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# ***CROSS-COUNTRY SURVEY ON SOFT SKILLS REQUIRED BY COMPANIES TO MEDIUM/HIGH SKILLED MIGRANTS***

## ***Methodological approach for a common framework of Soft Skills at work***

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*Torino, December 2015*

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*The list of the organizations participating in the survey is included in Annex A.1.*

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## ACRONYMS USED

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ALMP	Active labour market policy(ies)
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational training
CAPI	Computer-assisted face-to-face interview
CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interview
CVET	Continuing Education and Training
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
EQF	European Qualification Framework (European Union)
ESCO	European skills, competences and occupation taxonomy
ETF	European Training Foundation
HR	Human resources
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education (UNESCO)
IT	Information technology
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
MHS	Medium-high skilled
MOSSA	Model of Soft Skills Assessment
MOSSE	Model of Soft Skills Empowerment
MOSP	Model of Promotion and Self Promotion
NVC	Non-verbal communication
R&D	Research and Development
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized companies
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VC	Verbal communication
VHSM	Valorise High Skill Management

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## FOREWORD

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This survey was developed during the implementation of the first step of VHSM project and it is the result of a working methodology developed, shared and tested by the project partners in each area involved: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden.

A former desk research was carried out to understand how existing literature, past and present projects and good practices might offer a starting point to guide our work. A further field research was done in each partner country through inquiries to local stakeholders, both companies and bodies working to match offer and demand of labour. The aim of the research was to identify the soft skills mostly requested by European companies while recruiting and hiring medium/high skilled human resources.

Since VHSM is purposely focused on migrants, our research methodology was conducted on two levels:

- firstly we tried to detect those soft skills which enterprises generally consider as unavoidable for a successful participation in work;
- secondly we tried to understand if there are any soft skills which are specifically requested to immigrants wherever they come from (EU or non-EU countries).

As a preliminary step to conduct this research, it was necessary to define a common ground to set up a system of comparable data among the target countries, both on socio-economic context and existing experiences.

The main difficulty concerned the **definition of “immigrant”**, which may vary from country to country according to different nationality laws and procedures how citizenship may be acquired.

Another difficulty was related to the **lack of a global consensus on terminology** about **soft skills**: their definition is context-based and also in this case we incur different meanings in different countries. So, first of all, we developed a shared glossary of soft skills requested to medium/high skilled people, as a basis for a further survey on the field.

The whole methodology which we followed consisted in five steps.

### First step - Preliminary desk research on:

- previous works done and projects developed by VHSM partners
- existing bibliography, literature and survey on soft skills, although not specifically focused on the project target group of migrants, e.g.: EQF, ESCO European Skills, competences, qualification and occupations, European framework of key competences, core skills for work identified by other countries, etc.

### Second step – Methodology development

- drafting a methodological pathway to carry out a cross-country survey on soft skills.

### Third step – Cross-country networking

- organization of cross-country working sessions in Torino to validate the proposed methodology, define a common ground and shared tools. We agreed on a shared glossary of 21 soft skills related to medium/high skilled people. This document represented a common ground to avoid misunderstandings or incomprehension during the following phase of the field research.

### Fourth step – Field research

- Organization of interviews to relevant stakeholders such as enterprises, employment agencies, career centres, employers' associations. 77 bodies involved in assessment, recruitment, hiring and training were interviewed, either companies, or other stakeholders. The interviews were structured on the basis of a common questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed in English and translated into Bulgarian, French, German, Italian and Swedish.

### Fifth phase: Data analysis

- Making analysis and interpretation of data gathered through the interviews and identification of the soft skills mostly requested by companies when hiring new human resources.
- define a common ground and shared tools. We agreed on a shared glossary of 21 soft skills related to medium/high skilled people. This document represented a common ground to avoid misunderstandings or incomprehension during the following phase of the field research.

The proposed methodology may be replied wherever, taking the precautions to adapt it to the specific context.

This handbook is composed of three parts:

**Part one** describes the literature and terms used, as well as reasons behind the developing of our common framework on soft skills.

**Part two** is specifically devoted to the enquiry: development of the questionnaire, conduction of interviews in all project countries, analysis and interpretation of gathered data.

**Part three** contains the definitive list of the soft skills (**Top 12 Soft Skills**) which are most frequently requested on the labour market. This list represents the common framework of Soft Skills required by companies to medium/high skilled migrants.

The English version of the tools used in the survey are included in the **Annex A** of this handbook. The translated versions in Bulgarian, French, German, Italian and Swedish are available on a separate report: **Tools used for the survey. Annex to the Cross-country Survey on Soft Skills**.

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## PART ONE

### A COMMON AND SHARED DEFINITION OF SOFT SKILLS FOR MEDIUM-HIGH SKILLED WORKERS

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#### 1.1. Which is VHSM target group?

VHSM has its origins at European level in the observation that soft skills represent an added value for company competitiveness and, at the same time, they are a factor encouraging the employability of persons looking for a job, especially the ones with medium-high profiles. The project targets are medium and high-skilled migrants.

VHSM focuses on immigrants, both EU and non-EU, as the conditioning of cultural elements and/or emergency situations due to their migration experience make the enhancement of their skills more difficult. In spite of the fact that the issue concerns all human resources and thus all firms in every context, it is clear enough that migrants are more affected as most of them fail to find a job coherent with their qualifications. One of the reasons is that they are not always able to present themselves in the right way. VHSM aims at providing migrants with methods and tools to assess, develop and valorize their soft skills so as to empower them in job search.

The status of foreigner varies from country to country, depending on local nationality law, which may be based on *jus soli*<sup>1</sup>, *jus sanguinis*<sup>2</sup>, or on a combination of the two (as it happens in most countries). There is not even a universally recognized statistical definition across the academic literature. Three following definitions are commonly used to define who a migrant is<sup>3</sup>:

- Someone born in a country other than his/her country of residence (this definition is objective, but it classifies as migrants individuals who are nationals of the country where they live, in spite of being born abroad, e.g. children born to expatriates)
- Someone who has a nationality other than the one of the country where s/he lives (it excludes either nationals born abroad, or people having recently changed their country of residence and acquired the nationality of their new home country)
- Someone who changes his/her country of usual residence for a period of at least one year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the country of usual residence (this is the UN recommended definition; it is somewhat arbitrary as people's intentions regarding their length of stay in a country are subject to change)

Considering the above, it was decided to use a broad-based definition of immigrant within the present project, including either people born in a country other than their current resident area, or people born in the country where they reside by newly nationalized immigrant parents.

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<sup>1</sup> *Jus soli*, i.e. the right of soil, is the principle by which country's nationality is acquired by birth in a country territorial jurisdiction.

<sup>2</sup> *Jus sanguinis*, i.e. the right of blood, is the principle by which a child acquires the nationality of his/her parents wherever s/he was born.

<sup>3</sup> Hawkins Oliver (2015), *Migration statistics*, House of Commons Library (available on: [www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn06077.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn06077.pdf)).

### VHSM definition of immigrant

In this research we defined “**migrant**” or “**immigrant**” people falling into at least one of the following categories:

- **non-EU citizens,**
- **new EU citizens/EU citizens** moving from one country to another (for any period of time), because they may suffer from competitive disadvantages on the labour market,
- **first or second generation of immigrants** (e.g. children of immigrants, educated, bilingual, with a knowledge of each culture, who are cultural mediators from birth), even if they may have acquired the citizenship of the country where they live. Since the labour market tends to assimilate them to immigrants, they may suffer from labour discrimination.

☞ **High skilled immigrants, either unemployed or under-employed** (e.g. graduated women working as old people caregivers) are considered as VHSM target if one of the above conditions is met.

The immigrants included in VHSM target group, are **those with a medium or high profile**. So we wondered how to define a MHS immigrant worker. Generally “*migrants are perceived as highly skilled when they have at least tertiary education, but other definitions are possible, notably on the basis of the occupation in which they are employed*” or “*by means of wages paid with the highly skilled consisting in persons earning above a threshold value*”<sup>4</sup>.

From an educational perspective a person is generally considered as “highly skilled” if s/he has post-secondary education at a university level but s/he may have been involved in a vocational, technical or professional qualification of shorter duration than a bachelor’s degree (e.g. the Higher Technical Education and Training pathways). However educational attainment is not the only criterion to identify highly skilled human resources. Other criteria refer to wages as indicators of the skill level: they are more empirical but also more complicated. Moreover both education and wage indicators may be good enough when referred to hard skills, but they may be imperfect when referred to soft ones: an engineer surely is highly educated but s/he may lack communication skills while at work interpersonal skills may be not highly rewarded in terms of wages.

Another aspect to be considered is that the effective increasing importance given by employers to soft skills makes it difficult to decide whether a job is low or high-skilled; it is clearly enough that many jobs, like those in the care sector, require high communication and problem solving skills but relatively low qualifications. For this reason some countries have specific skilled job lists; as an example in Australia immigrants applying to the General Skilled Migration Programme must have an occupation according to a specific Skilled Occupation List and must have a qualification which generally corresponds at least to a local post-secondary diploma. Other countries’ lists of skilled

<sup>4</sup> OECD, Jonathan Chaloff, Georges Lemaître, *Managing highly Skilled Labour Migration. A comparative analysis of migration policies and challenges in OECD countries*, Social Employment and Migration Working Paper no. 79, 2009.



occupations include jobs which do not require university degree. So, considering the above, for the purpose of this document, we defined the target of **medium-highly skilled (MHS) immigrants** on the basis of both educational and occupation perspective.

#### VHSM definition of MHS immigrant worker

- From an educational perspective **medium skilled immigrants** are those having at least a 4 EQF level or 3 ISCED level (high-school diploma); **highly skilled** are those having at least a tertiary education (at least 6 EQF or 5 ISCED)
- From an occupation perspective medium-highly skilled immigrants are those resulting to be:
  - **Skilled** (or medium skilled) when they are able to work efficiently, exercise considerable autonomy and independent judgment, discharging their duties with responsibility.
  - **Highly skilled** when, besides working efficiently in autonomy, with independent judgment and taking their responsibilities, they are able to efficiently supervise the work of other skilled employees.

Ref: EQF<sup>5</sup> and ISCED<sup>6</sup> levels.

Statistical analysis<sup>7</sup> of European labour market underpin that the employment gap for high-skill migrants is relatively consistent and that the difference between the employment rates of tertiary-educated migrants and tertiary-educated non-migrants is larger than the gap existing between migrants and natives within any other qualification group, which shows a lack of inclusivity in the high-skill jobs market.

## 1.2. What are soft skills?

**Skills** are one of the four pillars of **Competency**. Competences can be defined as a set of inborn and acquired personal characteristics, attitudes, knowledge and skills leading to high-quality performance.<sup>8</sup>

So competences are composed by:

- **Personal characteristics:** they represent the qualities of an individual such as talent, mental, physical features, etc. and vary from individual to individual. Such differences can be strengthened by further accumulation of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

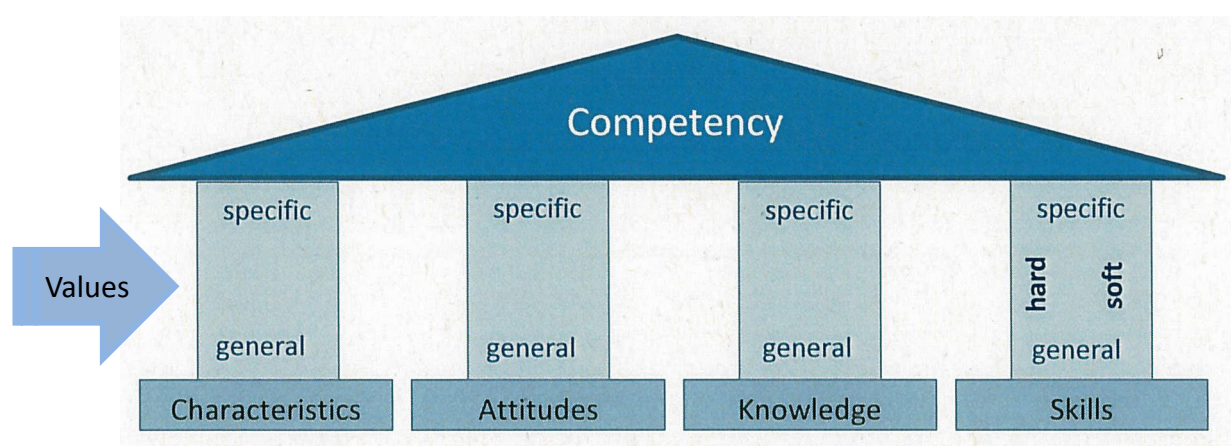
<sup>5</sup> European Qualification Framework (1-8 levels): <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page>.

