



# ***DIGITAL TOOLKIT FOR INCLUSION IN CAREER GUIDANCE***

*An Open Educational Resource containing materials ready to be used to innovate and empower career guidance practices for inclusion and diversity.*

## ***Innovative European Career Guidance***

***Erasmus+ Cooperation partnerships  
in Vocational Education and Training***

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## DIGITAL TOOLKIT FOR INCLUSION IN CAREER GUIDANCE

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## Introduction

### About the Toolkit

The DIGITAL TOOLKIT FOR INCLUSION IN CAREER Guidance is an Open Educational Resource containing materials ready to innovate and empower career guidance practices for inclusion and diversity.

Vocational Education and Training need to be innovated with the development of new and relevant teaching and learning approaches/materials, preferably the ones ready to be used in blended ways ref. digital.

The toolkit in digital and open format wants to equip the future career with materials ready to be used during activities to cater for unemployment, upskilling, and reskilling needs for the future job force.

These topics were selected because of the most relevant practical approaches and methodologies to be used to innovate the career guidance.

The toolkit is composed of 5 chapters:

1. LEGO® Bricks for Career Guidance
2. Soft Skills
3. Vet Excellence Implementation Tips
4. Self-reflection and self-construction
5. Inclusive career guidance tips



Source: Canva

## About the Project

### OBJECTIVES

There are six partner organizations from all over Europe – Italy, Finland, Spain, France, Belgium, and Ireland. The partners collaborated with many stakeholders, reaching a very large and diverse audience. The project's results will be released as digital Open Educational Resources because we care about accessibility and sustainability.

Our goal is to innovate career guidance. The project would like to build up a new generation of professional European Career Guidance Counsellors able to support people to improve their career journey through learning, skills, reskilling and upskilling, work, and transitions - a need more and more important, especially in difficult and evolving times.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Effective and innovative career guidance should support individuals to act based on 4 elements.

- › REFLECT: Starting from a personal point of view the individuals are invited to self-awareness, self-consciousness, and IKIGAI (a Japanese concept referring to having a direction or purpose in life).
- ›› GROW: Individuals are stimulated to a lifelong learning perspective for personal and professional growth thanks to soft skills, mindsets, antifragility, upskilling and reskilling, frequent Vocational Education and Training, and networking.
- ››› GO OUTSIDE: To explore the possibilities and to interact with the job market thanks to personal branding, skills intelligence, networking, understanding the world and how it could affect personal careers.
- ›››› MANAGEMENT AND EVOLUTION: Management of a position, the evolution of careers, transitions, antifragility and challenges.

### RESULTS

1. Report: Career Guidance in Europe Policies, systems and relevant cases across Europe with evidence-gathering about local and regional needs.
2. Handbook: Guidance to Post-covid19 Jobs and Transitions: Based on the need to build up quality career guidance in line with the evolution of society to be more adaptive to labour market needs and to foster employability.
3. Training Modules: Pedagogy and Psychology for Career Counselling: Training of the future Career Guidance Counsellors including antifragility, mindset building, ikigai, career counselling tips and pedagogical approaches to career guidance.
4. Digital Toolkit for Inclusion in Career Guidance: An open educational resource containing materials ready to be used to innovate and empower career guidance practices for inclusion and diversity.
5. Other
  - Multiplier events (seminars and webinars)
  - A brand-new professional profile of “European Innovator in Career Guidance”
  - Website: a database of multimedia materials
  - 2 project newsletters
  - Social Networks (Facebook, LinkedIn etc.) and traditional media dissemination
  - Leaflets in all partners’ national languages

## Chapter 1 - LEGO® Bricks for Career Guidance

### 1.1 Abstract

**LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP)** is an innovative methodology that leverages the power of LEGO® bricks to facilitate communication, collaboration, and self-discovery.

While traditionally used in business settings, the principles of LSP can be extensively used to **innovate career guidance** and for educational contexts. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of LEGO® bricks on career outcomes and to refine the methodology for different populations.

This **experiential approach** is based on some educational theories, such as experiential learning, constructivism, and play-based learning.

**In effect, LSP encourages participants to build physical models made of LEGO® bricks, representing, in a metaphorical and inner personal way, their thoughts, feelings, fears and aspirations.**

This process can **help people needing career guidance** to:

- Develop self-awareness and explore different and alternative personal career paths
- Build and reflect on essential skills for future success, such as critical problem solving and working in team attitudes
- Engage more creatively and interactively compared to traditional career guidance approaches

In conclusion, LEGO® Serious Play® offers a **unique and engaging approach to career guidance**, aligning with key educational theories and providing a hands-on, interactive experience for people exploring their career paths. As the workforce continues to evolve and continuously change, incorporating LEGO® bricks into career guidance can help develop essential skills and foster creativity in the next generation of professionals.



**LSP encourages participants to build physical models made of LEGO® bricks, representing, in a metaphorical and inner personal way, their thoughts, feelings, fears and aspirations.**

Source: [www.ideogram.ai](http://www.ideogram.ai)

## 1.2 About Traditional Career Guidance

**Traditional career guidance** focuses on aligning an individual's personality, skills, and abilities with specific occupations or industries, typically following a set sequence of stages in their career journey detected with some specific tools e.g. skills assessment tests, Bilan de compétences from France.

This conventional approach is based on:

- **Assumptions**
  - Careers are considered as linear, predictable, and stable.
  - There is a belief in a "right person" for each job, necessitating the use of vocational assessments.
  - Human potential is often linked to fixed and not variable topics, with development influenced by business interests.
- **Traditional Methods and Approaches**
  - Developmental Theories: the career is considered a series of progressive steps, contributing to identity formation, skills development, and relationship building.
  - Human Resource Management: career guidance is leveraging individual talents within structured career systems typically featuring multiple hierarchical levels, often found in paternalistic groups and businesses.
  - Vocational Counselling: Models like Schein's career anchors identify guiding principles in an individual's professional life merely based on their previous experiences and learning.
- **Limitations**
  - Traditional career guidance can restrict choices, creativity, and personal growth by providing rigid pathways that are not able to consider the evolving nature of work, varied career trajectories, and ever-changing external influences.
  - It is often based on factorial theories where the individuals are categorized on fixed characteristics, which may not reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of personal development and the job world.

In summary, traditional career guidance relies on a stable, linear model that emphasizes matching individuals to specific jobs. In contrast, contemporary and alternative approaches prioritize adaptability and antifragility, empowering individuals to take control of their career development in a constantly evolving work environment.

**Traditional career guidance relies on a stable, linear model that emphasizes matching individuals to specific jobs.**



Source: [www.ideogram.ai](http://www.ideogram.ai)

### 1.3 About LEGO® Serious Play®

#### The method

LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) is an innovative methodology designed to enhance innovation and business performance. It is based on science, research and intensive testing and it fosters creative problem-solving through the use of LEGO bricks. Developed in the late 1990s by the LEGO® group and in 2010, they decided to offer the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® methodology as a community-based model under the Creative Commons License Deed available at:

[https://www.lego.com/cdn/cs/set/assets/blt8ec1d6ff766ddfd4/LEGO\\_SERIOUS\\_PLAY\\_OpenSource\\_14mb.pdf](https://www.lego.com/cdn/cs/set/assets/blt8ec1d6ff766ddfd4/LEGO_SERIOUS_PLAY_OpenSource_14mb.pdf)

#### Fundamental Characteristics of LEGO Serious Play

- **Experiential Learning:** LSP fosters learning through a hands-on approach, and tactile engagement, where participants construct physical 3-D models to represent abstract concepts and insights. This experiential approach stimulates deep inner reflection and an open dialogue from the participants.
- **Team Building and Strategy Development:** LSP is a powerful method for aligning teams, building a shared vision and developing strategic direction. By building tangible metaphorical models, participants collectively visualize some complex thoughts and foster a shared understanding within peers.
- **Problem-Solving:** LSP encourages creative problem-solving thanks to a "serious play" approach. Participants collaborate to construct resolutions, leveraging the flexibility of LEGO bricks to explore assorted possibilities.
- **Versatility Across Age Groups:** while initially designed for adults, LSP has proven effective in developing some skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving for everyone, including children as well.

#### Benefits of LEGO Serious Play

- **Improved Communication:** LSP facilitates open and effective communication by providing a tangible medium for expressing ideas in clearer ways.
- **Amplified Creativity:** The playful feature of LSP methodology stimulates thinking out-of-the-box and fosters creative problem-solving and therefore sparkling innovation
- **Building Trust and Active Engagement:** LSP creates a collaborative atmosphere with stronger connections based on trust, increased engagement and commitment among peers in the team.



Source: [www.ideogram.ai](http://www.ideogram.ai)

**LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) is an innovative methodology designed to enhance innovation and business performance.**



## 1.4 A Methodological Approach: LEGO® Bricks for Career Guidance

LEGO® bricks significantly boost participants' self-awareness and career planning. By engaging in some creative constructions, individuals can develop a more positive self-image and clarify personal career aspirations. Overcoming challenges during the building process could help participants overcome personal doubts, fostering a proactive approach to their possible career paths. Participants could gain valuable insights into their skills and objectives, enabling them to set clear career objectives and effectively leverage available opportunities.

The conclusions after several practices suggest that LEGO® bricks offer a dynamic approach to career exploration. By providing a tangible platform for self-reflection and goal setting, methods like LEGO® Serious Play® empower individuals to deeply understand their strengths, weaknesses, and career ambitions. By constructing physical representations of career challenges and opportunities it is possible to foster innovative and critical thinking, enabling participants to confidently explore new career pathways.

### Key features of LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) applied to career guidance

#### 1. Tangible

By constructing LEGO® models, participants can visualize their strengths, weaknesses, and career goals. This hands-on process fosters a profound understanding of their inner world and aspirations.

#### 2. Storytelling and Metaphors

Through the narratives behind their LEGO® creations, participants uncover hidden meanings and symbolism related to their career aspirations. This storytelling process encourages introspection and personal growth.

#### 3. Overcoming Limitations

The LEGO® building activities can help participants identify and overcome their fears and self-imposed limitations. Confronting these challenges through the creative process leads to increased self-awareness and a sense of empowerment.

#### 4. Amplifying Thinking

LEGO® building's open-ended format inspires participants to explore a wider range of career possibilities. This expanded outlook sparks new ideas and can lead to significant career changes, ultimately fostering personal and professional growth.

#### 5. Positive Psychology

LSP fosters a positive and growth-oriented mindset by emphasizing strengths, engagement, and optimism.

**LEGO® bricks significantly boost participants' self-awareness and career planning.**

**By constructing physical representations of career challenges and opportunities it is possible to foster innovative and critical thinking, enabling participants to confidently explore new career pathways**

## LEGO® Serious Play® and IKIGAI: a holistic approach to career guidance

LSP's experiential learning methodology, employing LEGO® bricks to tackle complex issues, offers a tangible platform for self-discovery. Ikigai, encapsulating one's purpose and passion, provides a framework for meaningful work. By integrating these concepts, we aim to develop a robust tool for individuals to align their career paths with their values and strengths.

Ikigai is a Japanese concept that identifies the intersection of passion, skill, vocation, and financial reward as the key to a fulfilling life. By aligning these four elements, individuals can discover their "reason for being" and achieve a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

The 4 elements are:

- **What you love**
- **What you are good at**
- **What the world needs**
- **What you can be paid for**

Through this framework, individuals can discover their Ikigai, a sense of purpose and meaning.

### Integrating LEGO® Serious Play® and Ikigai

By integrating LSP and Ikigai, career counsellors can offer a dynamic and effective approach to career development. The following steps detail a potential process:

1. **Introduction to Ikigai:** Begin by introducing the concept of Ikigai and explaining its four components.
2. **Exploring with LSP:** Conduct LSP exercises to delve into each Ikigai component:
  - **What you love:** Build a 3D model representing metaphorically some activities or hobbies that bring joy and passion.
  - **What you are good at** Build a model as a visual representation of talents and skills
  - **What the world needs:** Build a model representing a problem or challenge that the individual feels passionate about addressing.
  - **What you can be paid for:** Build a model illustrating possible career trajectories matching the individual's abilities and passions.
3. **Identifying the Intersection:** Guide participants in identifying the overlap between the four models to discover their Ikigai.
4. **Creating a Roadmap:** Guide participants in developing a plan to achieve their identified Ikigai.

生き甲斐

**IKIGAI is a Japanese concept that identifies the intersection of 4 elements:**

- What you love
- What you are good at
- What the world needs
- What you can be paid for

## Potential Benefits of the Approach

The integration of LSP and Ikigai provides multiple benefits such as:

- **Enhanced self-awareness:** LSP and Ikigai can help individuals gain deeper insights into their strengths, values, and passions.
- **Increased motivation:** Discovering one's Ikigai can provide a strong sense of purpose and motivation for career exploration.
- **Improved decision-making:** By understanding their Ikigai, individuals can make more informed career choices.
- **Increased job satisfaction:** Aligning work with one's Ikigai can lead to greater job satisfaction and fulfilment.

## 1.5 Practical Implementation

### CASES

There are different practical ways to integrate LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) for individual career guidance effectively.

#### Strength-4D Career Model

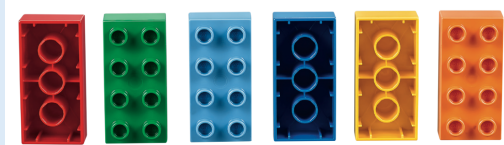
[Serious Play Business](#) is using 'The Strength-4D Career Model' that integrates LSP and Six Bricks\* to create a customized approach focused on self-discovery, career hope-building, and career development. This model allows participants to explore their strengths, challenges, and aspirations through hands-on LEGO® building activities.

#### Play Your Strengths Workshop

This workshop developed by [Brick Management Consulting](#) combines the Clifton Strengths Assessment with LSP, enabling participants to build tangible representations of their unique strengths and how they can apply them to their career goals.

#### Networking and Career Exploration

[Helical Dynamix EOOD](#) believes that LSP can be used to transform traditional networking activities into more engaging, collaborative experiences. By building LEGO® models together, participants can explore career possibilities and create authentic connections.



