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EMERGING ADVANCED SKILLS YOUTH (EASY)

EMPLOYABILITY GUIDE

Stimulate employability and talent development in disadvantaged communities to train at least 4,000 young people in the 10 skills needed by 2025 to get a decent job.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Presentation of the project

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Partners: MDE40 WIPSEE (France)
ACCELERAS (Austria)
Združenje EPEKA, so.p. (Slovenia)
IASIS (Greece)
Institute Bucovina (Romania)
TAVO EUROPA (Lithuania)

Website: <https://www.emerging-advanced-skills-youth.eu>

The EASY project aims to encourage employability, talent development, and talent acquisition in disadvantaged communities by equipping rural and marginalised youth with the innovative and in-demand skills they need to secure decent job opportunities. The project focuses on overcoming the skills mismatch and addressing the emerging needs of the labour market, helping young people increase their employability by developing lasting skills and capabilities. The EASY project also aims to empower disadvantaged youth to participate fully in social and economic life, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

This guide serves as a practical resource for young people, educators, and youth workers, providing insights into the key skills needed for the modern job market. It outlines the emerging competencies that are most in demand and offers actionable advice on how to acquire and develop these skills to improve employability and create meaningful career opportunities. The guide is divided into four main chapters: Introduction, Job Search and Recruitment Strategies, Career Guidance Practices, and Key Skills. The Introduction provides context and an overview of the project's objectives and target groups. Job Search and Recruitment Strategies cover essential topics such as CV writing, interview techniques, and understanding the labour market. Career Guidance Practices explore networking, skill development, and practical learning opportunities. Finally, the Key Skills chapter delves into the ten emerging skills that are critical for young people to succeed in the future labour market.

1.2. Context

Youth unemployment is a pressing problem in the EU, one that has been further exacerbated by the pandemic, digital transformation, recent economic inflation, and the war on the EU's doorstep. These factors have led to a significant skills mismatch: companies are struggling to find workers with the right skills, while young people are finding it difficult to secure jobs that match their qualifications. This situation has particularly impacted disadvantaged and rural youth, who often face additional barriers in accessing education, training, and employment opportunities.

To address these challenges, the EASY project aims to equip young people with the competencies they need to secure decent jobs, in line with the recommendations of the International Economic Forum and the European Year of Skills. The project focuses on 10 emerging skills identified as critical for the future labour market. These skills—ranging from resilience to technology design and active learning—are not just about adapting to technological changes but also about empowering young people to thrive in complex environments and build meaningful careers.

For disadvantaged and rural youth, the importance of these emerging skills cannot be overstated. They offer a pathway to bridging the skills gap, improving employability, and breaking the cycle of limited opportunities. By emphasising skills like creativity, analytical thinking, and adaptability, the EASY project is helping young people not only meet the demands of today's employers but also prepare for the challenges of tomorrow's job market. The project is dedicated to giving these young people the tools they need to be resilient, innovative, and ready to succeed in a rapidly evolving world.

1.3. Target Groups

The project aims to build the capacity of youth organisations, youth workers, and educators by equipping them with essential frameworks, tools, and guidance. By enhancing their ability to support young people effectively, we ensure that youth workers are better prepared to address the unique challenges faced by disadvantaged youth, foster a supportive learning environment, and deliver impactful educational programs. Our primary focus is on young people from rural areas, less developed urban regions, and marginalised groups, including NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), migrants, refugees, and early school leavers, aged 16 to 28. By targeting these groups, we strive to bridge the opportunity gap and provide these young people with the skills, support, and access they need to build meaningful futures. The project aims to empower young individuals by addressing the specific barriers they face, such as limited access to education, fewer job opportunities, and socio-economic constraints. Engaging policymakers is a key element of the project, as we aim to drive systemic change. Policy recommendations will be developed at the outset and continuously updated throughout the project. These recommendations will serve as a roadmap for improving youth employment strategies and enhancing the impact of education and training initiatives. To ensure collaboration, we will organise a stakeholder conference at the end of the project, bringing together all target groups—youth workers, young people, and policymakers—to share insights, discuss outcomes, and promote sustainable change.

2. Job search and recruitment strategies

2.1. Characteristics of today's labour market and job search practices

The European Union (EU) labour market is a dynamic and complex environment, characterised by both opportunities and challenges. **Regional disparities** in employment are significant, with countries like Germany and the Netherlands enjoying high employment rates, while others in Southern and Eastern Europe still struggle with higher unemployment. The EU also faces an ageing workforce, which is leading to policy changes aimed at encouraging longer working lives.

Youth unemployment remains a persistent issue, exacerbated by the mismatch between the skills young people possess and those demanded by the labour market. This problem is compounded by a rise in non-standard employment such as part-time and gig work, which, while offering flexibility, often lacks security and benefits.

Another important aspect is the **skills mismatch** across the EU, particularly in high-tech and emerging industries. Efforts like the Skills Agenda are aimed at closing this gap by aligning education and training with market needs. Additionally, the gender employment gap persists, with women generally facing lower employment rates and higher part-time work.

Migration and labour mobility are key features of the EU labour market, helping to balance labour supply and demand but also posing challenges like brain drain and integration issues. The push towards a green economy and the ongoing digital transformation are creating new job opportunities, especially for those with the right skills, but also leading to the automation of certain tasks, which can displace workers.

In today's European Union (EU), job search practices are increasingly influenced by digital tools, social networking, and the changing nature of work. Here are some of the most common practices:

1. Platforms like **EURES**, **LinkedIn**, and national job boards are now go-to resources for job seekers in the EU. These online job portals not only list job opportunities across a wide range of industries and locations, but they also allow users to apply directly and offer useful tools like resume builders and interview tips.
2. **Networking** plays a crucial role in the job search process. While LinkedIn is used to build and maintain professional connections, it is crucial to attend industry events, conferences, and webinars **in person**. These efforts often lead to job opportunities that are not advertised, with personal recommendations often carrying significant weight, particularly in fields where trust and reputation are paramount.
3. As for **social media**, platforms have become important tools for job seekers. Companies frequently post job openings on these platforms, making it essential for job seekers to follow and engage with potential employers. Additionally, social media provides a way to research companies and showcase your professional achievements in a more dynamic and personal manner.
4. For those targeting specific companies or industries, going directly to **company websites** is a common approach. Many organisations list job openings on their career pages, allowing candidates to apply directly. This method is particularly effective for those who are proactive and have a clear interest in working for a particular company.

5. **Recruitment agencies** are still widely used, especially for specialised or senior roles. These agencies often have access to job listings that aren't publicly advertised and can offer personalised job matching services. This can be especially useful for finding niche or high-level positions.
6. When it comes to **apprenticeships and internships**, young people and recent graduates often rely on advertisements through universities, specialised platforms, and company websites. The EU supports these opportunities through initiatives like the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA)**, which helps young people gain practical experience and enter the workforce.
7. Attending **job fairs**, whether virtual or in-person, is another way to explore job opportunities. These events allow job seekers to meet multiple employers, learn about different industries, and sometimes even participate in on-the-spot interviews. They are valuable for networking and discovering opportunities that might not be visible through other channels.
8. The rise of the gig economy has made **freelancing platforms** increasingly popular. These platforms connect freelancers with clients across a variety of fields, offering flexibility and opportunities for short-term projects or independent work. Freelancing appeals particularly to those who value autonomy and wish to explore diverse job opportunities.

The **hidden job market** refers to job opportunities that are not advertised or publicly listed. It's estimated that a significant portion of job openings—some sources suggest anywhere from 50% to 80%—fall into this category. Understanding and tapping into the hidden job market can be crucial for job seekers, as it offers access to opportunities that are less competitive and often better aligned with a candidate's skills and network. Understanding and accessing this hidden market can make all the difference, offering opportunities that are often less competitive and more closely aligned with their skills and networks.

One of the key reasons the hidden job market is so important is that it provides access to **unadvertised jobs**. Many employers prefer to fill vacancies quietly through internal channels or recommendations, avoiding the time and expense involved in posting jobs and sifting through numerous applications. This means that if you're only looking at job boards, you could be missing out on a large chunk of potential opportunities.

Another big advantage of the hidden job market is that it typically involves **less competition**. Since these jobs aren't publicly posted, the pool of applicants is smaller. This gives you a better chance to stand out and secure a position, particularly if you're leveraging your professional network or making direct connections with employers.

Jobs in the hidden market are often filled by candidates who are seen as a **strong fit for the role**, usually because they've been recommended by someone the employer trusts. This leads to better matches between the employer's needs and the employee's skills, which is one reason why many companies prefer to hire this way.

Navigating the hidden job market means **networking** is essential. Whether it's through industry events, professional groups, or platforms like LinkedIn, building and maintaining strong connections can open doors to opportunities that aren't widely advertised. Personal connections often lead to referrals, which are highly valued by employers.

The hidden job market is also characterised by **informal recruitment processes**. Instead of going through a formal hiring procedure, companies might fill a role through a simple conversation at a networking event or by promoting

someone from within. This means that being proactive—reaching out to potential employers, expressing interest in their work, and staying connected—can put you in line for these hidden opportunities.

There are plenty of examples of how the hidden job market works. For instance, **internal hiring** is a common practice where companies promote or reassign existing employees rather than looking for external candidates. **Networking events** are another example, where a casual chat at a conference can lead to a job offer. Then there's the strategy of sending **speculative applications**—reaching out to companies you admire even if they haven't advertised any openings. Sometimes, if they like what they see, they might create a role just for you or keep you in mind for future openings.

In short, the hidden job market is a powerful, albeit less visible, part of job searching. It's all about leveraging your network, being proactive, and staying open to opportunities that aren't on the radar of most job seekers. By tapping into this market, you can find jobs that not only match your skills but also offer less competition and a better chance of success.

2.2. Learning about the company

Before applying for a job or heading into an interview, getting to know the company inside and out can make a huge difference. This isn't just about impressing the interviewer—it's about making sure you're aiming for a place that suits you.

Understanding the company's values and culture can help you decide if it's a place where you'd feel comfortable and be able to thrive. Every organisation operates differently; some might value teamwork and collaboration, while others might emphasise individual performance. Figuring this out early can save you from landing in a job where you might not be happy.

Tailoring your application is much easier when you've done your research. Knowing what the company stands for and what they're looking for allows you to tweak your resume and cover letter to highlight the most relevant skills and experiences. It's not just about listing your qualifications—it's about showing that you're exactly what they need.

Showing genuine interest in the company is key. When you walk into an interview and can speak knowledgeably about the **company's mission**, recent projects, or industry challenges, it shows you're not just looking for any job—you're looking for this job. Employers notice this kind of enthusiasm and commitment.

Understanding the **company's challenges and goals** can also give you an advantage. If you can identify a current challenge the company is facing and discuss how your skills can help overcome it, you are already positioning yourself as a valuable asset. It's not just about fitting in, it's about making a difference.

When it comes to the **interview, preparation** can make or break your chances. Questions like “Why do you want to work here?” or “What do you know about our company?” are almost guaranteed to come up. If you've done your homework, you can answer with confidence and clarity, showing that you're serious about the role.

So, how do you go about **researching the company**? Start by digging into their website, especially the “About Us” section, where you’ll find details on their mission, values, and history. Don’t overlook the careers page, where they might share more about the company culture and what they’re looking for in employees.

Next, check out **recent news and press releases**. This gives you insight into what’s happening with the company right now—whether they’re expanding, launching new products, or facing challenges. It’s good material for understanding their current priorities and direction.

Social media is another great resource. Following the company on platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook gives you a sense of their day-to-day operations and culture. Plus, companies often post job openings and updates that you might not find elsewhere.

If the company is publicly traded, their **annual reports** can be goldmines of information. These reports give you a peek into their financial health, strategic goals, and market position—valuable context that can help you understand where they’re headed.

Reaching out to current or former employees for a quick chat can also be incredibly insightful. This can give you a more personal take on the company culture and what to expect during the hiring process—information that’s often hard to find elsewhere.

2.3. Importance of CV & motivational letters

A **CV** and **motivational letter** are essential tools for anyone looking for a job. They are usually the first things that employers see, and they can make a big difference in whether or not you get called for an interview. Understanding how important these documents are can help you increase your chances of getting the job you want, as they help you showcase your skills, experience, and enthusiasm to potential employers.

A **CV** (Curriculum Vitae) is more than just a list of your past jobs; it tells the story of your professional journey, including your skills, experiences, and achievements. There are several formats you can use for your CV, depending on your needs and the job you are applying for. For example, the **Europass CV** (available at [Europass](#)) is a standardised format that is widely used across Europe. This format can be particularly useful if you are applying for jobs in multiple European countries and want to ensure consistency and clarity. It should give a clear picture of your career, showing not only where you have worked but also what you have done and the skills you have learned along the way. The goal of a CV is to demonstrate why you are a strong candidate for the job. Structuring the CV in a logical and easy-to-follow manner helps recruiters navigate it quickly. To make your CV stand out, it’s important to adapt it to highlight the **specific skills and experiences** mentioned in the job description. Recruiters often spend only a few seconds scanning each CV, so making sure the most relevant information is easy to find is key.