<sup>6</sup> International Standard Classification of Education (1-6 levels): <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/iscd-2011-en.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Stirling Alfie (2015), *Migrant employment outcomes in European labour markets*, Report, Institute for Public Policy Research.

<sup>8</sup> This definition is in line with *The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework*, Luxembourg Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.

- **Attitudes:** they are a stable, long-lasting and learnt predisposition to respond to internal or external factors. They are based on a person's beliefs (cognitive aspect), feelings (affective aspect) and intentions (conative aspect).
- **Knowledge:** is the set of information acquired by an individual through learning or experience. It is influenced by the context and groups' culture. It can be divided into declarative knowledge (know-that) and procedural knowledge (know-how).
- **Skills:** they are the ability to act both on cognitive and practical levels. Skills can be seen as the outcome of learning, knowledge, attitudes and experiences. They represent an acquired mode of behavior which is influenced by internal and external motivation, being related to the innate talent and characteristics of a person.



Source: EC, Transferability of skills across Economic Sectors

Competences (and thus skills) are strongly influenced by values, that is to say beliefs and ideals shared by the members of a culture about what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Values have major influence on a person's behavior and attitude and serve as broad guidelines in all situations. Inside an organization values can also be expressed in terms of work ethics.

As far as skills are concerned, they may be **specific** (those which increase the value of a person only within a specific task or sector/company) or **general** (those which increase the value of a person across the labour market and private life). While CVET agencies, institutions and policy-makers work with a distinction between specific and general (or generic) skills, employers are more inclined to distinguish between hard and soft skills.

**Hard skills** are strictly job-specific, closely connected with knowledge, easily observed, measured and trained. They constitute the core occupational requirements of a job.

**Soft skills** are non-job specific, closely connected with personal attitudes which are intangible. This makes them more difficult to be quantified and developed.

Unfortunately there is no global consensus in the terminology to be used to indicate such skills and there is no generally accepted skills taxonomy. A large variety of names are often used as

synonymous of soft skills, such as: Generic Skills, Essential Skills, Skills for Life or Basic Skills<sup>9</sup>, People Skills, Key Skills/Competences<sup>10</sup>, Employability Skills, Core Skills, Transversal Skills<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover the distinction between hard and soft is not always so easy because the perception of what a soft skill is may vary from context to context: a skill may be considered as soft in a specific sector or working area but it may be considered hard in another one, for instance cultural awareness might be just useful for a chemist, but it is absolutely a must for a HR manager in multi-cultural societies.

So, in order to avoid misunderstanding or different interpretations, we took into consideration the definition proposed by Cedefop<sup>12</sup> in a wider extend in order to include, besides personal and communication competences, all those attitudes and behaviours which lead to achieve results in a working place, i.e. management competences.

**Soft skills** are a set of **non-technical skills and knowledge** that underpin **successful participation in work**. They are non-job specific and closely connected with **personal attributes** and **attitudes** (confidence, discipline, self-management...), **social** (communication, team working, emotional intelligence..) and **management abilities** (time keeping, problem solving, critical thinking...). Due to a certain level of intangibility, some of them are rather difficult to be quantified and developed.

Within VHSM we refer to the category of **soft skills**, as to the afore mentioned definition and description.

In the present project we do not refer to soft skills as a synonymous of “key competences” or “essential skills”. As a matter of fact these ones include some “basic skills” or “skills for life” which properly refer to language, literacy, numeracy (LLN) and IT. Such basic skills must be distinguished from soft skills. Apart from the fact that their acquisition is a *sine qua non* for being employable and being an active citizen, VHSM project is focused on MHS migrants who have full mastery of basic skills.

**Soft Skills** are apart from **Basic Skills** (literacy, numeracy, language, ICT).

Moreover we do not consider “transferable skills” as a synonymous for soft skills as if hard skills were not transferable at all. As a matter of fact all skills, both soft and hard, may be transferred from company to company, sector to sector, country to country; what makes them different is their

<sup>9</sup> Basic skills include LLN (language, literacy and numeracy) and IT.

<sup>10</sup> The name of “key competences” was used by the European Parliament and Council in their December 2006 Recommendations to the Commission. The final document issued by the Commission, the European Framework for Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning, gathers 8 key competences, which are a mix of soft skills and basic skills such as numeracy and literacy.

<sup>11</sup> ESCO (European Skills, Competencies and Occupations Taxonomy) uses “transversal skills” as a synonym for soft skills.

<sup>12</sup> Soft skills are **cross-cutting** across **jobs** and **sectors** and relate to **personal competences** (confidence, discipline, self-management) and **social competences** (teamwork, communication, emotional intelligence), Cedefop glossary (<http://euskills panorama.cedefop.europa.eu/Glossary/>).

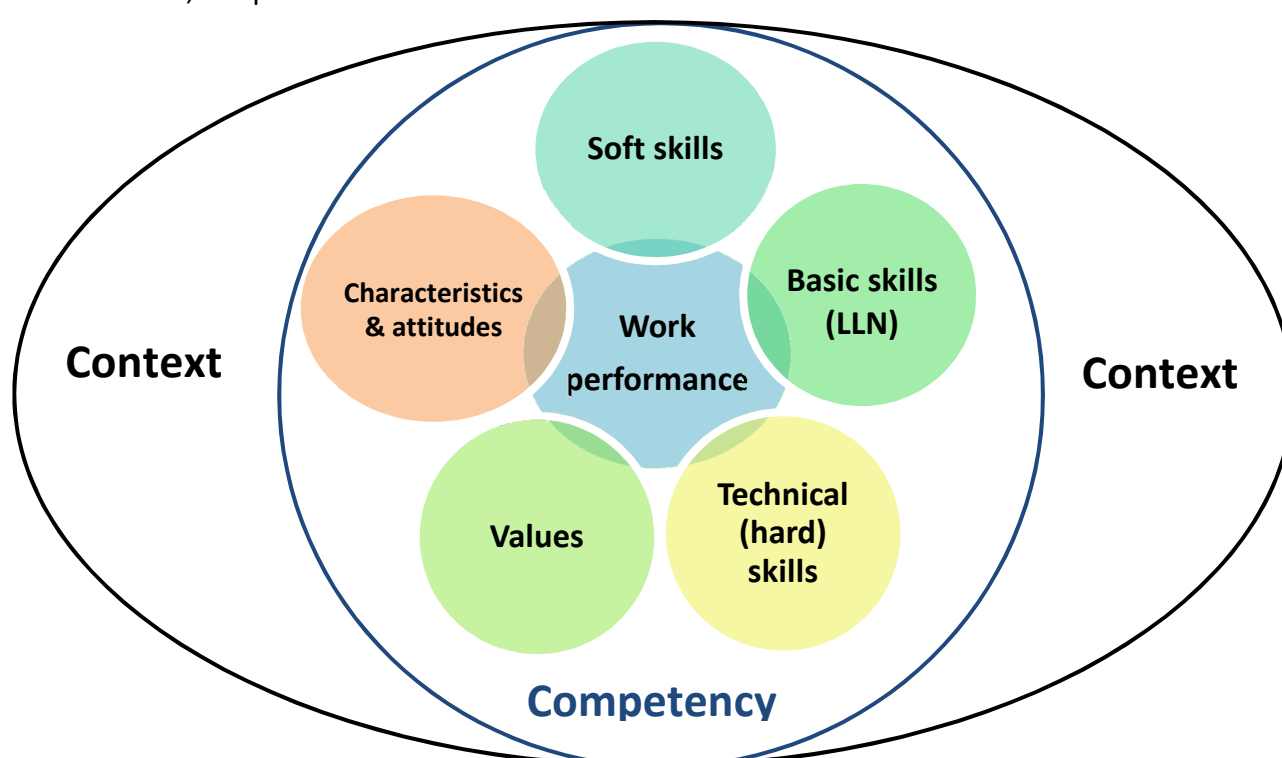
level of transferability: of course hard skills have a lower level of transferability compared to the soft ones.

**Soft Skills and Transferable Skills** do not coincide (also hard skills may be transferable)

In conclusion soft skills contribute to work performance in combination with technical or hard skills and knowledge, basic skills (language, literacy and numeracy) and personal values.

Hard skills, which are mainly proved by academic certificates, seem to be rated as being of less direct relevance to companies. Employers tend to place more importance on the candidates' personal qualities and attitudes (soft skills) which cannot be recognized and validated by conventional diplomas or certificates. Human resources are generally expected to show personal responsibility, flexibility, adaptability, innovation and creativity, entrepreneurship qualities besides self-directed and self-motivated attitudes.

Work performance is also influenced by personal values and external factors related to the context where the skills are applied. For example an employee may have highly developed decision-making skills, but if s/he is not given the necessary autonomy to exert it or her/his job role does not require such skill, the performance related to this skill is low.



Being aware of the complexity of the competency, which is at the basis of work performance, VHSM is focused only on **soft skills**. The main aim is to detect the soft skills which are considered by employers as a requisite for a successful work performance, with a special concern to the recruitment of MHS workforce and immigrant workforce.

How to consider the knowledge of **foreign languages** (reading, writing, speaking and comprehension) and the knowledge and use of **IT** (ECDL, use of software, e-mail, social network,

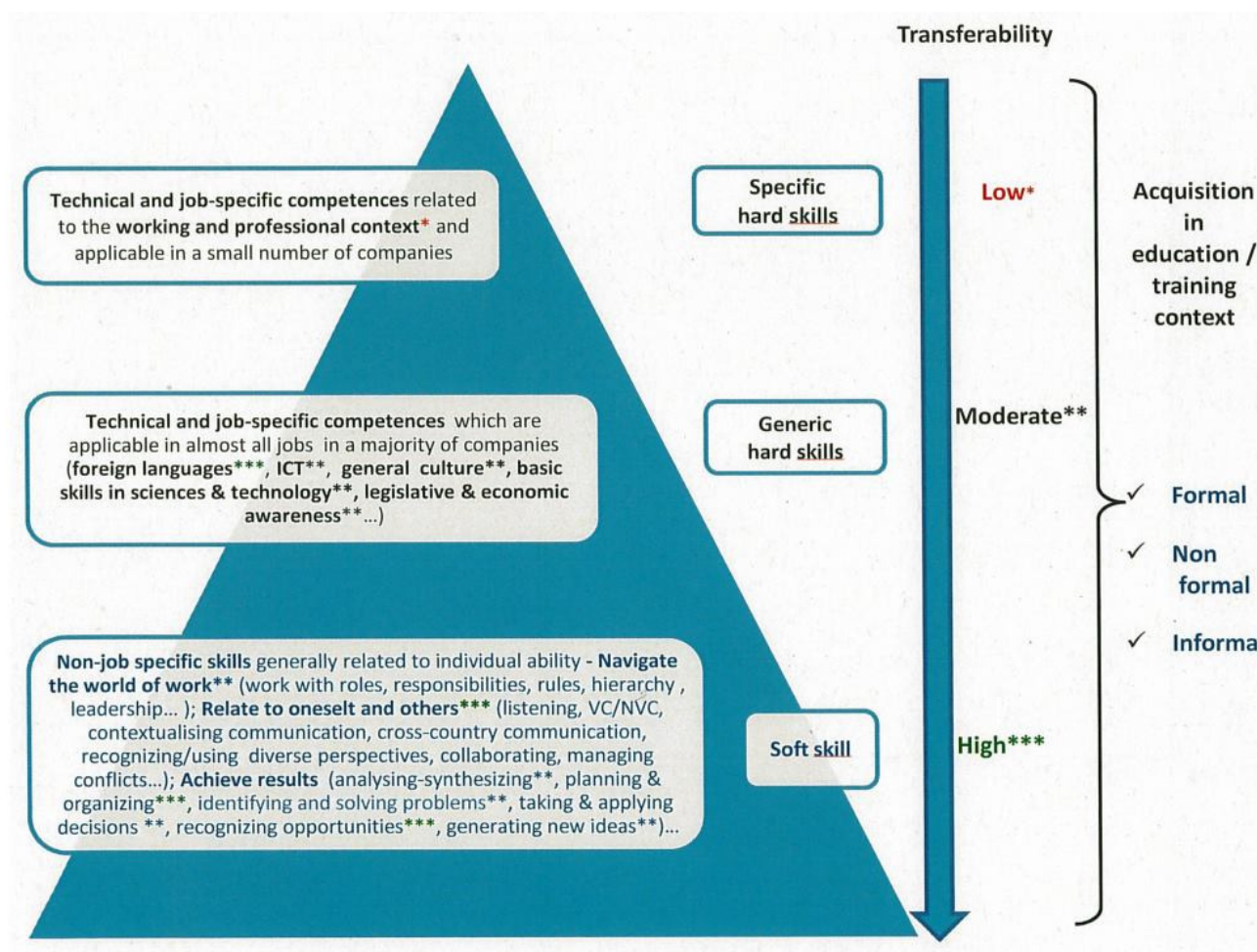
etc.)? Being essentially classified as basic or essential skills, they are not included in VHSM survey. On the contrary the survey includes the following ones among soft skills:

- **Cross-cultural communication** (ability to manage intercultural understanding and communication; awareness and sensitivity of other practices and cultures). Immigrants generally learn such skills going through their life experiences.
- **Managing the digital process** (ability to connect to other people, get information by digital systems, work with netiquette, manage risks associated with on-line environments, understand opportunities deriving from digital technology)

### 1.3. The transferability of soft skills

As already mentioned before, all skills are in principle transferable from company to company and sector to sector.