**\*Six Bricks is a hands-on tool for learning. Through fun and short activities with sets of LEGO® DUPLO® bricks in six bright colours, children can practice their memory, movement, creativity and more** (source: [Lego Foundation](#))

## IMPLEMENTATION ON SPECIFIC AGE GROUPS AND INDUSTRIES

LSP can be used and adapted also to different specific contexts including age groups and across various industries to face specific challenges and opportunities concerning career counselling.

### Age-Appropriate Career Counselling with LEGO® Bricks

- **Early Adolescence (12-14 years old):**
  - Unlocking potential for adolescent self-exploration
  - Overcoming challenges, building self-esteem and problem-solving skills
  - Improve cooperation, communication and work-in-team attitudes
  - Support educational choices in line with personal talents and ambitions
- **Late Adolescence and Young Adults (15-25 years old):**
  - Identify Career possible pathways and visualize potential future positions and roles.
  - Develop Skills such as STEM concepts and expand career possibilities.
  - Empower critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Adults (over 25 years old):**
  - Support transitions representing career changes or entrepreneurial projects.
  - Reflect and find a better Work-life balance
  - Facilitate Networking and building professional relationships.

### Industry-Appropriate Career Counselling with LEGO® Bricks

- **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics):**
  - Problem-solving in the ICT field e.g. engineering and programming skills
  - Unleashing imagination, creativity and think-out-of-the box
  - Empower teamwork in collaborative real-world STEM challenges.
- **Creative Industries (Arts, Design, Media):**
  - Visual communication thanks to LEGO® bricks' storytelling
  - Use of LEGO® models to visualize prototypes for designers and artists
  - Collaborate in groups for creative professionals.
- **Business and Management:**
  - Enhance strategic planning through LEGO® models.
  - Develop leadership thanks to collaborative building projects in teams
  - Support change in the management by aligning visions, understanding and adaptation.

**LSP can be used and adapted also to different specific contexts including age groups and across various industries to face specific challenges and opportunities concerning career counselling**

## 1.6 Career Guidance LSP pilot testing

During the IEUCG project lifetime, the partners' staff had the chance to test the method of LEGO® Serious Play® applied to career guidance.

The workshop was part of the intensive training event held at the Employment Agency of Madrid (Spain) in January 2023 with the participation of 15 career guidance experts from the staff of 6 partners coming from Italy, Spain, Finland, Belgium, France and Ireland.

### STEPS OF THE WORKSHOP

- Introduction and personal presentation of the participants
- Skills building to give participants technical skills and confidence to use the bricks
- Metaphorical building to enable participants to use the bricks as metaphors
- Storytelling models building to enable participants to use models to tell stories and embed the enhanced communication techniques:
  - o Storytelling 1: IKIGAI's 'What You Love' model
  - o Storytelling 2: IKIGAI's 'What you are good at' model
  - o Storytelling 3: IKIGAI's 'What you can be paid for' model
  - o Storytelling 4: IKIGAI's 'What the world needs' model
- Identification of the gaps and definition of the possible career pathway and action plan
- Invitation to share reflections, opinions, and feelings about the workshop



*Photos from the IEUCG's Intensive Training Event in Madrid (Jan 2023)*

## 1.7 Challenges and Tips

LEGO® bricks are tools presenting considerable opportunities for career guidance, even if some challenges need to be addressed and managed.

These **challenges** include:

- Facilitators of the career guidance process
- Time constraints
- Venue of the sessions
- Different needs of the participants looking for career guidance
- Budget limitations
- Businesses, Schools and context-related needs

### Tips

- Involve trained facilitators in the LEGO® Serious Play® methodology to be more effective and avoid problems within the career guidance process
- Manage the potential time limitations with a precise design of the timing
- Consider the need to tailor, adjust and design the approach for various age groups businesses and cultural contexts
- Ensure that all participants have access to various LEGO® bricks and enough space to build and keep the models aside
- Involve stakeholders from the businesses, schools and context-related in the design of the workshops by detecting their needs, integrating the activity into the daily routines
- Include an analytic assessment process to evaluate the skills acquired, the process in career guidance and the insights from the participation in the activities to measure success and get signals for a change in the next future activities.

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- [Career planning using Lego Serious Play by Nel Mostert](#)
- [Advantages of the Serious Play concept and the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method by SeriousPlay.hr](#)
- [Comparing a LEGO® Serious Play Activity With a Traditional Lecture in Software Engineering Education](#)

- [Ducks, elephants and sharks: Using LEGO® Serious Play® to surface the ‘hidden Curriculum’ of equality, diversity and inclusion](#)
- [Exploring Connections in LEGO Serious Play by Guy Stephens](#)
- [Using LEGO to help create a vision or mission statement at SeriousPlayPro](#)
- [Defining a vision with LSP at SeriousPlayPro](#)
- [Unlocking Your Career Potential: The LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® Advantage by Helical Dynamix Company](#)
- [Building a Vision with Lego Serious Play by Moritz Müller](#)
- [SeriousPlaybBusiness](#)
- [LET'S TALK TALENT](#)
- [Brick Management Consulting](#)



## Chapter 2 – SOFT SKILLS

### 2.1 Introduction

The term soft skills refers to a broad and diverse set of abilities comprising social and communication skills, personality traits, attitudes, professional attributes, and social and emotional intelligence, which enable people to move through their environment, work well with others, perform efficiently and, complementing the hard skills, achieve their objectives.

The Collins English dictionary defines soft skills as “qualities, desirable for certain forms of employment and independent of acquired knowledge, such as common sense, people skills and a flexible positive attitude”. However, if a person does not possess any of these soft skills, in most cases he can train specifically to acquire them. They can also learn them naturally by interacting with other people.

Soft skills require tacit knowledge that is difficult to measure quantitatively. Many authors studying soft skills state that these “are essentially people skills- the non-technical, intangible, personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths as a leader, listener, negotiator and conflict mediator”

Presently, because of economic changes, employers are eager to look for employees with applied skills rather than cognitive skills. Diplomas are not being considered as a definitive indicator of students’ professional intelligence as they used to be before. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has dramatically changed the labour market. Knowledge is now recognized as a strength of productivity and economic growth, and information technology has acquired great importance. In such a situation, whether employees start their careers or change jobs, they can demonstrate effective performance if they can continuously adapt and bring themselves up to date, build positive interpersonal relationships with their coworkers and deal successfully with the unpredictable challenges in the workplace. Accordingly, today the graduates of Higher Education need to master not only the professional skills of their job, but also various soft skills, including the ability to communicate, coordinate, work under pressure, and solve problems.



Source: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

## 2.2 Soft Skills vs Hard Skills

Hard skills were the only skills needed to obtain employment after studies and were generally quantifiable and measurable by academic results, work experience or through a job interview. In the 21st century, soft skills make a difference and are considered very necessary for employability and success in life. A Harvard University study found that 80% of career achievements are determined by soft skills and only 20% by hard skills. Other studies by the Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 entrepreneurs showed that 75% of long-term career success was due to soft skills and only 25% to hard skills (Sinha, 2008).

According to Melvin R. Weber's study, "hard skills usually require the acquisition of knowledge, are primarily cognitive in nature, and are influenced by an individual's intelligence-quotient score." (Weber, 2013 p:313). Besides such skills, another skills category has emerged including interpersonal, human, people, or behavioural skills. Therefore, soft skills are as important as technical skills (John, 2009; Zehr, 1998).

These so-called soft skills are needed to apply technical/hard skills and knowledge in the workplace (Weber, 2013). Thus, the skills' definition regarding only technical aspects has changed. A new category of skills has emerged (Hurrell et al, 2012). In addition to the technical requirements of jobs, there is a need to combine technical/hard skills with soft skills that can complement and enhance cognitive abilities. (Pandey and Pandey, 2015; Brill, Gilfoil and Doll, 2014). Soft skills are different and distinct from Hard Skills. Soft skills are those skills that add more value to the hard skills possessed by an individual. Martin Carole comments that hard skills are more "along the lines of what might appear on your resume" whereas soft skills are a "cluster of personality traits, social graces, personal habits, friendliness and optimism." Soft skills are not a substitute for hard or technical skills, but they act as harmonizing skills that serve to unlock the prospective for highly effective performance in people even with good hard skills. Hard skills correspond to the skills in the technical and administrative categories, and soft skills correspond to the skills in the human, conceptual, leadership, and interpersonal categories (Weber, Crawford, Lee and Dennison, 2013). In this sense, hard skills could be easier to identify and thus become more tangible, however, soft skills are more ambiguous and harder to identify or assess via standard questionnaire-type instruments (Mullen, 1997). Yet these frameworks see each set as a necessary complement to the other (Parente, Stephan and Brown, 2012). This ambiguity also manifests itself in the literature of soft skills, because authors label different skills as soft ones with little agreement on them. This makes it difficult to find a universal set of soft skills (Miriam, Anderson and Boyden, 2016). The concept differs from discipline to discipline, from context to context, and even it has different meanings in different cultures (R de Villiers, 2010).

The issue of recognition, validation and certification of soft skills is developing as a current topic for all educational institutions. However, there are still many weaknesses: study programs in Europe are mainly rooted in the traditional teaching-learning method, with a focus on the contents to be learnt. Soft Skills are not valued enough in the formal curriculum while they have a great value in the labour market. One of the main challenges that educators face when training soft skills is that they have not yet figured out how to properly teach them, nor how to assess them and capture the impact of these programs on learners. (Holtom & Bowen, 2007; Zehr, 1998). The outcomes of soft skills training are often intangible and provide gradual or deferred returns (Onisk, 2011). There is considerable interest in the idea of a standardized soft-skills assessment that avoids the problems of subjective ratings.

To sum up, here's a reminder of the differences between soft skills and hard skills:



**Hard skills are:**

- Job-specific
- Specialized
- Easy to learn through schooling or training
- Easy to measure and evaluate

Source: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

**Soft skills are:**

- Transferable
- Interdisciplinary
- Difficult to learn via traditional education
- Developed through social interaction



Source: [www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com)

## 2.3 Research Findings

Soft skills are generally recognized as connectors that bridge relationships among people at the workplace, leading to better productivity and performance. Soft skills reduce the gaps across various departments in an organization, thus promoting effective communication and performance. In the related literature, there are several efforts to categorize soft skills.

There is a growing number of business guides on skills. One example is Simplicable which distinguishes around 87 soft skills under various other subskills such as leadership, communication, personal skills, interpersonal skills and many more but the increasing number of studies on this subject result in varying degrees of consensus on selected soft skills which are critical and essential for the employees at workplaces to develop their career.

One definition based on a review of articles on this subject considers “soft skills” an umbrella term for skills with three key functional elements: personal, social and professional.

The Center for Career Opportunities at Purdue University defines soft skills as "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees." Their list of soft skills includes work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, conformity to prevailing norms and language proficiency.

Studies conducted by “National Business Survey” from the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) on 500 employers based on the requirement of soft skills at workplaces suggest several soft skills based on occupation and profession and conclude that positive attitude, communication skills, teamwork skills, time management skills and strong work ethics are some among the many skills that employers consider important.

(Source: Valdez N. How hard is it to Find Employees with Soft Skills? 2015. Available from: <https://ceric.ca/fr/2015/01/how-hard-is-it-to-find-employees-with-soft-skills/>)



Among classifications made in the literature, frequently discussed skills include communication skills, teamwork skills, creativity, problem-solving, self-motivation, decision-making and other relational skills mostly debated under the emotional intelligence construct.

Source: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

A thorough study conducted by Marcel M. Robles of Eastern Kentucky University identified the top 10 soft skills perceived as the most important by business executives.

- Communication – oral skills, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
- Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, saying please and thank you, respectful
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts
- Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what’s right
- Interpersonal Skills – nice, personable, sense of humour, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills
- Positive Attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident
- Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised
- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
- Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative

- Work Ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

(Source: Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today’s Workplace (Robles, 2012) - Business Communication Quarterly 75 (4) 453– 465 © 2012)

In the above study, executives overwhelmingly indicated that integrity and communication were the top two soft skills needed by employees in today’s workplace. All 57 (100%) of the executives indicated that integrity and communication were very important or extremely important. Over three-quarters of the respondents (84.2%) indicated that courtesy was an extremely important skill, and over half (71.9% and 61.4%, respectively) reported that responsibility and interpersonal skills were extremely important.

Soft skills can also be understood as character traits that enhance a person’s interactions, job performance, and career prospects (Parsons, 2008). The greatest feature of soft skills is that the application of these skills is not limited to one’s profession. Soft skills are continuously developed through practical application in the course of one’s approach to everyday life and the workplace (Arkansas Department of Education, 2007; Magazine, 2003). Unlike hard skills, which are about a person’s skill set and ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable (Parsons, 2008).

Businesses want resourceful employees with soft skills at all levels (“Employers Value Communication,” 2004; John, 2009) with interpersonal qualities (Rodas, 2007) who can collaborate, motivate, and empathize with their colleagues (Klaus, 2010).



Source: [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

Modern corporates look specifically for those candidates who can add value to their organization with their soft skills and the ability to develop and use soft skills which can make the difference between a job offer and enjoyment of new employment. This requirement for soft skills in a job has made the competition for job acquisition and job sustainability tougher.

All those candidates who wish to get an edge over their competitors are expected to refine their soft skills. Employers value these skills as an indicator of job performance as good as traditional professional qualifications. Most employers are likely to hire, retain and promote individuals who are trustworthy, resourceful, ethical, effective communicators, self-directed, willing to work and learn, and who have a positive attitude. Employers usually prefer to see a fine blend of competencies in their staff and, in addition to discipline-based knowledge and skills, adequate levels of soft skills are considered desirable for moving forward in the career.

A person's soft skills are therefore an important part of his or her contribution to the success of an organization. Organizations that deal face-to-face with customers are generally more successful if they promote activities for their staff to develop these skills through workplace

wellness initiatives. Specific training or rewards for habits or personal traits such as regular attendance at work (without sick leave, tardiness or illness) or diligence can provide a significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, employers are increasingly looking for these skills in their prospective employees, in addition to the usual qualifications. The National Association for Business Education deems soft skills critical in today's workplace since they complement hard skills, for optimal job performance and daily living competencies (Arkansas Counsellor of Education, 2007).

