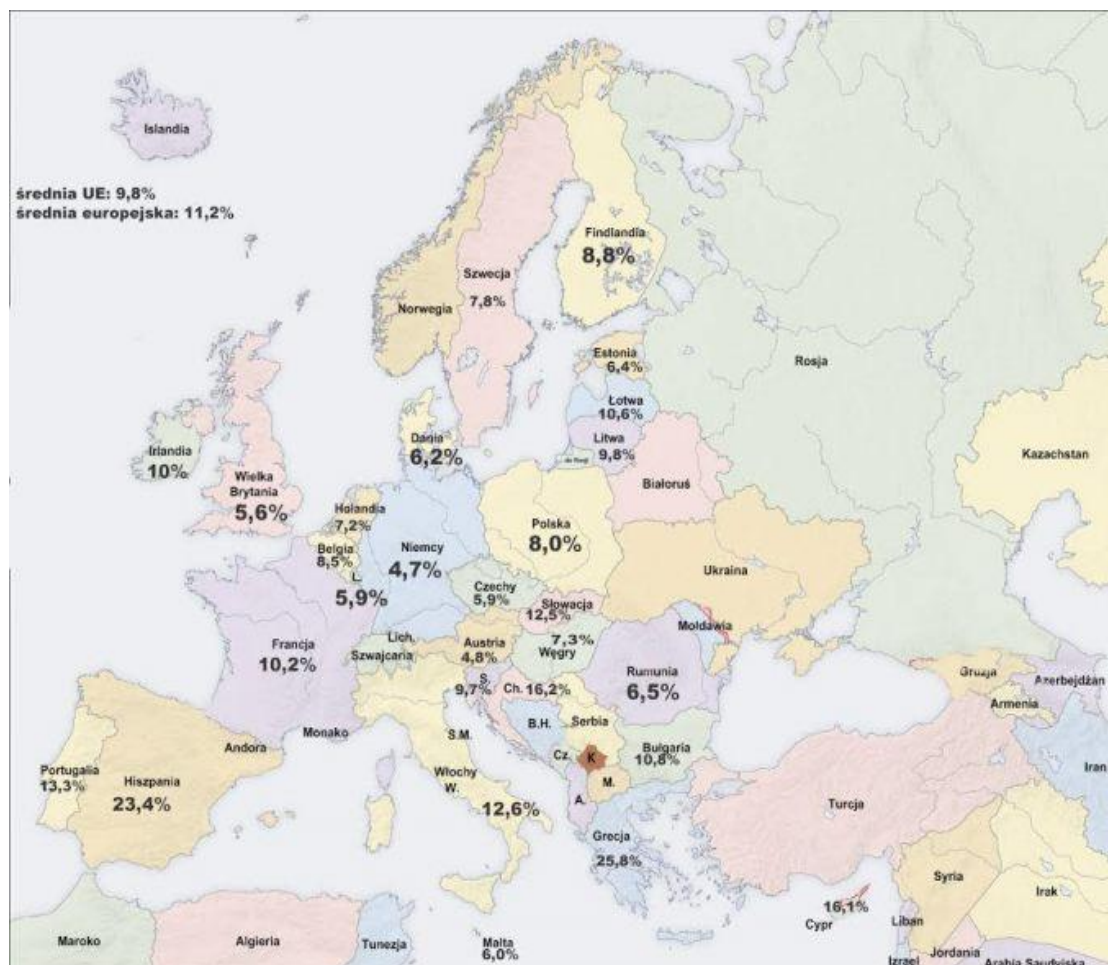
The core skills of social competences include the ability to communicate constructively in different environments, to show tolerance, express and understand different viewpoints, to negotiate with the ability to create confidence and to be flexible to changes. Social competences guarantee added value, social coherence, offer flexibility and ability to adapt on the labour market.

Unfortunately, as many examples from numerous European countries, including Poland, show, there is a big discrepancy between the official policy and declarations referring to civic education as well as developing key competences and a practical implementation of them at schools. Developing key competences is becoming more important in modern world than extensive knowledge. Collecting information does not mean the ability of using it. A modern teaching model deviates from sharing knowledge and focuses on forming and developing competences with the application of numerous methods stimulating students to be active and to participate in social life. Mastering key competences enables young adults to function effectively in a fast changing reality.⁷

⁷ Dr B. Kubiczek, Project „The School of Democracy - The School of Self-governance”- Teachers and Students’ Social and Civic Competences. Conference materials for participants. Sosnowickie Centrum Edukacyjne „EDUKATOR”, Sosnowiec 2012, s. 5

1.3. Young adults' situation in the labour market

Unemployment is one of the key problems in Poland and other EU countries. In March 2015 23.8 million people were unemployed in the European Union, 18 million of which live in the Euro zone countries. Compared to last year a slight improvement was observed – compared to December more than 150 000 people found a new job and the unemployment rate in Euroland dropped to 11.2 percent. Poland ranks 13 with regard to the unemployment rate among all EU countries.



Unemployment rate in Europe defined by Eurostat March 2015 / photo. PB

According to research of the Central Statistical Office (GUS) the unemployment rate according to Labour Force Survey (**EU LFS**) reached 8.6 percent in the first quarter of 2015 compared to 8.1 in a previous quarter. The rate reached 10.6 percent in the first quarter of 2014. The number of the unemployed increased from 1 410 thousand to 1 494 thousand in three previous months.

Finding a job is most difficult for young adults, especially those under 25. According to the Central Statistical Office the unemployment rate among young Poles ages 15 to 24 reached

23.1 % in the 3rd quarter of 2014. It equalled the rate in the 2nd quarter of 2014 and was 3.6 percentage points lower than in the 3rd quarter of 2013.

Poland Youth Unemployment Rate between 2005 and 2013 by education level (15-24 of age, in %)

year	All levels	primary	secondary	university
2005	36.9	41.2	37.0	29.3
2006	29.8	36.3	29.5	23.2
2007	21.7	22.8	21.7	20.0
2008	17.3	20.6	16.9	16.8
2009	20.6	24.5	20.2	19.6
2010	23.7	30.3	23.1	20.7
2011	25.8	31.8	25.4	22.0
2012	26.5	33.2	26.0	22.5
2013	27.3	32.3	27.2	23.5

Figure 1: Prepared by Sedlak & Sedlak on the basis of Eurostat (LFS)⁸

According to the European Statistical Office Eurostat the unemployment rate among young adults in the EU countries reached 21.2%. Compared to last year there was an improvement as the rate was 25% in the previous year.

⁸ http://www.rynekpracy.pl/artykul.php/typ.1/kategoria_glowna.10/wpis.805

Poland and European Youth Unemployment Rate (28) between 2005 and 2013 by education level (15-24 of age, in %)

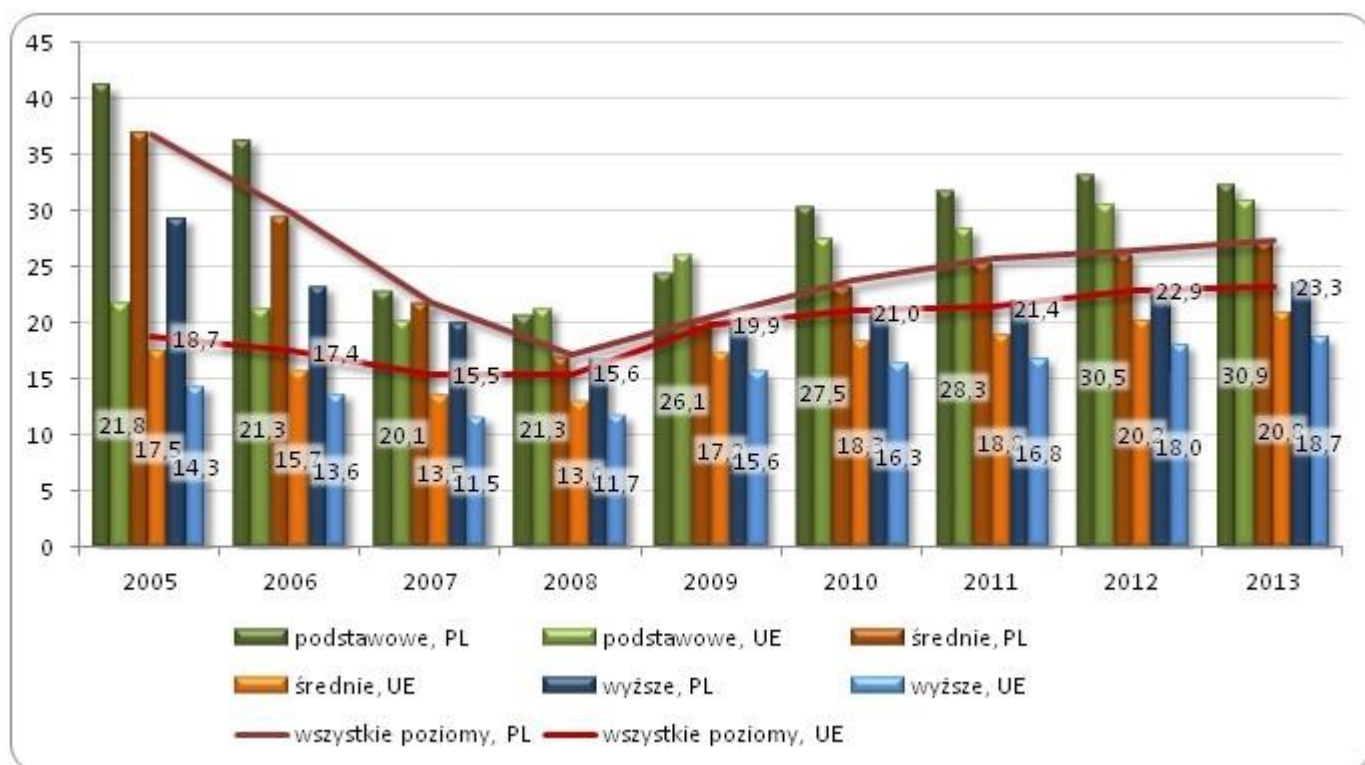


Figure 2: Prepared by Sedlak & Sedlak on the basis of Eurostat (LFS)

There are numerous reasons why young adults are placed at a greater risk of unemployment. Market analysts give the following grounds for such a state:

- lack of professional experience,
- lack of competences matching employers' requirements,
- lack of a well-developed social network helping to find an interesting job,
- very low salary for people lacking experience, discouraging young people to move into the labour market.