For this reason rather than distinguishing between transferable and non-transferable skills, it makes more sense to speak about the transferability level of skills. As a matter of fact transferability is not a discrete, but a continuous variable. The more general the skill is, the more transferable it is and vice versa. Soft skills have a medium-high level of transferability.



Source: own elaboration from *Transferability of skills across economic sectors: role and importance for employment at European level*, DG Employment, EU Commission, 2011.



The employability of a person is based on specific skills (hard skills, knowledge, experiences) but soft skills support it and they often make the difference. Being multi-skilled is undoubtedly an advantage for any jobseeker, either native or foreigner. So soft skills, ranging from social skills to problem solving, taking decision, achieving results, etc. are extremely important to maintain a job or to find a new one. Therefore individuals should invest in their soft skill development, besides the hard ones, in order to improve their employability level. As everyone is fully responsible for one's employability, a strong personal commitment on the topic is required.

Workers and employees are very likely to invest in soft skills, which result in an increase in their employability in other roles or companies. On the contrary they seem less interested in investing in acquiring hard skills which have a more narrow application (in case of leaving the company these skills might become useless). Instead for employers the opposite applies: enhancing their workforce's soft skills may increase the risk of losing the employees, while investing in acquisition of hard skills ties the employees more closely with the company. For this reason normally enterprises prefer to invest money in training their workforce on specific skills<sup>13</sup>, but when recruiting new workforces they mostly appreciate those candidates who prove strong soft skills. So a jobseeker has more opportunity to find a job if s/he is multi-skilled and endowed with a wide range of soft skills.

#### 1.4. The strategic role of soft skills in the world of work.

In 2008<sup>14</sup> Cedefop pointed out that modern organizations seemed to attach more value to "soft skills" than in the past (e.g. teamwork, interpersonal communication, initiative, creativity, entrepreneurship, leadership and management, presentation skills, ability to learn). In today's workplace the need for soft skills is widely considered as vital because of globalization, virtual offices, technology and increasing society diversity (in age, gender, education, ethnicity...). This happens not only in multinationals and big corporation, but also in SMEs. It is beyond doubt that global corporations recognize the crucial importance of soft skills as they hunt for talent worldwide, but also SMEs require these skills, being aware that their success and competitiveness is driven by a right mix of hard and soft skills: definitely technical competences and professional qualifications are important, but converting proficiency into economic output requires soft skills such as problem solving, motivation, flexibility, team working.

Why are soft skills so important to keep high level of employability? Because these are the skills that an individual uses to interact with, interpret or inform social and physical environments (Costin, 2002)<sup>15</sup>. Employers look for employees who are not simply able to do the specific job they apply for, but who do it better than others. In a certain way soft skills represent the working style of a person (the way in which s/he carries out the tasks assigned). It is the personal style which makes any person unique, in spite of they have same knowledges and qualifications (hard skills).

Moreover soft skills are strategic, not only because they can be applied in many different types of jobs, but also because they can empower persons (if aware of their own competences) to promote

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<sup>13</sup> This behavior is also confirmed by VHSM survey (see par. 2.2.2).

<sup>14</sup> CEDEFOP, *Skill mismatch, Research paper no 21, 2012.*

<sup>15</sup> Costin, G. *Legitimate Subjective Observation and the Evaluation of SoftSkills in the Workplace, a Concurrent Session Briefing Paper*, Albany Convention, Centre and Performing Arts Centre, 2002.

themselves in a proper way to find better jobs and positively contribute to the working organizations.

It is not surprising why soft skills are also sometimes referred to as employability skills (or core/key skills). Employers want assurances that people *“applying for jobs ... can deploy their knowledge to solve problems, take the initiative and communicate with team members, rather than just follow prescribed routines. These skills are not taught from a textbook, but can be acquired through good quality education. Yet employers often indicate that these skills are lacking in new recruits to the labour market”*<sup>16</sup>.

On labour market hard skills are considered as a pre-requisite to get a job interview, but jobseekers need soft skills to get (and then keep) the job. As a matter of fact employers want to hire workers/employees who will “fit in” to the workplace. So when the job seeker faces the interview, the employer has generally already verified his/her hard skills (through his/her application, CV or a specific test); most of the time of the interview process is about determining whether s/he will be a good fit for the organization, which means that the focus will be on his/her soft skills.

This applies in every country to both native and immigrants as well, but it is even more critical for newcomers since soft skills tend to be culturally specific. Immigrants tend to emphasize their hard skills, even deciding to go back to school to get local degrees and qualifications, thus keep developing their hard skills, without realizing what a big barrier their lack of soft skills may be in their search of employ.

The **lack of Soft Skills** may be a **big obstacle for migrant job seekers**, which tends to be underestimated.

Employers use a variety of recruitment techniques to assess applicants’ soft skills: from interviews to trial periods. Although not always explicitly stated, they generally have a recruitment framework which incorporates a mixture of skills, qualifications, work experience and personal qualities, the mix of which is tailored to reflect the job’s competencies and requirements.

The experience shows us that the key questions (mainly implicit) employers need to answer, during the recruitment process, are the following ones:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of person are you? (“Tell me about yourself”)</li> <li>• Which working style have you got?</li> <li>• What kind of problems would you be able to solve within my company?</li> </ul>	<p>These questions are related to identify the candidate’s <b>SOFT SKILLS</b>.</p>	<p>This issue is a top interest for the company</p>
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<sup>16</sup> UNESCO ( 2012), Youth and skills: putting education to work, EFA (Education for All), Global Monitoring Report 2012, Paris, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002180/218003e.pdf>, p. 30.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can you do?</li> <li>• Which experiences did you do in the past?</li> <li>• Where did you work before (if you did)?</li> </ul>	These questions are related to identify the candidate's <b>HARD SKILLS</b>	This issue is important for the company
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you know?</li> <li>• Which studies did you accomplish?</li> </ul>	These questions are related to identify the candidate's <b>KNOWLEDGE</b>	This issue is the least interesting for the company

The practical experience remind us that SME recruiters (which are normally entrepreneurs or top manager) are heavily interested in the above first section of questions that are related to soft skills owned by the candidate. So soft skills are the real field where candidates truly compete to acquire the position. Employers know that when employees lack basic soft skills, it can hurt the overall success of the organization. Moreover, contrary to hard skills, which may be easily developed on the job, employees are supposed to enter an organization already in possession of the right mix of required soft skills. So a candidate with the right hard skills but poor soft ones may be considered as not able enough to learn the soft skills required quickly; on the contrary a candidate with a good range of soft skills is generally supposed to have the potential to acquire any hard skills s/he may lack.

So soft skills, thanks also to their medium-high level of transferability, make the differences between one jobseeker and another one. Unfortunately during the job interview candidates generally put a great deal of effort into narrating their educational background and knowledge, which appears to be the least interesting aspect for the company, especially if this is a SME.

Last but not least the recruitment activity in SMEs is generally based on informal channels and personal networks. Most companies with less than 50 workers generally use the *word of mouth*: their first way of recruitment is represented by both informal and professional networks (the so called weak ties). This is confirmed also by the present survey. So individuals who are good at creating enlarged social networks have more chances to get job interviews; this capability implies high social skills, indeed. So "immigrant's social networks may play a vital role in securing employment".<sup>17</sup>

## 1.5. Immigrants and skills

In searching a job, the most vulnerable target groups are:

- **women** (mainly the ones which have been absent from work for a while) and **older people**: (they may need up skilling of obsolete skills and reskilling for new jobs. Being over 45 may be already considered "old" on the labour market, depending of course on positions requested and fields of activities)

<sup>17</sup> Reyneri E., Fullin G., (2010), "Labour Market Penalties of New Immigrants in New and Old Receiving West European Countries", in *International Migration*, vol. 49.



- **first jobseekers** who need to enter the labour market for the first time: they lack job specific skills and useful networks
- **migrants:** they may lack language skills or intercultural skills (not mastering the right V/NV communication codes of the host country) and may not have useful *weak ties* networks to facilitate entry into long-term employment. Finally they encounter problems in having their education qualifications recognized and validated in most EU countries. As a consequence they risk neither their soft or hard skills are recognized. If a migrant belongs to one of the previous categories, needless to say, the risk not to find a job or a proper job raises.

VHSM is focused on immigrants (both EU and non-EU) who are more frequently unemployed or under-employed than the native population (often holding insecure and/or badly paid jobs). There is not only the barrier of high costs and bureaucratic impediments for the recognition and validation of qualifications and certificates achieved abroad, but other “cultural” aspects are involved. The human capital theory (which refers to the individual’s endowment of knowledge, skills, abilities and job experiences) well explains the disadvantages which immigrants face in the labour market. Since the human capital is often country-specific and not a perfectly portable resource, it may be extremely difficult for migrants to transfer and adapt the educational and cultural credentials accumulated in their origin country to labour demand of the receiving country<sup>18</sup>. So migrants risk from being evaluated only for their language proficiency, while their other skills, especially the soft ones, go unexplored. Definitely among them the risk of skills under-utilization<sup>19</sup> is rather high. This phenomenon is loosely related to the fact that they have achieved education at a level higher than needed to get the job they are doing (so called “over-education”).

The lack of recognition and appreciation of their competences, besides being a dilemma for those affected, represents also a loss for the economy of their adopted countries.

### 1.6. Towards a classification of Soft skills

After a deep and wide research on a variety of models, tools and skills framework developed in EU and non-EU countries and, taking into consideration the past experiences done by VHSM partners and information collected by European employers, we proposed a framework of **21 soft skills** to be used and tested within the project. Among others, there is a document issued by the Australian Government which has particularly inspired the development of our framework, thanks to its business-oriented approach<sup>20</sup>.

Three categories of Skills (Skill Clusters) were considered, each of them splitting up into a certain number of micro-skills:

#### Cluster A. Navigating the world of work

- A.1. Identifying work goals
- A.2. Learning to learn
- A.3. Adaptability and flexibility

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<sup>18</sup> Reyneri E., Fullin G., (2010).

<sup>19</sup> Skills under-utilization: it occurs when a worker has work-related skills not used (or used at too low a level) in the job. It is the opposite case of skill gap, when an employees' competence to do the job is called into question.

<sup>20</sup> Dept. of Industry and Innovation, Dept. of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Core Skills for Work Development Framework*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2003.

- A.4. Motivation
- A.5. Recognizing and applying work protocols and values
- A.6. Respecting hierarchical levels and rules
- A.7. Managing responsibilities
- A.8. Time management
- A.9. Managing the digital process (not related to the knowledge and use of SW packages or office automation)

### Cluster B. Social skills

- B.1. Communication skills
- B.2. Managing the communication circle
- B.3. Personal effectiveness skills (stress management)
- B.4. Team working
- B.5. Service skills
- B.6. Leadership
- B.7. Conflict management
- B.8. Cultural awareness (recognizing and using diverse perspectives)

### Cluster C. Achieving results

- C.1. Decision making
- C.2. Problem solving
- C.3. Creativity and innovation
- C.4. Critical and structures thinking

Hereinafter in details the description of each Skill cluster and relevant clues and focus.

### A. Navigate the world of work

This skill area is about developing personal insights into goals, taking control of factors influencing decisions and actions in the workplace as well as personal career, identifying pathways and developing career plans.