A strong CV should also include **measurable achievements** whenever possible. For example, if you worked on a project that increased sales or made a process more efficient, make sure to mention that. These details help show the impact you made in your previous roles, like 'increased sales by 15%' or 'reduced costs by 10%', and give the employer confidence that you can bring value to their company. Using **keywords** from the job description is also

crucial, as many companies use software to filter CVs before they reach a human reviewer. By including the right keywords, you increase your chances of getting past these filters.

Your **motivational letter**, also called a cover letter, is your chance to show your **personality, passion, and interest** in the job. Motivational letters can also be done in different formats, including a **video motivational letter**. A video format allows you to speak directly to the employer, showcasing your communication skills, enthusiasm, and making a more personal connection. This can be especially effective for creative roles or when applying to companies that value innovation. Unlike the CV, which is more focused on facts, the motivational letter allows you to tell the employer why you want the job and how you would fit in at their company. This is where you can mention specific aspects of the job posting and show how your background and skills align with what the company needs. It's also the right place to talk about any **personal qualities** that make you a good fit for the team, and to show that you've done your **research on the company**. Explain why you're interested in this role, what excites you about working for this company, and mention a specific project or initiative by the company that inspires you. If you can also explain how your skills can help address a specific challenge the company is facing, your motivational letter will be even more compelling.

A well-written motivational letter should show that you understand the company's **mission, values, and culture**. This shows that you've taken the time to learn about the company and that you're genuinely interested in being part of their team. For example, if the company cares a lot about sustainability and you have experience or passion in that area, mentioning this can demonstrate that you share their values. The motivational letter is also a great place to share **specific examples** from your past that illustrate the skills needed for the job. Including stories or anecdotes can make your application more memorable and help the hiring manager see how you could fit into the role.

Both the CV and motivational letter are important because they work together. The CV presents the **hard facts** about your work history, while the motivational letter provides context, showing your **commitment** and helping the employer see who you are beyond your qualifications. Employers aren't just looking for someone with the right technical skills; they want someone who's excited about the opportunity and motivated to make a difference. Together, these documents help you create a **complete application** that shows both your abilities and your desire to grow with the company. This combination gives the employer a full picture of you—not just as a professional, but also as a person who would be a good fit for their team and culture.

When applying for jobs, it's worth considering different strategies. Taking the time to customise both your CV and motivational letter for each job application can make a big difference. Reviewing the job description thoroughly helps you identify key skills and qualifications to highlight. A **generic CV** and cover letter are easy to spot and often fail to make much of an impression. On the other hand, a personalised approach shows that you're truly interested in this specific job. When you take the time to understand what the employer is looking for and adjust your application accordingly, you show that you're **proactive** and **dedicated**. This extra effort can set you apart from other candidates who may not have put in the same level of care.

However, there are also situations where a different strategy might be effective. Sometimes, it may be better to focus on **quantity over quality** by using a less tailored CV and motivational letter, especially when applying to a large number of vacancies in a short time. This approach, often called the **numbers game**, allows you to reach

more potential employers quickly. While this method may not always make the same impact as a personalised application, it can be useful when the goal is to maximise your chances of landing an interview through sheer volume. The key is to balance these strategies based on the situation—sometimes it’s worth investing time in customising your application, and other times it’s more efficient to cast a wider net.

By using these tools effectively, you can convince the employer that you’re the right person for the job and secure an interview. It’s also important to proofread both documents carefully to avoid errors, as this shows attention to detail and professionalism. A well-crafted CV and motivational letter can make a big difference, especially in competitive job markets where employers receive many applications for each role. By taking the time to **personalise** your documents, highlight your **unique strengths**, and show genuine interest in the company, you greatly improve your chances of getting noticed. Remember, the goal is not just to get your application seen, but to leave a lasting impression that makes the employer want to know more about you. When done well, these documents can be powerful tools that open doors to new career opportunities.

2.4. Interview techniques

The **interview process** is often the most critical part of landing a job. It’s your chance to make a lasting impression on potential employers, show your **personality**, and prove that you have what it takes to succeed in the role. While interviews can be challenging, preparing with the right techniques can help you stay **confident** and articulate throughout the process.

One of the most effective ways to prepare for an interview is to understand the different **types of interview questions** you may face and how to respond to them effectively. Employers often ask **behavioural**, **competency-based**, or **situational questions** to learn more about you and your fit for the company. Using structured techniques can help you organise your answers and provide relevant examples.

STAR Technique The **STAR technique** is a popular and effective way to answer behavioural interview questions. It stands for **Situation, Task, Action, and Result** and helps you structure your responses when describing past experiences. This technique ensures your answers are clear, concise, and highlight your skills and achievements.

- **Situation** - Set the stage by describing the context or situation you were in
 - There was a conflict between two team members during a project I worked on.
- **Task** - Explain the challenge or responsibility you had.
 - As the project lead, I needed to resolve the conflict and ensure the team continued working effectively.
- **Action** - Detail the specific steps you took to address the task or problem.
 - I organised a meeting with both team members, helped them understand each other’s perspectives, and facilitated a compromise.
- **Result** - Share the outcome of your actions, ideally with measurable results.
 - The conflict was resolved, and we completed the project on time, improving team dynamics in the process.

Other Techniques The **PAR technique** (Problem, Action, Result) is another useful method for answering competency-based questions. Similar to STAR, this approach helps you effectively communicate your problem-solving skills by clearly outlining the problem you faced, the action you took, and the result you achieved. This technique is particularly effective when you need to demonstrate how you have addressed challenges or overcome obstacles in the past.

Another helpful approach is the **30-60-90 plan**. Some employers might ask what your plan would be if you were hired, and creating a 30-60-90 plan is a great way to show your proactive mindset. This plan outlines what you aim to achieve in your first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job. It shows that you're goal-oriented, ready to contribute, and that you've given serious thought to how you can make an impact from day one.

Practising with **mock interviews** is one of the best ways to prepare for a real interview. Mock interviews help you become comfortable discussing your experiences and get used to answering a variety of questions. You can practise with a friend, mentor, or even on your own by recording your responses and reviewing them. Practising with someone else allows you to receive constructive feedback on your answers, body language, and overall presentation. Mock interviews are also great for reducing anxiety, as they make the real interview environment feel more familiar. By practising multiple times, you can refine your answers, become more confident, and develop a natural flow in your responses, which will help you perform better during the actual interview.

Interviews often come with **tough questions** that might catch you off guard, like "What is your biggest weakness?" or "Tell me about a time you failed." The key to handling these questions is to be honest but strategic. When discussing weaknesses, mention something you're working to improve and how. When talking about failures, focus on what you learned and how it made you better.

Body language plays a big role in interviews. Keep **eye contact**, offer a **firm handshake**, and use **open body language** to convey confidence and enthusiasm. Avoid crossing your arms, looking down, or fidgeting, as these can signal nervousness or disinterest. A smile and positive attitude can make a strong impression.

At the end of most interviews, you'll be asked if you have any questions. This is a great chance to show your interest in the company and the role. Prepare a few **thoughtful questions** in advance, such as asking about team dynamics, company culture, or growth opportunities. Avoid asking questions that you could easily answer by checking the company's website.

Successful interviews come down to **preparation and practice**. Understand the types of questions you may face, use structured techniques like STAR, and be mindful of your **body language**. An interview isn't just about proving you're qualified; it's about showing you're the right fit for the company and that you're excited about the opportunity. With the right preparation, you can turn an interview into a compelling conversation that leaves a lasting impression.

2.5. Skills and personality tests

In the hiring process, many employers use **skills** and **personality tests** to get a better picture of candidates beyond what's on their resumes and how they perform in interviews. These tests help employers understand a candidate's **strengths, abilities**, and whether they would fit well with the **company culture**. They can seem intimidating at first, but knowing what to expect and how to prepare can make a big difference in how confident you feel and how well you do.

Skills tests are used to evaluate specific abilities that are important for the job you're applying for. These can be **technical skills**, like coding or working with particular software, or general skills like **problem-solving, data analysis**, or **communication**. The main goal is to see if you have the skills needed to succeed in the role.

For example, if you're applying for a software development job, you might have to take a **coding assessment** to show that you know how to use programming languages like **Python** or **Java**. In other roles, you might take **aptitude tests** that measure **logical reasoning, numerical skills**, and **verbal abilities**—these are common for jobs that require strong problem-solving skills. There are also **Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs)**, which present hypothetical scenarios and ask you how you would respond. These tests help employers see how you would handle challenges on the job and if your approach fits with what they're looking for.

To prepare for skills tests, review the job description and focus on the **key skills** needed. Practice exercises related to those skills, take **sample tests** online, and brush up on any technical knowledge that might be tested. The more familiar you are with the types of questions you might face, the more confident and less anxious you'll feel.

Personality tests are used to see how well your traits align with the role and the **company culture**. Unlike skills tests, there aren't right or wrong answers—these tests are about finding out if your **personality** is a good match for the team and work environment.

Some of the most common personality tests include the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)**, which categorises people into one of 16 personality types based on things like whether they're more **introverted** or **extroverted**. Employers might use the MBTI to get an idea of how you would work with others and tackle tasks. The **Big Five Personality Traits** test measures things like **openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness**, and **emotional stability**, and helps employers see if your personality is a good fit for their culture. The **DISC Assessment** looks at four traits—**Dominance, Influence, Steadiness**, and **Conscientiousness**—and helps predict how you might work in a team.

Personality tests aim to measure qualities like **adaptability, teamwork, resilience**, and **work style**. They give employers a sense of whether you would fit in with the company's culture and complement the existing team. The best way to approach these tests is to **be yourself**. Trying to "game" the test could lead to mismatched expectations if you get the job, so it's important to answer honestly and let your true character come through.

For **skills tests**, practice is key. Look up similar questions online and take sample tests to get used to the format and the kinds of questions you might face. Both skills and personality tests can be nerve-wracking, but **staying calm** can help you perform better. Take deep breaths, manage your time, and remember that these tests are just one part of

the hiring process. For **personality tests**, it's crucial to be **honest**. Employers want genuine answers to see how well you fit with the company. Giving the answers you think they want to hear might lead to problems later if the job isn't the right fit for you.

Skills and personality tests are valuable tools that help employers understand candidates beyond their work experience and qualifications. By assessing both your **technical skills** and **personality traits**, these tests help companies find people who are not only capable but also aligned with their values and culture. While these assessments can be challenging, your success depends on **preparation, authenticity, and a positive mindset**. Remember, these tests are meant to find the best match for both you and the company, so treat them as an opportunity to showcase what makes you a great fit.

3. Career guidance and practices

3.1. Practical learning

Practical experiences are crucial for helping young people transition from education to the labour market. While theoretical knowledge is important, practical learning provides hands-on skills and real-world context that are essential for navigating the complexities of the workplace. Employers today are looking for candidates who not only have the right qualifications but also know how to apply their skills in real-life situations. Practical experiences give job seekers an edge by helping them develop competencies, build confidence, and create a network that is vital for securing employment. By engaging in practical learning, young people gain a better understanding of what it means to work in their desired field, making them more prepared and adaptable when they enter the job market.

One of the key benefits of practical experiences is the opportunity to develop **transferable skills** and **key competencies**. For instance, during an internship, young people might develop communication skills by interacting with clients or team members, problem-solving skills by dealing with unexpected challenges, and adaptability by working in a fast-paced environment. Key competencies like digital literacy can be put to use by using specific software tools, while entrepreneurship skills can be honed by taking part in decision-making processes within a project. These real-world applications help young people become better prepared for the demands of the job market. These include skills like **communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability**, which are valuable across many roles and industries. Moreover, key competencies such as **multilingual skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness** can be developed through participation in various programs, including the **Erasmus+ programme**. Practical learning environments, whether through internships, mentorships, or on-the-job training, offer the chance to refine these skills in real situations. For example, in the healthcare industry, practical learning is particularly important because it allows individuals to apply theoretical knowledge in patient care settings, understand team dynamics, and develop skills like empathy and effective communication. Similarly, in engineering, hands-on experience is essential for understanding how theoretical concepts work in real-world projects, such as working on construction sites or collaborating with other engineers to solve technical challenges. Practical learning not only helps young people understand group dynamics but also offers insight into decision-making and resilience. These experiences help build both technical abilities and interpersonal qualities, such as **leadership** and **emotional intelligence**, which are highly valued in any work environment.

Another important aspect of practical learning is its ability to build **self-confidence**. Many young people entering the job market for the first time feel unsure about their abilities and how they will perform in a professional setting. Practical experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, allow them to apply their knowledge and see their own growth in real-time. The sense of accomplishment that comes from successfully completing tasks or solving problems significantly contributes to building confidence, which in turn improves overall employability. For example, taking on a challenging project during an internship and seeing it through to success can boost a young person's belief in their abilities and provide a concrete example to use during job interviews.

Within the European Union, there are several initiatives aimed at increasing access to practical learning opportunities and supporting young people in their career development. The **Erasmus+ Youth Programme** offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to gain practical experience across Europe while promoting

cross-cultural understanding, which is increasingly important in today's globalised job market. Through Erasmus+, participants can take part in **traineeships**, also known as internships, in various sectors. These traineeships allow young people to gain hands-on experience in a professional setting, helping them apply their skills in real-world scenarios while also developing key competencies like multilingual skills and cultural awareness. Erasmus+ also supports **youth exchanges**, where young people from different countries come together to work on projects, learn from each other, and gain valuable teamwork and communication skills. These opportunities not only help participants build practical experience but also expand their networks and deepen their understanding of different cultures and work environments, which is highly beneficial in today's interconnected labour market. Additionally, **Erasmus+ mobility programs** give students and young professionals the chance to study or work abroad, further enhancing their adaptability, independence, and cross-cultural communication skills.

