

NEEDS ASSESSMENT TRANSNATIONAL REPORT



SoftSkills4EU:
Promote your Soft Skills with Open Badges



TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

OUTPUT:

IO1 COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

ACTIVITY:

IO1 A1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

OUTPUT LEADER:

VISOKA POSLOVNA ŠKOLA PAR

PROJECT INFORMATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE NEEDS ANALYSES

The main aim of the SoftSkills4UE project is to identify the key soft skills within the competencies defined in the Europass Tool and then develop a standardized soft skills reference framework, which would be useful as a validation tool for those soft skills competences. It will bring an added value and more credibility to the already widely used Europass and can also be a starting point for a direct improvement of Europass. The impact will be visible for both, job seekers to credibly show their competencies; for employers (employing organizations) simplifying the selecting procedure or helping to more efficiently distribute already employed people to workplaces; for career counsellors to better and easier recognize the competencies thus, making counselling more efficient.

During the SoftSkills4EU project, partners conducted two surveys, targeted for employers and for job seekers. The aim was to understand and recognise the need for soft skills among job seekers and employers, or human resource departments. Each of the five partners conducted two different and separated surveys, including at least 70 participants, with the total of at least 350 respondents for the project.

The questionnaire included 15 questions. Questions were prepared in order to define the most significant soft skills, and to gain data on the methods of verifying, testing and proving soft skills. They had to include 50 participants for the employers survey, and at least 20 participants for the job seekers survey. In the last one, they also had to include at least 10 migrant participants (10 migrant job seekers, 10 national job seekers, total 20 participants for job seekers survey). Based on the survey results for Slovenia, Italy, The Netherlands, Cyprus and Croatia, the soft skills competence framework was created. Today it became crucial to employ highly skilled and motivated workforce, and it is widely accepted and acknowledged the importance of hard skills among potential and existing employees, but it is becoming more and more recognized the importance of soft skills, as they were to often undervalued and there were no training or similar educations for soft skill learning. That is why the soft skills competence framework is important for both, employers and job seekers.



2 NATIONAL / TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 EXPLORING NATIONAL STRATEGIES

SLOVENIA

Slovenian professional materials, strategies, frameworks related to competences is the European Document are based on: Key Competences for Lifelong Learning - European Reference Framework (European Reference Framework, 2007), where 8 basic capabilities (or key competences) are selected and defined. The European reference framework was revised in January 2018. Some areas have been transformed, renamed, and merged with some key competencies. We can see how the basic capabilities and key competences are matched in relation to the renewed reference framework (Key competences for Lifelong Learning, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0014&from=EN>). Definitions and division of soft skills, which can be found in different professional basis, are diverse depending on the concept.

Employment Service of Slovenia has developed e-portal (e-guidance: <https://esvetovanje.ess.gov.si/>). The part of the portal is connected with competences and offers tools for assessing key competences. Key competences are defined as: "...are those competencies that are useful both in different professions and in different life situations. They enable you to successfully integrate into the world of work and social life and increase employability. Key competences are transferable and your employability is greater." Soft skills are included within the key competencies that are divided into 18 groups of competences. For 14 soft skills (planning and organization, planning and organization, interpersonal skills, self-initiative, resilience, personal development, networking, leadership, self-confidence, self-awareness, order-based adaptability, solving mistakes, introducing changes and teamwork) tools for assessment (e-questionnaire) has been developed and includes three levels of competence development (low, medium, high level of competence development).

Also, within SIAE (Slovenian Institute for Adult education) document there are many different definitions and interpretations of basic capabilities of adults. The basic abilities, along with the development of literacy appear in all national development documents for the years 2004 to 2007 and 2007 to 2013. Operational development program of human resources 2007 determines the increase in linguistic literacy, learning foreign languages; access to ICT; reducing the educational deficit of adults, especially those with only basic or lower vocational education and low level of literacy, and training for developing new competences. Operational program for the development of human resources also summarizes all eight basic capabilities as defined in European Recommendations on Fundamental Capabilities. Hard skills can be measured and proven, while soft skills are more difficult to evaluate (and can

hardly be obtained in the process of formal education) because they are personality characteristics that connect with emotional intelligence because they represent the individual's ability to interact with the environment. Soft skills are personal characteristics that are complementary to hard skills, knowledge acquired in the process of formal education. Which means that hard skills are the ones that help an individual to talk, while soft skills are those who decide whether or not the candidate will also take the vacant job. (<http://www.talentiran.si/>). Most employers assess soft skills through a conversation and observation during job interview. Some of employers use psychological tests to assess soft skills and support from various assessment centres. It is important, however, that the skills that are being evaluated are those that are necessary for a specific job.