A.1. Identifying work goals	Ability to take decision about how, when, where to work, developing personal insights into goals
A.2. Learning to learn	Attitude to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• curiosity (questioning, looking for information);</li> <li>• pursue and organize one's own learning according to one's needs (responsibility for one's own learning and self-development)</li> <li>• be aware of opportunities</li> </ul>
A.3. Adaptability and flexibility	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept changes as a new challenge,</li> <li>• adapt to the new situations and modify approaches if required by the context</li> </ul>
A.4. Motivation	Attitude to be energetic, enthusiastic and capacity to self-motivate and motivate others

A.5. Recognizing and applying work protocols and values	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize company values, culture and etiquette</li> <li>adapt/act in accordance to places and situations (properly dressed, accepting habits of the work environment, etc.)</li> </ul>
A.6. Respecting hierarchical levels and rules	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand/recognize the organization policies and structures</li> <li>manage work roles, workplace rights/duties, requests and expectations</li> </ul>
A.7. Managing responsibilities	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>check to have understood the task assigned and ask assistance if needed</li> <li>take responsibility for one's own actions without blaming anyone else for something s/he is liable for</li> </ul>
A.8. Time management	Capacity to respect schedules and deadlines and being on time
A.9. Managing the digital process (not related to the knowledge and use of SW packages and office automation)	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>get information using digital systems and technology</li> <li>work with Netiquette;</li> <li>manage risks associated with on line environments;</li> <li>understand the new opportunities and innovation practices which may derive from digital technology</li> </ul>

## B. Social skills

This skill cluster is about using communication effectively and building work-related relations to achieve an outcome within a workgroup. It involves the capacity to understand others and build relations, understanding one's own and others' values, goals, expectations and emotions and make choices taking into account the others' needs and explicit/implicit social rules of the context (such skills imply emotional intelligence). Speaking about newcomers the skill that no jobseeker should be without is local language ability.<sup>21</sup>

B.1. Communication skills	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak clearly and politely to any typology of speakers (heads, colleagues, clients, etc.)</li> <li>Use body language, gesture, tone/pitch of voices properly at different levels and contexts</li> <li>Know which medium to use when communicating at different levels and contexts</li> <li>Present information (also technical ones) clearly and in a style easily understood</li> <li>Understand and interpret data (tables, figures, statistical data) accurately to support one's work effectively</li> </ul>
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<sup>21</sup> Local language knowledge may be also considered as a soft skill (even if it is mostly classified as a core or basic skill) as communication is about more than just grammar and vocabulary: it implies to understand jargons, double meaning, cultural and context aspects, way of greeting and pleasantries, social norms and etiquette. Nonetheless in VHSM, as written in par. 1.2, native language is not strictly considered as a soft skill, but an essential basic skill, then a pre-requisite. No doubt a poor local language performance is a strong barrier for migrants.

B.2. Managing the Communication circle	Ability in active listening, repeating, recollecting, interpreting (paraphrasing), empathy (being aware of others' feelings), giving feedback
B.3. Personal effectiveness and Integrity (stress management)	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain good level of performance when dealing with environmental pressures and difficulties (self-control, resilience, self-control). In details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Show maturity in relation to himself/herself, to others and to the environment;</li> <li>- be aware of one's behavior and how it can affect others and the working climate.</li> <li>- to accept constructive criticism</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
B.4. Team working	Capacity to understand the benefits of working in a team and work in a collaborative style with others to achieve results
B.5. Service skills (understanding of others' needs)	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offer support to others when asked for (empowerment)</li> <li>• identify and respond to client needs (customer orientation)</li> <li>• deal politely with clients problems (customer orientation)</li> </ul>
B.6. Leadership	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lead her/himself first</li> <li>• lead groups of people and make them work for a common goal;</li> <li>• inspire/influence on others, producing an impact</li> <li>• give and receive feedback on good/poor performance and behaviors</li> <li>• delegate to direct subordinates in the team</li> </ul>
B.7. Conflict management	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detect a conflict at an early stage without being afraid of calling it "conflict";</li> <li>• manage a conflict when it arises and understand which conflicts cannot be solved;</li> <li>• mediate, acting in such a way that one's and other's goals will be achieved (win-win approach)</li> </ul>
B.8. Cultural awareness (recognizing and using diverse perspectives)	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize and use diverse perspectives according to different values, beliefs and behaviors of different cultures, by demonstrating respect</li> <li>• take appropriate actions to minimize cultural, gender or other diversity difficulties, actual or perceived</li> </ul>

## C. Achieving results

This skill cluster is about working with a result-oriented approach being keen on continuing development and improving. Since these skills are related to the ability to turn ideas into actions, they belong to the so called “entrepreneurial skills”<sup>22</sup>. The essence of this cluster is tendency towards actions, directed more at task accomplishments than impact on other people.

C.1. Decision making	Capacity to make a choice from a range of possibilities; (also prioritizing actions) and use different decision-making approaches and reflect on the outcomes of decision
C.2. Problem solving	Capacity to find and solve effectively routine and non-routine problems to achieve work goals, as well as to anticipate them and reflect on the outcomes
C.3. Creativity and innovation	Ability to come up with new solutions, approaches, etc. and to think “out of the box”
C.4. Critical and structured thinking	Ability to analyze and valorize information and accept construction criticism

After clustering soft skills, between February and April 2015 the VHSM team ran a qualitative survey aiming at identifying the most important skills demanded by employers (labour demand). The survey involved a multi-stakeholder groups of 77 interviewees: SMEs (employers, HR managers, department managers), public and private bodies involved in CVET and guidance, such as universities, training agencies, career centres, placement agencies, skill assessment centres, employers’ associations, chambers of commerce, etc.

The survey included the **21 soft skills** clustered in the above mentioned three groups (these clusters had been pre-defined from a desk research and then validated during an active working session among the partners, which was carried out in Torino in January 2015).

On the basis of the survey results, and due to the large number of skills, we decided to select the top 4 skills in each cluster and group up those which share similar characteristics or training/assessment methods. This decision was also supported by recent literature. So a definitive list of **12 soft skills** was defined as a basis for the development of further intellectual outputs: MOSSA, MOSSE and MOSP. The list and reasons for the final choice is included in **Part three** of the following report.

<sup>22</sup> EC, EU Skills Panorama (2014), *Entrepreneurial skills Analytical Highlights*, prepared by ICF and Cedefop for the European Commission; OECD (2014), *Job creation and local economic development*, chapter 6 “Building entrepreneurship skills”.

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## PART TWO

### THE ENQUIRY

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#### 2.1. Survey Metodology

The objective of the research was to identify the skills mostly requested by European companies in the recruitment process. A field survey on employers and recruiters was conducted in six countries (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden) to analyze the main recruitment criteria used to select candidates and recruiters' perceptions on the so-called soft skills.

The survey covered two aspects:

- employers' and recruiters' perceptions about the importance of soft skills in working places and the availability or difficulty in finding candidates with such skills on the labour market.
- Employers' perceptions on the added value or negative impact which high-skilled migrants may generate inside their organization.

The survey focused on MHS human resources and on soft skills; so any other skills, such as technical or basic ones were not subject of the present survey.

The target of the research was twofold:

- industry representatives from micro to big companies
- representatives from organizations involved in recruitment, guidance and training of human resources.

In lines with the identified target group, two samples were choosen:

- **Companies:** the sample was supposed to be a group of 35 companies from the target countries. This sample was expected to be as heterogeneous as possible, regarding the company status (private or public, profit or nonprofit), size (micro, small, medium, large, groups) and sectors of activity (i.e. manufacture, services, agriculture, building, etc.) .
- **Other stakeholders:** the sample was supposed to be a group of 35 organizations involved in CVET and recruitment programmes, such as CVET agencies, universities, private/public career centres and placement agencies, skill assessment centres, employers' associations, chambers of commerce, etc.

As far as the public status is concerned, only "public companies" empowered to recruit human resources with autonomous means and procedures were considered eligible, which means that the Public Administration (central or local Governmental bodies) was not considered as a target group. As a matter of fact in such organizations recruitment is subject to public competition announcement and admission of foreign citizens in public bodies may depend on country national law.

Since the survey was based on one-to-one structured interviews the size of the sample was rather limited. Each partner was requested to interview 5 companies and 5 other stakeholders, gathering around 70 interviews.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The survey actually involved 77 organizations, more than expected.

Although VHSM was focused on migrants, the survey questions were not focused on immigrants only. Indeed a questionnaire-based interviews focused only on the target of migrants would sound as politically incorrect with the risk of violating law on equal opportunities and ghettoizing immigrants which are surely a vulnerable group on the labour market. Moreover it was absolutely important to avoid that employers' answers might be influenced by possible prejudices against immigrants. Such prejudices may be positive or negative, according to the employer's past experiences and personal beliefs, which are surely influenced by the people's imagination in the host country (collective consciousness) and the kind of reputation each immigrant group enjoys in the resident country (so called "ethnic reputation"). Moreover migrants are more frequently under-employed than the native population, often holding insecure and/or badly paid jobs, which means that the appreciation of their competences may be underestimated. Finally migrants always risk from being evaluated only for their language proficiency, while their other skills go unexplored.

For the afore-mentioned reasons the interview-questionnaire concerned all medium-high skilled employees in general and only a special section was devoted to migrants.

A limit of the survey, which was highlighted during all the interviews, is that different positions imply different skills and neither the questionnaire or the interview could properly cover all case histories.

### 2.1.1. Creation of the questionnaire

Two different questionnaires were used for the structured interviews: *Questionnaire type A* intended for "companies" and *Questionnaire type B* for "other stakeholders", that is to say all those stakeholders which are involved in active labour market policies. Both the questionnaires have six sections of questions and differ in the number of questions (40 questions in "company questionnaire" against 38 of the type B) and in the way they are expressed.

The six sections are:

1. Interviewee data

It includes the contact references and position of the interviewee inside the organization

2. Organization data

It includes the address, business sector, legal status, profit or nonprofit orientation, number of employees and size according to the EU definition of SMEs (micro, small, medium, large, group), quality of workforce (% of foreign employees and origin country)

3. Recruiting policies

This section concerns how organizations conduct candidate search and the average duration of the process, how competences are tested during the selection phase, the main difficulties encountered in testing candidates' soft skills and criteria considered mostly important while recruiting candidates on a scale of 1 to 4 (from "not important" to "extremely important").

4. Training policies

This section investigates on possible training programmes organized by companies for their employees in the last three years, reasons of choices, departments and roles mainly involved. A specific question investigates how companies consider the acquisition of hard, technical and soft skill; this question intends to catch the beliefs of the recruiter (either employer or head hunter)

on the process of skill development: is it more conceived as a cost or as a benefit, as a company's or employee's responsibility?

## 5. Migrants

This section intends to collect information on foreign employees already enrolled in the companies, their provenience and their kind of qualification according to the following four criteria: unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and highly-skilled HRs. The four categories included in the questionnaire do not refer to the education qualification of the workers, as most immigrants (mainly non-EU) encounter so many difficulties in getting the recognition of their diploma acquired in their motherland that they may renounce the recognition of prior learning abroad.

### Legenda - categories included in the survey.

- **Unskilled resource** is a person who does simple operations which require no independent judgment or previous experience.
- **Semi-skilled resource** is a person who is assigned to routine operations, which require little independent judgment and where important decisions are made by others.
- **Skilled resource** is a person who exercises considerable autonomy and independent judgment, discharging his duties with responsibility.
- **Highly skilled resource** is a person who, besides working efficiently in autonomy, with independent judgment and taking his responsibilities, supervises efficiently the work of other skilled employees.

The section includes also specific questions on the future intentions of the company about its contingent interest in recruiting immigrants, the reasons for its positive or negative interest, the added value that immigrants might give to the company (in case of positive answer) and special skills which might be required to high-skilled migrants applying for a position inside the organization.

In the B version questionnaire (for other stakeholders) a special question investigates which are the services that immigrants ask for, among job search, vocational guidance, diploma recognition, training, counselling and skills assessment.

## 6. Soft skills

This section represents the cornerstone of the questionnaire. It includes the list and appropriate description of soft skills grouped up in the three clusters and selected for the project: a. Navigating the world of work, b. Social Skills, c. Achieving results (which are accurately described in the Part One of this Report).