Another valuable initiative is **job shadowing**. Job shadowing gives individuals the opportunity to observe a professional in their day-to-day work. This experience helps young people gain a realistic understanding of different roles, company cultures, and work environments. Job shadowing is especially useful for those who are unsure about their career path, as it allows them to explore different fields without making a long-term commitment. By observing professionals in action, participants can get a sense of what a particular job entails and whether it aligns with their interests and strengths. Job shadowing can also help participants develop a network of contacts in their chosen industry, which may lead to future job opportunities. It also provides an opportunity to ask questions and receive advice from experienced professionals, offering insights that are often not available through formal education.

The **European Solidarity Corps** is another EU program that provides opportunities for young people to participate in projects that benefit communities across Europe. Through this initiative, participants gain hands-on experience in various fields, including education, health, social services, and environmental protection. These experiences help young people build practical skills while fostering a sense of solidarity and community engagement, which are highly valued by employers. Working on community projects also teaches participants about **project management**, **resourcefulness**, and **collaboration**—skills that are transferable to many different jobs. By contributing to projects that have a positive impact on society, young people develop a sense of purpose and motivation, which can be highly appealing to potential employers.

Practical learning initiatives, such as **internships**, **apprenticeships**, and job shadowing, help bridge the gap between education and employment. These experiences provide young people with practical knowledge, exposure to real work environments, and a chance to build their professional network. They help young people understand what employers expect, apply theoretical knowledge in practice, and create valuable professional connections. In a competitive labour market, having these experiences can make a significant difference in securing a job. They show employers that candidates are not only knowledgeable but also ready to contribute meaningfully from day one. For young people looking to enter the workforce, embracing practical learning opportunities is an essential step toward building a successful career. In addition, practical experiences provide a platform for young people to explore different career options, helping them make more informed decisions about their future. By trying out different roles and gaining exposure to various industries, they can better understand their strengths and preferences, leading to more fulfilling career choices in the long run.

3.2. Networking

Networking is a huge part of building a successful career, especially when you're just starting out. It's really about creating genuine relationships and connections that can open doors, provide advice, and give you access to opportunities you wouldn't otherwise hear about. In today's job market, having the right qualifications or experience is important, but who you know can be just as valuable. Networking helps you learn about hidden opportunities, get insider knowledge, and connect with people who can support your growth. It's not just about getting a job—it's also about finding mentors, gaining new perspectives, and learning from people who have already walked the path you're on.

One of the biggest advantages of networking is access to the **hidden job market**. A lot of jobs are never formally advertised; they're filled through word of mouth, internal referrals, or recommendations from people who already know and trust each other. If you have a good network, you might hear about these opportunities before they're made public—or sometimes they never even make it that far. Imagine a friend or a former colleague giving you a heads-up about a role that's opening up at their company. In a competitive job market, having that kind of information can make all the difference.

Alumni networks are a great way to start building those connections, especially if you've just graduated. People who attended the same university or school as you are often eager to help out because they've been in your shoes and share a common background. Alumni networks can be really helpful for finding job opportunities, getting advice, or learning more about a particular industry. Many universities even organise networking events and mentorship programs to help graduates connect with established alumni. These networks can give you a solid support system and even lead to job offers from people who want to help fellow graduates get a good start.

Another great way to network is through **professional associations**. These organisations are usually specific to an industry, and they offer a platform where you can connect with others in your field, share insights, and keep up with industry trends. Attending conferences, workshops, or seminars that these associations organise is a fantastic way to meet potential employers, collaborators, or mentors. Plus, a lot of professional associations offer career development resources like certification programs and skill-building workshops that can make you more marketable to employers.

Online networking has also become a game changer, especially with platforms like **LinkedIn**. LinkedIn is a place where you can showcase your skills, share updates about your career, and connect with people in your industry. You can also join relevant groups, participate in industry-specific discussions, and follow companies or thought leaders to stay informed and engaged. These activities help you build a strong network and increase your visibility to potential employers. Engaging in conversations, sharing interesting content, and reaching out to people in your field can help you build a strong online presence. This presence can establish your credibility and make you more visible to potential employers. One of the best things about online networking is that it breaks down geographical barriers—you can connect with people from anywhere in the world, making it easier to build relationships beyond your local area.

Mentorship is another valuable form of networking. Finding a mentor—someone with more experience who can guide you—is incredibly helpful when navigating your career. A good mentor can provide advice, offer feedback,

and help you understand the ins and outs of your industry. They might even introduce you to others in their network. Sometimes mentorships start through formal programs at universities or companies, but they can also develop naturally when you click with someone in your field. Having someone in your corner who's been through it all can make a huge difference in your confidence and career direction.

Then there are **networking events** like career fairs, industry meetups, and conferences. These events are great for meeting people face-to-face and making a lasting impression. You get to introduce yourself to potential employers, learn about different industries, and start building relationships that could lead to future opportunities. Even if you don't get a job offer right away, making a good impression can lead to referrals or opportunities down the road. The key is to go into these events with an open mind and a positive attitude, ready to engage and learn.

Building and maintaining a strong professional network isn't just about finding your next job—it's also about **long-term career growth**. A good network can help you gain access to industry insights, stay updated on emerging trends, and open doors to new opportunities that might not be available otherwise. A good network can offer support, advice, and mentorship throughout your career, helping you tackle challenges, discover new opportunities, and stay on top of industry trends. And networking isn't a one-way street; it's about giving back too. Sharing your own knowledge and helping others can make your network stronger and more supportive for everyone involved. In a world where who you know can have a big impact on your career, investing time in building and maintaining connections is one of the best things you can do for your future.

3.3. Orientation and Career Services

Getting started on your career path can feel overwhelming, especially when you're just finishing school or university and trying to figure out what comes next. This is where **orientation and career services** come in. These services are there to help you—whether you're a student, recent graduate, or even a professional thinking about a change—find direction, explore your options, and make well-informed decisions about your future. By offering guidance, resources, and support, career services help you understand your strengths, figure out the job market, and create a plan to reach your goals. It's a good idea to check out the services available through your school or university, as many educational institutions offer great resources to help with career planning and development.

One of the most important parts of career services is **career counselling**. For example, career counselling can help if you're unsure which industry to enter or if you need guidance on making a career transition. Career counsellors are trained to help you figure out what you're good at, what you value, and what kind of work will make you happy. They use different tools, like personality assessments, skills inventories, and one-on-one conversations, to help you get a clear picture of what kind of career might be the best fit. For example, tools like the **Belbin Team Roles** or the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)** can help match your personality traits to potential career paths, making it easier to find options that fit your natural strengths. Career counselling is also about helping you deal with any uncertainties, explore a range of career options, and build the confidence you need to go after what you want.

Another major service provided by career centres is **workshops and seminars**. These sessions cover lots of different topics, like **resume and cover letter writing**, **interview preparation**, and **career planning**. For example, in a resume and cover letter workshop, you'll get tips on tailoring these documents to specific industries, highlighting

your skills and achievements, and avoiding common mistakes. Workshops are hands-on and often include opportunities for peer review and feedback, so you can learn from others. **Interview preparation workshops** often involve mock interviews, where you can practise answering typical interview questions, tackle tough scenarios, and get helpful feedback to improve your performance. Workshops focused on **career planning** help you set long-term career goals, figure out what steps you need to take, and create a clear plan to achieve them. These sessions are especially helpful if you're new to the job market and need practical, step-by-step guidance.

Career centres also provide **specialised workshops** for different career stages and industries, e.g., workshops focused on careers in healthcare or technology. For instance, some workshops are dedicated to **networking strategies**, showing you how to build and maintain professional connections both online and in person. Others might focus on **salary negotiation techniques**, helping you understand your value in the job market and how to negotiate for fair compensation. These specialised sessions give you more tools to succeed in the workplace, no matter what field you're in.

Career fairs are another valuable resource offered by career services. These events bring together employers and job seekers, giving you a chance to explore different industries, learn about job openings, and connect with potential employers. Career fairs are great because they allow you to meet recruiters face-to-face, ask questions, and make a positive impression. Even if you don't get a job offer right away, attending career fairs helps you practise your networking skills and can lead to future opportunities. Many career fairs also include industry panels and informational sessions where employers talk about current trends, what they're looking for in candidates, and what it takes to succeed in their field, giving you valuable insights.

Another resource career centres offer is **career coaching**, which is similar to career counselling but often focuses more on taking action. Career coaches help you set specific goals, create a plan of action, and stay accountable throughout your job search. For instance, a career coach might help you figure out what skills you need for a particular job and create a timeline for gaining those skills—whether through online courses, workshops, or volunteering. Career coaching sessions often include role-playing exercises to help you practise professional communication, navigate challenging situations at work, and build leadership skills. This hands-on approach not only makes you more prepared but also helps you feel more confident stepping into a new role.

Career services also put a big emphasis on **self-assessment** and **personal development**. Many career centres have resources to help you understand your unique strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Self-assessment tools, like personality tests, values inventories, and aptitude tests, can give you a clearer idea of what types of roles and work environments are the best match for you. Knowing yourself is a huge part of making smart career decisions, and it helps you focus your job search more effectively.

If you're a student, make sure to take advantage of the **networking events** that career centres organise. These events are a great way to connect with alumni, industry professionals, and potential mentors. Often, they feature guest speakers who share their career stories, challenges, and lessons learned. Hearing these experiences can be really inspiring and give you practical advice on navigating your own career. Career centres also work closely with alumni networks to organise these events, so you can benefit from the insights and connections of people who were once in your shoes.

Orientation and career services are all about giving you the support and resources you need to make confident career decisions. Whether it's through counselling, workshops, career fairs, or coaching, these services are here to help you navigate the often confusing world of the job market. They're not just about helping you get your first job—they're about building a rewarding career in the long term. By using these resources, you can better understand your options, develop the skills you need, and create a clear path toward achieving your goals. If you're feeling unsure about what direction to take, making use of orientation and career services is a practical and effective way to get started on the right path.

In short, career services provide a complete toolkit to help you grow your career. From finding the right career path to mastering resume writing and interview techniques, these services are incredibly valuable for bridging the gap between school and work. If you're still studying, be proactive in seeking out these resources—they offer a major advantage when stepping into the competitive job market. Career services not only help you in your immediate job search but also set you up for lifelong growth and success.

3.4. Skill development

Employers today are looking for candidates who not only have the foundational knowledge needed for a role but also demonstrate a commitment to ongoing learning and growth. This is where **skill development programs** come in. These programs are designed to help you build and expand your skill set, keeping you competitive and ready for the challenges of the workplace. Whether you're just starting your career, looking to make a change, or trying to advance in your current position, investing time in developing your skills is one of the best ways to boost your employability and career prospects. The key to thriving in today's market is to always be learning and adapting to new trends, technologies, and best practices.

One of the most accessible ways to build new skills is through **online learning platforms**. Platforms like **Coursera**, **Udemy**, and **LinkedIn Learning** offer thousands of courses on a wide range of topics—from technical skills like coding and data analysis to soft skills like communication, leadership, and emotional intelligence. These platforms are perfect for learning at your own pace and fitting education around your schedule. For example, if you want to learn how to code, you could take a beginner Python course on Coursera. If you're interested in improving your public speaking skills, Udemy has a variety of courses that can help. Online learning platforms are great because they make education flexible and accessible, allowing you to focus on the areas where you want to grow. You can also take part in guided projects, interactive quizzes, and peer-reviewed assignments, which makes the learning experience more dynamic and practical.

Another key option for skill development is **certified programs**. Certified programs are more structured and often come with an official certificate upon completion, which can be a great addition to your resume. Certifications demonstrate to employers that you have taken the time to gain in-depth knowledge of a specific area and that you meet a recognised standard of competence. For example, earning a **Google IT Support Professional Certificate** or completing a **Project Management Professional (PMP)** certification can significantly enhance your qualifications and make you stand out in the job market. Many industries value certifications because they show that you have specialised skills that are up to date with the latest industry standards. In addition to traditional certifications, many

companies are now offering **micro-credentials**—short, targeted courses that focus on specific skills within a broader discipline. These micro-credentials can be particularly useful if you need to gain expertise quickly without committing to a lengthy program.

Workshops and short-term training courses are also excellent ways to build practical skills. Unlike traditional classes, workshops and short-term courses are usually focused on specific topics or skills and are designed to be intensive and practical. For example, **coding workshops** are popular among those looking to quickly gain tech skills needed for a career in IT. These sessions are hands-on and help participants become job-ready in a short period of time. Similarly, workshops on topics like **digital marketing**, **public speaking**, or **graphic design** provide practical experience and help you build a strong foundation in those areas. Many of these workshops are also run by professionals who are currently active in the industry, which means you get direct exposure to the latest tools, techniques, and industry insights. Additionally, these short-term courses often encourage group work, providing a chance to develop teamwork and collaboration skills, which are critical in many work environments.

