

Flash Eurobarometer 537 **SMEs and skills shortages**

Interviews with SMEs (<250 employees) and large companies (250+ employees) in the EU27 (14 108 interviews) Fieldwork: 11.9.2023 – 13.10.2023 | Methodology

Skills shortages in SMEs

A majority of SMEs faced difficulties, over the past 24 months, to find and hire staff with the right skills The likelihood to face difficulties increases with size and varies by 'ecosystem'



% of companies reporting it was 'very' or 'slightly' difficult to find and hire staff with the right skills in the past 24 months

5%

Large

Results by size of the SME (in comparison with large companies)



Results by industrial ecosystems

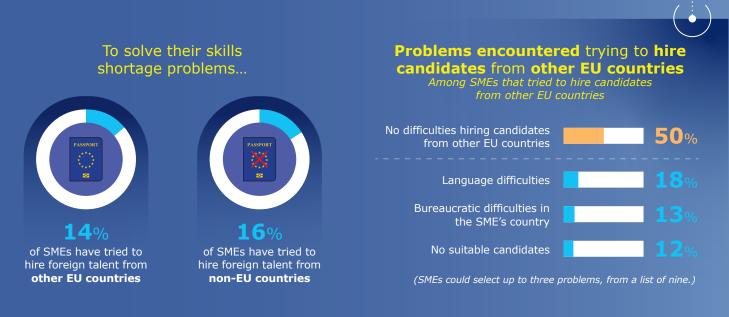
86%Tourism64%Electronics72%Health62%Energy - renewables67%Construction56%Cultural and creative industries65%Textile56%Digital65%Mobility - Transport - Automotive56%Retail65%Agri-food53%Proximity, social economy and civil security64%Energy intensive industries51%Aerospace and defence

Skills shortages are the top-ranking problem

SMEs	Top-5 problems faced by companies	Large companies
54 % ←	Difficulties in finding employees with the right skills	→ 72 %
34% ←	Regulatory obstacles or administrative burden	→ 26 %
21% ←	Limited access to finance, including possibly due to receiving payments late	→ 10 %
20% ←	Unfair competition	→ 7%
16 % -	Limited demand for their products or services	→ 13%

(SMEs and large companies were asked to select up to three problems, from a list of eight.)

Hiring foreign talent to solve skills shortages



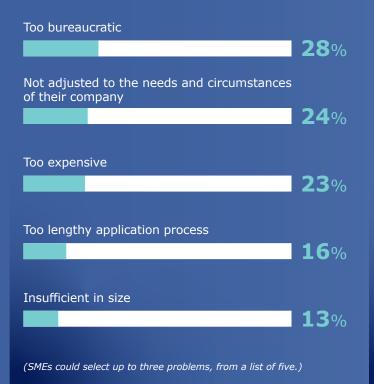
Support to address skills shortages



Seven in ten SMEs that received **external support** to tackle their skills shortage problems evaluate this support as very effective (19%) or somewhat effective (51%)



Problems encountered with external support received to tackle skills shortages Among SMEs that received external support



Types of external support seen as most useful to tackle skill shortages

Fiscal incentives (e.g. a tax moratorium, tax deductions for social security or corporate tax, etc.)

		38%	
Training for upski programmes funded b	illing (e.g. upskilling traini y an external entity)	ng	
		30%	
Direct subsidies (e.g. a grant or subsidies given to the company to tackle skill shortages)			
		28%	
Improved cooperation with public employment services			
		21%	
Consulting and guidance (e.g. advice or guidance to help navigate legal complexities that are a barrier to tackling skill shortages)			

(SMEs were asked to select up to three types of support, from a list of six.)