ITALY

On a policy level in Italy, soft skills are contained in local Educational institution programmes, in particular in those which provides secondary education. At the moment It is not possible to identify a standardised methodology for training and validation of soft skills. If Hard skills are measurable, functional or technical and also defined as specific job-oriented knowledge, Soft skills are less measurable. They are defined as more personal skills and strictly bound to the person behaviour. Moreover, the term Soft skill frequently do not refer to only one specific skill or competence and should be considered as groups of skills. A formal and universally accepted definition and subdivision of soft skills in Italy has not been found.

The widening phenomenon of the talent gap affects all areas of the business and the fear of hard skills redundancy could drive attrition. In soft skills it is more pronounced than in hard skills. People with experience in soft skills, such as customer-centricity and passion for learning are most in demand by Italian organizations and are an increasingly important characteristic of a well-rounded professional.

Several projects, which involve the contribution of Italian partners, are now aiming at defining a clear framework of soft skills, trying to foster a recognition of their added value in professional curricula. Soft skills training such as of those related to IT (digital soft skills) and to lifelong learning seem to be the most addressed by private and public organisations.

THE NETHERLANDS

On a policy level in the Netherlands, soft skills are contained within the wider policy theme of “21-century skills”. This theme has particular interest by primary and secondary education. A policy to prepare learners for the rapidly changing future, in which someone who is a primary school pupil now, later may have a profession that does not exist yet at this moment. Flexibility is king. Next to hard skills like IT-skills, the soft skills identified are: cooperation, problem solving, creativity, planning and reflection. Hard skills are measurable, functional or technical. Like computation, writing, typing, bookkeeping, working with machines and computer programming. They also can be specific job oriented knowledge like “human anatomy” or “Chinese economy”. Soft skills are less measurable. They are defined as more personal skills, like teamwork or leadership. Things like “Communicative skills” and “Social skills” of course does not refer to only one particular skill, and should be considered as groups of skills. A really formal and accepted definition and subdivision of soft skills in the Netherlands was not found. Some of the soft skills identified from training programs might not be of “general” importance, because the majority of the training programs seem more geared at managers.



CYPRUS

There are recent research findings in Cyprus concerning the level of soft skills and the knowledge/skills that the job seekers have which will be presented below: The MMC Management Center Ltd, conducted, as part of the European project "Gaining and strengthening "soft skills" for employment through models of supporting methods (peer coaching and mentoring)-SoS"), a nationwide survey on soft skills that are necessary for the labor market (2013). The survey combined a qualitative and a quantitative research (through questionnaires and personal interviews).

Participants were 18 to 64 years old and employed in the education, private, public and non-profit sector. The participants indicated that there are specific soft skills that are important for employability such as good communication skills, self-confidence, self-awareness, social skills and emotional intelligence. In order to recruit an employee, most Cypriot companies select a number of candidates based on their CVs, who they call in an interview and, in some cases, a written examination. Behaviors that would prevent an employer from recruiting a candidate are: difficulty in communication, over-confidence, lack of respect, anxiety, aggression, negative attitude, bad recommendations, lack of critical thinking and lack of team spirit. The majority of respondents did not consider that people over 50 need different "soft" skills than younger candidates, apart from adaptability and availability of technology information. Young people under the age of 25, who usually focus on their formal qualifications, should emphasize their "soft" skills such as positive attitudes, communication skills, accuracy and accountability, and reduce their demands and expectations. Additionally, all participants mentioned that continuous training and proper guidance for the maintenance and development of workers' "soft" skills is essential.

Literature research has identified, another research conducted by The Eurydice Network (2015) that is entitled "Adult Education and Training in Europe: Programs to Develop Achievements in Basic Skills". The research focused on policies and measures that aim to ensure satisfactory access to educational opportunities for adults whose skills and qualifications do not fully meet the current labor market and to the demands of society, offering a broad picture, studying and exploring a range of interconnected domains. The report covers 35 national education systems in 32 European countries. Specifically, in Cyprus, there is no institutional framework for the adult education and basic skills. However, there are adult education programs at basic skills such as evening schools as a provision second chance in adults with low qualifications, public and private education (Training Centres and State Training Institutes) mainly on issues ICT skills. Many adult education programs offer courses for soft skills such as: communication, organizational, life skills, problem solving and teamwork

In Cyprus there is a variety of operational programs regarding validation of soft skills including training seminars (Cyprus Productivity Centre, Strovolos Municipality, MySeminars), in-house seminars (KPMG), courses (PwC), workshops (Europe Direct Nicosia) and many others.

