MORAL

Key Skills Micro-credentials:
A Passport to Employment and Inclusion

Work Package No: 2

Work Package Title: Research for the Identification of Key Skills Necessary for Employment

Deliverable No: 2.1

Deliverable Title: Report: 'Key Skills Necessary for Employment in Entry-Level (Junior) Positions in Europe'

Project Agreement Number: 101132909

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Coordinator:

Partners:

Contents

PART 1 – CONTEXT

About the MORAL PROJECT

MORAL is a project – funded by the European Commission (EC) under the Erasmus+ Partnerships for Innovation - Forward-Looking Projects – that supports disadvantaged groups in entering the labour market through the development and validation of Key Skills, with the aid of **micro-credentials/development of a 'Passport to Employment' (PTE)**.

The Project is implemented by **11 organisations from Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Greece and Poland**; the consortium includes VET providers, chambers, organisations representing employers, and a certification company.

About the KEY SKILLS

The first step in MORAL is to **identify the Key Skills necessary for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions in different areas of economic activity**.

The **research carried out in all the partner countries** aimed to identify important skills that long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and young people), economically inactive women, and low-qualified adults should have to enter the labour market.

The goal is to develop a **Key Skills Matrix (KSM) including 20 key** (transversal) **skills** necessary for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions.

About the EC COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS

The Key Skills include life skills, digital skills, green skills, and entrepreneurial mindset skills. The identification of the Key Skills is based on the four competency frameworks developed by the European Commission:

1. **LifeComp**: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence
2. **GreenComp**: The European Sustainability Competence Framework
3. **EntreComp**: The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework
4. **DigComp 2.2**: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens

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PART 2 – RESEARCH

The RESEARCH

The **research was conducted in all the partner countries**, aiming to identify important skills that *long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and young people), economically inactive women, and low-qualified adults* should have to enter the labour market. Within the same context, skills necessary for *people that are already in entry-level (junior) job positions* were identified.

The **research phases** were:
   a) **focus groups that involved a specific number of employers and employer representatives**, including Human Resources managers, with the use of a Focus Group Guide and a set of research questions.
   b) **a large-scale survey that involved employers and employer representatives**, including Human Resources managers, with the use of a survey questionnaire, designed after the implementation of the focus groups, considering the results of the focus group discussions.

About the FOCUS GROUPS

During the 1st Transnational Project Meeting in Nicosia (Cyprus) in February 2024, the participants (project partners) were introduced to the 4 EC Competency Frameworks.

Then, through a workshop, the partners selected the competencies to be evaluated in the next step *(focus groups)* in the pathway to identify the Key Skills to be included in a **Key Skills Matrix (KSM)**.

At that stage, **31 Skills were identified**.

The focus group participants were selected based on **specific criteria**:
   - Their job position: Individuals having the role of employer or employer representative, that is, company owners, CEOs, Directors, or their representatives (e.g., Human Resources Managers).
   - The size of the organisation/company they represented: Entities of different sizes.
   - The area of economic activity of the organisation/company they represented: Entities from different sectors and industries (even if diversity depended on the territorial vocation related to the project partners' origin, e.g., tourism sector for Spain, agricultural sector for Italy, etc.).

2 focus groups were implemented in each one of the partner countries *(Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland)* **(10 in total), with at least 8-10 participants in each focus group**, representing 8-10 employers. The overall number of participants exceeded the initial plan, forming a group of **102 individuals**, as follows:
   - **Cyprus**: Focus Group 1 - 11 participants and Focus Group 2 - 9 participants: TOTAL - 20
   - **Italy**: Focus Group 1 - 11 participants and Focus Group 2 - 13 participants: TOTAL - 24
   - **Spain**: Focus Group 1 - 8 participants and Focus Group 2 - 11 participants: TOTAL - 19

- **Greece**: Focus Group 1 - 8 participants and Focus Group 2 - 10 participants: TOTAL - 18
- **Poland**: Focus Group 1 - 11 participants and Focus Group 2 - 10 participants: TOTAL - 21

A **set of questions** (open and close-ended) was posed to the participants to collect comparable data based on their insights.

The questions used were the following (see also *Annex 1*):

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 5 (least employed)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

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Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

Question 9: Which skills, in addition to those already defined, do you consider relevant? (Optional)

The data collected in the focus groups and the research conclusions at country level can be found in **National Focus Group Reports** *(Annex 3)*.

About the LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

During the 2nd Transnational Project Meeting in Potenza (Italy) in September 2024, the participants (project partners) presented the focus group findings from their countries, with differing national results.

At that stage, the partners defined the skills to be further evaluated, at a larger scale, and **36 Skills (**31 evaluated in the focus groups and 5 more) **were used for a survey in all the partner countries**.

Source	No. of Selected Skills
SKILLS EVALUATED IN THE FOCUS GROUPS	
LIFECOMP	9
GREENCOMP	6
ENTRECOMP	6
DIGCOMP 2.2	10
ADDITIONAL SKILLS	
New skills identified by the project partners at the Focus Groups' phase*	5
Total	**36**

* The additional skills are BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT, UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET, PROBLEM SOLVING, TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT, and ANTIFRAGILITY (see details in the next section).

A questionnaire for employers and employer representatives was designed and disseminated at large, considering the results of the Focus Groups and aiming to conclude on a final list of Key Skills.

At least 100 questionnaires were disseminated in each one of the partner countries and **413 responses from employers and employer representatives were collected in total**, as follows:
- **Cyprus**: 100
- **Italy**: 66
- **Spain**: 76
- **Greece**: 74
- **Poland**: 97

A **set of questions** in the form of an **online survey** were posed to the participants to collect comparable data based on their insights.

The questions used were the following (see also *Annex 2*):

About the Company/Organisation
- Industry/Area of Economic Activity (Economic Sector) of the Company/Organisation
- Size of the Company/Organisation

About the Respondent
- Respondent demographics, such as Position in the Company/Organisation, Educational Level, Age, Experience in the Selected Position, Overall Work Experience

About the Skills
- **Selection of 20 Skills** considered **RELEVANT AND NECESSARY for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions in different industries** among:
   o **SELF-REGULATION**: Being aware of and managing emotions, thoughts, and behaviour.
   o **FLEXIBILITY**: Managing transitions and uncertainty, and facing challenges.
   o **WELLBEING**: Pursuiting life satisfaction, caring for physical, mental, and social health, and adopting a sustainable lifestyle.
   o **EMPATHY**: Understanding others' emotions, experiences, and values and providing appropriate responses.
   o **COMMUNICATION**: Using relevant communication strategies and tools based on context and content.
   o **COLLABORATION**: Engaging in group activities and teamwork, while acknowledging and respecting others.
   o **GROWTH MINDSET**: Believing in continuous learning and progressing for oneself and others.
   o **CRITICAL THINKING**: Evaluating information to support reasoned conclusions and developing innovative solutions.
   o **MANAGING LEARNING**: Planning, organising, monitoring, and reviewing one's learning process.
   o **VALUING SUSTAINABILITY**: Reflecting on personal values and identifying and explaining how values vary among people and over time, while critically evaluating how they align with sustainability values.

- **SUPPORTING FAIRNESS**: Supporting equity and justice for current and future generations and learning from previous generations for sustainability.
- **PROMOTING NATURE**: Acknowledging that humans are part of nature and respecting the needs and rights of other species and nature itself to restore and regenerate healthy and resilient ecosystems.
- **PROBLEM FRAMING**: Framing challenges as sustainability problems to identify suitable approaches for prevention, mitigation, and adaptation.
- **ADAPTABILITY**: Managing transitions and challenges in complex sustainability situations and making decisions related to the future in the face of uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk.
- **INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE**: Identifying own potential for sustainability and actively contributing to improving prospects for the community and the planet.
- **SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES**: Using imagination and abilities to identify opportunities for creating value by exploring the social, cultural, and economic landscape.
- **SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY:** Believing in yourself, reflecting on personal needs and aspirations, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and having faith in your ability to influence events despite setbacks.
- **MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE:** Staying focused, determined, patient, and resilient to achieve your goals.
- **TAKING THE INITIATIVE:** Initiating processes that create value, taking up challenges, acting and working independently to achieve goals sticking to intentions, and carrying out planned tasks.
- **COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK:** Making decisions in uncertain situations with limited information and potential unintended outcomes, involving structured testing of ideas and prototypes early in the value-creation process to minimise risks.
- **LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**: Learning by doing, using any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity, learning with others including peers and mentors, and reflecting and learning from both success and failure.
- **BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT**: Articulating information needs to search for data, information, and content in digital environments and to access them and navigate between them, creating and updating personal search strategies.
- **EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT**: Analysing, comparing, and critically evaluating the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information, and digital content and analysing, interpreting, and critically evaluating the data, information, and digital content.
- **INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES:** Interacting through a variety of digital technologies and understanding appropriate digital communication means for a given context.
- **SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**: Sharing data, information, and digital content with others through appropriate digital technologies, acting as an intermediary and knowing about referencing and attribution practices.

- o **COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**: Using digital tools and technologies for collaborative processes and for co-construction and co-creation of data, resources, and knowledge.
- o **NETIQUETTE**: Being aware of behavioural norms and know-how, while using digital technologies and interacting in digital environments, adapting communication strategies to the specific audience, and being aware of cultural and generational diversity in digital environments.
- o **MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY**: Creating and managing one or multiple digital identities to be able to protect one's own reputation and to deal with the data that one produces through several digital tools, environments, and services.
- o **DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT**: Creating and editing digital content in different formats to express oneself through digital means.
- o **PROTECTING DEVICES**: Protecting devices and digital content, understanding risks and threats in digital environments, knowing about safety and security measures, and having due regard to reliability and privacy.
- o **PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY:** Protecting personal data and privacy in digital environments, understanding how to use and share personally identifiable information while being able to protect oneself and others from damages, and understanding that digital services use a "Privacy Policy" to inform how personal data is used.
- o **BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT**: Practicing applied knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to complete a project according to specific requirements.
- o **UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET**: Recognising the dynamics between employers and job seekers, focusing on the skills and competencies that are in demand.
- o **PROBLEM SOLVING**: Identifying, analysing, and resolving issues effectively.
- o **TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT**: Effectively organising and prioritising tasks, while maintaining emotional well-being in high-pressure situations.
- o **ANTIFRAGILITY**: Dealing with complexity and change through a proactive approach, fostering resilience through adaptability and growth.

The data collected through the survey at partner country level can be found in *Annex 4*.

About DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND REPORTING METHODOLOGY

The MORAL project involves a comprehensive data analysis and reporting methodology to identify the Key Skills. This methodology is applied at both focus group and large-scale survey levels, across different countries.

The collected data was analysed and reported by the partners at national level, as follows:

Focus Groups
Data Analysis

- Data Collection: Focus groups were conducted in each partner country (Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland) (at least 2 groups per country). Each focus group had 8-10 participants (employers and/or employer representatives). Questions were posed to gather insights on recruitment challenges and essential skills for various disadvantaged groups, including long-term unemployed individuals, economically inactive women, youth, and low-qualified adults, as well as for people in entry-level (junior) job positions.
- Data Analysis: The analysis involved qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis, to identify patterns and themes from the open-ended questions. This helped in understanding the challenges and skills valued by employers and their representatives.

Reporting
- National Reports: The findings from each focus group were compiled into national reports. These reports detailed the specific challenges faced by employers in each partner country and highlighted the key skills deemed essential for employment.
- Aggregate Findings: The national reports were used to inform an aggregate report, at consortium level, providing a broader perspective on the skills required across different countries.

Large-scale Survey
Data Analysis
- Data Collection: A large-scale survey was conducted across all partner countries (Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland), with at least 100 questionnaires disseminated in each country. The survey aimed to validate the skills identified in the focus groups and gather more quantitative data on the importance of these skills.
- Data Analysis: The survey data was analysed using statistical methods to quantify the importance of each skill. This involved calculating means or frequencies to determine which skills were most valued by employers and their representatives.

Reporting
- National Reports: Like with the focus groups, the survey data was analysed and reported at national level. These reports provided detailed insights into the skills considered necessary for entry-level (junior) job positions in each partner country.
- Aggregate Findings: The national survey reports contributed to an aggregate report that synthesises findings across all partner countries. This helps identify a common set of key skills essential for employment across different sectors and regions.

GOAL: Key Skills Matrix (KSM) Development

The data analysis and reporting from both focus groups and the large-scale survey will inform the Key Skills Matrix (KSM).

The KSM will include the 20 key skills identified as necessary for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions. These skills are categorised under life skills, digital skills, green skills, and

entrepreneurial mindset skills, aligning with the LifeComp, DigComp, GreenComp, and EntreComp EC Competency Frameworks.

The KSM will be used in *training, assessment, and certification processes*, supported by micro-credentials and the initiative of developing a 'Passport to Employment' (PTE).

About this REPORT

This report collects data from the 2 research phases (Focus Groups and a Large-scale Survey) conducted through MORAL on:
- **Partner Country Level**
- **Consortium Level**

Based on the research conclusions included in the report, it will become possible **to select the final skills for the Key Skills Matrix (KSM)** to be used in the next project phases involving training on Key Skills, assessment, and certification of employees or potential employees with ISO17014, with the aid of **micro-credentials to provide them with a 'Passport to Employment' (PTE)**.

PART 3 – COUNTRY-LEVEL FINDINGS

1-Cyprus

This report collects data from the **2 research phases** (Focus Groups and a Large-scale Survey) conducted in **Cyprus**.

1.1 FOCUS GROUPS

2 focus groups were implemented in Cyprus, as follows:
- Focus Group 1, with 11 participants
- Focus Group 2, with 9 participants
  TOTAL: 20 participants

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Position in the company

Other: , 0
Company Owner , 2
Managing Director , 1
Member of Board of Directors , 1
HR Staff , 5
General Manager , 1
Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 10

Education level

University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 1
University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 19

13

Age

- 55-64 years old , 1
- 20-34 years old , 1
- 45-54 years old , 6
- 35-44 years old , 12

Experience in the Specific Position

- 1-5 years , 4
- >15 years , 7
- 6-10 years , 3
- 11-15 years , 6

Size

- Micro-enterprise, 2
- Large Enterprise, 6
- Small Enterprise, 1
- Medium Enterprise, 11

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COMPANIES

Industry of Economic Activity

Size

- Micro-enterprise, 2
- Small Enterprise, 1
- Large Enterprise, 6
- Medium Enterprise, 11

Conclusions and Recommendations from the Focus Groups in Cyprus

The focus group activity highlighted the challenges faced by Cypriot businesses in recruiting for low and medium-skill positions due to a skills' gap and a limited pool of actively seeking unemployed candidates.

Key Findings:
- **Employee Shortages:** The Cypriot economy is experiencing growth, leading to a shortage of employees, particularly for low and medium-skill jobs.
- **Willingness to Hire:** Most businesses are willing to hire from all employee categories and provide training due to the labour market shortage. However, economically inactive women and long-term unemployed individuals are less likely to be hired, as they are less likely to show interest to re-enter the labour market, especially on a full-time basis; in the case of entry-level positions, Cypriot businesses have lowered their standards due to the considerable shortages in the labour market.
- **Skill Gaps:** Skill gaps and mismatches exist, particularly regarding soft skills and willingness to learn. Micro-credentials are seen as a potential solution.
- **Challenges in Recruiting Specific Groups:**
  - **Young Individuals:** Unrealistic expectations, lack of work ethic, preference for flexible work arrangements, and social media-related social skill deficiencies.
  - **Long-Term Unemployed:** Low digital skills and outdated knowledge in their field.
  - **Economically Inactive Women:** Primarily seeking flexible work environments.
- **Soft Skills Shortage:** Communication, collaboration, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking, and self-management are key skills lacking across all employee groups.
- **Micro-Credentials as a Potential Solution:** Participants see value in micro-credentials with proper quality assurance to address skill gaps.
- **National Qualifications Authority Needed:** The absence of a national qualifications' authority hinders the introduction of micro-credentials.
- **Lifelong Learning Culture Advocated:** The report emphasises the importance of lifelong learning to address skill gaps and keep pace with labour market demands.
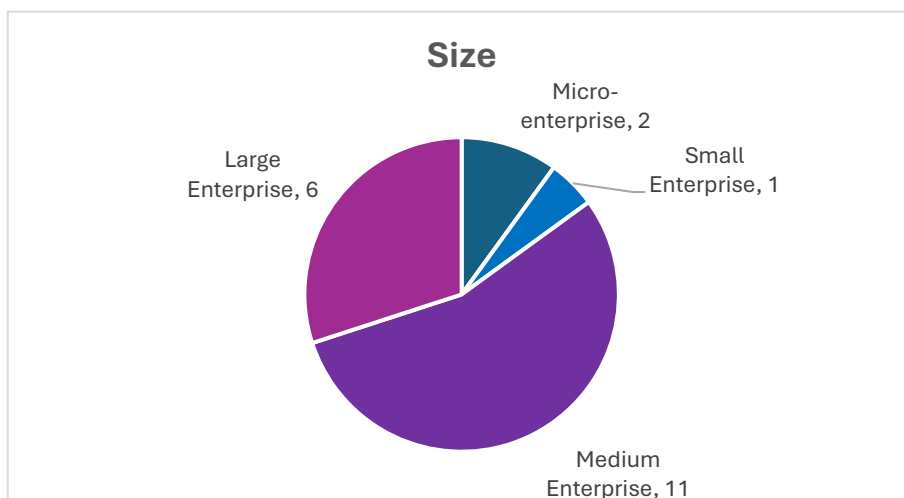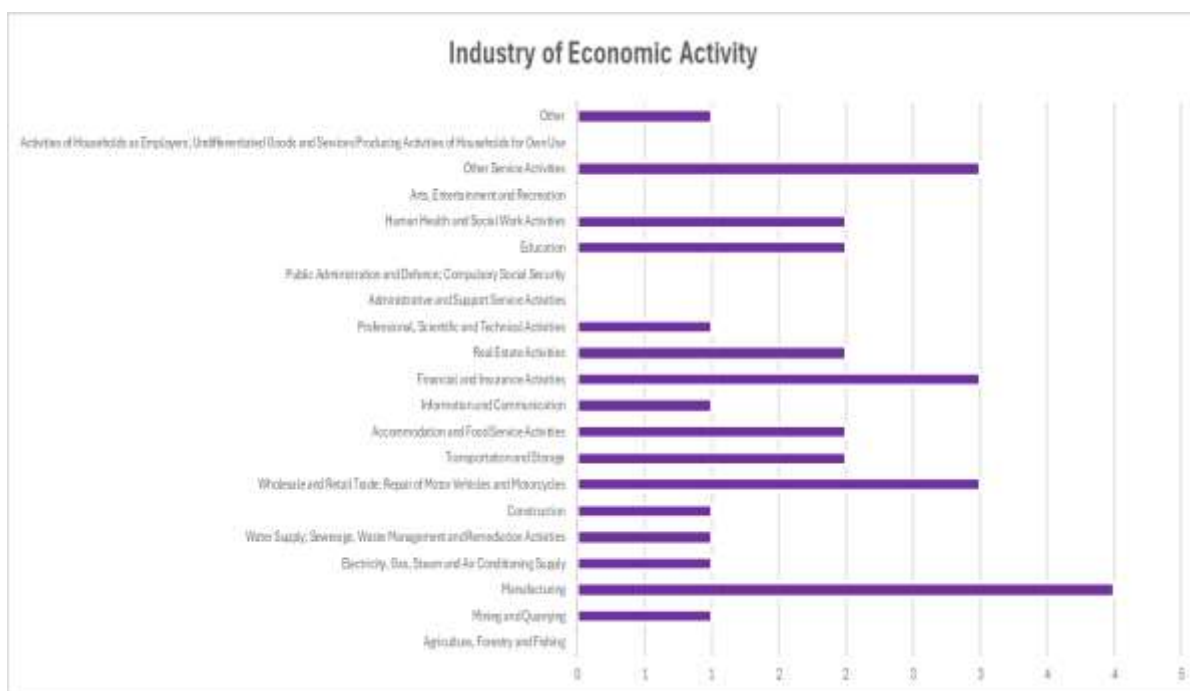
Recommendations:
- **Development of Soft Skills:** Prioritisation of soft skill development through education and training programmes at all levels.
- **Promotion of Micro-Credentials:** Establishment of a system for micro-credentials supported by quality assurance mechanisms to incentivise skill development.
- **Strategic Planning:** Implementation of strategic plans with incentives for both businesses and employees to encourage training and skill development.
- **Monitoring of Skill Gaps:** Continuously monitoring and evaluation of skill gaps to ensure training programmes address real labour market needs.
- **Employer-Employee Alignment:** Adaptation of work environments and demands by employers to attract and retain skilled workers.
- **Employee Awareness:** Encouragement of job seekers to be aware of labour market needs and the importance of continuous learning.

Overall, it is suggested that a multipronged approach is adopted, involving education, training, micro-credentials' granting, and strategic planning, to address skill gaps and improve recruitment outcomes in Cyprus.

1.2 LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

After the focus groups, the partners defined the skills to be further evaluated, concluding on **36 Skills**.

A questionnaire for employers was disseminated in Cyprus, having collected **100 responses.**

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Industry of Economic Activity

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Size of company/organisation

Micro-enterprise, 8

Large Enterprise, 28

Small Enterprise, 26

Medium Enterprise, 38

Position in the company/organisation

Other: , 8

Company Owner , 9

Managing Director , 4

Member of Board of Directors , 3

General Manager , 2

HR Staff , 29

Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 45

Education level

University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 1

University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 19

18

Age

- >64 years old , 6
- 55-64 years old , 10
- 45-54 years old , 24
- 35-44 years old , 38
- 20-34 years old , 22

Experience in the Specific Position

- >15 years , 22
- 11-15 years , 22
- 6-10 years , 23
- 1-5 years , 33

Overall Work Experience

- 1-5 years , 4
- 6-10 years , 18
- 11-15 years , 23
- >15 years , 55

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Employer Survey

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	88
COMMUNICATION	88
PROBLEM SOLVING	87
CRITICAL THINKING	86
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	82
FLEXIBILITY	82
ADAPTABILITY	81
GROWTH MINDSET	81
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	80
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	73
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	71
SELF-REGULATION	69
EMPATHY	65
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	63
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	63
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	54
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SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	46
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	45
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INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	43
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COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	41
MANAGING LEARNING	39
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	38
PROBLEM FRAMING	37
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	36
ANTIFRAGILITY	34
PROTECTING DEVICES	32
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	27
NETIQUETTE	26
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	25
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	24
PROMOTING NATURE	17
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	13
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	9

Comments

- *Usefulness of Skills:* Most skills listed are considered useful, although there is some overlap.
- *Educational Challenges in Cyprus:* There is a noted issue with some teachers in Cyprus resisting alternative methods and training, which can hinder effective learners' care.
- *Team Attitude and Learning:* A team-oriented attitude and a willingness to learn new skills without worrying about time constraints were emphasised.
- *Emotional Intelligence:* Emotional intelligence was highlighted as an important skill.
- *Time and Stress Management:* Time and stress management are seen as crucial for productivity, well-being, and success. They help in organising tasks, meeting deadlines, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
- *Relevance of Skills over Degrees:* The importance of practical skills over university degrees was stressed, especially in challenging environments like economic crises.
- *Timeless Skills:* Certain skills remain relevant across generations, regardless of changes in technology or societal norms.

2-Italy

This report collects data from the **2 research phases** (Focus Groups and a Large-scale survey) conducted in **Italy**.

2.1 FOCUS GROUPS

2 focus groups were implemented in Italy, as follows:
- Focus Group 1, with 11 participants
- Focus Group 2, with 13 participants
  TOTAL: 24 participants

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Age

>64 years old , 2

55-64 years old , 4

20-34 years old , 5

35-44 years old , 3

45-54 years old , 10

Experience in the Specific Position

>15 years , 1

11-15 years , 11

1-5 years , 11

6-10 years , 1

Overall Work Experience

1-5 years , 2

6-10 years , 6

>15 years , 13

11-15 years , 3

22

COMPANIES

Industry of Economic Activity

Size

Large Enterprise, 4

Medium Enterprise, 1

Small Enterprise, 6

Micro-enterprise, 13
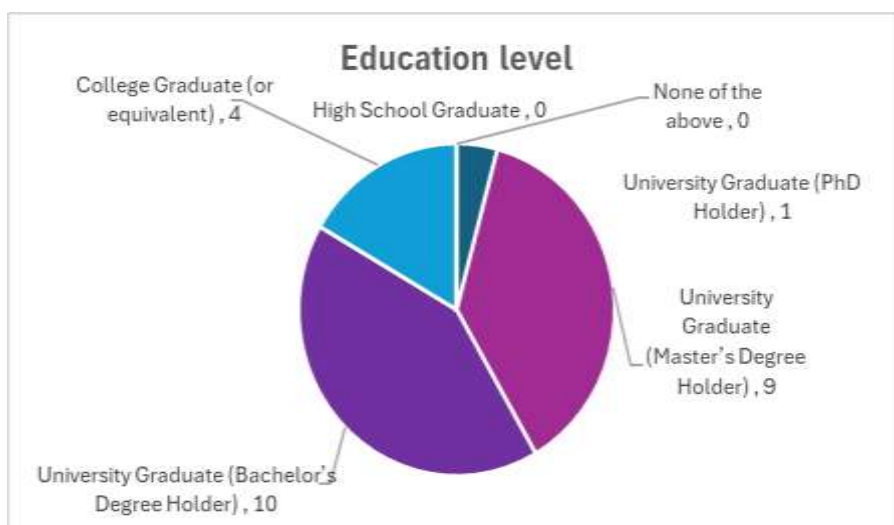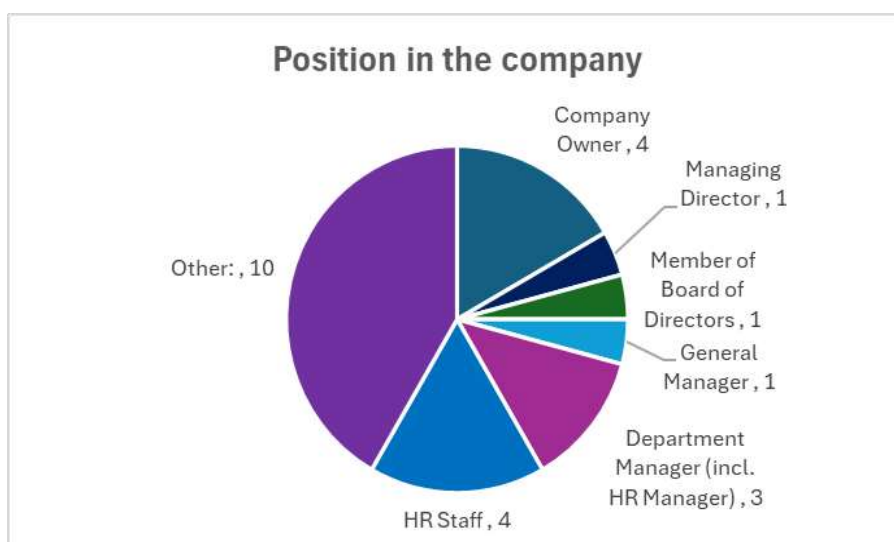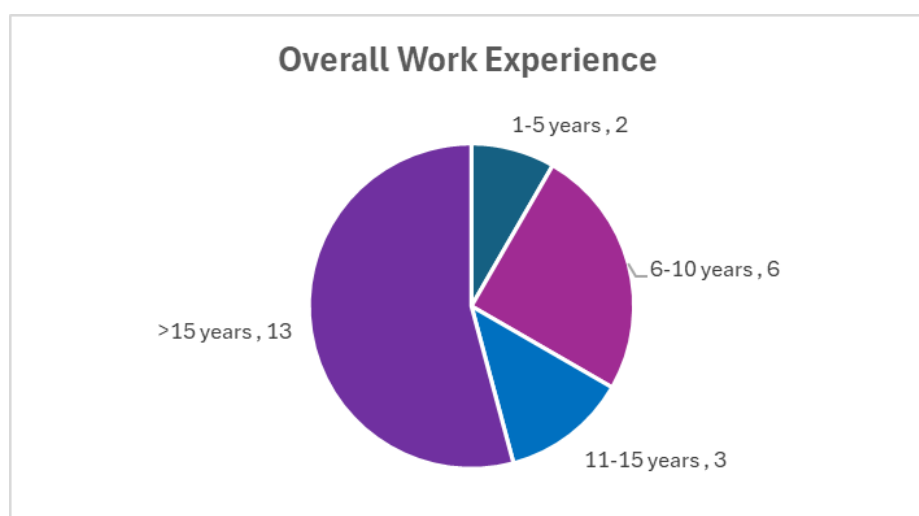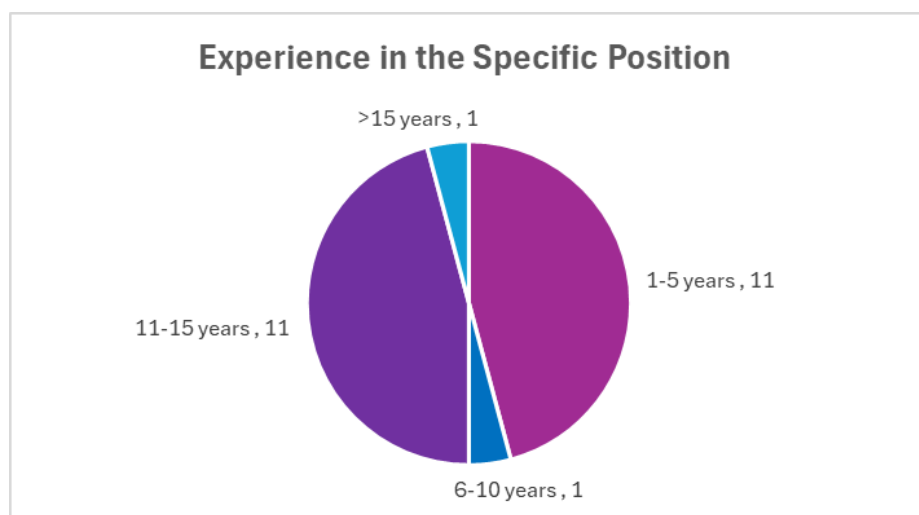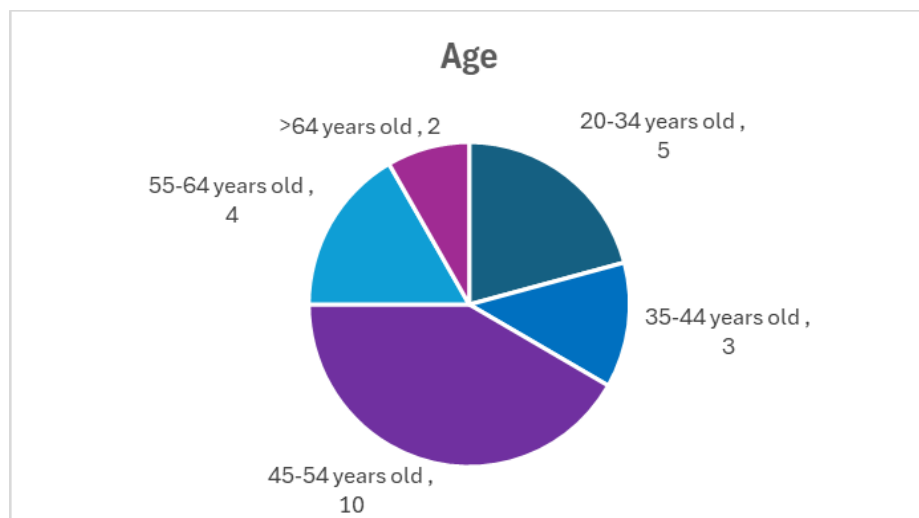
Conclusions and Recommendations from the Focus Groups in Italy

Key Findings:
- **Employment Ranking**
    1. People at entry-level job positions
    2. Young individuals
    3. Low-qualified adults
    4. Economically Inactive Women
    5. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

- **Recruitment Challenges**
    - **Satisfying demand for soft and light skills:** These are now considered as important as technical skills.
    - **Overcoming the generation gap:** Integrating employees from different age groups.

General Recommendations:
- **Stress management**
- **Empowering new resources**
- **Creating training processes for better integration**
- **Key Skills for Entry-Level Positions (Top 5)**
    1. Communication
    2. Collaboration
    3. Flexibility
    4. Self-regulation
    5. Empathy
- **Key Skills for an Ideal Worker (Top 5)**
    1. Collaboration
    2. Flexibility
    3. Communication
    4. Empathy
    5. Self-awareness & Self-efficacy

Overall Recommendations:
- **Emphasising soft skills:** In recruitment and training programmes.
- **Implementation of comprehensive training:** Focus on self-regulation, critical thinking, and digital literacy.
- **Promotion of lifelong learning:** Encouragement of continuous learning and adaptability.
- **Fostering inclusive work environments:** Promotion of age diversity and integration.
- **Supporting mental health and well-being:** Establishment of support systems for employees.

2.2 LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

After the focus groups, the partners defined the skills to be further evaluated, concluding on **36 Skills**.

A questionnaire for employers was disseminated in Italy, having collected **66 responses**.

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Position in the company/organisation

- Other: , 19
- Company Owner , 21
- HR Staff , 4
- Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 8
- General Manager , 8
- Member of Board of Directors , 3
- Managing Director , 3

Education level

- High School Graduate , 3
- None of the above , 1
- University Graduate (PhD Holder) , 2
- College Graduate (or equivalent) , 19
- University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 7
- University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 34

Age

- 55-64 years old , 12
- >64 years old , 1
- 20-34 years old , 10
- 35-44 years old , 14
- 45-54 years old , 29

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Experience in the Specific Position

- 1-5 years, 12
- 6-10 years, 14
- 11-15 years, 13
- >15 years, 27

Overall Work Experience

- 1-5 years, 6
- 6-10 years, 4
- 11-15 years, 12
- >15 years, 44

Employer Survey

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	60
GROWTH MINDSET	52
PROBLEM SOLVING	51
COMMUNICATION	51
FLEXIBILITY	51
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	49
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	47
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	47
CRITICAL THINKING	47
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	42
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	41
ADAPTABILITY	41
EMPATHY	40
WELLBEING	39
SELF-REGULATION	37
PROBLEM FRAMING	36
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	34
MANAGING LEARNING	34
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	33
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	30
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	30
ANTIFRAGILITY	29
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	29
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	28
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	28
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	26
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	26
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	24
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	24
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	22
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	22
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	20
PROTECTING DEVICES	19
NETIQUETTE	18
PROMOTING NATURE	17
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	9

Comments

- *Personal values of equity and intergenerational well-being have guided most of personal decisions.*
- *A critical mind is 'absolutely essential' for one to be able to work not mechanically but by understanding what is being done and then providing real support in monitoring the work.*
- *Lifelong learning is fundamental, as no MPI employer spends money on staff training unless it is compulsory.*
- *Nothing about gender status and equal opportunities is included, which is still a mirage in our country. In the private sector, people work even when on sick leave, and this is a trend among all employees, which further undermines this situation, because it is impossible to deviate from it if you are the only one who believes in rights.*

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3-Spain

This report collects data from **2 research phases** (Focus Groups and a Large-scale Survey) conducted in **Spain**.

3.1 FOCUS GROUPS

2 focus groups were implemented in Spain, as follows:
- Focus Group 1, with 8 participants
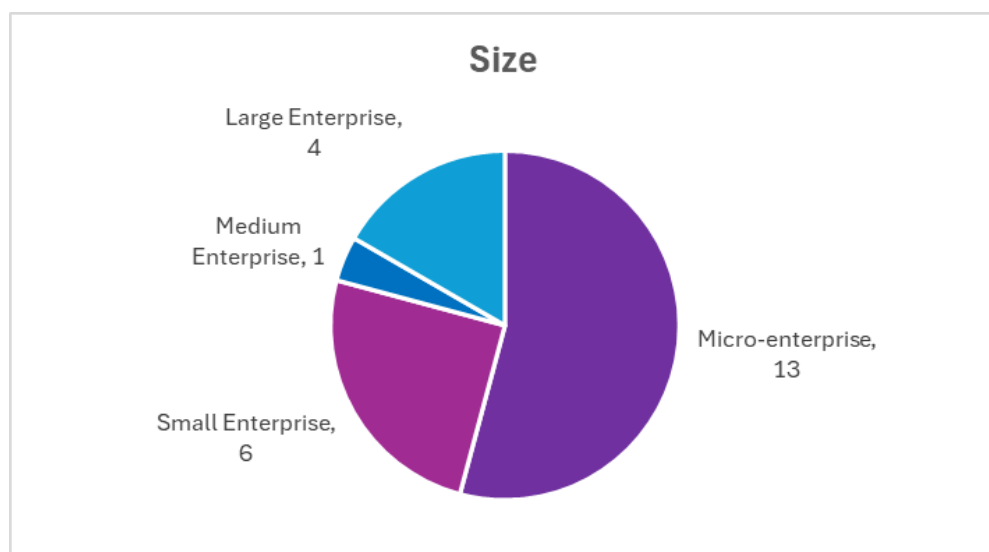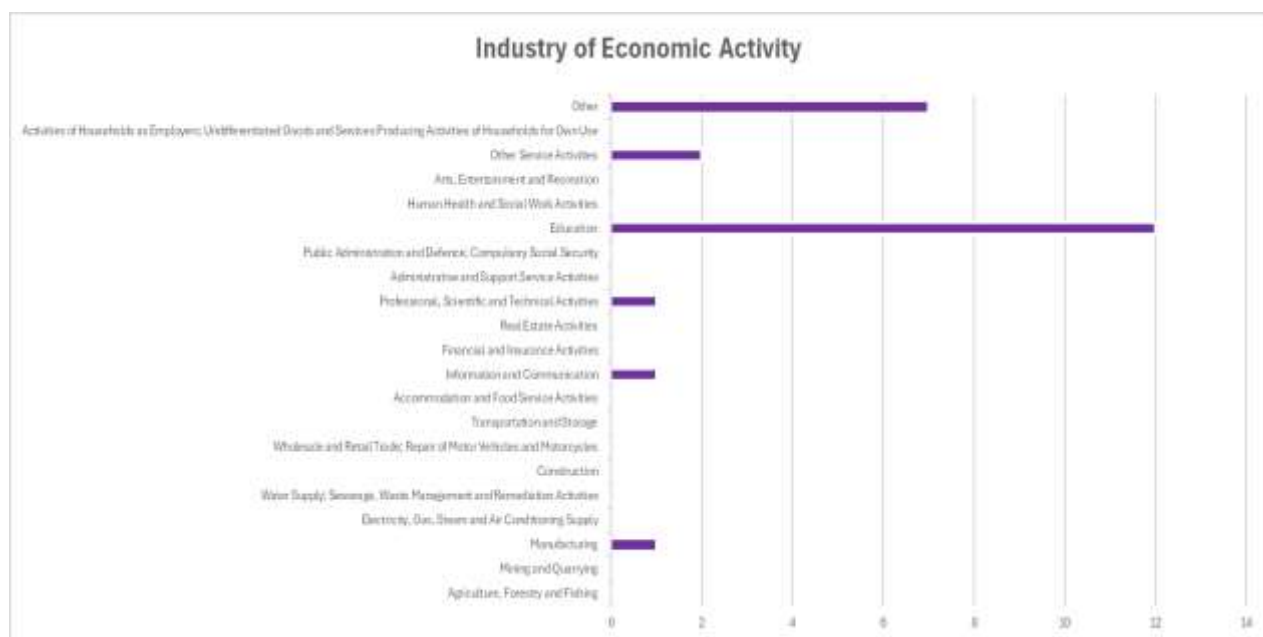- Focus Group 2, with 11 participants
  TOTAL: 19 participants

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Position in the company

Other: , 1
Company Owner , 2
Managing Director , 4
General Manager , 0
Member of Board of Directors , 0
Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 1
HR Staff , 11

Education level

High School Graduate , 1
None of the above , 0
College Graduate (or equivalent) , 2
University Graduate (PhD Holder) , 1
University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 9
University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 6

Co-funded by the European Union

Age

- 55-64 years old, 2
- >64 years old, 0
- 20-34 years old, 3
- 35-44 years old, 4
- 45-54 years old, 10

Experience in the Specific Position

- >15 years, 6
- 1-5 years, 6
- 11-15 years, 3
- 6-10 years, 4

Overall Work Experience

- 1-5 years, 1
- 6-10 years, 4
- 11-15 years, 1
- >15 years, 13

COMPANIES

Industry of Economic Activity

Size
- Micro-enterprise, 3
- Small Enterprise, 2
- Medium Enterprise, 2
- Large Enterprise, 12

Conclusions and Recommendations from the Focus Groups in Spain

Key Findings:
- **Junior Worker Priorities:** Collaboration, Motivation, Adaptability, Communication, Empathy, Growth Mindset, Learning Agility, Coping with Uncertainty, Data Protection.
- **Ideal Worker Priorities:** Flexibility, Communication, Collaboration, Adaptability, Motivation, Taking the Initiative, Critical Thinking, Opportunity Spotting, Digital Interaction.
- **Less Essential:** Digital Interaction, Sustainability, Content Development (perceived as less immediate but still valuable).
- **Soft Skills Training:** Crucial for junior staff integration, managing expectations, and overall performance.
- **Retention:** Shifting from traditional "retention" to "familiarisation" for a more welcoming and organic employee experience.
- **Ideal Worker Characteristics:** Adaptability, Creativity, Problem Solving, Proactive Mindset, Digital Literacy.
- **Junior Staff Challenges:** Retention, Patience, Teamwork, Resilience, Managing Workplace Pressures.

Situation on Micro-credentials:
- **Addressing Skill Mismatches:** Micro-credentials are crucial for bridging the gap between workforce skills and employer demands, especially in a rapidly evolving technological and green economy.
- **Plan Microcreds:** A government-funded initiative to promote the creation and dissemination of micro-credentials in Spanish universities.
- **Key Objectives:** Reconciling skills with employment, promoting a knowledgeable society, expanding access to higher education, and fostering social inclusion.
- **Focus on Continuous Learning:** Aligned with the Organic Law of the University System, which emphasises lifelong learning and flexible access to higher education.

General Conclusion:
- The focus group discussions emphasised the importance of foundational skills, adaptability, and continuous learning for both junior and ideal workers. Micro-credentials in Spain represent a significant step towards addressing skill mismatches and fostering a more skilled and adaptable workforce.

Key Implications:
- Organisations should prioritise soft skills' training and create a supportive work environment for junior employees.
- Micro-credentials offer a valuable pathway for individuals to acquire new skills and adapt to the changing demands of the labour market.
- A strong emphasis on lifelong learning and continuous professional development is crucial for both individuals and organisations to thrive in a dynamic and competitive environment.

3.2 LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

After the focus groups, the partners defined the skills to be further evaluated, concluding on **36 Skills**.

A questionnaire for employers was disseminated in Spain, having collected **76 responses**.

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Position in the company/organisation

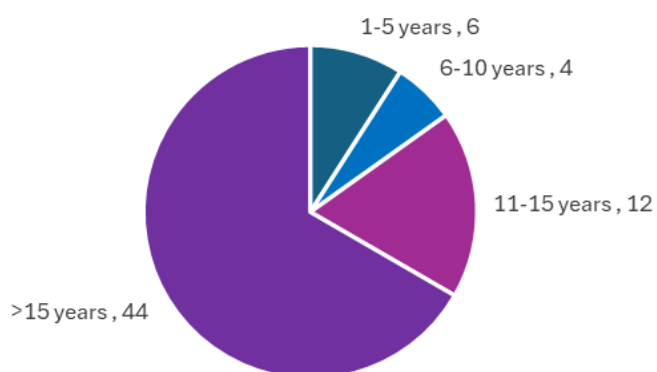- Other: , 8
- Company Owner , 23
- Managing Director , 0
- Member of Board of Directors , 7
- General Manager , 7
- Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 14
- HR Staff , 17

Education level

- College Graduate (or equivalent) , 5
- High School Graduate , 0
- None of the above , 1
- University Graduate (PhD Holder) , 6
- University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 21
- University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 43

Age

- 55-64 years old , 8
- >64 years old , 0
- 20-34 years old , 12
- 35-44 years old , 12
- 45-54 years old , 44

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Experience in the Specific Position

>15 years , 27

1-5 years , 20

6-10 years , 15

11-15 years , 14

Overall Work Experience

1-5 years , 5

6-10 years , 7

11-15 years , 9

>15 years , 55

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Employer Survey

**SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries**

Comments

- **Growth Mindset and Learning:** *Having a growth mindset, motivation, and a willingness to learn. These traits are seen as essential for professional development and success in any job.*
- **Soft Skills:** *Soft skills, such as frustration management, adopting mature behaviours, and initiative, were highlighted as crucial. Proactivity, communication, and collaboration are also important for junior positions.*
- **Entrepreneurial Spirit:** *An entrepreneurial spirit with a focus on self-learning is considered vital.*
- **Core Competencies:** *Key competencies include self-management, teamwork, project management skills, identifying business opportunities, and innovation. These skills are important for both personal and organisational growth.*
- **Risk Prevention and Emerging Technologies:** *The importance of risk prevention for physical safety and interest in emerging technologies like AI, digitalisation, and blockchain was mentioned.*
- **Project Feedback:** *Some comments raised the issue of having set too many goals for the project.*

36

4-Greece

This report collects data from the **2 research phases** (Focus Groups and a Large-scale Survey) in **Greece**.