Still, other researchers equate soft skills with employability skills that are transferable to many jobs. Cleary, Flynn, and Thomasson (2006) define general employability skills as follows:

- Basic/fundamental skills: technical, knowledge of task, hands-on ability
- Conceptual/thinking skills: planning, collecting and organizing information, problem-solving
- Business skills: innovation and enterprise
- Community skills: civic and citizenship knowledge
- People-related skills: interpersonal qualities, such as communication and teamwork
- Personal skills: attributes such as being responsible, resourceful, and self-confident

(Source: Cleary, M., Flynn, R., & Thomasson, S. (2006). *Employability skills from framework to practice: An introductory guide for trainers and assessors*. Canberra, Australia: Department of Education, Science and Training)

Note that the “people-related skills” and the “personal skills” (attributes) above fit the definition of soft skills. “Soft” skills can also be called “applied” skills or “21st-century skills” (Gewertz, 2007). As a general rule, soft skills have more to do with who we are than what we know.

Experts say that people should start their soft skills training when they are still students to achieve good academic results and, later, better job performance. A public interest study sponsored by McDonald's in the UK predicted that more than half a million people will not be able to enter the workforce due to the lack of soft skills.

## 2.4 Soft Skills and Career Satisfaction



Source: [www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com)

Career satisfaction reflects an individual's subjective feelings of success that are related to many aspects of work behaviour and well-being. It refers to an individual's progress made in meeting different career-related goals in terms of income, achievement development etc. (Spurk, Abele and Volmer, 2011). In other words, subjective career assessment echoes an individual's sense of his or her career and what is becoming (Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom, 2005).

Besides objective criteria (pay, promotions, occupational status), subjective ones have increasingly been adopted within career success research over the last decade (Heslin, 2005), the main argument being that if a person is endowed with soft skills, he will be satisfied with his career, and this could be an important subjective evaluation of success.

Moreover, satisfied individuals, in this case, academic staff, would be more successful in transferring those skills to students and preparing them for business life. Hence, it is assumed that there is a direct link between soft skills and subjective career evaluations based specifically on career satisfaction and an indirect link with education as a way of transferring those skills.

Research results should be interpreted with caution because of the weak explanatory power of each model. This could result from some other variables having an impact on satisfaction together with these skills. It is also possible that there is a hierarchy between these skills. In the future, it could be possible to test soft skill constructs with different dimensions in different contexts. Also, a composite scale for soft skills could be developed and validated, thus more powerful results could be attained in different occupational groups.

Whereas hard skills can be learned and perfected over time, soft skills are considered more difficult to acquire and change through formal education.

What makes soft skills so valuable is that they are highly transferable. This means that the same set of soft skills can be useful for a wide range of professions. For example, teachers, doctors, and managers need problem-solving skills to perform their jobs well. Transferability is the main difference: a soft skill is more transferable than a hard skill. Soft skills are perfectly transferable, so they support employability. Extra-curricular activities, ranging from volunteering, culture and arts to sports and leisure activities, help develop soft skills and nurture talents.

## 2.5 Teaching Soft Skills

Because of its relevance, the need to teach soft skills has become a major concern for educators and employers all over the world. The acquisition and mastering of soft skills require continuous practice, learning, observation, training and experience. The following initiatives can provide additional support for job seekers to address these needs.



Source: [www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com)

- **Campus Programs:** Most of the university students spend half of their student life living in hostels. As such, institutions of higher learning should use this golden opportunity to develop their soft skills through carefully crafted programs such as preparation for tests, interviews etc. and carry them out on the campus.
- **Finishing Schools:** Even though the idea of finishing schools has not caught up with the masses, it is a brilliant value add for students. These schools have a specialized focus on employment-related skills and enrolling in one of these schools could prove beneficial for students while in college.
- **Placement Cell:** A well-functioning placement cell which updates students and contributes lectures, provides workshops on study skills, conducts effective training as well as offers individual support. Regular communication and connection with Corporates are also essential to building rapport with them. This will ensure that the companies return year after year for recruitment.
- **Get on the Internet:** The usual surfing and browsing of Facebook, Twitter etc. is important too but a more constructive use is in terms of writing blogs, networking with like-minded industry folk etc. The possibilities of developing soft skills are endless not to forget the networking that can get you a job itself without relying on campus placements.
- **Networking:** Having a team of friends, learning mates or coworkers who work together to develop vital interpersonal skills, to know of upcoming company visits and to share information and resources boosts morale. Joining a couple of associations or clubs in college teaches teamwork, leadership, time management, etc.



- **Internships:** Many people fail to understand the value of internships while in college. A lot of students tend to consider internships as mere formalities. For someone to have worked and gotten his hands dirty while doing an internship at a company would have been so much good in at least experiencing what a job environment feels like. Impressing superiors with skills while being an intern is a sure way to gain a foothold in the company.



- **Work part-time/freelance:** Now one might say that a student should rather be focused on studies than worry about working and making money while in college. Working with an event management company, for example, during college, teaches so much about client handling and meeting customer requirements that no number of lectures in college would have.

Source: [www.freepik.com](http://www.freepik.com)

- **Company links:** Leading IT companies have woken up to the challenge and have introduced bridge courses for students. Infosys' campus connect, IBM's Center of Excellence, and Wipro's Mission 10X program with several colleges are examples of industry-academic tie-ups. Collaborating in a structured way with academia thereby results in a mutual win-win for both.
- **Consultant Trainers:** A few autonomous institutes have also introduced soft skills in the curriculum with credits which have gone a long way in bridging the gap between industry requirements and students. Several training institutes have sprung up which take the responsibility of training students either throughout the year or during the summer/ semester break. This training methodology can help students develop and perform to industry-level requirements during their campus recruitment.
- **Curriculum modification:** The present curriculum does not include practical knowledge of all four language skills, namely, reading, writing, listening and speaking. These skills should be learned along with soft skills. A change is required in designing the curriculum, which should be oriented more towards equipping the student to manage and excel at the workplace. A few of these aspects could be reworked into the curriculum for added impetus.

## 2.6 Tips for developing professional skills

On a more personal level, the following activities can be a great aid towards developing and improving one's professional abilities:

- **Observe other professionals:** Notice how team members, supervisors, distributors and others behave in their work environment. Observe how the professionals around you interact with one another, accomplish their tasks and navigate workplace processes. If you find a coworker who possesses a soft skill you want to develop, try to emulate some of their behaviours or attitudes.
- **Attend conferences and workshops:** Conventions, workshops and related events allow you to practice your professional skills outside of the workplace. Focus on communicating effectively, actively listening and other soft skills while networking with other professionals. Lectures, workshops, conferences and other professional events sometimes choose soft skills as their subjects. For example, you may discover a webinar that discusses the role of self-confidence in the workplace. Looking for events like these can further help develop your professional skills.



Source: [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

- **Solve workplace conflicts:** Although you might sometimes have conflicts with your coworkers, strive to collaboratively resolve these conflicts. Managers and team members alike usually prefer cooperating with an employee they know can keep working, strategizing and communicating politely but clearly during challenging situations. Try to see conflicts as opportunities to learn more about how you and your coworkers can effectively collaborate, solve problems and function as a team.
- **Ask questions:** Ask people more questions during interactions. People who ask questions more frequently than argue or assert their own opinions may excel at many soft skills, such as communication, open-mindedness or willingness to learn. You can ask someone questions about the subject even if you know a lot about it or have a different opinion. Focusing on asking questions can help you gain insights into new perspectives or areas within the subject. If you decide at a later date to debate or offer your own opinion on the subject, you'll then be able to provide a more complex or thorough perspective.

- **Be receptive to feedback:** Work on being open to constructive feedback. Many desirable professional skills relate to a person's ability to listen to, evaluate and implement someone else's assessment of their work or performance. Even if you don't agree with the feedback, consider what the other person said before dismissing it or arguing. Assessing the feedback other people give to you as objectively as possible can help you figure out how to rationally discuss the feedback and determine which parts of it to incorporate into your habits.



Source: [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

- **Create positive relationships:** Cultivate positive relationships with your coworkers, clients, managers and other professionals you work with. Many professional skills describe your behaviours, habits and communication methods when interacting with others. You may have an easier time having cooperative and friendly interactions if you already have positive relationships in the workplace. For example, you could try to have genuine conversations with your coworkers and clients. Ask about their weekend plans, hobbies, pets and other topics appropriate to the workplace that may give you more insight into their personal lives. You can also discuss your interests and plans, as this may help people to feel more comfortable talking about themselves.
- **Practice self-care:** Developing new skills generally becomes easier when you're already meeting your basic needs. Take care of yourself, such as by eating nutritious foods, spending time with loved ones, getting adequate sleep and making time for activities you enjoy. A healthy mind and body can help you learn and adapt to new habits.

## 2.7 Competencies for Lifelong Learning in the European Union

The existence of numerous socio-emotional education and learning frameworks by leading organizations worldwide indicates the increasing importance given to personal and social development through education and lifelong learning, however, there are significant disparities in the skills and features identified by those networks.

As early as 2006, the European Union produced a survey with recommendations from the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on key competencies for lifelong learning to meet the challenges brought about by globalization and ensure equality and access for those groups who, due to educational disadvantages caused by personal, social, cultural or economic circumstances, need particular support to fulfil their educational potential. Examples of such groups include people with low basic skills, in particular those with low literacy, early school-leavers, the long-term unemployed and those returning to work after a period of extended leave, older people, migrants, and people with disabilities.

This research has continued for the last two decades prompted by the need to address the profound changes in the labour market as a consequence of the digital and green transitions, as well as to achieve the United Nations Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goals

In May 2018, the European Council adopted an updated **“Recommendation on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning”** to further promote the development of key competencies in the European Union as a means to:

- Boost the EU’s innovation capacity, productivity and competitiveness.
- Address the challenges stemming from Globalization, structural changes in the labour market and the rapid development of new technologies.
- Provide more support to teachers, trainers and educational staff, enable cross-discipline learning and further promote networking and cooperation with stakeholders.
- Help individuals to cope with complex life situations, develop competencies which allow them to successfully manage the challenges posed by the many transitions taking place in their work, in their spheres, and in society, deal with uncertainty, nurture their resilience, develop on a personal level, build successful interpersonal relations and learn how to learn.
- Serve as a useful tool for policymakers, education and training providers and learners, helping us to ensure that all children and young people get the opportunities and the education they deserve.
- Encourage Member States to provide quality early childhood education and care, improve school education and ensure excellent teaching, further develop initial and continuing vocational education and training and modernize higher education.

## 2.7.1 Key Competencies

The Recommendation identifies eight key competencies essential to citizens for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.

The key competencies are developed throughout life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning in different environments, including family, school, workplace, neighbourhood and other communities. These are the 8 main key competencies:

- Multilingual competence (ability to use different languages)
- Mathematical competence, and competence in science, technology and engineering (ability to develop and apply mathematical, scientific and technological thinking to solve problems)
- Digital competence (digital technologies for learning at work and participation in society)
- Personal, social and learning to learn competence (ability to manage time and information)
- Citizenship competence (ability to act as responsible citizens)
- Entrepreneurship competence (ability to act upon opportunities)
- Cultural awareness and expression competence (respect for how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed)

**Personal, social and learning to learn competence** is the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, constructively work with others, remain resilient and manage one's learning and career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one's physical and emotional well-being, maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathize and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context.

These key competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

**Knowledge:** For successful interpersonal relations and social participation, it is essential to understand the codes of conduct and rules of communication generally accepted in different societies and environments. Personal, social and learning to learn competence requires also knowledge of the components of a healthy mind, body and lifestyle. It involves knowing one's preferred learning strategies, knowing one's competence development needs and various

ways to develop competencies and searching for the education, training and career opportunities and career guidance or support available.

**Skills:** Skills include the ability to identify one’s capacities, focus, deal with complexity, critically reflect and make decisions. This includes the ability to learn and work both collaboratively and autonomously and to organize and persevere with one’s learning, evaluate and share it, seek support when appropriate and effectively manage one’s career and social interactions. Individuals should be resilient and able to cope with uncertainty and stress. They should be able to communicate constructively in different environments, collaborate in teams and negotiate. This includes showing tolerance, expressing and understanding different viewpoints, as well as the ability to create confidence and feel empathy.

**Attitudes:** Competence is based on a positive attitude toward one’s personal, social and physical well-being and learning throughout one’s life. It is based on an attitude of collaboration, assertiveness and integrity. This includes respecting the diversity of others and their needs and being prepared both to overcome prejudices and to compromise. Individuals should be able to identify and set goals, motivate themselves, and develop resilience and confidence to pursue and succeed at learning throughout their lives. A problem-solving attitude supports both the learning process and the individual’s ability to handle obstacles and change. It includes the desire to apply prior learning and life experiences and the curiosity to look for opportunities to learn and develop in a variety of life contexts.

## 2.8 LifeComp - The European Framework for “Personal, Social and Learning to Learn” Key Competencies

The LifeComp framework, derived from the extensive research on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning by the Joint Research Center, is a flexible tool that can be adapted to different learning settings and target groups to support the acquisition of the “Personal, Social and Learning to Learn” competencies in context. This set of competencies is deemed foundational towards the development and consolidation of many valuable soft skills for life.

### 2.8.1 What is LifeComp?

- LifeComp offers a conceptual framework that comprises “Personal, Social, and Learning to Learn” key competencies for education systems, students, and learners on the whole. LifeComp intends to systematize the need to improve personal and social competencies.
- It deals with life skills – the skills and competencies that everybody should continually develop throughout life.
- It supports the development of competence-oriented teaching and learning and the

need to reform curricula in the European Union.

- Key competencies and basic skills are needed by all for personal fulfillment and development, employability, social inclusion, civic participation and democracy.
- Its core element is to identify teachable competencies, so citizens can become active agents in determining their learning and professional paths.

## 2.8.2 Methodology

The methodology was developed by the JRC (Joint Research Center), the European Commission's science and knowledge service, on behalf of, and in collaboration with the DG EAC (Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture) to implement the **"Personal Social and Learning to Learn"** key competences for lifelong learning.