CROATIA

The Republic of Croatia does not have a national strategy for soft skills validation or any kind of soft skills policy level. At the moment, there are few courses / educations about soft skills, and also a very few (scientific) papers about soft skills importance for today's work and business environment. There is no visible or tangible division of soft skills on the national lever or any other nation programme regarding the validation of the mentioned skills.

During 2017, the Croatian Chamber Of Economy had a soft skills education where was highlighted the importance of raising the awareness of soft skills in everyday work as well as showing case examples in business practices. There is a slight increase of soft skills educations, but it is still not widely accepted and trained.



It is deductible that Croatia has no operational programs for the validation of soft skills on any lever except the individual ones, in form of single education or course. Also, there is no clear definition or division of soft skills, therefore, the Softskills4eu project and it's competence framework could be a possible answer to defining and validating the set of soft skills needed in business environment for the country of Croatia.



3 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 SURVEY FINDINGS BY COUNTRY

As stated earlier, the survey included the five project partners countries, Slovenia, Italy, The Netherlands, Cyprus and Croatia. Two questionnaires were sent to different target groups. The first questionnaire was aimed for employed and job seekers - 10 migrants, 10 national - 20 answer needed. The second questionnaire was sent to employers, human resources department or other departments entitled in the recruitment process - 50 answer needed.

SLOVENIA

QUESTIONNAIRE - job seekers - 21 answers (11female, 10male):

85,7% respondents - answered job interview as the main tool for identifying soft skills, and 47,6% of them identified written test as the main tool for identifying soft skills. As most researched soft skills they identified communication skills (100%), teamwork (81%), responsibility (81%) and organisation skills (71,4%). The most significant factors in the employment process are education(90%), IT skills (76%), and soft skills (57%). Soft skills marked as the most important were: responsibility, flexibility and communication skills. The most used service during job seeking is diploma and job search. 52,4% respondents claim that soft skills are not easy to prove, and the 90% of them agreed that employers requires both, soft and hard skills from their workers.

QUESTIONNAIRE - employers - 40 answers:

16 micro, 16 small and 8 medium organisations included, with 55% directors included answers. As the most important factors for the employment process - they've selected: references (51%), hard skills (46%) and education (44%) - soft skills (41%). The soft skills tested before hiring are: communication skills, teamwork, flexibility and problem solving. 85% of respondents believe it would be useful to have tools for verifying soft skills.

ITALY

QUESTIONNAIRE - job seekers - 20 answers (12female, 8male):

85% respondents - answered job interview as the main tool for identifying soft skills, and the 45% of them identified internship/trial period as the second option. As most searched soft skills they identified flexibility(90%), communication skills(80%) and problem solving(75%). The most significant factors in the employment process are hard skills(85%), education and foreign languages(80%). Soft skills are identified as less important than hard skills (55%) during the recruitment process from the job seekers point of view. Soft skills marked as most important are: handling stress, flexibility and communication skills. The most used service during job seeking is diploma, certificate, following by job search. 70% of the respondents claim that soft skills are not easy to prove, and the 55% of them agreed that employers require both, soft and hard skills from their workers.

QUESTIONNAIRE - employers - 50 answers:

23 micro, 17 small and 10 medium organisations included. 65,5 % of answers were collected from general managers or answers. As the most important factors for the employment process - they've selected: references (51%), hard skills (46%) and education (44%) - soft skills (41%) (equal to Slovenia). The soft skills tested before hiring are: flexibility(92%), problem solving(82%), handling stress(82%) and customer oriented service(78%). The high percentage (77%) of respondents believe it would be useful to have tools for verifying soft skills.