4.1 FOCUS GROUPS

2 focus groups were implemented in Greece, as follows:
- Focus Group 1, with 8 participants
- Focus Group 2, with 10 participants
      TOTAL: 18 participants

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Age

- 55-64 years old, 0
- >64 years old, 0
- 45-54 years old, 3
- 20-34 years old, 8
- 35-44 years old, 7

Experience in the Specific Position

- >15 years, 4
- 1-5 years, 7
- 11-15 years, 2
- 6-10 years, 5

Overall Work Experience

- >15 years, 5
- 1-5 years, 6
- 11-15 years, 1
- 6-10 years, 6

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COMPANIES

Industry of Economic Activity

Size
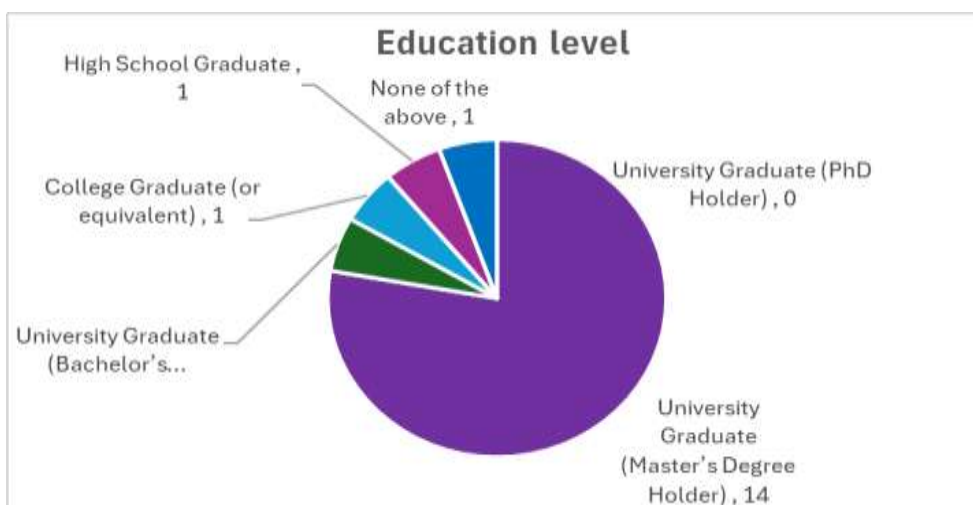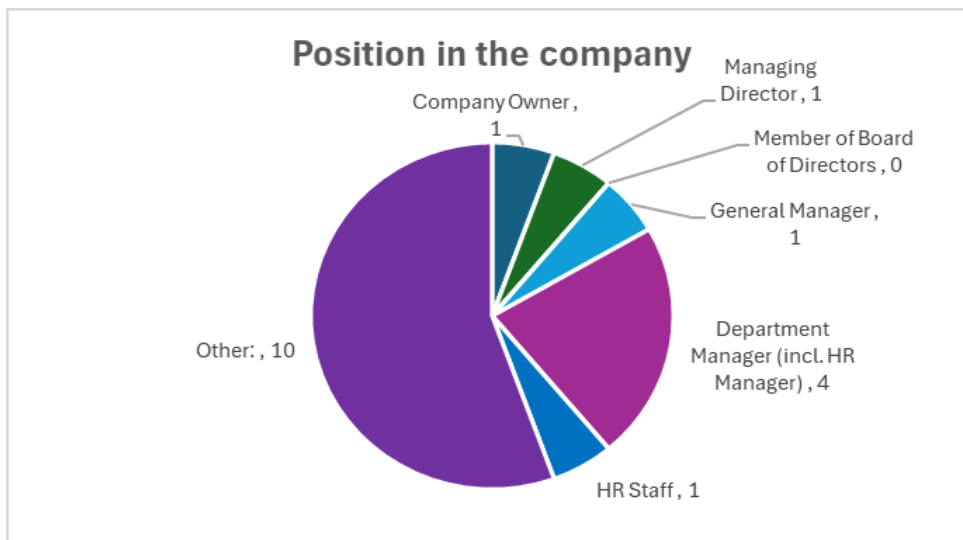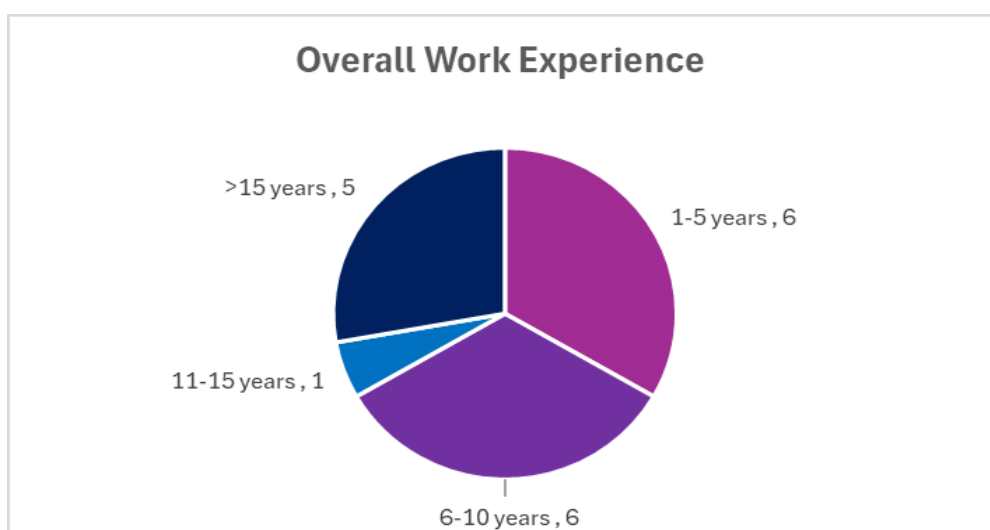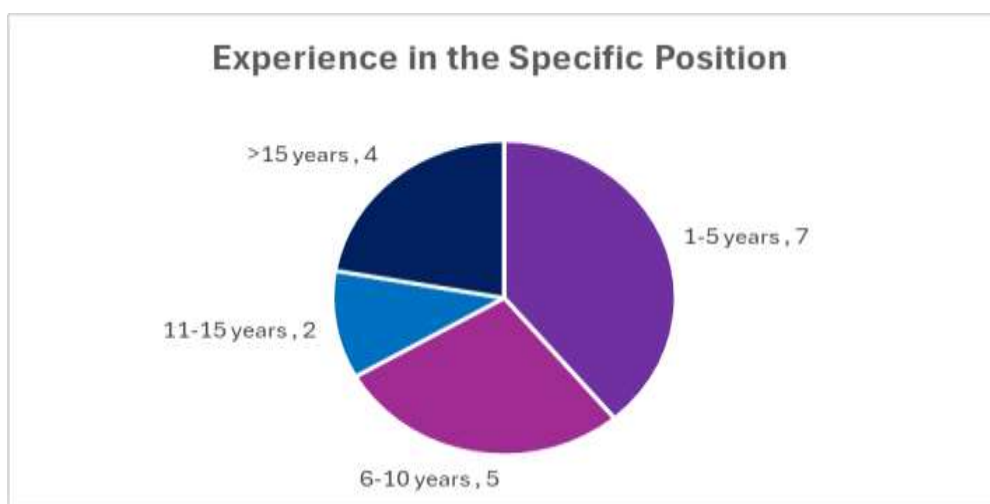
Conclusions and Recommendations from the Focus Groups in Greece

Key Findings:
- **Hiring Preferences**
  - **Focus Group A:** Prioritised low-skilled adults for administrative roles and valued young workers for fresh ideas. Women appreciated in practical roles, while long-term unemployed facing reintegration challenges.
  - **Focus Group B:** Focused on entry-level positions and young workers, followed by women and then long-term unemployed. Low-skilled adults were least prioritised.

- **Working Challenges**
  - Entry-level: Experience gaps, generational differences.
  - Long-term unemployed: Reintegration difficulties.
  - Economically inactive women: Balancing family and work.
  - Young workers: Adaptation, generational differences.
  - Low-skilled adults: Adaptability, communication.

- **Skills Needed**
  - Women: Flexibility, critical thinking, collaboration, communication.
  - Entry-level youth: Flexibility, critical thinking, responsibility.
  - Low-skilled adults: Critical thinking, communication.
  - Long-term unemployed: Self-regulation, strategic thinking.

Micro-Credentials:
  - Value placed on the certifying body's reputation and course delivery method (online v in-person).
  - Emphasis put on quality education and covering relevant skills.

Role of Micro-credentials in Greece:
- **Bridging the Gap:** Recognising specific skills to address gaps in standard qualifications.
- **Promoted by:** Public and private entities.
- **Funding Challenges:** Often reliant on private sector funding, creating financial barriers.
- **Credibility Concerns:** Depended on programme quality and the certifying organisation's reputation.
- **Need for Improvement:** Concerns about the comprehensiveness of skills covered.

Skill Mismatch in Greece:
- **Poor Performance:** Greece ranks low in the European Skills Index, indicating significant skill development challenges.
- **Multifaceted Issues:** Overeducation, undereducation, and misalignment between skills and job requirements.
- **Overeducation:** High among young graduates, linked to the economic crisis and a focus on low-skill sectors.
- **Horizontal Mismatch:** High rates of mismatch between studies and job fields.
- **Skill Shortages:** 80% of employers report difficulty finding suitable candidates.

- **Limited Training Opportunities:** Exacerbating the skill mismatch issue.

In essence: The focus groups highlighted varying hiring preferences across sectors and identified key skills needed for different employee groups. In Greece, skill mismatch is a significant challenge and micro-credentials offer a potential solution but require careful development and implementation to ensure quality and address financial barriers.

4.2 LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

After the focus groups, the partners defined the skills to be further evaluated, concluding on **36 Skills**.

A questionnaire for employers was disseminated in Greece, having collected **74 responses**.

Demographics
PARTICIPANTS

Size of company/organisation
- Micro-enterprise, 8
- Small Enterprise, 25
- Medium Enterprise, 29
- Large Enterprise, 12

Position in the company/organisation

Other: , 3
HR Staff , 12
Company Owner , 10
Managing Director , 1
Member of Board of Directors , 1
General Manager , 5
Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 42

Education level

College Graduate (or equivalent) , 0
High School Graduate , 2
None of the above , 0
University Graduate (PhD Holder) , 2
University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 28
University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 42

Age

55-64 years old , 4
>64 years old , 1
20-34 years old , 12
45-54 years old , 21
35-44 years old , 36

42

Experience in the Specific Position

>15 years, 10

1-5 years, 15

11-15 years, 9

6-10 years, 40

Overall Work Experience

>15 years, 14

1-5 years, 6

11-15 years, 20

6-10 years, 34

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Employer Survey

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
FLEXIBILITY	62
COLLABORATION	58
COMMUNICATION	58
SELF-REGULATION	53
EMPATHY	52
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	51
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	51
CRITICAL THINKING	48
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	45
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	45
PROBLEM FRAMING	44
GROWTH MINDSET	44
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	41
WELLBEING	41
ADAPTABILITY	40
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	39
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	38
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	38
MANAGING LEARNING	38
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	36
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	36
PROBLEM SOLVING	35
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	34
PROTECTING DEVICES	33
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	33
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	31
NETIQUETTE	31
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	30
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	29
PROMOTING NATURE	29
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	29
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	26
ANTIFRAGILITY	25
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	22
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	22
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	21

Comments

No comments were provided.

5-Poland

This report collects data from **2 research phases** (Focus Group and a Large-scale Survey) conducted in **Poland**.

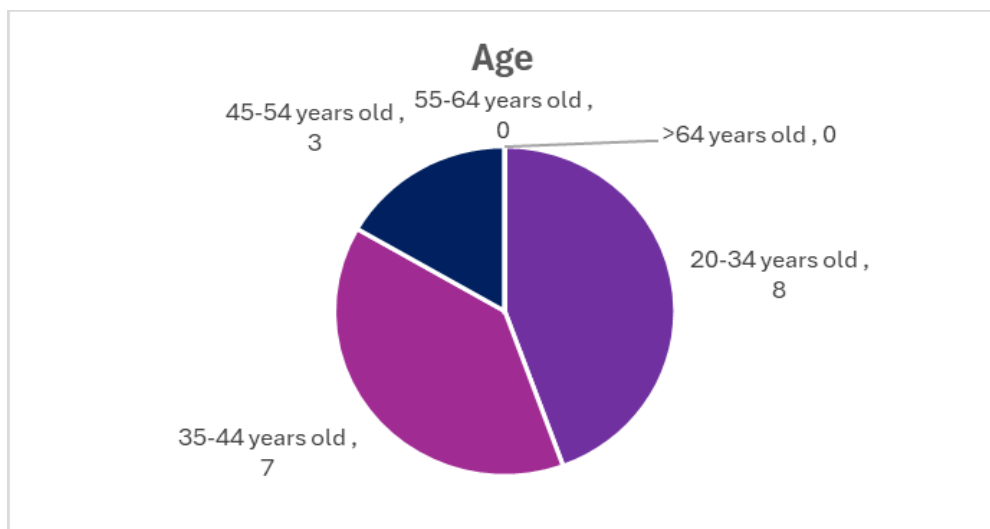### 5.1 FOCUS GROUPS

2 focus groups were implemented in Poland, as follows:
- Focus Group 1, with 11 participants
- Focus Group 2, with 10 participants
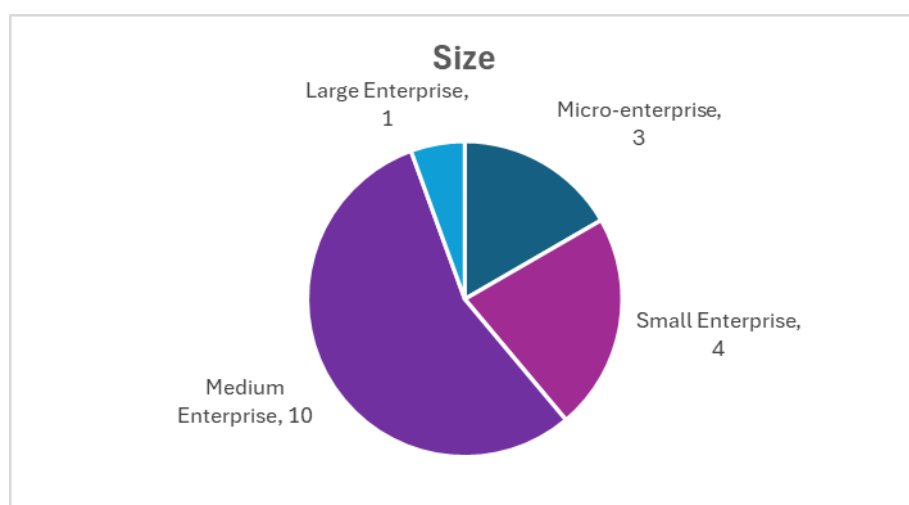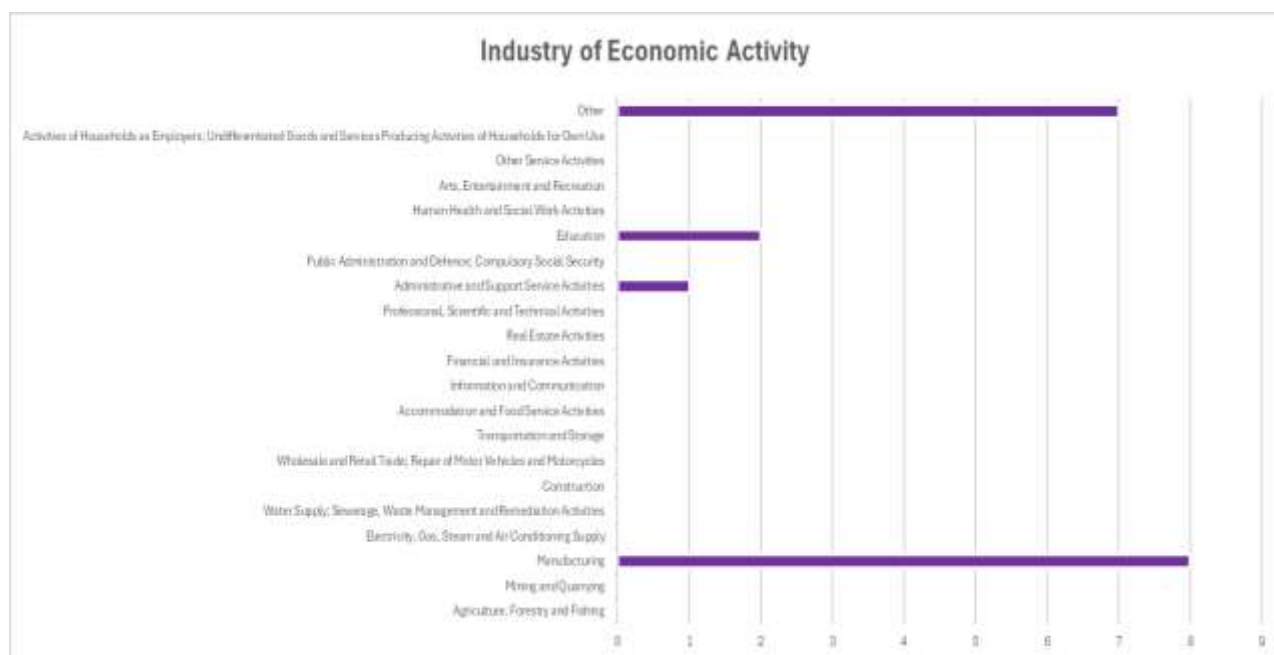 **TOTAL: 21 participants**

Demographics

PARTICIPANTS

Age

- 20-34 years old, 2
- 35-44 years old, 6
- 45-54 years old, 7
- 55-64 years old, 3
- >64 years old, 3

Experience in the Specific Position

- 1-5 years, 4
- 6-10 years, 2
- 11-15 years, 2
- >15 years, 13

Overall Work Experience

- 1-5 years, 2
- 6-10 years, 3
- 11-15 years, 2
- >15 years, 14

COMPANIES

Industry of Economic Activity

Size
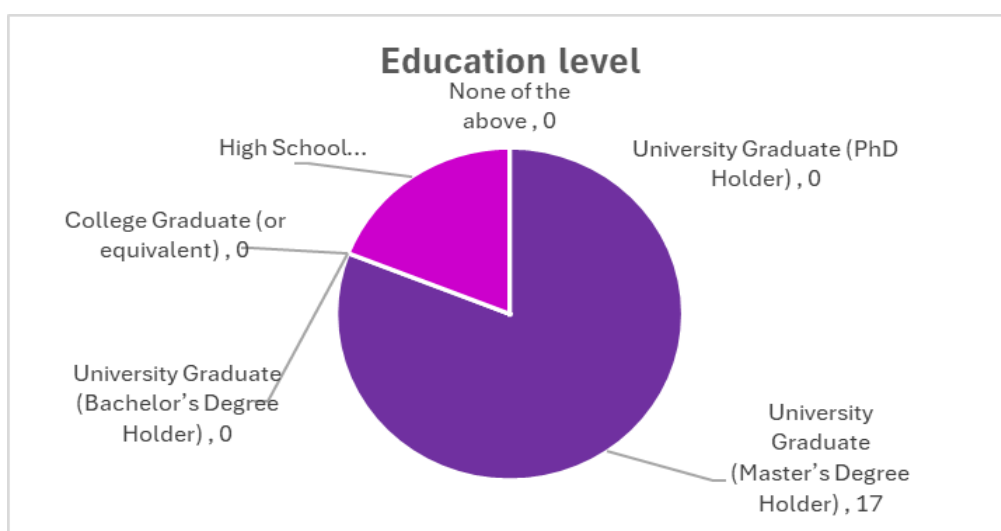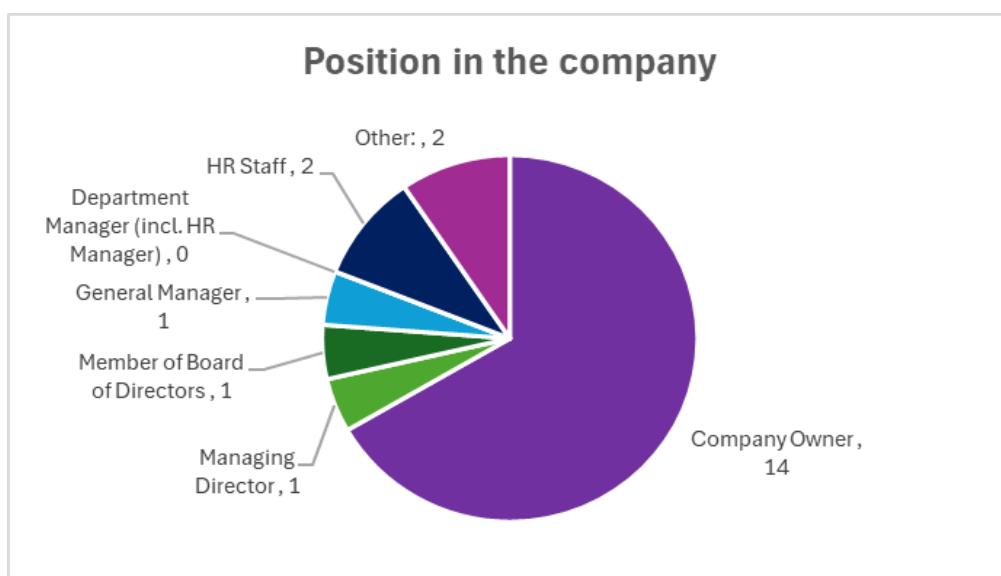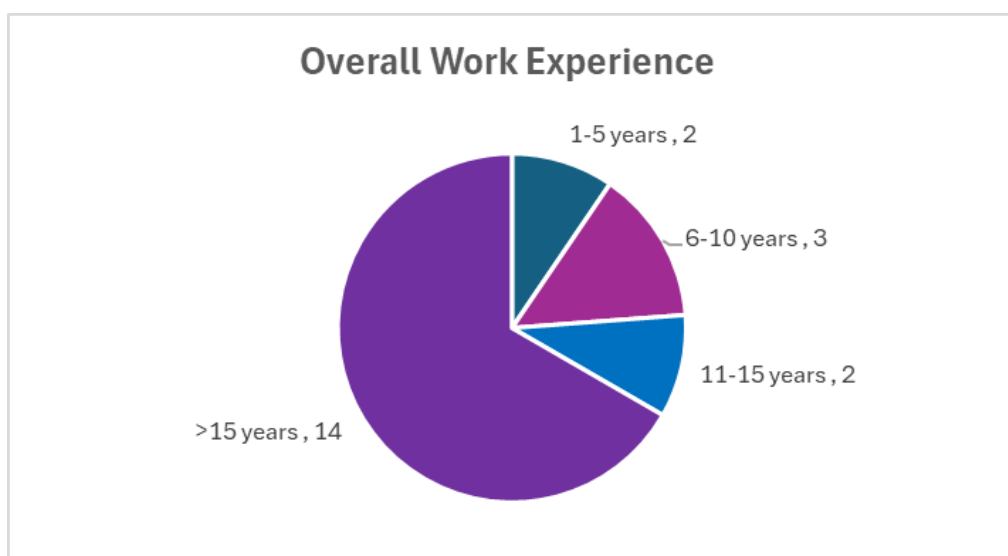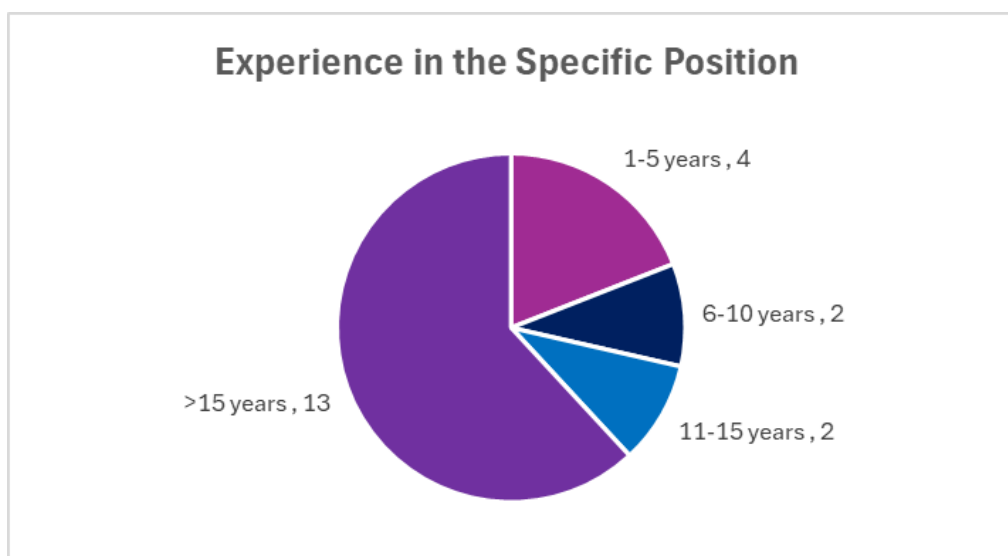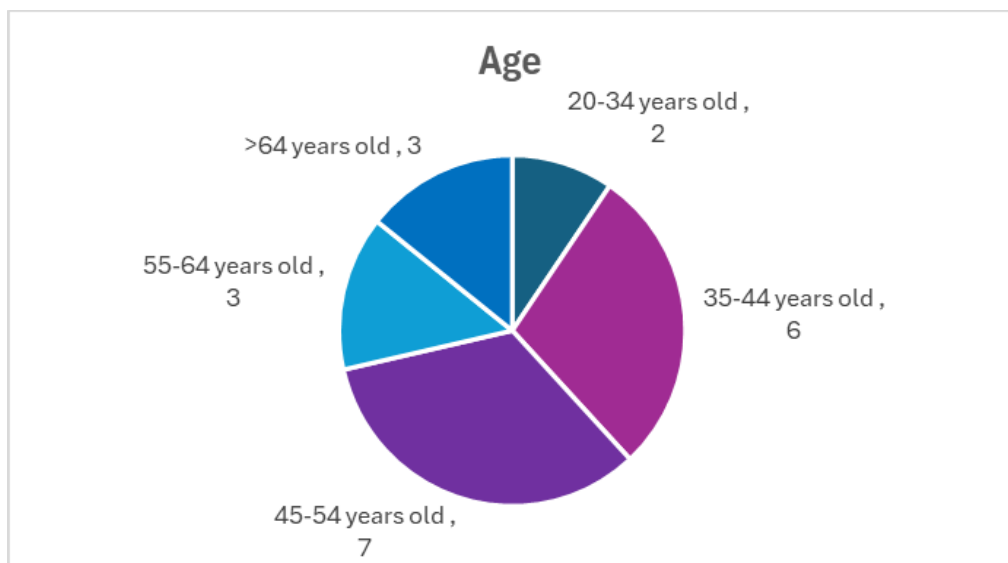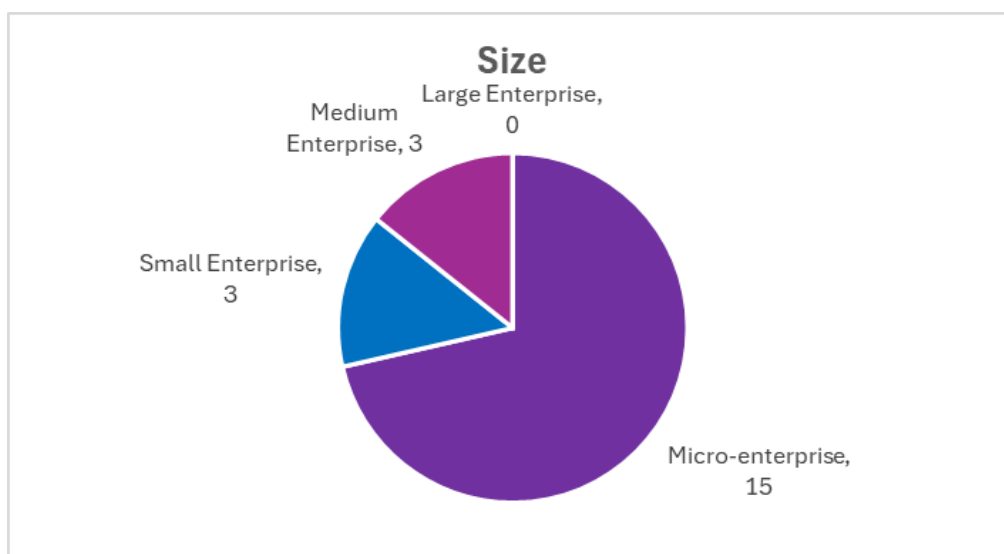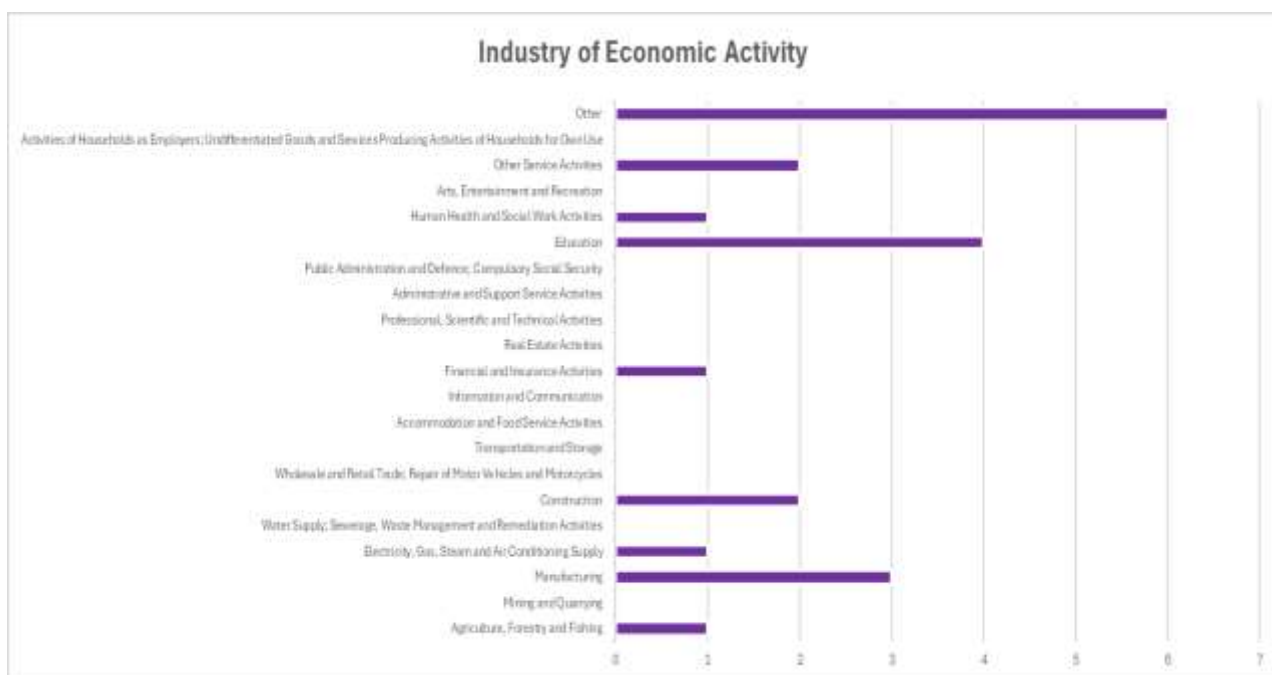
Conclusions and Recommendations from the Focus Groups in Poland

Key Findings:

- **Hiring Preferences**
- **Focus Group A:** Favored low-skilled adults for administrative roles and values young workers for fresh perspectives. Women are valued in practical roles but face challenges in physically demanding jobs. Long-term unemployed individuals are less preferred due to perceived reintegration issues and skill gaps.
- **Focus Group B:** Prioritised hiring for entry-level positions and young workers, particularly valuing women and then the long-term unemployed. Low-skilled adults were least prioritised.

- **Working Challenges**
- **Entry-level workers:** Experience gaps and generational differences.
- **Long-term unemployed:** Reintegration challenges.
- **Economically inactive women:** Balancing family and work responsibilities.
- **Young workers:** Adapting to the workplace and navigating generational differences.
- **Low-skilled adults:** Adapting to new situations and communicating effectively.

- **Essential Skills**
- **Women:** Flexibility, critical thinking, collaboration, communication.
- **Entry-level youth:** Flexibility, critical thinking, responsibility.
- **Low-skilled adults:** Critical thinking, communication.
- **Long-term unemployed:** Self-regulation, strategic thinking.

Micro-Credentials

- **Value:** Participants valued micro-credentials highly, emphasising the reputation of the certifying body and the quality of the education provided.
- **Key Factors:** Course delivery method (online v in-person) and the relevance of the skills covered by the certification programme.

In essence: The focus groups revealed distinct hiring preferences and highlighted the challenges faced by different employee groups in the labour market. The findings emphasised the importance of developing essential skills, particularly soft skills, and the potential role of high-quality micro-credentials in enhancing employability and addressing skill gaps.
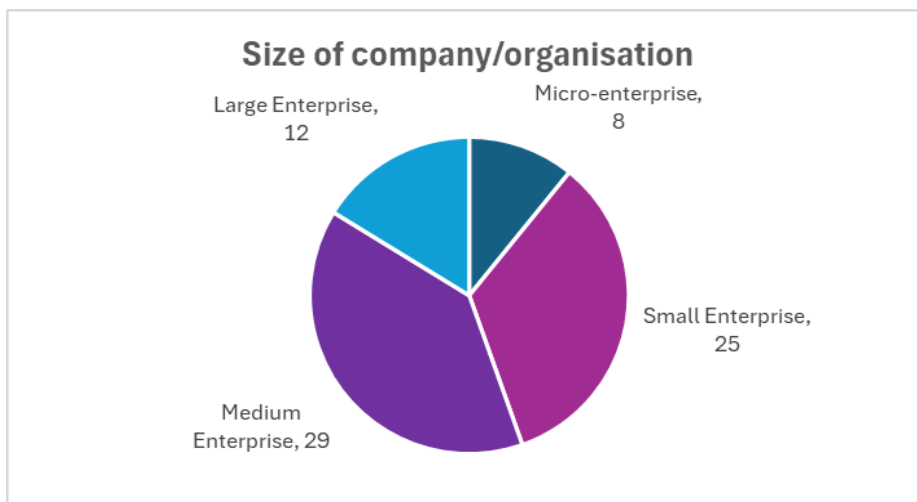
5.2 LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

After the focus groups, the partners defined the skills to be further evaluated, concluding on **36 Skills**.

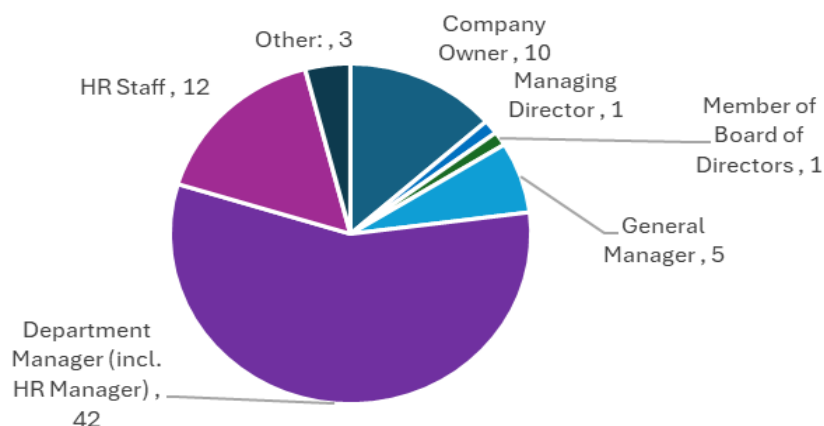A questionnaire for employers was disseminated in Poland, having collected **97 responses**.
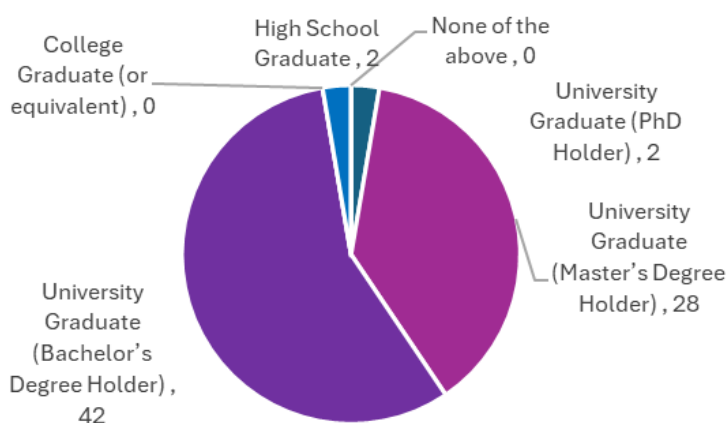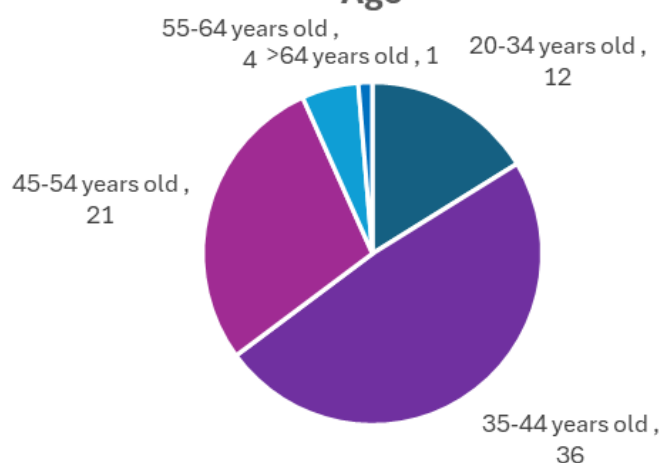
Demographics

PARTICIPANTS
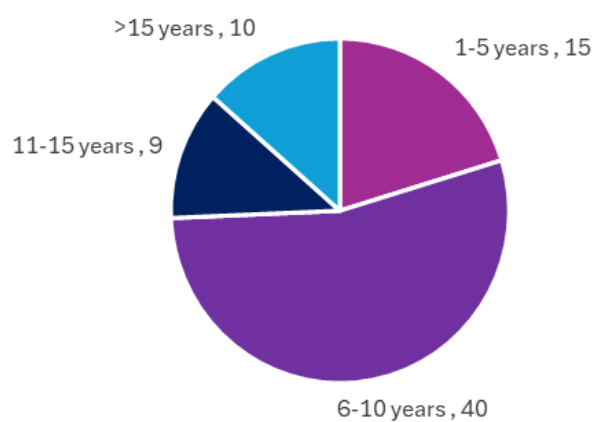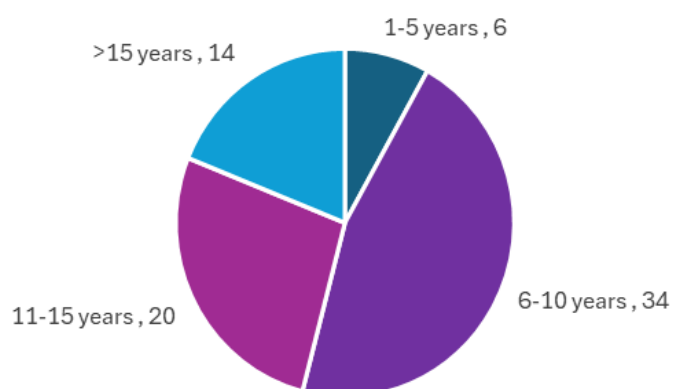
Position in the company/organisation

Company Owner , 31
Managing Director , 7
Member of Board of Directors , 14
General Manager , 2
Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 10
HR Staff , 0
Other: , 33

Education level

High School Graduate , 13
None of the above , 2
University Graduate (PhD Holder) , 9
College Graduate (or equivalent) , 1
University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 10
University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 62

Age

>64 years old , 3
20-34 years old , 9
55-64 years old , 11
35-44 years old , 35
45-54 years old , 39

Co-funded by the European Union

Experience in the Specific Position

1-5 years, 17

>15 years, 44

6-10 years, 23

11-15 years, 13

Overall Work Experience

1-5 years, 3

6-10 years, 7

11-15 years, 10

>15 years, 77

Co-funded by
the European Union

Employer Survey

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	86
FLEXIBILITY	81
COMMUNICATION	76
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	72
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	70
PROBLEM SOLVING	69
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	66
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	62
GROWTH MINDSET	62
MANAGING LEARNING	57
EMPATHY	57
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	52
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	51
SELF-REGULATION	50
CRITICAL THINKING	49
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	48
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	48
ADAPTABILITY	44
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	43
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	42
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	38
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	37
WELLBEING	37
PROBLEM FRAMING	36
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	34
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	34
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	29
ANTIFRAGILITY	26
NETIQUETTE	25
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	25
PROMOTING NATURE	22
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	21
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	20
PROTECTING DEVICES	18
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	16
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	0

Comments

- *Initiative and Adaptability: Initiative is seen as important but perhaps too broad. Adaptability to economic and global changes is crucial, as it prepares employees for uncertainty.*
- *Flexibility and Learning: Flexibility and a willingness to learn are prioritised as essential skills.*
- *Economic Realities: New employees should be prepared for potential low payment despite being productive.*
- *Initiative as Creativity and Independence: Initiative is also associated with creativity and independence, highlighting its value in fostering innovative and self-driven work environments.*

PART 4 – AGGREGATE FINDINGS

The aggregate report's structure follows the phases of the research carried out.

FOCUS GROUPS

Below, an <u>aggregate list</u> of the focus group findings in each partner country is provided:

1. Cyprus - 2 focus groups, with a total of 20 participants
- **Key Findings:** Cypriot employers concluded that the main challenges faced by businesses in Cyprus include a skills' gap and a limited pool of unemployed candidates actively seeking for low and medium-skill positions.
- **Essential Skills:** Skills such as Flexibility, Adaptability, and Digital Literacy were emphasised.

2. Italy - 2 focus groups, with a total of 24 participants
- **Key Findings:** Italian employers emphasised the need for skills related to Sustainability and Environmental Awareness, reflecting the country's strong agricultural sector.
- **Essential Skills:** Skills such as Taking the Initiative and Self-awareness were also highlighted.

3. Spain - 2 focus groups, with a total of 19 participants

- **Key Findings:** Spanish employers focused on the need for skills related to tourism and customer service, given the country's significant tourism industry.
- **Essential Skills:** Skills such as Empathy and Collaboration were also valued.

4. Greece - 2 focus groups, with a total of 18 participants
- **Key Findings:** Greek employers highlighted challenges related to difficulties in finding candidates with the right skills and experience.
- **Essential Skills:** Skills such as Communication, Teamwork, and Problem Solving were emphasised.

5. Poland - 2 focus groups, with a total of 21 participants
- **Key Findings:** Polish employers stressed that the challenges they face include managing learning processes and adapting to new technologies.
- **Essential Skills:** Digital skills, including Browsing, Searching, and Filtering Digital Content, were highlighted.

Common Themes Across Countries
1. **Life Skills:** Skills such as **Self-awareness, Motivation, and Perseverance** were consistently highlighted.
2. **Digital Skills: Digital Literacy** for entry-level (junior) job positions was emphasised in all partner countries.

3. **Entrepreneurial Mindset Skills: Taking the Initiative and Problem Solving** were valued across all partner countries.
4. **Sustainability and Green Skills:** A growing recognition of the need for **Sustainability** skills, particularly in the partner countries with strong environmental sectors, was identified.

Recommendations from Across Countries
1. **Integration of Key Skills in Training Programmes:** The identified key skills should be integrated in vocational training programmes to ensure that graduates possess the skills demanded by employers.
2. **Promotion of Micro-Credentials:** The use of micro-credentials should be encouraged to validate the acquisition of key skills enhancing employability, supported by quality assurance mechanisms.
3. **Continuous Evaluation:** Training programmes should be regularly evaluated to ensure they remain relevant and effective in addressing emerging skills' needs.

LARGE-SCALE SURVEY

Below, an aggregate list of the survey responses collected in each partner country is provided:

1. Cyprus - Survey Responses: 100
2. Italy - Survey Responses: 66
3. Spain - Survey Responses: 76
4. Greece - Survey Responses: 74
5. Poland - Survey Responses: 97

Aggregate Survey Results – Graphs

The following graphs represent the data collected from the survey **in an aggregate form**, that is, from the **413 responses collected in 5 EU countries** *(Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Greece and Poland)*.