The interviewees are asked to:

- indicate the **level of importance** which they **assign to each skill**, when looking for new MHS human resources, in a 1-4 scale (1 = not important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = important; 4 = extremely important)
- indicate whether the skill **is difficult to be found** while recruiting ("yes", "no", "don't know").



After grading the list of skills, the interviewees are invited to reflect on which skills are lacking or need to be improved within their current MHS company workforce and which ones, where lacking, may have the greatest negative impact on the company performance, which are the main departments where these skills are considered extremely important and which ones are required to migrants.

The two questionnaires contain mostly closed-ended questions (the answer is fixed in advance) in order to ensure that answers could be reliably aggregated and make comparisons between sample national subgroups. A certain number of questions are open-ended, so as the respondent can formulate his/her own answer and add notes or comments.

The choice of questions was considered as a strategic aspect. The following aspects were accurately considered and studied:

- **Quality of the questions:** they have to be easy to respond, non-offensive and relevant. So a precise attention was paid to the words in order to avoid off-putting feelings and confusion.
- **Exhaustiveness and comparability of the questions:** most questions must be closed-ended and their response options must be exhaustive and mutually exclusive, having different types of response scales. For this reason the questionnaire results in a mix of dichotomous responses where the respondent has two options (Yes / No), nominal-polytomous where the respondent has more than two unordered options, and ordinal-polytomous where the respondent has more than two ordered priorities.
- **Length of the questionnaire:** survey brevity is generally associated to an increasing response rate and the quality of response tend to degrade toward the end of long surveys. So a special attention was paid to avoid repetition of concepts and to ensure a reasonable time to answer the proposed questions.
- **Relevance and motivation:** in order to ensure the respondents' willingness to participate in the survey it was highlighted how to propose the tool as a benefit for the interviewee. The concept of the questionnaire was inspired by the following two questions: "why s/he may be interested in the interview?", "what does s/he gain from the survey?". So the interview was proposed to companies primarily as a reflection moment on their own selection, recruitment and development policies; secondly as an opportunity to bring in their own views and experiences in the survey and exert influence on training and guidance programmes of other stakeholders, in view of helping future skills of the labour workforce.

The questionnaires were accompanied by a motivation letter explaining the objective of VHSM project and its survey. A special attention was given to ensure the legal requirements on interviewees' privacy and company's data protection in line with the specific law in force in each country where the survey was conducted.

A hybrid approach was used for the realization of the survey: both CAPI (face-to-face) and CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) methods were used.

### 2.1.2. Interviews and data collection

Each country partner was free to define its own approach to conduct the survey, according to contingent aspects of the specific context. Nonetheless the methodology used had some common features, such as the definition of the sample. As a first step a former list of companies was identified by the organizations' data bases (extraction of those contacts classified as HR managers, as well as contacts of entities working with jobseekers and foreigners and/or having liaison to immigrant issues<sup>24</sup>) and a massive mailing was done. As a second step all personal contacts, client companies, partner organizations were identified, which were contacted previously by phone and e-mail to explain the aims and details of the survey. An official invitation letter (with description and instructions on the survey) was sent to all contacts as a motivation mean in order to convert possible initial refusals into interviews (for samples of the document see **Annex A**). The letter was very useful when respondents did not spontaneously agree to be surveyed and in all cases where the contact person had to consult superiors or colleagues about permission to participate.

The interested stakeholders could choose between two different ways of participating in the survey:

- a) **By a questionnaire-based direct interview** with researchers on scheduled appointment (estimation time for the interview around 45-60 minutes) at their working place, by phone or skype
- b) **filling the questionnaire by themselves** (with necessary instructions) and transmitting it to the survey team.

A small number of stakeholders filled the questionnaire alone (after receiving instructions by phone/e-mail/skype) and sent it back to the survey team, while most organizations were interviewed face-to-face or via phone/skype by researchers. In all countries the same methodology was used for the two targets: "companies" and "other stakeholders".

The average done in each country revealed that a personal delivery and completing of the questionnaire is required for a successful outcome.

The average time for the interview was calculated around 30-45 minutes. The interviewees were given full and permanent guarantee for confidentiality of the information given.

The interviews were carried out along a period of 2 months.

### 2.1.3. Problems encountered and lessons learnt

Most contacted companies/stakeholders showed interest in the survey, but a great majority did not take part in the interview, primarily due to lack of time or maybe because they did not see advantages in participating. Although our intentions to prepare a brief questionnaire and concise interview, the 45 minute estimated time to answer was considered too long by some organizations.

In Bulgaria three companies managed by immigrants were approached at the preliminary step of the research, but they preferred not to be interviewed, this was partially due to the fact that their representatives (who are foreigners) did not feel comfortable enough with Bulgarian or English

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<sup>24</sup> In Bulgaria this aspect was considered at a large extent as the liaison to immigrant issues does not necessarily refer to direct employment of immigrants and foreigners which is not very frequent in the country.

languages, but also due to the fact that immigrant communities are still relatively closed in a new migration country, being difficult to be approached from outside.

Having interviews and questionnaires from public organizations was rather difficult, as it took longer time (in most cases the contacted person had to obtain authorizations from his/her top management). It was more difficult to involve other stakeholders than companies (they represent only 42% of the sample indeed).

At last it was difficult to collect data about migrants from employment centres because in many cases information regarding nationality was not available.

The following lessons learnt resulted from the cross-country survey:

- **Confidence building:** a confidence-based relationship with the organizations was a strong catalyzer to reach the goal of interviews. It was experienced that the best way to proceed was to offer the interview as an opportunity to reflect on the company's HR development and recruitment actions. In some cases the interviewing organizations took advantage from the company's attendance at their headquarters for other events to propose the interview (e.g. while waiting at the information desk or at the reception, they were asked to be interviewed).
- **Interview methods:** the best results came from phone or face-to-face meetings. Online version of the questionnaire may help to reduce time, but on condition that a previous phone call is made to explain aims and gives the necessary details. Before distributing the questionnaire the expert engaged in the survey is recommended to have a preliminary conversation with representatives of the organizations in order to make sure that they have a real interest in the topic and filling in the questionnaire.
- **Multiplier effect of the interview:** in spite of early difficulties in actively involving the organizations in the survey, it was remarked that during the interviews the interviewees realized how interesting some questions were. Many of them admitted they had never thought about some aspects and they recognized the experience of the interview as an important reflection occasion on several subjects (e.g. importance on some specific skills, added value of immigrants in working places). As a consequence many bodies which were interviewed face-to-face and had not received the questionnaire by e-mail, asked for an additional blank copy of the questionnaire for further use inside their structure with their collaborators or employees. To a large number of companies the survey was an occasion to be informed and sensitized on soft skills and their features (which are generally confused with transversal skills). The questionnaire may be also proposed to HR managers and employers as a reflexion tool in training sessions on human resources development.
- **Spreading results:** Many of the involved organizations expressed their interest in knowing the results of the survey. So it is recommended to draw up a summary report of results for the use of the organizations who took part in the survey and to any other stakeholders who may be interested in.
- **Dissemination of results and publishing the names of organizations:** it is recommended to ask all the interviewees a written authorization to publish, in case, the name and websites of their organizations in the survey results.

## 2.2. Data analysis

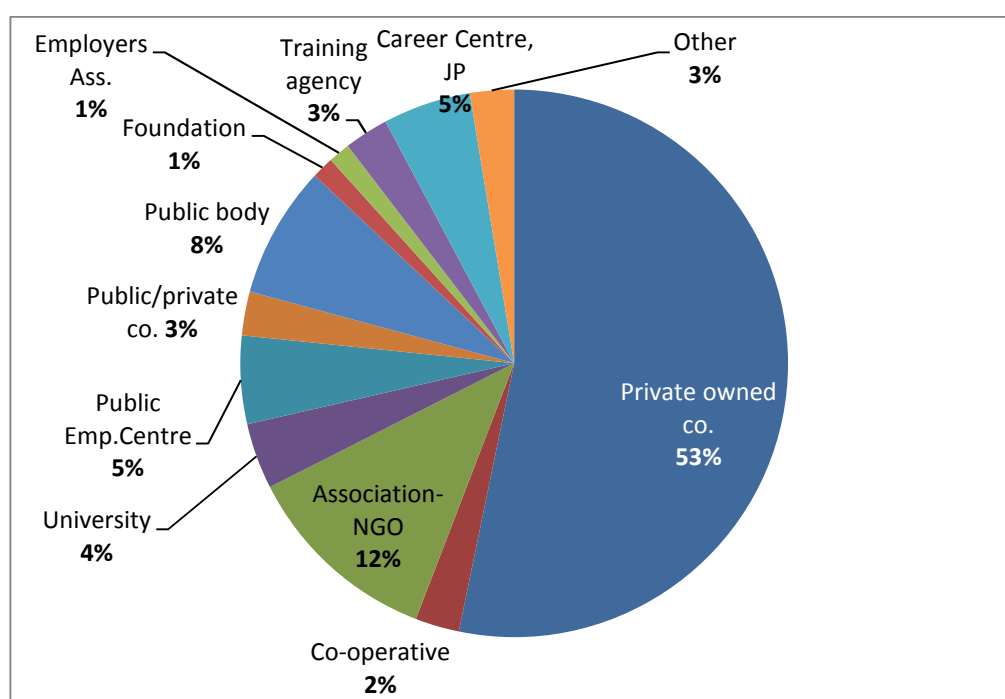
The data collection and analysis was of great importance to implement the further steps of VHSM project, consisting in designing and implementing assessment and empowerment methods and tools specifically for soft skill, which are as coherent as possible with companies' real needs to fill the existing gap between labour demanders and suppliers (which is cause of unemployment or under-employment).

### 2.2.1. The target group

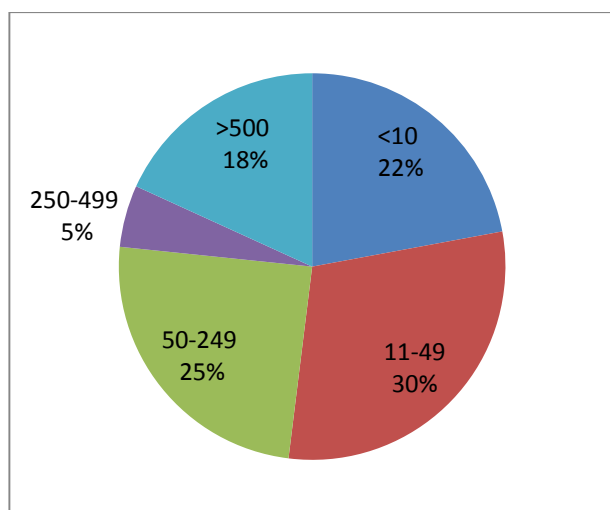
**77** organizations were involved in the interviews: 13% of interviewees came from Austria and Bulgaria, 14% from France and Sweden, 16% from Germany and 30% from Italy (where there were two partners involved in the action).

**58%** of the target group is represented by **companies** and **42%** by **other stakeholder**, either private or public.

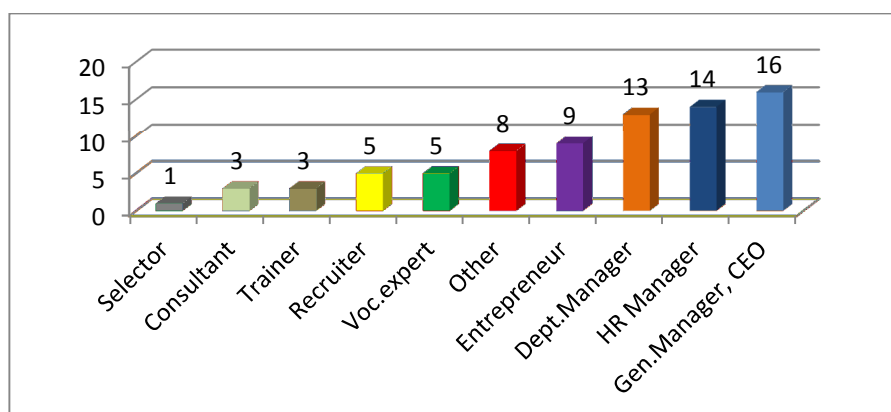
**62%** of the target group are **profit** companies and **38%** are **nonprofit** organizations.



**52%** of the target group is represented by Micro and Small organizations (<50 employees). **77%** are Small and Medium sized companies, according to the EU definition. **23%** have more than 250 employees. Large companies (> 500 employees) represent **18%**. Groups of company are **5%** of total.



