EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE – COMPETENCES FOR EMPLOYMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND:

This project was developed and implemented carried out by eight National Agencies[1] (hereinafter NAs) of the Youth in Action programme, together with two SALTO[2] Resource Centres on between 2012-2014. The common motivation and focus were to explore the relevance of competences[3] developed during a European Voluntary Service project (hereinafter EVS) for the labour market

The project included several stages and activities, including *desk research; online surveys for Ex-EVS volunteers, Sending and Hosting Organizations; focus groups; national meetings* and *an international seminar* that took place in Slovenia in May 2014.

The project was carried out by representatives of participating NAs and SALTOs, and it involved three experts: one researcher and in charge of the survey report (Ozgehan Senyuva) and two facilitators of the international seminars and contributors to the narrative report (Darko Markovic and Gisele Evrard).

The detailed *project narrative report* and *full survey report* are available through the project web site:

https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/inclusion/inclusiontraining/evsskillsandemployability/

DATA and SAMPLE FOR SURVEYS:

There were three parallel online surveys that were open by invitation: *Ex-EVS Volunteers Survey (27 questions); SOHO Survey (16 questions); Employers Survey (16 questions).* The links for the three surveys were launched in September 2013 for testing purposes and were heavily promoted from October 2013 onwards. The survey links expired in April 2014. Through the period that the link was online, it received 1643 responses out of which 1210 respondents completed all questions.

After data cleaning, the EX-EVS survey has 1419 respondents (weighted); SOHO survey has 330 (weighted) and Employers 220 (Not-weighted).

[1] Belgium-Flanders; Bosnia-Herzegovina; Hungary; Poland; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; the United Kingdom

2 SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme (now E+/YiA)

[3] Competences in this project are to be understood as an overall system of values, attitudes and beliefs as well as skills and knowledge, which can be put into practice to manage diverse complex situations and tasks successfully. Self-confidence, motivation and well-being are important pre-requisites for a person to be able to act out his/her developed competences.

KEY FINDING:

Spending a certain period of time as an EVS volunteer in another country makes a profound impact on the young people. They state that this experience affected their future plans for employment, education and where to live. They also believe that by participating in the EVS programme, they have developed competences that are essential for their employability. Finally, they believe that being an Ex-EVS volunteer increases their chances of employability. Ex-EVS volunteers also believe that the biggest obstacle for employment is the *Experience Dilemma:* to find a job you need experience; to get experience you need to find a job.

The SOHOs evaluate their role in supporting the development of the EVS volunteers in a more positive light than the Ex-EVS volunteers. They also strongly agree that EVS experience is contributes very significantly to the competence development of a young person, thus increasing their employability.

The employer sector also has a positive evaluation of those young people who spend time abroad as a volunteer and they state that Ex-EVS volunteers should definitely mention their volunteer experience when applying for a job. The research also revealed that the level of knowledge about EVS is extremely low among employers. There is also a big match between the competences stated to be developed by Ex-EVS volunteers and those sought for by the employers. The employers differ from young people about the obstacles for employment; they believe that the biggest obstacle is *Inadequateness between the offer and/or the approach of formal education and the needs of the labor market*.