Demographics
PARTICIPANTS

Industry of Economic Activity

Industry	Value
Other	59
Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
Other Service Activities	54
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	5
Human Health and Social Work Activities	10
Education	44
Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	9
Administrative and Support Service Activities	6
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	28
Real Estate Activities	5
Financial and Insurance Activities	20
Information and Communication	11
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	9
Transportation and Storage	13
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	20
Construction	19
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	3
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	6
Manufacturing	82
Mining and Quarrying	1
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	9

Size of company/organisation

- Large Enterprise, 96
- Micro-enterprise, 126
- Medium Enterprise, 101
- Small Enterprise, 90

Position in the company/organisation

Other: , 71
Company Owner , 94
Managing Director , 15
Member of Board of Directors , 28
HR Staff , 62
Department Manager (incl. HR Manager) , 119
General Manager , 24

Education level

College Graduate (or equivalent) , 31
High School Graduate , 20
None of the above , 4
University Graduate (PhD Holder) , 21
University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder) , 86
University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder) , 251

Age

>64 years old , 11
55-64 years old , 45
20-34 years old , 65
45-54 years old , 157
35-44 years old , 135

Experience in the Specific Position

>15 years , 130

1-5 years , 97

11-15 years , 71

6-10 years , 115

Overall Work Experience

1-5 years , 24

6-10 years , 70

>15 years , 245

11-15 years , 74

Co-funded by
the European Union

Selection of Skills (A)

In the graph below, the **selection of skills on aggregate basis** are represented based on the order of the skills in the online form (questionnaire) provided to employers and employer representatives in all the partner countries.
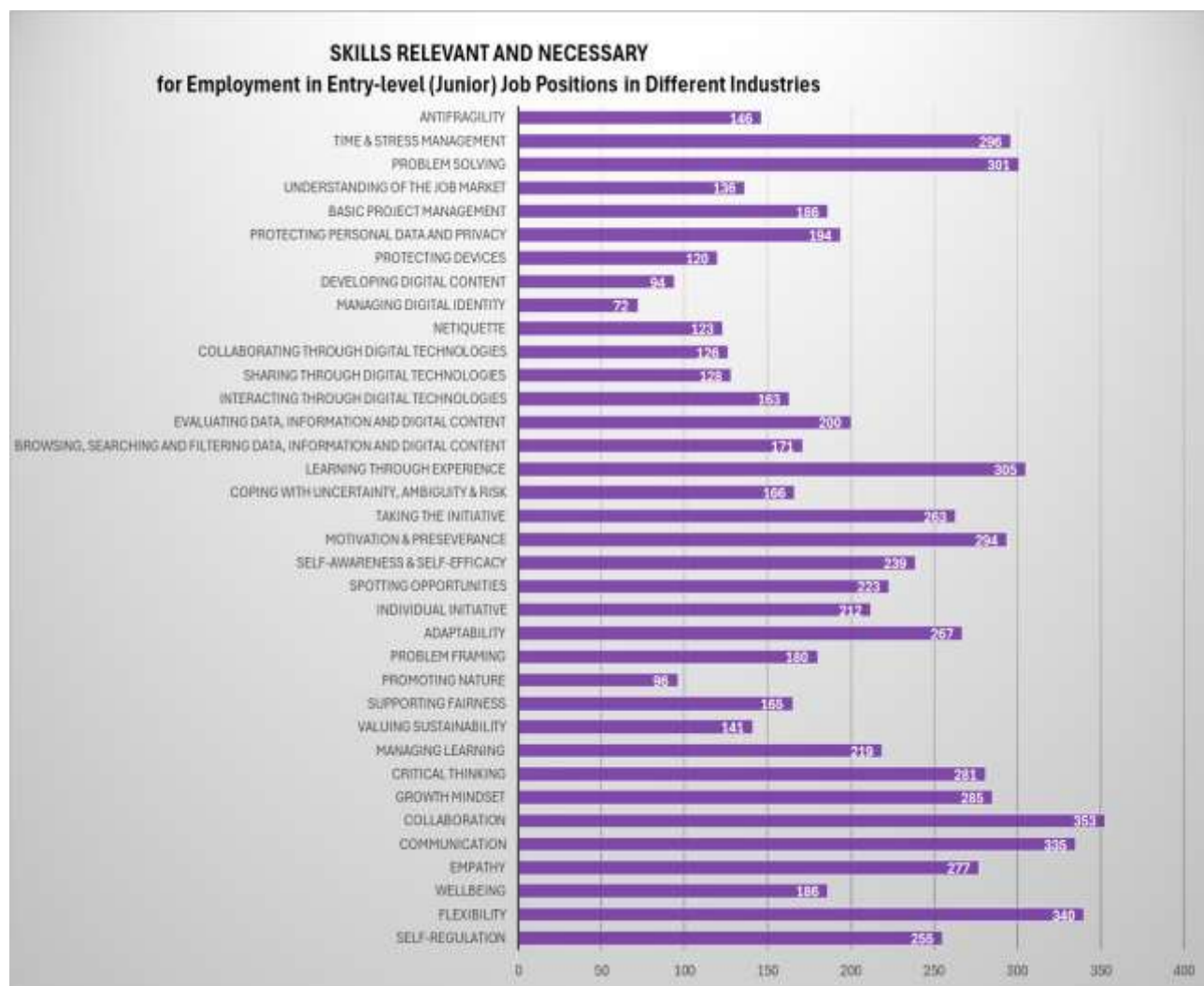
AGGREGATE SURVEY RESULTS ON SKILLS – NOT RANKED (413 responses in 5 EU Countries)

Aggregate Survey Results – Analysis

Based on the aggregate data presented above, some key insights regarding entry-level (junior) job positions in the partner countries are as follows:

Demographics and Company Information
- **Industry Distribution**: The report covers various economic sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, and more.
- **Company Size**: The data includes micro-enterprises (126), small enterprises (90), medium enterprises (101), and large enterprises (96).
- **Positions**: The participants hold roles such as company owners, Managing Directors, Department Managers, and HR staff.

Education and Age
- **Education Level**: Most participants are university graduates, with 251 holding a Master's degree, 86 a Bachelor's degree, and 21 a PhD.
- **Age Distribution**: Most participants are between 35-54 years old.

Work Experience
- **Specific Position Experience**: Most participants have less than 15 years of experience in their current position.
- **Overall Work Experience**: A significant number of participants has more than 15 years of overall work experience.

Key Skills for Entry-Level (Junior) Job Positions
The report highlights the following **20 skills as crucial for entry-level (junior) job positions, in terms of relevance with the needs addressed by MORAL**:
1. **Collaboration**
2. **Flexibility**
3. **Communication**
4. **Learning Through Experience**
5. **Problem Solving**
6. **Time & Stress Management**
7. **Motivation & Perseverance**
8. **Growth Mindset**
9. **Critical Thinking**
10. **Empathy**
11. **Adaptability**
12. **Taking the Initiative**
13. **Self-Regulation**
14. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy**
15. **Spotting Opportunities**

16. Managing Learning
17. Individual Initiative
18. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content
19. Protecting Personal Data and Privacy
20. a. Wellbeing
20. b. Basic Project Management

Note: *The list includes 21 skills in total, since 2 skills (Wellbeing and Basic Project Management) received the same points.*

Given the representative survey sample of MORAL in 5 EU countries, the above-presented insights provide a comprehensive overview of the skills and demographics relevant to entry-level (junior) job positions across various economic sectors in Europe.

Selection of Skills (B)

In the graph below, the **selection of skills on an aggregate basis** is represented based on the <u>final ranking of the skills</u> (from the most frequently selected skills to the least frequently selected ones).

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

| Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	353
FLEXIBILITY	340
COMMUNICATION	335
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	305
PROBLEM SOLVING	301
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	296
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	294
GROWTH MINDSET	285
CRITICAL THINKING	281
EMPATHY	277
ADAPTABILITY	267
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	263
SELF-REGULATION	255
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	238
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	223
MANAGING LEARNING	219
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	212
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	200
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	194
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	186
WELLBEING	186
PROBLEM FRAMING	180
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT	171
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	166
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	165
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	163
ANTIFRAGILITY	146
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	141
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	136
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	128
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	126
NETIQUETTE	123
PROTECTING DEVICES	120
PROMOTING NATURE	95
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	94
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	72

AGGREGATE SURVEY RESULTS ON SKILLS – RANKED (413 responses in 5 EU Countries)

CONCLUSIONS

The MORAL project's comprehensive data analysis and reporting methodology has provided invaluable insights into the key skills necessary for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions across different EU countries.

This section of the report highlights the **differences and common points identified among the partner countries** *(Cyprus, Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland)* based on the Focus Group and Large-scale Survey findings.

Differences Among EU Countries
1. Industry Focus: Each country has a unique industry focus that influences the skills required. For example, Spain emphasises the tourism sector, while Italy focuses on agriculture. These differences reflect the diverse economic activities and vocational needs across the countries.

2. Recruitment Challenges: The challenges faced by employers vary significantly. Cyprus, for instance, struggles with a skills' gap and limited candidate pools for low and medium-skill positions. In contrast, other countries might face different challenges, such as high competition or specific skill shortages.

Common Points Among EU Countries
1. Essential Skills: Despite the differences in industry focus and recruitment challenges, there is a common set of essential skills identified across all countries. These include life skills, digital skills, green skills, and entrepreneurial mindset skills, aligned with key EC Competency Frameworks, such as LifeComp, DigComp, GreenComp, and EntreComp.

2. Key Skills Matrix (KSM): The development of a Key Skills Matrix (KSM) that includes 20 key skills necessary for employment in entry-level (junior) positions is a common goal across all countries. This matrix will be used in training, assessment, validation, and certification processes, supported by micro-credentials and an initiative for a 'Passport to Employment'.

3. Methodological Consistency: Both focus groups and large-scale surveys were conducted using consistent methodologies across all countries. This ensured that the data collected was comparable and contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the skills required for employment.

Future Implications
The findings of this project highlight the importance of aligning **education and training programmes** with the skills required by employers. By identifying common essential skills across different countries, the MORAL project can inform policy and educational initiatives to better support disadvantaged groups in entering the labour market.

The use of **micro-credentials** and a 'Passport to Employment' will also enhance the employability of individuals by providing them with recognised and validated skills.

In conclusion, while there are differences in specific challenges and industry focuses among the partner countries, the common identification of essential skills and the development of a unified Key Skills Matrix underscore the project's potential to create a harmonised approach to **employment skills' development across Europe.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The MORAL project's European report provides several **recommendations** based on the findings of the Focus Groups <u>and</u> Large-scale Surveys conducted across the partner countries. These suggestions aim to support disadvantaged groups in entering the labour market by identifying and validating key skills necessary for employment.

Key Recommendations

1. Developing a Key Skills Matrix (KSM):
- <u>Key Skills Matrix</u>: The report suggests the development of a KSM that includes 20 key skills essential for entry-level (junior) job positions. These skills are categorised under life skills, digital skills, green skills, and entrepreneurial mindset skills, aligning with key EC Competency Frameworks, such as LifeComp, DigComp, GreenComp, and EntreComp.
- <u>Training and Certification</u>: The KSM should be used in training programmes and assessment and certification processes to ensure that individuals acquire the necessary skills for employment.

2. Developing Micro-Credentials and a 'Passport to Employment' (PTE):
- <u>Micro-Credentials</u>: The report recommends the use of micro-credentials to validate the acquisition of key skills. These will provide employers with a clear understanding of an individual's competencies.
- <u>Passport to Employment</u>: A PTE initiative that incorporates 20 micro-credentials can enhance employability by providing a recognised and validated skillset.

3. Addressing Skills Mismatch:
- <u>Employer Needs</u>: The report highlights the importance of understanding the specific skills required by employers to address the skills' mismatch issue. This involves continuous dialogue between educational institutions and industry stakeholders.
- <u>Tailored Training Programmes</u>: Training programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of each industry and sector are key to ensuring that graduates possess the skills demanded by employers.

4. Emphasising Digital Skills:
- <u>Digital Literacy</u>: Given the increasing reliance on technology, the report emphasises the need for strong digital skills among job seekers. This includes skills such as Browsing, Searching, and Filtering Digital Content, as well as Interacting through Digital Technologies.

5. Promoting Sustainability and Entrepreneurship:
- <u>Green Skills</u>: The report findings show the need for integration of green skills into training programmes to foster sustainability and environmental awareness.
- <u>Entrepreneurial Mindset</u>: The same findings suggest the promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset through skills like Problem Solving, Taking the Initiative, and Adaptability to enhance innovation and resilience among the workforce.

Implementation Strategies

1. <u>Collaboration between Stakeholders</u>: Collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and policymakers to ensure that training programmes align with industry needs is encouraged.
2. <u>Continuous Evaluation and Provision of Feedback</u>: Regular evaluation of training programmes and establishment of feedback mechanisms to ensure that the programmes remain relevant and effective are suggested.
3. <u>Incorporating Emerging Skills</u>: Incorporating emerging skills, such as Antifragility and Basic Project Management, in training programmes to prepare individuals for future challenges is recommended.

By implementing these suggestions, the MORAL project aims to enhance the employability of disadvantaged groups and support their integration into the labour market. At the same time, people that are currently holding entry-level (junior) job positions are expected to be upskilled with the aid of the project.

Annexes

1. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

2. LARGE-SCALE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

3. NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORTS

4. SURVEY DATA AT PARTNER COUNTRY LEVEL

Annex 1 – FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

SET OF QUESTIONS:

1. What is the **SIZE** of your company (Small, Medium, Large*)? (Answers to this can be extracted from the Registration and Consent Forms)

2. What is the **SECTOR/INDUSTRY OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY** of your company? (Answers to this can be extracted from the Registration and Consent Forms)

3. Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 5 (least employed)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

4. What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

5. What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

6. What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

7. What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?**

8. What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?**

9. Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'***** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

10. What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH****** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

* SME definition follows.

** Question 7 and Question 8: The moderator should highlight the difference between these two questions; Q7 refers to what the employers/employer representatives 'encounter' during the recruitment process in terms of candidates' skills; it is about the usual recruitment process they are used to and their experience with evaluating and recruiting workers; Q8 refers to an ideal situation regarding the skills required of an employee; it is about the 'ideal worker' that they would like to have during the selection process, taking also into account the sustainability of the future workers from a forward-looking perspective. This pair of questions addresses the 'skills' mismatch' issue; Q7 and Q8 will be reported with the use of a Grid to facilitate the ranking of the skills.

*** The official definition of MICRO-CREDENTIALS, as provided by the Council of the European Union in its Recommendations of June 2022, can be found in the Project Overview presentation.

**** SKILLS' MISMATCH refers to a situation where the skills possessed by workers do not match the skills required for their jobs. This can result in underutilisation of skills, where workers are overqualified for their positions, or overqualification, where workers lack the necessary skills for their positions.

Annex 2 – LARGE-SCALE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

MORAL - EMPLOYER SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for considering participating in this survey, which is conducted in five EU countries (Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Spain), within the framework of the EU-funded project 'Key Skills Micro-credentials: A Passport to Employment and Inclusion' (MORAL). Your input into the study is highly valued.

About the 'MORAL' Project

MORAL is a project – funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Partnerships for Innovation - Forward Looking Projects – that aims to **support** disadvantaged groups (long-term unemployed with emphasis on women and youth, economically inactive women, and low-skilled adults) **in entering the labour market** through the development and validation of **Key Skills**, with the aid of **micro-credentials/development of a 'Passport to Employment'**.

Additionally, the project aims to **upskill** employees that are currently in entry-level (junior) job positions.

About the 'MORAL' Employer Survey

The first step in MORAL is to **identify the skills that are necessary for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions in different industries**.

Through this questionnaire, you are asked to contribute to **SELECTING 20 KEY SKILLS for entry-level (junior) job positions, through your role as employer/employer representative**.

1. About your Company/Organisation
Country of Company/Organisation
Cyprus
Greece
Italy
Poland
Spain

Name of Company/Organisation

Industry of Economic Activity of Company/Organisation
(Choose the one that best describes the main activities of the company/organisation)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

Mining and Quarrying

Manufacturing

Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply

Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities

Construction

Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles

Transportation and Storage

Accommodation and Food Service Activities

Information and Communication

Financial and Insurance Activities

Real Estate Activities

Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities

Administrative and Support Service Activities

Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security

Education

Human Health and Social Work Activities

Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

Other Service Activities

Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use

Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies

Other

Size of Company/Organisation

Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees

Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees

Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees

Large Enterprise: >249 employees

2. About you as an Employer/Employer Representative

Position in the Company/Organisation

Company Owner

Managing Director

Member of Board of Directors

General Manager

Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)

HR Staff

Other

Education Level

University Graduate (PhD Holder)

University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)

University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)

College Graduate (or equivalent)

High School Graduate

None of the above

Age

20-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55-64 years old

>64 years old

Experience in the Above-Selected Position

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

>15 years

Overall Work Experience

1-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

>15 years

3. Employer Survey

Please select 20 Skills that you consider **RELEVANT AND NECESSARY for employment in entry-level (junior) job positions in different industries**.

You have **ONLY 20 points** to assign - *by ticking the boxes* - to the **20 most relevant and necessary skills** (that is, 1 point per skill). The ones not selected will be considered not relevant/important.

Take your time to read the description of the single skills - most of them have been identified by the European Commission in 4 Competence Frameworks: DigComp, GreenComp, EntreComp, and LifeComp - and then, select 20 skills.

SELF-REGULATION: Being aware of and managing emotions, thoughts, and behaviour.

FLEXIBILITY: Managing transitions and uncertainty, and facing challenges.

WELLBEING: Pursuiting life satisfaction, caring for physical, mental, and social health, and adopting a sustainable lifestyle.

EMPATHY: Understanding others' emotions, experiences, and values and providing appropriate responses.

COMMUNICATION: Using relevant communication strategies and tools based on context and content.

COLLABORATION: Engaging in group activities and teamwork, while acknowledging and respecting others.

GROWTH MINDSET: Believing in continuous learning and progressing for oneself and others.

CRITICAL THINKING: Evaluating information to support reasoned conclusions and develop innovative solutions.

MANAGING LEARNING: Planning, organising, monitoring, and reviewing one's learning process.

VALUING SUSTAINABILITY: Reflecting on personal values and identifying and explaining how values vary among people and over time, while critically evaluating how they align with sustainability values.

SUPPORTING FAIRNESS: Supporting equity and justice for current and future generations and learning from previous generations for sustainability.

PROMOTING NATURE: Acknowledging that humans are part of nature and respecting the needs and rights of other species and nature itself to restore and regenerate healthy and resilient ecosystems.

PROBLEM FRAMING: Framing challenges as sustainability problems to identify suitable approaches for prevention, mitigation, and adaptation.

ADAPTABILITY: Managing transitions and challenges in complex sustainability situations and making decisions related to the future in the face of uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk.

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE: Identifying own potential for sustainability and actively contributing to improving prospects for the community and the planet.

SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES: Using imagination and abilities to identify opportunities for creating value by exploring the social, cultural, and economic landscape.

SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY: Believing in yourself, reflecting on personal needs and aspirations, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and having faith in your ability to influence events despite setbacks.

MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE: Staying focused, determined, patient, and resilient to achieve your goals.

TAKING THE INITIATIVE: Initiating processes that create value, taking up challenges, acting and working independently to achieve goals sticking to intentions, and carrying out planned tasks.

COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK: Making decisions in uncertain situations with limited information and potential unintended outcomes, involving structured testing of ideas and prototypes early in the value-creation process to minimise risks.

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE: Learning by doing, using any initiative for value creation as a learning opportunity, learning with others including peers and mentors, and reflecting and learning from both success and failure.

BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT: Articulating information needs to search for data, information, and content in digital environments and to access them and navigate between them, creating and updating personal search strategies.

EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT: Analysing, comparing, and critically evaluating the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information, and digital content and analysing, interpreting, and critically evaluating the data, information, and digital content.

INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Interacting through a variety of digital technologies and understanding appropriate digital communication means for a given context.

SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Sharing data, information, and digital content with others through appropriate digital technologies, acting as an intermediary and knowing about referencing and attribution practices.

COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: Using digital tools and technologies for collaborative processes and for co-construction and co-creation of data, resources, and knowledge.

NETIQUETTE: Being aware of behavioural norms and know-how, while using digital technologies and interacting in digital environments, adapting communication strategies to the specific audience, and being aware of cultural and generational diversity in digital environments.

MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY: Creating and managing one or multiple digital identities to be able to protect one's own reputation and to deal with the data that one produces through several digital tools, environments, and services.

DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT: Creating and editing digital content in different formats to express oneself through digital means.

PROTECTING DEVICES: Protecting devices and digital content, understanding risks and threats in digital environments, knowing about safety and security measures, and having due regard to reliability and privacy.

PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY: Protecting personal data and privacy in digital environments, understanding how to use and share personally identifiable information while being able to protect oneself and others from damages, and understanding that digital services use a "Privacy Policy" to inform how personal data is used.

BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT: Practicing applied knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to complete a project according to specific requirements.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET: Recognising the dynamics between employers and job seekers, focusing on the skills and competencies that are in demand.

PROBLEM SOLVING: Identifying, analysing, and resolving issues effectively.

TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT: Effectively organising and prioritising tasks, while maintaining emotional well-being in high-pressure situations.

ANTIFRAGILITY: Dealing with complexity and change through a proactive approach, fostering resilience through adaptability and growth.

Comments and any other useful information about your choices (the skills that you consider the most important out of your choices and why, etc.).

4. Personal Data Protection: Collection, Processing, Use, and Storage

By participating in this survey, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided below and consent to the collection, processing, use, and storage of your personal data for the below-stated research purposes:

Your participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. All responses will be treated confidentially. The data collected will be used and processed solely for research purposes and will be published in aggregate form (at national and/or consortium level), that is, your individual responses will not be identifiable in any reports or publications. All personal data will be kept secure and stored in

accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation GDPR EU 2016/679. Access to the data will be limited to the project's research team and, if requested, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the European Commission's body responsible for the project.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact the project's partner organisation conducting the survey in your country.

Consent

Thank you for your time!

Annex 3 – NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORTS

CYPRUS

WP2: Research for the Identification of Key Skills Necessary for Employment

T2.2: Implementation of Two Focus Groups with Employers per Partner Country

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT
PARTNER COUNTRY: *CYPRUS*

(MMC Management Centre –

Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation)

Co-funded by the European Union

INTRODUCTION

Partner(s) Responsible for the Report	MMC Management Centre (MMC)
	Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB)

Focus Groups' Details

	Date and Time	Duration	Implementation Mode	Number of Participants	Evidence Available
Focus Group A	18/06/2024, 09.00-11.00	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	11	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/ Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms
Focus Group B	18/06/2024, 11.30-13.30	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	9	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/ Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms

Table 1: Focus Groups' Details

Focus Group A

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants

Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	HR Staff	1-5 yrs
Participant 2	Company 2	Department Manager	1-5 yrs
Participant 3	Company 3	Department Manager	11-15 yrs
Participant 4	Company 4	Department Manager	6-10 yrs
Participant 5	Company 5	HR Staff	11-15 yrs
Participant 6	Company 6	Department Manager	>15 yrs
Participant 7	Company 7	Member of Board of Directors/ Department Manager	>15 yrs
Participant 8	Company 8	Department Manager	6-10 yrs
Participant 9	Company 9	HR Staff	6-10 yrs
Participant 10	Company 10	Department Manager	11-15 yrs
Participant 11	Company 11	Department Manager	>15 yrs

Table 2: Participants' Profile (Focus Group A)

Background

Position in the Company* *(No of Participants per Position)* **1 participant is both a Board Member and an HR Manager. She is recorded as a Board Member that is hierarchically superior.*	Company Owner	0
	Managing Director	0
	Member of Board of Directors	1
	General Manager	0
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	7
	HR Staff	3
	Other *(please specify in list)*: N/A	0
Education Level* *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	10

Only the highest attained degree is recorded.	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	1
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	0
	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s))* *(List of Degrees)* **1 participant did not complete this field.*	BSc in Business & Economics; BA and MA in HRM; BSc and MSc in Education of French Language; MA in Workforce Education; BA in Sociology; MSc in Organisational Psychology; BSc Economics; BA in Business; MSc in HRM and Organisational Behaviour; BSc in Marketing.	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	1
	35-44 years old	6
	45-54 years old	3
	55-64 years old	1
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	2
	6-10 years	3
	11-15 years	4
	>15 years	2
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	1
	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	2
	>15 years	7

Table 3: Participants' Background (Focus Group A)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity* *(No of Companies per Industry)* **Some participants selected more than 1 option. All choices are recorded to demonstrate the diversity in economic activity represented in the participants' sample.*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	3
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	1
	Construction	0
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	1
	Transportation and Storage	1
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	1
	Information and Communication	0

	Financial and Insurance Activities	2
	Real Estate Activities	1
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	1
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	2
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	1
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	1
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	
	Other *(Please specify in list)*: Fiduciary and Corporate Administration	1
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	0
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	0
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	8
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	3

Table 4: Companies (Focus Group A)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

An effort was made to invite professionals experienced in recruitment, employee selection, and talent development from a diverse group of companies, representing several areas of economic activity.
It should be noted that some companies are involved in more than one sector of economic activity and this diversification reflects on the demographics (all industries declared were recorded in section 1.2).
Most participants are holders of both a Bachelor and a Master's Degree; few of them declared both degrees. The highest degree attained is recorded.

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 5 (least employed)?
- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- c. Economically inactive women
- d. Young individuals
- e. Low-qualified adults

a. People at entry-level job positions

Employed by all the participating companies. Sometimes, people recruited at entry-level job positions are expected to develop and get promoted within a reasonable period of time, whereas other times their recruitment is aimed exclusively for those positions and their early ambition for advancement may conflict with the company's plans. In many cases, people belonging to all the other groups could be also classified into this group.

b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

Less employed by the participating companies, since in Cyprus this group is relatively small, consisting of people who usually do not actively seek a job. Public schemes to tackle unemployment apply to this group; some employer representatives participated in such schemes in the past, which were proven disappointing for them. According to one participant, the programme beneficiaries appeared only in the interview phase and were then unwilling to be deprived of the public allowance, which led the company to suspend its promotional activities to attract those people. Economically inactive women often fall under this group; on the contrary, none of the participants mentioned any experience with recruiting long-term unemployed young individuals.

c. Economically inactive women

Employed by participating companies having flexible work hours and/or dividing their work into shifts (e.g., manufacturing or service activities), which acts as an incentive for them due to family obligations. This group often falls under the long-term unemployed group and is integrated into the same or similar public schemes for employment. According to one participant, the last 20 recruits of their company, having its factory premises in the industrial zone of Nicosia near many villages and implementing shifting work, were women aged 50-60 years old.

d. Young individuals

Employed often by the participating companies, particularly by those economically active in fields that require an academic background (e.g., financial and insurance activities, education, scientific activities, and retail trade). In some cases, young individuals are recent graduates or people with work experience of a minimum of 1-2 years, who are selected to get trained on a company's specific requirements for a job position (e.g. legal administrators, accountants, bankers).

e. Low-qualified adults

Employed by companies whose industry of economic activity does not require an academic qualification for key positions (e.g., labourers) for which technical skills are mandatory (e.g., manufacturing). To acquire or improve those skills, low-qualified adults take in-company training/training in the field along with onboarding focusing on corporate and health and safety issues. In some companies, new recruits acquire the skills required exclusively through in-company training due to overspecialisation of the work or the machinery used (e.g., steamfitters).

For the majority of the participating companies, recruitment focuses on people at entry-level job positions and young individuals. In companies which employ low-skilled adults and economically inactive women in their production departments, young individuals and recent graduates are recruited in scientific positions.

In terms of which target group is employed the most, the five (5) groups could be ranked as follows:
1. **People at entry-level job positions**
2. **Young individuals**
3. **Low-qualified adults**
4. **Economically inactive women**
5. **Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)**

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

The very first challenge regarding recruitment is **finding *people for entry-level job positions (a)* and particularly for positions that require technical skills**. As a result, companies often recruit people that do not meet their requirements, whom they subsequently train on the job along with their induction.

Another challenge that applies to *all the groups (a-e)* is the **lack of previous work experience** and the consequent **lack of 'professional maturity'**.

People applying for entry-level job positions (a) sometimes **do not have a good command of English** that many junior job positions require, while more than one foreign language may be requested (in case of bicommunal or multinational companies or for other reasons). On other occasions, they **lack diplomas that are necessary for the position for which they apply** and – even if they have some proven work experience – they are not selected for this reason (e.g., secretarial diploma for a relevant position). Additionally, **good ICT skills** (at least on Word processing and Excel spreadsheet software) **may also be a prerequisite for such positions that is not always met**.

Young individuals (d) usually **lack clear understanding of the requirements and the potential of the job position for which they apply**, which lead to unreasonable demands from their side (from the very beginning up to a maximum of 6 months after recruitment).

Particularly *individuals of a very young age (23-25 years old) (d)* show a **complete lack of understanding of how the labour market works (university-labour market gap)**, which discourage companies from considering them for recruitment and oblige them to opt for applicants of over 30 years old. However, according to one participant, the tendency of companies to prefer older employees over the last years has led to a need for 'rejuvenation' of work environments that only the new generation of enthusiastic, full-of-new-ideas, and technology knowledgeable people can bring.

Additionally, *people belonging to all the groups (a-e)* are usually **reluctant to work in shifts**, preferring morning to afternoon work hours. This is a common challenge among *low-qualified adults (e)* who usually take positions in industries that follow this work system and *women (c)*, particularly in case of night shifts.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women

> d. Young individuals
> e. Low-qualified adults

Either due to a lack of clear understanding of the potential of different job positions and **higher expectations than those ensured by the job position acquired**, or due to a **need for rapid development** that is common among younger generations, *people at entry-level job positions (a)* and particularly *young individuals (d)* **ask for a promotion and a salary increase** after a maximum of two years, which are either not applicable or very early to request. Companies often try to address this through expansion of job descriptions, continuous training, and salary raise. Some junior job positions do not entail any promotion, while some others lead to promotion to positions (2-3 levels of hierarchy) that companies establish purposefully to retain their staff.

However, two years at a specific job position tend to be a turning point particularly for *recent graduates (d)*, who **use the experience gained in their first job to apply for a position in another company**. **High employee turnover in these positions** results also from the fact that they are **taken by graduates whose qualifications do not fit the positions**, who soon regret having a low-ranking position and/or a position on a subject other than their subject of study.

The **limited understanding of job requirements** as well as the **way of life** of *young individuals (d)* is often **reflected on issues related to how the company operates**, such as the work hours or the number of leave days, leading to **asking for more flexibility that is not in alignment either with the terms of employment or with the level of undertaken responsibility**.

The **lack of previous work experience** of *all groups (a-e)* has an impact on both **on-the-job issues and issues related to work ethic**. The latter may lead to conflicts within the work environment (one participant mentioned personal disputes among *economically inactive women (c)* recruited in their company).

People that are out of the labour market for a long period of time (*b. long-term unemployed, c. economically inactive women*) often need **a period of work adjustment** (to corporate processes, the use of technology, etc.). The same applies to *young individuals (d)* when they obtain their first job and to *people being at entry-level job positions (a)* for the first time. The work adjustment process often slows down by **high stress level** as a result of being new in a job (in positions with tight time schedules and/or strict safety protocols stress management becomes even more challenging).

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
> a. People at entry-level job positions
> b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
> c. Economically inactive women
> d. Young individuals
> e. Low-qualified adults

According to the participants, having the following skills and competencies is key, particularly when it comes to people belonging to the five (5) target groups:
- **Critical Thinking; Problem Solving**: being in a position to resolve problems by oneself; **Adaptability; Communication; Collaboration; Taking Initiative and Responsibility**: being in a position to execute tasks without receiving explicit instructions and taking ownership of own actions; **Project Management**: the fundamentals, focusing on how to execute tasks in a corporate setting (the significance of understanding how a company works and being in a position to implement basic tasks before taking a   job – a need that is currently being met by

companies after recruitment – was mentioned by multiple participants); **Time Management; Stress Management**.

One participant mentioned also the importance of providing mentoring to new recruits for skill development; their company has introduced an in-company mentorship programme for employees belonging to the generation of millennials and younger generations to address a gap in 'traditional skills'.

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Regarding the **skills that employers require at the recruitment phase**, the thirty-one (31) key skills provided were evaluated by the **participants (n=11)** as **follows (total score per skill out of 44; descending sorting)**:

Communication; Collaboration – **42/44**
Critical Thinking – **39/44**
Adaptability – **39/44**
Flexibility; Taking the Initiative – **37/44**
Motivation & Perseverance – **35/44**
Empathy; Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy; Learning through Experience; Interacting through Digital Technologies – **34/44**
Self-regulation; Individual Initiative; Protecting Personal Data and Privacy – **33/44**
Coping with Uncertainty; Ambiguity & Risk, Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content – **32/44**
Sharing through Digital Technologies; Collaborating through Digital Technologies – **31/44**
Wellbeing; Problem Framing – **30/44**
Managing Learning; Supporting Fairness; Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content,
Netiquette (The rules of conduct for respectful and appropriate communication on the Internet) – **29/44**
Growth Mindset – **28/44**
Promoting Nature; Protecting Devices – **26/44**
Spotting Opportunities; Managing Digital Identity – **25/44**
Developing Digital Content – **24/44**
Valuing Sustainability – **23/44**

'Communication' and 'Collaboration' received the highest total score (42 out of 44 each), whereas 'Valuing Sustainability' received the lowest total score (24 out of 44). Some of the skills (n=26) were assigned same points (different score every 2-4 skills).

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Regarding the **skills that an ideal worker should have in employers' opinion**, the thirty-one (31) key skills provided were evaluated by the **participants (n=11)** as follows **(total score per skill out of 44; descending sorting)**:

Communication – **43/44**
Collaboration – **42/44**
Critical Thinking – **40/44**
Self-regulation; Flexibility; Taking the Initiative – **38/44**
Adaptability; Protecting Personal Data and Privacy – **37/44**

Empathy; Individual Initiative; Motivation & Perseverance – **36**

Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy – **35/44**

Growth Mindset; Learning through Experience; Netiquette (The rules of conduct for respectful and appropriate communication on the Internet) – **33/44**

Wellbeing; Protecting Devices – **32/44**

Managing Learning; Supporting Fairness; Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk – **31/44**

Problem Framing; Spotting Opportunities; Interacting through Digital Technologies, Collaborating through Digital Technologies – **30/44**

Valuing Sustainability; Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content; Sharing through Digital Technologies – **29/44**

Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content; Managing Digital Identity – **27/44**

Promoting Nature; Developing Digital Content – **25/44**

'Communication' received the highest total score (43 out of 44; this time, 'Collaboration' was ranked second with 1 point less, that is, with 42 out of 44), whereas 'Promoting Nature' and 'Developing Digital Content' received the lowest total score (25/44 each). Some of the skills (n=28) were assigned same points (different score every 2-4 skills).

Question 7: Would you take into account or even consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Holding **micro-credentials at the recruitment phase** would be considered by employers as:

- **A positive element in general**.
- **A proof of one's willingness to invest time in learning and validating their skills.**
- **A proof of update of one's existing skills** (e.g., digital skills, which are being upgraded from the Covid-19 pandemic onwards).

However, **the skills described in micro-credentials will need to be tested and evaluated in the workplace for their 'validity' to be verified**. If they are not 'verified', they cannot be considered either for recent recruits or for future recruitments.

Additionally, it is important for **the very concept of micro-credentials to be effectively promoted**, so that the companies become aware of how an employee can be granted micro-certifications and what skills can be validated through this kind of certification.

Finally, there is a need for a **local Certification Authority to accredit and reflect micro-credentials on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**.

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

Skill mismatch is a labour market reality with which companies have to cope, particularly during the recruitment process for entry-level job positions due to the professional profile of the people applying for such jobs; thus, companies tend to prioritise a good personality over the skills required and try to develop those skills through on-the-job training. For example, in seasonal employment (e.g., in the field of accommodation) that entails high employee turnover due to the nature of the job, applicants' skills often do not match the typical requirements of job positions, which is overcome through training.

In Cyprus, technical and vocational education is underappreciated and less preferred by young individuals, which constitutes **a structural problem of the educational system** and creates **a large gap in technical skills in the labour market**.

Academic education has been also proven problematic regarding matching students' skills with the skills required by the labour market. In addition to this, **recent graduates are often not aware of the different employment options provided by their degrees**, which they could exploit to find job positions relevant to their studies (e.g., a mechanical engineer could also work – after relevant training – as an engineer). This group should be seen as a distinct group that has to get trained on how to adapting to the real labour market needs.

Education is key to staying informed about the need for new skills and acquiring those skills. The absence of a lifelong learning culture and the fact that changes in education are always time-consuming lead to perpetuation of skill mismatch.

Even if mismatches in skills are overcome, employers are also faced with the challenge of **expectations' mismatch, which is due to a generational gap**: younger generations seek rapid career progression and high flexibility (in opposition to slow career progression and stability sought by older generations), which cannot be fully satisfied despite the proven efforts of companies (partially or exclusively remote work, flexible work arrangements, etc.).

Skill mismatch relates also to the **need for an update of existing skills** (e.g., digital skills due to the continuous technological advancements).

Question 9: Would you like to add anything else to the discussion?	
No answers were provided to this question.	

Table 5: Participants' Answers (Focus Group A)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

FOCUS GROUP A

Participants in the focus group:
A representative group of eleven (11) people (9 women, 2 men) highly experienced in recruitment, employee selection, and talent development (1 Board member, 7 Department Managers, and 3 HR staff members; experience in the specific positions: 1-5 years (n=2), 6-10 years (n=3), 11-15 years (n=4), more than 15 years (n=2)) constitute the sample of the population of the study in the first focus group that took place in Cyprus. The participating companies (8 medium, 3 large) are economically active in diverse industries (manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, financial and insurance, fiduciary and corporate administration, scientific, food, and other service activities, education, accommodation, etc.; few of them in more than one industry), which ensured balanced representation of all opinions on the basis of the specific characteristics of each sector and their different level of interaction with the employee categories discussed in the focus group.

Experience with the target groups of the study:
Irrespective of field of economic activity, all the participating companies recruit people at entry level job positions – a group that, up to some extent, include all the other groups – as well as young individuals. This is not the case with low-qualified adults that take job positions requiring more technical skills (e.g., in manufacturing) and economically inactive women, who tend to be recruited

by companies with flexible work systems in place (e.g., in service activities). Long-term unemployed (under which economically inactive women sometimes fall) does not constitute a group to be reckoned with, due to their reluctance to apply for job positions and their comparatively small number. Young individuals usually take jobs that require academic qualifications (e.g., in financial and insurance, and scientific activities); in this group, recent graduates have an important role to play, since they are often selected by companies to get trained on their specific requirements. In companies which employ low-skilled adults and economically inactive women in their production departments, young individuals and recent graduates are often recruited in scientific positions.

Main challenges regarding the target groups of the study:

- *At the recruitment phase*

First and foremost, employers cannot easily find people interested in applying for entry-level job positions and particularly for positions that require technical skills. As a result, to the extent possible, they are eager to invest in training people who do not meet their requirements but have some basic skills and positive character traits. Often, they receive CVs lacking diplomas that are required for specific positions (e.g., secretarial diploma for a relevant position), which they are obliged to reject, whereas low ICT and English language skills may also be reasons for rejection. Members of those groups either lack previous work experience or are out of the labour market for long, which results in showing signs of unprofessionalism. Particularly young applicants have a false understanding of how the labour market works due to the existing university-labour market gap (the younger the applicants the less their understanding); this is also reflected on how they perceive the requirements and potential of the job positions for which they apply, which leads to unreasonable demands from their side from the very beginning. Shifting work, which is the system followed in some industries mainly recruiting low-qualified adults, is usually a discouraging factor for applicants, apart from women who often opt for jobs with flexible work hours but avoid night shifts.

- *At work*

Young individuals, belonging to a generation that seek change, is often obliged to apply for job positions not matching their degrees, and follow a different way of life, very soon have higher or different expectations than those ensured by the job positions they acquire; this is reflected on promotion, salary increase, and work flexibility demands, high turnover if those demands are not satisfied, and making use of their first job positions to apply for new jobs. The limited professional experience or lack of professional experience of the target groups is reflected on lack in work ethic too. The need for an adjustment period, which is common among all groups, is often accompanied by a need for stress management due to an evident difficulty of many group members in adapting to new situations.

Key skills for the target groups of the study:
For the different challenges to be addressed, the target groups need to develop a skill set that will include critical thinking and problem-solving skills to be in a position to handle workplace issues by themselves, adaptability to new situations and stress management to cope with change, communication and collaboration that will ensure a more effective working life, as well as initiative

and responsibility taking that entail implementing tasks without receiving explicit instructions and taking ownership of own actions. Project management fundamentals focusing on how to execute tasks in a corporate setting should be also learnt, supported by the development of time-management skills.

Evaluation results for the 31 key skills provided:

GROUP A:
Evaluation of 31 Key Skills - Recruitment Phase
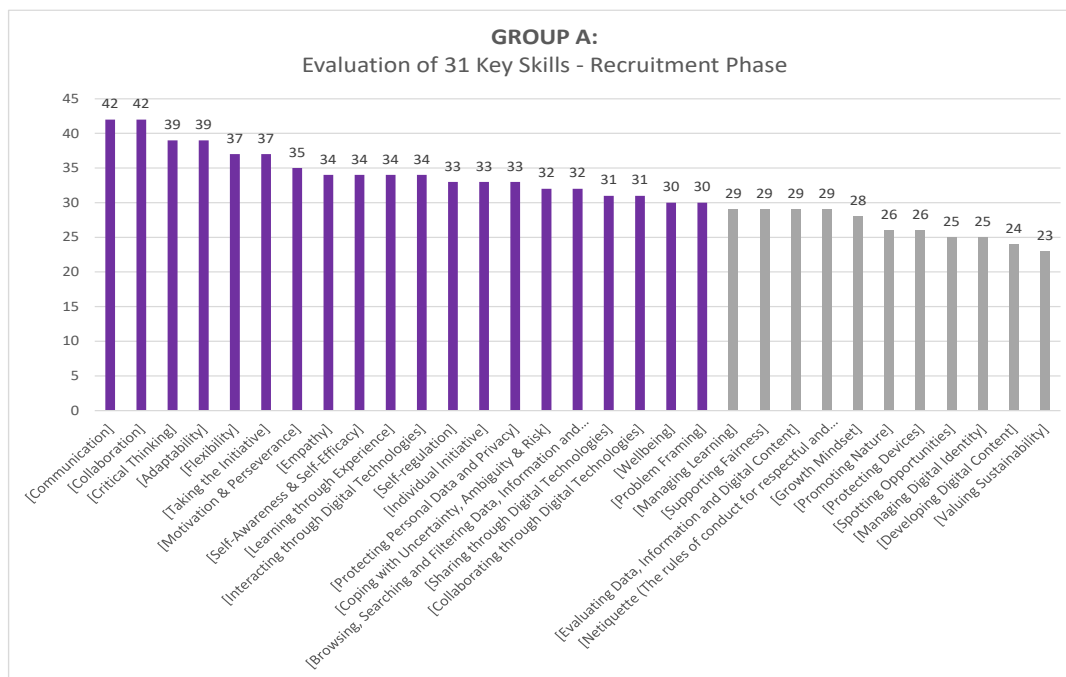
(Respondents: 11; Scale: 1 – lowest grade to 4 – highest grade)

According to the participating employer representatives, 'Communication' and 'Collaboration' are the most important skills to have at the recruitment phase (total score: 42 out of 44 each), followed by 'Critical Thinking' and 'Adaptability' (total score: 39 out of 44 each). It is worth mentioning that all four skills had been mentioned by the participants before they were provided with the list of key skills for evaluation. 'Taking the Initiative', which was also among the skills mentioned by the participants in the discussion that preceded, received a very high score too (37 out of 44 in total). The lowest total score obtained was 23 out of 44 for 'Valuing Sustainability'. 'Communication' and 'Collaboration' were evaluated with 4 points (= 'absolutely essential' skill; the highest scale grade) by 9 out of the 11 participants, while 'Wellbeing', 'Valuing Sustainability', 'Promoting Nature', and 'Managing Digital Identity' did not receive full marks by any of the participants. *The 20 most highly ranked skills (some having received same number of points) are indicated in purple in the graph.*

GROUP A:
Evaluation of 31 Key Skills - Ideal Worker
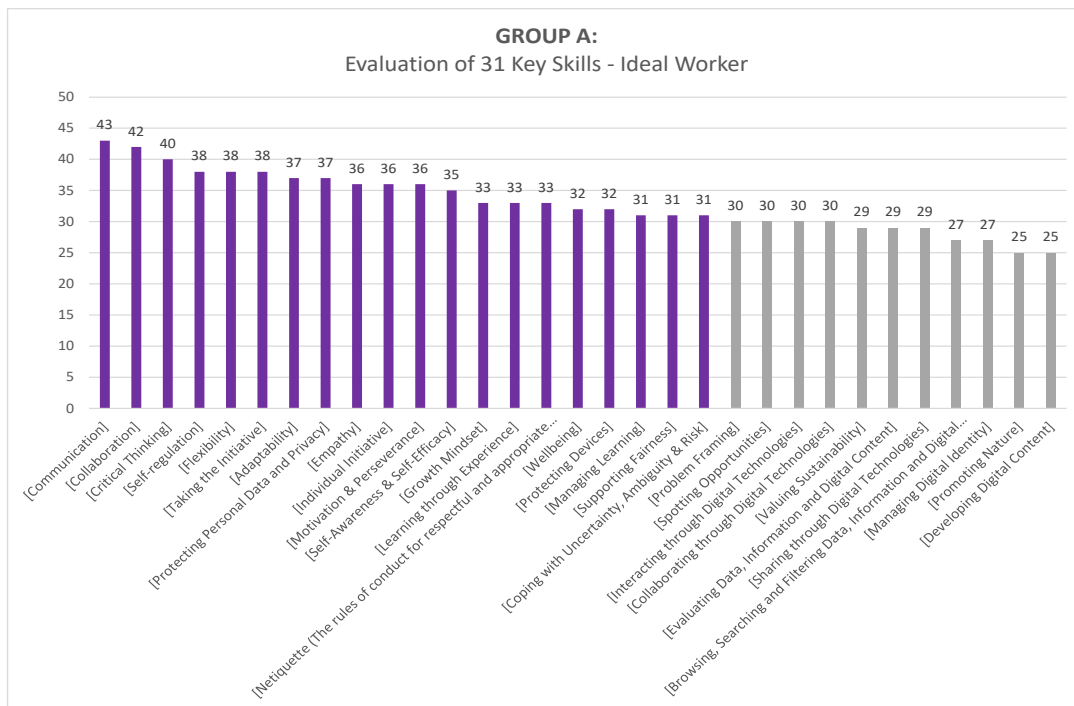
(Respondents: 11; Scale: 1 - lowest grade to 4 – highest grade)

When the participants were asked to evaluate the same skills regarding an ideal worker, 'Communication' and 'Collaboration' ranked first again (total score: 43 and 42 out of 44 respectively), while a 'new' skill, 'Self-regulation' as well as 'Flexibility' (appearing also in the first places of the previous ranking, closely related to 'Adaptability') took the third and fourth place respectively, with 38 out of 44 points in total each. The lowest ranked skills were 'Promoting Nature' and 'Developing Digital Identity' that obtained 25 out of 44 points in total each. 'Communication' received the majority of 4 points (by 10 out of the 11 participants), while skills related to the use of technology ('Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data', 'Information and Digital Content', 'Evaluating Data', 'Information and Digital Content', 'Managing Digital Identity', and 'Developing Digital Content') received full marks by none of the participants. As per the evaluation results, it should be noted that the key skills for an ideal worker do not differentiate significantly from those required when recruiting people belonging to the target groups. *The 20 most highly ranked skills (some having received same number of points) are indicated in purple in the graph.*

The challenge of skill mismatch and the potential of micro-credentials:

Skill mismatch is a labour market reality, particularly when it comes to entry-level job positions. Both the disconnection of academic education with the needs of the labour market and the sidelining of technical and vocational education have contributed to skill gaps, which are currently being addressed up to some extent through in-company trainings. The establishment of a lifelong learning culture will allow for staying informed about the need for new skills and acquiring those skills.