Young people unemployment rate is a great challenge for Europe; it is becoming a major threat to their professional start and a barrier preventing fulfilment of the needs and inspirations of the young. Long-term unemployment and failed attempts to find a job result in total discouragement and failure to seek a new job. A fall in professional activity may result from abandoning professional plans with little chances of getting a job at the place of residence and the lack of funding for further education.

The level of education, experience gained in the course of taken activities as well as high social and personal competences are the main determinant of a position in the labour market and, as a result, may increase opportunities of getting a job by the unemployed. It is the responsibility of schools, employers and training institutions dealing with job counselling to focus on this particular area in their operations. A young person should realize the importance of these competences in their professional and social lives, which, in turn, will translate into upgrading these competences through training initiatives.

2. Methodology of the study

2.1 The objective of the study

The main objectives behind the analysis of young adults' competences and employers' requirements include:

investigating and specifying the level of personal and social competences (creativity, openness to change, coping in stressful situations, negotiations, responsibility, ability to work in a team) of secondary school and university youth. Moreover, it assumes setting the most important aspects related to moving into the labour market and related educational needs.

understanding employers' opinions on the level of social competences of young people entering the labour market.

2.2 Study questions and hypotheses

The following study questions facilitated implementation of set objectives:

What is the level of personal and social competences among secondary and university students moving into the labour market?

What are the educational needs of secondary and university students?

What competences do employers require from young adults starting their professional lives?

How do employers assess the level of personal and social competences of young adults moving into the labour market?

The following hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the abovementioned problem-related questions:

Secondary school and university youth moving into the labour market show insufficient personal and social competences.

Secondary school and university students lack adequate assessment of their competences important in the labour market.

Young adults are ready to improve those skills which are important in the labour market.

Employers assess the level of personal and social competences of young adults moving into the labour market as insufficient.

Social and personal competences coaching will improve the level of these competences and will improve the situation on the labour market.

2.3 Variables, sampling

Independent and dependent variables such as: age, sex, profile/course of studies, assessment of employers' requirements related to personal and social competences of young people entering the labour market were used in the survey.

A non-random sampling method was applied in the survey - techniques in which there is no room for random selection but other procedures based on subjective decisions, identified subjective data related to the knowledge of the structure of the examined population are used.

A non-random sampling method was applied in the survey – the most typical example of non-probability sampling. It is a sampling technique in which participants are selected based on subjective choices to enable getting as much and as detailed information as possible.

2.4 Research tools

Taken the objective of the study, which was determining the level of personal and social competences of secondary school and university youth and obtaining information on employers' opinions and requirements in relation to personal and social competences of young moving into the labour market, a quality method (*individual interviews with employers*) and a quantity method (*tests filled in by secondary and university students*) were used.

A quality method concentrates on a „deeper” analysis of a given phenomenon. Focus is shifted towards better and more comprehensive understanding of an analysed phenomenon through special research techniques. As the name denotes, quality methods aim at obtaining information which is of “good quality”. Quantity methods, on the other hand, examine phenomena/ features which are well-known and pre-determined. Quality methods provide a new quality of knowledge and information. Quality techniques aim at obtaining information/knowledge and opinions on a given subject, they, however, are not restricted to specific respondents – polled people. In quantity methods the answers are listed and respondents choose one of them. In quality methods answers are collected from respondents, the researcher does not assume what the answers will be. Both of these techniques make it possible to gather non-standard data, to view an analysed concept/problem from different perspectives.⁹

Competence tests of secondary school students and university students were basic survey tools used in a (quantity) survey of secondary school and university students. The test consisted of 20 descriptions of professional situations or life situations. The respondents had to analyse these situations and to choose one out of three, the one that was most similar to what they would personally do. Situations referred to the following areas

⁹ Źródło: http://www.naukowiec.org/wiedza/metodologia/badania-jakosciowe--idea_654.html

Teamwork and teamwork planning
Communication
Resourcefulness
Negotiations
Stress tolerance
Creativity
Openness to change
Responsibility for taken actions
Active professional development
Personal manner.

The test was extended and a survey in which young people individually assessed the level of their preparation to move into the labour market and expressed their educational willingness to perfect competences required by employers was added.

The test was completed in the form of open questions, respondents assessed their skills and list expectations and requirements employers demand secondary school and university young adults possessed.

A high level of anonymity was guaranteed in the survey. Competence tests were filled in by individual students selected to participate in the survey (during one lesson under the supervision of a member of a research team). Students' questionnaires were filled in on-line (through MachForm platform); invitation links were sent earlier. The pollster's role was to identify a pre-selected group or class, to conduct the survey in the selected group, to explain the objectives of a survey, methods of completing tests and questionnaires, to assure participants of full anonymity as well as to explain any ambiguities that could come up when tests and questionnaires were filled in by the students.

In-depth individual interviews which are one of the most commonly used techniques in quality methods were selected. They were used in the survey carried out during this study. The main idea was to collect opinions and requirements of young adults who were about to enter the labour market. The decision to choose this type of a survey was made as it was necessary to collect detailed opinions and information without a risk of negative influence of a group, as it the case when group interviews are carried out. Additionally, when respondents found it difficult to spare some free time it proved convenient as it was not necessary to gather the group at a specific time in a specific place.

In-depth employers' interview scripts included questions on competences a potential employee should have. The competences were listed and an employer was expected to prioritize them, to rank the importance of given competences in his/her company. Later, the respondents from this group were evaluating the level of competences of secondary school and university students' entering the labour market. New questions referring to the following areas were added to the interview script:

Methods of verifying future employees' competences
Determining factors and features in a recruitment process

training methods for inexperienced employees
the importance of additional factors in a recruitment process.

In a quality survey each respondent was able to express his/her feelings, opinions and views freely (which they were not even conscious of before). A standard quantity survey (questionnaire) would definitely not provide such detailed, complex and thorough information and data.

2.5 Description of a research group

A non-random sampling method was applied in the survey - that is sampling techniques based on subjective decisions, familiar subjective data referring to the knowledge of the structure of an audited population rather than randomization.

Target screening was used in the survey – that is the most typical example of a non-random sampling. It is a subjective method of selecting participants of a survey, which, in turn, provides the broadest and the most comprehensive information.

Three respondent groups were selected for the survey:

secondary school students: secondary school, technical school, vocational school – 60 students
university youth – 60 students
employers – 15

Secondary school students

A competence test survey was conducted among 60 secondary school students, including students of secondary school, technical school, and vocational school. A detailed list has been presented below in Table no 1.

School	Educational Profile	Number of students
VI. H. Kollataj Secondary School in Lublin	Sports	14
	Arts	4
	Humanities	2
F. Kleeberg Aviation Technical School in Dęblin	Air force mechanic/ technician	20
4. Jan Paweł II Vocational School in Lublin	Cook	20

Table nr 1: List of schools participating in the survey and educational profiles.

A representative sample was an unbiased representation of students' sex, types of school and profile. 17 women and 43 men aged 16 to 20 were selected, with 17-18-year-olds being the largest age group participating in the survey (81.7%).

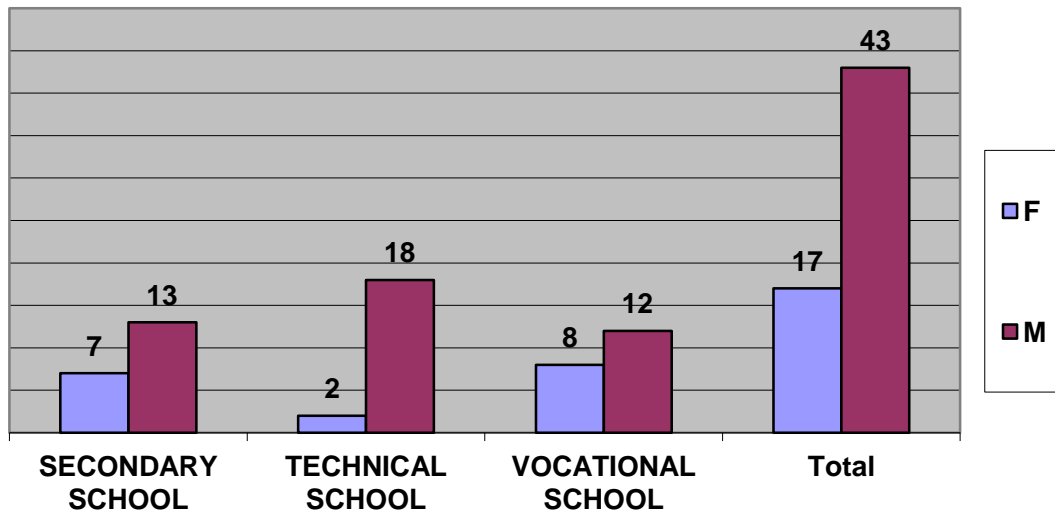


Figure no. 3: Student groups participating in the study by sex

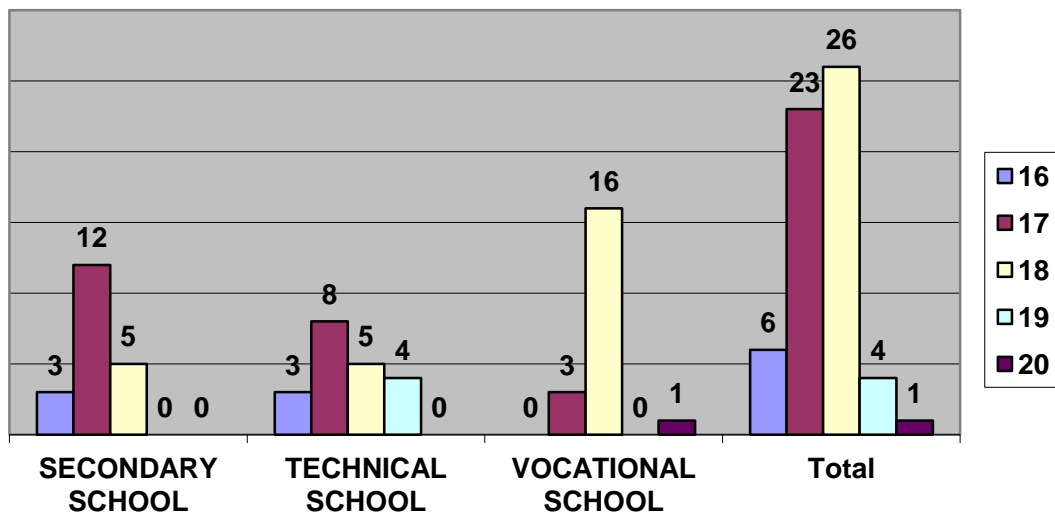


Figure no 4: Secondary school student groups participating in the study by age

University students

39 women and 21 men participated in the survey conducted among university students, representing numerous specialties, mostly from universities in Lublin. The age of the participants: 19 to 30, with 21-26-olds being the largest age group participating in the survey, that is 88.33% of all surveyed.