In addition to these formal programs, it's also important to recognize the value of **self-directed learning**. Self-directed learning is all about taking the initiative to build your skills through whatever resources are available to you. This could mean reading books, watching YouTube tutorials, listening to podcasts, or experimenting with projects on your own. The internet is full of resources that can help you learn just about anything. For example, if you're interested in photography, there are countless free tutorials online that can teach you about lighting, composition, and editing. Self-directed learning shows employers that you're motivated, curious, and capable of managing your own growth—qualities that are highly valued in any workplace. One of the biggest advantages of self-directed learning is that it allows you to follow your own curiosity. If you're passionate about something, you can dive in deep and explore it at your own pace, which often leads to a much deeper and more meaningful learning experience.

Another important aspect of skill development is understanding the **importance of soft skills** alongside technical abilities. Employers are not only interested in your technical capabilities; they also value qualities like **adaptability**, **empathy**, **time management**, and **teamwork**. These soft skills are often what make the difference between a good employee and a great one. For example, if you're taking an online course on data analysis, it's equally important to work on your communication skills so that you can effectively present your findings to stakeholders. Skill development programs that integrate both technical and interpersonal skills can give you a significant advantage in the job market.

The importance of skill development cannot be overstated. The job market is constantly evolving, with new technologies and ways of working changing the skills employers are looking for. By participating in skill development programs, you stay up to date with these changes and ensure that your skills are relevant. Whether you're learning through online courses, attending workshops, or completing certifications, every effort you make to build your skills helps you stand out as a candidate who is ready to adapt and thrive. Learning doesn't stop once you get a job—it's a lifelong process that helps you grow both professionally and personally. Employers appreciate candidates who show a genuine interest in continuous learning because it demonstrates resilience and a proactive attitude towards career development.

If you're just starting out, or if you're thinking about shifting your career, take some time to explore the skill development opportunities available to you. Online platforms, certified programs, and workshops are all valuable resources that can help you grow. It's also a good idea to speak with industry professionals, mentors, or career advisors who can guide you on which skills are most in-demand in your field. By investing in yourself and your abilities, you'll be better prepared to tackle challenges, seize opportunities, and build a rewarding career. Skill development is not just about getting your next job—it's about setting yourself up for a future full of growth, learning, and opportunities to make a difference in whatever field you choose.

4. Case studies and good practices

This chapter presents a collection of inspiring good practices from across Europe, showcasing various successful initiatives aimed at enhancing youth employability. Each national team has contributed two case studies that highlight their unique approaches to tackling youth unemployment and fostering economic inclusion, particularly among vulnerable groups. These examples demonstrate the power of collaboration, innovative program design, and targeted interventions in supporting young people to acquire skills, gain work experience, and enter the labor market with confidence. By sharing these practices, we hope to inspire others to adopt and adapt similar initiatives to meet the needs of young people in their own communities.

4.1. MTOP – More Than One Perspective (Austria)

Context

MTOP (More Than One Perspective) is a mentorship and training program aimed at integrating refugees and migrants into the Austrian labour market. The program acknowledges the diverse skills and experiences that refugees bring with them and works to overcome the barriers they face in securing meaningful employment in Austria. By focusing on both professional and cultural integration, MTOP seeks to support refugees in their journey to find suitable jobs and become active members of the workforce.

Objectives

- Support refugees and migrants in overcoming barriers to employment in Austria.
- Provide tailored mentorship and training to enhance participants' skills and confidence.
- Foster social and professional integration by helping participants build connections and understand local business culture.

Description

MTOP provides a comprehensive training curriculum that includes language courses, job application workshops, and personalised mentoring. Participants receive support tailored to their individual needs, with a strong focus on utilising their existing skills and aligning them with the expectations of Austrian employers. The mentorship component of the program is particularly effective, as mentors—often professionals from various industries—work closely with participants to help them navigate the job market, understand Austrian business culture, and expand their professional networks. This personalised support is key in building participants' confidence and providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to integrate into the workforce successfully.

Outcomes

The MTOP program has successfully helped many refugees and migrants secure employment that matches their qualifications and aspirations. The emphasis on tailored support has allowed participants to bridge the gap between their past professional experiences and the expectations of Austrian employers, leading to improved career prospects and long-term stability. Participants report feeling more empowered and better prepared to face the challenges of the job market, thanks to the comprehensive training and mentoring they received through

MTOP. By helping individuals achieve meaningful employment, MTOP not only enhances their economic stability but also fosters their social integration into Austrian society.

Additional Resources

More information can be found on the official MTOP website: [MTOP Austria](#).

4.2. Everyone Codes (Austria)

Context

"Everyone Codes" is an Austrian initiative focused on equipping young people with the digital skills necessary for the modern job market. Recognising the growing demand for coding and programming expertise, the program offers intensive training in software development, specifically designed for individuals who are new to the field. The target group includes young people from diverse backgrounds, including those who are unemployed or underemployed, providing them with an opportunity to acquire valuable technical skills in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Objectives

- Equip young people with the digital skills needed to enter the modern job market.
- Provide tailored, intensive training in software development for individuals without prior experience.
- Foster professional growth and confidence through mentorship and career guidance.

Description

"Everyone Codes" offers an intensive training curriculum in software development, specifically aimed at young people who are new to the field of coding. The program provides a supportive and inclusive environment where participants can learn programming skills through hands-on experience. One of the standout features of the program is its strong mentorship component, where participants are paired with experienced mentors from the tech industry. These mentors provide technical expertise, career advice, and guidance throughout the learning process, helping participants build both skills and confidence. The mentorship also helps participants develop a professional network within the tech industry, which is invaluable as they transition into employment.

Outcomes

The mentorship and intensive training provided by Everyone Codes have led to significant successes for its participants. Many graduates of the program have successfully transitioned into employment in the tech sector, with some securing positions at prominent tech companies. The focus on personalised support and hands-on learning has not only enabled participants to gain the necessary technical skills but also built their confidence to pursue careers in the tech industry. By offering tailored training and a strong mentoring network, Everyone Codes has contributed to improving the employability of young people, helping them access opportunities in a rapidly growing field.

Additional Resources

More information can be found on the official Everyone Codes website: <https://everyonecodes.io>.

4.3. Employment support programme for young people in the Landes department (France)

Context

The Landes department covers a vast area, characterised by its rural nature and the white zone it represents. To offset the effects of this rurality, the département has experimented with and developed a scheme to help young people under the age of 26 into employment, in particular young people who are no longer in formal education and who need more specific, individualised support.

Objectives

The objectives of this programme are

- Identify and guide young people aged 16 to 24, particularly those furthest from employment,
- Strengthen personalised, comprehensive (social and professional), partnership-based and reinforced support to remove barriers to employment,
- Work on social and professional integration by identifying each person's skills,
- Offering a range of opportunities for professional integration and/or training with local partners aimed at getting people into work.

Two actions are being carried out simultaneously:

- Identifying young NEETs,
- Individualised, comprehensive (social and professional), partnership-based and reinforced support for the young participants.

The aim is to offer young people a job or training solution (during or at the end of this support), or to enable them to return to mainstream services to continue their journey towards employment and independence.

Description

In addition to individual meetings, the young people involved in the programme can also take part in a range of activities. For example, young people from the Landes region benefiting from the department's Support for Youth Employment programme took part in a 3-day film workshop to showcase their skills and restore their confidence. Through a short film on mental health featuring a job interview, they were able to showcase their skills and complement each other. They were accompanied by a director who wanted them to make their own decisions about their joint project, encouraging them to take collective decisions about the script, location scouting, costumes, sets and editing. The group effect had a real positive impact on the participants.

Through this type of action, the young people have an environment that encourages open-mindedness and openness to others. They work together to achieve a common goal. And to achieve this, they have made their individual skills available to others.

To make this programme feasible and, above all, effective, referral agents are deployed in several areas of the region to ensure a high level of coverage. The advisers are on hand to give practical advice and support to young people in their efforts to find a job or training, and to remove obstacles to their independence.

The first step in providing such support is to introduce the scheme and find out what the young person's needs are. Other meetings can be organised to help the young person find the employment and/or training that would be most beneficial to them.

The AEJ-XL advisor collaborates and works with local stakeholders involved with young people: educational, social, professional and other partners (social action committees, local missions, job centres, youth information offices, judicial protection, etc.).

The partners are invited to take part in the programme by mobilising their services and networks to help guide the young people and their career paths, and by making their skills and tools available to the participants.

Half of the time is devoted to testing tools for identifying 'invisible' young people aged 16 to 25 who are not supported by mainstream services. This work is carried out in conjunction with the service's team of educators, partners, digital tools, participants in the operation and/or their direct entourage.

Outcomes

Since the scheme was launched in 2015, 1,050 young people have been identified and 88% of them have received support. The conclusion of these years of support is that 57% of the young people supported leave with a job or training.

4.4. Maison de l'Europe des Landes WIPSEE and its Youth Information Label (France)

Context

France's youth policies focus on supporting young people as they move towards independence and access to rights. With this in mind, the government has sought to ensure the quality of the information provided to young people by introducing the Information Jeunesse label, which is awarded to a youth information structure following a comprehensive and objective assessment. The MDE40 WIPSEE was awarded this label in 2022.

MDE40 WIPSEE is an association based in Pontonx sur l'Adour (Landes department), a rural village. The process of applying for Information Jeunesse (I.J.) accreditation stems first and foremost from a need identified among young people in the area. This need emerged at several levels:

- observations made by our youth workers, in contact with young people during the activities and events we organise;
- feedback from young people themselves, who expressed a feeling of isolation and difficulty in identifying valid and effective sources of information;
- an overall lack of interest on the part of the political authorities, who have so far produced relatively few policies for the 15-30 age group and have done little to address the problems of this generation.

In the course of its work with young people, the association has observed that :

- young people in rural areas are more marginalised and isolated than the rest of society;
- young people have less autonomy and are less likely to be able to travel easily to get in touch with facilities;
- young people need information to support their practices and activities, i.e. to enable them to identify their interests and expectations more easily, as well as their needs and the prerequisites for achieving their objectives.

Objectives

The IJ aims to offer :

- a place to listen and a privileged and competent contact person to answer their requests and questions, while respecting confidentiality ;
- support for their life projects and administrative, educational and community activities;

- a source of general and specific information;
- a place to carry out research on the Internet and/or to obtain materials for discussion;
- a place to make contact with other young people or associations;
- a place to discover new things and open up to new practices.

Description

With this accreditation, the MDE40 WIPSEE is recognised throughout the region and is part of a youth information network. Meetings between youth workers enable them to brainstorm on ways of working with young people. This exchange of practice is vital for adjusting and adapting the support we give young people.

The role of the youth worker in the IJ structure is central: he or she is the structure's direct link with young people. They are a source of listening, information and support. As such, the youth worker must be constantly up to date with the latest information on the schemes available to young people, so as to be able to interest them in a wide variety of subjects. The YI is not just a place for information, but also for documentation, both for young people and for youth workers. The youth worker has the skills to support young people in inventing, drafting, preparing, carrying out and evaluating an individual or group project. Anyone can contact the person in charge of the scheme to make an appointment, or they can come directly to the Youth Information Centre during opening hours. This good practice is carried out on a daily basis, enabling young people to contact it throughout the year.

Throughout the year, youth workers from the MDE40 WIPSEE take part in public events to raise the profile of youth information. There is also regular communication on social networks.

A number of actions are planned in cooperation with local youth partners:

- Flyers, leaflets and information documents are displayed at local partners' offices to guide young people to MDE40 Wipsee for further information, and conversely the MDE40 Wipsee youth worker redirects young people in need of specialist information to the specific players covering the area concerned.
- The MDE40 Wipsee and its partners are coordinating to act as information relays both on their online digital networks and on their websites (partner logos, information on joint initiatives, etc.).
- Permanent offices are organised.

Due to the characteristics of the area, the IJ at the MDE40 Wipsee offers entirely free information, both face-to-face and online:

- face-to-face: the IJ adviser is the main point of contact for young people who are able to come to the premises. He or she can provide information and general advice (during opening hours), present events on more specific topics and answer additional questions (during drop-in sessions), and offer in-depth, one-to-one support and follow-up to young people over time (appointments must be made in order to block off the time needed for these one-to-one meetings), in a dedicated office that guarantees the confidentiality of the discussions.
- online: young people can find the most comprehensive documentation possible on our website on the various issues that concern them. They also have access to the contacts of the IJ referral coordinator (business telephone and e-mail) if they wish to make a one-to-one appointment.

Outcomes

In order to measure the impact of this initiative, sign-up sheets are available at the entrance to the Espace Information Jeunesse, enabling the MDE40 WIPSEE to show the number of young people who have attended the

event. Since the start of 2024, more than 70 young people have benefited from face-to-face, online and telephone support. And around 140 young people have taken part in workshops set up by MDE40 WIPSEE.