Micro-credentials can serve as a proof of one's willingness to learn and acquire skills they lack, and as a useful tool for employers, given that the validity of the specific skills can be verified within the workplace.

Focus Group B

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	Department Manager	>15 yrs
Participant 2	Company 2	Company Owner	>15 yrs
Participant 3	Company 3	HR Staff	1-5 yrs
Participant 4	Company 4	Department Manager	>15 yrs
Participant 5	Company 5	Company Owner	>15 yrs
Participant 6	Company 6	General Manager	>15 yrs
Participant 7	Company 7	Managing Director	11-15 yrs
Participant 8	Company 8	Department Manager	1-5 yrs
Participant 9	Company 9	HR Staff	>15 yrs

Table 6: Participants' Profile (Focus Group B)

Background

Position in the Company* *(No of Participants per Position)* **2 participants are both Company Owners and Managing Directors: they are recorded as Company Owners; 1 participant is both a Managing Director and a Board Member: he is recorded as a Managing Director.*	Company Owner	2
	Managing Director	1
	Member of Board of Directors	0
	General Manager	1
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	3
	HR Staff	2
	Other *(please specify in list)*: N/A	0
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	9
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	0
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	0

	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	BA in Sociology, MA in HRM & Organisational Behaviour, MBA, BSc in Banking and Finance, MSc in HRM, BSc in Business and Management Studies, BA in Hospital Management, MA in Health Unit Management, BSc in Economics, MSc in Informatics, BA in Business and HRM.	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	0
	35-44 years old	6
	45-54 years old	3
	55-64 years old	0
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	2
	6-10 years	0
	11-15 years	2
	>15 years	5
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	0
	6-10 years	0
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	8

Table 7: Participants' Background (Focus Group B)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity* *(No of Companies per Industry)* **Some participants selected more than 1 option. All choices are recorded to demonstrate the diversity in economic activity represented in the participants' sample.*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	1
	Manufacturing	1
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	1
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0
	Construction	1
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	2
	Transportation and Storage	1
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	1
	Information and Communication	1
	Financial and Insurance Activities	1
	Real Estate Activities	1

	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	0
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	1
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	2
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other (Please specify in list): Research and Innovation	2
Size (No of Companies per Size)	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	2
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	1
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	3
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	3

Table 8: Companies (Focus Group B)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

An effort was made to invite professionals experienced in recruitment, employee selection, and talent development from a diverse group of companies, representing several areas of economic activity.

It should be noted that some companies are involved in more than one sector of economic activity and this diversification reflects on the demographics (all industries declared were recorded in section 1.2).

Most participants are holders of both a Bachelor and a Master's Degree; few of them declared both degrees. The highest degree attained is recorded.

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 5 (least employed)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

c. Economically inactive women
d. Young individuals
e. Low-qualified adults

a. People at entry-level job positions

Employed by all the participating companies. In many cases, people belonging to all the other groups could be also classified into this group.

b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

Less employed by the participating companies, since in Cyprus this group is relatively small, consisting of people who do not actively seek a job; more often, the employers recruit people belonging to this group within the framework of public schemes subsidised by the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance of Cyprus and by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA – ANAD; training programmes for long-term unemployed). Some participants made use of such programmes in the past. According to one participant, long-term unemployed, as is the case with economically inactive women, are more often being sought for employment on employers' initiative. None of the participants mentioned any experience with young individuals being out of the labour market for long.

c. Economically inactive women

Employed by participating companies whose activities' nature allow for more flexible work hours (e.g., food service activities, retail trade). This group often falls under the long-term unemployed group and a similar situation regarding their recruitment applies.

d. Young individuals

Employed often by the participating companies, particularly by those economically active in fields that require an academic background (e.g., in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, research, retail trade, real estate, and construction (in positions requiring academic qualifications)). In fields such as IT and research, specialisation is usually required. Sometimes, entry-level job positions in those companies are taken by recent graduates. Young individuals are also recruited in positions that do not always require a degree (e.g., in food service activities).

e. Low-qualified adults

Employed by companies whose field of economic activity does not require an academic qualification for all job positions but in which technical and/or on-the-job skills are often mandatory (e.g., construction, electricity supply, food service activities).

For the majority of the participating companies, recruitment focuses on people at entry-level job positions and young individuals, while low-qualified adults are employed in industries in which the required technical/on-the-job skills are often acquired through in-company training. In some companies with a broad spectrum of activities, almost all target groups are recruited, while for companies involved in scientific activities young individuals and people at entry-level job positions predominate.

In terms of which target group is employed the most, the five (5) groups could be ranked as follows:

1. **People at entry-level job positions**
2. **Young individuals**
3. **Low-qualified adults**
4. **Economically inactive women**
5. **Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)**

Recruiting people from each one of the five (5) groups is related to different challenges, which should be addressed strategically by providing incentives to these people to improve their skills, enter the labour market, and retain their jobs.

Young individuals (d) **lack basic skills** and are often **unprepared for the labour market**, which is due to the existing gap between what they are being taught at the university and what the labour market needs. In many cases, it is apparent that they do **not even understand how the corporate world functions**. Also, they **lack professionalism** which is proven by the fact that some of them do not even appear in planned interviews.

During the recruitment process, many of them are **not aware of how to bring out their positive traits**, which can be explained, to some extent, by their **low face-to-face communication skills and social competence** affected by the constant use of technology, their high exposure to social media, and frequent online communication (they tend to feel more confident in front of their computer screen). The abrupt transition from high school to university and from university to the labour market due to the pandemic contributed also to this shortage.

In addition to this, they very often provide **inappropriate CVs** (not well-structured, too long, identical, or not pointing out important aspects, such as their extracurricular and social attainments); promoting oneself in the labour market through a good CV and by being a competent interviewee should be a skill acquired at the university. Women in general tend to be more **reserved in terms of promoting themselves in interviews** in comparison to men who tend to overstate their qualifications; this applies to both *young women (d)* and *economically inactive women (c)* seeking a job.

In opposition to the situation with youth, *low-qualified adults (e)* tend to provide extremely short CVs or even apply for job positions by calling the company to give their details. Regarding interviews, according to one participant, 50% of those cases do not show up in planned meetings without notifying or providing a reason.

Furthermore, *youth (d)* appear to be **indecisive regarding their professional orientation (secondary and tertiary education gaps)** and **unaware of the job positions for which they apply**, which is often evident in their excessive demands. According to one participant, during the recruitment process young individuals tend to elaborate on their own demands rather than listen to the demands of the company.

Another challenge for companies employing *youth (d)* is **making the work environment 'attractive'** to them, so that they consciously select them to apply for a job. This can be achieved by analysing the feedback they receive during the recruitment process and trying to adjust the company's requirements to the changes identified in the profile of applicants.

Employers are also faced with **difficulty in finding people that comply with the evaluation criteria they set out for job positions** that are aimed at *low-qualified adults (e)*, which often applies also to *entry-level*

job positions (a). Companies try to ensure compliance at least with the basic requirements regarding these positions and, at the same time, to come to 'as little as possible of a compromise'. In some cases, they may also find it difficult to identify people specialised in the field of activity of the company (one participant, for example, referred to the lack of incentives to study nursing).

As for *long-term unemployed (b)*, **a gap in digital skills and difficulty in adjusting with current technology trends** are identified. Also, these people sometimes **need to catch up with updates in their field of expertise**.

One participant referred also to the mismatch between *entry-level job positions (a)* and salary expectations of applicants in the case of the most rapidly developing city of Cyprus (Limassol).

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- c. Economically inactive women
- d. Young individuals
- e. Low-qualified adults

When working with *all the target groups (a-e)*, employers are often encountered with a **lack in soft skills**, which is reflected on communication, teamwork, and flexibility issues as well as on the difficulty that these employees face regarding coping with problems that may occur at work.

In addition, some of these people are often **not willing to adjust to new situations and deal with change**, and tend to show **resistance to learn, acquire new skills, and develop professionally** (they prefer to be limited to the duties of their position). Such behaviours may also be identified among *young individuals (d)*, who tend to quit their jobs very easily.

Multicultural work environments are common nowadays, which impose a **need for showing empathy towards different cultures and within different contexts** (e.g., when working with people of different religions, collaborating in different time zones, etc.) **as well as for intercultural skills**.

The **need for an update of the digital skills** of *long-term unemployed (b)* is also a challenge with which employers are faced. This becomes more complicated when these employees are required to report on their work to people younger and more digitally skilled than them.

For *low-qualified adults (e)* on the other hand, who often come from different countries (e.g., in food service activities) and possess diverse skill sets, it is important to ensure **a common set of basic digital skills** as well as **language skills that are necessary for them in the country in which the work** (in Cyprus, for example, they should be capable of speaking English, Greek, and, in some cases, even Russian to some extent); this will help have a homogenous workforce regarding basic skills.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- c. Economically inactive women
- d. Young individuals
- e. Low-qualified adults

In employer representatives' opinion, the most important skills and competencies for the members of the five (5) target groups are the following:

- **Communication; Collaboration; Adaptability; Flexibility; Problem-solving Skills; Self-awareness; Empathy; Social Skills; Intercultural Skills; Digital Skills.**

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Regarding the **skills that the employers require at the recruitment phase**, the thirty-one (31) key skills provided were evaluated by the **participants (n=8; 1 participant did not evaluate the skills)** as follows **(total score per skill out of 32; descending sorting)**:

Communication – **32/32**
Empathy – **29/32**
Flexibility; Collaboration; Critical Thinking; Adaptability – **27/32**
Growth Mindset; Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy; Motivation & Perseverance – **25/32**
Self-regulation; Learning through Experience; Protecting Personal Data and Privacy – **23/32**
Wellbeing; Individual Initiative; Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk – **22/32**
Interacting through Digital Technologies – **21/32**
Valuing Sustainability; Supporting Fairness, Spotting Opportunities; Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content; Collaborating through Digital Technologies, Netiquette (The rules of conduct for respectful and appropriate communication on the Internet) – **20/32**
Managing Learning; Taking the Initiative – **19/32**
Problem Framing; Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content – **18/32**
Promoting Nature; Protecting Devices – **17/32**
Sharing through Digital Technologies; Managing Digital Identity – **16//32**
Developing Digital Content – **14//32**

'Communication' received the highest total score equalling to full marks (32 out of 32, that is, it was assigned 4 points by all the respondents), whereas 'Developing Digital Content' received the lowest total score (14 out of 32). Some of the skills (n=27) were assigned same points (different score every 2-6 skills).

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Regarding the **skills that an ideal worker should have in employers' opinion**, the thirty-one (31) key skills provided were evaluated by the **participants (n=8; 1 participant did not evaluate the skills)** as follows **(total score per skill out of 32; descending sorting)**:

Communication – **31/32**
Collaboration – **30/32**
Empathy; Adaptability – **29/32**
Critical Thinking; Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy – **28/32**
Flexibility; Growth Mindset – **27/32**
Self-regulation; Taking the Initiative – **26/32**
Wellbeing; Collaborating through Digital Technologies; Protecting Personal Data and Privacy – **25/32**
Supporting Fairness; Individual Initiative; Motivation & Perseverance; Learning through Experience; Interacting through Digital Technologies – **24/32**
Spotting Opportunities – **22/32**

Valuing Sustainability; Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk – **21/32**

Managing Learning; Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content; Sharing through Digital Technologies; Netiquette (The rules of conduct for respectful and appropriate communication on the Internet); Managing Digital Identity; Protecting Devices – **20/32**

Promoting Nature; Problem Framing, Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data; Information and Digital Content – **19/32**

Developing Digital Content – **15/32**

'Communication' was evaluated again with the highest total score (31 out of 32; this time not receiving full marks); 'Developing Digital Content' received again the lowest total score (15 out of 32; this time with 1 more point than in the previous evaluation). Some of the skills (n=27) were assigned same points (different score every 2-6 skills).

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Holding micro-credentials would be seen **in a positive way at first** by employer representatives; however, **their 'validity' has to be checked** to be considered in the long run.

The most important aspect for considering this form of certification is its **credibility**: who provides the certification, what is the acquisition process, whether the holders of the certification do have the described skills and at what level, and whether they do comply with the requirements for receiving the certification. Within that context, a **transparent acquisition process and thorough quality assurance** have to be ensured.

Additionally, the micro-credentials have to be **in alignment with skill sets that are required by companies**, so that they become a useful tool for them. Soft skills should be prioritised over on-the-job skills, in view of the fact that companies are usually more willing to provide in-company training on the latter. Employers would be also very much benefited from **courses leading to micro-credentials for key soft skills strategically designed and provided to recent graduates** to prepare them for the labour market.

According to one participant, if micro-credentials become well established and depending on the skills that they will validate, they can even be seen by employers as more important than traditional degrees. For example, in the IT field, **some certifications that are required for specific job positions or projects** (e.g., on Amazon Web Services) are not acquired at the university and **could be obtained in the form of micro-credentials**.

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

Taking skill mismatch as a given, a significant challenge for companies is to **define the skill gaps and decide whether it is in their interest to invest in employees who do not match their requirements** (that is, if the benefits of the training will exceed the training cost for the company).

In case of underqualified employees, **skill evaluation and skill development** should take place, whereas overqualification could involve **adjusting the job position to fit the profile of the applicants**. This can be achieved by **establishing a mechanism of redesigning different roles within companies through monitoring and analysing skill mismatch in the labour market.**

Defining skill gaps is also very important in order to **assist already recruited employees acquire skills they lack**.

Question 9: Would you like to add anything else to the discussion?

The **connection between education and the labour market is mandatory** for the different challenges regarding recruitment and retention of the target groups at work to be addressed.

Establishing a lifelong learning culture is key; to start with, it is important to admit that everyone lacks important-to-acquire skills (particularly soft skills) and be willing to learn.

Individuals' **future employability is affected at all levels of education**, which should be considered when attempting to address skill gaps. The 'top-down' approach to skill development starting from higher education that is currently being followed is not the most effective one.

In addition, there is a **need for companies to adopt a systematic approach to upskilling through strategic planning supported by the provision of incentives**; this will enhance both learning and rapid adjustment to the work environment.

Regarding micro-credentials, a crucial issue to address in Cyprus is the **absence of a national qualifications' authority which would validate this new certification system.**

Table 9: Participants' Answers (Focus Group B)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

FOCUS GROUP B

Participants in the focus group:
In the second focus group that took place in Cyprus, the discussion was conducted among nine (9) employer representatives (5 women, 4 men) with a vast experience in recruiting people (2 company owners, 1 Managing Director, 1 General Manager, 3 Department Managers, 1 HR staff member; experience in the specific positions: 1-5 years (n=2), 11-15 years (n=1), more than 15 years (n=6)). A high degree of diversification regarding the industry of economic activity (construction, real estate, electricity supply, wholesale and retail trade, financial and insurance, food and other service, and human health activities, information and technology, research and innovation, etc.; few of them in more than one industry) and the size of the participating companies (all company sizes: 2 micro, 1 small, 3 medium, 3 large) was achieved, which ensured a comprehensive discussion and results covering both the common areas and the differentiation points among the companies on the subject of the study.

Experience with the target groups of the study:
The employee categories of the study that are mostly recruited by the participating companies are people at entry-level job positions and young individuals, while low-qualified adults are employed by the companies that are economically active in industries in which technical skills are required, which the recruits usually acquire through in-company training. In some companies with a broad spectrum of activities (e.g., in construction), almost all target groups are recruited, while in companies involved in scientific activities (e.g., in information and technology, research, and human health activities) young individuals including recent graduates, and people at entry-level job positions predominate, who are usually required to have some kind of specialisation. Economically inactive women are usually recruited by companies with flexible work hours (e.g., in food service

activities), whereas long-term unemployed are less recruited due to both their lack of interest in getting employed and their comparatively small number.

Main challenges regarding the target groups of the study:

- *At the recruitment phase*

Lack of basic skills and unpreparedness for the labour market are two of the most common challenging factors in recruiting people belonging to the target groups. Applicants often lack professionalism (e.g., they do not show up in planned interviews), provide inappropriate CVs, and appear to have low social skills, as a consequence of the excessive use of technology and the social media, and the social restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic the previous years. Young applicants are indecisive regarding their professional orientation as well as unaware of the job positions for which they apply and how the corporate world functions, which often lead to being inconsistent with their aspirations or having excessive demands. People that are out of the labour market for long have also low digital skills and they often need to catch up with developments in their field of expertise. For many entry-level openings – particularly for those requiring technical skills – employers do not even find people to interview.

- *At work*

A general lack in soft skills which make work with the target groups harder is identified, leading to communication and collaboration issues. Often, members of these groups including young individuals are also faced with difficulty in adjusting to the new work environment and new situations, and they are reluctant to learn and develop. At the same time, some of them – particularly long-term unemployed and low-qualified adults – lack basic ICT and language skills, which are often necessary for entry-level job positions, making work with more skilled colleagues and clients difficult. Due to multiculturalism that characterises today's work environments (staff and colleagues with different cultural backgrounds, corporate activities abroad, etc.), an ever-growing necessity for intercultural skills and showing empathy are also pointed out.

Key skills for the target groups of the study:

Some skills and competencies that employers deem essential for the target groups are: communication and collaboration as the cornerstone of a successful working life, adaptability and flexibility covering both rapid adjustment to new situations and willingness to undertake new tasks and duties, problem-solving skills to overcome issues at work without receiving step-by-step guidance, self-awareness to be in a position to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses, and empathy to understand also others' position and feelings, irrespective of who they are. Additionally, it is important for the target groups to improve their social skills and level of professionalism, upgrade their digital skills when necessary, and develop intercultural skills to be in a position to 'navigate' today's multicultural work environments and avoid misunderstandings.

Evaluation results for the 31 key skills provided:
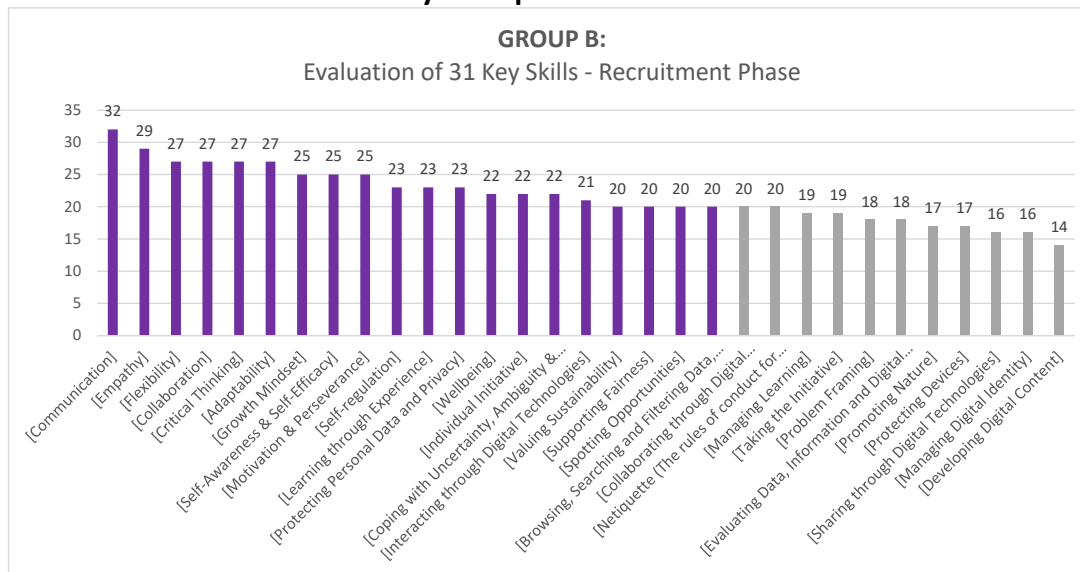
GROUP B:
Evaluation of 31 Key Skills - Recruitment Phase

(Respondents: 8 – 1 did not evaluate the skills; Scale: 1 – lowest grade to 4 – highest grade)

According to the participants, 'Communication' is the most essential skill to have at the recruitment phase (total score: 32 out of 32; evaluated with full marks by all the participants), which was also pointed out by Focus Group A (on both dimensions: recruitment phase, employment phase). 'Empathy', which follows with 29 out of 32 points in total, is one of the key skills that employer representatives had introduced in the discussion before evaluating the skills, which was assigned more points on the same dimension in Focus Group B than in Focus Group A (it that case, it was ranked fifth). 'Flexibility', which received 27 out of 32 points in total and took the third place along with 'Collaboration' (surprisingly ranked lower by this focus group, on the specific dimension), 'Critical Thinking', and 'Adaptability' (highly ranked again) were all mentioned by the participants before their evaluation. The lowest score received was 14 out of 32 in total for 'Developing Digital Content'. Interestingly, 'Self-regulation', 'Spotting Opportunities', and 'Problem Framing' were not evaluated with full marks by any of the participants, which could be explained by the fact that this evaluation applies to the recruitment phase. 4 points were not assigned either to 'Valuing Sustainability, 'Promoting Nature', 'Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content', 'Managing Digital Identity', 'Developing Digital Content', and 'Protecting Devices'. *The 20 most highly ranked skills (some having received same number of points) are indicated in purple in the graph.*

GROUP B:
Evaluation of 31 Key Skills - Ideal Worker
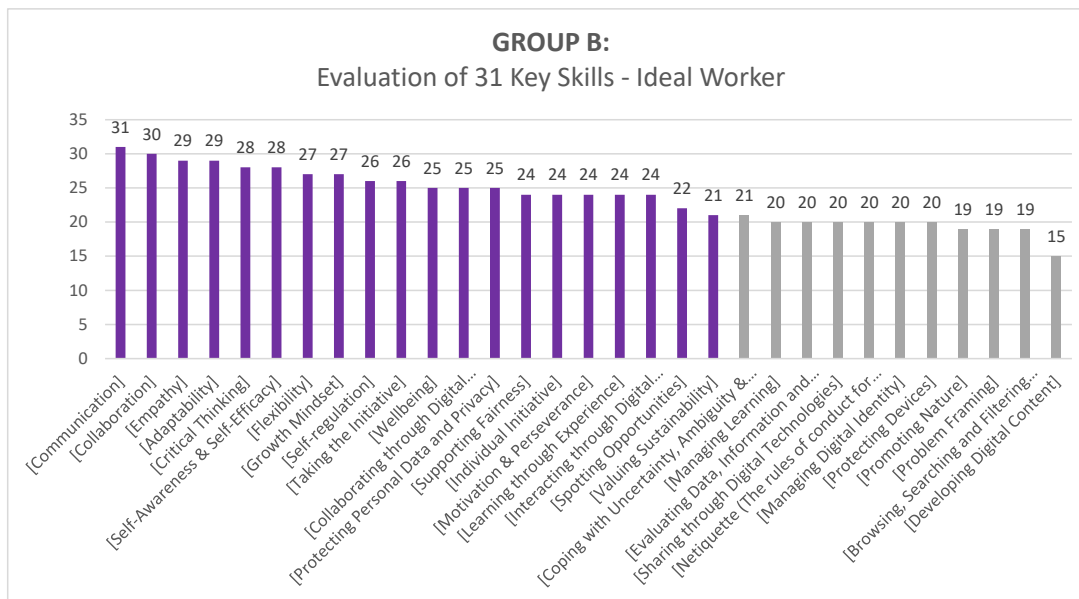
(Respondents: 8 – 1 did not evaluate the skills; Scale: 1 – lowest grade to 4 – highest grade)

When asked to evaluate the same skills regarding an ideal worker, the employer representatives ranked at the top 'Communication' (which was also the case with Focus Group A, on both dimensions) and this time also 'Collaboration' (receiving 31 and 30 out of 32 points in total respectively). The rest of the first places were taken by 'Empathy' and 'Adaptability', which received 29 out of 32 points in total each (both ranked higher by Focus Group B than by Focus Group A). The lowest ranked skill was 'Developing Digital Content' with 15 out of 32 points in total. 'Communication' received the majority of 4 points (by 7 out of the 8 participants), while skills related to the environment and technology ('Valuing Sustainability', 'Promoting Nature', 'Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data', 'Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content', 'Sharing through Digital Technologies', and 'Developing Digital Content') did not receive full marks by any of the participants. It is worth mentioning that neither 'Managing Learning' was considered an essential skill for ideal workers by the participants (none of them assigned 4 points to that skill).

Many of the skills ranked highly by the participants regarding the recruitment phase received high scores in terms of the skills for ideal workers too. *The 20 most highly ranked skills (some having received same number of points) are indicated in purple in the graph.*

The challenge of skill mismatch and the potential of micro-credentials:

A significant challenge for companies is to define the skill gaps in the labour market and decide whether it is in their interest to invest in employees who do not match their requirements. This can be achieved by establishing a mechanism of monitoring and analysing skill mismatch in the labour market, and redesigning some job positions to comply with the skill sets of applicants.

Micro-credentials can become a means of validation of skills that many employees lack today, given that their acquisition process will be transparent and supported by thorough quality assurance. Additionally, the micro-credentials that an applicant may have or an employee may seek to acquire will have to be in alignment with the skill sets required by the companies, prioritising soft skills over

more technical and on-the-job skills, without being limited only to them (highly technical skills could be also validated through micro-credentials).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus Group A and B

The Cypriot economy is experiencing a period of continuous growth which has resulted in considerable employee shortages. As a result, businesses are struggling to find employees for low and medium-skill-level jobs. Due to these labour market shortages, most businesses are willing to hire staff from all employee categories discussed in the focus groups, and to provide suitable training. People at entry-level job positions are being hired by all businesses; young individuals seem to prevail over low-qualified adults but this may vary based on the businesses' field of economic activity; long-term unemployed and economically inactive women are less hired, as a result of how actively these people seek a job.

Skill gaps and mismatches have been identified, particularly with regard to the educational and lifelong learning culture (willingness to improve existing skills or learn new ones), and micro-credentials could be one step in helping alleviate the problem.

To the degree possible, businesses also make efforts to align their needs with the skill sets and priorities of today's employees, for example by redesigning job descriptions where possible and providing incentives, as well as to accommodate employee work-life balance needs, for example by adjusting one's working hours.

Depending on the nature of the job, the following general challenges exist about recruitment:
- The pool of unemployed actively seeking employment is limited.
- People from all groups are unwilling to work on a shift system, particularly night shifts.
- Some entry-level job positions have prerequisites which prohibit people from applying or makes their recruitment more difficult (e.g., a secretarial job may require a relevant diploma, IT jobs may require relevant degrees, a service-related job may require good command of a second language or basic computer skills).
- There is a lack of work ethic, particularly among young people (e.g., never showing up for a planned interview, quitting their job without giving notice).
- Young individuals are frequently overly ambitious and have expectations for rapid career advancement, which are not always realistic or feasible.
- Young individuals follow a different way of life, which frequently leads to expectations for special work arrangements (e.g., flexible work hours, partially or exclusively remote work) that may not be applicable.
- Young individuals and particularly recent graduates are usually unprepared for the labour marker (lacking clear understanding of how the corporate world functions, what the requirements of their job position are, and what the different employment options provided by their degrees are), due to the existing university-labour market gap.

- Young individuals are many times indecisive with regard to their professional orientation or they follow a different professional career than that corresponding to their educational background due to limited relevant openings or due to their low competence level, which result in being in positions that do not match their subject of study or in low-ranking positions, and in losing their interest quickly.
- There is a lack of social skills, particularly among young people, which is reflected on their difficulty in communicating effectively face to face (e.g., they feel more confident in online interviews than in interviews with physical presence), due to the excessive use of technology and the social media, and the consequences of the social restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Long-term unemployed usually have low digital skills due to the continuous technological advancements and their long absence from the labour market, and they are sometimes faced with gaps in their field of expertise due to relevant developments.
- (Economically inactive) women often seek flexible work environments (e.g., jobs with flexible work hours) due to family obligations.
- A Managing Authority or a Certification Body to accredit micro-credentials based on high levels of quality assurance that can serve as a proof of one's willingness to learn and acquire skills they lack (in alignment with the labour market needs, emphasising soft skills), and as a means of validation of those skills is currently absent.

When working with the people discussed in the focus groups, the challenges revolve around their low soft skills and limited work experience, which are reflected on communication, collaboration, adaptability, and flexibility issues, as well as on their difficulty in completing properly corporate tasks and taking ownership of actions, often accompanied by prolonged high stress level. Also, in many cases, these people appear reluctant to learn, acquire new skills, and develop professionally. The high turnover regarding positions taken particularly by young individuals due to a variety of reasons has to be considered too. To some extent, a need for intercultural skills to adapt to today's multicultural work environments is also identified, which, at the same time, imposes a need for being empathetic towards different people and in different contexts. Additionally, the low basic ICT and language skills of some of these people may make their collaboration with more skilled colleagues and clients difficult.

Employers refrained from describing an 'ideal worker', citing the existing employee shortages. Jokingly, it was mentioned that in the current labour market, 'An ideal worker is anyone who is willing to show up for work'.

Businesses are willing to invest both time and resources to teach work-related skills to new recruits. Skills employees seem to be lacking (and could therefore benefit through micro-credentials) are primarily soft skills: critical thinking, problem-solving skills (resolving problems on one's own), taking initiative (working without being given explicit instructions), adaptability, communication, teamwork, and time and stress-management skills. Self-awareness and empathy are also key. English language skills, basic computer and health and safety skills, and intercultural skills are important to have but are more or less required depending on the position. On the contrary, basic

project management skills (having an understanding of the nature of corporate tasks and executing such tasks properly) should be a common skill irrespective of the position, in employers' opinion. This non-exhaustive list of skills can be enriched with skills from four European Competence Frameworks – LifeComp, GreenComp, EntreComp, and DigComp – that employer representatives (n=19) evaluated at two levels: 1) requested at the recruitment phase and 2) possessed by an ideal worker (for the list of 31 skills provided for evaluation, see figure below).

1. Self-regulation	17. Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy	28. Managing Digital Identity
2. Flexibility	18. Motivation & Perseverance	29. Developing Digital Content
3. Wellbeing	19. Taking the Initiative	30. Protecting Devices
4. Empathy	20. Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk	31. Protecting Personal Data and Privacy
5. Communication	21. Learning Through Experience	
6. Collaboration	22. Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	
7. Growth Mindset	23. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content	
8. Critical Thinking	24. Interacting through Digital Technologies	
9. Managing Learning	25. Sharing through Digital	
10. Valuing Sustainability	26. Collaborating through Digital Technologies	
11. Supporting Fairness	27. Netiquette	
12. Promoting Nature		

The results regarding both aspects are represented in the following two graphs (each graph including overall scores for 31 skills from both focus groups). *The 20 most highly ranked skills (some having received same number of points) are indicated in purple in each graph.*

1) *Skills requested at the recruitment phase*

Overall Scores (GROUP A and B):
Evaluation of 31 Key Skills - Recruitment Phase

Values: 74, 69, 66, 66, 64, 63, 60, 59, 57, 56, 56, 56, 55, 55, 54, 53, 52, 52, 51, 49, 49, 48, 48, 47, 47, 45, 43, 43, 43, 41, 38

Categories: [Communication], [Collaboration], [Critical Thinking], [Adaptability], [Flexibility], [Empathy], [Motivation &...], [Self-Awareness &...], [Learning through...], [Taking the Initiative], [Self-regulation], [Protecting Personal...], [Interacting through...], [Individual Initiative], [Coping with...], [Growth Mindset], [Browsing, Searching...], [Wellbeing], [Collaborating through...], [Supporting Fairness], [Netiquette (The rules...], [Problem Framing], [Managing Learning], [Sharing through...], [Evaluating Data,...], [Spotting Opportunities], [Promoting Nature], [Protecting Devices], [Valuing Sustainability], [Managing Digital...], [Developing Digital...]

(Respondents: 19; Scale: 1 – lowest to 4 – highest; Highest possible score: 76)

2) Skills of an ideal worker

Overall Scores (GROUP A and B):
Evaluation of 31 Key Skills - Ideal Worker
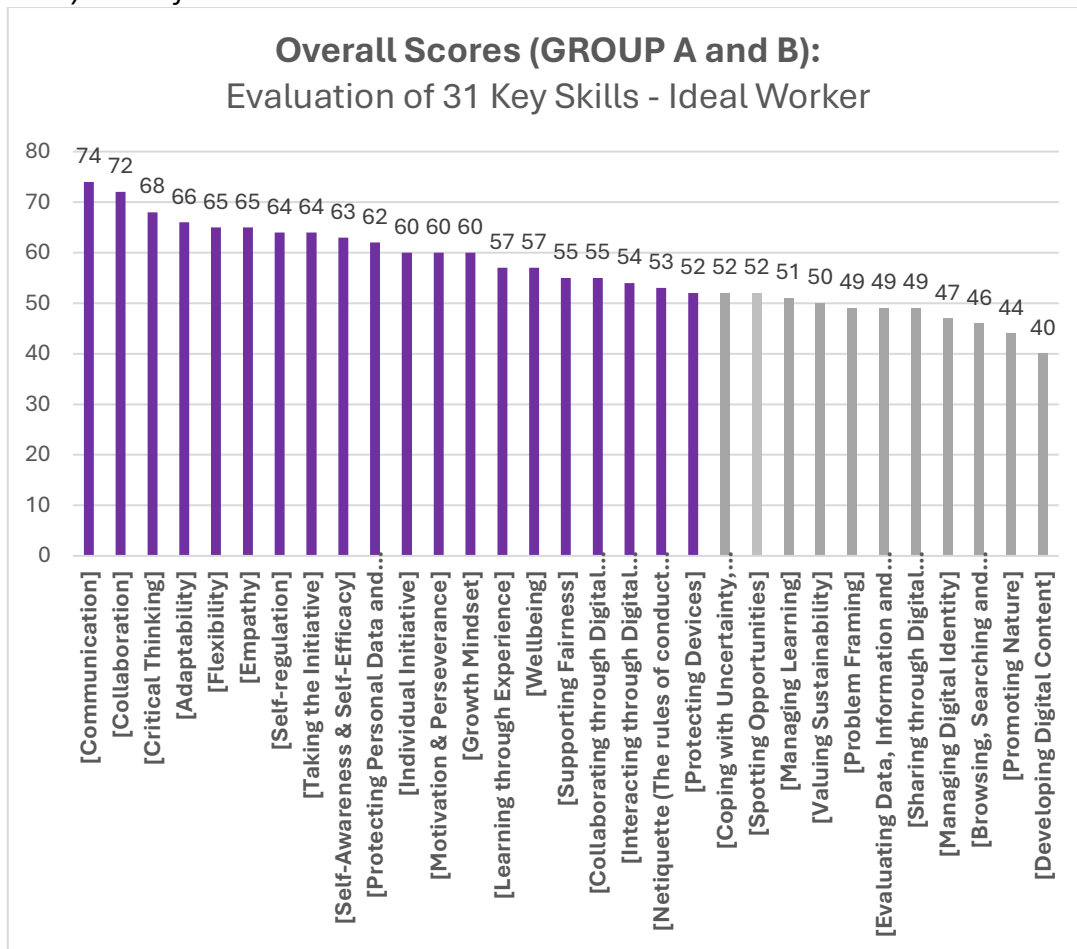
(Respondents: 19; Scale: 1 – lowest to 4 – highest; Highest possible score: 76)

As it is evident from both graphs, which are not differentiated significantly, personal and learning-to-learn skills such as 'Self-regulation', 'Wellbeing', and 'Growth Mindset', as well as entrepreneurial skills such as 'Motivation and Perseverance', 'Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk', and 'Learning through Experience' could be added to the list of key skills for the target groups. Also, some skills related to sustainability – 'Supporting Fairness' and 'Individual Initiative' – appear to be important for the respondents on both dimensions. The skill set could be completed with some basic digital skills, such as 'Protecting Personal Data and Privacy', 'Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content', 'Interacting through Digital Technologies', 'Collaborating through Digital Technologies', 'Netiquette', and 'Protecting Devices'. It is worth mentioning that the first six skills in both evaluations (that employers look for at the recruitment phase and that an ideal worker should have) coincide perfectly, and that the rest of the skills ranked at the top twenty positions are more or less the same, having attained similar total scores.

Below, the *20 most highly ranked skills per level* (both groups; overall scores) are listed. The *skills with same ranking* (different overall scores) <u>and</u> the *skills that are different from one list to the other* (2 skills per list) are indicated *in bold*.

Final Ranking	Recruitment Phase	Ideal Worker
1	**Communication**	**Communication**
2	**Collaboration**	**Collaboration**
3	**Critical Thinking**	**Critical Thinking**
4	**Adaptability**	**Adaptability**
5	**Flexibility**	**Flexibility**
6	**Empathy**	**Empathy**
7	Motivation and Perseverance	Self-regulation
8	Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy	Taking the Initiative
9	Learning through Experience	Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy
10	Taking the Initiative	Protecting Personal Data and Privacy
11	Self-regulation	Individual Initiative
12	Protecting Personal Data and Privacy	Motivation & Perseverance
13	Interacting through Digital Technologies	Growth Mindset
14	Individual Initiative	Learning through Experience
15	Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk	Wellbeing
16	Growth Mindset	Supporting Fairness
17	**Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content**	Collaborating through Digital Technologies
18	Wellbeing	Interacting through Digital Technologies
19	Collaborating through Digital Technologies	**Netiquette (The rules of conduct for respectful and appropriate communication on the Internet)**
20	**Supporting Fairness**	**Protecting Devices**

Soft (e.g., personal, social, learning-to-learn, entrepreneurial mindset) skills should be prioritised over more technical (e.g., digital) skills, as suggested by both focus groups. However, both digital skills and sustainability and green skills (the latter being ranked comparatively lower in general) should be also considered. The development of a comprehensive list of key skills should be the ultimate goal of the skill selection process.

With regard to micro-credentials, a certification would be useful provided that it undergoes proper and thorough quality assurance, so that the holder actually has the credentials described. The absence of a national qualifications' authority in Cyprus complicates the introduction of this new certification system. It was also mentioned that the standardised professional qualification certificates of the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA – ANAD) (https://shorturl.at/vAY0b) are not utilised to the desired extent and that further incentives and recognition of their value is needed.

Within this framework, it is also worth mentioning that unemployment in Cyprus is continuously shrinking (https://www.cystat.gov.cy/el/SubthemeStatistics?id=43); there were 10,959 registered unemployed in June 2024 and 13,723 in June 2022.

A pilot project on Individual Learning Accounts is implemented as a national positive response to the European Recommendation on ILA's. However, a respective national initiative on micro-

credentials is not discussed at the moment. As a result, a private initiative emerged for the certification of learning outcomes of individuals according to ISO 17024:2012 (https://synnous.org.cy/) in which the HRDA (ANAD) and some of the social partners are engaged. As far as the 'MORAL' project is concerned, the aim is to explore the developments regarding micro-credentials in five EU countries including Cyprus (level of integration of this form of certification and connection with national qualification systems), to develop micro-courses and relevant credentials (on key skills for employment at entry-level job positions), and to test this pilot certification system in those countries to come to conclusions and provide recommendations.

In conclusion, key (soft) skill shortages – identified among the employee categories discussed in the focus groups but also among all employees to a degree – should be ideally addressed before these people enter the labour market involving all levels of education or through in-company and external trainings for people already employed. For this to be achieved, strategic planning is required, ensuring incentives and support for employees and employers when it comes to businesses. Connecting employee trainings with micro-credentials will serve as an additional incentive and will help address qualification shortages. Skill gaps and mismatches should be constantly monitored and evaluated for the system to remain updated and address real labour market needs. Employers should also strategically monitor and evaluate the changes in the skill sets of people, so that their demands are in alignment with the offer in skills, and in order to make their work environments 'attractive' to job applicants and new recruits, providing incentives and accommodating their needs when necessary. On the other hand, current and potential employees have to be well aware of the labour market needs, and self-aware regarding their existing skills and the need for acquiring new skills. A lifelong learning culture should be the overarching approach to all these aspects.

ITALY

WP2: Research for the Identification of Key Skills Necessary for Employment
T2.2: Implementation of Two Focus Groups with Employers per Partner Country

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT
PARTNER COUNTRY: *ITALY*

(Basilicata Chamber of Commerce –
ASNOR Associazione Nazionale Orientatori)

INTRODUCTION

Partner(s) Responsible for the Report	Basilicata Chamber of Commerce ASNOR Associazione Nazionale Orientatori

Focus Groups' Details

	Date and Time	Duration	Implementation Mode	Number of Participants	Evidence Available
Focus Group A	18/06/2024, 16.00-18.00	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	11 participants (not all of them attended the entire meeting)	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/ Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms
Focus Group B	25/06/2024, 16.00-18.00	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	13 participants (not all of them attended the entire meeting)	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/ Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms

Table 1: Focus Groups' Details

Focus Group A

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	General Manager	>15 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Employee	>15 years
Participant 3	Company 3	Self-Employment	1-5 years
Participant 4	Company 4	Trainer-Career guide	1-5 years
Participant 5	Company 5	Teacher-Trainer	1-5 years
Participant 6	Company 6	Teacher-Trainer	>15 years
Participant 7	Company 7	Human Resources Staff	1-5 years
Participant 8	Company 8	Company Owner	>15 years
Participant 9	Company 9	Human Resources Staff	>15 years
Participant 10	Company 10	Trainer-Career guide	1-5 years
Participant 11	Company 11	Trainer-Career guide	11-15 years

Table 2: Participants' Profile (Focus Group A)

Background

Position in the Company *(No of Participants per Position)*	Company Owner	1
	Managing Director	0
	Member of Board of Directors	0
	General Manager	1
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	0
	HR Staff	2
	Other *(please specify in list)*: Employee Self-Employment Trainer - Career guide Teacher - Trainer	Total: 7 1 1 3 2
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	8
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	1
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	2

	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	- Degree in Psychological Sciences and Techniques - Degree in Languages - HR - Master's Degree in Orientation - Surveyor Diploma - Degree in Conservation and Restoration of Historical-Artistic Heritage, Specialization in Second Degree Supports, Master's Degree - Degree in Sociology - *no one* - Bachelor's degree in law	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	2
	35-44 years old	1
	45-54 years old	5
	55-64 years old	2
	>64 years old	1
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	5
	6-10 years	0
	11-15 years	5
	>15 years	1
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	1
	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	7

Table 3: Participants' Background (Focus Group A)

1.2 Companies

	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	1
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0
Industry of Economic Activity *(No of Companies per Industry)*	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0
	Construction	0
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	0
	Transportation and Storage	0
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	0

	Information and Communication	0
	Financial and Insurance Activities	0
	Real Estate Activities	0
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	1
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	6
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	0
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	0
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other *(Please specify in list)*: HR -1	3
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	7
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	**2**
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	**0**
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	**2**

Table 4: Companies (Focus Group A)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

N/A

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?
- People at entry-level job positions
- Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- Economically inactive women
- Young individuals
- Low-qualified adults

In order from most employed to least employed: A D B E C

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
- a. People at entry-level job positions
- 2. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- 3. Economically inactive women
- 4. Young individuals
- 5. Low-qualified adults

People in data entry job positions represent the least challenging and most facilitated categories
- The group of young individuals was also considered less challenging as they are a very active category in the search for work.
- The group of long-term unemployed was considered particularly challenging as the most disadvantaged group for which motivation and self-esteem need to be reactivated.
- The position of economically inactive women is controversial: if in general they are the most disadvantaged categories, for a single member of a manufacturing company this category constitutes a challenge on which his company is focusing, as it is a category considered more likely and determined to take action to acquire and maintain a job.
- Transversally for all categories it is suggested:
- The implementation of effective training and learning projects tin line with market needs, which requires the constant acquisition of skills (especially soft, but also hard) and the ability to do so very quickly, given that the changes taking place are really very fast.
- Being able to allow these categories to catch up with changes
- The implementation of projects that overcome obstacles and barriers to entry into the world of work, which unfortunately does not invest much in disadvantaged groups;
- Create a welfare state that introduces a fully inclusive system like that of other European states (e.g. Netherlands)
- Being able to fill the gap between the demands of the world of work and what the worker is able to do
- Recognize the skills acquired even in non-formal contexts
- Create an information aggregator regarding the training opportunities to be accessed by the most disadvantaged groups

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Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- c. Economically inactive women
- d. Young individuals
- e. Low-qualified adults

The main challenges regarding WORK offered the following suggestions.