University	Course of studies	Number of students
<i>Maria Curie-Skłodowska University - UMCS</i>	Administration	2
	Archaeology	1
	Political science	4
	Economy	6
	International Relations	9
	Applied Linguistics	2
	Bulgarian Philology	1
	Law	2
	Cognitive Science	1
	Logopaedics with audiology	1
	English Philology	1
	Pedagogy	1
	Cultural Studies	1
<i>The John Paul II Catholic University Of Lublin</i>	Law	1
	The History of Art	1
	European Studies	1
	Marketing	1
	Romanistics	1
<i>Lublin University of Life Sciences</i>	Environment Management	1
	Logistics	1

	Science of Commodities	1
	Zootechnics	1
	Tourism and Recreation	1
Lublin Technical University	Environmental Engineering	3
Medical University of Lublin	Obstetrics	1
<i>University of Economics and Innovation in Lublin</i>	Psychology	2
	Economy	1
ST. Clemens of Ohryda Sofia University	Polish Philology	1
Warsaw University	Law	1
Rzeszów University	Economy	1
	European Studies	1
A. Mickiewicz University in Poznan	Linguistics	1
Cracow University of Technology	Transportation	1
Rzeszów University of Technology	Mechanical Engineering	1
Silesian University of Technology - Automatic Control Engineering, Electronics and Computer Science	Computer Science - Programming	1
Łódź University of Technology	Technical Physics	1
Warsaw University of Technology	Automatic Control and Robotics	1
No available data on the university or course of studies		1

Table no 2: List of universities participating in survey and degree courses

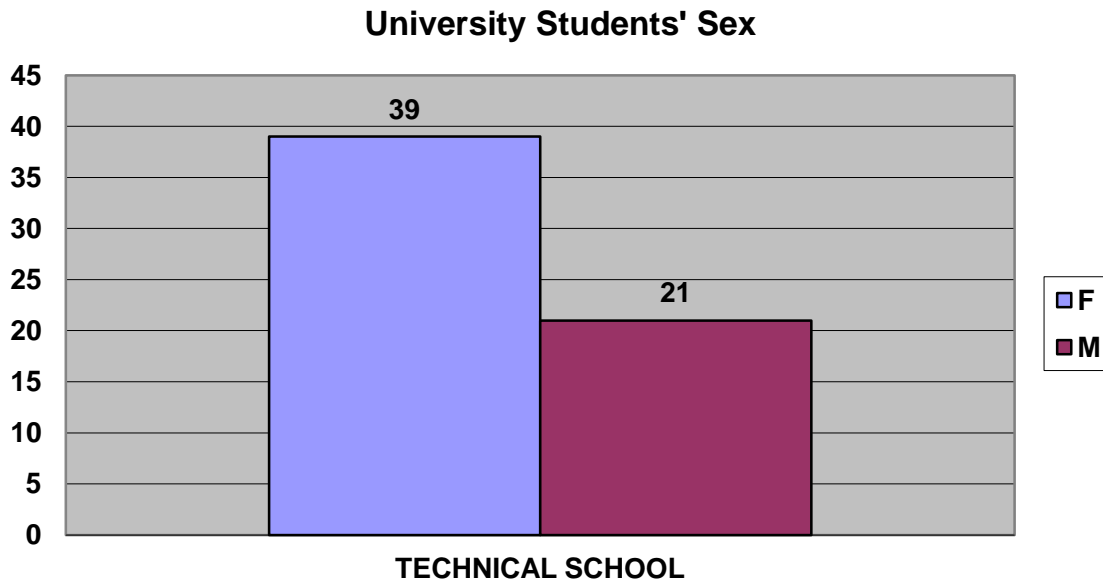


Figure no 5: University students participating in the study by sex

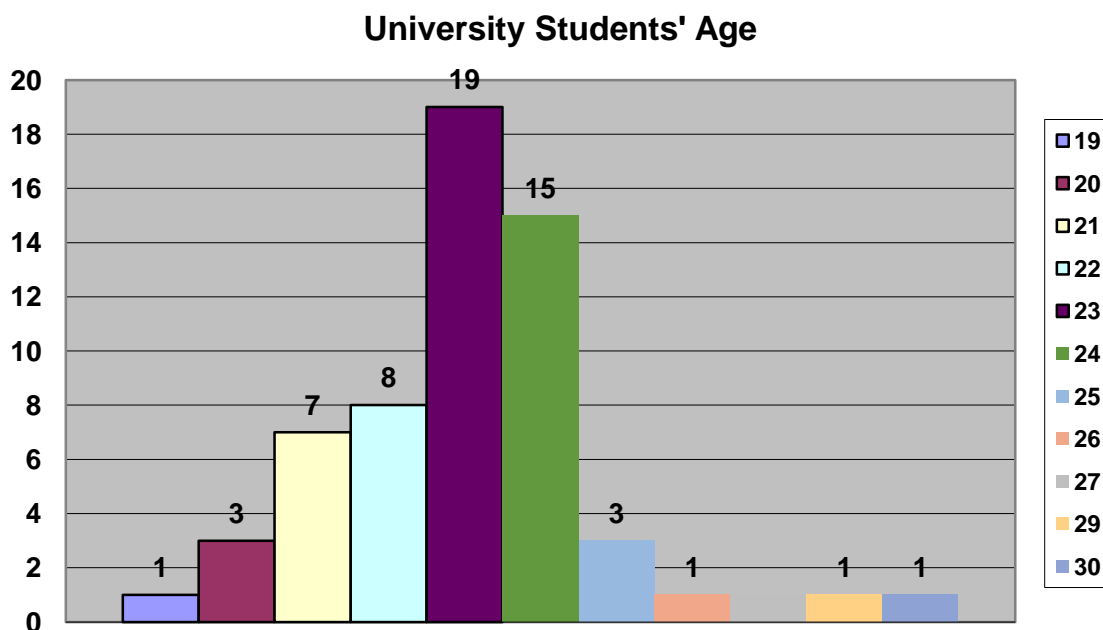


Figure no 6: University students participating in the study by age

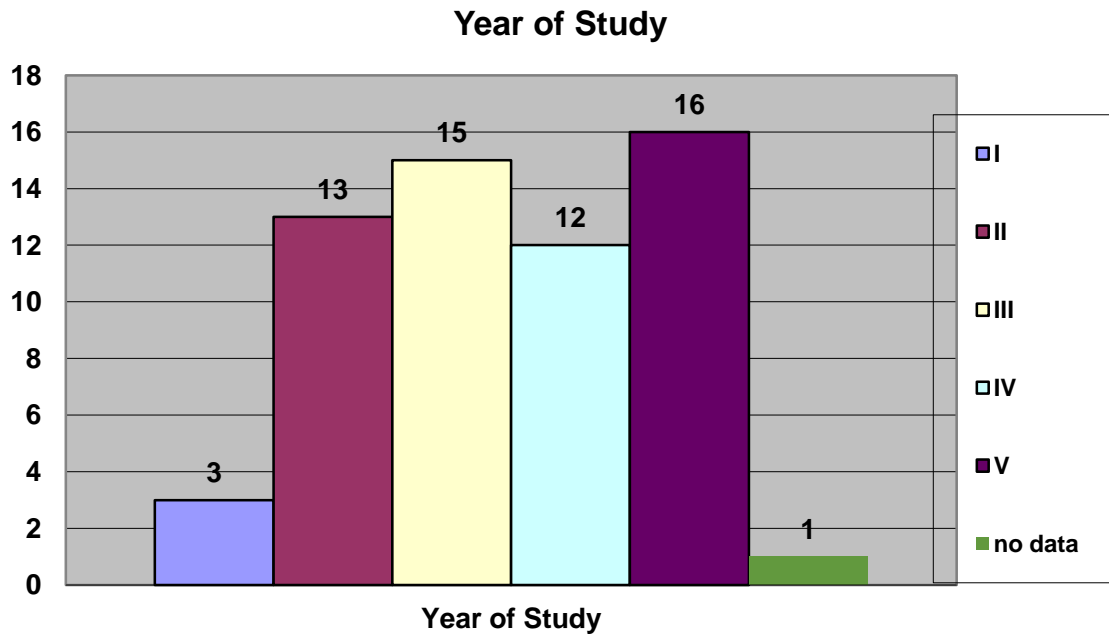


Figure no 7: University students groups participating in the study by the year of study

Employers hiring young adults

Employers need professionally competent people who will do specific task at specific working positions and who will depict high level of personal competences. In order to find out what employers demand from young adults entering the labour market, detailed interviews with 15 employers representing different companies as for type, size and range of operations were conducted in the project.

53.33% of surveyed employers declared that they employed secondary school graduates in recent years. Half of them regularly employ vocational school graduates. The level of university graduates employment is similar– 46.7%.