The framework development approach was validated through various stages and the initial list of competencies and descriptors was discussed to reach an initial consensus and receive feedback for the framework's revision to assess different strategies for its implementation.

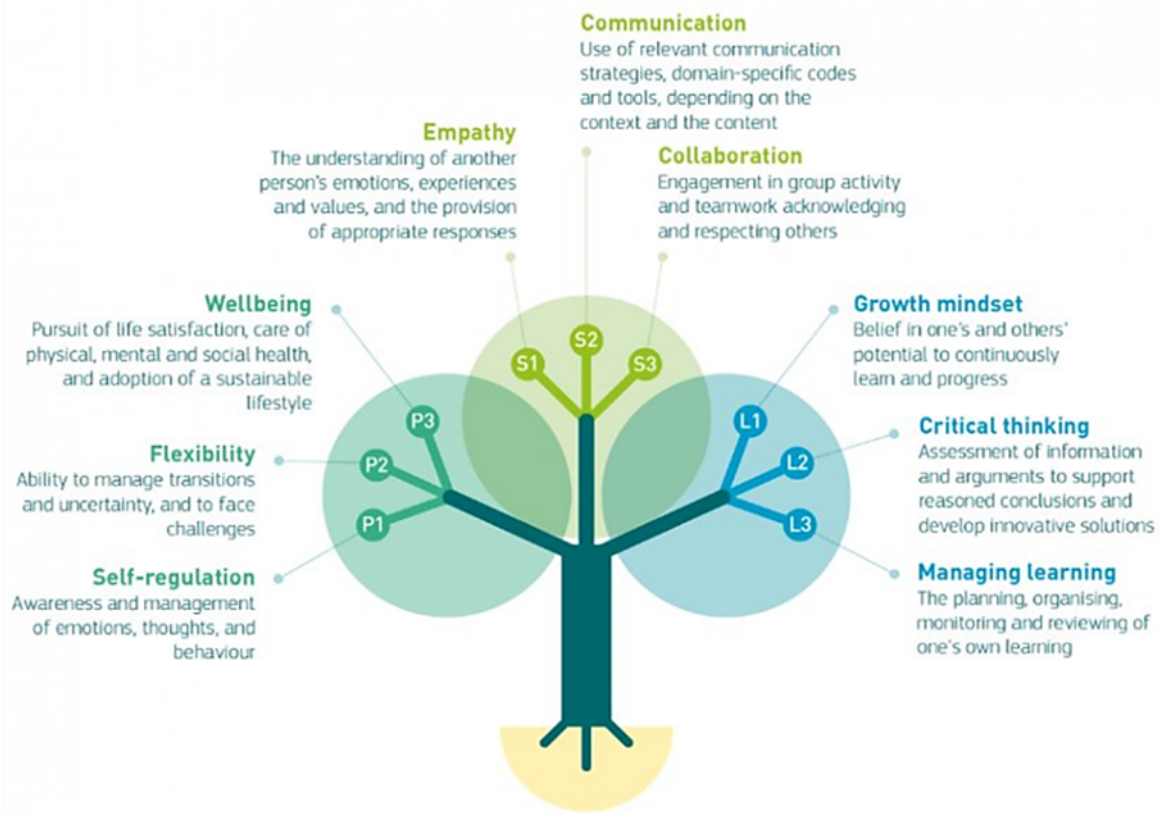
A literature review and analysis of frameworks produced **the Consolidated LifeComp Framework, which consists of 3 Competence Areas, 9 Competencies and 27 Descriptors. Each area is composed of 3 competencies. Each competence is described by 3 descriptors.**

Each competence has three descriptors which are outlined using the 'awareness, understanding, action' model, suggested by experts for depicting different facets of deployment.

## 2.8.3 The LifeComp Tree

Describes 9 competencies, structured in three areas:

- The "Personal" area (P1, P2, P3)
- The "Social" area (S1, S2, S3)
- The "Learning to Learn" area (L1, L2, L3)



LIFECOMP DESCRIPTORS TYPOLOGIES



AWARENESS



UNDERSTANDING



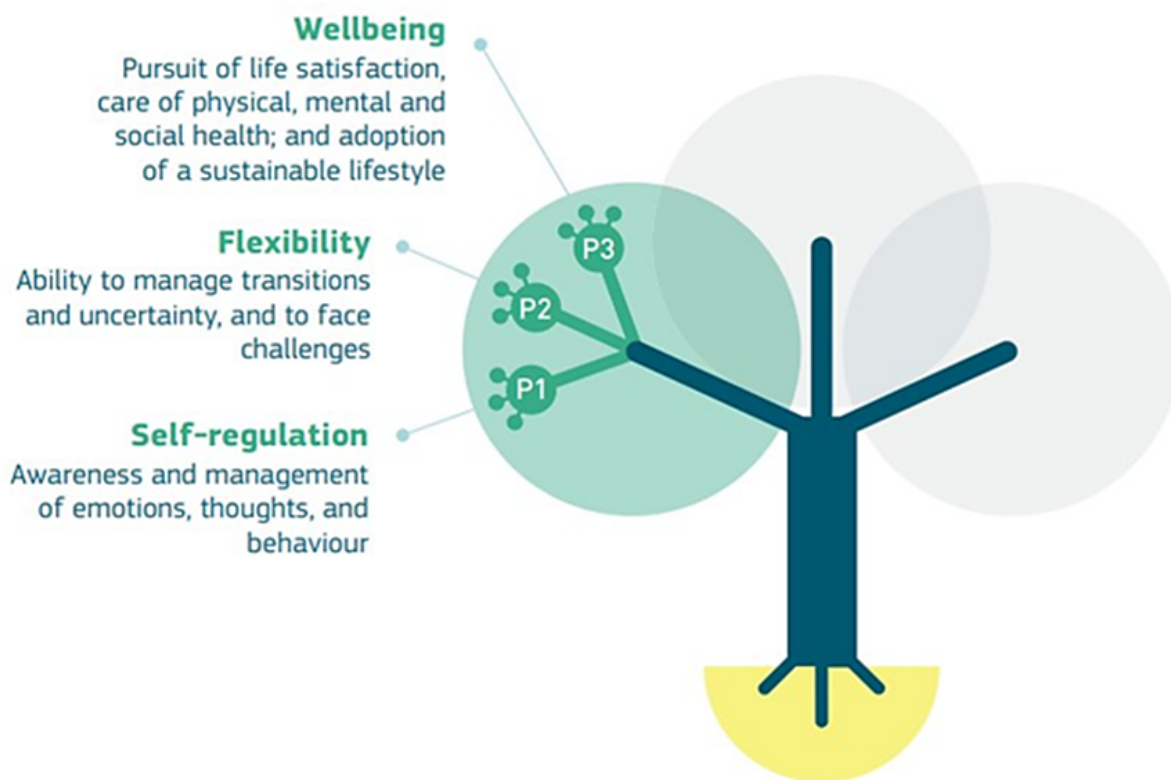
ACTION

## 2.8.4 Personal Area Competencies

This area refers to personal development, thriving and realizing the potential of everyone.

To be personally competent is closely related to “learning to be”. “Learning to be” implies being knowledgeable about a healthy mind, body, and lifestyle; being skilled in how to cope with complexity, uncertainty, and stress, seeking support when needed, and staying resilient, as well as developing the ability to work autonomously and manage one’s career. It also entails having attitudes of assertiveness, integrity, self-motivation, problem-solving to deal with changes, and a generally positive disposition towards the promotion of one’s personal, social, and physical well-being.





LIFECOMP DESCRIPTORS TYPOLOGIES



AWARENESS



UNDERSTANDING



ACTION

**Descriptors for Personal Area Competences**

**SELF-REGULATION DESCRIPTORS (P1)**

**P1.1** Awareness and expression of personal emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviour.

**P1.2** Understanding and regulating personal emotions, thoughts, and behaviour, including stress responses.

**P1.3** Nurturing optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and a sense of purpose to support

learning and action.

### **FLEXIBILITY DESCRIPTORS (P2)**

**P2.1** Readiness to review opinions and courses of action in the face of new evidence.

**P2.2** Understanding and adopting new ideas, approaches, tools, and actions in response to changing contexts.

**P2.3** Managing transitions in personal life, social participation, work and learning pathways, while making conscious choices and setting goals.

### **WELLBEING DESCRIPTORS (P3)**

**P3.1** Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics and social and environmental factors influence health and well-being.

**P3.2** Understanding potential risks for wellbeing, and using reliable information and services for health and social protection.

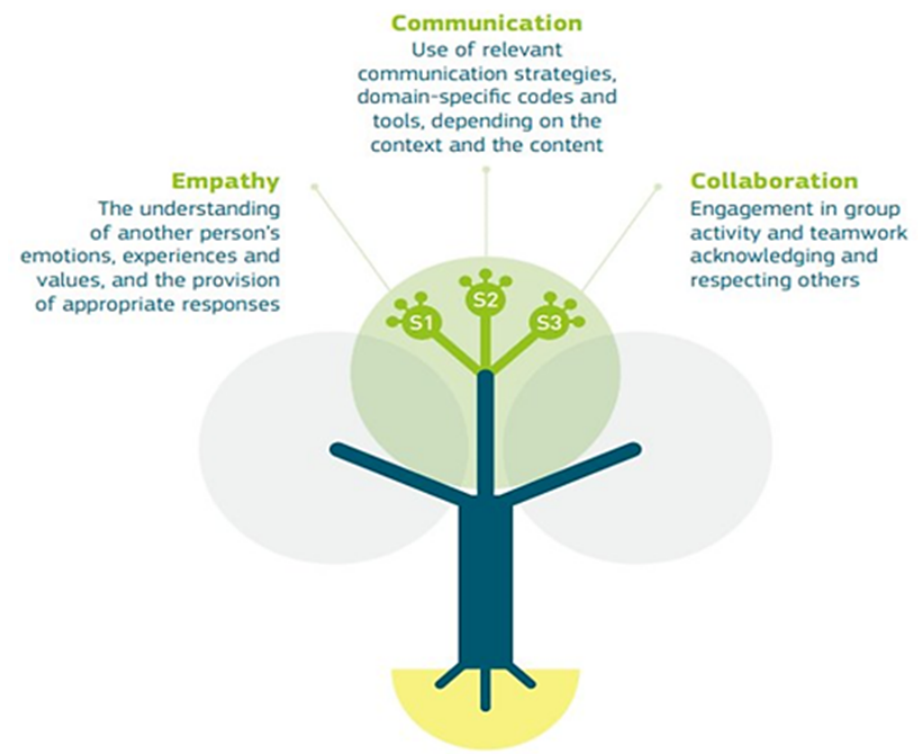
**P3.3** Adoption of a sustainable lifestyle that respects the environment, and the physical and mental wellbeing of self and others, while seeking and offering social support.

## **2.8.5 Social Area Competencies**

The social area is related to learning to live together and to awareness of the social nature of the human being. It implies the ability and willingness to interact, communicate and collaborate with others constructively.

Social competence refers to knowledge about the codes of conduct and rules of communication accepted in our societies and environments, and skills allowing the individual to:

- Communicate constructively in different environments
- Work collaboratively
- Negotiate
- Show tolerance
- Express and understand different points of view
- Feel empathy



LIFECOMP DESCRIPTORS TYPOLOGIES



AWARENESS



UNDERSTANDING



ACTION

## Descriptors for Social Area Competencies

### EMPATHY DESCRIPTORS (S1)

**S1.1** Awareness of another person's emotions, experiences and values.

**S1.2** Understanding another person's emotions and experiences, and the ability to proactively take their perspective.

**S1.3** Responsiveness to another person's emotions and experiences, being conscious that group belonging influences one's attitude.

### COMMUNICATION DESCRIPTORS (S2)

**S2.1** Awareness of the need for a variety of communication strategies, language registers, and

tools that are adapted to context and content.

**S2.2** Understanding and managing interactions and conversations in different socio-cultural contexts and domain-specific situations.

**S2.3** Listening to others and engaging in conversations with confidence, assertiveness, clarity and reciprocity, both in personal and social contexts.

### **COLLABORATION DESCRIPTORS (S3)**

**S3.1** Intention to contribute to the common good and awareness that others may have different cultural affiliations, backgrounds, beliefs, values, opinions or personal circumstances.

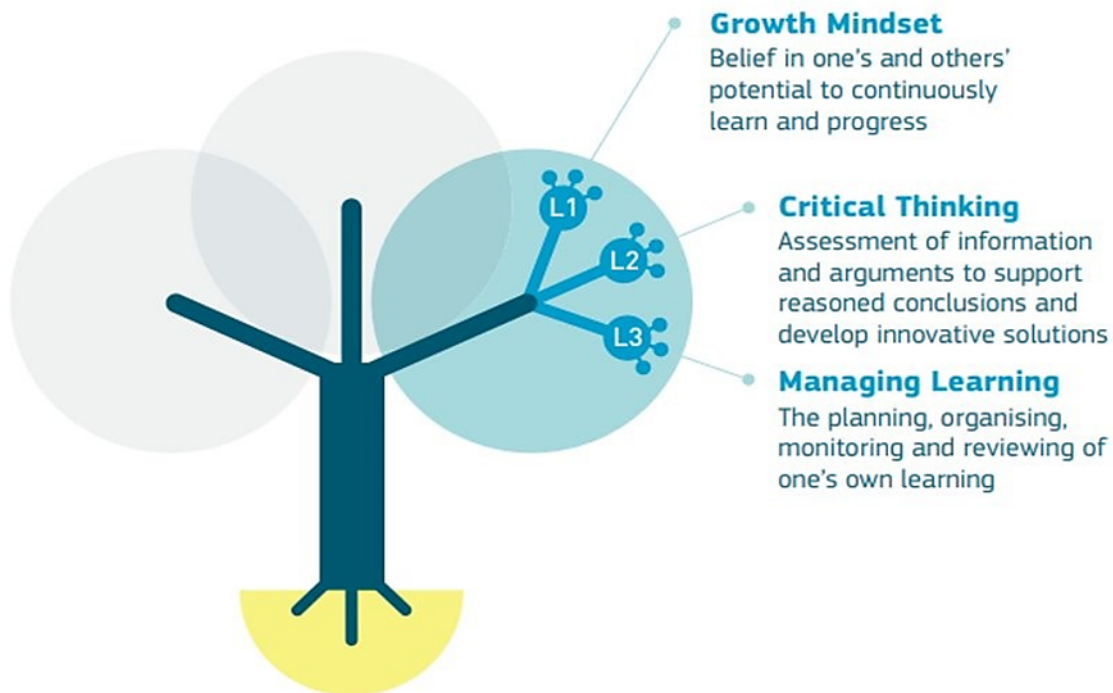
**S3.2** Understanding the importance of trust, respect for human dignity and equality, coping with conflicts and negotiating disagreements to build and sustain fair and respectful relationships.