THE NETHERLANDS

QUESTIONNAIRE - job seekers - 19 answers (2/3 female):

84% respondents - answered job interview as the main tool for identifying soft skills, 32% identified probation period as answer. As the most researched (top skills asked by employers) soft skills they identified communication skills (84%), flexibility (74%), customer orientation (58%). The most significant factors during the employment process are communication skills (84%), flexibility (37%), and problem solving (37%). Respondents answered job interview as the main tool for identifying soft skills as well as training. As the most researched soft skills they identified communication skills, customer orientation, flexibility and adaptability. The most significant factors during the employment process are education background (84%), soft skills (79%), and hard skills (63%). the high percentage of 74% claimed they are interested in soft skills training.

QUESTIONNAIRE - employers - 10 answers:

50% answers from the private sector, 30% from the social sector and guidance, and 20% answers from the education sector. 20% answers were collected from company directors and 20% from company recruiters. As the most important factors for the employment process - they've selected: soft skills (80%), hard skills (50%). Soft skills tested before hiring or the recruitment process are: responsibility (80%), cooperation (70%), communication skills, motivation(60%). The 80% of the respondents believe it would be useful to have tools for verifying soft skills.



CYPRUS

QUESTIONNAIRE - job seekers - 24 answers (14female, 10male):

Respondents answered trial period/internship as the main tool/method for identifying soft skills among potential workers. As the most researched soft skills they identified adaptability, teamwork, and communication skills. The most significant factors in the employment process are hard skills (9 answers), soft skills (8 answers) and educational background. Soft skills marked as the most important were: responsibility/ teamwork and communication skills/organisational skills. A high percentage of respondents - the 70,8% stated that they would be interested in soft skills trainings. 84,6% of respondents agreed that employers requires both, soft and hard skills from their workers.

QUESTIONNAIRE - employers - 51 answers:

19 micro, 10 small and 13 medium, 9 large organisations included in the survey. Two third of the answers were given from general managers. Job interview is the most used method for the soft skills identification among potential workers. As the most important factors during the employment process - they've selected: soft skills (84,3%), hard skills and foreign language. Soft skills tested before hiring are: adaptability, responsibility and creative thinking. It is significant that all respondents, the 100% of them, believe it would be useful to have tools for verifying soft skills.

CROATIA

QUESTIONNAIRE - job seekers - 31 answers (71%female, 29%male):

83,8% respondents - answered job interview as the main tool for identifying soft skills. As the most researched soft skills during the recruiting process they identified communication skills, problem solving and responsibility. The most significant factors during the employment process are foreign language knowledge, soft skills and education - followed by the IT capabilities. Soft skills marked as the most important (based on previous working experience) were: problem solving, responsibility and adaptability. The most used service during job seeking is job search, least used is diploma/certificate. The 81% of respondents would like to attend soft skills trainings. 77% agreed that employers requires both, soft and hard skills from their workers.

QUESTIONNAIRE - employers - 51 answers:

78% micro and small; 8% medium, 14% large organisations included. 84,3% of participants were directors or company owners. As the most important skills/factors for the employment process - they've selected: soft skills and education. The most tested skills before hiring are: teamwork, communication skills, responsibility. The most important soft skills (gradation) are: teamwork, communication skills, responsibility - equal. 86% of respondents believe it would be useful to have tools for verifying soft skills, which is in alignment with answers from all other countries.



3.2 SUMMARISED SURVEY RESULTS (ALL PARTNERS)

Almost all partners gathered the 20 answers from the job seekers questionnaire, including the 10 answers from migrants. Regarding the questionnaire targeted for employers - all partners gathered the asked 50 answers, except The Netherlands (10) and Slovenia (40) because of unexpected difficulties in gathering and collecting answers for the given time period.

JOB SEEKERS SURVEY SUMMARY:

The most important tool for identify soft skills is job interview for all partners except Cyprus (internship/trail period). The top skills asked by employers are communication skills (Croatia, Slovenia), adaptability (Cyprus) and flexibility (The Netherlands; Italy). The most significant factors during the employment process are education (Slovenia), hard skills (Italy), communication skills (The Netherlands), hard skills (Cyprus) and foreign language (Croatia). For Croatia and Cyprus - soft skills were the second, and for Slovenia the third most answered option.

Soft skills marked as the most important for the employment process are responsibility (Slovenia), handling stress (Italy), communication skills (The Netherlands), responsibility/teamwork (Cyprus) and problem solving (Croatia). The second options were: responsibility (Croatia), communication/organisation skills (Cyprus), customer orientation (The Netherlands), flexibility (Italy, Slovenia). Most of the respondents claimed they would like to attend soft skills trainings (Cyprus 100%, Croatia 81%). also, most of the respondents answered they believe that both, soft and hard skills are equally required by employers. The most used service for job seeking is diploma/certification, except Croatia - where it is the least used (job search portals is first).