Transversally for all categories:
- Stress management
- Empowerment of new resources
- Creation of training processes to better integrate these workers within the different company realities, awakening the planning skills of each of them

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Transversally for all categories:
- Curiosity
- Interest in the company and the job
- Communication
- Empathy
- Sharing: ability to work in a team
- Spirit of initiative: stimulate the projects and abilities of each of them

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

List of 20 Key skills and related score (list contains 23 positions where the same score has been achieved) in order of preference:

Flexibility - 30
Self-regulation - 29
Wellbeing - 29
Empathy - 29
Communication -29
Collaboration - 29
Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy - 29
Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk - 29
Interacting through Digital Technologies - 29
Protecting Personal Data and Privacy - 29
Growth Mindset - 28
Critical Thinking -28
Learning Through Experience -28
Collaborating through Digital Technologies -28
Adaptability -27
Motivation & Perseverance -27
Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content -27
Sharing through Digital -27
Supporting Fairness -26
Individual Initiative -26
Taking the Initiative -26
Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content -26
Protecting Devices -26

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Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?
List of 20 Key skills and related scores in order of preference: Communication - 30   Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy - 30   Self-regulation - 29   Flexibility - 29   Wellbeing - 28   Collaboration - 28   Empathy - 27   Critical Thinking - 27   Adaptability - 27   Motivation & Perseverance - 27   Interacting through Digital Technologies - 27   Collaborating through Digital Technologies - 27   Growth Mindset - 26   Supporting Fairness - 26   Learning Through Experience - 26   Netiquette - 26   Taking the Initiative – 25   Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk – 25   Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content - 25   Managing Digital Identity - 25
Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?
A common reply is YES   - For some of them would be relevant to evaluation of the certifier and the ways in which the skills will be acquired.   - For others it should be interesting if it will be combined with the selection criteria already in place: empathetic relationship, CV verification, carrying out a practical test
Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?
As part of the challenges to be faced during the recruitment process: - Extension of the assessment regarding the possession of these skills to the employer too, to ensure that the parameters and codes are shared between job seekers and the recruiter
Question 9: Which skills in addition to those already defined do you consider relevant?
Regarding the possession of additional skills in addition to those already defined, the following are noted: - Stress management;   - Will and ambition for growth;   - Attitude to work;   - Spirit of sacrifice;   - Know-how;   - Entrepreneurial thinking, to go beyond the "homework".

Table 5: Participants' Answers (Focus Group A)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results

Analysis of Results

Employment and Recruitment Trends:
- People in entry-level positions and young individuals are the most employed and least challenging to recruit.
- Long-term unemployed and economically inactive women face significant barriers but are seen as potential high-committed employees, if supported properly.
- Emphasis on soft skills like communication, empathy, and flexibility across all roles.

Skills Development Focus:
- Companies need to invest in comprehensive training and development programs.
- Recognition of non-formal skills and bridging gaps between job market demands and worker capabilities is critical.
- Inclusion of micro-credentials in the recruitment process would be appreciated and valorized.

Transversal Challenges and Skills:
- Effective stress management and empowerment of new resources are critical for integrating all employee categories.
- Key competencies such as curiosity, communication, empathy, and initiative are valued across all employee groups.

For a graphical representation of key data, see the next paragraph titled "Conclusions and Recommendations".

Focus Group B

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	Trainer-Career guide	>15 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Company Owner	1-5 years
Participant 3	Company 3	HR Staff	6-10 years
Participant 4	Company 4	Managing Director	1-5 years
Participant 5	Company 5	HR Staff	>15 years
Participant 6	Company 6	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	>15 years
Participant 7	Company 7	Company Owner	>15 years
Participant 8	Company 8	Trainer-Career guide	1-5 years
Participant 9	Company 9	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	>15 years
Participant 10	Company 10	Employee	1-5 years
Participant 11	Company 11	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	>15 years
Participant 12	Company 12	Member of Board of Directors	1-5 years
Participant 13	Company 13	Company Owner	1-5 years

Table 6: Participants' Profile (Focus Group B)

Background

Position in the Company *(No of Participants per Position)*	Company Owner	3
	Managing Director	1
	Member of Board of Directors	1
	General Manager	0
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	3
	HR Staff	2
	Other *(please specify in list)*: Employee Trainer-Career guide	**Total: 3** 1 2

Education Level (No of Participants per Level)	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	1
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	1
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	9
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	2
	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) (List of Degrees)	Degree in Literature and Philosophy Degree in Training and Human Resources Development at the University of Padua/ Master's degree in labour law, industrial relations and negotiation, various courses on human resources. Degree in Work and Organizational Psychology Degree in economics Degree in EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING SCIENCES Degree in economics and business Degree in foreign languages and literature Degree in pharmaceutical marketing Bachelor's degree in law SOCIAL PSYCHO PEDAGOGICAL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA Degree in Business and Financial Intermediary Economics Degree in Sociology and Degree in Educational Sciences Accounting school diploma	
Age (No of Participants per Age Range)	20-34 years old	3
	35-44 years old	2
	45-54 years old	5
	55-64 years old	2
	>64 years old	1
Experience in the Specific Position (No of Participants per Years' Range)	1-5 years	6
	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	6
	>15 years	0
Overall Work Experience (No of Participants per Years' Range)	1-5 years	1
	6-10 years	4
	11-15 years	2
	>15 years	6

Table 710: Participants' Background (Focus Group B)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity (No of Companies per Industry)	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	0
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0

	Construction	0
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	0
	Transportation and Storage	0
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	0
	Information and Communication	1
	Financial and Insurance Activities	0
	Real Estate Activities	0
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	6
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	0
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	2
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other *(Please specify in list)*: Third sector body supporting business creation No profit Educational and social welfare services Employment agency	Total :4 1 1 1 1
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	6
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	4
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	1
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	2

Table 8: Companies (Focus Group B)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

N/A

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?
    a.   People at entry-level job positions
    b.   Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
    c.   Economically inactive women
    d.   Young individuals
    e.   Low-qualified adults

D-A-C-E-B The context of values is important It is essential to be aware of the needs of the job market The entry level category overlaps with that of young people (A, D)

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
    a.   People at entry-level job positions
    b.   Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
    c.   Economically inactive women
    d.   Young individuals
    e.   Low-qualified adults

The main challenges regarding RECRUITMENT offered the following suggestions. Transversally for all categories it is suggested: Satisfying the demands for soft and light skills imposed by the labour market, the possession of which by candidates is now a mandatory condition, equal to, if not to a greater extent if compared with the possession of technical skills Overcoming the generation gap: through the integration of different categories of individuals belonging to different ages into the company

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
    a.   People at entry-level job positions
    b.   Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
    c.   Economically inactive women
    d.   Young individuals
    e.   Low-qualified adults

The main challenges regarding WORK offered the following suggestions across all categories:
    -   work in a team.
    -   the ability to adapt.
    -   availability and proactivity for continuous training/learning.
    -   the implementation of effective communication.
    -   mutual fairness between worker and employer.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
    a.   People at entry-level job positions
    b.   Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
    c.   Economically inactive women
    d.   Young individuals
    e.   Low-qualified adults

Transversally for all categories:
- solve problems creatively
- emotional intelligence
- learn to learn in rapidly changing contexts
- autonomy in learning
- adaptability and flexibility

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

List of 20 Key skills and related score (list contains 22 positions where the same score has been achieved) in order of preference:

Communication - 33

Collaboration - 33

Empathy - 30

Flexibility - 29

Critical Thinking - 29

Self-regulation - 28

Learning Through Experience - 28

Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content - 28

Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content - 28

Collaborating through Digital Technologies - 27

Protecting Personal Data and Privacy - 27

Adaptability - 26

Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy - 26

Motivation & Perseverance - 26

Interacting through Digital Technologies - 26

Wellbeing - 25

Growth Mindset - 25

Managing Learning - 25

Taking the Initiative - 25

Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk - 25

Sharing through Digital - 25

Netiquette - 25

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

List of 20 Key skills and related score order of preference:

Collaboration - 35

Communication - 34

Empathy - 33

Flexibility - 33

Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy 32

Self-regulation - 31

Protecting Personal Data and Privacy – 31

Critical Thinking - 30

Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content - 30

Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content - 30

Motivation & Perseverance - 30

Growth Mindset - 30
Spotting Opportunities - 30
Learning Through Experience - 29
Collaborating through Digital Technologies - 29
Interacting through Digital Technologies - 29
Taking the Initiative - 29
Sharing through Digital - 29
Managing Digital Identity - 29
Protecting Devices - 29
Question 7: Would you consider and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Most common reply: YES
    -   This is an objective point of view from which to start.
    -   Not only during the entry phase but also during the working career, also to develop tailored training paths.
    -   This is a step of self-awareness on the part of the candidate.

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

As part of the challenges faced in terms of lack of skills during the recruitment process:
    -   Being able to outline good common practices valid in every context;
    -   Implement lifelong learning practices
    -   Develop processes of awareness and construction of the values specific to each company in relation with the start of the recruitment process
    -   Construction of the personal branding of each candidate so that they fully understand their work identity and the target of the job market to be addressed

Question 9: Which skills in addition to those already defined do you consider relevant?

Regarding the possession of additional skills in addition to those already defined, the following are noted:
    -   Stress management;
    -   Will and ambition for growth;
    -   Attitude to work;
    -   Spirit of sacrifice;
    -   Know-how

Table 9: Participants' Answers (Focus Group B)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

The analysis of participants' answers highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to recruitment and workforce development.

Entry-level positions and young individuals often overlap in employment categories.

It is crucial to align with the needs of the job market to maximize employment efficiency.

Meeting demands for soft and light skills, which are now as essential as the technical skills.

Overcoming the generation gap by integrating individuals of different ages into the company.

Companies should prioritize essential soft and technical skills, address recruitment and work-related challenges, and foster a culture of continuous learning and adaptability.

Emphasizing the value of micro-credentials and addressing skills mismatches through targeted strategies will enhance the effectiveness of the recruitment process and support the development of a capable and resilient workforce.

Implementing these recommendations will help companies navigate the complexities of the modern job market and build a strong, diverse, and skilled workforce.

For a geographical representation of key data, see the next paragraph titled "Conclusions and Recommendations".

Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus Group A and B

Employment Ranking:
In order from most employed to least employed (A D B E C):
      People at entry-level job positions
      Young individuals
      Low-qualified adults
      Economically Inactive Women
      Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

Recruitment Challenges:
Satisfying the demands for soft and light skills imposed by the labour market, the possession of which by candidates is now a mandatory condition, equal to, if not more important than, the possession of technical skills.
Overcoming the generation gap: through the integration of different categories of individuals belonging to different ages into the company.
Transversally for all categories it is suggested:
- Stress management
- Empowerment of new resources
- Creation of training processes to better integrate these workers within the different company realities, awakening the planning skills of each of them

Key Skills for Entry-Level Positions:
To ensure successful recruitment and performance of entry-level employees, the following key skills are prioritized:
Communication - 63
Collaboration - 61
Flexibility - 58
Self-regulation - 57
Empathy - 57
Critical Thinking - 56
Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy - 56
Learning Through Experience - 54
Collaborating through Digital Technologies - 54
Wellbeing - 53
Adaptability - 53
Motivation & Perseverance - 53
Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content - 53
Interacting through Digital Technologies - 53
Growth Mindset - 51
Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content - 51
Netiquette - 51

Protecting Personal Data and Privacy - 51
Taking the Initiative - 50
Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk – 50

Key Skills for Ideal Worker (the list contains 22 positions where the same score has been achieved):

For an ideal worker, the following key skills are considered most essential:
Collaboration - 64
Flexibility - 63
Communication - 63
Empathy - 62
 Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy - 61
Self-regulation - 60
Protecting Personal Data and Privacy - 60
Growth Mindset - 58
Critical Thinking - 58
Interacting through Digital Technologies - 58
Motivation & Perseverance - 57
Learning Through Experience - 57
Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content - 57
Sharing through Digital - 57
Collaborating through Digital Technologies - 57
Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk - 56
Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content - 56
Wellbeing - 55
Adaptability - 55
Spotting Opportunities - 55
Taking the Initiative – 55
 Protecting Devices – 55

Recommendations:
-   Emphasize Soft Skills in Recruitment and Training: Develop targeted programs to enhance employee communication, collaboration, and flexibility.
-   Implement Comprehensive Training Programs: Implement training modules focusing on self-regulation, critical thinking, and digital literacy.
-   Promote Lifelong Learning and Adaptability: Encourage a culture of continuous learning and adaptability to keep pace with technological and market changes.
-   Foster Inclusive Work Environments: Implement policies and practices that promote age diversity and integration within the workforce.
-   Support Mental Health and Wellbeing: Establish support systems to help employees manage stress and maintain their well-being.

What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions?

1. Self-regulation
2. Flexibility
3. Wellbeing
4. Empathy
5. Communication
6. Collaboration
7. Growth Mindset
8. Critical Thinking
9. Managing Learning
10. Valuing Sustainability
11. Supporting Fairness
12. Promoting Nature

17. Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy
18. Motivation & Perseverance
19. Taking the Initiative
20. Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk
21. Learning Through Experience
22. Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content
23. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content
24. Interacting through Digital Technologies
25. Sharing through Digital
26. Collaborating through Digital Technologies
27. Netiquette

Legend: not important | somehow important | important | absolutely essential

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SPAIN

WP2: Research for the Identification of Key Skills Necessary for Employment

T2.2: Implementation of Two Focus Groups with Employers per Partner Country

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT

PARTNER COUNTRY: *SPAIN*

**(Valencia Chamber of Commerce –
Fundación Equipo Humano)**

INTRODUCTION

Partner(s) Responsible for the Report	Valencia Chamber of Commerce Fundación Equipo Humano

Focus Groups' Details

	Date and Time	Duration	Implementation Mode	Number of Participants	Evidence Available
Focus Group A	13/06/2024, 09.30-11.30	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	8	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms
Focus Group B	18/06/2024, 09.30-11.30	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	11	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms

Table 1: Focus Groups' Details

Focus Group A

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	Managing Director	1-5 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Head of projects	6-10 years
Participant 3	Company 3	HR Staff	1-5 years
Participant 4	Company 4	HR Staff	1-5 years
Participant 5	Company 5	HR Staff	1-5 years
Participant 6	Company 6	HR Staff	1-5 years
Participant 7	Company 7	HR Staff	1-5 years
Participant 8	Company 8	HR Staff	<15 years

Table 2: Participants' Profile (Focus Group A)

Background

Position in the Company *(No of Participants per Position)*	Company Owner	0
	Managing Director	1
	Member of Board of Directors	0
	General Manager	0
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	0
	HR Staff	6
	Other *(please specify in list)*: Head of projects	1
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	4
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	4
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	0

	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	Business sciences, business administration and management, psychology, law, labour relations and human resources, labour sciences.	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	3
	35-44 years old	1
	45-54 years old	3
	55-64 years old	1
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	6
	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	0
	>15 years	1
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	1
	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	4

Table 3: Participants' Background (Focus Group A)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity *(No of Companies per Industry)*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	
	Mining and Quarrying	
	Manufacturing	2
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	
	Construction	
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	2
	Transportation and Storage	1
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	
	Information and Communication	
	Financial and Insurance Activities	
	Real Estate Activities	

	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	
	Education	
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	
	Other Service Activities	3
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	
	Other *(Please specify in list)*:	
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	1
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	1
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	6

Table 4: Companies (Focus Group A)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

The companies have been highly participative, and there have been engaging debates regarding the challenges associated with junior positions. The group was quite diverse in terms of sector and size. The focus group concluded that, although there are universal competencies necessary for both junior profiles and the ideal profile, certain skills require a tailored approach depending on the candidate's level of experience. Communication, empathy, cooperation, and managing expectations were highlighted as essential skills to cultivate from the outset. Furthermore, training in soft skills was acknowledged as a valuable means of assessing candidates' interest and willingness to adapt and develop in their roles.

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?
  a. People at entry-level job positions
  b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
  c. Economically Inactive Women

d. Young individuals
e. Low-qualified adults

The participants assured that the group hiring the most frequently consists of young people. This is because, generally, when thinking of the term "junior," the participants also associate it with someone young. However, one participant noted an exception in their company: they have been incorporating individuals who are senior in terms of years of experience but are considered juniors in that particular sector. This highlights a nuanced understanding of the term "junior," acknowledging that it doesn't always correlate directly with age but can also refer to the level of experience within a specific field.

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

In the initial Focus Group discussion, the participants identified several key challenges across different segments of the workforce that require focused attention during the recruitment process.

For individuals in entry-level positions, the primary concerns revolve around onboarding and training. It was noted that significant time and resources are needed to effectively bring these new hires up to speed with the job requirements. Additionally, ongoing effort is required in managing expectations to align their perceptions with the reality of the job, ensuring their satisfaction and retention. Continuous performance monitoring and feedback were emphasised as essential for nurturing their skills and competencies over time.

The discussion then shifted to the long-term unemployed, with a specific focus on women and youth. Participants highlighted the importance of skill re-integration programmes to update and practise skills that have become rusty due to prolonged unemployment. They also stressed the need for confidence-building measures such as mentoring and counselling to support their successful re-entry into the workforce. Developing retention strategies to sustain motivation and engagement in the long term was identified as critical for this group.

Economically inactive women presented another set of challenges, primarily centred around flexibility and support. Participants emphasised the necessity of balancing work with personal responsibilities and the need for supportive systems that facilitate this balance. Skill re-updating through tailored training programmes was seen as vital to bring their skills in line with current industry standards. Addressing biases in hiring processes and fostering a supportive work environment were also highlighted as crucial steps in ensuring their successful integration into the workforce.

The discussion then turned to young individuals entering the job market. Guidance and mentorship were identified as essential tools in helping them navigate their early careers and make informed decisions. Creating opportunities for skill development and growth within the organisation was emphasised to retain their engagement and commitment over time.

For low-qualified adults, the focus was on comprehensive training and development programmes designed to build their skills from the ground up. Crafting job roles that match their current abilities while offering pathways for advancement was seen as a key strategy for their integration and long-term success in the workplace. Ongoing support systems and resources were also deemed necessary to reinforce their journey and ensure sustained growth.

Overall, the insights from this Focus Group underscored the multifaceted nature of challenges in recruitment and retention across diverse segments of the workforce. The recommendations highlighted the importance of tailored approaches that address specific needs ranging from skill development and confidence-building to creating supportive environments and combating biases in hiring.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Working with young individuals often presents several unique challenges. One of the primary issues is managing their expectations. Young professionals may have preconceived notions about their roles and career progression, often expecting rapid advancement and immediate impact. This can lead to frustration if their expectations are not met, affecting their motivation and engagement.

Another significant challenge is their relative lack of experience in a professional setting. While young individuals may possess strong technical skills, they often lack basic organisational competencies and practical experience. This can result in difficulties with time management, prioritising tasks, and understanding workplace norms and etiquette.

Moreover, young employees may struggle with teamwork and collaboration. While they are generally eager to contribute and share ideas, they might lack the patience and communication skills necessary to work effectively in a team. This can lead to conflicts and inefficiencies in group settings.

Additionally, young individuals often prioritise work-life balance and may resist traditional hierarchical structures. They tend to value flexibility and a project-based approach over rigid schedules and defined roles. This can pose a challenge for organisations with more conventional work practices.

Retention is another critical issue. Young professionals are often more inclined to change jobs frequently in search of better opportunities and work environments that align with their values and career goals. This can result in high turnover rates and the constant need for recruitment and training.

Lastly, fostering a sense of responsibility and resilience can be challenging. Young individuals may need to develop patience, tolerance for frustration, and the ability to work under pressure. Helping them build these personal skills is essential for their long-term success and adaptability in the workplace.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

  c. Economically Inactive Women
  d. Young individuals
  e. Low-qualified adults

In this first Focus Group focused on junior positions, participants discussed the essential competencies required for these roles. Their insights shed light on the specific skills and traits that are highly valued in entry-level employees.

Responsibility emerged as a foundational competency highlighted by the group. Junior employees are expected to take ownership of their tasks and contribute responsibly to team objectives. This includes meeting deadlines, following through on commitments, and demonstrating accountability for their work.

Collaboration and teamwork were identified as crucial skills for junior positions. The ability to work effectively with others, communicate ideas clearly, and contribute to group efforts were emphasised. Participants stressed the importance of fostering a collaborative environment where junior employees can leverage each other's strengths to achieve shared goals.

Empathy and attitude were noted as essential qualities for junior roles. Having empathy enables employees to understand and relate to colleagues and clients, fostering positive relationships and effective communication. A positive attitude contributes to a supportive work environment and enhances team morale.

Autonomy was recognized as a competency that junior employees should develop. While guidance and supervision are often provided, the ability to work independently and make informed decisions is valued. This autonomy allows employees to take initiative and contribute proactively to their roles.

Involvement in tasks and projects was also highlighted by the group. Junior employees are encouraged to engage actively in their work, demonstrate enthusiasm, and show a willingness to contribute beyond basic responsibilities. This proactive involvement contributes to their professional growth and development.

Self-demand and results orientation are important competencies for junior positions. Participants noted the importance of setting high standards for oneself, striving for excellence, and being driven by achieving tangible outcomes. This results-oriented approach helps junior employees contribute effectively to organisational success.

Lastly, the discussion acknowledged that junior positions may involve routine tasks that are not always inherently motivating. Participants emphasised the importance of resilience and the ability to handle such tasks diligently and with a positive attitude. This capacity to persist through routine work contributes to maintaining productivity and contributing to team goals.

In summary, the Focus Groups highlighted a comprehensive set of competencies essential for junior positions. These insights provide valuable guidance for organisations seeking to recruit and develop entry-

level talent, emphasizing not only technical skills but also the interpersonal qualities and attitudes that foster success in these roles.

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Here are the results of the skill assessments that are **absolutely essential** for the participants during the **recruitment** **process.**

Nr.	Skill	Score
1.	Collaboration	7
2.	Motivation & Perseverance	6
3.	Growth Mindset	6
4.	Adaptability	5
5.	Empathy	5
6.	Learning through Experience	4
7.	Protecting personal data and privacy	4
8.	Communication	4
9.	Managing learning	4
10.	Flexibility	3
11.	Taking the initiative	3
12.	Protecting devices	3
13.	Wellbeing	2
14.	Valuing Sustainability	2
15.	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	2
16.	Self-regulation	1
17.	Supporting Fairness	1
18.	Individual Initiative	1
19.	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	1
20.	Problem Framing	1
21.	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	1
22.	Interacting through digital Technologies	0
23.	Crititcal Thinking	0
24.	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	0
25.	Developing digital Content	0
26.	Spotting Opportunities	0
27.	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	0
28.	Sharing through Digital Technologies	0
29.	Netiquette -	0
30.	Managing digital Identity	0
31.	Promoting Nature	0
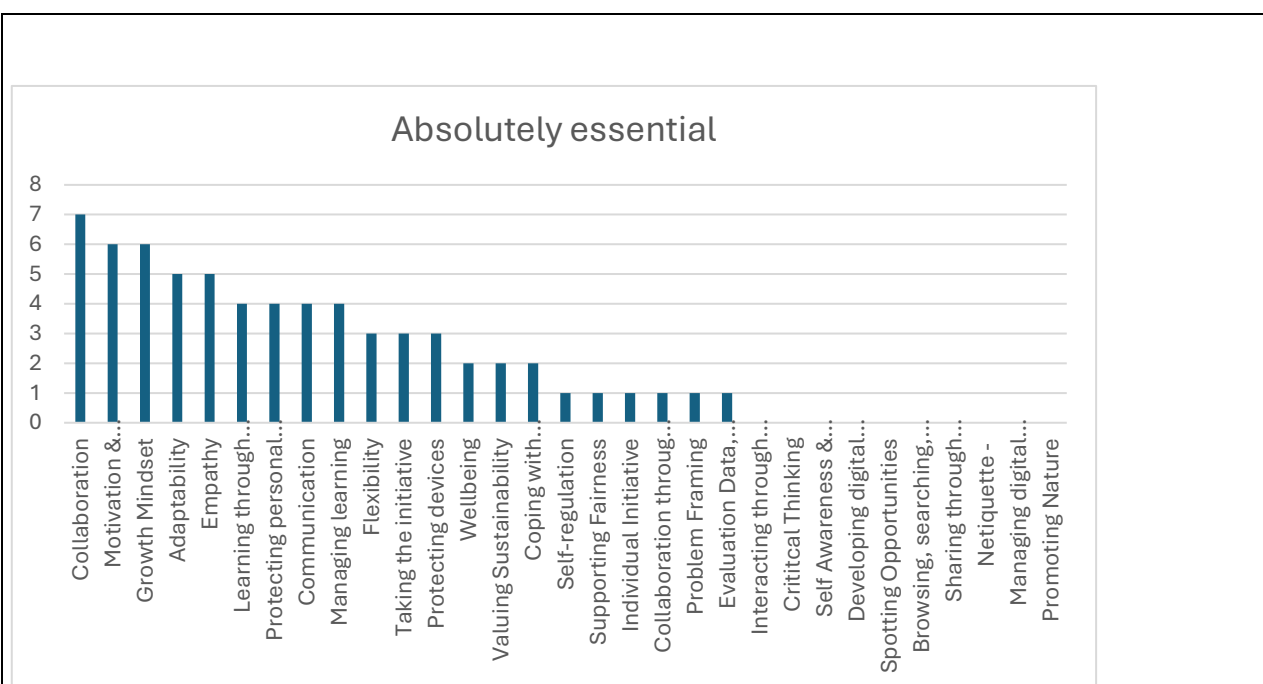
Absolutely essential

Here are the results of the skill assessments that are **important** for the participants during the **recruitment process.**

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Interacting through digital Technologies	8
2	Flexibility	5
3	Wellbeing	5
4	Self-regulation	5
5	Supporting Fairness	5
6	Individual Initiative	5
7	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	5
8	Crititcal Thinking	5
9	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	5
10	Developing digital Content	5
11	Learning through Experience	4
12	Protecting personal data and privacy	4
13	Taking the initiative	4
14	Valuing Sustainability	4
15	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	4
16	Problem Framing	4
17	Spotting Opportunities	4
18	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	4
19	Sharing through Digital Technologies	4
20	Netiquette -	4
21	Adaptability	3
22	Communication	3
23	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	3

24	Motivation & Perseverance	2
25	Empathy	2
26	Managing learning	2
27	Protecting devices	2
28	Managing digital Identity	2
29	Collaboration	1
30	Growth Mindset	1
31	Promoting Nature	1
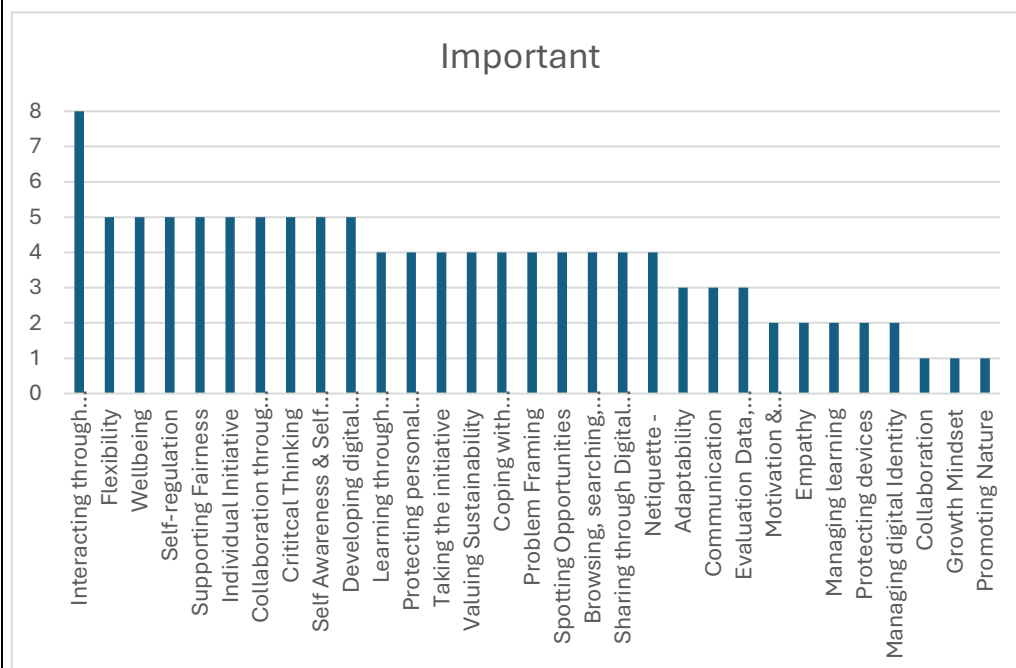
Hereby are the results of the skill assessments that are **somehow important** for the participants during the **recruitment** **process.**

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Promoting Nature	6
2	Managing digital Identity	6
3	Spotting Opportunities	4
4	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	4
5	Sharing through Digital Technologies	4
6	Netiquette -	4
7	Crititcal Thinking	3
8	Problem Framing	3
9	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	3
10	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	3
11	Developing digital Content	3
12	Protecting devices	3
13	Self-regulation	2
14	Managing learning	2

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15	Valuing Sustainability	2
16	Supporting Fairness	2
17	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	2
18	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	2
19	Wellbeing	1
20	Empathy	1
21	Communication	1
22	Growth Mindset	1
23	Individual Initiative	1
24	Taking the initiative	1
25	Flexibility	0
26	Collaboration	0
27	Adaptability	0
28	Motivation & Perseverance	0
29	Learning through Experience	0
30	Interacting through digital Technologies	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0

Somehow important
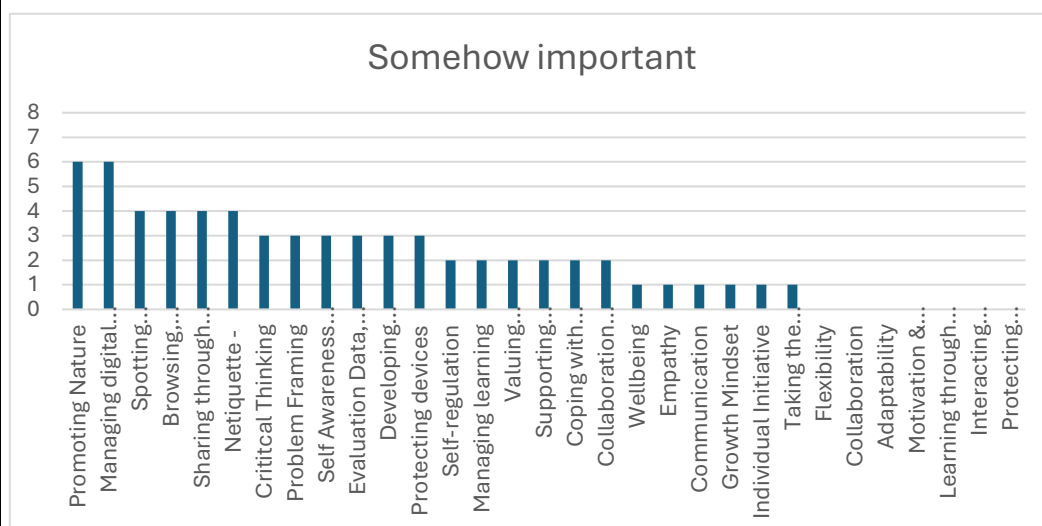
Finally, participants considered as **not important** the following skills with the following score for candidates during the **recruitment process.**

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Promoting Nature	1
2	Individual Initiative	1
3	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	1
4	Self-regulation	0
5	Flexibility	0
6	Wellbeing	0
7	Empathy	0
8	Communication	0
9	Collaboration	0

10	Growth Mindset	0
11	Crititcal Thinking	0
12	Managing learning	0
13	Valuing Sustainability	0
14	Supporting Fairness	0
15	Problem Framing	0
16	Adaptability	0
17	Spotting Opportunities	0
18	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	0
19	Motivation & Perseverance	0
20	Taking the initiative	0
21	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	0
22	Learning through Experience	0
23	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	0
24	Interacting through digital Technologies	0
25	Sharing through Digital Technologies	0
26	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	0
27	Netiquette -	0
28	Managing digital Identity	0
29	Developing digital Content	0
30	Protecting devices	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

On the following table are shown the score results for the skills that are **absolutely essential** for an **ideal worker** for 8 participants:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Flexibility	8
2	Communication	8
3	Collaboration	8
4	Adaptability	8
5	Motivation & Perseverance	8
6	Taking the initiative	8
7	Empathy	7
8	Growth Mindset	7
9	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	7
10	Individual Initiative	6
11	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	6
12	Self-regulation	5
13	Managing learning	5
14	Protecting devices	5
15	Crititcal Thinking	4
16	Supporting Fairness	4
17	Spotting Opportunities	4
18	Interacting through digital Technologies	4
19	Protecting personal data and privacy	4
20	Wellbeing	3
21	Problem Framing	3
22	Learning through Experience	3
23	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	3
24	Sharing through Digital Technologies	3
25	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	3
26	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	2
27	Managing digital Identity	2
28	Developing digital Content	2
29	Valuing Sustainability	1
30	Netiquette -	1
31	Promoting Nature	0

The score results for the skills that are **important** for an **ideal worker** for 8 participants are the following:

Nr.	Skill	Socore
1	Valuing Sustainability	6
2	Wellbeing	5
3	Problem Framing	5
4	Learning through Experience	5
5	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	5
6	Managing digital Identity	5
7	Developing digital Content	5
8	Netiquette -	5
9	Crititcal Thinking	4
10	Supporting Fairness	4
11	Spotting Opportunities	4
12	Interacting through digital Technologies	4
13	Protecting personal data and privacy	4
14	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	4
15	Self-regulation	3
16	Managing learning	3
17	Sharing through Digital Technologies	3
18	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	3
19	Promoting Nature	3
20	Individual Initiative	2
21	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	2
22	Protecting devices	2
23	Empathy	1
24	Growth Mindset	1
25	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	1
26	Flexibility	0
27	Communication	0

28	Collaboration	0
29	Adaptability	0
30	Motivation & Perseverance	0
31	Taking the initiative	0
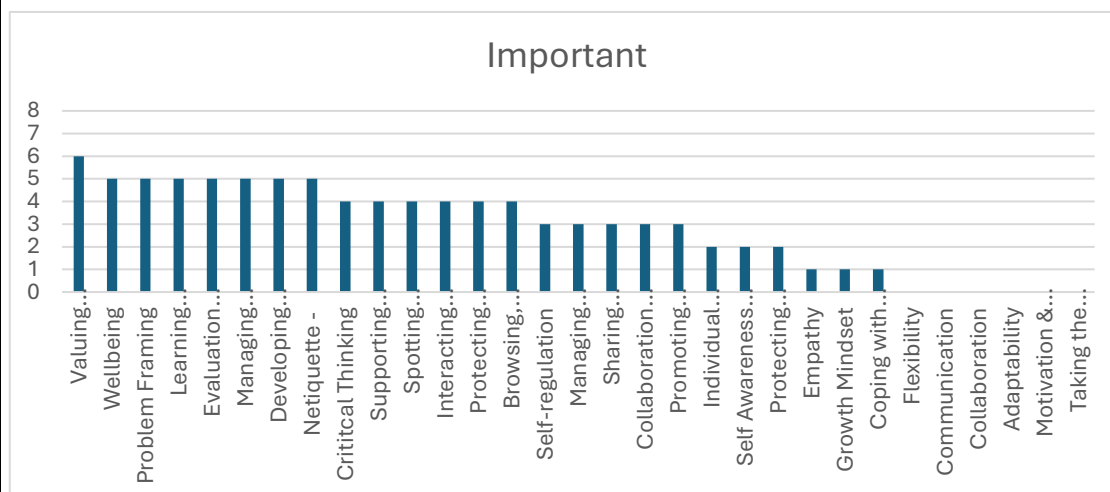
This is the result of the assessment of skills for an **ideal worker** offered by the 8 participants as **somehow important:**

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Learning through Experience	5
2	Wellbeing	2
3	Communication	2
4	Motivation & Perseverance	2
5	Self-Awareness & Self Efficacy	1
6	Netiquette -	1
7	Adaptability	1
8	Taking the initiative	1
9	Protecting devices	1
10	Interacting through digital Technologies	1
11	Individual Initiative	0
12	Collaboration	0
13	Managing learning	0
14	Problem Framing	0
15	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	0
16	Managing digital Identity	0
17	Developing digital Content	0
18	Valuing Sustainability	0
19	Growth Mindset	0
20	Supporting Fairness	0
21	Sharing through Digital Technologies	0
22	Promoting Nature	0
23	Flexibility	0
24	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	0

25	Self-regulation	0
26	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	0
27	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	0
28	Crititcal Thinking	0
29	Spotting Opportunities	0
30	Empathy	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0
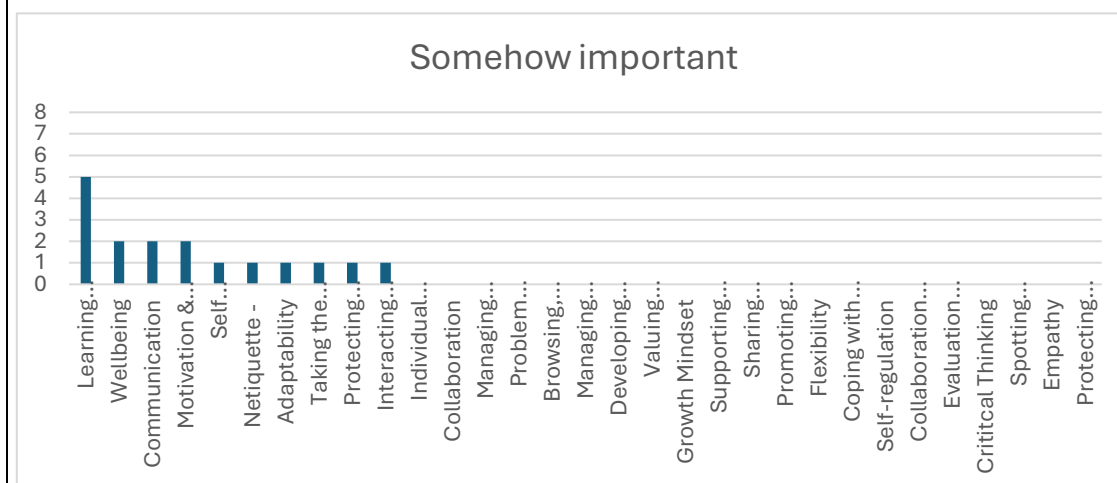
Finally, this is the result of the assessment of skills for an **ideal worker** offered by the 8 participants as **no important**:

nr.	Skill	Score
1	Self-regulation	0
2	Flexibility	0
3	Wellbeing	0
4	Empathy	0
5	Communication	0
6	Collaboration	0
7	Growth Mindset	0
8	Crititcal Thinking	0
9	Managing learning	0
10	Valuing Sustainability	0
11	Supporting Fairness	0
12	Promoting Nature	0
13	Problem Framing	0
14	Adaptability	0
15	Individual Initiative	0
16	Spotting Opportunities	0
17	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	0
18	Motivation & Perseverance	0
19	Taking the initiative	0
20	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	0
21	Learning through Experience	0

22	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	0
23	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	0
24	Interacting through digital Technologies	0
25	Sharing through Digital Technologies	0
26	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	0
27	Netiquette	0
28	Managing digital Identity	0
29	Developing digital Content	0
30	Protecting devices	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0

None of the skills were valued as not important, so all skills are considered in somehow for an ideal workier.

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

In the focus group, it was discussed that micro-credentials are increasingly recognised as valuable assets in the recruitment landscape. These credentials provide concrete evidence of an individual's specialised competencies and skills, which are particularly relevant for both junior positions and ideal candidates sought after by employers. By presenting micro-credentials, candidates demonstrate a proactive commitment to continuous learning and development. This willingness to consistently acquire new knowledge and adapt to evolving demands is highly prized in today's dynamic work environment. Employers perceive such credentials as indications of a candidate's readiness to contribute effectively and grow within their roles.

Participants noted that these credentials are valued because they indicate a worker's interest in enhancing specific areas of communication and personal skills, which can have a positive impact on their job performance. They considered them valuable, but not essential.

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

The primary challenge highlighted in addressing skills mismatch during recruitment revolves around aligning candidates' skills and competencies with specific job requirements. This challenge encompasses several aspects: Firstly, there's a notable technical skills gap where candidates often lack the precise technical competencies needed, especially in rapidly evolving industries. Secondly, there is a significant deficit in essential soft skills among candidates, particularly junior professionals, such as communication, empathy, and teamwork abilities. These soft skills are crucial for effective collaboration and workplace success but are frequently underdeveloped in many applicants.

Another critical aspect is balancing experience with potential. Some candidates possess theoretical knowledge but lack practical experience, requiring companies to assess their potential for growth alongside immediate productivity needs. Moreover, recruiters often encounter situations of overqualification or under qualification among candidates. Overqualified individuals may seek roles below their skill level, while under qualified candidates may necessitate extensive training and development to meet job requirements. Finally, ensuring candidates align with company values and

culture is essential for long-term employee satisfaction and retention, highlighting the multifaceted nature of addressing skills mismatch in recruitment processes.

Table 5: Participants' Answers (Focus Group A)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

The focus group analysis provided an in-depth examination of the competencies required for both junior and ideal worker profiles, highlighting the inherent and developing skills necessary for optimal performance and alignment with company values.

One of the key findings was the importance of **communication and empathy**. These skills are universally crucial and necessary from the beginning of an employee's career due to their intrinsic nature. Effective communication and empathy facilitate better interaction and collaboration among colleagues and clients. The focus group underscored that emphasising these skills in the selection process ensures that candidates are well-prepared to engage positively in their work environment. Additionally, certain skills, such as sustainability, tend to develop later in an employee's career. These skills are not immediately essential but grow as the employee gains more experience and a deeper understanding of the company's operations and long-term goals.

The alignment of employees with the company's values was another significant point discussed. The group stressed the importance of hiring individuals who exhibit a positive attitude, cooperation, and pragmatism. Aligning employees with these values is seen as foundational for fostering a cohesive and productive work environment. This alignment helps ensure that employees not only perform their tasks effectively but also contribute positively to the company culture.

Regarding junior staff, the focus group identified specific challenges related to their expectations and perceptions. Juniors often enter the workforce with preconceived notions about their roles, which can lead to disillusionment if the reality does not match their expectations. Clear communication about the full scope of the position is essential to prevent such disillusionment. The perception of the job title significantly impacts performance, with juniors tending to be more short-term focused and sometimes lacking humility. They often prioritise leadership over other competencies due to their immediate career aspirations. The discussion emphasised the need to strengthen personal skills, particularly in managing expectations, to help juniors adapt better to the work environment. This involves helping them understand the broader context of their roles and the importance of developing a range of competencies over time.

Training in soft skills was highly valued by the focus group. Such training is recognised as an indicator of a candidate's interest and commitment, relevant for both junior and senior profiles. There was a consensus on the importance of reinforcing personal skills, such as expectation management, to improve the overall performance and adaptability of junior

employees. This training is seen as beneficial across different roles and useful in specific selection processes to ensure a well-rounded evaluation of candidates.

For the recruitment process in entry-level positions, the most valued competencies were identified as collaboration, motivation and perseverance, a growth mindset, adaptability, empathy, and learning through experience.

In addition to the general competencies discussed, the focus group provided specific evaluations of the skills necessary for the ideal worker profile. Flexibility, motivation and perseverance, collaboration, communication, and adaptability were all rated highly, with eight evaluations each. These skills are crucial for employees to navigate and thrive in dynamic and challenging work environments. The ability to take the initiative was also emphasised, with eight reviews highlighting its importance. Empathy, coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk, and a growth mindset were noted as essential, with seven assessments each. Self-awareness and self-efficacy, along with individual initiative, received six evaluations, underscoring the importance of personal development and proactive behaviour. Learning management and device protection, both with five reviews, highlight the need for continuous learning and safeguarding digital tools. Self-regulation and critical thinking, with five and four evaluations respectively, were identified as key for maintaining composure and making informed decisions. Protection of personal data and privacy, detecting opportunities, supporting equity, and interacting through digital technologies, each with four evaluations, were recognised as important in maintaining ethical standards and leveraging technology effectively. Lastly, learning through experience, with three evaluations, underscores the value of practical, hands-on learning.

In summary, the evaluation and assessment of skills highlighted the critical nature of communication and empathy for both junior and ideal profiles. While some competencies, like sustainability, develop over time, aligning employees with company values remains essential. The need to manage expectations and provide training in soft skills was identified as crucial for helping junior staff adapt and perform effectively. The comprehensive evaluations of the ideal worker profile's skills provide a clear framework for identifying and developing the competencies that contribute to an employee's success and alignment with organisational goals.