**S3.3** Fair sharing of tasks, resources and responsibilities within a group taking into account its specific aim; eliciting the expression of different views and adopting a systemic approach.

### **2.8.6 Learning to Learn Area Competencies**

Learning to Learn implies taking responsibility for one's development. This is probably the "most important skill of all" involving:

- To pursue and persist in learning.
- Organize one's learning, including effective management of time and information, both individually and socially.
- Knowledge of one's preferred learning strategies, the competence areas that need to be developed, how to do it, and the support available to tackle education and training.
- Skills to identify one's capacity, reflect critically and make decisions, to organize, persevere and evaluate one's learning.
- Attitudes of confidence in the ability to succeed in learning, desire to apply prior learning, curiosity, and a positive attitude towards learning throughout one's life.



#### LIFECOMP DESCRIPTORS TYPOLOGIES



AWARENESS



UNDERSTANDING



ACTION

### Descriptors for Learning to Learn Area Competencies

#### GROWTH MINDSET DESCRIPTORS (L1)

**L1.1** Awareness of and confidence in one's own and others' abilities to learn, improve and achieve with work and dedication.

**L1.2** Understanding that learning is a lifelong process that requires openness, curiosity and determination.

**L1.3** Reflecting on other people's feedback as well as on successful and unsuccessful experiences to continue developing one's potential.

#### CRITICAL THINKING DESCRIPTORS (L2)

**L2.1** Awareness of potential biases in the data and one's personal limitations, while collecting

valid and reliable information and ideas from diverse and reputable sources.

**L2.2** Comparing, analyzing, assessing, and synthesizing data, information, ideas, and media messages to draw logical conclusions.

**L2.3** Developing creative ideas, synthesizing and combining concepts and information from different sources in view of solving problems.

### **MANAGING LEARNING DESCRIPTORS (L3)**

**L3.1** Awareness of one's own learning interests, processes and preferred strategies, including learning needs and required support.

**L3.2** Planning and implementing learning goals, strategies, resources and processes.

**L3.3** Reflecting on and assessing purposes, processes and outcomes of learning and knowledge construction, establishing relationships across domains.

### **2.8.7 Aims of the LifeComp Framework**

LifeComp endeavours to initiate an agreed-upon set of guidelines for the flexible implementation of “Personal, Social, and Learning to Learn” training in Member States’ curricula, specific school-based curricula and learning activities in general.

The LifeComp conceptual framework provides a common understanding and shared language at the European level, following the 2018 Council Recommendation on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning. The framework supports initiatives that ensure that these life skills are acquired as much as possible by all individuals in Europe not only through the different levels of formal education but using non-formal and informal education as well. These include initiatives from primary school to university as well as the flexible implementation of specific school-based curricula and learning activities in general.

This framework is not intended to be prescriptive; rather, it provides a validated description of the components that make up the key competence. The definition of “competence” encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitudes inspired by a holistic perspective, which understands the interdependence between elements of the framework as a complex ecosystem. All competencies included in the framework are, therefore, equally relevant, necessary, interrelated, and interconnected, and should be treated as parts of a whole. The goals of the framework can be summarized as follows:

- Personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.
- Tool for education and training of citizens, educators, educational policymakers and civil society organizations in a non-prescriptive way.
- Promote competence development through innovative learning approaches,

- assessment methods and support to educational staff.
- Provide quality early childhood education and care, improve school education and ensure excellent teaching, further develop initial and continuing vocational education and training and modernize higher education.
  - Make explicit the need for specific skills, fostering reflection about where learners stand and seeking ways for them to continuously improve, so citizens can become active agents in determining their learning and professional paths.

### 2.8.8 Implementation and Validation

The main limitation of this framework is that it has not yet been adapted to or tested in practice. The implementation process should be spiral, not linear, with each step informing all others since the acquisition and deployment of the competencies is a dynamic process, influenced by personal and contextual factors.

Educating learners will remain a challenge in increasingly digitalized and blended settings. Although the discussion of LifeComp learning outcomes and progression levels might be premature at this stage, the qualitative measurement of the competencies' development through formative assessment and the creation of self-reflection tools to support all learners, including adults and informal learners can be contemplated. Since this is a theoretical framework that needs to be put into practice, piloting in schools with teachers volunteering can be envisaged to develop and further improve the framework. The framework, if adopted in formal education settings, would benefit from mobilizing the active participation of the whole school community, including students, teachers, school leaders, families and local communities. This recommendation links to the suitability of using a Whole School Approach, stressing the centrality of students' voices as described in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also the relevance of the competencies described for staff and community development.

Member States could develop national standards from this framework, adapting it to their educational contexts. LifeComp could inspire the inclusion of new topics in the curricula or be included in existing subjects so that we understand better how to teach LifeComp competencies and how these can be embedded in the curriculum whether on a cross-curricular basis or in particular subjects but also lifelong learning and lifelong guidance.

AREA	COMPETENCES	DESCRIPTORS
PERSONAL	<b>P1 Self-regulation</b> Awareness and management of emotions, thoughts and behaviour	P1.1 Awareness and expression of personal emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviour
		P1.2 Understanding and regulating personal emotions, thoughts, and behaviour, including stress responses
		P1.3 Nurturing optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy and a sense of purpose to support learning and action
	<b>P2 Flexibility</b> Ability to manage transitions and uncertainty, and to face challenges	P2.1 Readiness to review opinions and courses of action in the face of new evidence
		P2.2 Understanding and adopting new ideas, approaches, tools, and actions in response to changing contexts
		P2.3 Managing transitions in personal life, social participation, work and learning pathways, while making conscious choices and setting goals
	<b>P3 Wellbeing</b> Pursuit of life satisfaction, care of physical, mental and social health; and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle	P3.1 Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics and social and environmental factors influence health and wellbeing
		P3.2 Understanding potential risks for wellbeing, and using reliable information and services for health and social protection
		P3.3 Adoption of a sustainable lifestyle that respects the environment, and the physical and mental wellbeing of self and others, while seeking and offering social support
SOCIAL	<b>S1 Empathy</b> The understanding of another person's emotions, experiences and values, and the provision of appropriate responses	S1.1 Awareness of another person's emotions, experiences and values
		S1.2 Understanding another person's emotions and experiences, and the ability to proactively take their perspective
		S1.3 Responsiveness to another person's emotions and experiences, being conscious that group belonging influences one's attitude
	<b>S2 Communication</b> Use of relevant communication strategies, domain-specific codes and tools, depending on the context and content	S2.1 Awareness of the need for a variety of communication strategies, language registers, and tools that are adapted to context and content
		S2.2 Understanding and managing interactions and conversations in different socio-cultural contexts and domain-specific situations
		S2.3 Listening to others and engaging in conversations with confidence, assertiveness, clarity and reciprocity, both in personal and social contexts
	<b>S3 Collaboration</b> Engagement in group activity and teamwork acknowledging and respecting others	S3.1 Intention to contribute to the common good and awareness that others may have different cultural affiliations, backgrounds, beliefs, values, opinions or personal circumstances
		S3.2 Understanding the importance of trust, respect for human dignity and equality, coping with conflicts and negotiating disagreements to build and sustain fair and respectful relationships
		S3.3 Fair sharing of tasks, resources and responsibility within a group taking into account its specific aim; eliciting the expression of different views and adopting a systemic approach
LEARNING TO LEARN	<b>L1 Growth mindset</b> Belief in one's and others' potential to continuously learn and progress	L1.1 Awareness of and confidence in one's own and others' abilities to learn, improve and achieve with work and dedication
		L1.2 Understanding that learning is a lifelong process that requires openness, curiosity and determination
		L1.3 Reflecting on other people's feedback as well as on successful and unsuccessful experiences to continue developing one's potential
	<b>L2 Critical thinking</b> Assessment of information and arguments to support reasoned conclusions and develop innovative solutions	L2.1 Awareness of potential biases in the data and one's personal limitations, while collecting valid and reliable information and ideas from diverse and reputable sources
		L2.2 Comparing, analysing, assessing, and synthesising data, information, ideas, and media messages in order to draw logical conclusions
		L2.3 Developing creative ideas, synthesising and combining concepts and information from different sources in view of solving problems
	<b>L3 Managing learning</b> The planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing of one's own learning	L3.1 Awareness of one's own learning interests, processes and preferred strategies, including learning needs and required support
		L3.2 Planning and implementing learning goals, strategies, resources and processes
		L3.3 Reflecting on and assessing purposes, processes and outcomes of learning and knowledge construction, establishing relationships across domains

## Annex I – The LifeComp Framework



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## Chapter 3 - VET EXCELLENCE IMPLEMENTATION TIPS

Vocational education plays a crucial role in European society and economy. It provides a bridge to employment and equips industries with the skills they need to grow and remain competitive. Professionals who build our homes, build roads and provide our digital infrastructure have mostly received their training in this vocational education.

Despite the benefits, vocational education in Europe faces a considerable number of challenges, such as changing labour market needs, technological advances and societal expectations.

This note discusses the various ways in which vocational education in Europe can be improved to better meet current and future demands.

### 3.1 Curriculum flexibility

One of the biggest challenges for vocational education is the need to respond quickly to changing labour market needs. This requires a flexible curriculum that can be adapted to new technologies and skills. **Modular education** can provide a solution, with students having the opportunity to follow different modules that match their interests and career goals.

The curriculum is the school's curriculum. It lists the contents and goals that must be learned. It specifies which subjects are taught and what their core objectives are. It is often determined within a Ministry of Education which requirements the curriculum must meet. Currently, it is often the case that a curriculum is based on a labour market needs survey. Companies are asked what a professional should know and be able to do in a certain sector. Let's say this survey takes place in year one. In year two, this programme of requirements is translated into the curriculum. This is communicated to the schools. Then they start working with it to implement it in their new school year. This is often year three! If some four years are then trained according to this curriculum, this means that education is at least four years behind the developments within the business world. Clearly, this situation is undesirable. Also, realise that we are increasingly training people who will end up in professions that do not even exist today!

It is therefore vital that educational institutions work more closely with companies and industries to ensure that the curriculum and, above all, flexibility remain relevant. **Dual learning pathways**, where students receive both theoretical education and practical experience at companies can be an effective way to foster this collaboration.

However, these dual learning pathways also require direct involvement and motivation from this business community. After all, students in such a learning path are often seen as cheap labour. Good training, in line with the curriculum, with good career guidance from the learning company, is essential. here.



### 3.2 Promoting Lifelong Learning

With rapid technological change, it is increasingly important that employees continue to develop their skills throughout their careers. This requires a shift from the traditional one-off education model to one that promotes **lifelong learning**.

Vocational education institutions and private training providers within sectors should offer flexible and accessible CVT programmes that allow employees to update their skills and adapt to new developments.

The use of online learning platforms can play an important role here, offering courses that can be taken at any time and from any location. This makes it easier for working people to continue learning without having to quit their current jobs.

However, these online learning platforms do need to be qualified. It is very important to integrate this form of learning into a blended format as well. Online learning combined with classroom lessons and on-the-job practical assignments have proven to be very effective.



### 3.3 Integration of Digital Technologies

Integrating digital technologies into education is essential for preparing students for the modern labour market. Vocational education should invest in **modern technologies**, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), which can provide students with a realistic learning experience in a safe and controlled environment.



In addition, students need to develop digital skills that are essential and increasingly essential in almost every field. Programming, data analysis and digital literacy should be integral parts of the curriculum to prepare students for the future.

### 3.4 Strengthening Social Skills

While technical skills are crucial, social skills are increasingly important in the modern job market. Employers value employees who can effectively communicate, collaborate, and solve problems.

Vocational education should focus on developing these **soft skills** through group projects, simulations, and other interactive learning methods.



### 3.5 Promoting Inclusion and Equality

Inclusion and equality should be at the heart of vocational education. This means that educational institutions should ensure that their programmes are accessible to students from all backgrounds, including people with disabilities, migrants and those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

By offering scholarships, mentoring programmes and other support services, institutions can attract and support a more diverse student population.



### 3.6. Strengthening European Cooperation

The challenges for vocational education are often cross-border. European countries can benefit from sharing knowledge and best practices. Initiatives such as the Erasmus+ programme play a very important role in promoting exchanges between students and teachers, as well as supporting cross-border cooperation projects between educational institutions.

We see these exchanges or internships abroad mainly among students in higher vocational education and universities. But even within vocational education, such exchanges on a much larger scale than at present would greatly contribute to the social and professional development of the students involved.

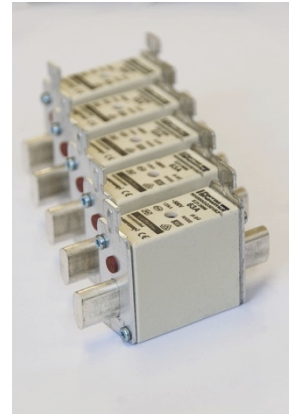
Organising (much) larger-scale (international) traineeships or exchanges of teachers will also; immediately give a quality boost to vocational education. After all, developments in the business world are so rapid that teachers soon have outdated knowledge. So how can you give practical or theory lessons that are motivating for students and in line with the labour market?

It would be my personal recommendation to make these internships and exchanges of teachers and students mandatory. It will help improve the quality of vocational education on all sides.