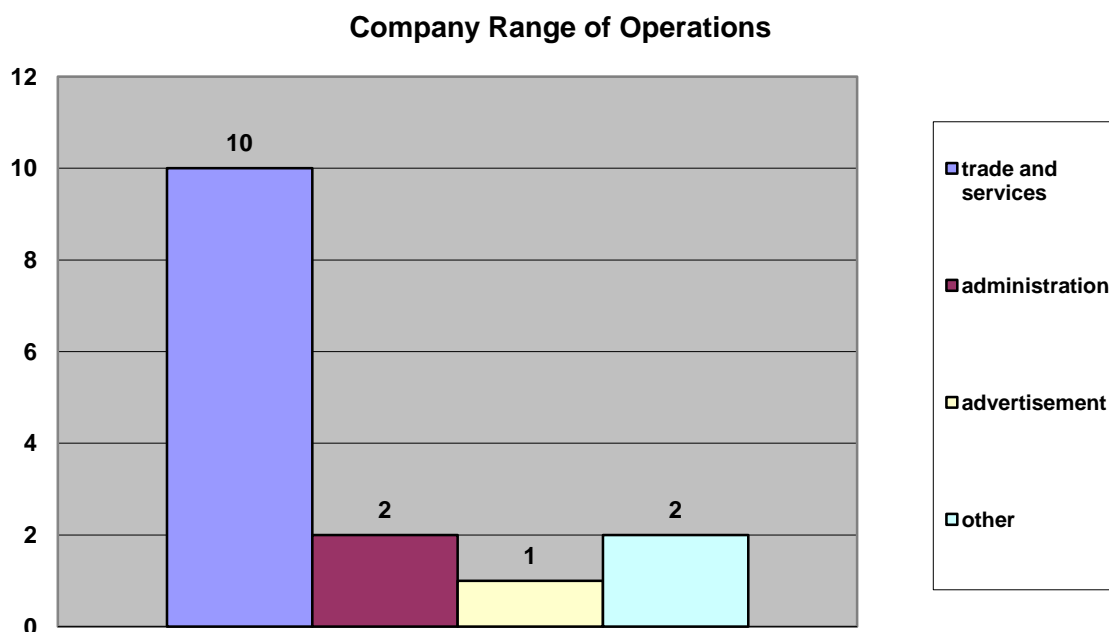


Figure no 8: Company Range of Operations

Detailed description of the companies' range of operations

Company Description	Number
State Administration	3
Shop and/or kiosk	2
Bank, financial services	1
Customer service focused on increasing sales	1
IT services, mainly rep air services and computer services	1
Advertisement and computer design	1
Medical services in a form of residential care hospitalization and outpatient medical care	1
Organization of training and workshops	1
Clothing Company	1
Trade company – 400 shops- head-office in Great Britain	1
Tourist accommodation services and catering services	1
Market analyses, specialist services, insurances and room renting,	1

Table no 3: List of institutions on the labour market participating in the survey

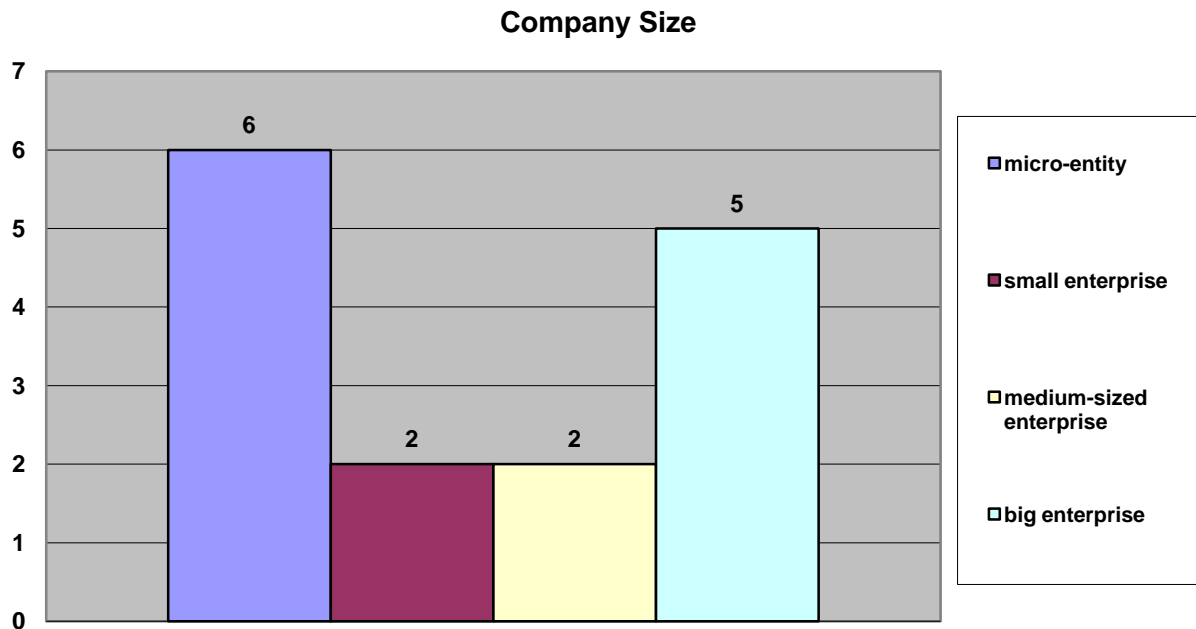


Figure no 9: Company Diversity by Size

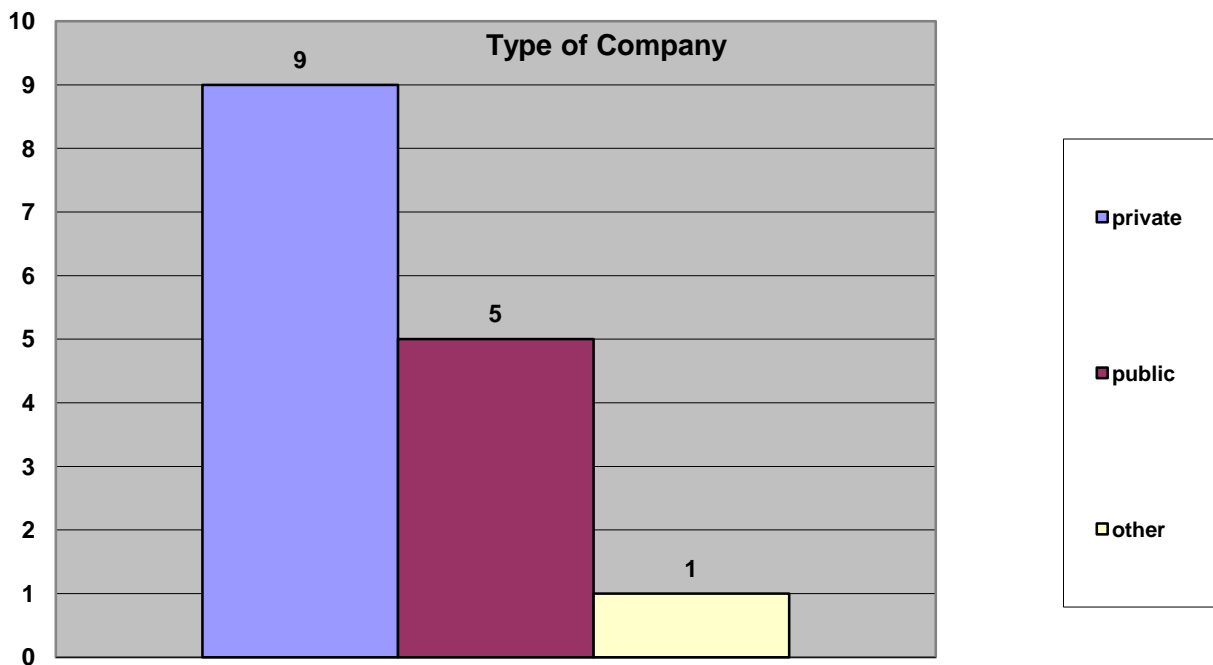


Figure no 10: Company Diversity by Type

3. The analysis of the survey

3.1 Analysis of the survey among secondary school students

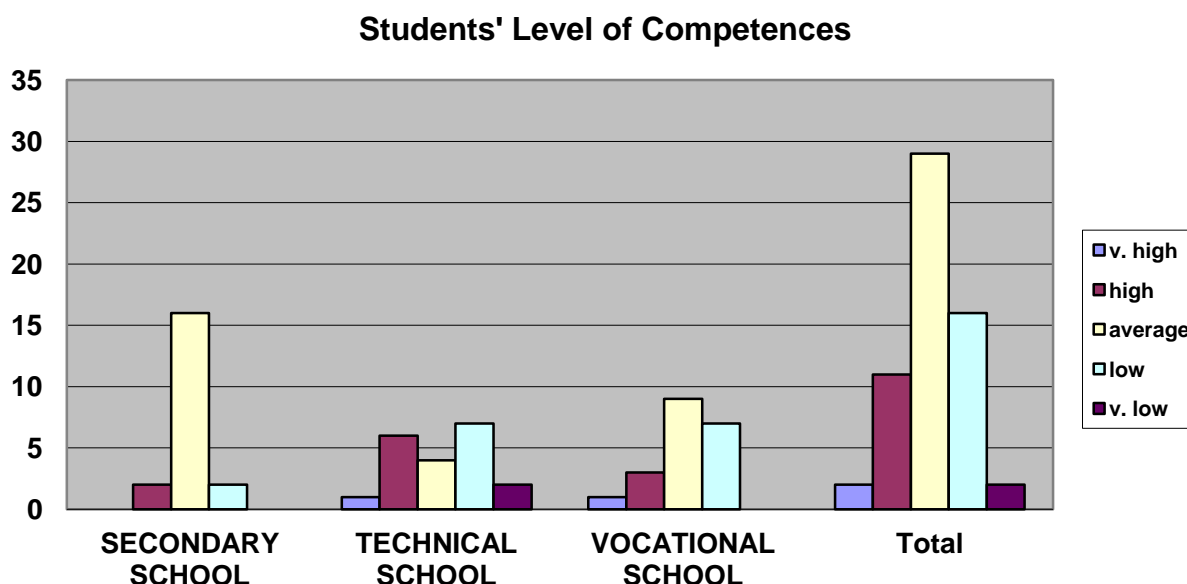


Figure no 11: *Secondary School Students' Level of Competences*

The competence test was aimed at gathering objective assessment of social and personal competences of students through a direct reference to specific life situations. The analysis of test results shows that the majority of students represent an average level of competences-43.3% of all respondents. The majority of them are secondary school students - 55.2 %, who rated as average. Vocational school students made 30.0%, and technical school students 13.8% of all respondents.