EMPLOYERS SURVEY SUMMARY:

The majority of small and medium enterprises included in the survey. The mostly answers were given by directors, general directors or company owners.

The most important skills/factors during the employment process are: references (Slovenia, Italy), soft skills (The Netherlands, Cyprus and Croatia). Soft skills tested during the recruiting process: teamwork (Croatia), adaptability (Cyprus), responsibility (The Netherlands), flexibility (Italy) and communication skills (Slovenia). It is important to highlight that at least 2/3 of the respondents (employers) claimed that it would be useful to have tools for verifying soft skills. Also, at least 2/3 of the respondents (job seekers) claimed that they would like to attend soft skills trainings. Those claims and the two survey summarised results were the starting point for creating the soft skills competence framework - brainstormed as the abbreviation name - SPOCC framework.



3.3 SPOCC FRAMEWORK - SOFT SKILLS

COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

Soft skills identified as important and crucial based on the project survey results are: social skills, personal skills, organisational skills, cooperation skills, and creativity skills. The soft skills framework abbreviation is SPOCC Framework. The framework will consist of five modules, which includes five topics, with the description of each topic, aligned with the appropriate level of knowledge, and the learning outcome for each level. There are three learning outcomes per level. Levels are defined as basic, intermediate and advanced.

For each module, participants undertake a questionnaire with 50 questions, with the possibility to gain a soft skills badge for the module - scored as basic, intermediate or advanced level. If the participants gain five badges for all five modules, they also have the possibility to receive the Full Soft Skills Badge - basic, intermediate or advanced level.

SPOCC FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:

Module	Topic	Basic Level Learning Outcomes	Intermediate Level Learning Outcomes	Advanced Level Learning Outcomes
1. Social Skills	1.1.Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Define types of conflicts ✓ Recognize conflict situations ✓ Avoiding conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understand conflict situations ✓ Intermediate during conflicts ✓ Conflict problem reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Predict conflict situations ✓ Solve conflict situations ✓ Legally address potential conflict situations
	1.2.Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	1.3.Inter - cultural skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	1.4. ...	...	...	...
	1.5. ...	...	...	...

Module	Topic	Basic Level Leraning Outcomes	Intermediate Level Leraning Outcomes	Advanced Level Leraning Outcomes
2. Personal Skills	2.1.Handling Stress	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	2.2.Personal Development	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	2.3.Time management	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	2.4. ...	...	...	...
	2.5. ...	...	...	...
	3. Organisationa l Skills	3.1.Management	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
3.2.Leadership		✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
3.3.Negotiation		✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
3.4. ...		...	...	...
3.5. ....		...	...	...
4. Cooperation Skills		4.1.Teamwork	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	4.2.Flexibility	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome

Module	Topic	Basic Level Leraning Outcomes	Intermediate Level Leraning Outcomes	Advanced Level Leraning Outcomes
	4.3.Brainstorming	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	4.4. ...	...	...	...
	4.5. ....	...	...	...
5. Creativity Skills	5.1.Innovativeness	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	5.2.Imagination	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	5.3.Creative Problem Solving	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome	✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome ✓ Outcome
	5.4. ...	...	...	...
	5.5. ....	...	...	...



4 EU CONTEXT

4.1 GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTION

SLOVENIA

1. *Migrant Mentorship Model (MMM)- Erasmus+*

Main goal of the project is teaching basic skills of literacy, numeracy, ICT and social competences to migrants by addressing the issue from a migrant perspective. Social competences in the project represent different soft skills necessary for migrants to adapt in the new country.

2. *Grading Soft Skills (GRASS)- Lifelong Learning Programme*

Project focusing on representing soft skills of learners of various ages and at different levels of education in a quantitative, measurable way, so that these skills can become the subject of formal validation and recognition. To do this, GRASS has used Open Badges.

3. *Mediating Soft Skills at Higher Education Institutions (MOdES)- Lifelong Learning Programme*

The project's overall objective is to support the integrating of soft skills required in the labour market into the academic programs/courses to enrich students' profiles.