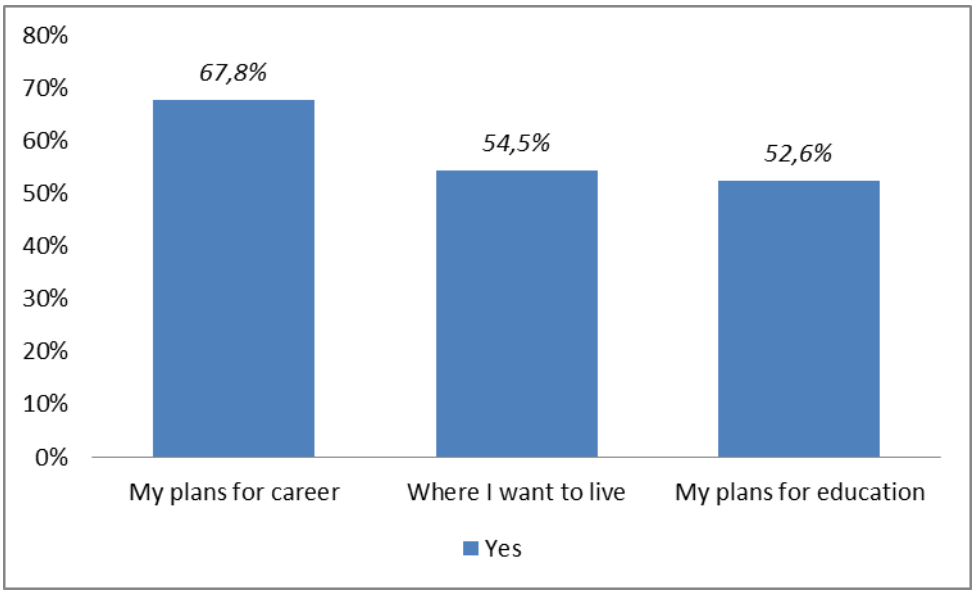
Overall, this project's findings are in line with other similar research, indicating a very strong link between Non-formal and Informal learning and Youth work and employability.

MAIN FINDINGS:

EVS is a life changer…

The ex-EVS volunteers that have participated in the study have stated that the EVS experience played a very important role in shaping their lives. Following EVS, they seem to have re-evaluated their future plans, mainly