30% of all surveyed students show a very low level of social and personal competences. The results of technical schools and vocational schools rate almost identically, only 2 secondary school students ranked the same.

18.33% students out of all surveyed show very high level of competences. 6 technical school students (54.5% of all in this group), 3 vocational school students (27.3%) and 2 secondary school students (18.2%) had the best results.

Only 2 students had very high scores (3.3%) - one of whom was a technical school student and another one was a vocational school student.

Self- assessment of preparation to enter the labour market

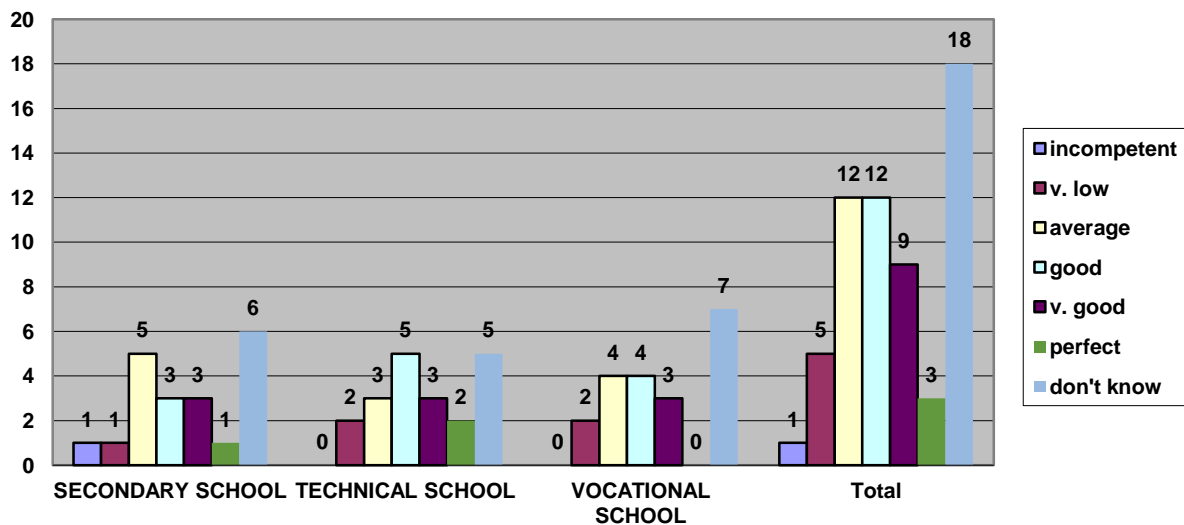


Figure no 12: Self- Assessment of preparation to enter the labour market

The students participating in the survey assessed their preparation to enter the Labour market in the following way:

- 30.0% does not know
- 20.0% rates as medium
- 20.0% rates as good
- 15.0% rates as very good
- 8.3 % rates as very bad
- 5.0 % rates as perfect
- 1.7 % is not able to rate their preparation

Willingness To Upskill

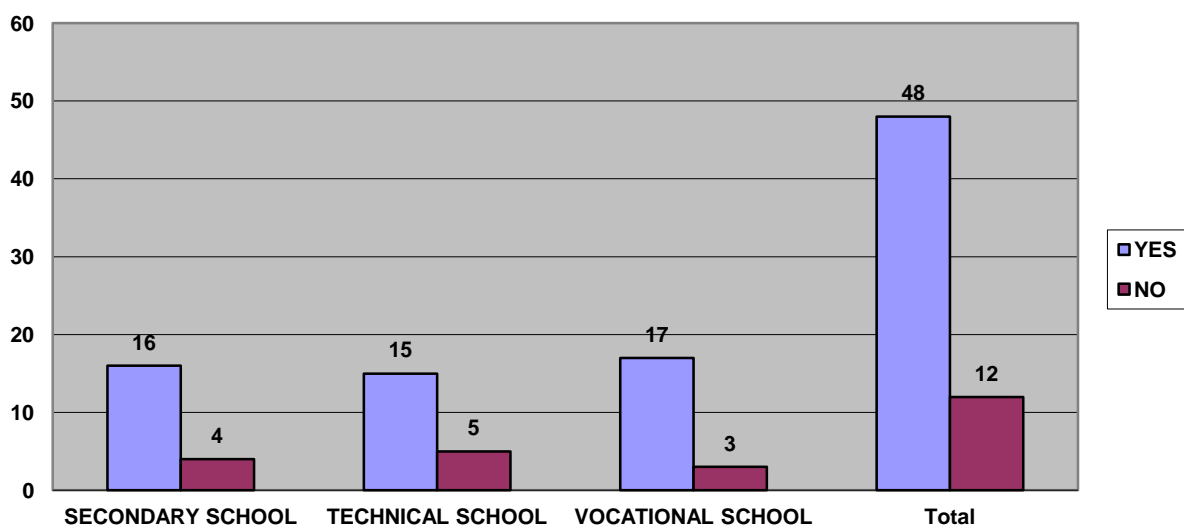


Figure no 13: Students' Willingness to Upskill, the Labour Market Requirements

The majority of secondary school students who were surveyed understand the necessity to upskill, which increases a person's opportunities in the labour market. 81.7 % of subjects express their readiness and willingness to participate in additional training and coaching courses and workshops. Students list the following competences they want to improve:

Communication skills
creative thinking
cooperation with other people
active listening
ability to influence others positively
negotiation skills
stress tolerance
marketing skills
openness to change
personal manner
reliability, patience, conscientiousness, sense of responsibility
very little students additionally list a clean driving licence and foreign languages.

The surveyed student group is very conscious of their skills. 31.7% of all surveyed students are able to assess their competences in terms of usefulness in their future job and labour market. The majority of them were secondary school students – 15, 4 technical school students were able to list such competences while none of the vocational school students answered this open question. In majority of cases the skills that were mentioned by students correlated with ones they wanted to improve or broaden in additional, informal training session outsider school.

One of the questions that the respondents were asked to answer was:
In your opinion, what do employers expect from young adults entering the labour market?

Three technical school students and 16 secondary school students gave the following answers:

Creativity, commitment, systematic approach, conscientiousness, punctuality
internship, experience, commitment, cooperation
theoretical knowledge and little experience (internship)
commitment, sense of responsibility, willingness to acquire knowledge, creativity,
ability to work in a team, comprehensibility, patience, stress tolerance, punctuality
sense of responsibility, consistency, reliability, creativity
conscientiousness, punctuality, ability to work in a team, creativity, making new
relations
experience, total devotion to work, foreign languages, secondary education
(minimum),
personal manner, flexibility, skills, openness, punctuality
creativity, efficiency, sense of responsibility, punctuality, sincerity, modesty,
confidence, ambitiousness, understanding, diligence
foreign languages, contacts

punctuality, commitment
 punctuality, respect for work, personal manner
 punctuality, personal manner
 creativity, knowledge, intelligence, resourcefulness,
 being as responsible as the adults
 professional skills
 sense of responsibility, punctuality, doing as the employer says, obedience
 intelligence, knowledge, creativity, devotion, diligence, personal manner, knowledge,
 skills, Basic knowledge, honesty, sense of responsibility, teamwork, creativity
 foreign languages, professional experience

3.2 Analysis of the survey among university students

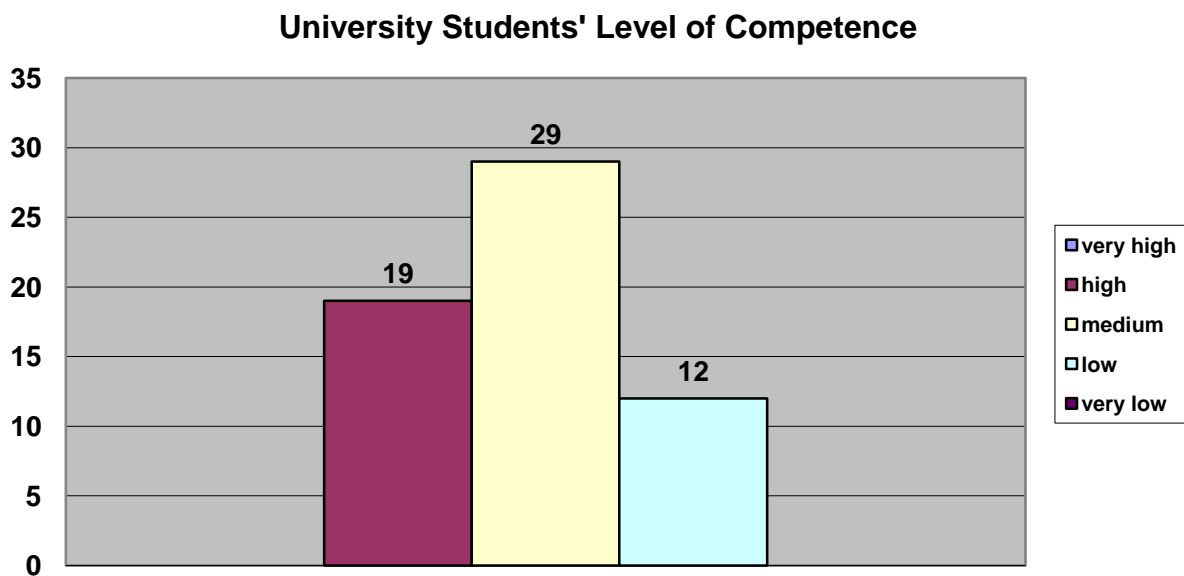


Figure no 14: University Students' level of competence

The analysis of data from the survey conducted among university students demonstrated that the majority of young adults (48.33 %) have an average level of personal and social competences.