For example, during the current year, the MDE40 Wipsee supported a 19-year-old young person who came to do a year's civic service in animation. During her time with the association, a youth worker was able to monitor her progress and, above all, provide her with individualised support. As part of her career plan, she wanted to train for the 'Brevet d'Aptitude aux Fonctions d'Animateurs' (Certificate of Aptitude for Leadership Functions), so that she could supervise children and teenagers on a non-professional basis, on an occasional basis. There is help available for all young people wishing to take this training course, but it is sometimes little known or requires a lot of time and administration. The MDE40 WIPSEE was therefore on hand to help this young person with the administrative formalities, in skills development and the search for a work placement to validate her training. The administrative procedures often represent obstacles because of their complexity and the time required. In the end, she was able to complete her training and obtain her diploma. Accompanying a young person through these procedures reassures them and gives them confidence, because they learn by doing things with someone who listens.

4.5. IASIS | At Work (Greece)

Context

IASIS | At Work is a Day Centre dedicated to providing psychosocial support to both employed and unemployed individuals facing workplace challenges. The Centre's mission is to enhance employability and overall well-being through a range of psychoeducational services. For young people aged 18-26, IASIS | At Work offers an integrated support system that combines psychological support, skills development, and hands-on volunteering experience. This comprehensive approach helps youth effectively navigate the workforce, particularly those who may face barriers to employment.

Objectives

- Enhance employability and resilience among young people aged 18-26.
- Provide personalised psychosocial support and career planning services.
- Foster skills development through practical experience and volunteering opportunities.
- Encourage social responsibility and community engagement.

Description

IASIS | At Work provided a combination of career counselling sessions that focused on career planning, CV writing, interview preparation, and crucial skill development for the job market. Additionally, psychological support sessions addressed stress relief and challenges related to workplace adaptation. The Centre also facilitated volunteering opportunities, allowing young people to shadow professionals, lead projects, and participate in adult education programs, which helped them gain valuable skills in management and teaching. The stakeholders involved in this initiative included young people aged 18-26, career counsellors, psychologists, and community partners. Resources used for the program included individual counselling, psychological support, partnerships with professionals in various fields, and community activities.

Outcomes

Participants gained practical experience, enhanced their employability, and improved their resilience through the program. In the long term, the program helped young people build a solid foundation for their professional future, while also enhancing both their psychological well-being and social skills.

Lessons Learned

Combining psychological support with career services and practical experiences is effective in addressing both the emotional and professional needs of young people. Encouraging community involvement and hands-on experiences strengthens resilience and prepares participants for real-life challenges.

Additional Resources

More information about the program can be found on the official IASIS website: [IASIS | At Work](#).

4.6. Odyssea Youth Centre (Greece)

Context

Odyssea Youth Centre is dedicated to empowering young people by providing training opportunities and a sustainable pathway to the job market. Located in Greece, the Centre's mission is to offer comprehensive support that enhances employability and fosters active community participation, specifically targeting young people aged 18-26 from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Objectives

- Provide young people with professional training tailored to market needs.
- Support youth with career guidance, resume preparation, and job placements.
- Foster a sense of civic responsibility through community involvement and social networking activities.

Description

Odyssea Youth Centre offered professional training through its Academy, which included courses in artificial intelligence, basic computer skills, and practical job training such as barista seminars. Career guidance services supported young people with resume preparation and job placement assistance, while youth activation initiatives encouraged participation in community activities, helping them develop a sense of civic responsibility. Participants in the program included young people aged 18-26, trainers at the Academy, career counsellors, and community organisations. Resources used included training facilities, partnerships with employers, courses on AI and basic skills, and community engagement activities.

Outcomes

Young participants gained job-relevant skills and received support in connecting with employment opportunities. The Centre helped young people secure stable employment and encouraged their ongoing community involvement, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to society.

Lessons Learned

Aligning training programs with market needs ensures that young people develop relevant skills that improve their

employability. Community involvement initiatives not only foster a sense of social responsibility but also strengthen interpersonal skills, which are essential in both personal and professional environments.

Additional Resources

More information about the [Odyssea Youth Centre](#).

4.7. DUOday: integrating people with disabilities into the labour market (Lithuania)

Context

DUOday is an international initiative where companies and organisations open their doors to people with disabilities, allowing them to shadow professionals and try out new job roles. The initiative was first implemented in Lithuania in 2019, initially in Vilnius, involving 32 people with disabilities and 25 employers. Since then, it has expanded significantly, and in 2024, the fifth edition of the initiative included SOPA, a social employment agency, along with 30 other organisations working with people with disabilities from 20 cities across Lithuania. More than 400 participants took part, exploring different job positions, and some of them even found employment as a result.

Objectives

- Draw attention to the high unemployment rate (70%) among people with disabilities in Lithuania and promote their social and economic inclusion.
- Provide opportunities for people with disabilities to explore different professions, gain work experience, and build confidence.
- Increase tolerance and awareness among employers about the potential of people with disabilities and the benefits of inclusive employment.
- Demonstrate the positive impact of inclusive work environments for both participants and employers.

Description

The DUOday initiative is centred on providing people with disabilities the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in different workplaces. Companies and organisations across Lithuania open their doors for a day, allowing participants to explore different professions and work alongside professionals. In 2024, more than 400 people from 20 Lithuanian cities participated in DUOday, with SOPA and other partner organisations ensuring participants received the support they needed throughout the experience. The aim was not only to offer practical job exposure but also to help participants enhance their social skills and self-confidence by engaging in real work environments. The initiative also aimed to increase employers' awareness and foster a culture of inclusivity by showing the value that people with disabilities can bring to the workforce.

Outcomes

DUOday has had a meaningful impact on both participants and employers. Participants reported feeling more confident and motivated after the experience, with some even securing job positions. For example, Martynas, who participated in DUOday 2022, successfully joined a bank as a digital accessibility tester and became involved in the bank's Accessibility of Services project. Martynas shared how DUOday provided him the first opportunity to try a job position, evaluate his capabilities, and demonstrate his potential. Employers who took part in DUOday also

noted a shift in their awareness and tolerance, recognising the value of inclusive workplaces and the unique contributions that people with disabilities can make.

Additional Resources

More information can be found on the official DUOday website: <https://duoday.lt/>

4.8 Summer jobs programme in Ukmergė (Lithuania)

Context

Starting in 2022, Ukmergė District Municipality and the Ukmergė Regional Career Centre "Karjeras" launched an initiative to provide young people aged 14-19, who are studying in the district's educational establishments, with the opportunity to gain work experience during the summer holidays. The aim of the programme is to create employment opportunities for young people during the summer period, increase their practical skills, and encourage employers to recruit young people through a workplace maintenance allowance. The initiative has seen growing interest from both employers and young people, with around 15 young participants gaining their first work experience each year. Many of these young people come from rural areas, while employers are located across different parts of the district.

Objectives

- Create employment opportunities for young people aged 14-19 during the summer holidays.
- Provide young people with practical work experience to help them develop essential job skills.
- Encourage employers to recruit young people by offering a workplace maintenance allowance.
- Support young people in rural areas by connecting them with job opportunities throughout the district.

Description

The Ukmergė Youth Summer Employment Initiative offers young people the chance to gain hands-on work experience during the summer holidays. Organised by Ukmergė District Municipality and the Ukmergė Regional Career Centre "Karjeras," the programme invites students aged 14-19 from the district to take part. Employers from various sectors open their doors to these young participants, providing them with the opportunity to try their hand at different job roles. The programme also incentivizes employers through a workplace maintenance allowance, encouraging them to take on young workers. The initiative has been especially beneficial for young people from rural areas, as it connects them with employment opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. The initiative aims to give young people a taste of the working world, helping them develop practical skills and build their confidence.

Outcomes

Since its launch, the Ukmergė Youth Summer Employment Initiative has provided meaningful work experience to around 15 young people each year. Participants have gained **practical job skills** and had their first experience of the working world, which has helped them understand the importance of responsibility and teamwork. The programme has also fostered a sense of community by connecting young people with local employers and

providing opportunities for skill development. Employers have benefited from having motivated young workers who bring fresh perspectives and enthusiasm to their teams.

Additional Resources

More information can be found on the Ukmergė Regional Career Centre "Karjeras" website: <https://karjerastau.lt/news/overview/121>

4.9. Supporting Employment Platform through Apprenticeship Learning (SEPAL) (Romania)

Context

The SEPAL project was implemented across five European countries—Romania, Spain, Lithuania, Greece, and Poland—with the goal of supporting young people in disadvantaged communities. The project specifically targeted NEETs (young people not in employment, education, or training) aged 18 to 29, focusing on vulnerable groups such as individuals with disabilities, Roma communities, migrants, low-skilled persons, and school dropouts. The initiative aimed to combat social exclusion and facilitate access to the labour market for these marginalised groups.

Objectives

- Combat social exclusion among young people, particularly NEETs from vulnerable backgrounds.
- Facilitate access to the labour market through personalised employment support, training, and apprenticeships.
- Promote the Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) model to create sustainable employment opportunities.

Description

The SEPAL project focused on providing a comprehensive support system for NEETs through personalised employment services and the promotion of the WISE model. Key actions included counselling, labour market mediation, and the creation of apprenticeships and internships. Participants received personalised support, including mentoring, training, and on-the-job learning opportunities. The project was led by the Institute for Social Partnership Bucovina Association in Romania, in collaboration with European partners such as the Pere Closa Private Foundation from Spain, ZIPB from Lithuania, KOISPE DIADROMES from Greece, and KOMES Fundacja from Poland. Local stakeholders, including the Suceava County Prefecture and the Suceava County Employment Agency (AJOFM), played crucial roles in the project's implementation. Resources such as the SEPAL Innovation Book, SEPAL e-Platform, and guides on apprenticeships and training were instrumental in supporting participants. The project was funded by the EEA & Norway Grants Fund for Youth Employment, which helped to ensure the availability of essential tools and partnerships for success.

Outcomes

The SEPAL project achieved significant results, including the qualification of 300 NEETs, the establishment of 5 SEPAL WISEs, the training of 15 SEPAL professionals, and the engagement of 25 SEPAL Local Stakeholder Committees (LSCs). One particularly inspiring success story is that of Alina Gafita. Alina, who had a physical disability and faced challenges finding employment despite her qualifications, joined the SEPAL project and began

with a paid apprenticeship. Within just four months, her dedication and potential led to her promotion to a full-time vocational counsellor, and by September 2020, she had advanced to the role of Communication Manager. In this role, Alina contributed to organising events, managing communications, and supporting European projects, exemplifying the transformative impact of SEPAL on individuals' lives. The project also highlighted the importance of data collection on NEETs, reducing bureaucratic barriers, recognising non-formal learning, and promoting transversal and digital skills.

Additional Resources

More information about the SEPAL project can be found on the official website: <https://www.projectsepal.com/>

4.10. IN JOB - Inclusion of NEET Youth into the Labor Market (Romania)

Context

The IN JOB project was implemented in Suceava County, Romania, by the Institute for Social Partnership Bucovina Association, in collaboration with key local stakeholders such as the Suceava County Employment Agency (AJOFM), the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection, various municipalities, and local schools. The project targeted NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youths aged 16 to 29, with a specific focus on those from rural areas and Roma communities. The initiative aimed to address the challenges faced by these young people in accessing the labour market by providing tailored vocational and entrepreneurial training.

Objectives

- Promote sustainable employment opportunities for NEET youths in Suceava County.
- Improve the professional and social integration of young people, particularly those from rural areas and Roma communities.
- Enhance the skills, competencies, and self-confidence of NEET youths through vocational training, career guidance, and entrepreneurship development.

Description

The IN JOB project developed and implemented a comprehensive set of integrated measures to improve access to the labour market for NEET youths. The project provided vocational training programs, ranging from introductory courses to level II qualifications, as well as entrepreneurship training for participants identified as having high employability potential. Training also included digitalization skills, aligning participants with the growing demands of the modern workforce. In addition to training, the project offered job mediation services to facilitate connections between young people and potential employers. The collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and the private sector was crucial to the project's success, ensuring that the training programs met the real needs of the local labour market. Personalised career guidance and support services were provided to help participants develop the self-confidence needed to pursue their career goals.

Outcomes

The IN JOB project successfully identified and included 372 NEET youths in its target group. Of these, 280

participants completed vocational training and became qualified in various fields, while 50 participants engaged in entrepreneurship and ICT training, which led to the creation of 10 new businesses. Additionally, the project facilitated the employment of 146 NEET youths, offering comprehensive support services to ensure their successful integration into the workforce. The project's impact extended beyond individual participants, as the establishment of new enterprises and the alignment of youth skills with labour market demands contributed to the long-term sustainability of the project's outcomes. IN JOB also highlighted the importance of practical skills training that meets employers' needs, emphasising the value of fostering an entrepreneurial culture and the need for strong collaboration between government, educational institutions, and the private sector.

Additional Resources

More information about the IN JOB project can be accessed through the official project channels:
<https://www.facebook.com/InJobNEETs>

4.11. Social Activation (Slovenia)

Context

The Social Activation Program, initiated by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and financed through the European Social Fund, is designed to support long-term unemployed people in Slovenia, helping them enter the labour market. Many participants, including young people, face social and economic barriers that prevent them from accessing job opportunities or continuing their education. The program aims to break this cycle by providing a supportive environment where participants can develop skills, gain practical experience, and build the confidence necessary for success. Operating across both urban and rural regions, the program works closely with local communities and NGOs, such as EPEKA, to foster an inclusive atmosphere that encourages growth and participation. The program focuses on both the professional and personal challenges that participants face, creating a pathway to social inclusion and greater independence.