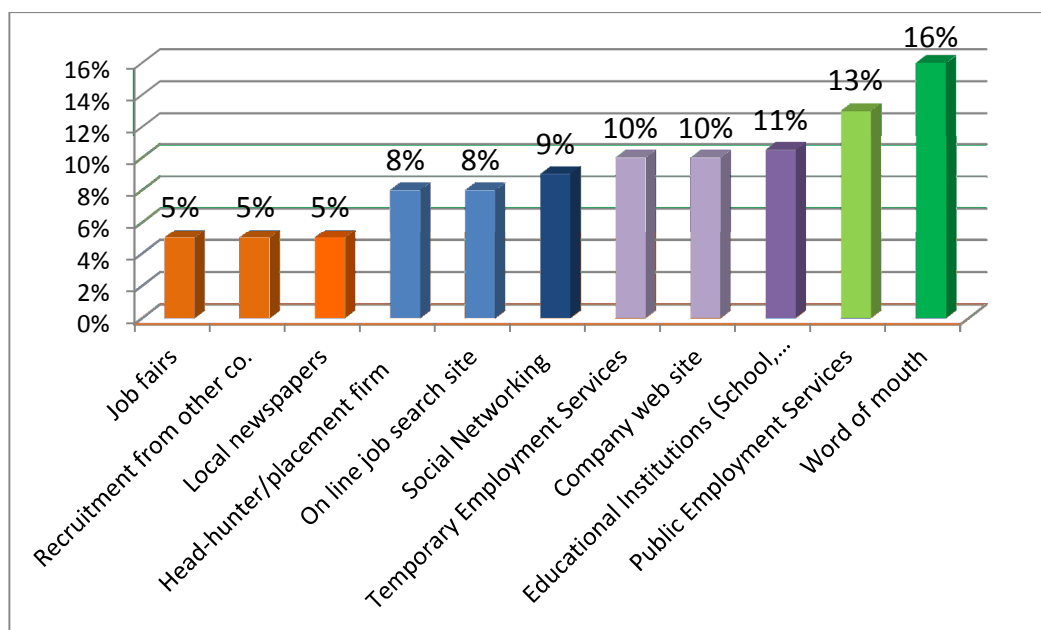
In **33%** of cases the interviewee is part of the **top management** (entrepreneur, CEO, general manager), in **35%** it is the **HR or department manager**, in **10%** it is a **trainer or CVET expert**, in **8%** it is a **recruiter or selector**, in **4%** it is a company **consultant**. In **10%** of cases the interviewee belongs to **other categories**, such as manager assistants or technicians.



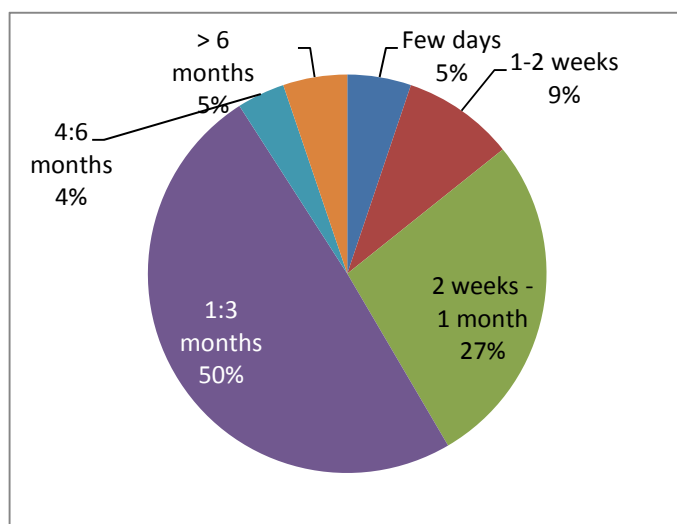
### 2.2.2. The recruiting policies

The questionnaire described 11 channels of recruiting (education institutions, public employment services, head hunters/placement firms, temporary employment services, company website, social networking, on-line job search sites, job fairs, word of mouth, local newspapers and recruitments from other companies).

The two best ranked channels result to be the **word of mouth (16%)** and **public employment services (13%)**. The **education system and CVET** is third ranked (**11%**) The use of the official company website gets the same percentage of the use of services offered by temporary employment services (**10%**), **social networks** and **online job search** sites are around **10%**. Job fairs, local newspapers and recruitment from other companies result bottom ranked.



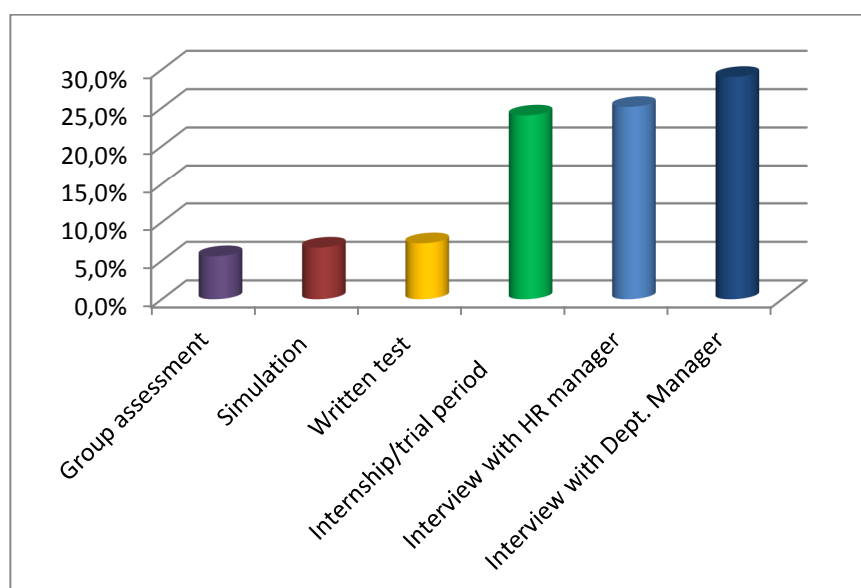
Of course there are significant differences among the countries. The use of word of mouth is among 3 top ranked channels in all the countries, except Germany and particularly Sweden where this channel has been chosen by none of the 11 interviewees. In both these countries the use of the web together with social networks, newspapers, services of public employment and education agencies are among the top ranked channels. Public employment services are mostly used in Sweden, Austria and France and little used in Italy. Only Bulgarian bodies rank job fairs among the best 3 choices. However differences among the countries are not statistically relevant in VHSM survey, due to the limited size of the sample.



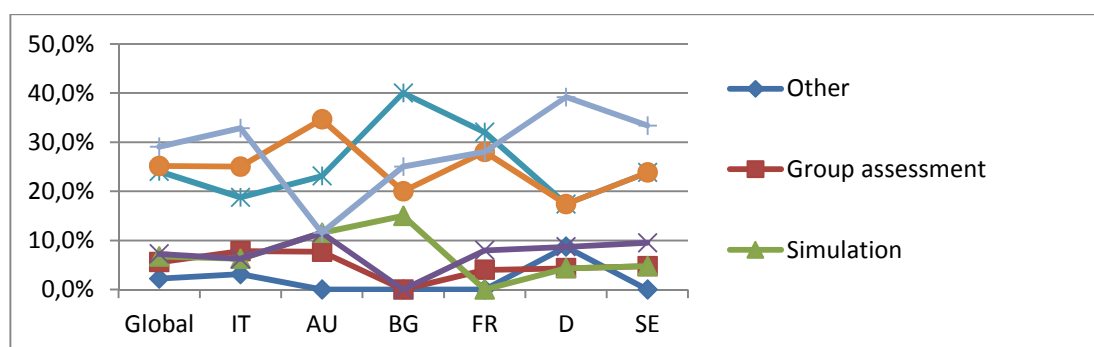
Recruitment process is rather quick: in **41%** of cases the selection of new staff lasts **less than one month** and in **91%** of cases the process lasts **less than three months**. Longer processes represent only around 9%.

As regards the modalities for the selection of candidates (**Question 3.3.**), **54%** use the traditional interview with the HR manager and/or with the department manager where the candidate is to be inserted; **24%** of organizations consider the trial period or internship as a long selection period to test the person's skills. Written tests are generally used by any kind of organization in spite of their status or size, while group assessments are only used by other stakeholders (training agencies,

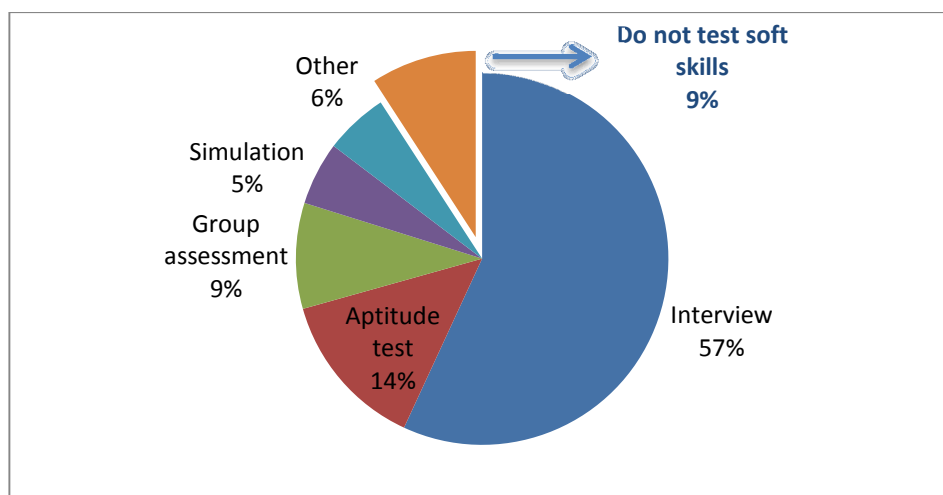
employment agencies) or quite large companies. Simulations seem to be preferred either by small or large companies.



The Italian and German interviewees are the ones who prefer the job interview with the manager department, while the Austrians and French ones seem to prefer the interviews with the HR manager. The Bulgarians are the ones who prefer the internship or a trial period to test the candidates overall skills, followed by the French ones (over the average), Simulations are preferred by the Bulgarian interviewed organizations, while Swedish seem to prefer the written test. Here again differences among the countries cannot be considered relevant from a statistical point of view.

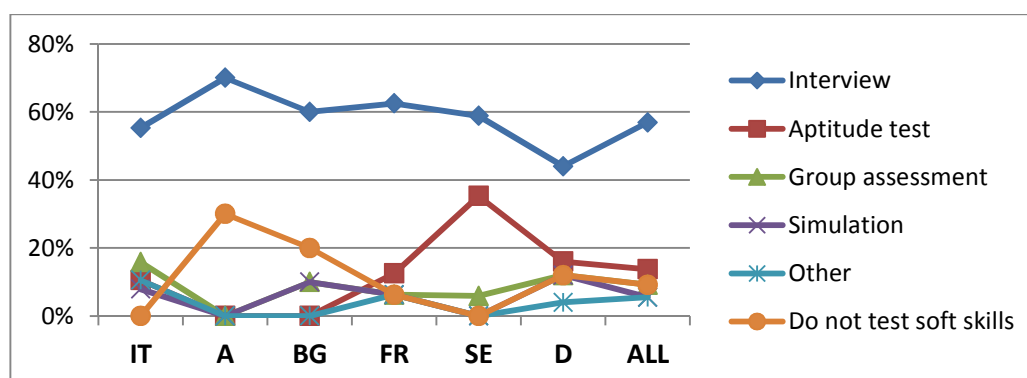


As regards the assessment of soft skills (**Question 3.4.**), **57%** of the target group declare to assess them through job interviews. Most companies rely on proxy measures such as information on the candidate referring to previous working experiences or experiences in charity works, personal interests or hobbies. A key aspect for interview selection is often the cover letter for applying (so called motivation letter) and motivation is a soft skill indeed.



**28%** of the target declare to use specific tools to assess soft skills, among them **14%** use aptitude test, **9%** organizes group assessment and **5%** simulations. In **9%** of cases candidates' soft skills are **not assessed** at all. Among other methods to assess soft skills there is an initial trial period (which is 3<sup>rd</sup> ranked way of selection)<sup>25</sup>.