### 3.7 Quality Assurance and Teaching Standards

To ensure the quality of vocational education, clear standards and guidelines need to be established. This can be done through accreditation systems that ensure programmes meet certain quality standards. In addition, setting up a common European qualifications framework can help improve the comparability of qualifications between countries and promote student and worker mobility.

At the moment, we see big differences in the level the quality of vocational education between different European countries. Continuous hard work will be needed to reduce these differences. European cooperation projects such as those initiated by organisations like EVTA (and many others) contribute to this.



### 3.8 Image of Vocational Education

The image of vocational education within Europe has undergone significant changes in recent years. Traditionally, vocational education was often seen as a less prestigious option compared to academic education. However, this image changed with the increasing recognition of the value of practical skills in a rapidly changing labour market.

Several European countries and the European Commission have taken steps to improve the image of vocational education by making it more responsive to the needs of industry and by strengthening partnerships with companies. This has led to a greater appreciation of vocational training, especially in sectors where there is a shortage of skilled labour.

In Germany and Switzerland, for example, vocational education has long enjoyed high prestige, thanks in part to the dual system that combines practical experience with theoretical classes. Other countries are trying to adopt this model to increase the attractiveness of vocational education. Moreover, EU policies and initiatives, such as Erasmus+ and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), have contributed to moves towards the harmonisation and promotion of vocational education across Europe.

Despite these positive developments, challenges remain, such as overcoming persistent prejudices and improving mobility and recognition of qualifications within Europe. Overall, there is a growing awareness of the crucial role of vocational education in training a diverse and resilient workforce. However, there is still a long way to go, with continuous efforts to promote this form of education and to put on the map the excellent opportunities that graduate students have in the labour market. The promotion will also have to focus on the parents of potential students within vocational education. They will have to be convinced that higher vocational education or university is not always the best education path for their child. If, in the process, the flow between different levels of education is also simplified, this will only contribute positively to lifelong learning and development.

### 3.9 Conclusion

Improving vocational education in Europe requires a multifaceted approach that responds to the changing needs of the labour market and society. By offering flexible and modular curricula, promoting lifelong learning, integrating digital technologies, developing social skills, promoting inclusion and equality, strengthening European cooperation, and ensuring the quality of education, vocational education can become more effective and play an important role in Europe's economic and social development. Last but certainly not least, improving the image of vocational education will also need constant attention.

By investing in these improvements, vocational education can play a leading role in supporting individuals and businesses to thrive in an ever-changing world.

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## Chapter 4 – Self-Reflection and Self-Construction

This chapter is about the socio-constructivist approach: a real asset to enable young people to optimize their internship periods in companies. It includes a full description of the “Talents & Transitions Patchwork®”: a tool for self-construction.

### 4.1 Experiencing the implementation of a new method.

The “*Missions Locales*” were created in 1982 in France following Bertrand Schwartz's report on "the professional and social integration of young people". The 436 branches based in the country (more than 6,800 sites) receive young people aged 16 to 25 and support them on the following issues: employment, training, health, and housing.

They support young people in their search for employment and training, and the identification of their skills. They can help them with workshops to master IT tools (creation of a professional email box, layout of a CV, writing a cover letter online) and to explain to them the procedures on the different job websites.

In May 2023, advisors from the [Mission Locale “Coeur de Picardie”](#) and advisors from [Cap Emploi 60](#) (a local association dedicated to people with disabilities) participated in a think tank organized by David J. Bourne, occupational psychologist and researcher in the field of career counselling.

This work highlighted the advisors' desire to rely concretely on the socio-constructivist approach to enable the young people they support in their daily work to develop professional projects. **The idea was to enable young people to optimize their internship periods in companies** named *PMSMP (Période de Mise en Situation en Milieu Professionnel)*.

Complete training in the socio-constructivist method “Talents & Transitions Patchwork®” was thus implemented in October 2023.

#### Results:

The implementation of the constructivist method “Talents & Transitions Patchwork®” proved to be highly valuable in the context of a practical internship in a professional environment for young persons from the Mission Locale and Cap Emploi 60. This innovative approach placed the young individual at the forefront of their learning experience, emphasizing and exploring their unique talents. By identifying and valuing these skills, the young person gained increased self-confidence, fostering a positive self-image within a sometimes intimidating professional setting.



Photo by David J. Bourne

#### 4.2 Socio-constructivist approach in career counselling.

Inspired by both socio-constructivist and socio-cognitive ideas, the "Talents & Transitions Patchwork®" method contributes to developing real career management skills (CMS: Career Management Skills) in individuals, following the example of the recommendations recently formulated in this area by the 'European Union.

The "Patchwork of Talents" goes beyond mere technical skills, incorporating interpersonal and emotional competencies. This provides the young person with a comprehensive understanding of their potential, helping them comprehend how various abilities can be showcased in a professional context. This process actively encourages thoughtful consideration of their career path, assisting the young individual in anticipating and managing transitions throughout their professional journey.

Furthermore, the method facilitates a personalized approach to the internship, enabling the young person to acquire specific skills aligned with their own goals and aspirations. By establishing a close connection between the individual's talents and the demands of the professional environment, the method promotes a seamless integration into the workforce. It also forms a solid foundation for making informed decisions regarding future career directions.

The "Talents & Transitions Patchwork®" method empowers the young person to become an active participant in their professional development. It nurtures autonomy, urging them to play a central role in defining career objectives and seeking learning opportunities. By enhancing

engagement, the method contributes to a more enriching internship experience and effective preparation for future challenges in their career.

In the specific context of a Mission Locale, this constructivist approach addresses the diverse needs of young individuals, considering their unique backgrounds and varied aspirations.

**By incorporating this method into the career guidance process, the counsellor can maximize its impact by guiding young people towards internships that align with their distinctive talents, thereby enhancing their employability and long-term professional fulfilment.**

## The socio-constructivist approach: a real asset for young people looking for work.



The research aimed to evaluate the impact of the use of the socio-constructivist approach by young people looking for work.



Six guidance practitioners were trained in the socio-constructivist "Talents & Transitions Patchwork®" method so they can support young people during internship periods in companies.



The research was carried out in France in "Mission Locale Cœur de Picardie" (Association specializing in the career guidance of young people).



**Findings:**  
The implementation of the socio-constructivist method proved to be highly valuable in the context of a practical internship in a professional environment for young people.



**Next step:**  
We wish to expand this research by training a larger number of practitioners in this approach, ideally within the framework of a European ERASMUS+ project.





This experience contributed to developing career management skills in individuals and clearly increase specific skills of participating practitioners.



**Let's work together to build this new European project:**  
**Feel free to contact us:**  
[contact@ott-partners.eu](mailto:contact@ott-partners.eu)





David John BOURNE, France  
Consultant in European projects - Occupational Psychologist - Practitioner/Researcher/Trainer – Mentor  
**Founder of Euro-CDP-Lab**      [contact@ott-partners.eu](mailto:contact@ott-partners.eu)

### 4.3 Proposal:

The tool offered to you below constitutes the first part of the complete "Talents & Transitions Patchwork®" method in which, over recent years, not only the advisors of the Local Mission "Cœur de Picardie" have been trained » but also numerous professional development advisors in France and abroad.

**This tool makes it possible in particular to optimize the use of internship periods and, more generally, to facilitate the reflection and expression of people wishing to identify the professional activities that suit them.**

This first part of the "Talents & Transitions Patchwork®" method aims above all to facilitate the narration of various professional and extra-professional experiences. It is intended to be used by professional development support practitioners wishing to mobilize innovative approaches for the benefit of their clients.

The second part of the "Talents & Transitions Patchwork®" method, which is not developed here, makes it possible to support the emergence of professional projects. Only professionals

who have participated in specific certification training can use the complete method. Certification training courses are regularly organized by the author of the method, David J. Bourne, for professionals interested in the complete method.



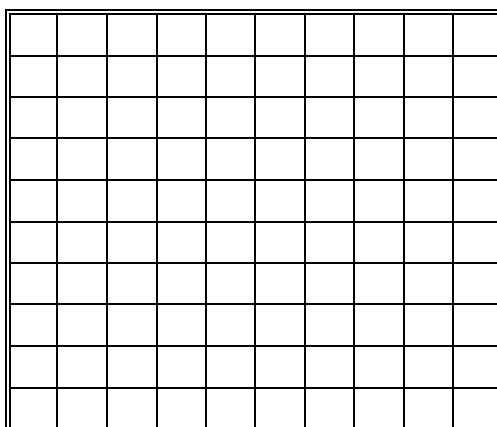
### How to draw your Patchworks.

To represent the significant activities of your internship or professional immersion period, you are invited to use the empty Patchwork grid shown below.

You will notice that each patchwork has 100 squares in total (10 X 10). This will subsequently allow you to express as a percentage (%) the time you spent on each activity. So, for example, if you spent  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your time putting products on the shelves, you would colour  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Patchwork grid (i.e. 25 squares) a certain colour.

How to draw your Patchworks

### Patchwork grid: 100 colouring boxes



To compose the Patchwork, corresponding to a given experience, you will use 4 different colors: blue, red, yellow and green. Each of these 4 colours has 3 different shades: dark, intermediate and light.

You will classify these 4 colours according to your personal preference in order from the least pleasant to the most pleasant.

So, for example, Eva, who is currently supported by her advisor in her professional development projects, prefers blue and yellow. She doesn't like green much and even less like red. It therefore establishes the following classification:

Here is how Eva classified the 4 colours according to her personal preferences:



To each piece of your patchwork representing an activity, you will associate a colour. Each color must correspond to a specific activity of the experience that you represent, that is to say to a piece of fabric from the Patchwork. You will therefore use a color that you do not like if it is to illustrate an activity that you were supposed to carry out but that you do not appreciate. Conversely, a pleasant colour will illustrate an activity that you carried out with pleasure.

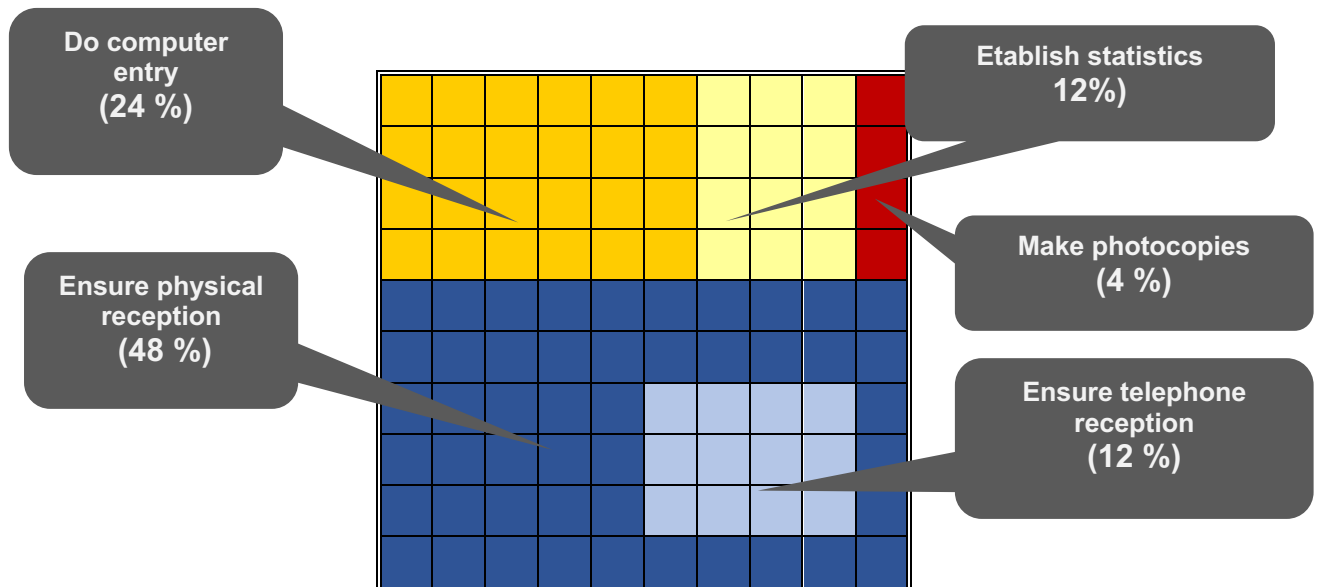
Likewise, if you felt very comfortable carrying out the activity in question (you knew how to carry it out), you would use the darkest shade of the colour concerned (eg: dark blue). Conversely, if you do not feel comfortable carrying out this activity, you will use a lighter shade of colour (e.g. light blue).



Here is Eva's colour code:

		<b>Very unpleasant</b>	<b>Unpleasant</b>	<b>Pleasant</b>	<b>Very pleasant</b>
	<b>Very comfortable</b>	Red	Green	Yellow	Dark Blue
	<b>Comfortable</b>	Light Red	Light Green	Light Yellow	Light Blue
	<b>Uncomfortable</b>	Lightest Red	Lightest Green	Lightest Yellow	Lightest Blue

As an example, here is the Patchwork made by Eva. It corresponds to the internship she completed for 3 days in the secretarial field:



***Eva's secretariat Patchwork***

The patchwork thus drawn by Eva represents the activities that she had the opportunity to carry out during her internship of a few days. This graphic support will allow him to communicate very precisely and easily with his advisor during his next meeting. She will be able to explain the following things to him in particular:

- ✓ The most important activity she carried out was the physical reception of customers (48% of the internship time). She really enjoyed this activity and felt very comfortable (dark blue) while doing it.
- ✓ Eva also provided telephone reception which represented 12% of her internship time, an activity that she also appreciated but for which she felt a little less comfortable (light blue). Eva thinks she can still progress in this area...
- ✓ Eva spent 24% of her time doing computer data entry, which is an activity that she also enjoys (yellow) and for which she felt very comfortable (dark yellow).
- ✓ Establishing statistics is another pleasant activity (yellow) to which Eva devoted 12% of her internship time. She feels that she can still progress in this area (light yellow).
- ✓ Eva didn't like making photocopies at all even though she knew how to actually do it (Dark red). This activity represented 4% of his time.