Objectives

- Empower long-term unemployed individuals in Slovenia to enhance their employability and independence.
- Provide education, training, and life skills to help participants overcome barriers to employment.
- Foster social inclusion through community engagement and active participation.
- Deliver tailored support to meet each participant's unique needs, guiding them towards employment or further education.

Description

The Social Activation Program is structured into three modules. The Introductory Module helps participants develop a daily routine, integrate into their social environment, and increase motivation through group activities, workshops, and individual sessions. The Execution Module focuses on practical work experience, providing participants with hands-on learning through placements or projects, while enhancing their employability skills. Finally, the Exit Module helps participants review their progress, address any skill gaps, and receive guidance for future employment or educational opportunities.

Throughout the program, NGOs like EPEKA collaborate with schools, social services, and community organisations to provide holistic support, focusing on each participant's personal and professional development. Mentorship from local professionals further enhances the participants' journey by offering valuable career insights and encouragement.

Outcomes

The Social Activation Program has made a lasting impact on its participants, equipping them with practical skills that have helped many secure employment or continue their education. For example, one participant with only elementary school education was able to secure a job at a well-known tech company after completing a 4-month internship through the program. Many others have found employment in diverse industries, using the skills gained from the program's community engagement activities. Additionally, the program has fostered stronger social connections, making participants feel more supported and integrated into their communities. In the long term, the program has guided several participants into stable jobs, while others have pursued further education or training opportunities. Through its comprehensive approach, the Social Activation Program has helped many young people build brighter, more sustainable futures.

Additional Resources

For more information please visit <https://socialnaaktivacija.si/>.

4.12. Fair Employment (Slovenia)

Context

The Fair Employment project, led by the Association EPEKA and funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Slovenia, aims to tackle youth unemployment by empowering young people with skills for sustainable employment. The project specifically targets youth facing social and economic challenges, providing opportunities to enhance employability and community engagement. By focusing on skill development and active citizenship, the initiative supports participants in overcoming barriers to employment and promotes their integration into the labour market. The project also builds a support network involving local organisations, employers, and mentors, ensuring participants have a stable foundation as they transition into the workforce.

Objectives

- Equip young people with practical skills and knowledge to increase their employment prospects.
- Encourage active community participation to foster social responsibility.
- Connect young people with potential employers and community partners to create sustainable job opportunities.

Description

The Fair Employment project prepares young people for the workforce through career development, digital skills, and communication training. Participants engage in community projects to develop transferable skills and build a sense of belonging. The project emphasises experiential learning, combining hands-on workshops, mentorship, and internships with local businesses, which provide real-world experience and professional networking opportunities.

One-on-one mentorship also helps participants set realistic career goals, boosting their confidence and motivation throughout the program.

The project includes regional events and conferences that offer networking opportunities with stakeholders such as employers, policymakers, and community organisations. These events help young people expand their professional connections and explore different career paths. Collaborations with local schools and training centres provide both formal and non-formal learning experiences, ensuring participants have access to comprehensive educational opportunities.

Outcomes

The Fair Employment project has supported over 70 young people, helping them gain skills and experience to enter the job market. Many participants have moved on to stable employment or further education. Collaborations with local businesses provided practical experiences that significantly boosted employability, while mentorship offered individualised support to overcome challenges and set career goals. The program's community-driven approach has also strengthened partnerships among stakeholders, creating a supportive ecosystem that benefits both participants and the broader community by addressing youth unemployment and promoting social inclusion.

Additional Resources

For more information please visit <https://fairemployment.si/>.

5. Key Skills

Mastering key skills is vital to improving employability, especially for young people in disadvantaged communities. The EASY project specifically addresses emerging competencies, focusing on the top 10 skills that are critical for modern workplaces, including both digital and soft skills. These emerging skills are particularly relevant for rural youth, who face unique challenges in accessing education and employment. By equipping young individuals with these essential competencies, the project empowers them to build a durable skill set that goes beyond soft skills, enabling them to adapt to an increasingly digitised and complex world. This chapter clarifies why these emerging skills are essential and provides practical guidance on how youth can acquire them to thrive in the competitive job market.

Each of the key skills is explained below in a consistent and practical format. First, a clear definition establishes a foundation for understanding the skill. Then, the importance of the skill in today's job market is discussed, highlighting specific scenarios where it is particularly valuable. Next, practical advice on how young people can develop the skill is offered, followed by real-world examples that show how it is applied in the workplace. To help measure progress, methods for assessing the skill are outlined, and additional resources are provided to guide further development and mastery.

5.1. Analytical thinking and innovation

Definition

Analytical thinking is all about breaking down complex problems into smaller, more manageable parts. It involves evaluating information, identifying patterns, and making decisions based on evidence. It's about looking beyond the surface and digging deeper to understand the "why" behind things. Innovation, on the other hand, is the process of taking those insights and turning them into something new—a fresh solution, a better way of doing something, or even a new product. Together, analytical thinking and innovation work hand in hand to not only solve problems but also create opportunities for improvement and growth.

Importance

In the EU, where industries are rapidly evolving due to technology, sustainability goals, and policy shifts, analytical thinking and innovation are critical. Employers are looking for people who can take a step back, analyse complex situations, and come up with meaningful solutions. Analytical thinkers help make sense of data, identify what's working and what isn't, and find opportunities for innovation. Innovation is not just for tech giants or startups; it's for every organisation that wants to stay relevant, especially in a fast-changing economy. Analytical thinking and innovation are particularly valuable in fields like renewable energy, public policy, and healthcare—areas where creative problem-solving can make a real difference for communities across the EU.

How to Develop

Developing analytical thinking starts with a curious mindset. Question everything: Why does something work the way it does? How could it be better? Practice looking at situations from different angles. Try breaking down problems into their core components and look for patterns that might not be immediately obvious. Puzzle games, strategy games, and even practising data analysis can help sharpen your analytical skills. For innovation, it's all

about combining that analysis with creativity. Try brainstorming exercises—take a problem and list out all the possible ways to solve it, even the wild ones. Engage with diverse fields; often, the most innovative ideas come from cross-pollinating concepts from different disciplines. Don't be afraid to experiment—test out your ideas, learn from the failures, and refine them. Participating in innovation challenges or hackathons can also be a great way to stretch both your analytical and innovative muscles.

Examples

Consider a logistics manager who uses data analysis to identify inefficiencies in delivery routes. Instead of just accepting delays as unavoidable, they dig into the data, find patterns, and come up with an innovative new routing strategy that saves time and fuel. Or think about a healthcare worker who identifies a recurring issue in patient care. They analyse the underlying causes, develop a new protocol, and then advocate for its implementation—transforming not just how they work, but improving patient outcomes overall. These are real-life examples of how analytical thinking, paired with the courage to innovate, can bring about positive change.

Assessment

Assessing analytical thinking can start with reflecting on how often you question assumptions and dig into the details of a situation. How well do you handle complex information? Are you able to identify the root cause of an issue? Keep track of situations where you've used data or evidence to solve a problem—this helps you see your own progress. For innovation, think about the times you've proposed a new idea or implemented a change. How did it turn out? Feedback from supervisors or peers is also valuable here, especially if they've seen you in action during problem-solving sessions. Analytical thinking and innovation can also be assessed through problem-solving exercises or case studies that require you to analyse data and propose creative solutions.

Additional Resources

- "Thinking, Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman
- "The Innovator's Dilemma" by Clayton Christensen
- "A More Beautiful Question" by Warren Berger.

5.2. Active learning and learning strategies

Definition

Active learning is all about rolling up your sleeves and getting involved. Instead of passively receiving information, it means questioning, discussing, reflecting, and actually doing something with the content. It's not about memorising; it's about understanding. Learning strategies, meanwhile, are the different methods we use to make that learning stick—whether it's breaking down a complex concept into smaller parts or practising until something becomes second nature. When you combine active learning with solid learning strategies, you're not just going through the motions. You're taking charge, making sure you really understand, and figuring out how to use that knowledge when you need it.

Importance

We all know the world doesn't stand still—new technologies pop up all the time, and what worked yesterday might not work tomorrow. In this kind of job market, especially across the EU where industries are undergoing rapid digital transformation and green innovation, being adaptable isn't just a nice-to-have. It's essential. Active learning lets you take the reins on your development. It's not just about learning the latest tech or buzzwords; it's about knowing how to learn, how to adapt, and how to be creative in problem-solving. It's about the mindset that tells employers, "This person can grow with us." And it's especially crucial for those who haven't had all the same educational opportunities—active learning can level the playing field, helping young people from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds catch up and thrive. Research even backs this up—students who engage in active learning perform better and understand things more deeply (Freeman et al., 2014). In the EU, where initiatives like Erasmus+ focus on upskilling citizens, active learning is the key to making these opportunities work.

How to Develop

You don't just "get" active learning skills; you build them, and it starts with taking part. This could be joining a study group, but it could also be setting a goal to watch a series of online lectures and actually take notes—and then do something with those notes, like discussing them with a friend. Reflect on what you've learned; ask yourself if you really got it, and if not, dig deeper. Tools like journals can be great for this kind of reflection, and platforms like Coursera or Khan Academy are perfect for diving into new topics. But it's not just about sitting behind a screen—volunteering, attending workshops, taking part in projects—these are all ways to actively apply what you've learned in real situations. When you help someone else learn—say by explaining a tricky concept to a peer—you're not only helping them, but you're also reinforcing that knowledge for yourself.

Another powerful way to build active learning skills is through tackling real problems that don't have obvious answers. Problem-based learning (PBL) is an approach that's all about jumping into complex scenarios—just like real life. Imagine a group of people tackling how to reduce waste in their community; there's no single answer, and it requires everyone to think, research, and collaborate. It's these kinds of challenges that make learning come alive.

Examples

Take a junior software developer. Instead of just writing code and getting it approved, they might actively participate in code reviews—asking questions, learning why something is done a certain way, and then using that feedback to improve. They're not just learning how to code—they're learning how to think like a developer. Or consider a marketing assistant who goes beyond their daily tasks by joining webinars, asking questions, and bringing those new ideas into their work. They don't just absorb content—they put it into action. Or think about a customer service representative who role-plays tricky customer scenarios. By practising how they'd react, they're learning on their feet and adapting their skills to meet real-world challenges.

Assessment

Assessing active learning isn't just about passing a test. It's about understanding how well someone takes what they learn and puts it into practice. Self-evaluation is a great starting point—asking yourself, "What did I actually learn today?" and "How can I use this?" goes a long way. Keeping a learning journal helps too; it's a way to document your journey and see how far you've come. Mentors can also help—watching how you deal with new

situations, how you contribute during training, and whether you apply feedback. Project-based tasks are another way—seeing how you handle a challenge that requires new knowledge shows if you've truly learned or if you're just going through the motions. And getting feedback from peers? That's gold, especially in team environments where collaboration is key.

Additional Resources

- "Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning" by Peter C. Brown;
"Learning How to Learn" by Barbara Oakley;
"The Power of Now" by Eckhart Tolle (for mindfulness, which supports active learning).
- Coursera (www.coursera.org)
- Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org),
- edX (www.edx.org)

5.3. Complex problem-solving

Definition

Problem Solving is one of the transversal soft skills that is often requested in the labour market; It refers to the ability of identifying the source of a problem and then identifying, prioritising, selecting and implementing a solution for that problem. However, this is a very generic definition, and nowadays, it's possible to identify 2 approaches to problem solving: simple and complex.

Simple problem solving: It's useful in a "Linear System" that presents a static situation, with a clear goal, a limited number of variables, when all the information is available, it's possible to find a clear correlation between input and output and the problem can be solved with a single strategy.

Complex problem solving (CPS), on the other hand, refers to a "nonLinear system". In this case the scenario is dynamic, with a big number of interconnected variables that change during time, not all information is available and other actors can be influencing the context; goals are often vague and only supposition between given input and output can be produced, multiple interconnected strategies need to be used to try to solve the problem. More often than not it requires teamwork and not only the knowledge (cognitive aspect) but also emotional and motivational aspects of problem-solvers need to be considered.

Importance

CPS it's expected to become one of the most important skills to have to be competitive in the labour market. This is because, In real-world scenarios, simple problem solving is just not efficient enough, while CPS skill allows realistic prediction in complex contexts, for example where the social field is involved. Managers, psychologists, doctors, politicians etc... all need to take multiple significant decisions on daily bases and constantly use CPS to do so; predictions about collective issues like climate changes, market stock, etc... also requires use of CPS skill.

How to Develop

Unfortunately, formal teaching of CPS is not consolidated yet, but new education strategies, like New Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are starting to include problem solving as a fundamental part of their programs and PISA

is helping in defining how to evaluate the education system. However, it's impossible to teach a single strategy that will always work with CPS, but it's possible to form mental habits and create methods that can guide it.

The CPS process usually consists of two phases that are interlinked between them: acquiring knowledge of the problem and applying the knowledge to reach the goal. To do so, reducing the information into smaller chunks can be useful to recognise which segment is relevant and which is not. A good strategy to search if there is available bibliography on the topic or ask other people with previous experience, as said before, CPS is not an individual task. In fact, team meetings, brainstorming and structured feedback are all examples that can offer a more detailed and complex point of view on a situation and suggest new creative ways of actions.