4. *eLene4work (eL4w)- Erasmus+*

Project tackling the definition of soft skills, including digital soft skills, and proposes a series of actions and practical tools to help young talents better understand the expectations of employers, to assess their own level of competency and to further develop these skills through open education initiatives such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and OERs (Open Educational Resources).

5. *Word of Work (WOW)- Erasmus+*

Project had two main objectives, first one concerning the students; to equip them with both hard and soft skills that can encourage each student to participate effectively and constructively in the workplace and socially both inside and outside their own countries. Second Concerning the teachers, to strengthen teacher's skills based teaching practice through transnational cooperation and by adopting innovative, effective and new methods and tools in order to bridge the gap between education and employability skills.

ITALY

1. *Ostesa EU*

Organizational Success through Employee Satisfaction OSTESA EU has developed useful resources, including an assessment tool covering different dimensions of organisational climate and several training materials, the project can support companies (managers, HR staff and employees) to become more efficient. Additionally, OSTESA EU tools and materials can be used by VET providers and trainers whose work is related with improving soft skills and generating a positive organizational climate.

2. *InnoSpark*

The project aims to attract new talents, train European citizens with the relevant creativity skills needed in the ICT sector, and as a consequence - to fuel innovation, productivity and growth in the EU. INNOSPARK is funded under the Erasmus+ programme, KA2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices.



3. APSES

Adult's problem-solving skills enhancement strategies enabling to improve personal resilience Started in 2017, APSES is a project financially supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project aims to: - provide a customized non-formal educational support for adults - promote getting competencies for living and working in changing world with main focus on problem-solving skills - prepare educators/mentors/ trainers to be able to provide the support.

4. EaSY - Evaluate Soft skills in International Youth volunteering

The EaSY model identifies the 7 soft skills that may be acquired or developed by young people by taking part to an International Volunteering experience. The project aims to support the recognition of soft skills developed by young international volunteers.

5. Young People on the Labour Market

Young people on the Labour Market has been a 2-years research project financially supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Starting with a research on the most needed soft skills in the labour market, the project aims to recognize a profitable methodology for developing these.

THE NETHERLANDS

International information about soft skills were mainly found in the following: EU-funded projects and University research. OECD research states that on this subject large differences exist between countries. As an example: a soft skill like "critical thinking" can be highly valued in some countries, but very much deprecated in other countries, which can even be a neighboring country. Another example from this research: "social skills" are more appreciated in the Netherlands than average.

1. Icaro – Erasmus+

Theme of the project is "Innovative Curriculum on Soft Skills for Adult learners". This project identifies communication, creative thinking, work ethic, teamwork, networking, decision making, positivity, time management, motivation, flexibility, problem-solving, critical thinking and conflict resolution.

2. WikiJob - website

A website that gives advice on doing job interviews, succeeding in assessments and other tests. According to this source, most important are communication, self-motivation, leadership, responsibility, teamwork, problem solving, decisiveness, working under pressure, flexibility, conflict resolution

3. Werf& - magazine and website for HR-managers

This magazine is, together with LinkedIn the most popular source for HR-professionals in the Netherlands. A review amongst HR-managers describes the following 8 most important soft skills: communicative skills, curiosity, focus, teamwork, solution orientedness, perseverance, sense of ownership, strategic thinking

3. Shared Responsibility - Erasmus+

This Erasmus+ project was geared on "general skills", and related to the 8 Key Competences defined by the EU. This concept is a bit wider than soft skills, because there are also "general hard skills". Communication, Entrepreneurial and Social Skills were seen als the most essential from the soft skills.

5. Sage - website for research on social, health and biomedical sciences

This study identified integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, social skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethic as the top 10 soft skills, perceived the most important by business executives.



CYPRUS

1. Project: AIPFE Cyprus – Women Of Europe

A scholarship program where participants are unemployed female university graduates under the age of 35. The aim is to empower, motivate and connect 12 participants through practical training and soft skills that will assist them in their search for employment.

2. Project: Gaining and strengthening 'soft skills' for employment through models of supporting methods

Soft Skills with mentoring & coaching, the main objective is to develop learning tools and environments for strengthening 'soft skills' and models of supporting learning and training. The project aims is to raise awareness of the need for these skills. Results: the 'Soft Skills Toolkit' and the 'Guidelines for models of supporting methods (Peer Coaching and Mentoring)'.