regarding their plans for *education, career* and *where they would like to live*.

Chart 1 Impact of EVS on Future Plans (Ex EVS Volunteers Survey, N=1312)



Volunteers need self-reflection to realize what they learnt…

The outcomes of the survey suggest that the most popular and efficient way for Ex-EVS volunteers during their project is through self-reflection.

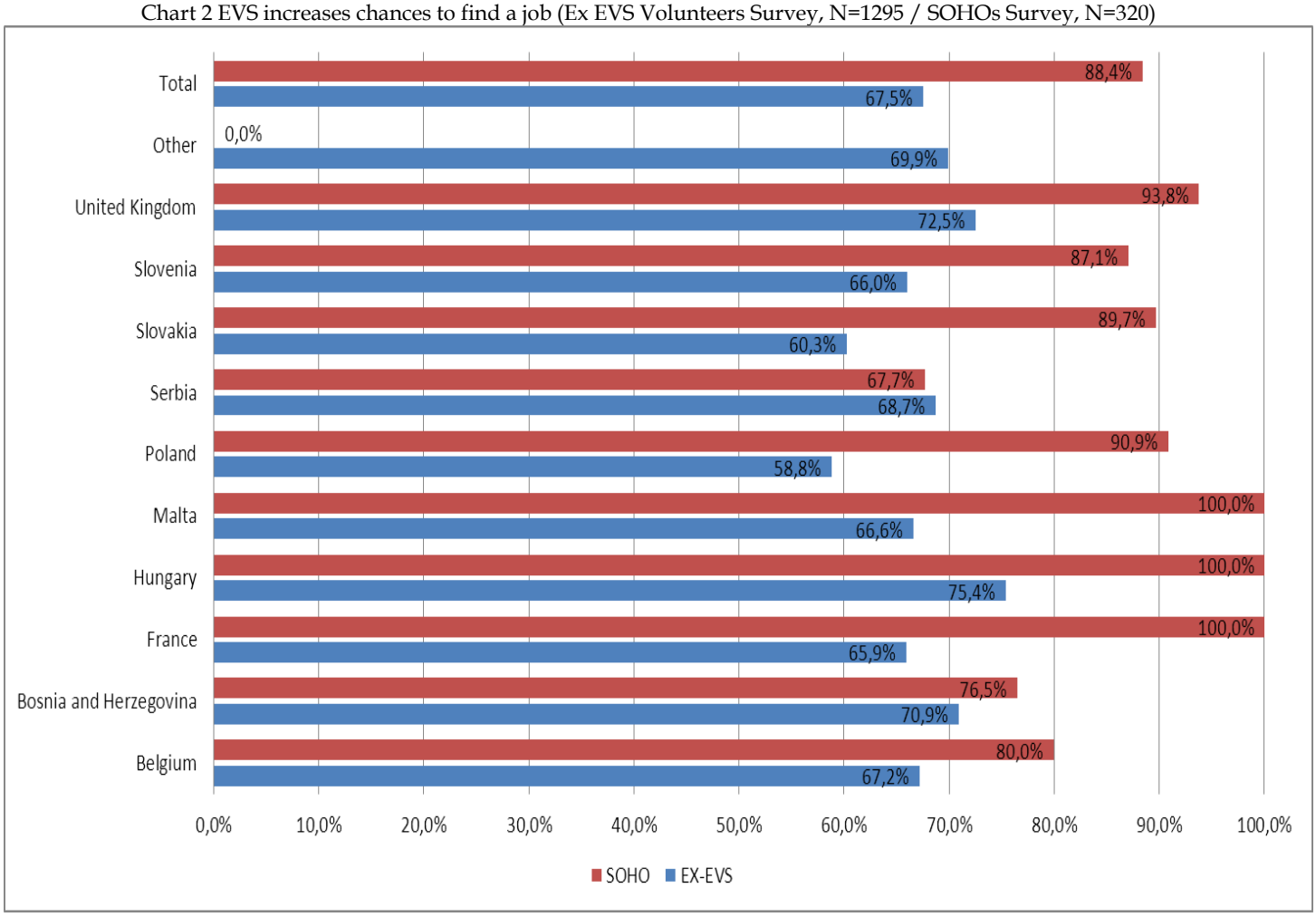
TABLE 1 Awareness of learning in EVS by… (EX-EVS Volunteers survey)