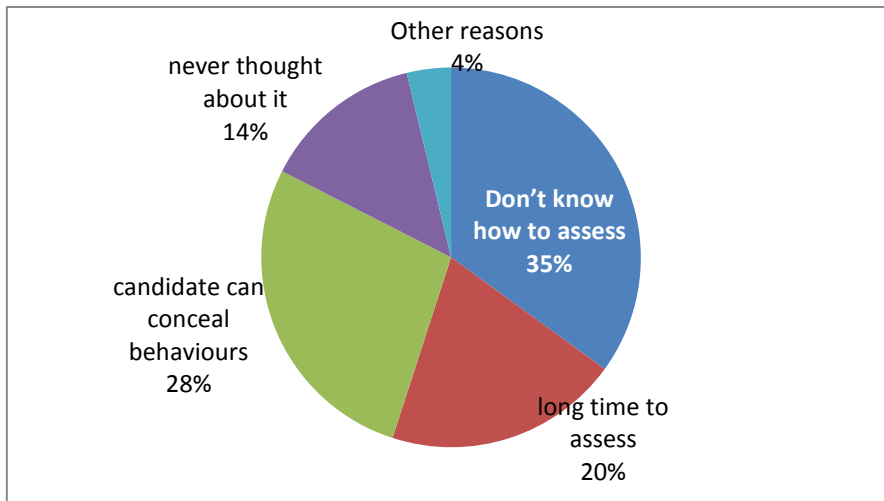
The highest percentage of organizations which do not assess soft skills are encountered among Austrian and Bulgarian interviewees. Almost 60% of the target group declare to use simple interviews to evaluate such skills (only the German ones are below 50%) , Swedish bodies are the ones who use aptitude tests the most, together with French ones.



The above data reflect a specific characteristics of soft skills, that is to say there is no agreed-upon way of measuring or certifying proficiency in them; the problem is also highlighted by the answers given to the **question 3.5.** of the questionnaire concerning the difficulties encountered in evaluating the candidate's soft skills. The major difficulties declared is **not to be able to assess soft skills (35%)**, followed by the awareness that the candidates can fake during the selection face (**28%**). This data reveals a certain skepticism regarding the real possibility to test such skills, which are considered intangible.

<sup>25</sup> As showed by the answers to the **question 3.3**: 24% of organizations consider the trial period or internship as a long selection period to test the person's skills.

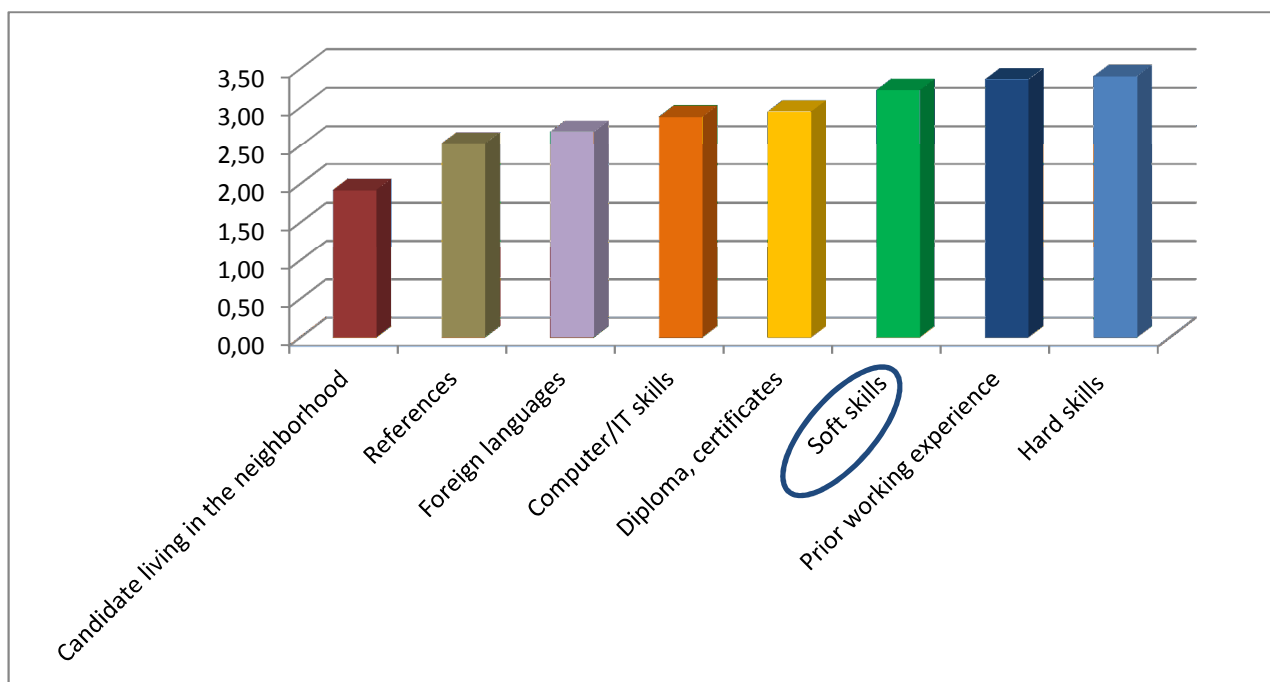




**20%** of the target consider that an accurate selection process to test soft skills would require too long time. This data matches the answers collected on recruitment timing, which result rather short: **41%** declare that their recruitment period lasts less than one month and **50%** declare that it last between 1 and 3 month.

Most companies agree in saying that during the recruitment the time at their disposal to select candidates is rather short (which is an obstacle to accurately evaluate soft skills), but at the same time they declare a high need to reinforce such skills among their hired HRs .

As far as the relevant criteria for recruiting are concerned (**question 3.7.**), the organizations had to give a mark in a 1-4 scale to eight variables. The here-below graphic shows that hard skills are the most requested criterion, immediately followed by prior working experience claimed by the candidate and his/her soft skills (3<sup>rd</sup> rank); diplomas and certification are ranked at the 4<sup>th</sup> rank. The least relevant criterion for the interviewees is the proximity of the candidate's resident place to the company headquarters.

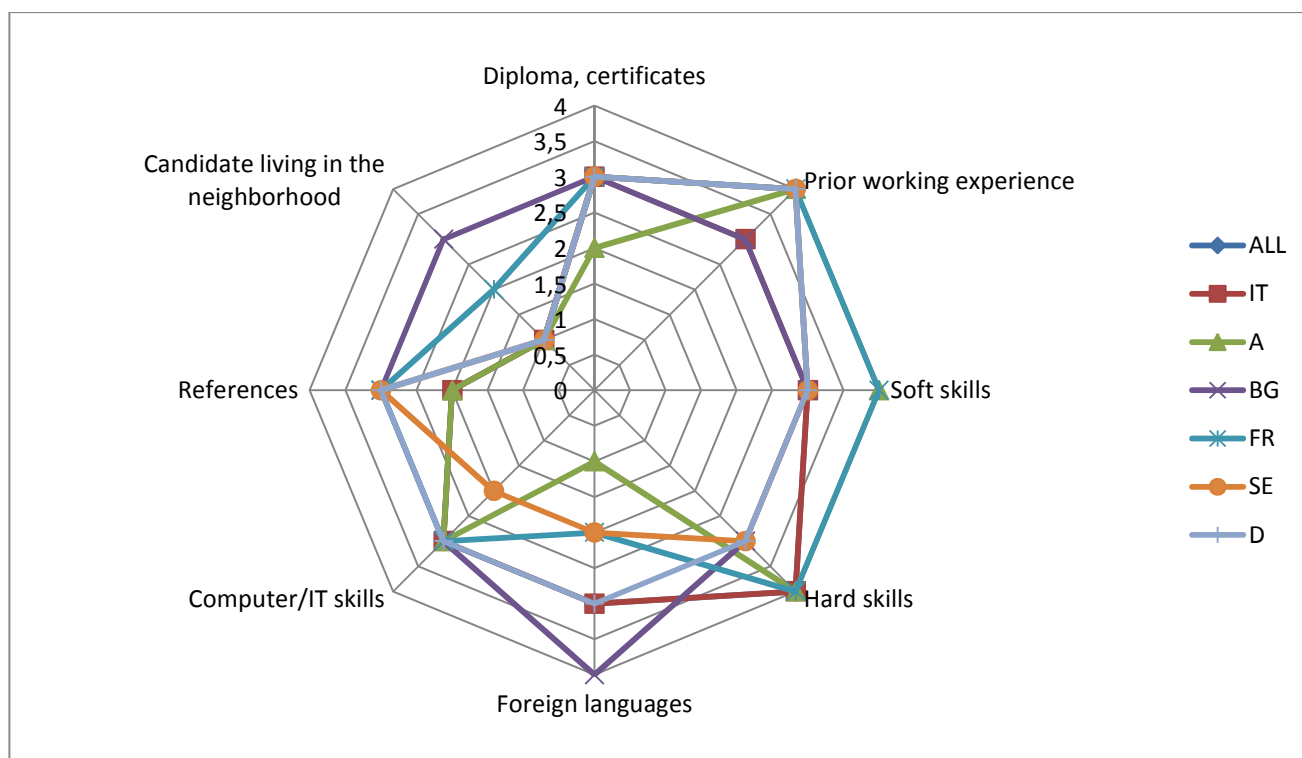


Hard skills are also the most frequent choice (statistical mode), at a global extent.

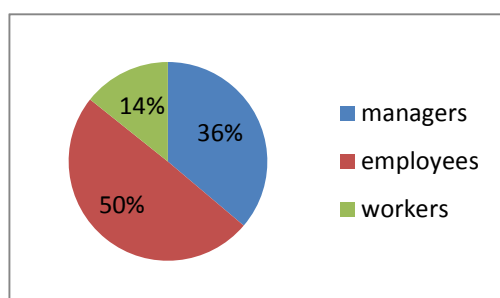
The hereinafter table indicates the scores got by each selection criteria (both arithmetic mean and mode) in a 1 to 4 scale.

Relevant criteria	Mean score (1-4)	Significance level	Value appeared most often (mode)
Hard skills (job-specific knowledge and abilities)	3,41	important	extremely important
Prior working experience	3,36	important	important
<b>Soft skills</b> (non-job specific abilities, such as communication, problem solving...)	3,23	important	important
Educational background (diploma, certificates)	2,91	slightly important	important
Computer/IT skills	2,88	slightly important	important
Foreign languages	2,68	slightly important	important
References	2,53	slightly important	slightly important
Candidate living in the neighborhood	1,92	not important	Not important

If we consider each country we see that hard skills are the most frequent choice in Austria, France and Italy; working experiences are mostly frequently requested in Austria, France, Germany and Sweden, while soft skills are more frequently requested by Austrian and French interviewees. Foreign languages are largely requested by Bulgarian organizations who also give the greatest attention to the geographical residence of the candidate. This criterion has a very little relevance for the interviewees of all other countries. The hereinafter graphic shows the selection criteria across VHSM countries.



Within the interviewed target, **85%** of organizations declare to have provided training to their staff during the last three years; training has involved **50%** of employers, **36%** of managers and only **14%** of workers.

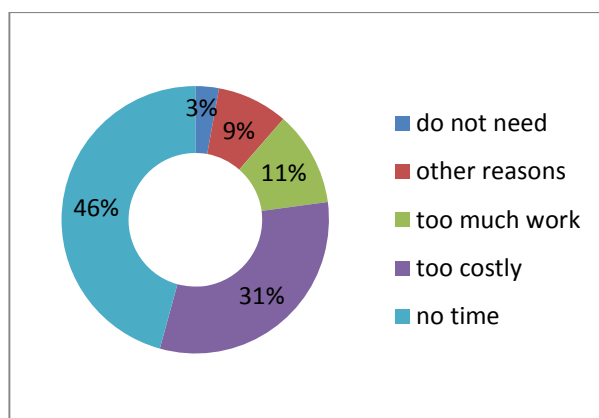


**41%** of companies having been active in training are large-sized, **38%** are medium-sized and **14%** are small-sized companies. Micro companies represent **7%**. So company size is a factor found to influence the provision of training. These data are coherent with Eurostat data and OECD reports<sup>26</sup>, which highlight the positive impact of increasing organization size on CVET, although there are country

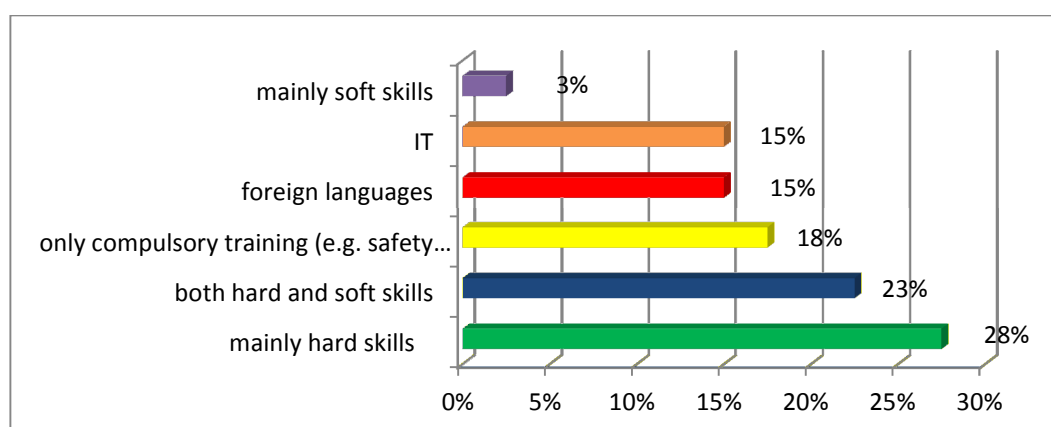
specific variables (e.g. Swedish, Danish and Finnish small companies maintain high levels of participation in training). Private companies result to be more training oriented: **53%** of the target are private against **27%** of public bodies. Cooperatives represent **20%**.