19 students that is 31.67 % of all surveyed, had a low level of personal and social competences.

12 of all surveyed students 20.00% had a high level of personal and social competences. No cases of very high or very low level of personal and social competences were recorded.

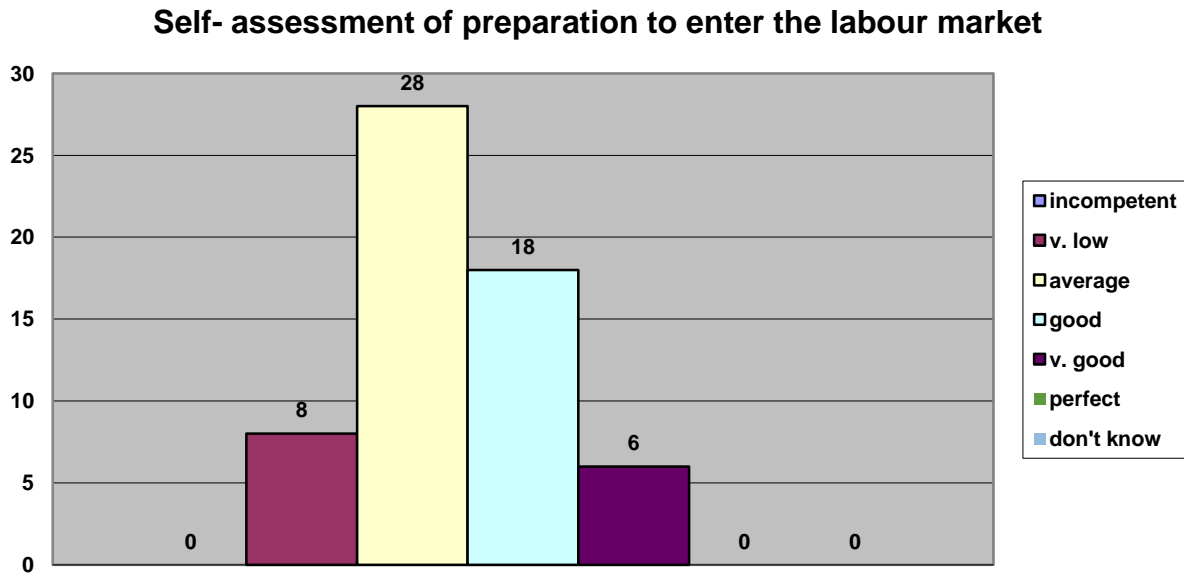


Figure no. 15: *University Students' Self- assessment of preparation to enter the labour market*

University students participating in the survey assessed their preparation to enter the labour market as follows:

- 13.3 % rate it as very low
- 46.67 rate it as average
- 30.0% rate it as good

All surveyed students were ready to upskill and to improve competences which are required in the labour market and which they listed in the survey. They are in opinion that those skills will facilitate their course into the labour market. The following skills were listed in the majority of analysed questionnaires:

- Work motivation
- ability to make quick decisions
- working under time pressure
- change management ability
- openness to people and new challenges
- motivation to acquire new knowledge individually
- ability to advertise one's skills
- teamwork and stress tolerance, communication
- analytic linguistic thinking
- organizational flexibility
- creativity
- ability to work in a team and under pressure
- consistency
- planning
- stress tolerance
- team management, openness to new challenges and people

courage to take up new tasks and challenges
confidence in decision-making process
teamwork
soft skills
patience
social intelligence
punctuality
confidence
being well-organized
multitasking

Students participating in the survey are aware of employers' expectations and requirements. They list the following ones as the most common: thematic knowledge, foreign languages, interpersonal skills, computer skills – specialist software and professional experience. Below please find sample students' answers:

In employers' opinion young adults looking for a job should have the ability to learn fast, adapt in a new team easily and have good communication skills, be creative and resourceful.

Employers expect discipline, commitment, punctuality, good will, creative ideas and taking responsibility for what you do.

Availability, devotion, commitment, ability to work in a team, creativity are basic skills.

Internship and practice during studies or being a member of student organization. Employers want their employees to have good communicative skills, to be able to work in a team and under time pressure. They want them to learn fast.

They expect discipline, commitment, punctuality, reliability, good will, creative ideas and taking responsibility for what you do.

They want young adults starting work to have professional experience, to be able to learn new things fast, they want them to have good communications skills and to adapt to their colleagues.

Employers would rather employ a graduate with at least 10-year's professional experience.

3.3 Data Analysis of Survey Among Employers

Employers' requirements made to potential employees

Competences	Expected Level (1 – the least important 5 – the most important)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical conduct	-	1	3	1	10
Responsibility	-	-	1	2	12
Commitment	-	-	-	2	13
Loyalty, willingness to bind themselves with the company	-	2	3	3	7
Willingness to learn	-	1	-	4	10
Interpersonal communication skills	-	-	2	2	11
Team skills	-	-	2	2	11
Capacity to cooperate with people from different social groups	-	2	1	4	8
Capacity to cooperate with people in senior positions	-	2	3	3	7
Negotiation skills	-	3	3	3	6
Good logic skills	-	-	-	7	8
Creativity	1	-	1	6	7
Independent thinking	-	-	-	8	7
Problem formulation and solving skills	-	-	3	2	10
Ability to set and justify priorities	1	-	5	3	6
Mathematical skills	-	1	5	4	5
Foreign languages,	1	1	6	4	3
Work organisation skills	-	2	5	4	4
Effective time management	1	1	4	5	4

Project management skills	3	1	5	5	1
Information literacy	-	4	1	7	3
General and professional knowledge	1	4	6	2	2
Professional and subject-area knowledge	2	2	3	2	6
Know-how matching current company requirements	1	4	1	5	4
Analytic Competences	3	2	1	5	4
Professional Experience	4	1	6	4	-
Resourcefulness	2	1	6	5	-
TOTAL	20	37	79	108	169

Table no 4: The Level of Potential Employers' Competences Per Employers' Requirements

This table comprehensively lists individual competences useful in the labour market. It also shows the level of an individual competence from employers' perspective, where 1 means the least important and 5 the most important.