COMPETENCES VALUED DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL
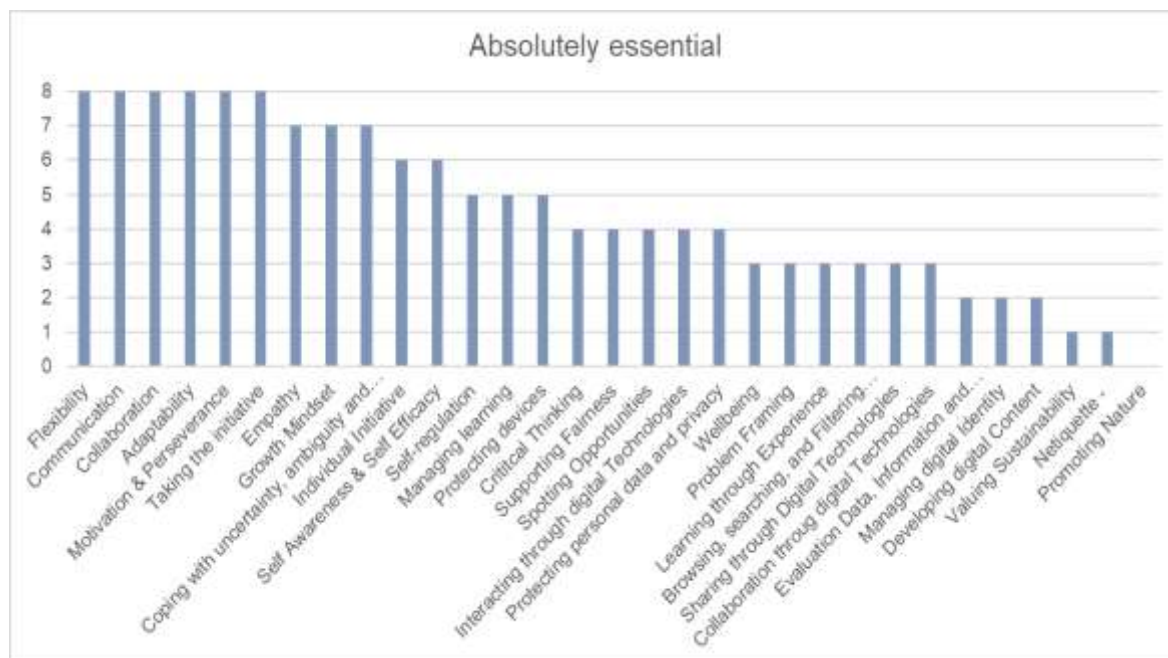
COMPETENCES VALUED FOR AN IDEAL WORKER AS ABSOLUTEL ESSENTIAL
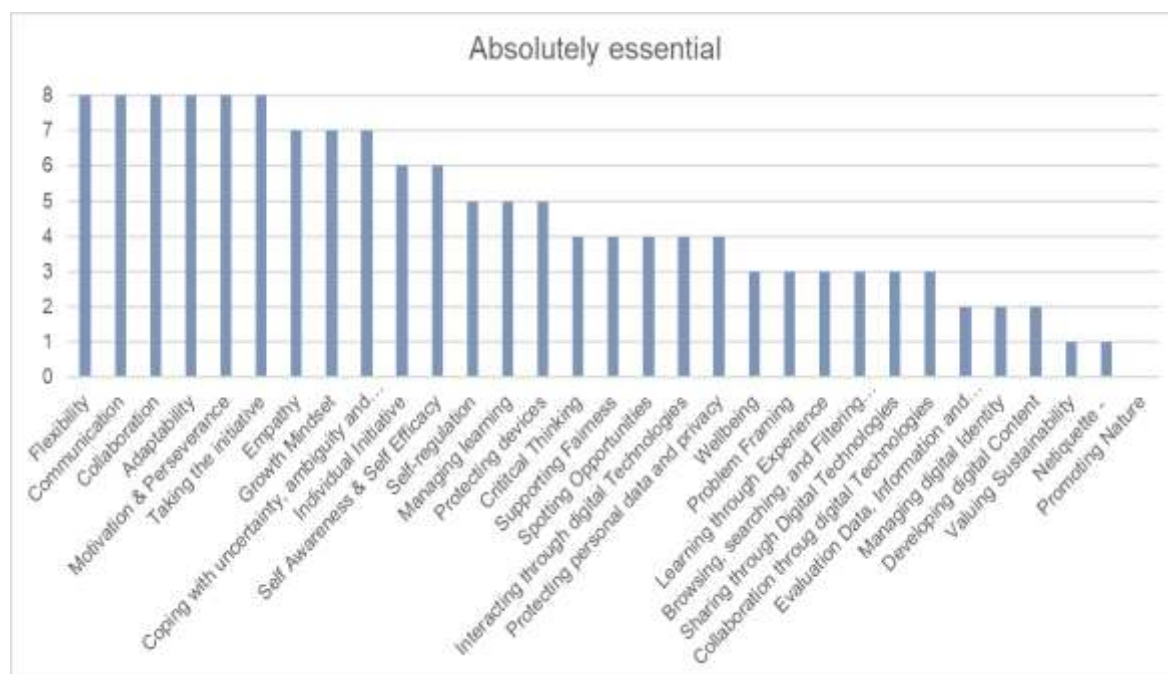
Focus Group B

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	6-10 years
Participant 2	Company 2	College Graduate (or equivalent)	11-15 years
Participant 3	Company 3	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	>15 years
Participant 4	Company 4	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	6-10 years
Participant 5	Company 5	High School Graduate	>15 years
Participant 6	Company 6	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	>15 years
Participant 7	Company 7	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	11-15 years
Participant 8	Company 8	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	6-10 years
Participant 9	Company 9	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	11-15 years
Participant 10	Company 10	College Graduate (or equivalent)	>15 years
Participant 11	Company 11	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	>15 years

Table 6: Participants' Profile (Focus Group B)

Background

Position in the Company (No of Participants per Position)	Company Owner	2
	Managing Director	3
	Member of Board of Directors	0
	General Manager	0
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	1
	HR Staff	5
	Other *(please specify in list)*:	
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	1
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	5
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	2
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	2
	High School Graduate	1
	None of the above	
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*		
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	0
	35-44 years old	3
	45-54 years old	7
	55-64 years old	1
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	0
	6-10 years	3
	11-15 years	3
	>15 years	5
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	0
	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	0
	>15 years	9

Table 7: Participants' Background (Focus Group B)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity *(No of Companies per Industry)*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	
	Mining and Quarrying	1
	Manufacturing	2

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	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	
	Construction	
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	1
	Transportation and Storage	
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	
	Information and Communication	2
	Financial and Insurance Activities	
	Real Estate Activities	
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	1
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	
	Education	1
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	1
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	
	Other Service Activities	1
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	
	Other *(Please specify in list)*: Food	1
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	3
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	1
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	1
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	6

Table 8: Companies (Focus Group B)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

The group formed to participate in FG 2 has been very participatory and has posed challenges in which talent loyalty and teamwork stand out. They state that Junior staff face several significant challenges in the workplace. Three employers identify retention as a primary issue, emphasising the necessity of creating a supportive work environment and career development plans to foster loyalty. Other challenges include integrating young employees into teams, developing a sense of responsibility, and enhancing the ability to work under pressure. Other two participants note that juniors need to build patience, tolerance for frustration, and strong teamwork skills, moving beyond the culture of immediacy. Another two individuals stress the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and having a diverse range of job experiences to develop well-rounded skill sets. Regarding the ideal competencies for junior employees, it's noted that while young professionals may possess strong technical skills, they often lack basic organisational competencies that experienced workers have. Enhancing creativity and problem-solving from various perspectives is crucial. Additionally, it's important to decouple the notion of "junior" from age, as juniors can bring valuable competencies from different roles. The certification of competencies and ensuring they are sector-specific is also critical. Reducing the number of competencies to focus on detailed development in diverse contexts is recommended, along with assessing practical skills to determine acquired competencies.

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?

      a. People at entry-level job positions

      b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

      c. Economically inactive women

      d. Young individuals

      e. Low-qualified adults

The companies focus on hiring diverse profiles, including young technicians, senior talent, interns, freelancers, and individuals with varying levels of qualification, from recent graduates to older individuals. These companies aim to integrate young talent into their teams, offering an attractive work environment with career plans and growth opportunities, as well as technical profiles in specific sectors such as electricity and construction. They also value constant updating and diversity in work experience.

The main challenges they face include employee integration and retention, tolerance for frustration due to the variable nature of projects, and commitment from the entities. The key competencies highlighted are effective communication, teamwork, proactive attitude, listening skills, adaptability, and honesty. Additionally, many of these companies focus on providing continuous training and creating a safe and family-like environment for their employees, which helps improve retention and job satisfaction.

Even though 11 people attended the first part of the FG, only 9 participants did the evaluation questionnaire.

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?

      a. People at entry-level job positions

      b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

      c. Economically inactive women

      d. Young individuals

      e. Low-qualified adults

In the focus group, the following challenges were discussed in recruitment. Young individuals often face challenges related to work readiness, as they may lack practical work experience and an understanding of workplace norms. They frequently require career guidance to align their aspirations with realistic job opportunities and may need significant development in essential soft skills such as effective communication and teamwork.

Low-qualified adults commonly struggle with basic skills deficiencies that hinder their employability. Addressing these gaps requires substantial investment in training and upskilling to prepare them for available positions. Additionally, matching these individuals to suitable job roles that not only fit their current abilities but also offer opportunities for growth presents a significant challenge.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?

      a. People at entry-level job positions

b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
c. Economically inactive women
d. Young individuals
e. Low-qualified adults

In the focus group, the following challenges were discussed. Working with young individuals presents several challenges that organisations need to address proactively. Firstly, guidance and mentorship are crucial to help these individuals navigate their roles and career paths effectively. Providing clear career development pathways and mentorship programs can significantly enhance their professional growth and job satisfaction. Secondly, organisations must create ample development opportunities tailored to young employees, ensuring they can acquire new skills and advance within the organisation. Engagement and retention strategies are also vital to maintain their motivation and commitment over time, fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture that values their contributions.

For low-qualified adults, the focus lies in comprehensive training and development initiatives to bridge their skills gap effectively. Investing in robust training programs that cater to their specific needs and abilities is essential to prepare them for the demands of their roles. Simultaneously, crafting job designs that align with their current skill levels while offering avenues for progression is critical. Establishing support systems within the workplace, including mentoring, coaching, and access to resources, further enhances their chances of success and growth. By addressing these aspects, organisations can effectively support and empower both young individuals and low-qualified adults in achieving their full potential within the workforce.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
a. People at entry-level job positions
b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
c. Economically inactive women
d. Young individuals
e. Low-qualified adults

In the focus group, the most necessary and valued skills for the following groups were discussed:

Long-term unemployed individuals, with a focus on women and youth, face multifaceted challenges upon re-entering the job market. First and foremost, resilience is crucial as they navigate setbacks and periods of unemployment, requiring them to maintain a positive outlook and perseverance in their job search. Motivation and confidence are equally vital, as many may need to rebuild self-esteem and drive to pursue new career opportunities effectively. Additionally, staying updated with technical skills relevant to the current job market is essential to enhance their employability. Networking skills play a pivotal role in establishing professional relationships and support systems that can aid in their job search and career advancement. Adaptability is another critical trait, enabling them to adjust to new work environments and evolving job requirements. Effective communication skills are indispensable for integrating back into teams and interacting confidently with clients, facilitating a smoother transition into the workforce.

Young individuals entering the workforce bring distinct strengths and challenges. Their curiosity and learning agility are assets, allowing them to rapidly acquire new knowledge and adapt to different work

situations. Proficiency in digital literacy is essential, given the pervasive use of technology in modern workplaces. Teamwork skills enable them to collaborate effectively within groups, contributing to collective goals and fostering a cooperative work environment. Clear and effective communication skills are crucial for conveying ideas and building rapport with colleagues and clients alike. Problem-solving abilities are honed through creative thinking and strategizing to overcome obstacles. Moreover, their adaptability and flexibility in taking on new roles and responsibilities demonstrate a willingness to grow and contribute meaningfully to organisational success.

Low-qualified adults face specific challenges that require targeted support and development. Fundamental skills such as basic literacy and numeracy form the foundation for their daily tasks and job functions, requiring ongoing reinforcement and improvement. A strong work ethic, characterised by reliability and dedication, underscores their commitment to performing their roles effectively. Their openness to learning and skill development is essential, necessitating accessible training opportunities tailored to their needs. Effective communication skills enable them to interact confidently with colleagues and supervisors, facilitating smoother workflow and team cohesion. Collaborative teamwork skills are essential for working harmoniously with others, contributing to shared objectives within diverse workplace environments. Adaptability is vital as they navigate different job roles and settings, while problem-solving abilities equip them to identify and implement practical solutions to challenges they encounter. Collectively, addressing these skills and competencies can empower low-qualified adults to thrive in the workplace and contribute positively to organisational success.

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Here are the results of the skill assessment   in the recruitment process as **absolutely essential** by the 9 participants:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1.	Flexibility	8
2.	Communication	8
3.	Collaboration	8
4.	Adaptability	8
5.	Motivation & Perseverance	8
6.	Taking the initiative	8
7.	Empathy	7
8.	Growth Mindset	7
9.	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	7
10.	Individual Initiative	6
11.	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	6
12.	Self-regulation	5
13.	Managing learning	5
14.	Protecting devices	5
15.	Crititcal Thinking	4
16.	Supporting Fairness	4
17.	Spotting Opportunities	4
18.	Interacting through digital Technologies	4
19.	Protecting personal data and privacy	4

20.	Wellbeing	3
21.	Problem Framing	3
22.	Learning through Experience	3
23.	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	3
24.	Sharing through Digital Technologies	3
25.	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	3
26.	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	2
27.	Managing digital Identity	2
28.	Developing digital Content	2
29.	Valuing Sustainability	1
30.	Netiquette -	1
31.	Promoting Nature	0

The results of the skill assessments that are **important** for the 9 participants in the **recruitment process**:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Wellbeing	7
2	Supporting Fairness	7
3	Spotting Opportunities	7
4	Learning through Experience	6
5	Taking the initiative	6
6	Valuing Sustainability	6
7	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	5
8	Promoting Nature	5
9	Empathy	4
10	Problem Framing	4
11	Protecting personal data and privacy	4
12	Crititcal Thinking	4
13	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	4

14	Interacting through digital Technologies	4	
15	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	4	
16	Flexibility	3	
17	Managing learning	3	
18	Individual Initiative	3	
19	Growth Mindset	3	
20	Sharing through Digital Technologies	3	
21	Protecting devices	3	
22	Communication	2	
23	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	2	
24	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	2	
25	Netiquette -	2	
26	Developing digital Content	2	
27	Self-regulation	1	
28	Managing digital Identity	1	
29	Collaboration	0	
30	Adaptability	0	
31	Motivation and perseverance	0	
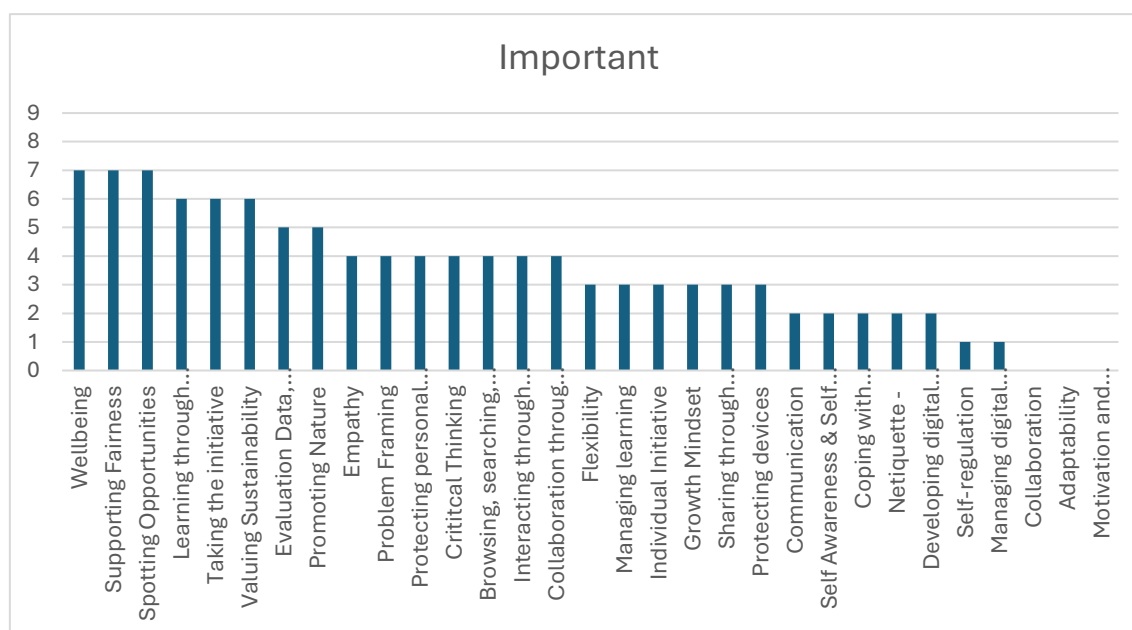
Here are shown the results of the of the skill assessments as **somehow important** for the 9 participants during the **recruitment process**:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Netiquette -	6
2	Managing digital Identity	5
3	Developing digital Content	5
4	Spotting Opportunities	4
5	Sharing through Digital Technologies	4
6	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	4

7	Crititcal Thinking	3	
8	Promoting Nature	3	
9	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	3	
10	Wellbeing	2	
11	Growth Mindset	2	
12	Managing learning	2	
13	Valuing Sustainability	2	
14	Supporting Fairness	2	
15	Problem Framing	2	
16	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	2	
17	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	2	
18	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	2	
19	Interacting through digital Technologies	2	
20	Protecting devices	2	
21	Self-regulation	1	
22	Empathy	1	
23	Protecting personal data and privacy	1	
24	Flexibility	0	
25	Communication	0	
26	Collaboration	0	
27	Adaptability	0	
28	Individual Initiative	0	
29	Motivation & Perseverance	0	
30	Taking the initiative	0	
31	Learning through Experience	0	

Somehow important
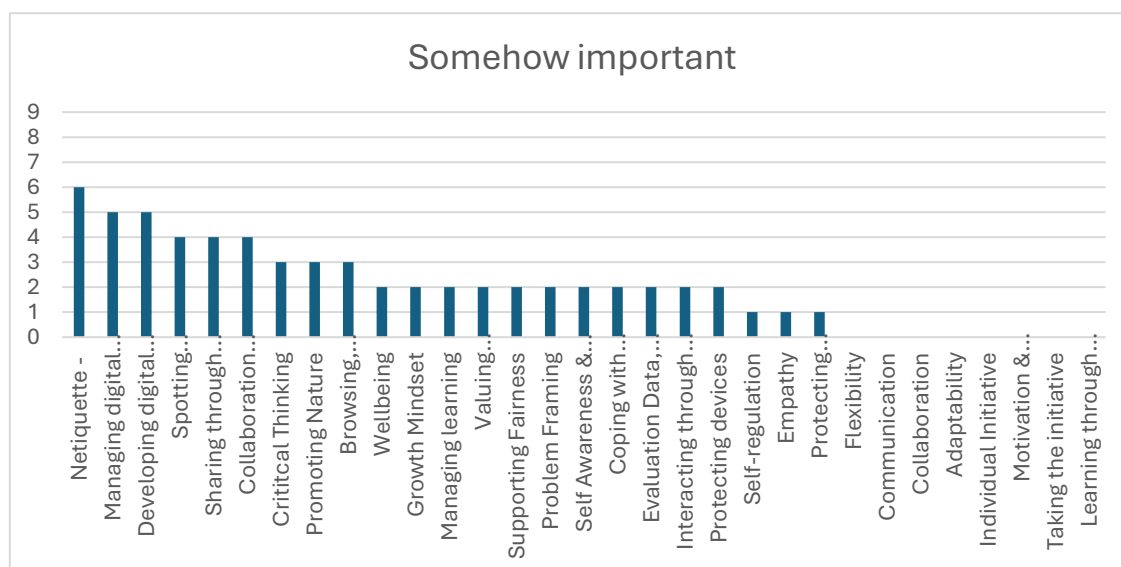
Finally, the results of the skill assessments that are **not important** for the 9 participants for **recruitment process** are the following:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Developing digital Content	2
2	Protecting devices	2
3	Crititcal Thinking	1
4	Promoting Nature	1
5	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	1
6	Taking the initiative	1
7	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	1
8	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	1
9	Interacting through digital Technologies	1
10	Sharing through Digital Technologies	1
11	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	1
12	Managing digital Identity	1
13	Self-regulation	0
14	Flexibility	0
15	Wellbeing	0
16	Empathy	0
17	Communication	0
18	Collaboration	0
19	Growth Mindset	0
20	Managing learning	0
21	Valuing Sustainability	0
22	Supporting Fairness	0
23	Problem Framing	0
24	Adaptability	0
25	Individual Initiative	0
26	Spotting Opportunities	0
27	Motivation & Perseverance	0
28	Learning through Experience	0
29	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	0
30	Netiquette -	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0
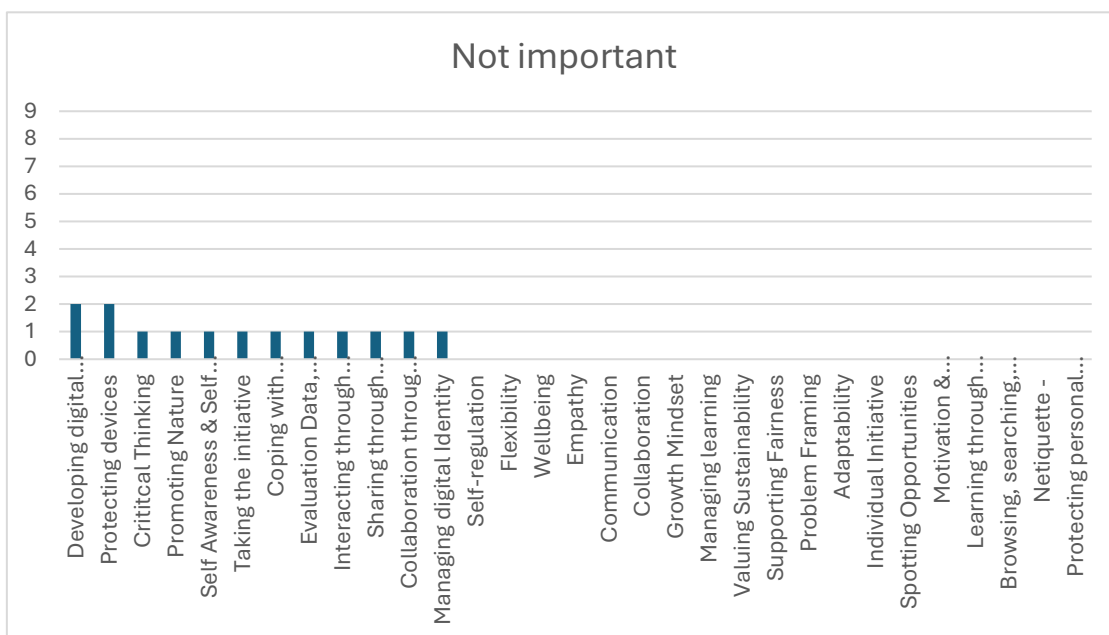
Not important

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on the following scale: 1 (not important), 2 (somehow important), 3 (important), 4 (absolutely essential)?

Here are the results of the skill assessments that are **absolutely essential** for the participants for an **ideal worker**:

Nr.	Skill	Score	Score	Score	
1.	Flexibility	9			
2.	Communication	8			
3.	Collaboration	8			
4.	Adaptability	8			
5.	Individual Initiative	8			
6.	Motivation & Perseverance	8			
7.	Spotting Opportunities	7			
8.	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	7			
9.	Protecting personal data and privacy	7			
10.	Growth mindset	7			
11.	Self-regulation	6			
12.	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	6			
13.	Taking the initiative	6			
14.	Empathy	5			
15.	Crititcal Thinking	5			
16.	Learning through Experience	5			
17.	Wellbeing	4			
18.	Interacting through digital Technologies	4			
19.	Protecting devices	4			

20.	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	4
21.	Managing learning	3
22.	Supporting Fairness	3
23.	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	3
24.	Sharing through Digital Technologies	3
25.	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	3
26.	Netiquette -	3
27.	Managing digital Identity	3
28.	Problem Framing	2
29.	Valuing Sustainability	2
30.	Developing digital Content	1
31.	Promoting Nature	0
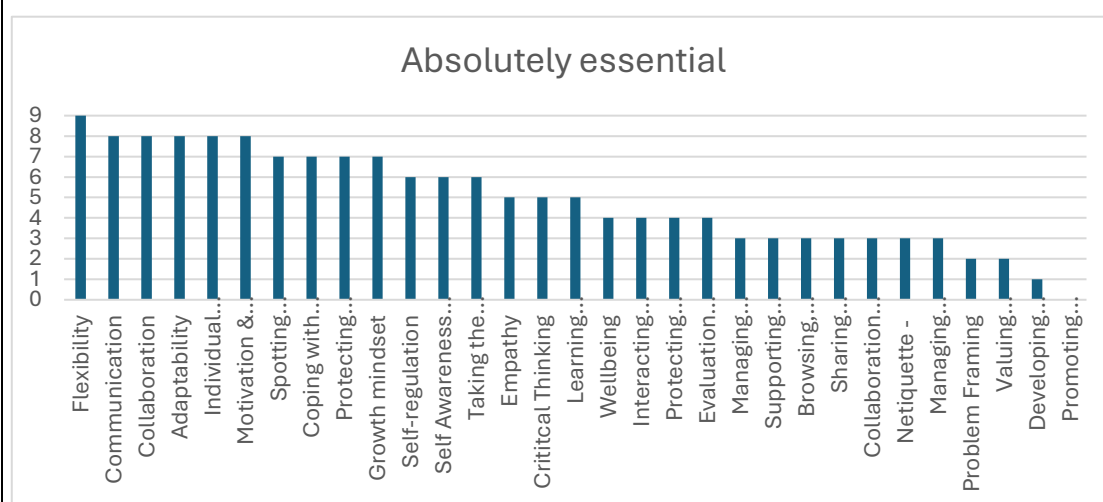
Here are the results of the skill assessments that are **important** for the participants for an **ideal worker**:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Problem Framing	7
2	Promoting Nature	7
3	Managing learning	6
4	Wellbeing	5
5	Supporting Fairness	5
6	Valuing Sustainability	5
7	Empathy	4
8	Crititcal Thinking	4
9	Interacting through digital Technologies	4
10	Protecting devices	4
11	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	4
12	Sharing through Digital Technologies	4
13	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	4
14	Netiquette -	4
15	Managing digital Identity	4
16	Developing digital Content	4

17	Self-regulation	3	
18	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	3	
19	Taking the initiative	3	
20	Learning through Experience	3	
21	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	3	
22	Spotting Opportunities	2	
23	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	2	
24	Protecting personal data and privacy	2	
25	Communication	1	
26	Collaboration	1	
27	Adaptability	1	
28	Individual Initiative	1	
29	Motivation & Perseverance	1	
30	Growth mindset	1	
31	Flexibility	0	
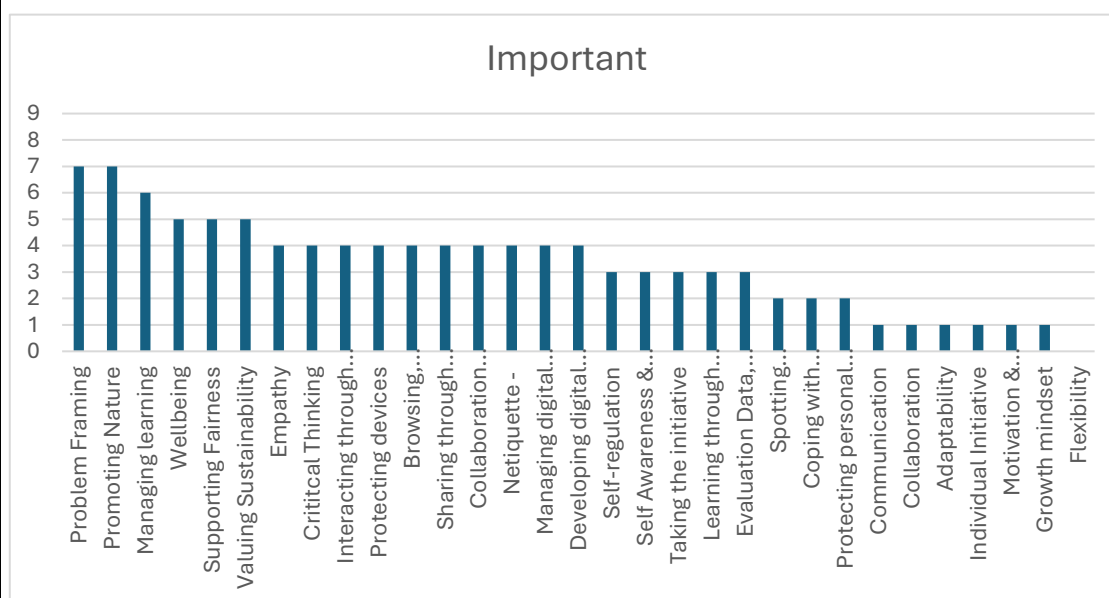
The 9 participants valued the skills, and this are the score results as **somehow important** for an **ideal worker**:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Developing digital Content	3
2	Valuing Sustainability	2
3	Promoting Nature	2
4	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	2
5	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	2
6	Sharing through Digital Technologies	2
7	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	2
8	Netiquette -	2
9	Managing digital Identity	2
10	Growth Mindset	1

11	Supporting Fairness	1
12	Learning through Experience	1
13	Interacting through digital Technologies	1
14	Protecting devices	1
15	Self-regulation	0
16	Flexibility	0
17	Wellbeing	0
18	Empathy	0
19	Communication	0
20	Collaboration	0
21	Crititcal Thinking	0
22	Managing learning	0
23	Problem Framing	0
24	Adaptability	0
25	Individual Initiative	0
26	Spotting Opportunities	0
27	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	0
28	Motivation & Perseverance	0
29	Taking the initiative	0
30	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0

Somehow important
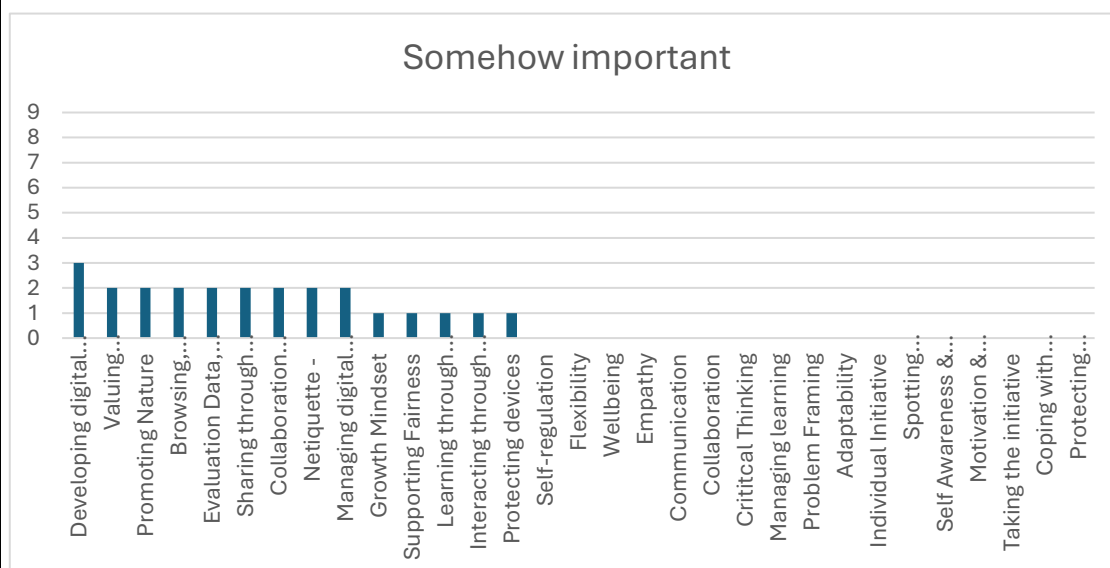
As **no important** skills for an **ideal worker** only the following was voted at least by 1 participant:

Nr.	Skill	Score
1	Developing digital Content	1
2	Self-regulation	0
3	Flexibility	0
4	Wellbeing	0
5	Empathy	0
6	Communication	0

| 7	Collaboration	0
8	Growth Mindset	0
9	Crititcal Thinking	0
10	Managing learning	0
11	Valuing Sustainability	0
12	Supporting Fairness	0
13	Promoting Nature	0
14	Problem Framing	0
15	Adaptability	0
16	Individual Initiative	0
17	Spotting Opportunities	0
18	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	0
19	Motivation & Perseverance	0
20	Taking the initiative	0
21	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	0
22	Learning through Experience	0
23	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	0
24	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	0
25	Interacting through digital Technologies	0
26	Sharing through Digital Technologies	0
27	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	0
28	Netiquette -	0
29	Managing digital Identity	0
30	Protecting devices	0
31	Protecting personal data and privacy	0
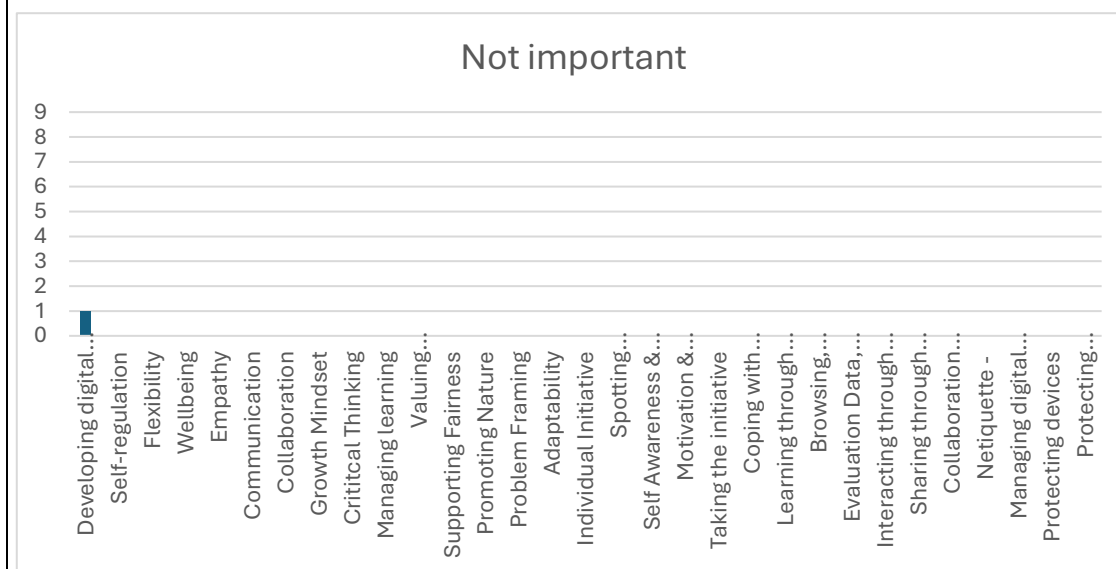
Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Focus group participants discussed their strategies for integrating information based on the guidelines and standards of the certifying institution. They emphasised the approach needed for each competency, highlighting that what works in one sector may not necessarily be applicable or effective in another. This

adaptability is crucial to ensure that competencies are not only relevant but also perfectly tailored to meet specific challenges and expectations within different industries. They also gave great importance to the organisation that certifies these skills, its prestige and rigour, to take it into account when selecting its personnel.

Additionally, the group expressed a nuanced perspective on micro-credentials, viewing them as valuable but not essential for evaluating candidates. They cautioned against the potential drawbacks of attempting to train across too many competencies, for instance, focusing on 20 competencies might be overly ambitious and could hinder the thorough acquisition of these skills. Instead, they recommended prioritising fewer competencies to ensure deeper mastery and applicability in professional settings. This targeted approach, they argued, would better prepare professionals to navigate the complexities and specific demands of their respective fields effectively.

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

The most significant challenges regarding skills mismatch during the recruitment process, as identified by the focus group participants, revolve around the disparity between technical skills and organisational competencies in junior staff. While young professionals often come equipped with strong technical abilities, they frequently lack the essential organisational skills that experienced workers possess. This gap creates difficulties in integrating them into teams, developing a sense of responsibility, and enhancing their ability to work under pressure. Additionally, there is a need to move beyond the culture of immediacy and help juniors build patience, tolerance for frustration, and strong teamwork skills. Retention is a primary issue, with emphasis placed on creating a supportive work environment and career development plans to foster loyalty. The participants also highlighted the importance of adaptability, flexibility, and having a diverse range of job experiences to develop well-rounded skill sets. Moreover, there is a necessity to decouple the notion of "junior" from age, as juniors can bring valuable competencies from different roles. Ensuring the certification of competencies is sector-specific and assessing practical skills to determine acquired competencies are also critical. Efforts should focus on reducing the number of competencies to allow for detailed development across diverse contexts and understanding the practical experience juniors have developed to ascertain the competencies they possess.

Table 9: Participants' Answers (Focus Group B)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

During the FG B, it was identified the challenges of integrating young employees into companies, emphasising responsibility, teamwork, listening skills, and working under pressure. The issue of job abandonment is also noted. The primary challenge, according to this perspective, is retention, which can be addressed by providing a conducive work environment or a clear career plan.

Another perspective highlights the need for frustration tolerance and patience, stressing the importance of working towards long-term solutions rather than immediate fixes. A project-based approach is advocated rather than a hierarchical one.

It also addressed the need of focusing on retention and the importance of working not only based on competencies but also on values. HR managers seek individuals who are up-to-date and curious,

with diverse job experiences that contribute various skills and values, even if those experiences are unrelated to the current job.

Moreover, it emphasised the importance of teamwork and project-based work, as well as listening skills and frustration tolerance, urging a move away from the culture of immediacy. Another points out that the main challenge is retention, particularly for young, less-qualified talent. This perspective values diverse work experiences, offers training plans, and sets small challenges like obtaining a truck licence or taking various courses. It is believed that young talent is always willing to share their opinions, and many group or team activities are encouraged.

The focus group identified the most valued competencies for junior entry positions as Collaboration, Adaptability, Motivation and perseverance, Communication, and Flexibility. These skills are crucial for young professionals entering the workforce, helping them navigate dynamic environments and contribute effectively to team goals. For ideal worker profiles, the most valued competencies were identified as Flexibility, Communication, Collaboration, Adaptability, and Individual Initiative. These skills are essential for professionals who are expected to demonstrate leadership and innovation within their roles.

A focus on low-skilled profiles and the provision of stability, which is highly valued, is highlighted by one contributor. Another notes the high ageing rates in the travel sector and the lack of young people due to its highly stressful nature, suggesting the recruitment of young, highly qualified personnel from other companies. Communication skills, the impoverishment of vocabulary, adaptability, and flexibility are highlighted as well.

The ideal competency level for junior profiles often lacks the digital skills that more experienced workers, even non-digital natives, may possess. Young profiles typically have a high technical level but need to develop basic organisational competencies, which the ideal profile already has. Therefore, it is often necessary for juniors to acquire these skills beforehand. Creativity should be enhanced and approached from different perspectives.

The term "junior" should not be synonymous with "young", as there are juniors with different competencies acquired through various jobs. It is important to know who certifies these competencies and how, as the certification's origin is crucial. Competency application varies across sectors, and certifications may be too general for specific sector needs. Many competencies are more of a result, so it is better to reduce the number of competencies to focus on them in detail across various domains. Efforts should be made to understand the practical experience juniors have developed to ascertain the competencies they have acquired.

COMPETENCES VALUED DURING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS
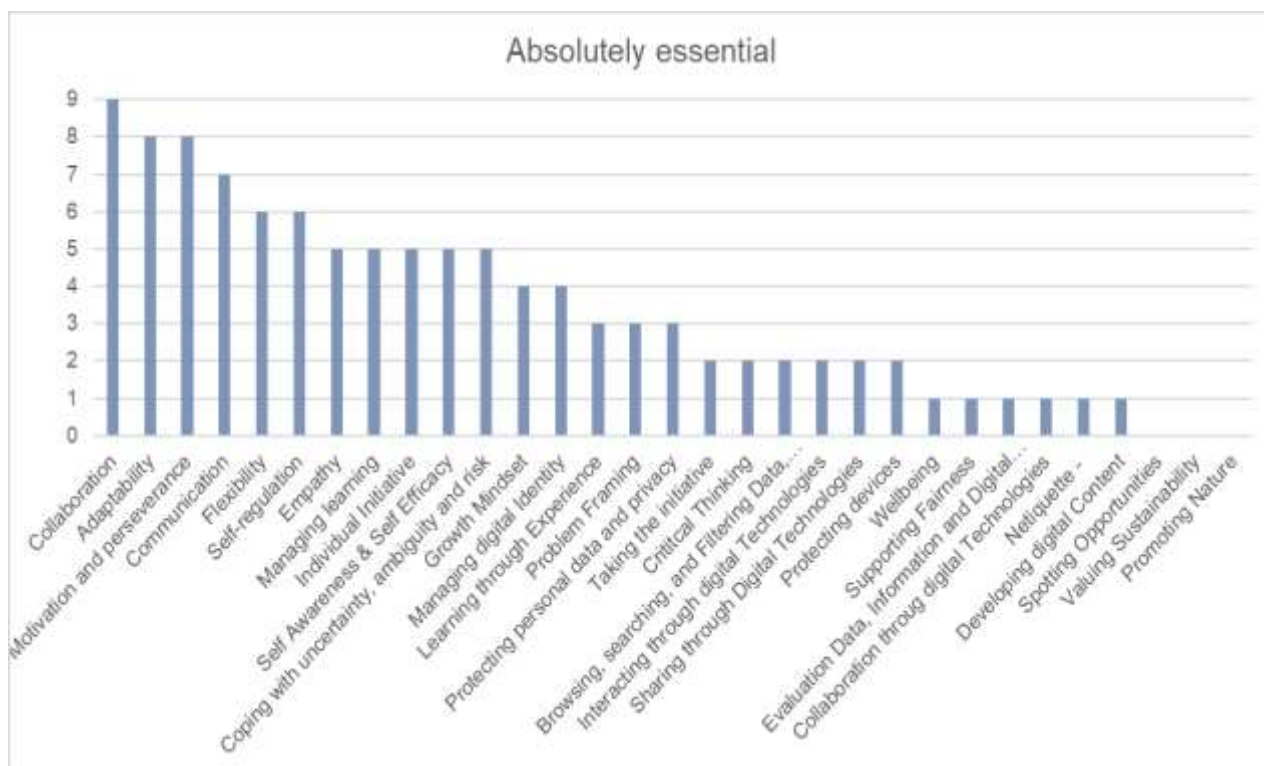
COMPETENCES VALUED FOR AN IDEAL WORKER
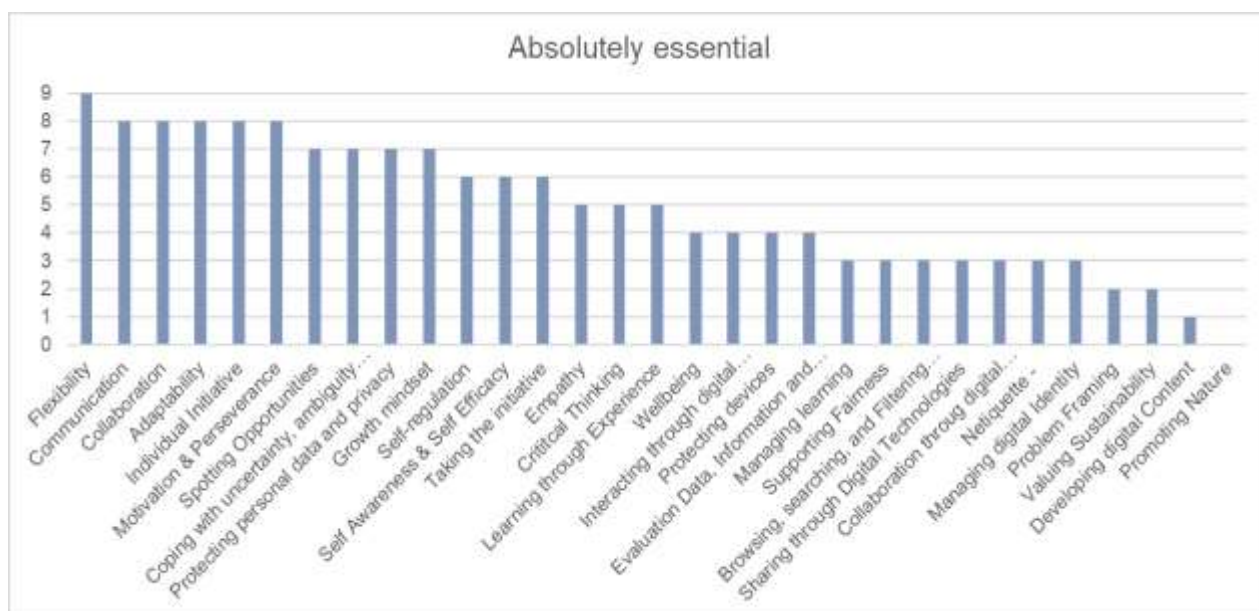
Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus Group A and B

The focus group discussions provided a unique perspective on the skills necessary for both junior and ideal worker profiles within an organisation. These findings revealed distinct priorities in essential competencies for junior positions across various industries **during the recruitment process. For entry-level junior positions, competencies such as Collaboration, Motivation & Perseverance, Adaptability, Communication, Empathy and Growth Mindset were highlighted as critical.** These skills are fundamental for fostering teamwork, adapting to new challenges, and establishing effective communication within teams. Skills related to managing learning, coping with uncertainty, and protecting personal data were also emphasised, reflecting the importance of foundational abilities in early career stages.

In addition, competencies deemed essential **for ideal worker profiles included Flexibility, Communication, Collaboration, Adaptability, Motivation & Perseverance and Individual Initiative** underscoring the need for professionals to demonstrate leadership, innovation, and adaptability in dynamic work environments. Skills like Critical Thinking, Spotting Opportunities, and Interacting through digital Technologies were also prioritised, reflecting the advanced capabilities required to navigate complex scenarios and drive organisational growth.

Less essential competencies for both junior and ideal workers included activities like **Interacting through digital Technologies, Valuing Sustainability, and Developing digital Content**, which were perceived as less immediately crucial but still valuable for broader skill development and organisational alignment. These competencies were perceived as less immediately essential compared to others, possibly due to a perceived emphasis on more foundational skills in the early stages of career development.

Interestingly, while skills like sustainability were noted to develop over time, the immediate focus on foundational competencies suggests a strategic approach to early career development. This includes managing expectations among junior staff, who often enter with idealised perceptions that may not match reality, necessitating clear communication about role responsibilities. Competencies such as motivation and perseverance and critical thinking are critical to problem-solving, decision-making, and maintaining productivity in challenging situations, reflecting their integral role in shaping effective employees.