With time and reflection on previous results, expertise on a specific system will be developed; allowing to understand complexity and the interconnections between variables easier and better and so elaborate more fast and reliable prediction of the results. However, even with expertise, a single approach will not be efficient all the time in all the context; for this reason, teamwork, creativity and reflection are all sub skills necessary to develop CPS skill, other than the knowledge available on the topic.

Examples

Multiple Careers are actively using CPS, and studies have often focused on the Science and Engineering field and STEM in general. In these fields, an expert's competence is not to know how to apply specific procedures, but to know which ways of action are best to use in specific situations. For example, software developers may need to code programs that they don't have prior knowledge about, optimise system performance, troubleshoot issues and more; all in a context where their work is probably done in a team, it's time-sensitive and need to meet the specific needs of the client, who will probably be different from the previous and the next one.

However, not only STEAM but every field of work can benefit from CPS skills; company managers for example, need to take strategic decisions to foster the growth of the company; taking in consideration internal factors like, human resources and team attitude, and external factors like market trend, laws on different countries etc...

Assessment

Even though CPS is an important skill, often requested by companies; most of the problem solving test referees to "simple problem solving" and are not adequate, because they usually provide all the information and are solvable with the application of a studied academic knowledge or they are confused with the IQ test. Tests that want to focus on CPS should require to understand a bigger context, figure out which information is useful or not, and that the solution may not be clearly defined and may require a creative proposition.

Still, some ways to assess CPS exist: Computer simulations with multiple variables are being used in the PISA test to do it, but they present some limitations, focusing mostly on the results.

In CPS skill assessment, the evaluation needs to be about the problem solving process itself and not about the outcome, which can be negative even if most of the decisions during the process taken were correct. For this reason, the OECD has developed an innovative "29 decision-based assessment", that focuses on seeing how the candidate reflects given an authentic problem to solve with limited time and information.

Resources

- <https://phet.colorado.edu/> Interactive simulation for STEM student
- <https://www.mindtools.com/a6tcgqp/what-is-problem-solving> Hub to multiple useful links
- <https://www.nextgenscience.org/> To learn more about NGSS
- DOI:[10.7771/1932-6246.1118](https://doi.org/10.7771/1932-6246.1118) The Process of Solving Complex Problems
- <https://doi.org/10.1787/e5f3e341-en> To learn more about Decision-based assessment tool

5.4. Critical thinking and analysis

Definition

Critical thinking is the ability to think independently and reflectively by assessing, integrating, and interpreting information to support decision-making. It consists of various mental processes, such as evaluating evidence, analysing arguments, understanding consequences, and combining information.

Importance

Critical thinking is essential in today's job market as it empowers individuals to navigate complex and fast-paced environments. Employers highly value critical thinking because it allows employees to solve problems effectively, make quick decisions, and adapt to new challenges.

Critical thinking is particularly important in various sectors, including finance, healthcare, and technology. For instance, in healthcare, professionals use critical thinking to accurately diagnose patients, often dealing with unclear or conflicting information, while in the technology field, employees need to solve problems, improve processes, and anticipate future needs in a creative and logical way.

Generally, critical thinking helps individuals navigate the large amounts of information available today. With easy access to misinformation, being able to identify credible sources is a valuable skill. In a globalised and competitive job market, those who can think critically and adapt to changes are more likely to succeed and grow in their careers.

How to develop

Young people can enhance their critical thinking skills through various activities:

1. **Educational Courses:** Enrol in courses specifically designed to teach critical thinking skills. Many universities and online platforms offer programs, which are tailored to apply these skills in real-world scenarios.
2. **Workshops and Seminars:** Workshops and seminars often include interactive learning through case studies and problem-solving scenarios that require participants to think critically.
3. **Engaging in Real-World Problem Solving:** Encourage participation in internships, volunteer opportunities, or community projects that require critical thinking to navigate complex, real-world problems. Engaging in such experiences can provide valuable insights and practical applications of critical thinking.
4. **Interdisciplinary Learning:** Critical thinking is enhanced when individuals can connect ideas across different fields of study. Engaging in interdisciplinary projects encourages creative problem-solving and a broader understanding of complex issues.
5. **Feedback and Peer Review:** Participate in peer review processes, where students evaluate each other's work. This not only promotes critical analysis of peers' ideas but also encourages self-reflection.

Examples:

- Healthcare Professionals: In medical settings, professionals apply critical thinking to assess diagnostic tests, weighing evidence to avoid biases that could lead to misdiagnosis
- Business Decision-Making: A marketing team analysing consumer feedback must critically assess data to understand market trends and inform their advertising strategies

Assessment:

Methods to assess critical thinking skills include:

- Performance Assessments: These involve tasks that simulate real-world challenges requiring critical analysis and problem-solving, providing a more comprehensive measure of critical thinking.
- Self-Assessment Tools: Surveys and questionnaires that prompt individuals to reflect on their thinking processes can help identify areas for improvement.

Additional Resources:

- Book: "Thinking, Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman
- Website: Critical Thinking Community: offers resources and activities to foster critical thinking skills.

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5.5. Creativity, originality and initiative

Definition

Creativity is all about coming up with new ideas, thinking outside the box, and breaking away from the usual ways of doing things. Originality takes this a step further—it's about those unique thoughts that are fresh and different, not just recycled versions of what's already out there. Initiative ties it all together: it's the drive to take those creative, original ideas and make something happen, to turn imagination into action without waiting to be told.

Importance

Especially across the EU where innovation and new approaches are crucial for staying competitive, creativity, originality, and initiative have become essential skills. Employers aren't just looking for people who can follow instructions; they want people who can come up with innovative solutions, bring a fresh perspective, and are

willing to act on their ideas. Whether it's working on a project that needs new ideas to stay ahead in a competitive market or coming up with more sustainable practices that align with the EU's green agenda, being creative and taking initiative can be a game-changer. For young people in particular—especially those from communities where opportunities are limited—these skills can help them stand out, bring value, and contribute meaningfully, even in roles where they may not have formal authority.

How to Develop

Developing creativity, originality, and initiative starts with building habits that push you out of your comfort zone. Begin by asking questions: Why is something done this way? How could it be done differently? Challenge yourself to come up with multiple solutions to problems, not just the most obvious one. Try new experiences, as creativity often comes from connecting ideas across different fields. Read books, watch documentaries, or engage in arts and culture to broaden your perspective. For originality, work on your own projects—even if they're small. Having the freedom to make something uniquely yours helps develop a creative voice. To boost your initiative, set goals and deadlines for yourself. Don't wait for permission to do something—if you see a way to add value or solve a problem, go for it. Volunteering for projects at work or suggesting new ideas, even if they're risky, can also build your ability to take initiative.

Examples

Imagine a product designer who sees a flaw in a tool that people are using every day. Instead of simply accepting it, they think of a new, user-friendly design. They don't wait for someone else to notice the issue; they create a prototype and present it to their team. That's creativity, originality, and initiative at work. Or take a marketing specialist who looks at the same data as everyone else but comes up with an unconventional way to reach their audience—something no one has tried before. They not only come up with the idea but also outline a plan to bring it to life. These are the kinds of behaviours that make people stand out and help organisations move forward.

Assessment

Assessing creativity and initiative isn't as simple as ticking a box. But you can start by reflecting on how often you find yourself coming up with new ideas or questioning the status quo. Do you actively seek opportunities to contribute something new, or do you wait for instructions? Keep track of moments when you acted on an idea, especially if it wasn't part of your usual responsibilities. Feedback from mentors and peers can be a great way to understand how others perceive your creativity and drive. Tools like brainstorming exercises, innovation challenges, or even creativity tests can help gauge where you stand. Employers might also evaluate initiative by looking at how you take on tasks outside your job description or whether you bring new suggestions to the table during meetings.

Additional Resources

- "Creative Confidence" by Tom Kelley and David Kelley;
- "Steal Like an Artist" by Austin Kleon;
- "The War of Art" by Steven Pressfield.
- TED Talks on innovation and initiative (www.ted.com), CreativeLive (www.creativelive.com).
- Mind mapping software to help brainstorm new ideas; journaling for daily creative thoughts; platforms like Kickstarter to explore how creative ideas can turn into projects.

5.6. Leadership and social influence

Definition

In the coming years, the skills of leadership and social influence will become indispensable in the professional world. Leadership is the ability of a person or group of people, through their behaviour, to have an influence on others, whether within a business, an organisation, a company or a group of people. A good leader is able to unite his or her team around the same objective through cooperation and integrity. Social influence occurs when a person or group of people is able to change the beliefs, attitudes or actions of others in a subtle, conscious or unconscious way. The people influenced may not even realise it. **Leadership and social influence are intrinsically linked.** Social influence involves the power to shape the thoughts, behaviours and decisions of others. Competent leaders recognise that their actions, words and even non-verbal signals have a profound impact, creating a ripple effect that shapes the attitudes and behaviours of those they lead. To succeed in guiding people in the same direction, it is important that the leader is expressive and transparent to others, and that trust is established between the parties to allow the full development and use of each person's skills.

Importance

Leadership and social influence have become essential skills in today's job market due to the increasing complexity of working environments, the diversity of teams and the need to collaborate to achieve organisational objectives.

How to develop

Frequently, leadership is interpreted as a form of authority, but this is not the case. The strengths of a leader are the ability to show compassion, to encourage and uplift people, to show a strong commitment to a vision and to influence through their words and visions. In a sense, it is essential for a leader to know how to work as part of a team and how to listen to his or her team. A leader can very well develop the skills to become a good leader through training and practice; these are not skills that are innate.

Effective leaders acknowledge the diversity within their teams and adjust their approach to fit different situations. Adaptable leaders skillfully navigate cultural differences, diverse communication styles, and varying perspectives, ensuring that their actions and strategies are inclusive and responsive to each unique context.

Examples

In the workplace, the fact of being a driving force demonstrates a certain level of involvement in one's work. For example, an employee who has an idea that seems relevant to the company can set up a **brainstorming session** to discuss it collectively. This creates an environment/space of trust where everyone present is encouraged to share their ideas. Creating this space where all ideas are considered and respected also helps to create a link between the leader and the team. In this type of group meeting, the emphasis is on communication, transparency and active listening.

Another example would be when someone who works in a company/organisation becomes the professional referent or mentor for a new person. They can influence others by giving advice and tips to new employees. This is an example of leadership through peer support, creating a positive and collaborative environment while strengthening one's own leadership skills.

Assessment

To assess and measure these skills, it is possible to gather feedback and opinions from colleagues and/or management. On the basis of this feedback, the individual can see the impact that his or her leadership and social influence have on others. They can use satisfaction questionnaires, give verbal feedback and take notes, or provide a ballot box where people can anonymously enter their observations.

For self-evaluation, it is possible to draw up a before/after report in the form of a diary or letter in which a person writes down their feelings about their position as leader before an event, project or other action, and to do the same thing afterwards while keeping a critical eye, i.e. being as objective as possible and noting the points for improvement. This before-and-after comparison enables you to see if there has been any evolution and to see which points still need to be improved.

Resources

There are professional training courses based on these skills. In France, for example, companies can offer, or respond to an employee's request for, professional training in leadership and social influence. These courses are run by experts and can last one or more days.

There are also podcasts on the subject of leadership available on various streaming platforms. For example, writer and trainer Julien Godefroy has put French podcasts online called 'Réussir son management', which are available in English with subtitles on Youtube and in French on the various listening platforms. These short videos are highly accessible and cover a range of leadership topics and advice.

5.7. Technology use, monitoring and control

Definition

"Technology use, monitoring and control" skill, also referred to as "Using and operating technology" or for shortness "Technology literacy" (TL); is the ability to "Capacity to select the right tools needed to perform tasks, use those tools well and set up and operate technology", and it's recognised as one of the 21st Century skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy is probably the most important technological skill for the future; however, regardless it's relevant, it should be considered as a subgroup of TL skill, which refers to every kind of technology. "Technology Literacy" skill can also be considered part of the bigger cluster of skill "Technology use and development" and can be also be divided in functional sub-skills:

- Equipment selection: determining the kind of tools and equipment best suited for the job, discovering new technology potential compared to previous one and analysing cost-benefit.
- Operation and control: Controlling operations of equipment or systems. Knowing how to operate a technology efficiently, secure the best outcome in terms of quality and time.
- Operation monitoring: Watching gauges, dials or other indicators to make sure a machine is working properly. Double-checking result and recognise error in the production chains.

Even if these 3 sub-skills may be required at different levels in different jobs, they are interconnected and part of the unique skill-set "Technology use, monitoring and control".

Importance

Technology is getting more complex to answer the evolving needs of society; a quick diffusion of innovation is important for economic, social, and ecological sustainable development. Not knowing that a new technology has been developed, not understanding its potential, not being able to implement it or not using it successfully; are all realistic scenarios which slow down development. This is especially true about digital technology, Ai in particular, that is evolving at incredible speed, requiring a labour force able to improve their Technological skill to not fall behind. However, TL is also relevant in other field: for examples, modern [renewable energy technology](#) diffusion is needed to mitigate climate change; technical repairers need high level of “Equipment Selection” sub-skill and “Operation control and monitoring” are the main cross-functional skill required to Aeroplane pilots

How to develop

Developing “Learnability” (the willingness and ability to unlearn, learn, and relearn) is fundamental to having appropriate TL skill. Technology is developing so fast, that previously acquired skills became obsoleted multiple times over the course of a career. Lifelong education allows people with learnability to adapt previous skills to new technologies and stay relevant. Unfortunately, youth people may have problems developing TL skill : the traditional education system is slow to adapt to changes, creating a skill gap and mismatch with the labour market needs. Implementation of new technology in the education system has proved useful: big data analyses to monitor new technology diffusion, computer assisted learning, learning by evaluating and massive open online courses (MOOC) are some examples of how TL and Learnability can be acquired also by youth, also with disadvantages.