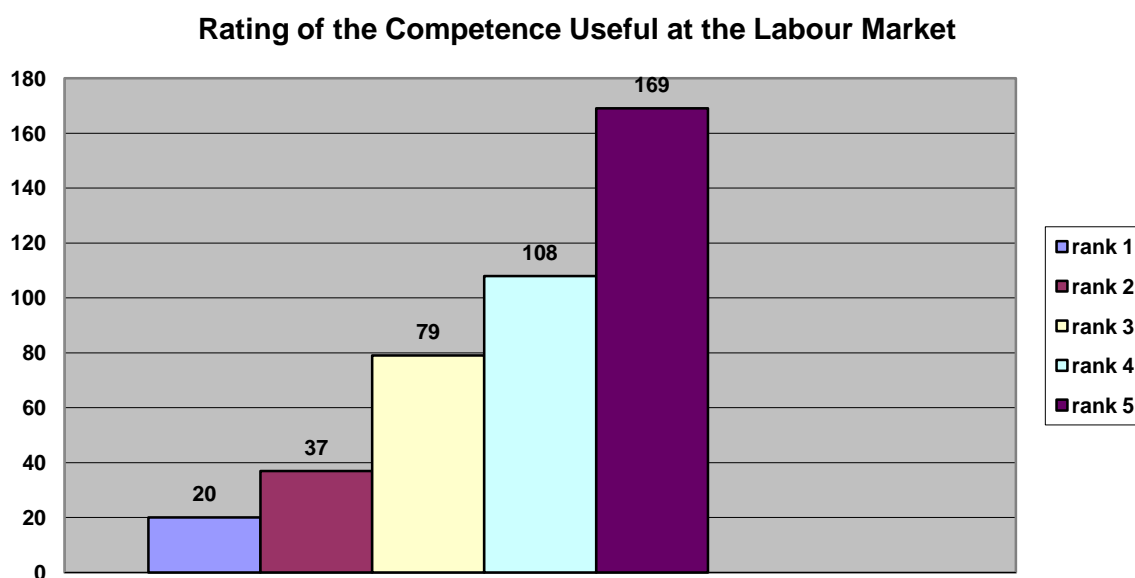


Figure nr 16: Rating of the Competence Useful in the Labour Market

Competences Required by the Employers

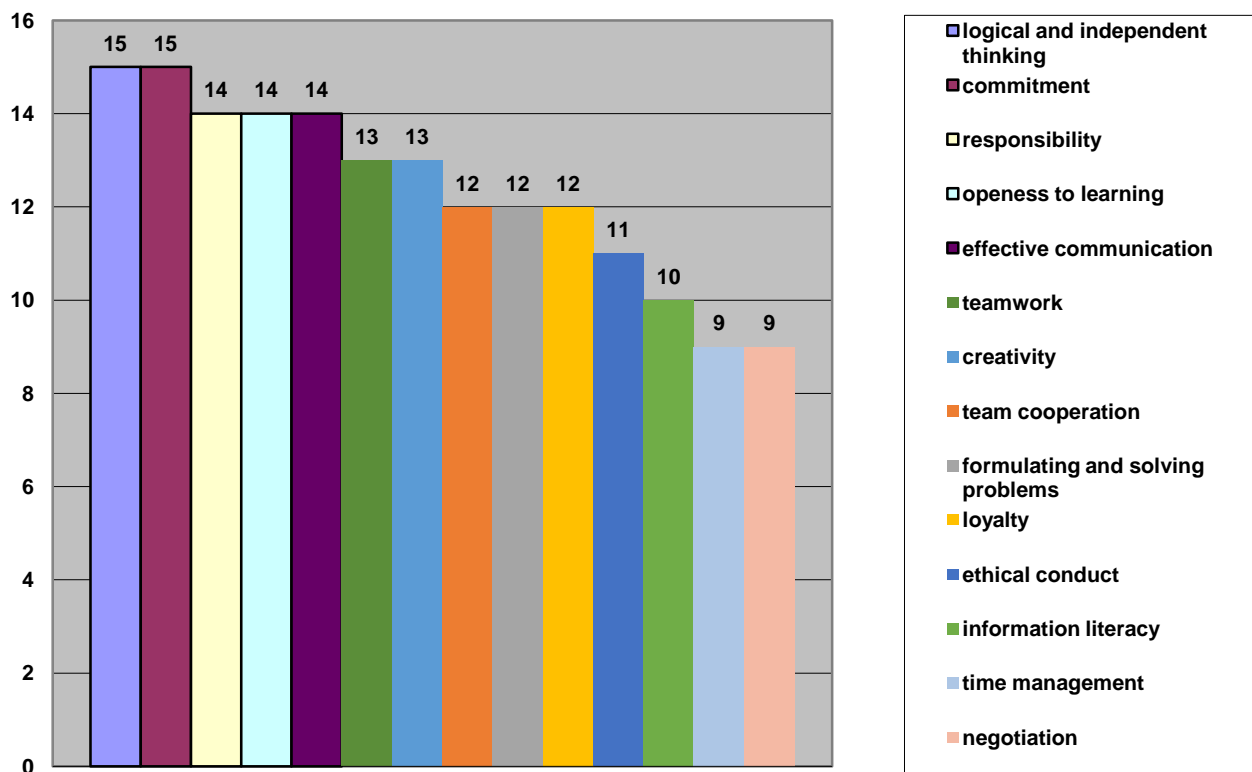


Figure no 17: Competences Required by Potential Employees

Employers expect a variety of competences from candidates for a given position. From the survey perspective, the most important competences are those listed by the majority of the surveyed (60%) and more than the majority who rated the importance as 4 and 5 on the scale). Employers' expectations index with reference to potential employees' competences ranks as follows:

Logical and independent thinking as well as commitment – 100% employers consider them as the most important

Responsibility and openness to new knowledge as well as effective communication– 93.33%

Teamwork creativity – 86.67 %

Team cooperation, formulating and solving problems as well as loyalty-80.00%

Ethical conduct – 73,33%

Information literacy – 66.67%

Management and negotiations – 60%

Evaluation of secondary school students' competences – detailed summary

Competences	Expected level (1 – the least important 5 – the most important)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical conduct	1	2	8	1	3
Responsibility	3	1	7	2	1
Commitment	1	5	4	3	2
Loyalty, willingness to bind themselves with the company	4	3	6	-	2
Willingness to learn	2	1	5	4	3
Interpersonal communication skills	2	6	3	4	-
Team skills	1	2	7	3	2
Capacity to cooperate with people from different social groups	-	9	2	2	2
Capacity to cooperate with people in senior positions	5	5	3	2	-
Negotiation skills	3	6	5	1	-
Good logic skills	1	1	12	1	-
Creativity	2	3	8	2	-
Independent thinking	2	5	6	1	1
Problem formulation and solving skills	3	6	5	1	-
Ability to set and justify priorities	4	6	4	1	-
Mathematical skills	-	4	6	4	1
Foreign Languages,	2	4	6	3	-
Work organisation skills	1	5	7	1	-
Effective time management	-	6	9	-	-
Project management skills	2	6	5	2	-
Information literacy	-	5	2	6	2
General and professional knowledge	-	4	4	7	-

Professional and subject-area knowledge	2	7	3	3	-
Know-how matching current company requirements	4	6	4	1	-
Analytic Competences	3	7	5	-	-
Professional Experience	6	5	3	1	-
Resourcefulness	2	5	5	3	-
TOTAL	56	125	144	58	19

Table no 5: Evaluation of secondary school students' competences

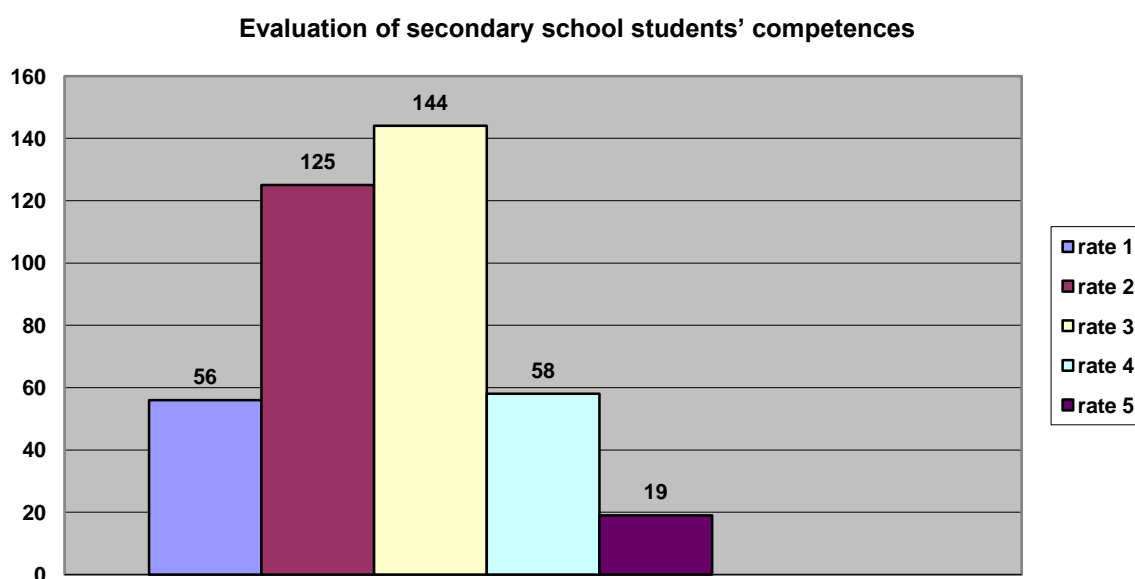


Figure no 17: Evaluation of secondary school students' competences

The level of secondary school graduates' competences required in the labour market falls well in average levels 2-3 (where 1 means the lowest rates and 5 – the highest rates). Very low scores – 1 and good are reported by a similar number of employers. Very few employers evaluated students' competences as low- 5 points.

Evaluation of university students' competences – detailed summary

Competences	Expected level (1 – the least important 5 – the most important)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Ethical conduct	-	4	5	2	4
Responsibility	-	3	5	2	4
Commitment	1	5	3	3	3
Loyalty, willingness to bind themselves with the company	2	4	6	-	3
Willingness to learn	-	4	3	2	6
Interpersonal communication skills	-	2	4	8	2
Team skills	-	3	3	6	3
Capacity to cooperate with people from different social groups	-	2	5	3	5
Capacity to cooperate with people in senior positions	1	2	5	6	1
Negotiation skills	-	5	5	5	-
Good logic skills	1	1	5	6	2
Creativity	1	4	5	4	1
Independent thinking	1	5	4	4	1
Problem formulation and solving skills	1	2	6	5	1
Ability to set and justify priorities	1	4	5	2	3
Mathematical skills	1	3	6	3	2
Foreign Languages,	-	2	5	3	5
Work organisation skills	1	1	6	4	3
Effective time management	3	4	4	4	-
Project management skills	3	2	6	3	1
Information literacy	-	4	4	2	5
General and professional knowledge	2	3	5	4	1

Professional and subject-area knowledge	3	4	4	4	-
Know-how matching current company requirements	3	5	3	3	1
Analytic Competences	2	5	6	3	-
Professional Experience	5	5	4	1	-
Resourcefulness	2	4	6	3	-
TOTAL	34	92	128	75	57

Table no 6: Evaluation of university students' competences

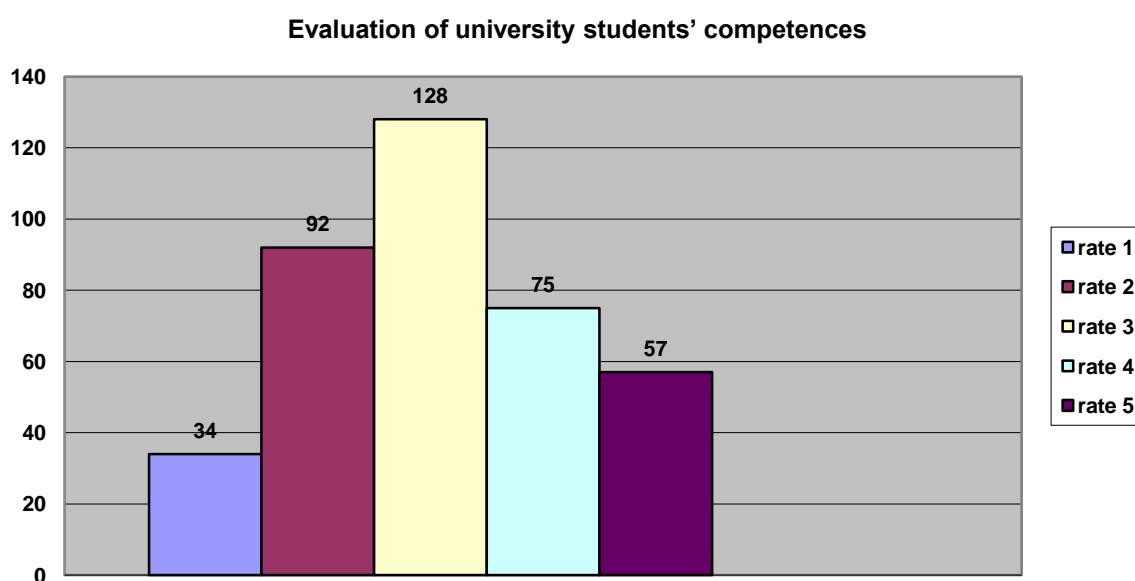


Figure no 18: Evaluation of university students' competences

The level of university graduates' competences required in the labour market falls well in average levels 2-3 (where 1 means the lowest rates and 5 – the highest rates). A large group of the surveyed indicated that university graduates had competences at a good level. Very low scores – 1 and good are reported by very few employers – rate 1.