Soft skills training emerged as a key point for evaluating candidates' adaptability and growth potential across different roles. It was viewed as instrumental in helping junior staff navigate challenges like integration into teams and managing expectations, thereby enhancing overall performance and retention rates.

The ideal worker profile discussions further highlighted competencies like adaptability, creativity, and problem-solving as crucial for thriving in dynamic work environments. These skills, combined

with a proactive mindset and digital literacy, underscored the evolving expectations placed on today's workforce.

Challenges specific to junior staff included retention concerns and the need for patience, teamwork, and resilience in handling workplace pressures. Addressing these challenges often involves promoting a supportive work culture and offering structured career development paths to foster loyalty and skill enhancement.

It is worth noting that participants, when referring to "retention" of talent and employees, spoke of "familiarisation". In other words, there is a shift towards this new term as they aim to integrate employees into a more familiar and welcoming environment, less formal in a corporate sense. This approach allows employees to identify with the company, ensuring their continued presence in the role in an organic and comfortable manner.

As a result, the focus group analysis emphasised the dual importance of foundational and evolving competencies in shaping junior and ideal worker profiles. It highlighted the role of early skill development, clear communication, and ongoing training in preparing junior employees for long-term success within organisational frameworks. This approach not only addresses immediate operational needs but also cultivates a workforce capable of sustained growth and adaptation in a competitive landscape.

The final results for the two focus groups on the most valued skills in recruitment:

Nr.	**Skills**	Score
1.	Collaboration	16
2.	Motivation & Perseverance	14
3.	Adaptability	13
4.	Communication	11
5.	Empathy	10
6.	Growth Mindset	10
7.	Flexibility	9
8.	Managing learning	9
9.	Learning through Experience	7
10.	Protecting personal data and privacy	7
11.	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	7
12.	Self-regulation	7
13.	Individual Initiative	6
14.	Taking the initiative	5
15.	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	5
16.	Protecting devices	5
17.	Problem Framing	4
18.	Managing digital Identity	4
19.	Wellbeing	3
20.	Supporting Fairness	2
21.	Interacting through digital Technologies	2

22.	Valuing Sustainability	2
23.	Crititcal Thinking	2
24.	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	2
25.	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	2
26.	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	2
27.	Sharing through Digital Technologies	2
28.	Developing digital Content	1
29.	Netiquette	1
30.	Spotting Opportunities	0
31.	Promoting Nature	0
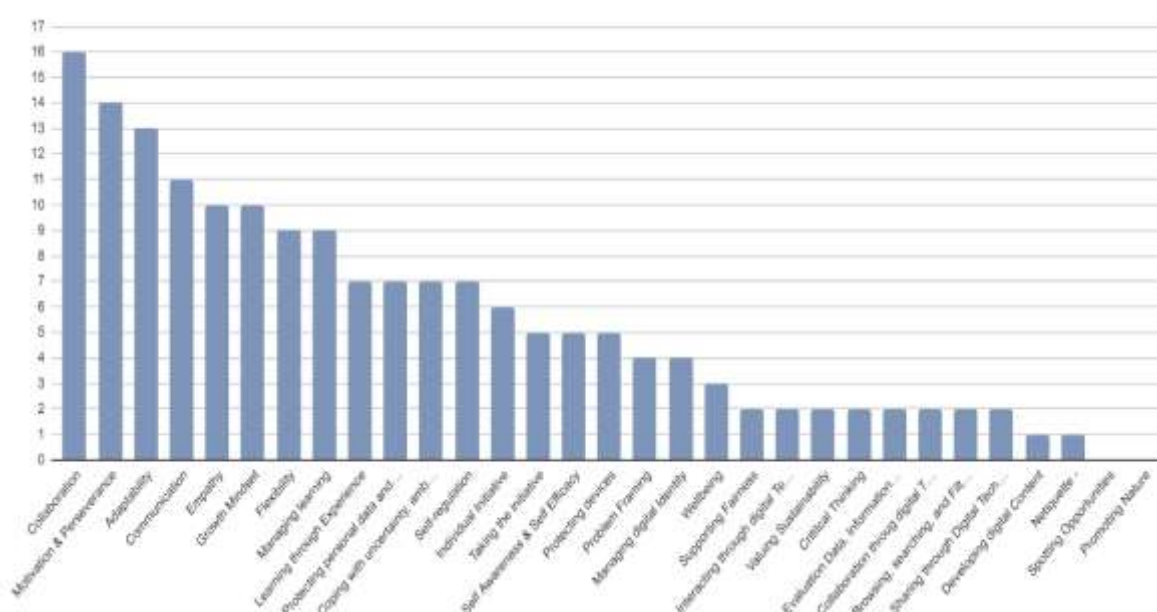
Here is the assessment for the ideal candidate from the two focus groups:

Nr.	Skills	Score
1.	Flexibility	17
2.	Communication	16
3.	Collaboration	16
4.	Adaptability	16
5.	Motivation & Perseverance	16
6.	Individual Initiative	14
7.	Taking the initiative	14
8.	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	14
9.	Growth mindset	14
10.	Empathy	12
11.	Self Awareness & Self Efficacy	12
12.	Self-regulation	11
13.	Spotting Opportunities	11
14.	Protecting personal data and privacy	11

15.	Crititcal Thinking	9
16.	Protecting devices	9
17.	Managing learning	8
18.	Learning through Experience	8
19.	Interacting through digital Technologies	8
20.	Wellbeing	7
21.	Supporting Fairness	7
22.	Browsing, searching, and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	6
23.	Evaluation Data, Information and Digital Content	6
24.	Sharing through Digital Technologies	6
25.	Collaboration throug digital Technologies	6
26.	Problem Framing	5
27.	Managing digital Identity	5
28.	Netiquette	4
29.	Valuing Sustainability	3
30.	Developing digital Content	3
31.	Promoting Nature	0
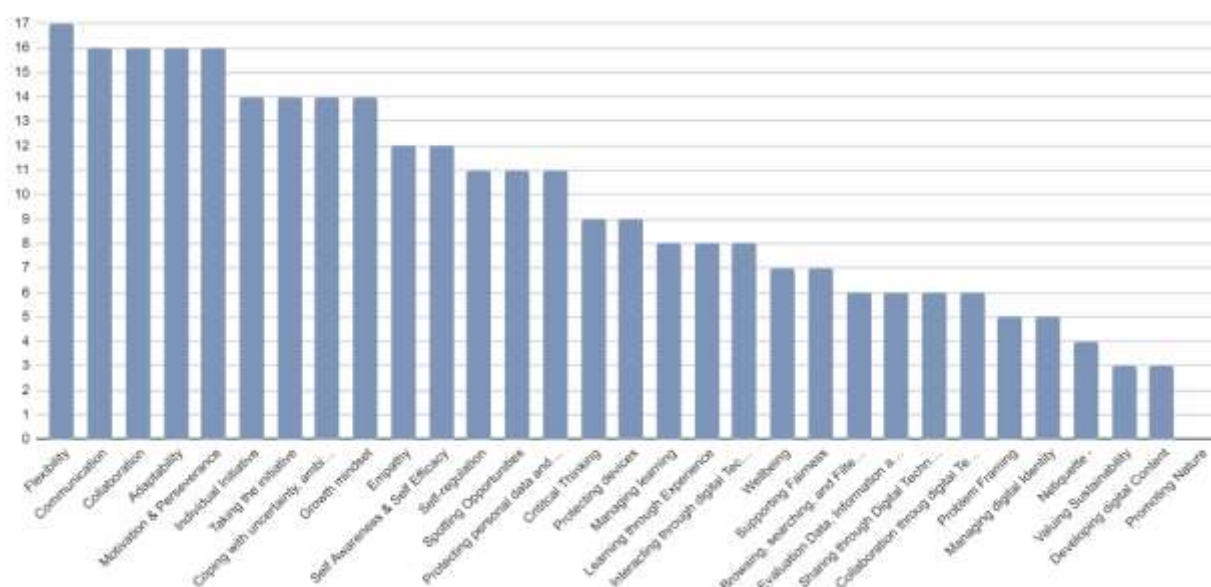
SITUATION IN SPAIN REGARDING SKILL MISMATCH AND MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Microcredentials in Spain are becoming increasingly important in addressing the skill mismatches prevalent in the labor market. These mismatches occur when there is a disparity between the skills possessed by the workforce and those required by employers. This gap is often exacerbated by rapid technological advancements and the evolving demands of the green economy.

In the education sector, particularly in the context of continuous learning and professional development, **Microcredentials are increasingly significant in Spain** These credentials are

obtained after completing short, focused training programs, typically less than 15 ECTS credits, aimed at acquiring specific skills and adaptable to the needs and availability of adult learners.

The Spanish Ministry of Universities has developed the Plan Microcreds, funded with 50 million euros as part of the European Union's Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan. The main goal of this plan is to promote the creation and dissemination of microcredentials in Spanish universities. Microcredentials are a key tool for:

- **Reconciliating skills with employment opportunities**: adapting to technological changes and the transition to a green economy.
- **Promoting a knowledge society**: helping the population keep pace with technological and social advancements.
- **Expanding access to higher education:** offering a flexible entry route for adults who do not meet traditional university entry requirements.
- **Fostering social inclusion**: designing specific training programs for vulnerable groups, such as refugees or the unemployed.

Over 60 universities and higher education institutions in Spain are implementing microcredential programs in various fields. The Plan Microcreds proposes a set of 41 specific actions to develop and promote microcredentials within the Spanish university system, ensuring these trainings are accessible, inclusive, and of high quality. This approach aligns with European recommendations on microcredentials and aims to promote lifelong learning as an essential function of Spanish universities

Future Perspectives

The push for microcredentials is also supported by the Organic Law of the University System (LOSU), which strengthens the role of universities in lifelong learning and establishes mechanisms to facilitate access to higher education for individuals without prior university qualifications. This legislation promotes scholarship programs and financial aid to support students in economically and socially vulnerable situations

In conclusion, microcredentials in Spain represent a strategic initiative to enhance continuous learning, align the population's skills with current labor market demands, and expand access to higher education in an inclusive and flexible manner.

GREECE

WP2: Research for the Identification of Key Skills Necessary for Employment
T2.2: Implementation of Two Focus Groups with Employers per Partner Country

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT

PARTNER COUNTRY: *GREECE*

(Association of Thessalian Enterprises and Industries (STHEV) –

DIMITRA Education and Consulting)

INTRODUCTION

Partner(s) Responsible for the Report	Association of Thessalian Enterprises and Industries (STHEV) DIMITRA Education and Consulting

Focus Groups' Details

	Date and Time	Duration	Implementation Mode	Number of Participants	Evidence Available
Focus Group A	11/06/2024, 14:00-16:00	2 hours	☐ Face-to-Face ☒ Online	8 no. of participants	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms
Focus Group B	12/06/2024, 17:00-19:00	2 hours	☒ Face-to-Face ☐ Online	10 no. of participants	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms

Table 1: Focus Groups' Details

Focus Group A

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants

Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	EU Projects Manager	6-10 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Employee	1-5 years
Participant 3	Company 3	Director of Larissa Campus	1-5 years
Participant 4	Company 4	Assistant Accountant	1-5 years
Participant 5	Company 5	Department Manager	>15 years
Participant 6	Company 6	Marketing Manager	6-10 years
Participant 7	Company 7	Head of Research & Development Unit	6-10 years
Participant 8	Company 8	Owner	6-10 years

Table 2: Participants' Profile (Focus Group A)

Background

Position in the Company *(No of Participants per Position)*	Company Owner	1
	Managing Director	1
	Member of Board of Directors	0
	General Manager	1
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	2
	HR Staff	1
	Other *(please specify in list)*: Head of Research & Development Unit Assistant Accountant	2
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	7
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	0
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	1

	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	Master of Business Administration Bachelor in Department of Economics Honours Ba In English Language And Literature – Uth, Greece Honours Ma In Women, Gender And Society – Ucd, Ireland Bachelor of Communication / Journalism, Panteion University Master in Business Administration, University of Thessaly BSc in Economic Sciences Bachelors in Statistics Science Masters in International Business Bachelor In Business Administration	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	3
	35-44 years old	5
	45-54 years old	0
	55-64 years old	0
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	3
	6-10 years	4
	11-15 years	0
	>15 years	1
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	3
	6-10 years	4
	11-15 years	0
	>15 years	1

Table 3: Participants' Background (Focus Group A)

1.2 Companies

	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	**2**
Industry of Economic Activity *(No of Companies per Industry)*	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0
	Construction	0
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	0
	Transportation and Storage	0
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	0

	Information and Communication	0
	Financial and Insurance Activities	0
	Real Estate Activities	0
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	**1**
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	**2**
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	0
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	0
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other *(Please specify in list)*: Logistics & DG Management Vocational training, Consulting Consulting Services	**3**
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	3
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	3
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	2
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	0

Table 4: Companies (Focus Group A)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

N/A

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?

     a. People at entry-level job positions
     b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
     c. Economically inactive women
     d. Young individuals
     e. Low-qualified adults

Young entry-level workers and low-qualified adults are more frequently hired compared to women and the long-term unemployed. Companies prefer low-qualified adults for their contemporary skills and flexibility, despite their limited experience. Young workers benefit from their adaptability and eagerness to learn. In contrast, women and the long-term unemployed face challenges due to prolonged periods without work, family obligations and concerns among employers about their skill levels and adaptability.

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?

     a. People at entry-level job positions
     b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
     c. Economically inactive women
     d. Young individuals
     e. Low-qualified adults

After discussion with the participants, these answers emerged overall:

1. Women:

- **Family Obligations:** One company highlighted that women with children or family obligations face significant challenges in balancing work and personal life.
- **Muscle Stress:** Another respondent mentioned the physical demands of certain jobs, making it difficult for women to perform due to muscle stress.
- **No Issues in Female-owned Companies:** A company owned by women reported no significant challenges in employing women.

2. Young People at entry-level job positions:

- **Lack of Experience:** Multiple respondents pointed out that young people often lack previous work experience, requiring time to adjust and adapt to the work environment.
- **Education-Reality Gap:** Several companies noted a disconnect between educational training and workplace needs, suggesting the need for induction courses, practical training, and soft skills development.
- **High Turnover:** One company mentioned that young employees might leave easily to pursue further academic opportunities or to work abroad, which affects job stability and commitment.
- **Presentation and Induction:** There were suggestions for better presentation of company skills and operations to new young employees to help them integrate better.

3. Low-qualified Adults:

- **Coping with Demands:** Companies mentioned that low-qualified adults sometimes struggle to meet job demands and need upskilling, especially with evolving technology.
- **Specialization Needs:** One company highlighted the need for gradual specialization to help low-skilled workers reach the required level of competence.

- **Reactions to Change:** Low-skilled adults often react negatively to new technologies and methods, requiring small steps for effective adaptation.

4. Long-term Unemployed:

- **Reintegration Difficulties:** Several respondents emphasized the challenges of reintegrating long-term unemployed individuals due to their extended absence from the workforce and associated difficulties in adjusting to a regular work routine.
- **Motivation and Retention:** Companies noted the need for strong motivational strategies to retain long-term unemployed employees, who might quit easily if not adequately supported.
- **Perceived Challenges:** The long-term unemployed often feel the difficulties more acutely and need to exert more effort than other categories to reintegrate successfully.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
  a. People at entry-level job positions
  b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
  c. Economically inactive women
  d. Young individuals
  e. Low-qualified adults

1. Women:

- No specific challenges were mentioned regarding working with women.

2. Young People at entry level positions:

- **Lack of Experience:** Several respondents noted that young people often lack work experience and familiarity with working environments, making it challenging for them to adjust.
- **Cultural and Generational Gap:** One company highlighted cultural differences and a generational gap, stating that young people are less engaged and perform more typical tasks, lacking deeper professional engagement.
- **Mobile Services Dependency:** Another respondent pointed out that young people's reliance on mobile services diminishes their sense of responsibility and professional consciousness.
- **Need for Induction:** There was a consensus on the necessity for comprehensive induction programs to help young people integrate better into the workforce.
  3. Low-qualified adults:
- Low-qualified adults face challenges in collaboration due to lack of technical knowledge, difficulty adapting to job demands, and communication and collaboration issues.
  4. Long-term unemployed:
- Long-term unemployed individuals also encounter challenges in collaboration, including difficulties reintegrating into the workforce, adjusting to job requirements, and issues with communication and teamwork.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
  a. People at entry-level job positions
  b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
  c. Economically Inactive Women
  d. Young individuals
  e. Low-qualified adults

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1. Low-qualified adults:

Many companies prioritize employing low-qualified adults. They find this group productive and well-suited for administrative tasks. Additionally, they value the reliability and work ethic of these employees. One company highlighted their need for adults with low skills due to the nature of their work.

2. Young People at entry-level job positions:

Young people are highly sought after for their fresh ideas and energy. Several companies favor young individuals, especially for internships and practical training programs. One respondent emphasized the importance of young professionals at the beginning of their specialization. Another mentioned the appeal of young people starting their careers, highlighting their potential for growth within the company.

3. Women:

Women, particularly young women, are preferred by some companies, especially for practicum positions. One company mentioned their balanced workforce, comprising half men and half women. However, there is a tendency to employ fewer women in roles that demand physical labor, as indicated by one respondent.

4. Long-term Unemployed:

The long-term unemployed are the least favored category. Several companies indicated a reluctance to employ this group unless specific programs or incentives, such as those offered by DYPA, are available. The primary concern is the perceived lack of current skills and the potential challenges in integrating long-term unemployed individuals into the workforce.

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

After extensive discussion and analysis of the 31 key skills, participants came up with the 20 most important for the recruitment process for entry-level positions and rated them:

1. **Adaptability-4**
2. **Collaboration-3,75**
3. **Flexibility-3,625**
4. **Communication-3,625**
5. **Protecting Personal Data and Privacy-3,5**
6. **Self-Regulation-3,25**
7. **Growth Mindset-3,25**
8. **Critical Thinking-3,25**
9. **Interacting through Digital Technologies-3,25**
10. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy-3,125**
11. **Supporting Fairness-3**
12. **Motivation & Perseverance-3**
13. **Learning through Experience-3**
14. **Wellbeing-2,875**
15. **Empathy-2,75**
16. **Collaboration through Digital Technologies-2,75**
17. **Netiquette-2,75**
18. **Managing Digital Identity-2,75**
19. **Problem Framing-2,625**
20. **Individual Initiative-2,625**
21. Taking the Initiative-2,625
22. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk-2,625

23. Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content-2,625
24. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content-2,5
25. Developing Digital Content-2,5
26. Protecting Devices-2,5
27. Managing Learning-2,375
28. Sharing through Digital Technologies-2,375
29. Spotting Opportunities-2,375
30. Valuing Sustainability-2,25
31. Promoting Nature-2,125

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

After extensive discussion and analysis of the 31 key skills, participants concluded on the 20 most important for an ideal worker in their company/enterprise at entry level and rated them:

1. **Flexibility-3,75**
2. **Communication-3,75**
3. **Adaptability-3,75**
4. **Self-Regulation-3,625**
5. **Collaboration-3,625**
6. **Growth Mindset-3,625**
7. **Critical Thinking-3,625**
8. **Protecting Personal Data and Privacy-3,625**
9. **Supporting Fairness-3,5**
10. **Protecting Devices-3,5**
11. **Wellbeing-3,375**
12. **Motivation & Perseverance-3,375**
13. **Netiquette-3,375**
14. **Managing Digital Identity-3,375**
15. **Managing and Learning-3,25**
16. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy-3,25**
17. **Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk-3,25**
18. **Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content-3,25**
19. **Empathy-3,125**
20. **Problem Framing-3,125**
21. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Technologies-3,125
22. Spotting Opportunities-3
23. Taking the Initiative-3
24. Learning through Experience-3
25. Interacting through Digital Technologies-3
26. Collaborating through Digital Technologies-3
27. Valuing Sustainability-2,875
28. Individual Initiative-2,875
29. Developing Digital Content-2,875
30. Promoting Nature-2,75
31. Sharing through Digital Technologies-2,75

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Most participants think micro-credentials should be considered in hiring, stressing the certifying organization's reputation and reliability. They have concerns about course quality and skill coverage, but some view it positively if modules are clearly outlined.
Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?
Skills mismatch makes recruitment tough, especially for low-skilled adults. Limited job progression and training worsen this. Worker motivation issues also hinder labor retention. Firms must adjust wages to keep qualified workers from leaving for better opportunities.
Question 9: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable
Question 10: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable

Table 5: Participants' Answers (Focus Group A)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

The survey responses indicate a balanced representation of micro, small, and medium enterprises across various sectors, including manufacturing, logistics, vocational training, education, consulting services, and finance. Companies prioritize hiring low-qualified adults for their reliability and suitability for administrative tasks, and young people for their fresh ideas and growth potential. Women are valued, especially in practicum positions, but face challenges in physically demanding roles. Long-term unemployed individuals are the least preferred due to reintegration difficulties and perceived skill gaps.

Key skills valued during recruitment and for ideal workers include communication, collaboration, self-regulation, flexibility, planning and management, and critical thinking. While there is openness towards considering micro-credential certifications, their acceptance depends on the credibility and thoroughness of the certification process. The main challenges regarding skills mismatch include managing overqualified employees' motivation and retention and addressing the digital skills gap among underqualified candidates. Overall, tailored support and development programs are essential for integrating diverse employee categories effectively.
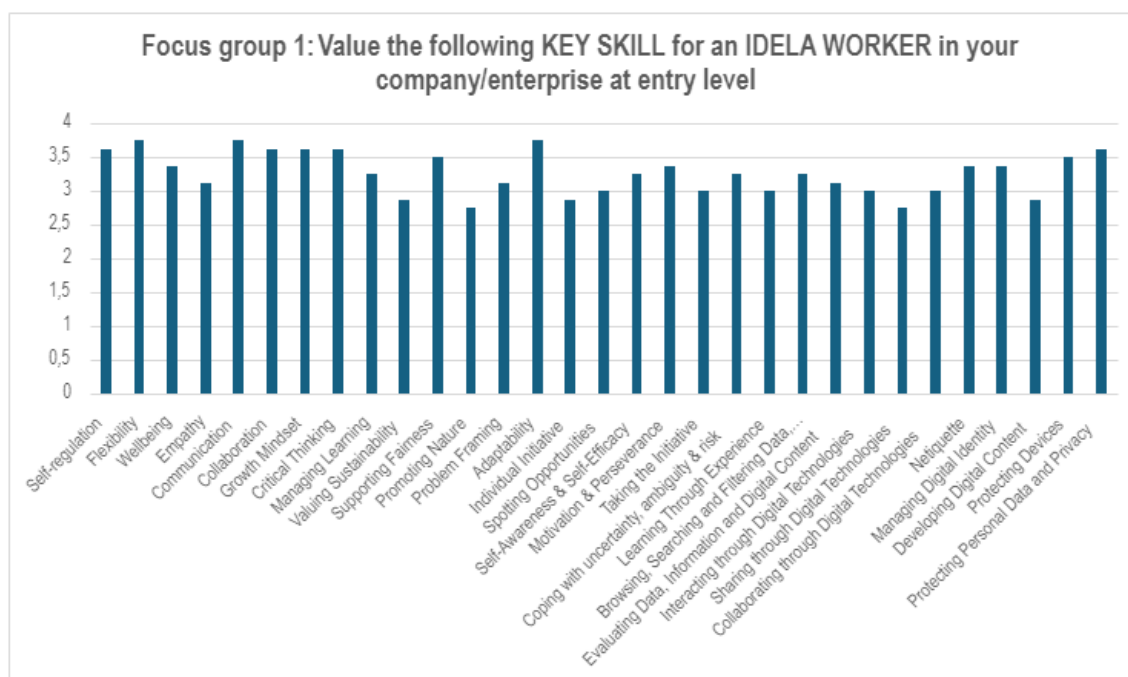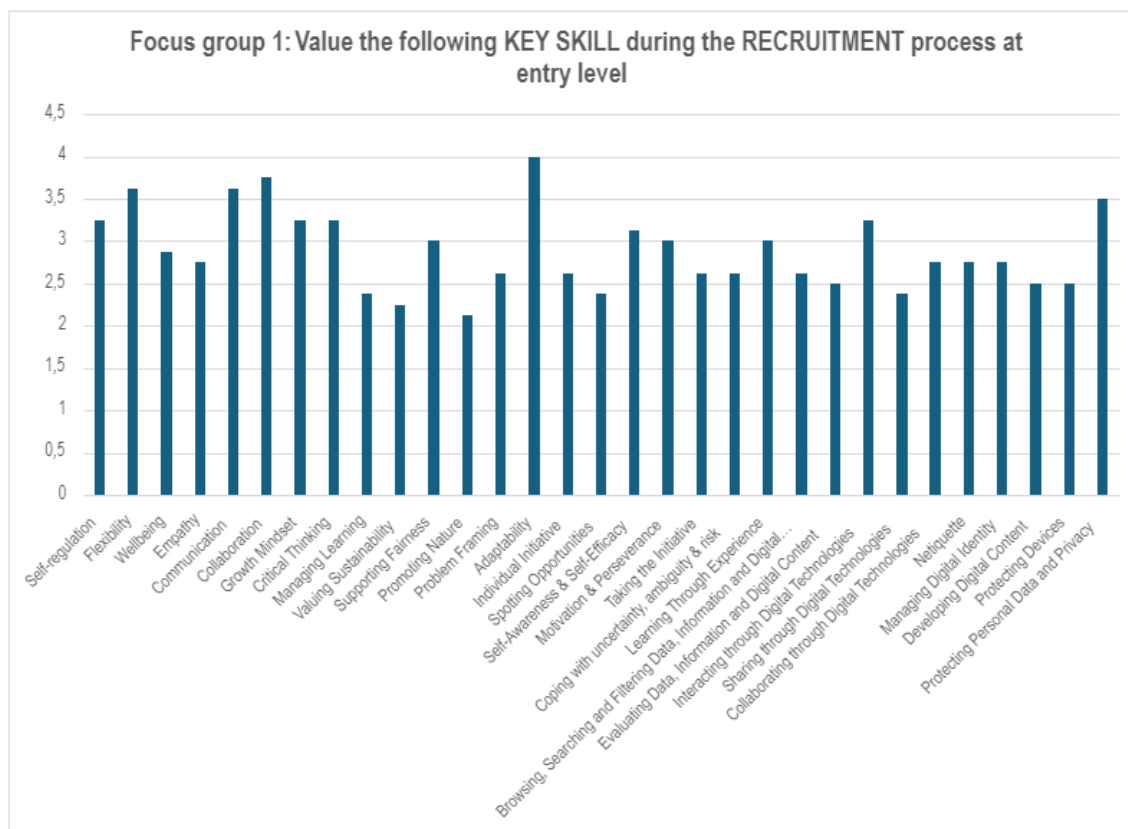
Focus group 1: Value the following KEY SKILL during the RECRUITMENT process at entry level

Focus group 1: Value the following KEY SKILL for an IDELA WORKER in your company/enterprise at entry level

Focus Group B

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	Account Coordinator	11-15 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Account Manager	>15 years
Participant 3	Company 3	Chief Scientific Officer	1-5 years
Participant 4	Company 4	Account Coordinator	1-5 years
Participant 5	Company 5	Sales	11-15 years
Participant 6	Company 6	Sales	1-5 years
Participant 7	Company 7	Production Office	1-5 years
Participant 8	Company 8	Sales	>15 years
Participant 9	Company 9	Sales	6-10 years
Participant 10	Company 10	Sales	>15 years

Table 6: Participants' Profile (Focus Group B)

Background

Position in the Company	Company Owner	0
	Managing Director	0
	Member of Board of Directors	0

(No of Participants per Position)	General Manager	0
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	2
	HR Staff	0
	Other *(please specify in list)*:	8
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	7
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	1
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	0
	High School Graduate	1
	None of the above	1
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	Bachelors in economics Master in business administration Bachelor's Degree in Economics Master's Degree in Finance of Energy Markets Accreditation as a Mediator by Hellenic Min. of Justice Accounting & Finance	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	5
	35-44 years old	2
	45-54 years old	3
	55-64 years old	0
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	4
	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	2
	>15 years	3
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	3
	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	4

Table 7: Participants' Background (Focus Group B)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity *(No of Companies per Industry)*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	**6**
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0
	Construction	0
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	0

	Transportation and Storage	0
	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	0
	Information and Communication	0
	Financial and Insurance Activities	0
	Real Estate Activities	0
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	0
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	0
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	0
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other *(Please specify in list)*:	**4**
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	0
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	1
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	8
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	1

Table 8: Companies (Focus Group B)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

As observed, most companies employ a large number of employees, so they are well acquainted with the needs and shortages that exist.

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?
     a. People at entry-level job positions
     b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
     c. Economically inactive women
     d. Young individuals
     e. Low-qualified adults

Young entry-level workers and women tend to be employed more in companies compared to adults with low qualifications and long-term unemployed individuals. Young entry-level workers are often attractive to businesses due to their modern skills and recent education, and they are eager to learn and adapt to new challenges. However, there is a general concern about their lack of work experience. Women benefit from the equality policies implemented by many companies, aiming to eliminate gender disparities in the workplace and include equal pay, flexible working hours, and teleworking options. In contrast, adults with low qualifications and long-term unemployed individuals face greater difficulties in finding employment due to the lack of specialized skills and extended periods of unemployment, which may concern employers about their skill retention and adaptability.

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?
     a. People at entry-level job positions
     b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
     c. Economically inactive women
     d. Young individuals
     e. Low-qualified adults

The main recruitment challenges for the above-mentioned groups are: Women face difficulties due to the nature of manual work in positions such as industrial production, increased rhythm of life in case of family responsibilities. Young entry-level workers find it difficult due to their lack of experience, the constant challenges they face and the possibility of leaving the position for better opportunities. Low-qualified adults face a lack of technical knowledge, low wages and difficulty in adapting and meeting job demands. Finally, the long-term unemployed find it difficult to find stable employment due to the volatility, the seasonality of the jobs often offered to them and the difficulty of re-integration into the labour market after prolonged periods of unemployment.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
     b. People at entry-level job position
     c. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
     d. Economically inactive women
     e. Young individual
     f. Low-qualified adults

The main challenges in collaborating with these groups are: Women face difficulties due to lack of time due to family obligations and inconsistency that can arise. Young entry-level workers struggle due to lack of experience, difficulty working with highly qualified colleagues, the challenges of first-time employment, generational differences in mindset, increased use of mobile devices causing distraction and a sense of lack

of responsibility. Low-skilled adults face challenges in collaboration due to difficulty in adapting to the demands and pace of work, communication and complexity issues compared to high-skilled individuals, causing frustrations in teamwork. Finally, the long-term unemployed face challenges due to lack of experience and difficulty in re-entering the labour market after prolonged periods of unemployment.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically Inactive Women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

The most important skills and competences that employees belonging to each specific group should have been as follows:

Women: Flexibility due to family obligations and the need for self-regulation are essential. It's important to have a growth mindset to tackle professional challenges and evolve. Critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills are also crucial for effective teamwork and problem-solving. Additionally, evaluating sustainability and proficiency in planning and management are vital for addressing contemporary workplace challenges.

Entry-level Youth: Apart from basic skills like flexibility and self-regulation, young individuals need a growth mindset to navigate early career challenges. Critical thinking and collaboration are critical for integrating into the workplace and contributing effectively to team activities. Communication skills and a sense of responsibility play a central role in their professional development and success.

Adults with low qualifications: Learning critical skills such as critical thinking and communication helps them better adapt to job demands. Self-regulation and proficiency in planning and management improve their ability to respond to workplace challenges. Assessing sustainability is also important for integrating into modern business practices and contributing to business sustainability.

Long-term unemployed: Skills in self-regulation and self-management are crucial for their successful reintegration into the job market after long periods of unemployment. Proficiency in planning and management helps them address challenges and effectively organize work tasks. Strategic thinking and collaboration enhance their ability to contribute constructively to team activities and problem-solving in the workplace.

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

After discussion and explanation of 31key skills, the participants decided on the 20 key skills-competences that they consider very important in the process of recruiting for entry-level job positions. This conclusion emerged from the participants' personal experiences, discussion and rated them:
   1. **Wellbeing-3,9**
   2. **Flexibility-3,7**
   3. **Critical Thinking-3,7**
   4. **Promoting Nature-3,6**

5. **Motivation & Perseverance-3,6**
6. **Collaborating through Digital Technoogies-3,6**
7. **Collaboration-3,5**
8. **Growth Mindset-3,5**
9. **Empathy-3,4**
10. **Communication-3,4**
11. **Taking the Initiative-3,4**
12. **Sharing through Digital Technologies-3,4**
13. **Managing Learning-3,3**
14. **Developing Digital Content-3,3**
15. **Problem Framing-3,2**
16. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy-3,2**
17. **Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content-3,2**
18. **Interacting through Digital Technologies-3,2**
19. **Adapatability-3,1**
20. **Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content-3,1**
21. Netiquette-3,1
22. Managing Digital Identity-3,1
23. Protecting Devices-3,1
24. Valuing Sustainability-3
25. Supporting Fairness-3
26. Learning through Experience-3
27. Protecting Personal Data and Privacy-3
28. Self-Regulation-2,9
29. Individual Initiative-2,9
30. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk-2,9
31. Spotting Opportunities-2,7

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

Most participants consider that the ideal worker for their company should have these 20 important key skills. This conclusion emerged through extensive discussion, dialogue, and exchange of opinions among the participants. By sharing their experiences and perspectives, they collectively identified the skills that are essential for success in their respective workplaces and rated them:

1. **Flexibility-3,6**
2. **Wellbeing-3,6**
3. **Valuing Sustainability-3,5**
4. **Spotting Opportunities-3,5**
5. **Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content-3,5**
6. **Growth Mindset-3,4**
7. **Critical Thinking-3,4**
8. **Individual Initiative-3,4**
9. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy-3,4**
10. **Managing Digital Identity-3,4**
11. **Communication-3,3**
12. **Supporting Fairness-3,3**
13. **Adaptability-3,3**

14. **Interacting through Digital Technologies-3,3**
15. **Sharing through Digital Technologies-3,3**
16. **Protecting Personal Data and Privacy-3,3**
17. **Empathy-3,2**
18. **Collaboration-3,2**
19. **Promoting Natyre-3,2**
20. **Learning through Experience-3,2**
21. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content-3,2
22. Developing Digital Content-3,2
23. Self-Regulation-3,1
24. Taking the Initiative-3,1
25. Collaborating through Digital Technologies-3,1
26. Protecting Devices-3,1
27. Managing Learning-3
28. Netiquette-3
29. Motivation and Perseverance-2,9
30. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk-2,9
31. Problem Framing-2,8

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?
Most participants believe that having a micro-credentials certification for the mentioned skills should be considered in the hiring process, emphasizing the importance of reliability and the reputation of the certifying organization. They express concerns about how courses are delivered and the quality of education, as well as whether the certification adequately covers the advertised skills. Nevertheless, some participants consider it positively for hiring, provided that the certification clearly outlines the covered modules and demonstrates the individual's commitment to continuous learning and skill improvement.
Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?
Skills mismatch represents a major challenge in the recruitment process, as a fair distribution of tasks must be ensured. Companies often look for candidates with a high level of education, which makes it difficult for some groups, such as low-skilled adults, to find work. This difficulty is increased by the lack of opportunities for progressive jobs and insufficient training for alternative options. In addition, the lack of motivation from workers can lead to difficulties for the firm to attract and retain sufficient labour. This challenge requires firms to respond in terms of wages, otherwise there is a risk that highly qualified workers will leave for other job options that offer better pay and career opportunities
Question 9: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable
Question 10: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable

Table 9: Participants' Answers (Focus Group B)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

Most participants said that they recruit mainly for entry-level positions and young workers, with a focus on women, then focus on the long-term unemployed and lastly on low-skilled adults. Young

people in entry-level positions and women tend to be employed more than low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed.

Recruitment Challenges

There are several recruitment challenges associated with different groups. For people at entry-level job positions, the primary issues are their lack of experience and the possibility of job-hopping for better opportunities. Long-term unemployed individuals, particularly women and youth, face difficulties reintegrating into the workforce, job instability, and seasonality. Economically inactive women often struggle with family responsibilities, the nature of manual work, and physical strain. Young individuals face challenges due to their lack of experience, generation gap, and potential irresponsibility and immaturity. Low-qualified adults encounter problems related to a lack of technical knowledge, low wages, and difficulty adapting to new roles.

Challenges in Working

When it comes to working with these groups, specific challenges arise. People at entry-level job positions often struggle with a lack of experience, difficulty collaborating with highly qualified colleagues, generational mindset differences, and distraction due to mobile device usage. Long-term unemployed individuals, especially women and youth, suffer from a lack of experience and difficulty re-entering the labor market. Economically inactive women face challenges due to family responsibilities and inconsistency. Young individuals also deal with a lack of experience, difficulty adapting to professional life, and generational mindset differences. Low-qualified adults find it hard to adapt to work demands and pace, and they experience communication and collaboration issues.

Important Skills and Competencies

Different groups require specific skills and competencies to thrive in the workplace. Women benefit from flexibility, self-regulation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, sustainability evaluation, planning, and management. Entry-level youth need flexibility, self-regulation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and a sense of responsibility. Low-qualified adults should focus on developing critical thinking, communication, self-regulation, planning and management, and sustainability evaluation. Long-term unemployed individuals require self-regulation, planning and management, strategic thinking, and collaboration skills to reintegrate successfully into the workforce.

Micro-credentials Certifications

Most participants view micro-credentials certifications positively in the hiring process. They emphasize the importance of the reliability and reputation of the certifying organization, believing that a well-known and respected certifying body can significantly enhance the perceived value of the certification. Another key factor is the delivery method of the courses; participants stress that the way courses are taught, whether online or in-person, synchronous or asynchronous, can impact the effectiveness of the learning experience. Finally, the quality of education provided by the certification program is crucial, with participants concerned about whether the certification adequately covers the advertised skills and competencies. A high-quality education, demonstrated through a well-designed certification program, is seen as a valuable asset in the hiring process.

Focus group 2: Value the following KEY SKILL during the RECRUITMENT process at entry level

Focus group 2: Value the following KEY SKILL for an IDELA WORKER in your company/enterprise at entry level

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

1. **Flexibility-3,66**
2. **Collaboration-3,61**
3. **Communication-3,5**
4. **Critical Thinking-3,5**
5. **Adaptability-3,5**
6. **Wellbeing-3,44**
7. **Growth Mindset-3,38**
8. **Motivation and Perseverance-3,33**
9. **Interacting through Digital Technologies-3,22**
10. **Collaborating through Digital Technologies-3,22**
11. **Protecting Personal Data and Privacy-3,22**
12. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy-3,16**
13. **Empathy-3,11**
14. **Self-Regulation-3,05**
15. **Taking the Initiative-3,05**
16. **Supporting Fairness-3**
17. **Learning through Experience-3**
18. **Promoting Nature-2,94**
19. **Problem Framing-2,94**
20. **Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content-2,94**
21. Sharing through Digital Technologies-2,94
22. Netiquette-2,94
23. Managing Digital Identity-2,94
24. Developing Digital Content-2,94
25. Managing Learning-2,88
26. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content-2,83
27. Protecting Devices-2,83
28. Individual Initiative-2,77
29. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk-2,77
30. Valuing Sustainability-2,66
31. Spotting Opportunities-2,55

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

1. **Flexibility-3,66**
2. **Wellbeing-3,5**
3. **Communication-3,5**
4. **Growth Mindset-3,5**
5. **Critical Thinking-3,5**
6. **Adaptability-3,5**
7. **Protecting Personal Data and Privacy-3,4**
8. **Collaboration-3,38**
9. **Supporting Fairness-3,38**
10. **Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content-3,38**

11. **Managing Digital Identity-3,38**
12. **Self-Regulation-3,33**
13. **Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy-3,33**
14. **Spotting Opportunities-3,27**
15. **Protecting Devices-3,27**
16. **Valuing Sustainability-3,22**
17. **Empathy-3,16**
18. **Individual Initiative-3,16**
19. **Interacting through Digital Technologies-3,16**
20. **Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content-3,16**
21. Netiquette-3,16
22. Managing Learning-3,11
23. Motivation & Perseverance-3,11
24. Learning through Experience-3,11
25. Taking the Initiative-3,05
26. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk-3,05
27. Sharing through Digital Technologies-3,05
28. Collaborating through Digital Technologies-3,05
29. Developing Digital Content-3,05
30. Promoting Nature-3
31. Problem Framing-2,94

Focus Group A-B (TOTAL)
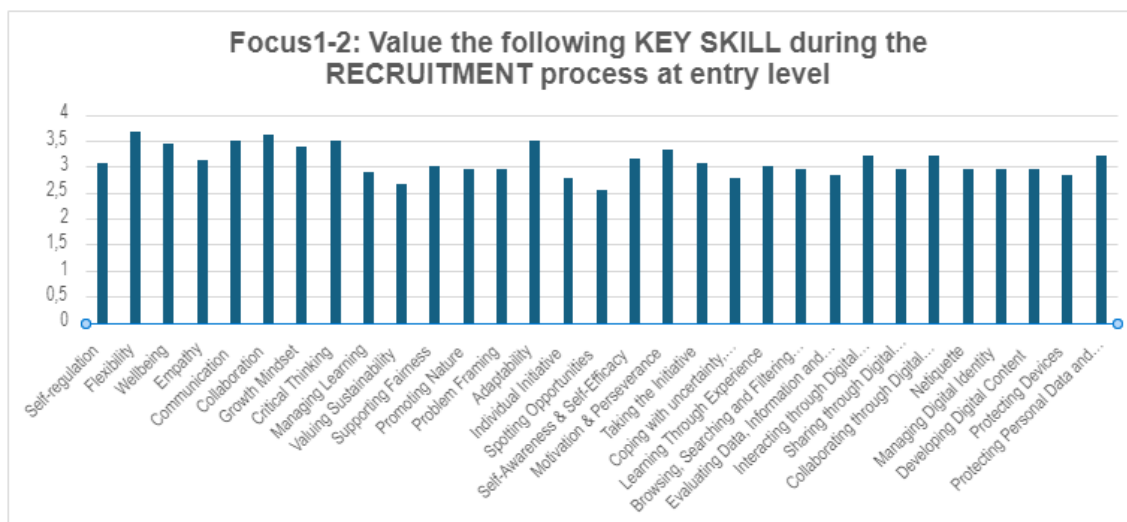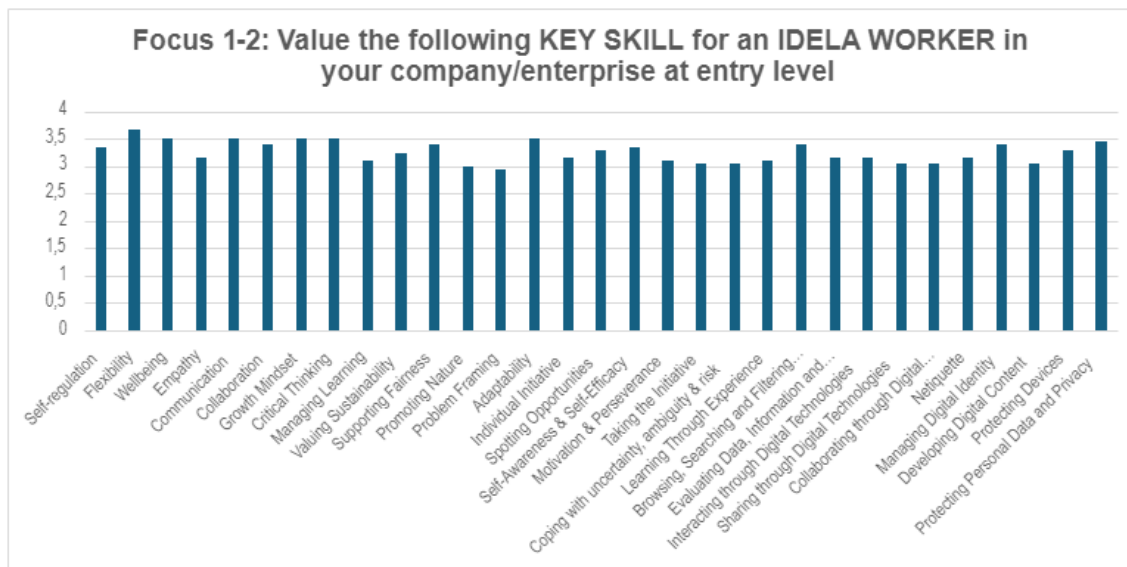
Focus1-2: Value the following KEY SKILL during the RECRUITMENT process at entry level

Focus 1-2: Value the following KEY SKILL for an IDELA WORKER in your company/enterprise at entry level

Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus Group A and B

In conclusion, for both focus groups of the MORAL:

Focus Group A: Participants from various sectors like manufacturing, logistics, education, and finance prioritize hiring low-qualified adults for administrative tasks and value young workers for their fresh ideas. Women are appreciated in practicum roles but face challenges in physically demanding jobs. Long-term unemployed individuals are less preferred due to reintegration issues and perceived skill gaps.

Focus Group B: Most participants focus on hiring for entry-level positions and young workers, particularly valuing women and then the long-term unemployed, with low-skilled adults being least prioritized. Young people and women are more likely to be hired than low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed.

Working Challenges: Entry-level workers deal with experience gaps and generational differences. Long-term unemployed individuals face reintegration challenges. Economically inactive women juggle family duties. Young workers struggle with adaptation and generational differences. Low-skilled adults find it hard to adapt and communicate effectively.