**Eva can use this document to identify with her advisor the activities she would like to find in her next internship, profession or job. New avenues can thus be discussed and explored.**

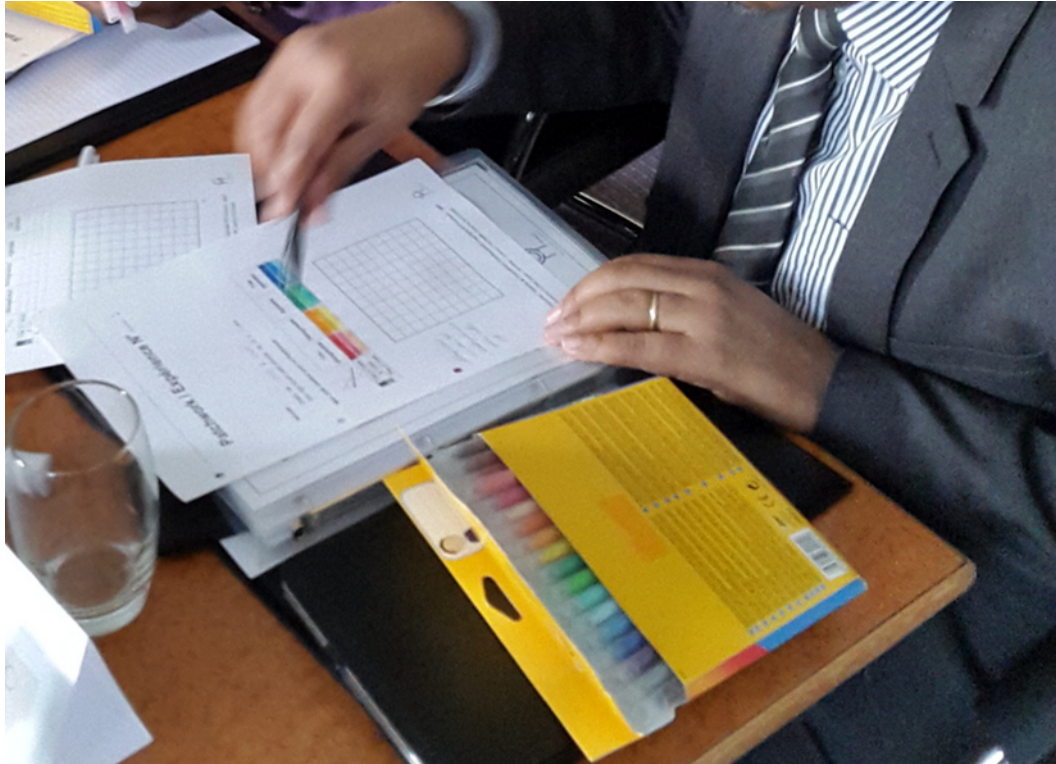


Photo by David J. Bourne

## It's your turn ...

You have just completed an internship or taken up a job and you will soon meet your advisor to discuss it. Create the patchwork corresponding to this experience in order to be able to discuss this experience and your possible professional development project in an effective and constructive manner.

Here's how to do it in 6 steps:

1/ Draw up a list of all the activities carried out during this experience. Always use an action verb in the infinitive. (e.g. "Welcome customers")

2/ Establish your colour code: classify the 4 colours according to your order of preference (blue, red, yellow and green).

3/ Assign each activity the colour that corresponds to it depending on whether this activity was very pleasant (favourite colour), pleasant (second favourite colour), unpleasant (unliked colour) or very unpleasant (unliked colour).

4/ Once the colour has been assigned to each activity, give it the appropriate shade (dark, intermediate or light) depending on whether you feel very comfortable, comfortable or not very comfortable when you have completed this activity.

5/ Indicate for each activity the percentage of time you devoted to it during this experience (e.g.: 4% of the total time). Remember that a Patchwork square represents 1%. Thus, you would have to colour 4 boxes if the activity represented 4% of the total time (e.g.: 4 red boxes, making photocopies, in Eva's case).

Please note: The total of the percentages must be equal to 100%, i.e. correspond to 100 boxes in the Patchwork grid.

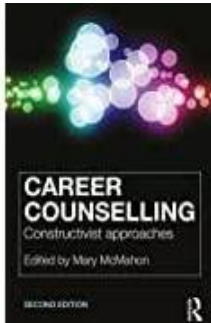
6/ All you have to do is report all the activities in your Patchwork grid. Start by placing the activities that took you the most time (the largest percentages) and then the others. Remember to indicate the name of the activity in a bubble as well as its percentage % as in the example of Eva's Patchwork.

Don't hesitate to make a new Patchwork for each new experience that makes sense to you. This could be an internship, an associative or a leisure activity. This will allow you to more easily and more precisely identify the activities that suit you.





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<http://www.educavox.fr/innovation/recherche/constructivisme-et-conseil-en-orientation>

[https://iaevgconference2019.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IAEVG-Conference-Proceedings-2019\\_FINAL.pdf](https://iaevgconference2019.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IAEVG-Conference-Proceedings-2019_FINAL.pdf) (pages : 63-68)

**Please, feel free to contact David J. BOURNE, the author of the “Talents & Transitions Patchwork®” method: [dbourne61@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dbourne61@yahoo.co.uk)**

## Chapter 5 – Inclusive Career Guidance Tips

### 5.1 About inclusive career guidance

Inclusive Career Guidance refers to the application of practices and methods that consider the diversity of individuals and enable equal access to career guidance for everyone, regardless of their background, abilities, or challenges. The goal of inclusive career guidance is to support and encourage all people, especially underrepresented groups such as people with disabilities, immigrants, and the long-term unemployed, to find and develop their career paths. This approach emphasizes inclusivity, diversity, and equality in all aspects of career planning and development.

This document presents several methods designed to support inclusive career guidance and assist career counsellors in their work. **The Life Map Reflector** is a tool that helps career counsellors and clients reflect comprehensively on their life fields and career paths by offering structured tasks and visual tools to clarify their values and goals. **The Growth Map**, in turn, helps shift mindsets and develop a growth and career development mindset, which is essential for long-term career planning and decision-making.

The **Future Stories Builder** provides career counsellors with a method to utilize future studies in career guidance, helping clients envision and build possible future paths and scenarios. This method encourages clients to anticipate future changes and develop strategic thinking. Additionally, the document introduces the **Accessibility Map**, a digital tool that assists career counsellors and learners in creating accessible and interactive online career guidance sessions, taking into account linguistic, pedagogical, technological, economic, and social factors.

The document also introduces a new digital career guidance tool, **FuturePath AI**. This AI-assisted tool helps users set specific short- and long-term career goals and plan the steps to achieve them. FuturePath AI offers the ability to visualize various career paths and their potential outcomes using multiple formats such as text, video, audio, and interactive tasks. The tool adapts to the user's individual needs and guides them toward their goals.

Finally, the document discusses inclusive career guidance practices specifically for people with disabilities in Ireland, where special programs and services have been developed to support their participation in the labour market. The **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** and its three main principles—multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and options for demonstrating learning—help ensure that career guidance is accessible and inclusive for everyone.

## 5.2 Method 1: Life Map Reflector

A Tool for Life Mapping Reflection for Career Counsellors

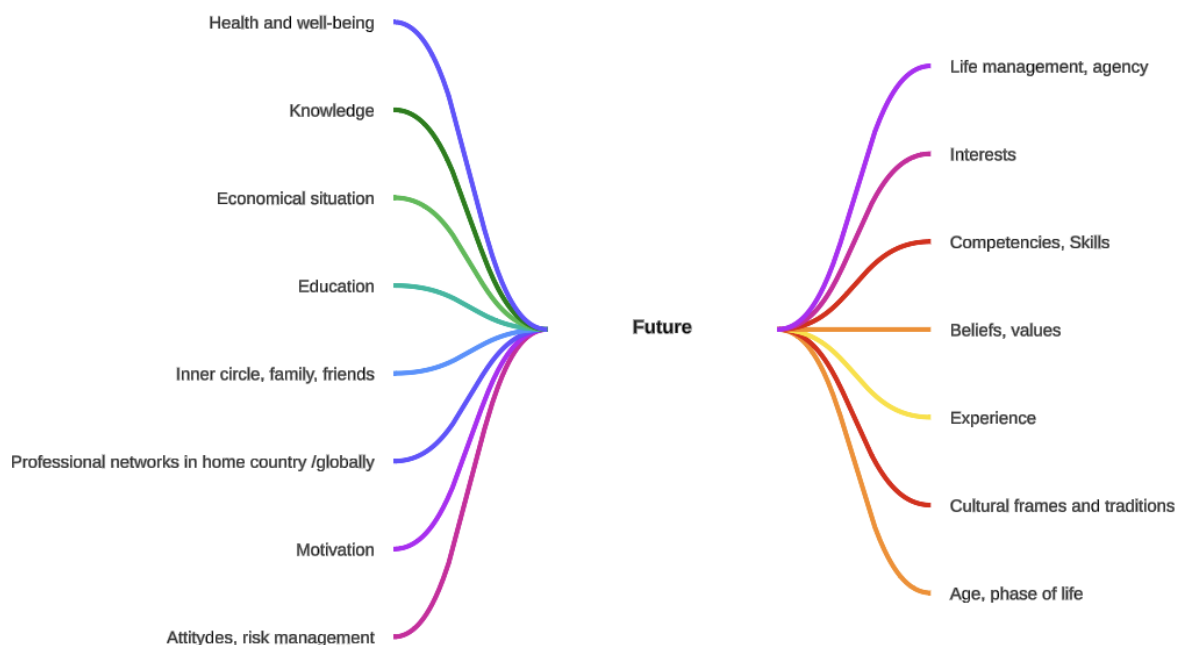
### Description

The Life Map Reflector is a tool that helps career counsellors, and their clients reflect comprehensively on life fields and career paths. It provides engaging, visual, and structured reflection tasks that allow clients to map out their past, present, and future goals. Through life mapping reflection, clients gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their values, and their aspirations, which supports their career planning and decision-making.

The career guidance process includes several stages. Getting to know the life map can help both parties in the counselling relationship understand the situation better and open new perspectives.

### Task 1: Counsellor Preparation

1. Familiarize yourself with the mind map below and reflect on your life field.
2. Then consider how you can utilize the life map with your client. How can the life map help identify possible career paths and generate alternatives? How can it promote co-designing and provide a common foundation for discussion?



### Task 2: Life Map

Visual Mapping: The client draws or creates a life map by hand or digitally, based on the different areas of life depicted in the mind map. The client can also place important career-related events on a timeline.

### Task 3: Current Situation Analysis

SWOT Analysis: The client evaluates their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in their current life situation and career using a four-field matrix. The client can also keep a journal of current feelings, challenges, and successes.

### Task 4: Future Planning

*Future Vision:* The client creates a vision for their future, including professional and personal goals.

Goal Setting: The client sets SMART goals for themselves:

- **Specific:**  
Is the goal clear? Name the goal, the tools, resources, budget, and time frame needed.
- **Measurable:**  
Can the goal be measured? How? Schedule the measurements.
- **Achievable:**  
Is the goal realistic? Break down larger goals into smaller sub-goals.
- **Relevant:**  
Is the goal meaningful for your development? Why do you want to achieve this goal?
- **Time-bound:**  
What is the deadline for the goal? Is the schedule clear? Ensure the timeline is realistic and avoids excessive strain.

### Evaluation

The client reflects on daily events and learning experiences briefly but daily. The client reflects on their progress and makes necessary adjustments to their plans weekly or monthly. If group meetings are possible, the client benefits from participating in group discussions. The client may also choose to use digital applications to track progress and provide real-time feedback, such as [LifeMap](#) or [LifeMap Solutions](#).

### Outcomes

The tool enhances self-awareness, helps clarify values and goals, and supports long-term career planning. Using the tool improves the counselling process and helps the client achieve better results.

### 5.3 Method 2: Growth Map

According to Crum, Salovey, and Achor (2013), mindsets are "lenses or frames of mind that orient individuals to particular sets of associations and expectations." Caroline Dweck (2006) encourages adopting a 'growth mindset,' which can also help in developing a 'career mindset.' According to Nancy Curtis (Advancing Career Development in Canada), "a career mindset is a strategic approach to career development that is deliberate and focused on how an individual seeks to shape their future and see their career develop and unfold."

Changing any mindset and developing a good 'career mindset' requires deep reflection and introspection. This tool is designed to help adopt a 'growth mindset' and develop a strong 'career mindset.' The tool contains two main exercises, and it is recommended that both be completed in the same journal.

#### Task 1. Where Are You Now? (Includes Success Mapping)

This exercise helps assess your current situation, achievements, goals, and ambitions. Write down your achievements and goals. Start with your successes: how did you get here, and what helped you? This exercise can be done individually or in groups. It is also important to consider how various circumstances, such as location, finances, and opportunities, affect our career mindset and career outcomes.

Achievements	What worked well	What helped you to achieve success e.g. supports	Alternatives
Goals	How can I achieve this?	What do I need to achieve this?	Is there an alternative method or pathway?

After completing this activity, reflect on key career events by writing detailed accounts, focusing on decisions and their influences. Consider how stress or circumstances affected these decisions. Write down these reflections and discuss them with a mentor, career guidance counsellor, or coach.

#### Task 2. "Positive Affirmation" Statements

This exercise builds on the first by addressing doubt and negativity. Write positive statements, like "I can be an engineer even if I'm not good at Maths because I'll improve through hard work or help." These statements help overcome obstacles, set SMART goals, and boost confidence. It can be done alone or in a team, fostering a growth mindset and collaboration.

#### Instructions

Participants should start by writing personal affirmations about their capabilities, such as "I can speak Spanish and French very well." They can then add, "I need to improve my written skills to meet my goals," and include steps like "watching movies, reading, or taking classes."

Review these statements when feeling overwhelmed or unsure. This exercise can be done individually or as a team, depending on goals and team dynamics.

I can	Because I am good at	But I want to improve	...Will help me to improve	I need this because

## 5.4 Method 3: Future Story Builder

### Tool for Building Future Stories

The Future Stories Builder is a tool designed for career counsellors that utilizes future stories as elements to promote inclusive and equitable career guidance. This tool combines future studies with a comprehensive career guidance approach, offering practical methods and resources that help career counsellors assist their clients in actively and creatively envisioning and building their futures.