The EU, aware of this situation, has also created a “Skill Agenda” and it is incentivising “Vocational Education and Training” (VET), traineeships, apprenticeships, and STEM courses of study, to diminish the skill gap and provide youth people appropriate skill to enter the labour market on their chosen field.

Examples

To improve a company's profits, an expert could suggest changing an old software in use with a new one, able to do more tasks in less time (selection). If the labour force have a sufficient level of TL, they will learn easily how to input and manipulate data in the new software (control) and will notice if results produced are correct (monitor). On the other hand, if the labour force is not prepared to adapt, the company will not be able to update its software and could risk losing profits, compared to other companies who are benefitting from new technology.

In the medical field, Technological equipment is also improving constantly. Surgeons need to acquire new skills all over their career, avoiding automaticity and learning new procedures and how to use new medical technology to provide state-of-the-art treatment to their patients.

Assessment

Evaluating TL can be challenging and requires a complex, real world scenario performance assessment. To do so, the US is using NAEP’s “Technology and engineering literacy” (TEL) test. TEL is a cross-curricular, scenario based test, which measures 3 interconnected areas (Technology and Society, Design and Systems, and Information and Communication Technology) and 3 different practices: Understanding Technological Principles, Developing Solutions and Achieving Goals, and Communicating and Collaborating. In this way a complex assessment, that takes in consideration multiple factors, can be done. Another approach can be the “ISTE” framework, that uses technology in school education and provides tools to evaluate students' ability to understand and use it.

Considering ICT relevance for the future, specific tests for it are also important; but there is still a lack of tools to assess teacher ICT skills, making it difficult to evaluate if they can teach it appropriately. However, some tests to check individual ICT literacy exist, like “North star Digital Literacy Assessment”. Lastly, Firms are also developing tools to assess the “Learnability” skills, essential to keep TL skills relevant over time. “Learnability quotient” test can be taken online and online gamified assessment tools, Ai assisted video analytics and other advanced tools also exist.

Additional resources

- <https://www.mooc.org/> catalogues of free online courses
- <https://iste.org/standards> To learn more about ISTE framework
- https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf to read more about skills for the future
- <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223> To learn more about EU’ Skills Agenda
- <https://jte-journal.org/> To stay updated about technology education

5.8. Technology design and programming

Definition

Technology design and programming are the backbone of the modern digital world. Technology design is all about creating user-centred solutions that are functional, intuitive, and engaging—whether it's a mobile app, website, or any other digital product. Programming, meanwhile, is the process of writing the code that makes these designs come to life. It's not just about making things work, but doing so in a way that is efficient, scalable, and effective. Together, these skills allow for the creation of meaningful digital experiences that solve real problems.

Importance

Digital transformation is touching every industry, and the ability to design and create digital solutions is crucial. Technology design is what makes sure that the solutions we build meet the needs of the user—it's about more than just function; it's about providing a seamless experience that makes users happy. Programming, on the other hand, is the engine behind those designs, transforming creative ideas into working products. Whether in healthcare, agriculture, finance, or any other field, the combination of good design and solid programming can drive real innovation. Think about a new healthcare app that makes it easier for patients to get advice from doctors—that only happens if you have both the thoughtful design to make it easy to use and the programming that makes it actually work. The skills to design and code are not just about building products; they're about building better experiences and finding better ways to solve real-world problems.

How to Develop

To develop skills in technology design, young people can start by learning about user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design. There are plenty of online courses and workshops that cover these topics, and tools like Figma, Sketch, or Adobe XD are great for getting started with design. Start by sketching out your own ideas for apps or websites—think about how people would use them and what would make that experience as simple as possible. Practising by creating mock-ups or prototypes is one of the best ways to understand how good design works. On the programming side, online platforms like Codecademy, Coursera, or freeCodeCamp can help you start learning to code. Start with beginner-friendly languages like Python or JavaScript, and work your way up to more complex

projects. It's not just about following tutorials—try building small projects on your own, like a simple website or an app that solves a specific problem. Contributing to open-source projects can also be a great way to get hands-on experience while working with other developers.

Examples

Imagine a technology product designer at a tech company who creates a user-friendly mobile app interface that makes navigation easier and improves accessibility. Their design makes it simple for users to find what they need, leading to higher customer satisfaction and better engagement. On the programming side, consider a developer working in healthcare who collaborates with medical professionals to build a decision-support tool. This tool helps doctors make more accurate diagnoses, improving patient outcomes. These examples show how technology design and programming work together to create impactful digital solutions.

Assessment

Assessing skills in technology design and programming is all about seeing what someone can create. For technology design, a portfolio is key—looking at mock-ups, user journeys, and case studies can give insight into how well a designer understands the needs of users and translates those needs into a practical product. For programming, coding challenges and project-based assessments are great ways to evaluate skill level. Reviewing contributions to open-source projects can also provide a sense of how well a programmer writes code and solves problems in a real-world context. It's not just about whether the code works, but how well it's written and whether it's maintainable over time.

Additional Resources:

- "Don't Make Me Think" by Steve Krug
- "Clean Code" by Robert C. Martin
- Figma or Adobe XD and GitHub

5.9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility

Definition

Resilience refers to the ability to recover quickly from difficulties or setbacks. It is a dynamic process that involves adapting positively to difficult situations. This adaptability may exist in various ways, including emotional regulation, social support, or problem-solving strategies. Stress Tolerance is the capacity to handle stress without becoming overwhelmed. This skill includes the ability to control both emotional and physical responses to stress, thus enabling individuals to maintain performance levels even in high-pressure environments. Flexibility refers to being adaptable and open to change, both in thinking and behaviour. It includes the ability to adjust plans and actions to changing circumstances.

Importance

Resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility are essential skills that enable employees to thrive in a fast-paced and constantly changing environment. Flexibility allows employees to adapt effectively to new tools, processes, or roles, which in turn contributes to the overall growth and agility of the organisation. In high-stress environments like healthcare, stress tolerance is vital for employees to remain calm and perform well under pressure, ensuring

quality service and meeting organisational expectations. Resilience provides individuals with the ability to recover from setbacks and unexpected challenges, which not only boosts their productivity but also strengthens the organisation's capacity to grow despite difficulties.

How to Develop

Developing resilience, stress tolerance, and flexibility takes practice and a commitment to self-growth. Personal therapy can be an effective way to build emotional resilience, providing a safe space to explore feelings and adopt a growth mindset. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) practices help individuals identify and change negative thinking patterns, allowing for more adaptive responses to stress. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation, body scans, and mindful breathing, are also helpful for reducing stress and improving emotional stability. Participating in stress management workshops can provide practical strategies for handling stress, including relaxation techniques and time management. Physical wellness programs, such as yoga or regular exercise, can boost mood and reduce tension, supporting better stress management. To foster flexibility, organisations can assign employees diverse roles and problem-solving tasks, which helps them develop adaptability skills through exposure to different challenges.

Examples

In healthcare, professionals often face traumatic situations, such as the loss of patients. Resilience is essential for them to manage their emotional responses while continuing to provide care. In the technology sector, a software developer may need to quickly adapt to new programming languages or software updates—flexibility enhances their problem-solving skills and keeps them effective in their role. In fields like law enforcement and firefighting, stress tolerance is crucial, as these employees regularly face life-threatening situations. Their ability to tolerate stress is critical for making fast, effective decisions during crises.

Assessment

To assess resilience, tools like the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) can be used to evaluate resilience levels and identify areas for improvement. Flexibility can be assessed by observing performance in scenarios that require employees to adapt to unexpected changes, providing insights into their adaptability. Stress tolerance can be measured through simulations that mimic high-pressure environments, allowing evaluators to observe how individuals cope with stress and perform under challenging conditions.

Additional Resources:

- "The Resilience Factor: 7 Keys to Finding Your Inner Strength and Overcoming Life's Hurdles" by Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté.
- MindTools (www.mindtools.com): Provides free tools and resources for improving skills, including stress management and resilience.
- Headspace: A mindfulness app that provides guided meditation programs specifically designed to reduce stress and increase resilience.
- Online Course: Coursera - "The Science of Well-Being" by Yale University: This course focuses on understanding and building resilience, flexibility, and stress coping through positive psychology.

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5.10. Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

Definition

Reasoning, problem-solving, and ideation are all about navigating challenges with logical thinking, making effective decisions, and creatively coming up with new ideas. Reasoning is about analysing information and drawing sound conclusions. Problem-solving involves finding practical ways to overcome obstacles, while ideation focuses on generating a wide range of new ideas, whether to solve problems or innovate. Together, these skills form a powerful toolkit for tackling complex challenges in any professional environment.

Importance

Reasoning, problem-solving, and ideation are indispensable skills. Reasoning helps in making informed decisions, enhancing the quality of work, and preventing costly mistakes. Problem-solving drives productivity by allowing individuals to overcome obstacles effectively, while ideation fuels innovation and creativity—the keys to staying competitive in a world that’s always evolving. Whether it’s developing business strategies, solving technical problems, or creating new products, these skills are particularly valuable because they ensure that professionals can adapt to and thrive in changing conditions. In the EU, where innovation and adaptability are high priorities for maintaining competitiveness, these skills are crucial across various sectors, from technology to public policy.

How to Develop

Building these skills requires practice, curiosity, and a willingness to try new approaches. For reasoning, start by engaging in activities that challenge your ability to think critically—analyse case studies, engage in debates, or even just take time to question why things work the way they do. For problem-solving, break down complex issues into manageable parts and tackle them one step at a time. Try puzzles, real-world scenarios, or exercises like troubleshooting technical problems to sharpen your skills. Don’t shy away from challenges—they’re the best training ground for problem-solving. When it comes to ideation, it’s all about letting your creativity flow. Participate in brainstorming sessions, use tools like mind mapping or sketching to visualise your thoughts, and apply Design Thinking principles to refine your ideas. Explore different perspectives—often, the best ideas come from combining insights across different disciplines.

Examples

Imagine a project manager faced with an unexpected supply chain disruption. Instead of panicking, they use their reasoning skills to analyse the situation, gather the facts, and determine the most viable options. Then, they use their problem-solving skills to develop a contingency plan that keeps the project on track. Meanwhile, ideation helps them come up with new processes that prevent similar issues in the future. Or think of an engineer who’s

working on optimising an existing product. They might break down the problem, reason through various data points, solve technical challenges, and then use ideation to create an innovative new feature that sets the product apart in the market. These examples show how interconnected these skills are and how they can be used to bring about meaningful change.

Assessment

Assessing reasoning, problem-solving, and ideation skills involves observing how individuals approach and think through challenges. For reasoning, consider using logic puzzles, decision-making scenarios, or role-playing exercises that require critical thinking. To assess problem-solving, analyse how individuals tackle real-life case studies or evaluate their performance during problem-based learning activities. For ideation, look at their participation in brainstorming sessions or evaluate the creativity and feasibility of the ideas they generate—it's not just about how many ideas they have, but also how well those ideas can be put into action.

Additional Resources

- "Thinking, Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman
- "The Lean Startup" by Eric Ries
- Design Thinking toolkits to support ideation

6. Conclusion

The journey to mastering key employability skills is not a quick or straightforward one, especially for young people in disadvantaged or rural communities. However, as this guide has shown, these emerging skills are critical for thriving in today's dynamic job market. By focusing on the key areas, young people can build a strong foundation that empowers them to pursue meaningful career opportunities.

The EASY project is committed to bridging the skills gap and ensuring that every young person, regardless of background, has access to the resources and support they need. This commitment goes beyond simply providing training; it's about fostering an environment where young people feel encouraged and motivated to learn, grow, and take ownership of their career paths. The skills discussed in this guide are not just theoretical—they are practical competencies that will enable youth to adapt to changes, innovate, and create a lasting impact in their workplaces and communities. The key is to continuously learn, apply, and refine these skills throughout one's professional journey. The world of work is constantly evolving, and those who embrace lifelong learning will be best positioned to succeed.

We encourage youth, educators, and policymakers to continue building on the insights shared in this guide. By working together to promote the development of these key skills, we can help create a more inclusive and resilient labour market where young people can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. The importance of collaboration cannot be overstated—when educators, policymakers, and employers join forces to support skill development, they help create an environment where young people are not only prepared for employment but are also empowered to innovate, lead, and make meaningful contributions. Together, we can ensure that the next generation is ready to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of the future.

This employability guide was created as part of the Erasmus+ EASY project, an initiative aimed at empowering young people by providing them with the skills needed to thrive in the modern job market. The project is supported by a consortium of partner organisations committed to youth development, social inclusion, and reducing unemployment rates among disadvantaged communities across the European Union.



Emerging Advanced Skills Youth

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