3. Project: Apprentices Preparation Training-New Approaches in Managing the Transition from Education to Employment

Aims to develop tools and approaches that will help organisations, employers and professionals who work with young people to prepare them for employability. Results: Career advice, training package and assessment toolkit.

4. Summer School: Young Refugees As Actors For Social Inclusion And Intercultural Dialogue

The aim: empowerment and participation of young refugees, reinforcing resilience and leadership skills. The main objectives were to provide participants with a wide range of soft skills. Project results: Increased employability

5. Website : Invaluable soft skills all managers should possess

This article clarifies what soft skills a manager will need in order to manage efficient an organisation. A job seeker will need communication, leadership, delegation, listening, critical thinking, decision making, managing discipline, motivation

CROATIA

1. Adresing Youth Unemployment Throught Soft Skills Coaching Programmes

The project focus was globalisation, the economic recession and technological revolution as the main factors that have substantially changed society and labour market needs. The transferability potential is in the area of adult education and learning, in providing equal opportunities and the improvement of employment.

2. Choose A Job Not A Dole

The project offers innovative solutions to foster integration of people with disadvantaged background and fewer opportunities into the labour market. The transferability potential is to contribute to the reduction of number of low-skilled adults by re-skilling and up-skilling their soft skills.

3. Job Placements App

The aim is to reinforce soft skills through the direct application of the innovation model and tool, in the implementation of the module "job placement", in which students spend a training period working in a company abroad. The transferability potential lays in the project dissemination that was done by using project website as well as partners' website.



4. Soft Skills From Inclusive Employment

The project supports the needs of young people disadvantaged on the labour market by enhancing their soft skills and the needs of the regions where project partners are located. The transferability potential is shown in the possible impact for all participants including increased digital and personal branding skills, increased adaptation to mainstream culture, increased access to non-formal activities and increased knowledge of off-line and online tools for job applications.

5. Hard Soft Skilling - Chartinh Your Career Path

The project aim was equipping students with high transferable skills to help them in everyday life and labour market permanent challenges. The transferability potential is continuous research and continual quality checks as the project promotes a core of teaching tools which could be easily implemented as part of the school based curriculum in any school.

It is visible that partners included many examples of good practices regarding soft skills learning, training and analysing. From all given examples it is deductible the need of creating a new soft skills framework, which could be one of the main guidelines regarding soft skills testing, learning and verifying. There are many projects across the EU regarding competences and skills in general, but we believe there is a strong need of qualification and further clarification of soft skills both, from the side of employers and from the side of job seekers. The proposed soft skills SPOCC framework should be highlighted as the main guideline and tool for the improvement and accomplishment of soft skills open badges, as we found there is no such a similar tool on the existing EU environment.



5 CONCLUSIONS

Soft skills are defined as personal attributes, traits, social cues, and specific communication abilities needed for business success. Soft skills often characterize how a person interacts in his or her relationships with others, specially in the working environment. Unlike hard skills that are learned, soft skills are similar to emotions or insights that allow people to “read” others. These are much harder to learn, at least in a traditional classroom. They are also much harder to measure and evaluate. Soft skills are sometimes referred to as transferable skills or professional skills. As this term implies, these are skills that are less specialised, less rooted in specific vocations, and more aligned with the general disposition and personality of a candidate.

Based on all survey questions, but also on the open survey question for employers, the main issues that arises during the employment process are: flexibility issues, lack of knowledge, lack of communication skills, adaptability issues, lack of working experience, language barriers, unrealistic expectations about salary and working conditions, lack of problem solving skills and more. On the other side, job seekers stated that the main issues during the process of finding job are: limited experience, age, competition, not enough opportunities, corruption, excessive expectations, language knowledge. It is deductible that employers and job seekers, both understand the importance of soft skills in the business environment, as well as the importance of setting tools for soft skills measurement, but also for soft skills further education and training efforts in each country.

After the SoftSkills4EU project surveys, conducted in five partner countries, Slovenia, Italy, The Netherlands, Cyprus and Croatia, few main soft skills modules were deducted and identified: social skills, personal skills, organisational skills, cooperation and creativity skills. Each of the identified soft skills modules consist of five subtopics, which were deducted after analysing the survey answers for all included countries. Based on the survey answers, soft skills topics and afterword main modules were identified, brainstormed and included in the final soft skills framework - SPOCC. The soft skill framework should be useful for future soft skills trainings, guidelines and possible pre employment testing.