Skills Needed: Women need flexibility, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Entry-level youth require flexibility, critical thinking, and responsibility. Low-skilled adults should develop critical thinking and communication. Long-term unemployed individuals need self-regulation and strategic thinking skills.

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Micro-Credentials: Participants value micro-credentials, focusing on the certifying body's reputation and course delivery method (online vs. in-person). Quality education and coverage of relevant skills are crucial in certification programs for enhancing employability.

Current state of skills mismatch and the role of micro-credentials in Greece

In Greece, the skill development system performs poorly according to the European Skills Index (ESI) from Cedefop. Greece ranks very low on the overall index as well as on specific indicators of skill development, activation, and matching. Skill mismatch is multifaceted, involving phenomena such as overeducation, undereducation, and the lack of alignment between skills and job requirements. Overeducation, where individuals acquire more qualifications than necessary for a position, is particularly pronounced among young graduates and is linked to the economic crisis and the focus of recovery on low-skill sectors like retail and tourism. Horizontal mismatch, referring to the lack of relevance between studies and job fields, exceeds 30%, with the highest rates observed in areas like Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Humanities, and the Sciences. Additionally, skill shortages remain high, with 80% of employers reporting difficulties in finding suitable candidates. However, limited training opportunities and unattractive wages and working conditions exacerbate the issue. Addressing skill mismatch effectively requires coordinated policy interventions to improve the alignment between education and the labor market and to enhance the country's economic development and competitiveness. Also, in Greece, micro-credentials recognize that an individual has acquired specific skills in designated fields, bridging the gap in standard qualifications. They are promoted by public and private entities, allowing for the accumulation of skills recognized by employers. Their funding often comes from the private sector, creating financial barriers for some learners. However, their credibility depends on the quality of the programs and the reputation of the organizations granting them. Despite their growing acceptance, there are concerns about the comprehensiveness of the skills they cover, highlighting the need for careful evaluation and implementation in the hiring process.

POLAND

**WP2: Research for the Identification of Key Skills Necessary for Employment
T2.2: Implementation of Two Focus Groups with Employers per Partner Country**

NATIONAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT
PARTNER COUNTRY: *POLAND*

**(Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Radom Region,
Łukasiewicz Research Network – Institute for Sustainable Technologies)**

INTRODUCTION

Partner(s) Responsible for the Report	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Radom Region Łukasiewicz Research Network – Institute for Sustainable Technologies

Focus Groups' Details

	Date and Time	Duration	Implementation Mode	Number of Participants	Evidence Available
Focus Group A	15/06/2024, 10:00-12:00	2 hours	☒ Face-to-Face ☐ Online	11 no. of participants	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/ Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms
Focus Group B	28/06/2024, 10:00-12:00	2 hours	☒ Face-to-Face ☐ Online	10 no. of participants	☒ Registration and Consent Forms ☒ Participant List/Letters of Declaration of Participation ☒ Photographs/Screenshots/ Audio/Video(s) ☒ Evaluation Forms

Table 1: Focus Groups' Details

Focus Group A

1. Demographics

1.1 Participants

Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	Managing Director	1-5 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Owner	20-25 years
Participant 3	Company 3	Co-Owner	20-25 years
Participant 4	Company 4	Owner	20-25 years
Participant 5	Company 5	HR specialist	>15 years
Participant 6	Company 6	Education Specialist	1-5 years
Participant 7	Company 7	Owner	>15 years
Participant 8	Company 8	Owner	11-15 years
Participant 9	Company 9	Owner	>15 years
Participant 10	Company 10	Owner	15-20 years
Participant 11	Company 11	Technician Prosthodontics	6-10 years

Table 2: Participants' Profile (Focus Group A)

Background

Position in the Company *(No of Participants per Position)*	Company Owner	7
	Managing Director	1
	Member of Board of Directors	0
	General Manager	0
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	0
	HR Staff	1
	Other *(please specify in list)*: Education specialist Technician	2
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	7

	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	0
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	0
	High School Graduate	4
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	Msc. Prosthodontics Msc Eng. Programmist Eng. Mechanical transport Msc. Administration Msc economy Carpenter, Mechanic Technician gardner	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	2
	35-44 years old	3
	45-54 years old	2
	55-64 years old	1
	>64 years old	3
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	3
	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	6
Overall Work Experience *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	2
	6-10 years	2
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	6

Table 3: Participants' Background (Focus Group A)

1.2 Companies

Industry of Economic Activity *(No of Companies per Industry)*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	3
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	0
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0
	Construction	2
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	0
	Transportation and Storage	0

	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	0
	Information and Communication	0
	Financial and Insurance Activities	0
	Real Estate Activities	0
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	3
	Human Health and Social Work Activities	1
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	2
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other *(Please specify in list)*:	0
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	10
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	1
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	0
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	0

Table 4: Companies (Focus Group A)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

The majority of participants possess extensive experience in their respective fields.

Focus Group A
(Warsaw, Craft Chamber of Mazowsze, Kurpie and Podlasie, 15.06.2024, 10.00-12.00 CET)

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?

    a.   People at entry-level job positions (4)
    b.   Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth) (2)
    c.   Economically inactive women (4)
    d.   Young individuals (1)
    e.   Low-qualified adults (3)

Young entry-level workers and low-qualified adults (and apprentices) are more frequently hired compared to women and the long-term unemployed. Companies prefer low-qualified adults (and apprentices) for their contemporary skills and flexibility, despite their limited experience. In craft companies, qualifications are often required (as a journeyman). Young workers benefit from their adaptability and eagerness to learn. In contrast, women and the long-term unemployed face challenges due to prolonged periods without work, family obligations and concerns about lack of adaptability.

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?

    a.   People at entry-level job positions – lack of vocational qualifications
    b.   Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
    c.   Economically inactive women
    d.   Young individuals

After discussion with the participants, these answers emerged overall:

1. Women:

- **Family Obligations:** Two companies (three people) highlighted that women with children or family obligations face significant challenges in balancing work and personal life.

2. Young People at entry-level job positions:

- **Lack of Experience and confirmed qualifications:** Respondents from craft companies have pointed out that young people often lack previous work experience (on-the-job) and lack of qualifications. There is also a strong trend in switching jobs and young people have high financial expectations

- **School-work transition:** Several companies noted a disconnect between educational training and workplace needs, suggesting the need for induction courses, practical training, and soft skills development. VET schools are not sufficiently prepared to train professionals (they always have to little money, especially for new technologies)

3. Low-qualified Adults (including graduates)

- **Dealing with Demands:** Companies mentioned that low-qualified adults need further upskilling, especially with evolving and new-emerging technology.

- **Specialization Needs:** Three craft company highlighted the need for gradual specialization to help low-skilled workers reach the required level of competence.

- **Reactions to Change:** Low-skilled adults often react negatively to new technologies and methods, requiring small steps for effective adaptation.

4. Long-term Unemployed:

- **Reintegration Difficulties:** Several respondents emphasized the challenges of reintegrating long-term unemployed individuals (craft companies and chamber have such experiences from the programme of Adult Apprenticeships since 2012 – "przygotowanie zawodowe osób dorosłych")

due to their extended absence from the workforce and associated difficulties in adjusting to a regular work routine.

- **Observed Challenges:** The long-term unemployed often feel the difficulties more acutely and need to exert more effort than other categories to reintegrate successfully.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

1. Women:

- No specific challenges were mentioned regarding working with women although there is a need to increase their number in VET and technical studies (KARAT coalition studies 2015, 2019).

2. Young People at entry-level positions:

- **Lack of Experience:** Most respondents (75%) noted that young people often lack work experience and familiarity with working environments.

- **Cultural and Generational Gap:** Four companies underlined cultural differences and a generational gap, stating that young people are less engaged and perform more typical tasks, lacking deeper professional engagement (but with greater salaries at the same time).

- **Mobile Services Dependency:** Another respondent pointed out that young people's reliance on mobile services diminishes their sense of responsibility and professional consciousness (it is especially visible in craft – manufacturing companies where they have to manufacture product and be focused).

- **Need for Induction:** There was a consensus on the necessity for comprehensive induction programs to help young people integrate better into the workforce.
   3. Low-qualified adults:
- Low-qualified adults (and graduates) face challenges in collaboration due to lack of technical knowledge, difficulty adapting to job demands, and communication and collaboration issues.
   4. Long-term unemployed:
- Long-term unemployed individuals face challenges in collaboration, including difficulties reintegrating into the workforce, adjusting to job requirements, and issues with communication and teamwork (they are not self-assured, feeling in-secured).

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?
   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

At this point participants of the focus group have indicated 15.06.2024 critical thinking, managing learning process (LIFE Comp) and seizing opportunities (Entre Comp), nature promotion (Green Comp) and net-etiquette +interaction with the use of digital technologies (DIGI Comp) as less expected from indicated in Nicosia competencies.

1. Low-qualified adults:

Many companies, all craftsmen, prioritize employing low-qualified adults (there are some specific incentives to employ adults – like a financial bonus for those who have acquired journeyman qualification. They value the reliability and work ethic of these employees. Three companies highlighted their need for adults with low skills due to the nature of their work.

2. Young People at entry-level job positions:

Several companies, especially craftsmen favor young individuals, especially for apprenticeships and practical training programs.

3. Women:

Women, particularly young women, are preferred by some companies, especially for practicum positions. Companies were represented mainly by men (8), few by women (2 firms) and they have indicated adaptability and self-regulation as important competencies.

4. Long-term Unemployed:

The long-term unemployed are the least favored category. Several companies indicated a reluctance to employ this group unless specific programs or incentives, such as those offered by DYPA, are available. The primary concern is the perceived lack of current skills and the potential challenges in integrating long-term unemployed individuals into the workforce.

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

DigComp:
- **Communication/collaboration:** 4 - Absolutely essential for effective teamwork and information sharing. (repeatedly emphasized)
- **Browsing, searching & filtering data, information & digital content:** 3 - Important for efficient information management and problem-solving.
- **Net-etiquette:** 3 - Could be important while sending CVs, etc.
- **interaction with the use of digital technologies:** 2 - Less expected

LifeComp:
- **Self-regulation:** 4 - Absolutely essential for maintaining productivity and managing workplace stress. (noted by multiple respondents)
- **Flexibility:** 4 - Absolutely essential for adjusting to new roles and changing work conditions. (frequently mentioned)
- **Critical thinking**: 2 - Less expected
- **Managing learning process**: 2 - Less expected on the entry level

EntreComp:
- **Taking the initiative:** 4 - Essential for finding a job. (highlighted by several respondents)
- **Motivation and perseverance:** 5 - Important for achieving long-term goals and overcoming obstacles.
- **Spotting opportunities:** 3 - Expected (from the discussion)

GreenComp:
- **Valuing sustainability:** 3 - Important for aligning personal values with the company's sustainability goals.

- **Adaptability:** 4 - Essential for making change for better.
- **Individual initiative:** 4 (like above mentioned adaptability).
- **Promoting nature:** 2 – Less expected (from the discussion)
- **Problem framing:** 2 – Less expected (from the discussion)

At this point participants of the focus group have indicated 15.06.2024 critical thinking, managing learning process (LIFE Comp) and seizing opportunities (Entre Comp), nature promotion (Green Comp) and net-etiquette +interaction with the use of digital technologies (DIGI Comp) as less expected from indicated in Nicosia competencies.

List of 20 Key skills and related score (1-5) **Recruitment**	AH	AM	JR	WO	ZM	AW	KS	RK	KK	RS	AKC	total
Self-regulation	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	50
Flexibility	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	51
Wellbeing	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	38
Growing mindset	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	4	3	4	34
Communication	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	45
Collaboration	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	45
Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	43
Critical thinking	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	3	3	28
Valuing sustainability	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	37
Supporting Fairness	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	42
Adaptability	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	48
Individual Initiative	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	46
Motivation & Perseverance	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	50
Taking the Initiative	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	46
Learning Through Experience	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	50
Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	43
Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	39
Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	2	3	5	5	40
Netiquette	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	2	3	5	4	37
Interaction with the use of digital technologies	3	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	1	3	3	26
Empathy	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	26
Managing Learning	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	3	2	27
Promoting Nature	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	23

Problem Framing	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	25
Collaborating through Digital Technologies	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	28
Developing Digital Content	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	2	20
Managing Digital Identity	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	3	2	18
Protecting Devices	3	3	2	3	2	2	4	2	2	4	3	30
Protecting Personal Data and Privacy	3	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	4	3	29
Sharing through Digital Technologies	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	28
Spotting Opportunities	3	3	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	3	35

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

DigComp:

- **Communication/collaboration:** 4 - Absolutely essential for effective teamwork and information sharing. (repeatedly emphasized)
- **Evaluating data, information & digital content (1.2):** 4 - Crucial for making informed decisions and improving business processes.
- **Net-etiquette: 4** - Expected
- **Protecting devices: 4** - Expected

LifeComp:

- **Self-regulation:** 5 - Absolutely essential for maintaining productivity and managing workplace stress. (noted by multiple respondents)
- **Flexibility:** 5 - Absolutely essential for adjusting to new roles and changing work conditions. (frequently mentioned)
- **Critical thinking**: 4 - Expected

EntreComp:

- **Motivation & Perseverance:** 5 - Essential for executing projects efficiently and meeting deadlines. (highlighted by several respondents)
- **Empathy:** 3 - Important for fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment.
- **Learning Through Experience:** 5 - Demanded

GreenComp:

- **Valuing sustainability:** 3 - Important for aligning personal values with the company's sustainability goals.
- **Adaptability:** 4 - Essential for making change for better
- **Individual initiative:** 4 (like above-mentioned adaptability)
- **Promoting nature:** 2 – Less expected
- **Formulating problems:** 2 – Less expected

List of 20 Key skills and related score (1-5) **Ideal worker**	AH	AM	JR	WO	ZM	AW	KS	RK	KK	RS	AKC	total
Flexibility	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	53
Self-regulation	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	4	50
Wellbeing	4	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	38
Growing mindset	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	44
Empathy	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	36
Communication	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	45
Collaboration	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	45
Self-Awareness & Self-Efficacy	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	45
Critical thinking	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	45
Valuing sustainability	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	37
Supporting Fairness	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	42
Adaptability	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	50
Individual Initiative	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	46
Motivation & Perseverance	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	50
Taking the Initiative	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	46
Learning Through Experience	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	55
Coping with Uncertainty, Ambiguity & Risk	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	43
Netiquette	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	46
Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	2	3	5	5	40
Interaction with the use of digital technologies	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	36
Protecting Devices	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	5	4	41
Managing Learning	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	47
Promoting Nature	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	34
Problem Framing	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	37
Browsing, Searching and Filtering Data, Information and Digital Content	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	40

Collaborating through Digital Technologies	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	38
Developing Digital Content	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	27
Managing Digital Identity	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	29
Protecting Personal Data and Privacy	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	2	2	4	3	31
Sharing through Digital Technologies	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	35
Spotting Opportunities	5	3	3	3	3	4	5	3	3	5	3	40

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?
Craftsmen in Poland have already gained some experiences with similar solutions like microcredentials as there is an "checking exam" conducted by craft chambers – there is a confirmation/validation of some chosen skills – as not people are ready to be prepared in whole profession than there is an option for them to became at least "partly qualified" person (there is a case of "assistants in chosen profession" (like hairstylist assistant" or "baker's assistant"). Most participants think micro-credentials should be taken into account in hiring, stressing the certifying organization's reputation and reliability. Course quality and skill coverage should be assured properly (WITH LEGAL GUIDELINES).
Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?
Young workers motivation (often they are jumpers), skills mismatch is experienced quite often and …high financial expectations among youngsters.
Question 9: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable
Question 10: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable

Table 5: Participants' Answers (Focus Group A)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

The survey responses indicate a representation of micro and small companies (15.06) across various sectors, including manufacturing, ICT, vocational training, education, health services. Companies prioritize hiring low-qualified adults for their reliability and responsibility in manufacturing (they are not so bold as young people valued for their fresh ideas and growth potential – although with high expectations). Women are valued, especially in practicum positions, but face challenges in physically demanding roles (they is still a need for girls to come to VET and HVET ("Girls for the Polytechnics"). Long-term unemployed individuals are the least preferred due to reintegration difficulties and perceived skill gaps (with slow skills acquisition).

Key skills valued during recruitment and for ideal workers include communication, collaboration, adaptability, self-regulation and – to some extent – use of digital technologies. Surprisingly participants have not indicated as important skills connected to management of the learning process. There is openness towards considering micro-credential certifications (pioneer solutions in crafts), their acceptance depends on the credibility and thoroughness of the certification process. The main challenges regarding skills mismatch and here micro-credentials would be a great solution (with proper quality assurance and tailored programme).

Focus Group B

1. Demographics
1.1 Participants
Profile

Employer/Employer Representative Code	Company Code	Position in the Company	Years of Experience in the Specific Position
Participant 1	Company 1	HR specialist	1-5 years
Participant 2	Company 2	Owner	>15 years
Participant 3	Company 3	Owner	11-15 years
Participant 4	Company 4	Owner	>15 years
Participant 5	Company 5	Owner	>15 years
Participant 6	Company 6	Owner	>15 years
Participant 7	Company 7	Member of the Board	>15 years
Participant 8	Company 8	Project coordinator	>15 years
Participant 9	Company 9	Owner	6-10 years
Participant 10	Company 10	Owner	>15 years

Table 6: Participants' Profile (Focus Group B)

Background

Position in the Company *(No of Participants per Position)*	Company Owner	7
	Managing Director	0
	Member of Board of Directors	1
	General Manager	1
	Department Manager (incl. HR Manager)	0
	HR Staff	1
	Other *(please specify in list)*:	0
Education Level *(No of Participants per Level)*	University Graduate (PhD Holder)	0
	University Graduate (Master's Degree Holder)	10
	University Graduate (Bachelor's Degree Holder)	0
	College Graduate (or equivalent)	0
	High School Graduate	0
	None of the above	0
Educational Background (Degree(s)) *(List of Degrees)*	Master in Business Master in business administration Master's Degree in Economics Master's Degree in International Relations Master's Degree Accounting & Finance Master's Degree in Philosophy Master's Degree in Human Resources Master's Degree Russian Linguistic	
Age *(No of Participants per Age Range)*	20-34 years old	0
	35-44 years old	3
	45-54 years old	5
	55-64 years old	2
	>64 years old	0
Experience in the Specific Position *(No of Participants per Years' Range)*	1-5 years	1
	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	7
Overall Work Experience	1-5 years	0

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(No of Participants per Years' Range)	6-10 years	1
	11-15 years	1
	>15 years	8

Table 7: Participants' Background (Focus Group B)

1.2 Companies

	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1
	Mining and Quarrying	0
	Manufacturing	
	Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	1
	Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	0
	Construction	0
	Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	0
	Transportation and Storage	0
Industry of Economic Activity (No of Companies per Industry)	Accommodation and Food Service Activities	0
	Information and Communication	0
	Financial and Insurance Activities	1
	Real Estate Activities	0
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	0
	Administrative and Support Service Activities	0
	Public Administration and Defence; Compulsory Social Security	0
	Education	1

	Human Health and Social Work Activities	0
	Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0
	Other Service Activities	0
	Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	0
	Activities of Extraterritorial Organisations and Bodies	0
	Other *(Please specify in list)*: Promotion & Marketing Metal industry/CNC Stonemasonry Geodesics Consulting services	6
Size *(No of Companies per Size)*	Micro-enterprise: 1-9 employees	5
	Small Enterprise: 10-49 employees	2
	Medium Enterprise: 50-249 employees	3
	Large Enterprise: >249 employees	0

Table 8: Companies (Focus Group B)

Please summarise below any other important information about the participants and the companies in the Focus Group.

N/A

2. Participants' Answers

Question 1: Whom are **YOU EMPLOYING THE MOST** within your company from the below, on a scale from 1 (most employed) to 4 (least employed)?

   a. People at entry-level job positions
   b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
   c. Economically inactive women
   d. Young individuals
   e. Low-qualified adults

Young entry-level workers and women are more likely to be employed by companies compared to low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed. Young entry-level workers are often attractive to

companies because of their modern skills and recent education, and are willing to learn and adapt to new challenges. However, there is a general concern about their lack of work experience. Low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed face greater difficulties in finding employment due to their lack of specialised skills and prolonged periods of unemployment, which may raise concerns among employers about their skills and adaptability.

Question 2: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **RECRUITMENT** in the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not recruiting in that group)?

- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- c. Economically inactive women
- d. Young individuals
- e. Low-qualified adults

The main recruitment challenges are: women face difficulties due to the nature of the manual work in positions such as industrial production, the increased rhythm of life in the case of family responsibilities. Young entry-level workers face difficulties due to lack of experience. Low-skilled adults face a lack of technical knowledge, low wages and difficulties in adapting to the demands of a changing labour market. The long-term unemployed find it difficult to find stable employment due to the volatility, seasonality of the jobs often offered to them and the difficulty of reintegrating into the labour market after prolonged periods of unemployment.

Question 3: What are the main **CHALLENGES** regarding **WORKING WITH** the single groups below, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?

- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)
- c. Economically inactive women
- d. Young individuals
- e. Low-qualified adults

The main challenges in working with these groups are as follows: Women struggle with the difficulties of lack of time due to family responsibilities and the inconsistencies that can arise. Young newcomers struggle with inexperience, difficulties working with highly skilled colleagues, challenges of first employment, generational differences in mindset, increased use of mobile devices causing distraction and a sense of lack of responsibility. Low-skilled adults face challenges in collaboration due to difficulties in adapting to the demands and pace of work, communication problems and complexity compared to high-skilled individuals, resulting in frustration in teamwork. Finally, the long-term unemployed face challenges due to inexperience and difficulties in re-entering the labour market after prolonged periods of unemployment.

Question 4: What are **THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES** that employees belonging to the single groups below should have, in your opinion (blank if not working with that group)?

- a. People at entry-level job positions
- b. Long-term unemployed (with emphasis on women and youth)

c. Economically inactive women
d. Young individuals
e. Low-qualified adults

The most important skills and competences that employees belonging to each group should have are as follows:

Women: Flexibility due to family responsibilities, a growth mindset to meet professional challenges and develop. Critical thinking, collaboration and communication skills are also key for effective teamwork and problem solving.

Entry-level youth: In addition to basic skills such as flexibility and self-regulation, young people need a growth mindset to cope with challenges early in their careers. Critical thinking and collaboration are crucial for integration in the workplace and effective participation in team activities. Communication skills and a sense of responsibility play a key role in their professional development and success.

Low-skilled adults: Proficiency in planning and management improve their ability to respond to challenges in the workplace.

Long-term unemployed: Self-regulation and self-management skills are crucial for successful reintegration into the labour market after long periods of unemployment

Question 5: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – during the **RECRUITMENT** process in entry-level job positions, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

After discussion and explanation of 31key skills, the participants decided on the 20 key skills-competences that they consider very important in the process of recruiting for entry-level job positions. This conclusion emerged from the participants' personal experiences and discussions.

1. Flexibility
2. Wellbeing
3. Empathy
4. Communication
5. Collaboration
6. Growth Mindset
7. Critical Thinking
8. Managing Learning
9. Learning through Experience
10. Problem Framing
11. Adaptability
12. Individual Initiative
13. Spotting Opportunities
14. Self-Awareness & Self Efficacy
15. Motivation &Perseverance

16. Taking the Initiative
17. Learning through Experience
18. Evaluating Data Information and Digital Content
19. Interacting through Digital Technologies
20. Collaborating through Digital Technologies

Question 6: What **VALUE** would you assign to each of the following **31 KEY SKILLS** – to be detailed – for an **IDEAL WORKER** within your company, on a scale from 1 (not important) to 4 (absolutely essential)?

Most participants consider that the ideal worker for their company should have these 20 important key skills. This conclusion emerged through extensive discussion, dialogue, and exchange of opinions among the participants. By sharing their experiences and perspectives, they collectively identified the skills that are essential for success in their respective workplaces.

1. Flexibility
2. Wellbeing
3. Empathy
4. Communication
5. Collaboration
6. Growth Mindset
7. Critical Thinking
8. Managing Learning
9. Learning through Experience
10. Problem Framing
11. Adaptability
12. Individual Initiative
13. Spotting Opportunities
14. Self-Awareness & Self Efficacy
15. Motivation &Perseverance
16. Taking the Initiative
17. Learning through Experience
18. Evaluating Data Information and Digital Content
19. Interacting through Digital Technologies
20. Collaborating through Digital Technologies

Question 7: Would you take into account and consider essential in the recruitment process a person **HOLDING A MICRO-CREDENTIALS'** certification on the above-mentioned competencies?

Most participants said that having a micro-certificate is an important element in the recruitment process, but only if the certifying institution is proven in the market.

Question 8: What are the challenges regarding **SKILLS' MISMATCH** that you are facing the most during the recruitment process?

Companies often seek candidates with a high level of education, which makes it difficult for certain groups, such as low-skilled adults, to find work. These difficulties are compounded by a lack of career development opportunities and insufficient training in alternative options. In addition, a lack of

motivation on the part of employees can lead to difficulties in attracting and retaining sufficient staff. This challenge requires companies to respond in terms of pay, otherwise there is a risk that highly skilled workers will leave for other work options that offer better pay and career opportunities.
Question 9: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable
Question 10: Content (if any other question has been posed)
No applicable

Table 9: Participants' Answers (Focus Group B)

Summary of Participants' Answers and Analysis of Results (incl. Graphs)

Most participants said that they recruit mainly for entry-level positions and young workers, with a focus on women, then focus on the long-term unemployed and lastly on low-skilled adults. Young people in entry-level positions and women tend to be employed more than low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed.

Recruitment Challenges
There are several recruitment challenges associated with different groups. For people at entry-level job positions, the primary issues are their lack of experience and the possibility of job-hopping for better opportunities. Long-term unemployed individuals, particularly women and youth, face difficulties reintegrating into the workforce, job instability, and seasonality. Economically inactive women often struggle with family responsibilities, the nature of manual work, and physical strain. Young individuals face challenges due to their lack of experience, generation gap, and potential irresponsibility and immaturity. Low-qualified adults encounter problems related to a lack of technical knowledge, low wages, and difficulty adapting to new roles.

Challenges in Working
When it comes to working with these groups, specific challenges arise. People at entry-level job positions often struggle with a lack of experience, difficulty collaborating with highly qualified colleagues, generational mindset differences, and distraction due to mobile device usage. Long-term unemployed individuals, especially women and youth, suffer from a lack of experience and difficulty re-entering the labor market. Economically inactive women face challenges due to family responsibilities and inconsistency. Young individuals also deal with a lack of experience, difficulty adapting to professional life, and generational mindset differences. Low-qualified adults find it hard to adapt to work demands and pace, and they experience communication and collaboration issues.

Important Skills and Competencies
Different groups require specific skills and competencies to thrive in the workplace. Women benefit from flexibility, self-regulation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, sustainability

evaluation, planning, and management. Entry-level youth need flexibility, self-regulation, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and a sense of responsibility. Low-qualified adults should focus on developing critical thinking, communication, self-regulation, planning and management, and sustainability evaluation. Long-term unemployed individuals require self-regulation, planning and management, strategic thinking, and collaboration skills to reintegrate successfully into the workforce.

Micro-credentials Certifications

Most participants view micro-credentials certifications positively in the hiring process. They emphasize the importance of the reliability and reputation of the certifying organization, believing that a well-known and respected certifying body can significantly enhance the perceived value of the certification. Another key factor is the delivery method of the courses; participants stress that the way courses are taught, whether online or in-person, synchronous or asynchronous, can impact the effectiveness of the learning experience. Finally, the quality of education provided by the certification program is crucial, with participants concerned about whether the certification adequately covers the advertised skills and competencies. A high-quality education, demonstrated through a well-designed certification program, is seen as a valuable asset in the hiring process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Focus Group A and B

In conclusion, for both focus groups of MORAL:

Focus Group A: Participants from various sectors like manufacturing, logistics, education, and finance prioritize hiring low-qualified adults for administrative tasks and value young workers for their fresh ideas. Women are appreciated in practicum roles but face challenges in physically demanding jobs. Long-term unemployed individuals are less preferred due to reintegration issues and perceived skill gaps.

Focus Group B: Most participants focus on hiring for entry-level positions and young workers, particularly valuing women and then the long-term unemployed, with low-skilled adults being least prioritized. Young people and women are more likely to be hired than low-skilled adults and the long-term unemployed.

Working Challenges: Entry-level workers deal with experience gaps and generational differences. Long-term unemployed individuals face reintegration challenges. Economically inactive women juggle family duties. Young workers struggle with adaptation and generational differences. Low-skilled adults find it hard to adapt and communicate effectively.

Skills Needed: Women need flexibility, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. Entry-level youth require flexibility, critical thinking, and responsibility. Low-skilled adults should

develop critical thinking and communication. Long-term unemployed individuals need self-regulation and strategic thinking skills.

Micro-Credentials: Participants value micro-credentials, focusing on the certifying body's reputation and course delivery method (online vs. in-person). Quality education and coverage of relevant skills are crucial in certification programs for enhancing employability.

Annex 4 – SURVEY DATA AT COUNTRY AND CONSORTIUM LEVEL

CYPRUS – Non-ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in
Different Industries

Skill	Value
ANTIFRAGILITY	34
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	82
PROBLEM SOLVING	87
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	27
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	53
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	63
PROTECTING DEVICES	32
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	9
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	13
NETIQUETTE	26
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	41
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	24
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	43
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	54
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	45
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	80
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	36
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	63
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	71
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	73
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	38
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	45
ADAPTABILITY	81
PROBLEM FRAMING	37
PROMOTING NATURE	17
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	46
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	25
MANAGING LEARNING	39
CRITICAL THINKING	86
GROWTH MINDSET	81
COLLABORATION	88
COMMUNICATION	88
EMPATHY	65
WELLBEING	42
FLEXIBILITY	82
SELF-REGULATION	69

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CYPRUS – Ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	88
COMMUNICATION	88
PROBLEM SOLVING	87
CRITICAL THINKING	86
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	82
FLEXIBILITY	82
ADAPTABILITY	81
GROWTH MINDSET	81
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	80
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	73
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	71
SELF-REGULATION	69
EMPATHY	65
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	63
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	63
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	54
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	53
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	46
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	45
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	45
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	43
WELLBEING	42
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	41
MANAGING LEARNING	39
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	38
PROBLEM FRAMING	37
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	36
ANTIFRAGILITY	34
PROTECTING DEVICES	32
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	27
NETIQUETTE	26
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	25
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	24
PROMOTING NATURE	17
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	13
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	9

ITALY – Non-ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
ANTIFRAGILITY	29
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	49
PROBLEM SOLVING	51
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	30
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	26
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	29
PROTECTING DEVICES	19
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	24
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	9
NETIQUETTE	18
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	28
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	22
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	34
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	30
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	26
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	47
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	24
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	41
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	47
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	33
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	42
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	28
ADAPTABILITY	41
PROBLEM FRAMING	36
PROMOTING NATURE	17
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	20
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	22
MANAGING LEARNING	34
CRITICAL THINKING	47
GROWTH MINDSET	52
COLLABORATION	60
COMMUNICATION	51
EMPATHY	40
WELLBEING	39
FLEXIBILITY	51
SELF-REGULATION	37

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ITALY – Ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	60
GROWTH MINDSET	52
PROBLEM SOLVING	51
COMMUNICATION	51
FLEXIBILITY	51
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	49
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	47
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	47
CRITICAL THINKING	47
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	42
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	41
ADAPTABILITY	41
EMPATHY	40
WELLBEING	39
SELF-REGULATION	37
PROBLEM FRAMING	36
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	34
MANAGING LEARNING	34
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	33
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	30
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	30
ANTIFRAGILITY	29
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	29
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	28
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	28
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	26
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	26
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	24
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	24
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	22
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	22
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	20
PROTECTING DEVICES	19
NETIQUETTE	18
PROMOTING NATURE	17
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	9

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SPAIN – Non-ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
ANTIFRAGILITY	32
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	64
PROBLEM SOLVING	59
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	23
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	43
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	31
PROTECTING DEVICES	18
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	15
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	12
NETIQUETTE	23
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	21
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	23
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	29
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	34
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	32
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	61
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	39
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	46
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	65
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	47
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	50
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	47
ADAPTABILITY	61
PROBLEM FRAMING	27
PROMOTING NATURE	11
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	18
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	27
MANAGING LEARNING	51
CRITICAL THINKING	51
GROWTH MINDSET	46
COLLABORATION	61
COMMUNICATION	62
EMPATHY	63
WELLBEING	27
FLEXIBILITY	64
SELF-REGULATION	46

SPAIN – Ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	65
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	64
FLEXIBILITY	64
EMPATHY	63
COMMUNICATION	62
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	61
ADAPTABILITY	61
COLLABORATION	61
PROBLEM SOLVING	59
MANAGING LEARNING	51
CRITICAL THINKING	51
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	50
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	47
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	47
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	46
GROWTH MINDSET	46
SELF-REGULATION	46
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	43
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	39
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	34
ANTIFRAGILITY	32
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	32
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	31
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	29
PROBLEM FRAMING	27
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	27
WELLBEING	27
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	23
NETIQUETTE	23
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	23
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	21
PROTECTING DEVICES	18
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	18
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	15
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	12
PROMOTING NATURE	11

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GREECE – Non-ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
ANTIFRAGILITY	25
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	31
PROBLEM SOLVING	35
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	22
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	21
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	29
PROTECTING DEVICES	33
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	26
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	22
NETIQUETTE	31
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	36
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	34
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	36
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL...	45
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,...	30
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	51
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	33
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	51
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	39
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	38
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	45
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	41
ADAPTABILITY	40
PROBLEM FRAMING	44
PROMOTING NATURE	29
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	29
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	38
MANAGING LEARNING	38
CRITICAL THINKING	48
GROWTH MINDSET	44
COLLABORATION	58
COMMUNICATION	58
EMPATHY	52
WELLBEING	41
FLEXIBILITY	62
SELF-REGULATION	53

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GREECE – Ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
FLEXIBILITY	62
COLLABORATION	58
COMMUNICATION	58
SELF-REGULATION	53
EMPATHY	52
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	51
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	51
CRITICAL THINKING	48
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	45
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	45
PROBLEM FRAMING	44
GROWTH MINDSET	44
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	41
WELLBEING	41
ADAPTABILITY	40
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	39
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	38
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	38
MANAGING LEARNING	38
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	36
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	36
PROBLEM SOLVING	35
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	34
PROTECTING DEVICES	33
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	33
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	31
NETIQUETTE	31
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	30
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	29
PROMOTING NATURE	29
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	29
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	26
ANTIFRAGILITY	25
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	22
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	22
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	21

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MORAL

POLAND – Non-ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
ANTIFRAGILITY	26
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	70
PROBLEM SOLVING	69
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	34
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	43
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	42
PROTECTING DEVICES	18
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	20
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	16
NETIQUETTE	25
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	0
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	25
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	21
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL...	37
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,...	38
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	66
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	34
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	62
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	72
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	48
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	48
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	51
ADAPTABILITY	44
PROBLEM FRAMING	36
PROMOTING NATURE	22
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	52
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	29
MANAGING LEARNING	57
CRITICAL THINKING	49
GROWTH MINDSET	62
COLLABORATION	86
COMMUNICATION	76
EMPATHY	57
WELLBEING	37
FLEXIBILITY	81
SELF-REGULATION	50

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POLAND – Ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	86
FLEXIBILITY	81
COMMUNICATION	76
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	72
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	70
PROBLEM SOLVING	69
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	66
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	62
GROWTH MINDSET	62
MANAGING LEARNING	57
EMPATHY	57
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	52
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	51
SELF-REGULATION	50
CRITICAL THINKING	49
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	48
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	48
ADAPTABILITY	44
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	43
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	42
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	38
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	37
WELLBEING	37
PROBLEM FRAMING	36
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	34
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	34
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	29
ANTIFRAGILITY	26
NETIQUETTE	25
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	25
PROMOTING NATURE	22
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	21
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	20
PROTECTING DEVICES	18
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	16
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	0

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MORAL

AGGREGATE – Non-ranked

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
ANTIFRAGILITY	146
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	296
PROBLEM SOLVING	301
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	136
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	186
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	194
PROTECTING DEVICES	120
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	94
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	72
NETIQUETTE	123
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	126
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	128
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	163
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	200
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	171
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	305
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	166
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	263
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	294
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	239
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	223
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	212
ADAPTABILITY	267
PROBLEM FRAMING	180
PROMOTING NATURE	96
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	165
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	141
MANAGING LEARNING	219
CRITICAL THINKING	281
GROWTH MINDSET	285
COLLABORATION	353
COMMUNICATION	335
EMPATHY	277
WELLBEING	186
FLEXIBILITY	340
SELF-REGULATION	255

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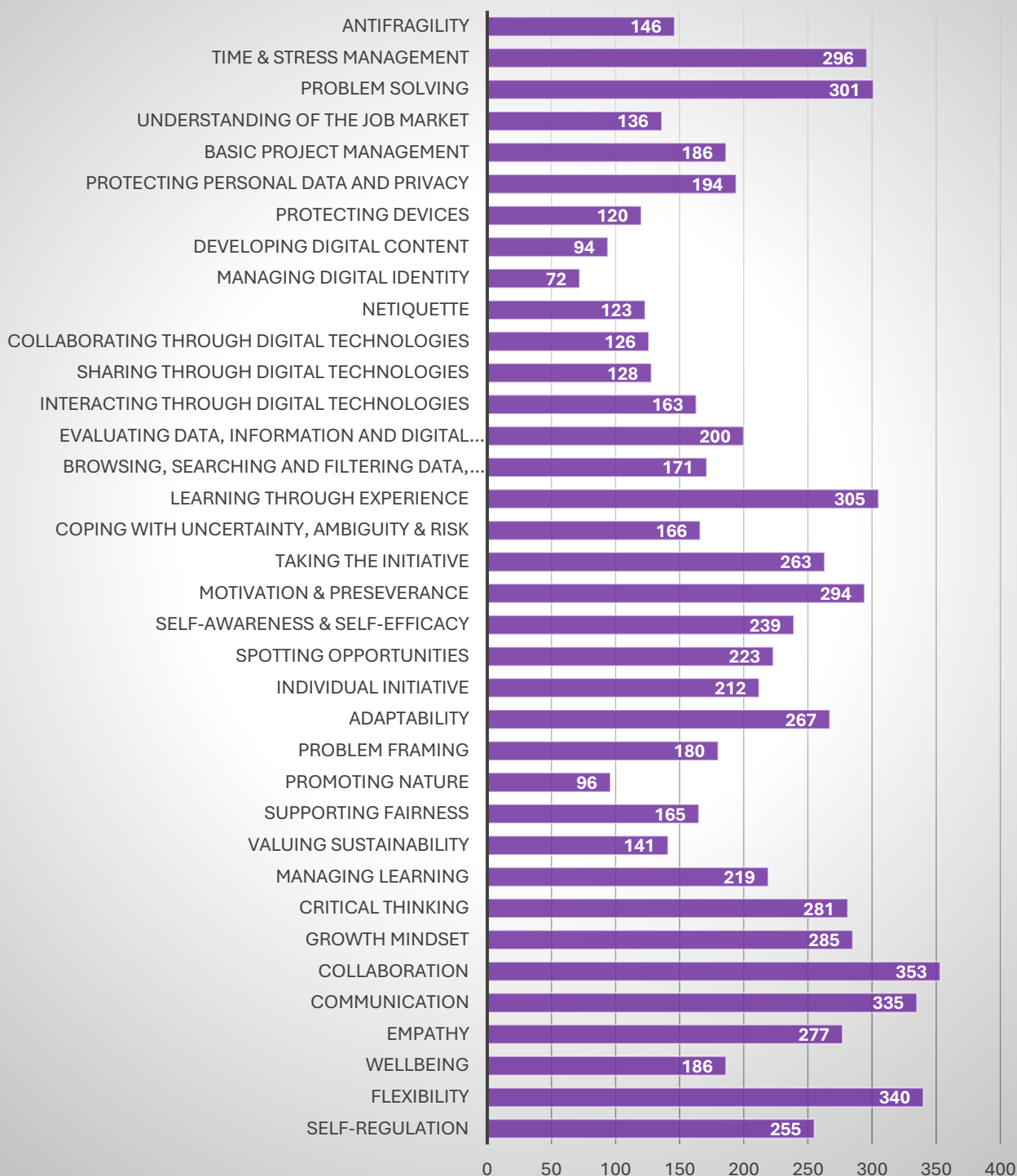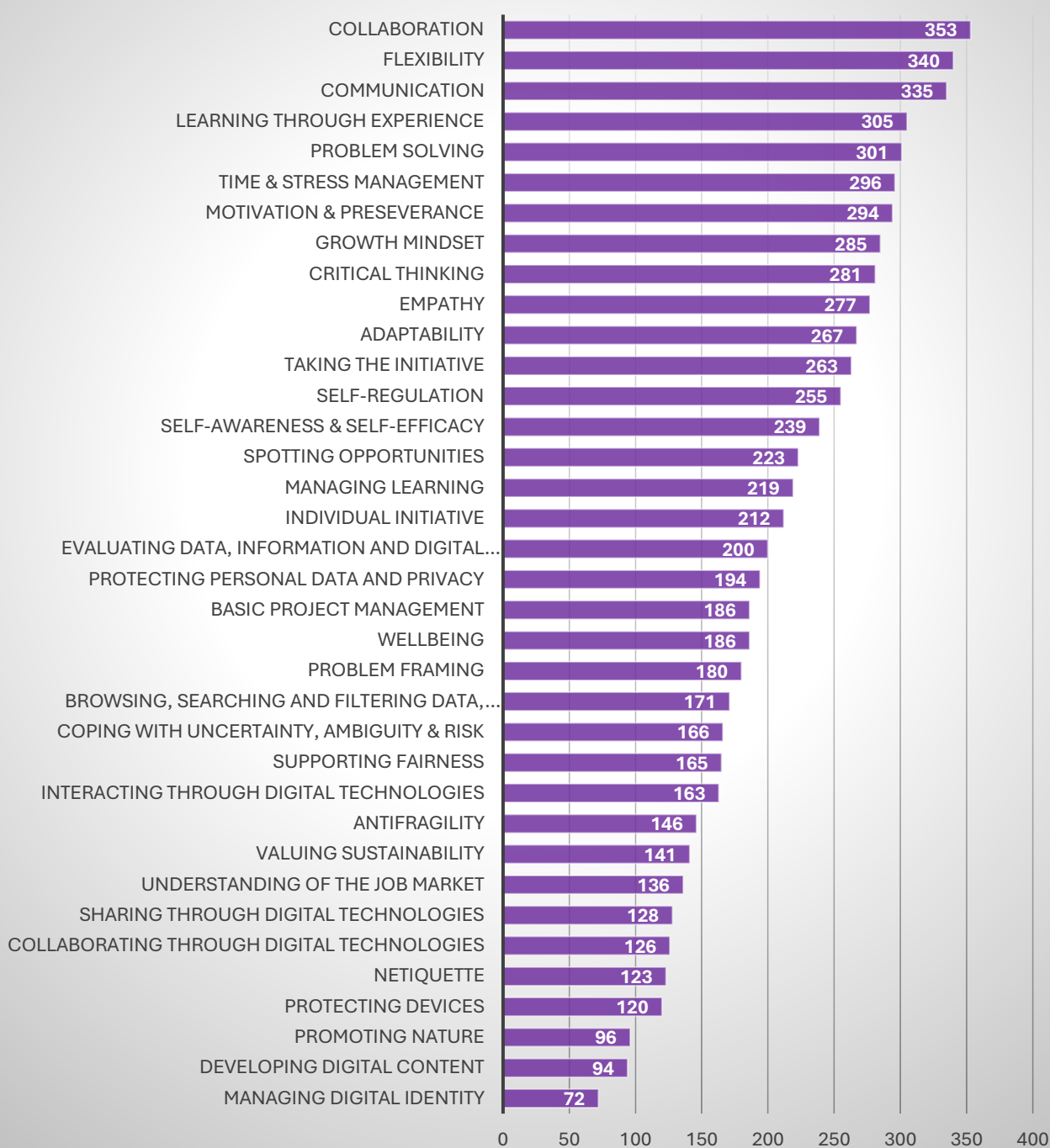**AGGREGATE – Ranked**

SKILLS RELEVANT AND NECESSARY
for Employment in Entry-level (Junior) Job Positions in Different Industries

Skill	Value
COLLABORATION	353
FLEXIBILITY	340
COMMUNICATION	335
LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE	305
PROBLEM SOLVING	301
TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT	296
MOTIVATION & PRESEVERANCE	294
GROWTH MINDSET	285
CRITICAL THINKING	281
EMPATHY	277
ADAPTABILITY	267
TAKING THE INITIATIVE	263
SELF-REGULATION	255
SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-EFFICACY	239
SPOTTING OPPORTUNITIES	223
MANAGING LEARNING	219
INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE	212
EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL…	200
PROTECTING PERSONAL DATA AND PRIVACY	194
BASIC PROJECT MANAGEMENT	186
WELLBEING	186
PROBLEM FRAMING	180
BROWSING, SEARCHING AND FILTERING DATA,…	171
COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY, AMBIGUITY & RISK	166
SUPPORTING FAIRNESS	165
INTERACTING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	163
ANTIFRAGILITY	146
VALUING SUSTAINABILITY	141
UNDERSTANDING OF THE JOB MARKET	136
SHARING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	128
COLLABORATING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	126
NETIQUETTE	123
PROTECTING DEVICES	120
PROMOTING NATURE	96
DEVELOPING DIGITAL CONTENT	94
MANAGING DIGITAL IDENTITY	72

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Author

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