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Ongoing self-reflection during the project	40,8%	24,5%	11,8%
Receiving feedback from people in my host organization	16,6%	18,1%	15,8%
Applying my newly gained competences after my EVS	16,5%	15,0%	20,2%
By reflecting on my EVS once back home	13,5%	20,0%	21,9%
Receiving feedback from people once back home	5,3%	9,9%	14,9%
Filling in the Youthpass self-assessment	4,4%	8,8%	13,5%
Other…	2,9%	3,6%	1,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

EX EVS Volunteers believe EVS experience increased their chances to find a job!

The findings indicate that for ex-EVS volunteers there is a strong link between EVS experience and chances of finding a job without a doubt. SOHOs are sure that EVS experience increases the chances of finding a job, more optimistic than the ex-EVS volunteers.

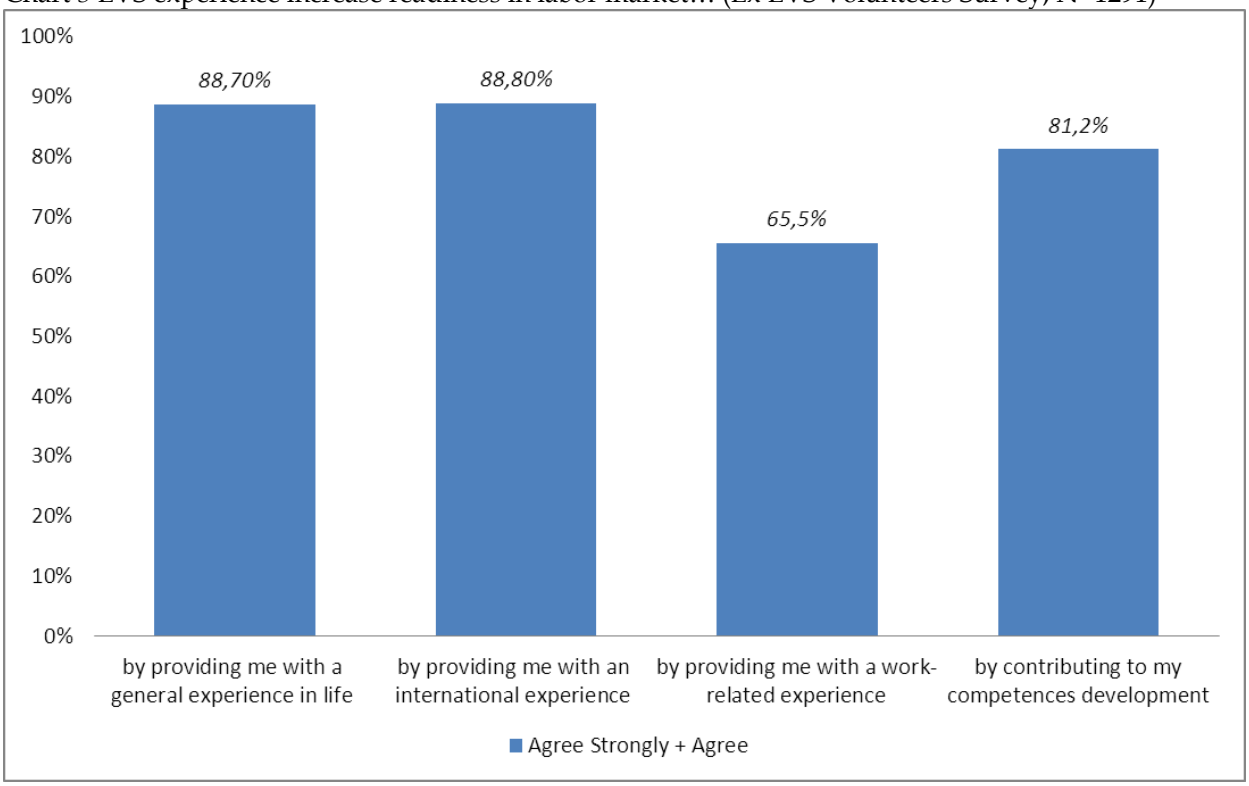
Chart 2 EVS increases chances to find a job (Ex EVS Volunteers Survey, N=1295 / SOHOs Survey, N=320)



When asked "Do you believe that a young person being a volunteer in another country for a period of time increases his/her chances to find a job?" a very clear majority (76,4%) of employers agree. While 11,2% disagree, 12,5% neither agree nor disagree.

Being a volunteer increases readiness for the labor market by providing life experience, international experience and by developing competences.