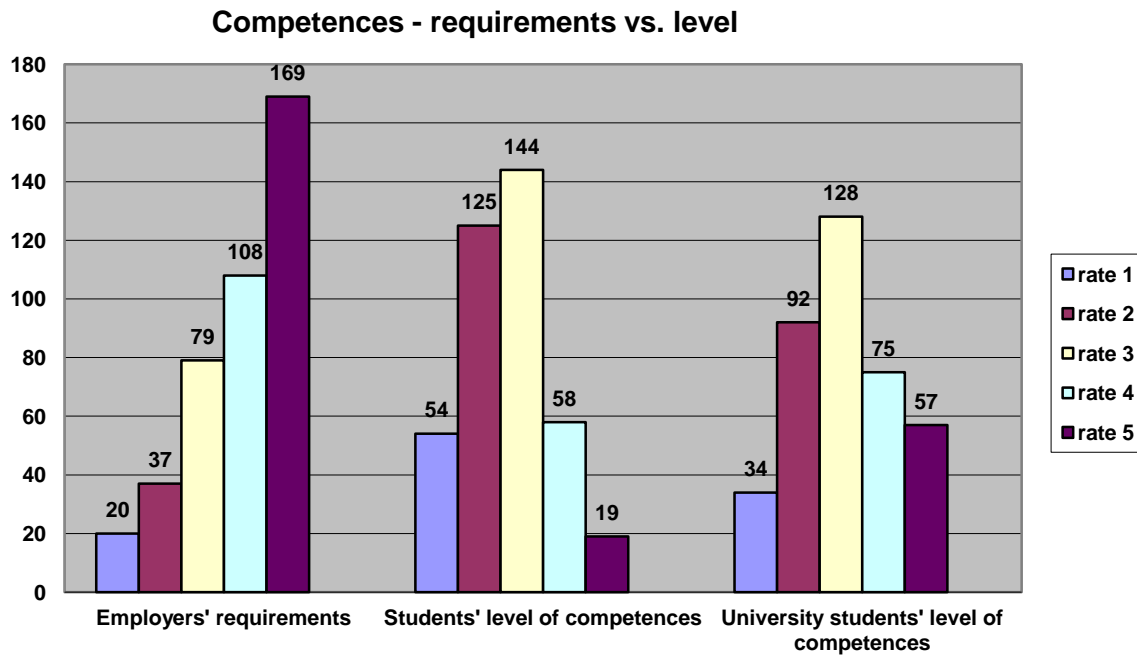


Figure no 19: *Competences - requirements vs. level by employers' responds*

This figure shows the lack of correlation between employers' requirements and young adults' entering the labour market level of competences.

The survey conducted was supplemented with open questions directly related to young adults' recruitment processes. Employers were very open in sparing their views and observations related to employment in their companies.

The majority of surveyed employers – 80% - verifies potential employers' competences and supplied information during job interviews and analysis of documents confirming competences as well as through a set of questions checking a candidate's truthfulness.

Competences of the employed people can be observed in their daily routine, that's why employers require candidates to solve practical assignments during job interviews. The surveyed employers hire people on probation when the employees are examined and competences which candidates listed in their application documents are naturally verified. In one instance an employee was evaluated „from outside” by a *secret shopper/customer*.

In a company, where specific professional knowledge and creative thinking are required the first task which helps to assess candidate's impeccable manner and to determine if you would want to cooperate with her/him as a person is one of the outstanding orders. When the employer observes the way the candidate handles the task, he/she is able to determine the level of professional and technical knowledge of the candidate. A draft of the project or its finished part can check creativity and accuracy of a person who prepared the project.

Some employers contact candidates' previous employers for references.

94.33% employers participating in the survey declare they help newly employed to improve their skills and knowledge. Employers provide internal and external trainings. They assign new employees experienced colleagues who provide necessary support and help. It is a good practice to make teams out of employees so that they could supplement and learn from one another. New employees usually join their elder colleagues. In this way younger employees quickly learn how the company operates and many practical things useful in their everyday routine. Elder employees also benefit from such situations as they get a fresher look at their professional duties.

Open questions the employers were asked referred to the ways of assessing graduates' practical experience and knowledge upon application for a given post in the company. Employers' experience shows that some of them assess this experience as very low and average (6 employers – 40%). In their opinion students and graduates have theoretical knowledge gained during their studies, they, however, lack many skills necessary in a given position. One of the employees said that: *Students most often lack experience in efficient interpersonal communications - with customers and colleagues. Teamwork is also difficult, not all students are able to adapt to principles of teamwork. They also find time management and setting priorities of work difficult to master (e.g. when we have a deadline to finish an order, it sometimes happened that a young employee executed all his/her duties one by one instead of concentrating on closing all outstanding things. Unfortunately you can learn such thing only in practice and they are very important.*

Employers notice that graduates who used to work as casual workers/employees during their studies have much better experience. In fact, many students have practical skills which they gained outside their universities. Even during a job interview one can notice they used to work or had a work placement or vocational training in companies. Vocational and technical school graduates show a higher level of competences.

Employers assess the level of general theoretical knowledge as better than professional experience. The majority of the surveyed assess it as good.

However, professional knowledge and personal and civic skills are not as good. Graduates very often find it difficult to use their theoretical knowledge in practice and though they know how e.g.: talk to a customer and what they should do in such a situation – they simply can't do it.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Assumptions of the Strategy of the Development of Education for 2007-2013 increased the importance of key competences. Both institutions of formal and non-formal educations emphasise and focus on developing these competences in young people. By combining knowledge-skills and personal, civic and teamwork-related competences the opportunities of secondary school and university graduates joining the labour market rise. The main objective is to reduce young adults 'unemployment in Poland and Europe.

The study conducted under *Young adults In the labour market* project and Erasmus Programme + KA2 Strategic Partnership and founded with the support from the European Commission with participation of 60 secondary school students, 60 university students and 15 employers **showed there is no correlation between employers' expectations and the level of competences young adults joining the labour market.**

The analysis of secondary school and university students' competence tests as well as details interview with employers made it possible to draw the following conclusions:

- Secondary school students generally have an average and low level of social competences
- A large group of surveyed students (30 %) is not able to assess the level of their competences, the others, in the majority of cases, asses this level as average. Self-assessment of technical and vocational school students is higher than secondary school students.
- Students have very little knowledge of employers' expectations in relation to social competences
- University students show average, low and very low level of social competences
- The assessment of the level of their own competences rates as low and average
- Students' awareness of employers' expectations of young employees is definitely higher than secondary school students'
- The vast majority of secondary school and university students Express their readiness to improve their skills and competences required in the labour market
- Employers emphasise the importance of such competences as: logical and independent thinking, commitment, responsibility, openness to new information and knowledge, efficient communication, teamwork, creativity, cooperation in a team, formulating and solving problems, ethical conduct, information literacy, management, negotiations, time management and planning one's work
- Employers asses young adults' theoretical knowledge as good, however, they consider its practical application as much worse
- Young adults' professional experience is varied; it is very low or none - of those people who did not have any opportunity to practice in a real work situation and even very high of casual workers, of those who cooperated with various institutions and of volunteers', etc.

Taken all the above mentioned issues, it is recommended to implement such solutions which would assist in developing young adults' social and personal competences, especially in relation to developing enterprising spirit, creativity, which is marketable from the employer's expectations and point of view:

- Correlation of formal and informal education institutions activities in relation to developing social competences. Introduction of subjects on developing personal competences and work organisation in small teams to the curriculum still needs to be improved – both in terms of merits and application of educational tools.
- Preparation of a set of programmes and didactic materials on the development of young adults' social competences which will help teachers and students develop key competences required in labour market and which could be used by training institutions
- Preparation and implementation of a uniform system of the evaluation of key competences required in the labour market, e.g. : evaluation sheets of the competences of young adults' joining the labour market
- Developing interesting to young adults educational methods and tools which will enable identification and improvements of social and personal competences of the students
- Increasing awareness, especially secondary school students' awareness of social competences required in the labour market
- Supporting and counselling pupils and students in order to assist them in a conscious career planning

It is estimated that the implementation of the abovementioned recommendations will stimulate creativity, independence, responsibility as well as ability to cooperate with members of a team mainly through applying innovative methods and tools facilitating sharing, improving and consolidating theoretical knowledge and developing and improving key competences. The awareness of strengths and weaknesses in key competences required in the labour market will also rise mainly due to the application methods developed in the project.

Conclusions and recommendations resulting from the surveys play an important role in scheduling work with young adults entering the labour market and selecting methods of developing social competences – recommended by the employers.

5. Summary

The Employment Agency data and public survey results show that while advertising vacancies for a given position employers very often list essentials conditions/requirements which mainly are: interpersonal and social competences in relation to efficient communication, work planning and coping in difficult situations, good manners and ethical conducts as well as ability to cooperate with team members. Moreover, employers need employees who are creative, relentless and determined in pursuing one's goals, reliable, committed and open to new knowledge and skills. The lack of the abovementioned competences makes it difficult for a graduate to find a job in the labour market. That is why it is necessary for school and university curricula contributed to the development of key competences by young adults. Moreover, non-formal education should provide training based on the programme developing social competences which are required by employers. It is easier to develop these competences outside school in the form of training sessions as mandatory curricular subjects cover these subjects marginally..

The need for change in teaching methods is one of the most challenges of the modern Polish educational system. Encyclopaedic knowledge, factual knowledge - „know what rather than know how or know why”, disintegration of knowledge, verbalism lack of individualized educational plans, no relation of education to life, insufficient accommodation of social needs: global and future still dominate. The importance of developing competences is still growing in the education system and encyclopaedic knowledge is being discarded. Knowledge alone is no longer important, what counts is the ability to apply this knowledge in practice. Teaching key competences means making it possible to apply acquired knowledge in complex, diversified and unpredictable situations. It is, thus, advisable to develop extensively these competences in educational process with appropriate teaching methods. Skills that are developed at teaching courses for young people offer a good basis for building key competences. They result from long-term activities, they include interrelated elements conditioning their achievement, namely: reflection, knowledge and attitude. Key competences will serve creative perception, identifying and solving problems arising in the modern world; they will allow lifelong acquisition of new knowledge; they enable adaptation to an ever-changing job market in an era of globalization, as well as self-development and self-fulfilment.

One should keep in mind a famous Confucius's saying:

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

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