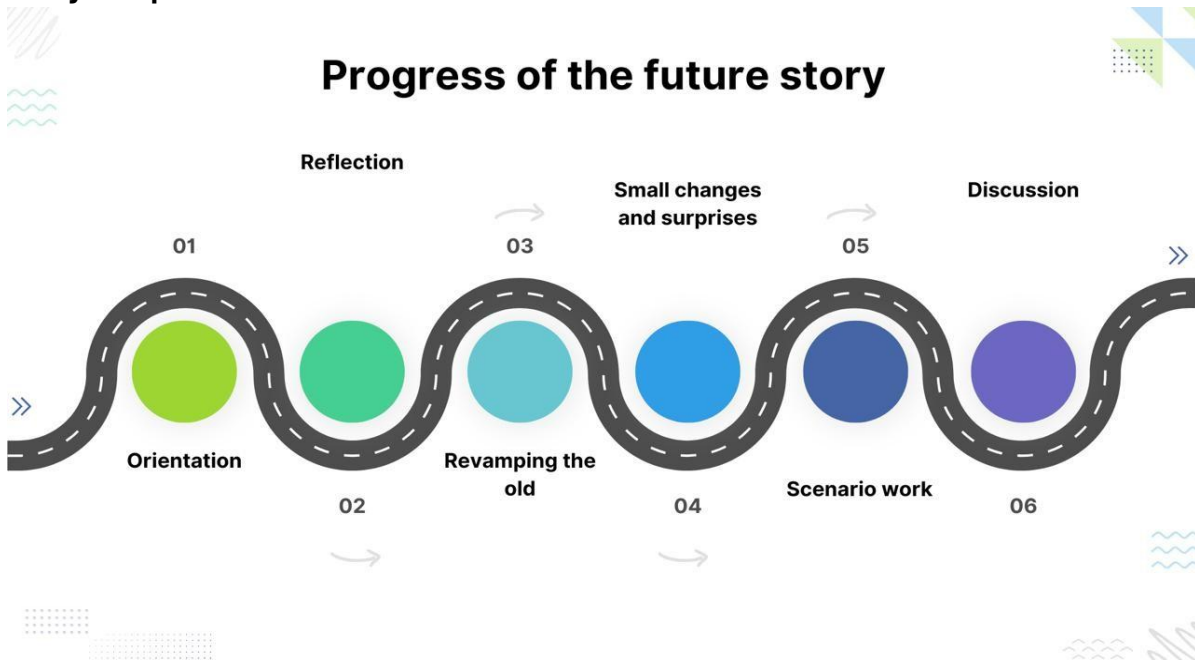
A future story, in the context of career guidance, is a narrative created by the client that describes their possible future paths, goals, and dreams. It integrates personal visions, aspirations, and opportunities into a comprehensive and concrete plan, enabling the client to envision and plan their career development over the long term. A future story helps the client understand their choices, see alternative paths, and prepare for future changes.

Future thinking is the ability to anticipate and construct possible, desirable, or probable future scenarios. It is a key competency for the future. Future stories help visualize various possibilities for the future. Weak signals serve as the foundation for these stories, challenging us to ask the question, "What if?" Future thinking involves anticipating and constructing possible, desirable, or probable future scenarios. It is a critical competency for the future.

### Task: Create a Future Story Using IEUCG Story Templates

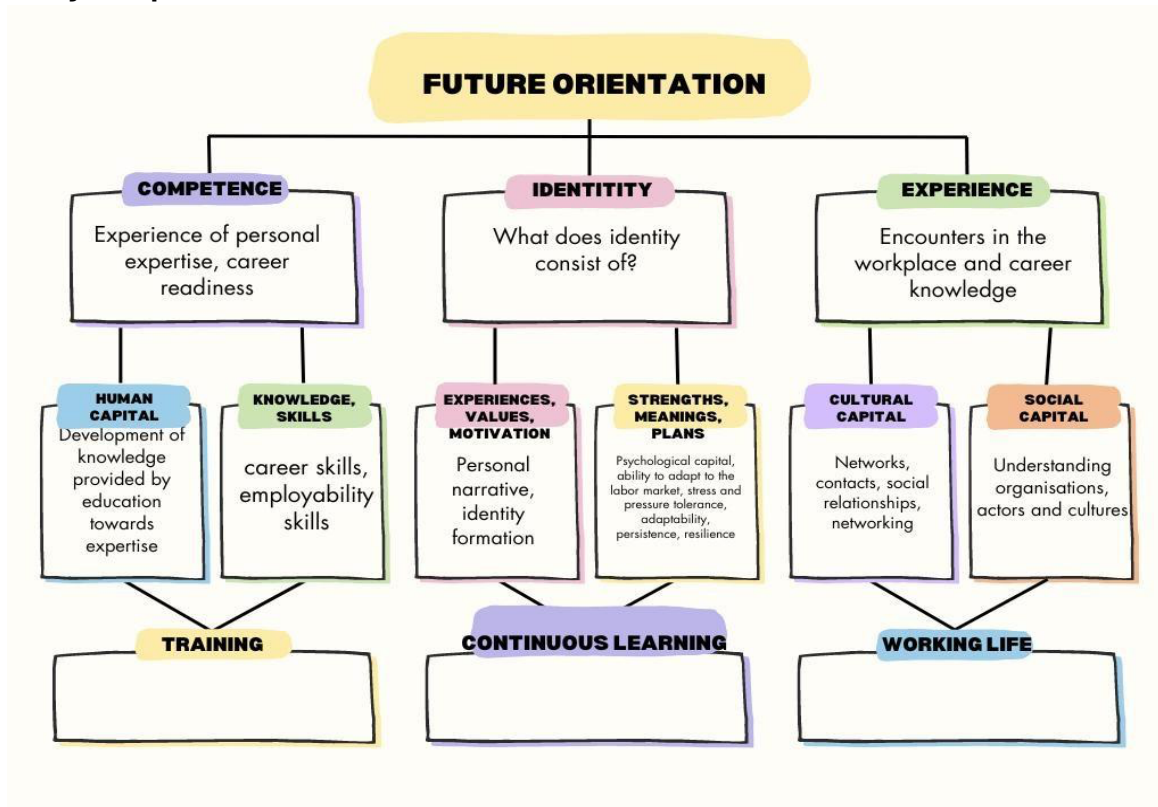
A story template helps the client organize their future into different scenarios and possibilities. The goal is to outline dreams, goals, and potential paths.

Story Template 1:



Modified from: <https://innokyla.fi/fi/tyokalut/tulevaisuustarinat>

Story Template 2:



Future stories are more effective when created together with peers or a counsellor.

## Evaluation

The client reflects on their choices and learns from them. A concrete action plan helps the client progress toward their future goals. Peer assessment and discussion sessions enhance the realistic placement of scenarios within one's life situation.

## Outcomes

Future stories provide a structured and creative way to deal with uncertainty and change. They help the client visualize various possible future scenarios, increasing adaptability and preparedness for unexpected situations. They develop strategic thinking and long-term planning, enabling the client to set realistic and achievable goals. Additionally, they promote self-awareness and reflection skills, which are essential for personal and professional growth.

## 5.5 Inclusive Digital Career Guidance: Accessibility Map

### Description

The Accessibility Map is a tool that helps career guidance counsellors and learners create inclusive, accessible, and interactive online career guidance sessions, taking into account linguistic, pedagogical, technological, economic, and social aspects. This promotes equal learning opportunities and active participation for all students.

### Task 1: Orientation

Familiarize yourself with accessible design for career guidance and accessibility strategies and criteria (Fennelly-Atkinson et al., 2022; Lomellini et al., 2022), where online learning management, design-focused work, and collaboration are key.

### Key Principles:

- Accessibility often refers to technology.
- Online training and courses should be designed to be accessible to those facing the most challenges in learning. Accessibility-focused design also works well for fast and skilled learners.
- Dimensions of accessibility in online career guidance, such as:
  - Linguistic
  - Pedagogical
  - Technological
  - Economic
  - Social

### Inclusive Design: Building Interaction in Technology-Mediated Career Guidance

- What learning environment do you use?
- What devices and tools does the organization have available?
- What do the learners have?
- What are the data security requirements?
- How accessible are the tools?
- How is interaction designed?



- In what situations does interaction occur?
- What are the requirements for good online interaction?
- What is the goal of the interaction?
- What methods are used to build interactive situations?
- How should the design be to ensure that interactive situations are possible and lead to the desired outcome?

### Online Career Guidance Session

- Introduction and opening (how the career guidance session progresses)
- Creating context (the client's situation at the start of the career guidance)
- Goal of career guidance (client's objectives: study, learning, study or career planning, employment)
- Problems
- Questions
- Reflection
- Information search and construction
- Deepening knowledge
- Reflecting on results (what was done and agreed upon in the career guidance session)
- Agreeing on follow-up actions

### Task 2

Evaluate your competencies in inclusive digital career guidance first by yourself and then with a peer using the Accessibility Map across the following dimensions:

#### **1. Linguistic Accessibility**

Provide materials in plain language and different languages. Use simple and clear language. Utilize automatic translation tools and subtitles.

#### **2. Pedagogical Accessibility**

Use diverse teaching methods such as videos, audio, images, and text. Create opportunities for active participation and provide regular feedback.

#### **3. Technological Accessibility**

Choose digital tools and applications that are accessible to all users. Identify users' habits. Ensure that tools work on different devices and browsers.

#### **4. Economic Accessibility**

Offer free or affordable resources and materials. Provide information about possible financial support for students.

#### **5. Social Accessibility**

Ensure all students feel welcome and valued. Promote community and networking among students.

Select a learning environment that supports the above accessibility dimensions.

### Evaluation

Assess your competencies using the DigiComp Edu Self-Reflection Tool (especially page 18).  
[https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu\\_en](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcompedu_en)

### Outcomes

The tool has helped counsellors and learners design and implement accessible and inclusive online career guidance sessions that take into account different learning needs and challenges.

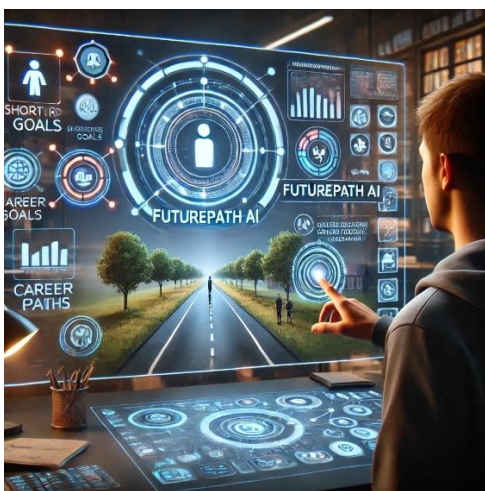
## 5.6 Digital Career Guidance Tool: FuturePath AI

### Description: AI-Assisted Personalized Career Guidance

Users set concrete short- and long-term goals and plan the steps to achieve them. The plan is visualized using AI. Users can create and visualize various career paths and their possible outcomes. The tool uses different formats such as text, videos, audio, and interactive tasks, which are suitable for different clients.

### Task: Creating Future Scenarios with AI

Users can create and visualize various career paths and future scenarios by writing a career story as a prompt. This helps in understanding possible career options and their impacts. Visualization can be achieved, for example, by writing a prompt for tools like Luma Dream Machine, Invideo AI, or Video Maker.



### Evaluation

Evaluate how well the user can set concrete goals and plan the steps to achieve them using the tool. Evaluate how effectively the user utilizes different formats (text, video, audio, interactive tasks) in the career guidance process. Assess how well the tool suits different users and adapts to their needs.

### Outcomes

The tool provides various content formats (text, video, audio, interactive tasks) that support career guidance. Users gain a better understanding of career options and their potential impact on the future. The tool adapts to

the individual needs of the user and guides them towards their goals.

## 5.7 Perspectives on Career Guidance for People with Disabilities in Ireland

In Ireland, people with disabilities can access career guidance and employment opportunities in several ways. Third-level career services offer career guidance, and many employers have developed special programs to hire people with disabilities. Additionally, there are several organizations, such as Employers for Change, the Supported Employability Programme, the Irish Wheelchair Association, and Vision Ireland, that support people with disabilities. For example, the Irish Wheelchair Association provides opportunities for wheelchair users to gain work placements and employment in companies that collaborate with the association and train employers on how to support the needs of employees who use wheelchairs. Vision Ireland assists visually impaired individuals in finding employment by offering starter packs, workshops, training for employers, and connecting job seekers with employers.

Universal Design for Learning is a tool used in Ireland that can complement career guidance for people with disabilities. This approach includes three principles:

1. **Multiple Means of Engagement:** Employers and career counsellors engage with job seekers with disabilities in various ways, such as by phone, email, Zoom calls, and career fairs. Face-to-face events are suitable for individuals with, for example, dyslexia, while online and digital events are better suited for those with physical disabilities or who need assistive technologies to access information. The accessibility of events and career guidance improves when individuals with disabilities are asked in advance about their needs and preferences for receiving information and engaging in interaction.
2. **Multiple Means of Representation:** Employers should represent employees with disabilities in their marketing materials and highlight initiatives that support the employment of people with disabilities. Many employers collaborate with the AHEAD organization to offer customized work experiences that provide reasonable accommodations, such as removing psychometric testing from the application process or allowing extra time during interviews. Visibility of people with disabilities fosters an inclusive environment and encourages them to apply to these organizations.
3. **Options for Demonstrating Learning:** It is important to provide students and employees with disabilities with various ways to demonstrate their learning and skills. For example, a person with dyslexia might create a visual representation instead of writing, or another might use Lego blocks or draw a map of their career goals. Employers and career counsellors should ask individuals with disabilities which method suits them best and how they would prefer to be assessed, such as through a presentation or a written report.

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- [Employability Ireland](#)
- [Employers for change](#)
- [Innokylä: Future Stories](#)
- [The Irish Wheelchair Association Employment training](#)
- [Materials for career planning and growth](#)
- [Vision Ireland](#)