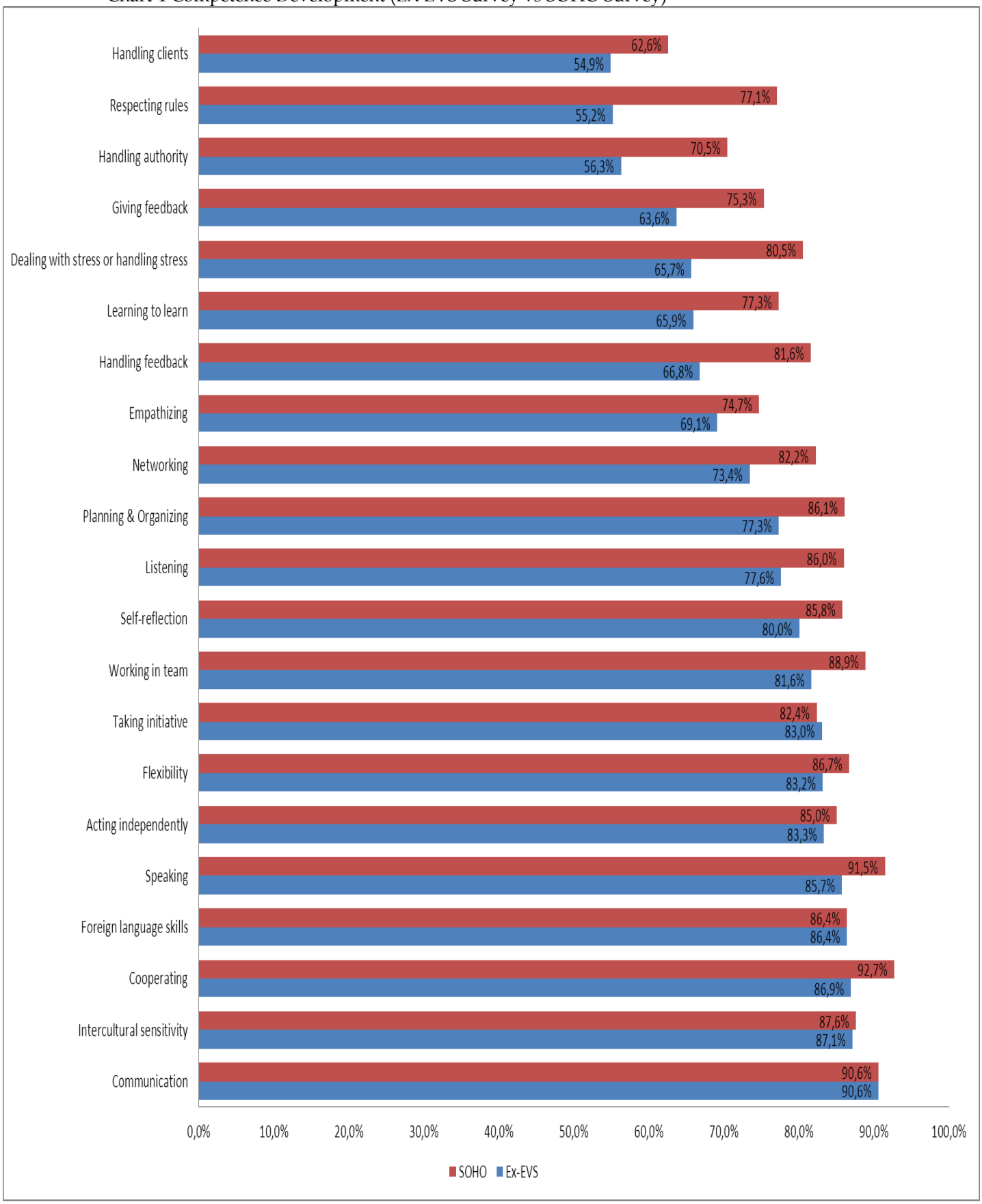
Chart 3 EVS experience increase readiness in labor market… (Ex EVS Volunteers Survey, N=1291)



Competence Development: Something both Ex-EVS Volunteers and SOHOs agree…

Ex-EVS volunteers report that communication is the competence they believe to have most developed, while handling clients is the least developed one. When looked into overall average, competence development during the EVS experience is at a very significant level of 75% (average of all 21 competences). SOHO representatives are more optimistic in their evaluations of the EVS experience. Overall, their average in 21 competence development is 82,4%, which is significantly higher than the average of ex EVS volunteers (75%).

Chart 4 Competence Development (EX EVS Survey vs SOHO Survey)



EX-EVS Volunteers and Employers disagree on obstacles for Youth Employment

Research results indicate that there is a significant difference between what young people see as an obstacle and what the employers see as obstacles. This is particularly true for the statement: *Young people are offered only lower-paid, temporary jobs and/or internships*. While **66,3%** of ex EVS volunteers agree with this statement, only **31,8%** of employers see this situation as an obstacle. *Corruption and nepotism* is considered as another major obstacle by almost **6 out of 10** ex EVS volunteers, while only **3 out of 10** employers consider it as an obstacle. On the other hand, **76,7%** of the employers consider that *young people do not have motivation to look for a job*, and **54,8%** of ex EVS volunteers tend to agree.

Both the employers and ex EVS volunteers see the *experience dilemma* as a major obstacle for youth employment. The *experience dilemma*, which refers to the situation that *to get work you need experience, to get experience you need work,* is indeed considered as the most important obstacle by ex EVS volunteers that young people face. **80,7% of ex EVS volunteers** consider experience dilemma as an obstacle, while **73% of the employers agree.** However, the most important obstacle in the eyes of employers is *Inadequateness between the offer and/or the approach of formal education and the needs of the labor market*. For **81,5% of the employers** this is an obstacle for youth employment, while **73,2%** of ex EVS volunteers agree.

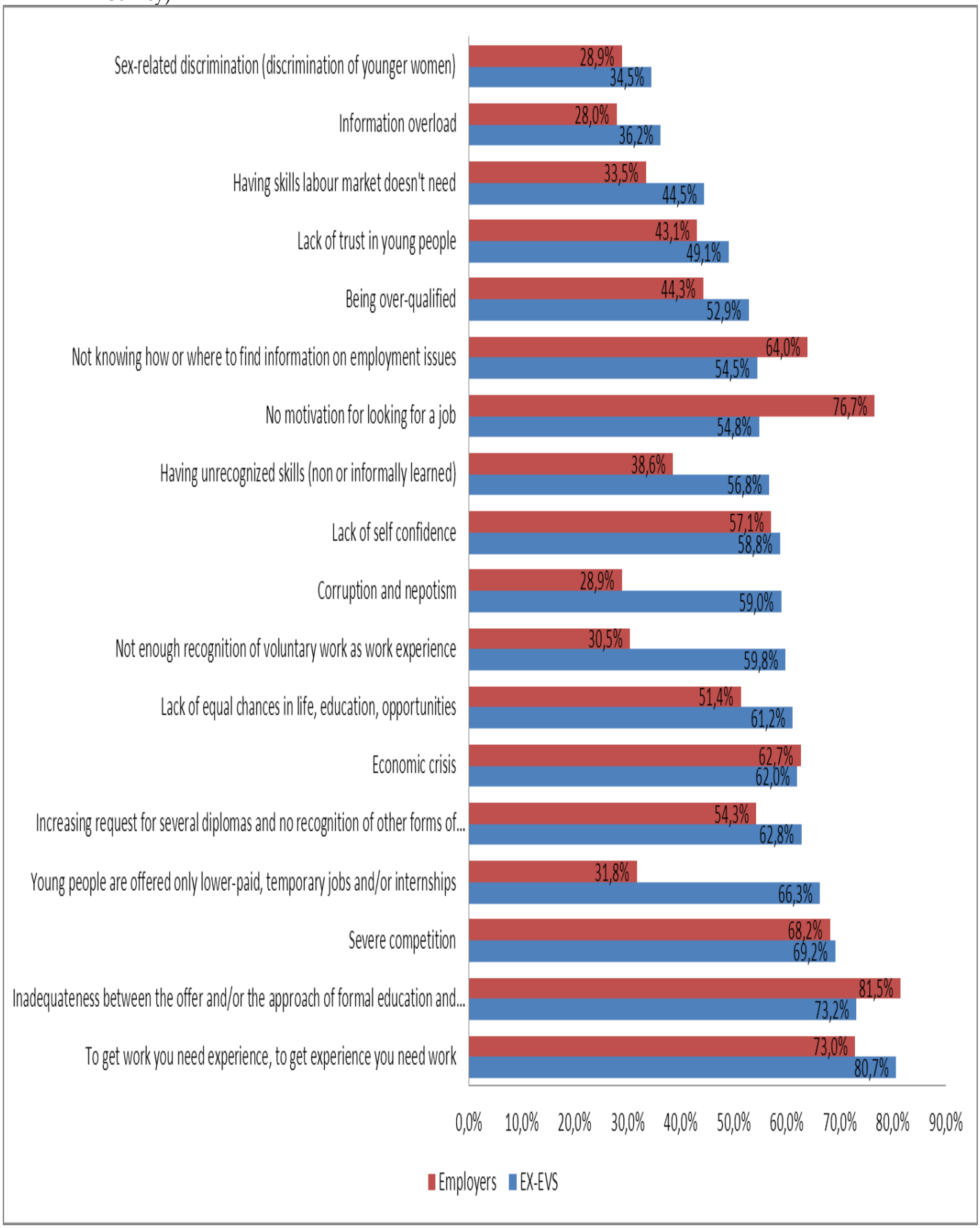



Chart 5 What are the major obstacles for youth employment? (Employers Survey-Ex EVS Volunteers Survey)