Considering the **15%** of organizations which have not provided training actions to their staff the main reasons are the following: **46%** claim a shortage of time, **31%** claim high costs and **11%** declare that they had too much work to be able to think about training programmes. Only **3%** declared that they did not need any training.

<sup>26</sup> OECD, *Skills Studies Skills Development and Training in SMEs*, 2012.

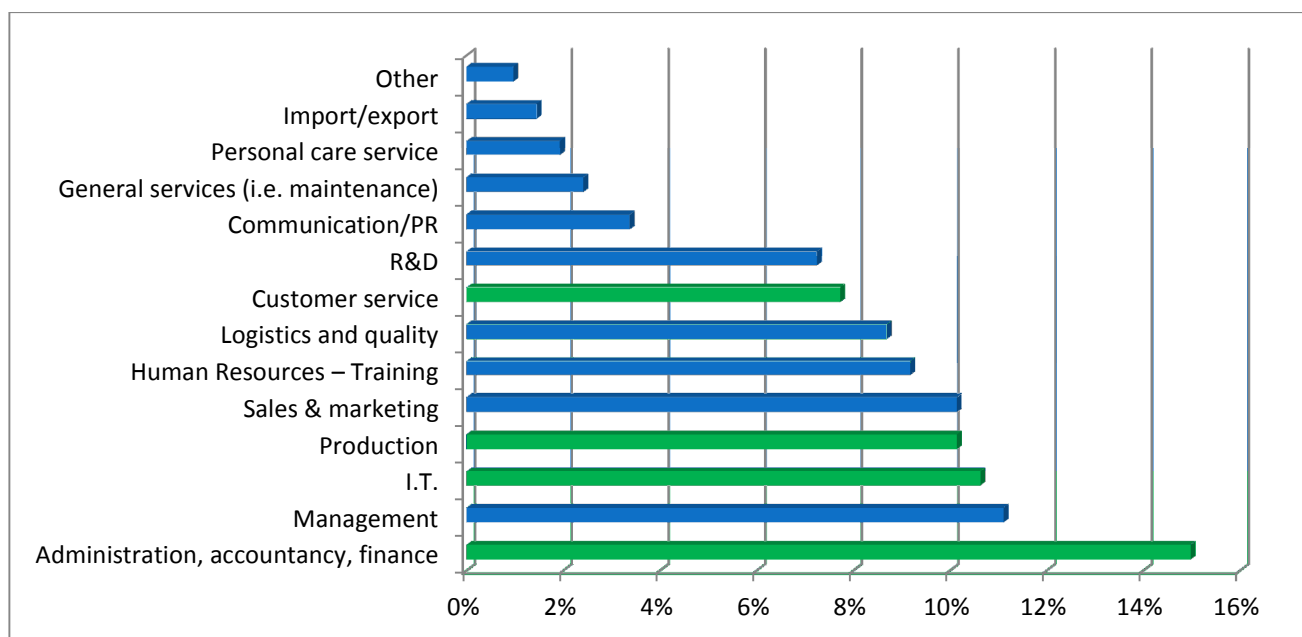


Training resulted to be preferably focused mainly on hard skills (**28%**), on both hard and soft skills (**23%**). Training specifically focused on soft skill represent only 3%. In **15%** of cases training is devoted to IT and foreign languages; **18%** of training concerns compulsory subjects such as safety at work). These data confirm the general tendency of companies to prefer to invest money and time in strengthening their HRs' technical and hard skills rather than soft skills.<sup>27</sup>



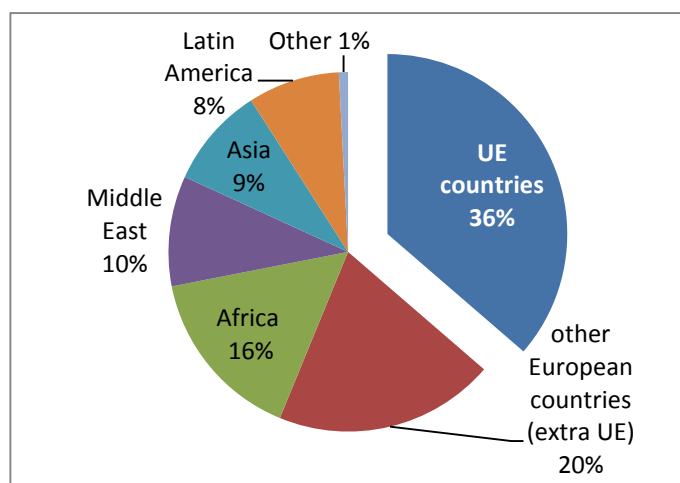
The departments which result to be mostly involved in training are the administrative and accountancy area, management, IT, production, commercial areas (marketing, sales, customer services), human resources. As shown in the following graphic there is not a great deal of commonality between the departments where training actions are frequent and the ones where immigrants are employed; only three areas where immigrants results to be mostly employed and training is normally provided are top ranked (i.e. the green bars). So migrants appear to be more vulnerable in continuing education.

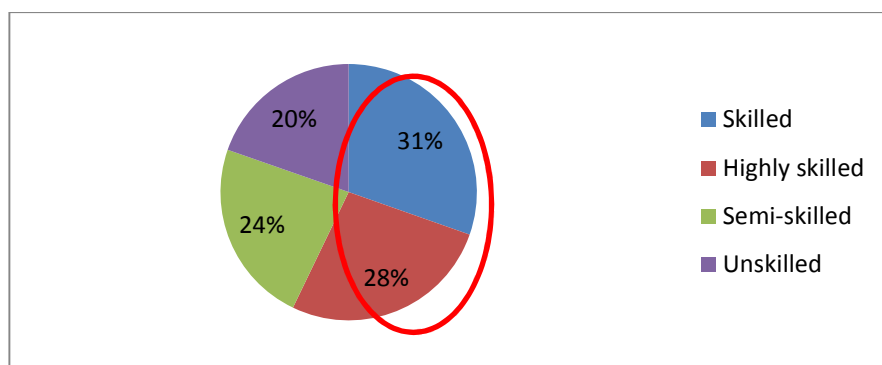
<sup>27</sup> See par. 1.3.



### 2.2.3. Companies and immigrant workforce.

More than half (51%) of interviewed companies have immigrants in their own organization. The average percentage of immigrants inside the organization is **14%**. **56%** of them come from Europe (36% EU and 20% non-EU citizens) and **44%** from the rest of the world. The hereinafter graphic shows their origin geographical areas.



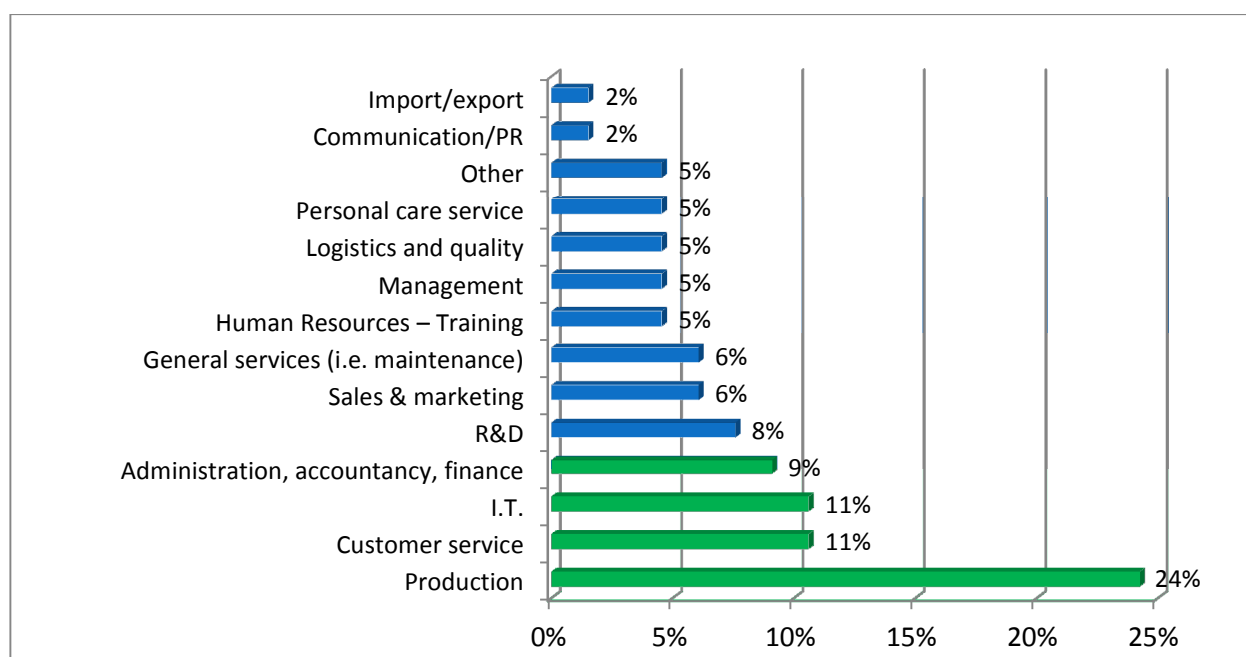


**59%** of the immigrants employed by the interviewed organizations are **medium-high skilled**, which represent the core target of the present research. **20%** of them are **unskilled**.

#### Criteria used in the questionnaire and research:

- **Unskilled:** person who does simple operations, which require no independent judgment or previous experience.
- **Semi-skilled:** person who is assigned to routine operations, which require little independent judgment and where important decisions are made by others.
- **Skilled:** person exercises considerable autonomy and independent judgment, discharging his duties with responsibility.
- **Highly skilled:** person who, besides working efficiently in autonomy, with independent judgment and taking his responsibilities, supervises efficiently the work of other skilled employees.

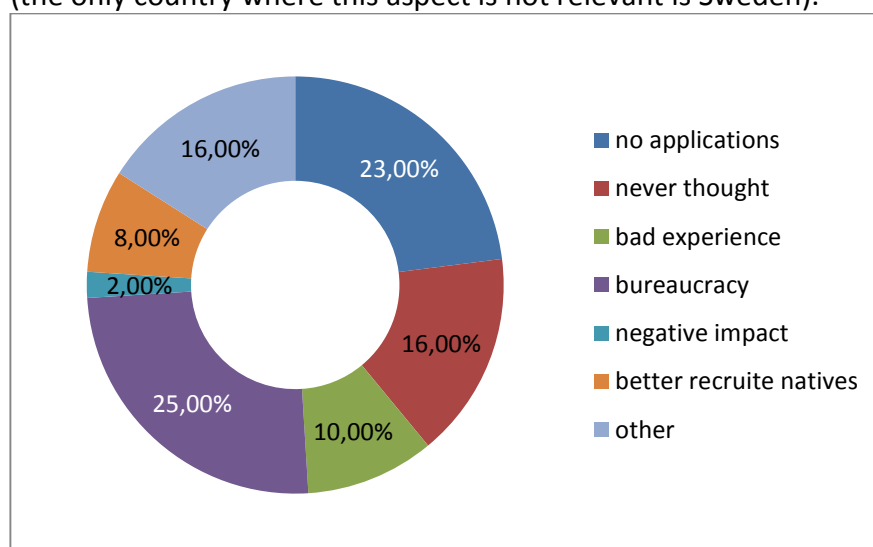
They are mostly employed in the **production area** (24%), **customer services** and **IT** (11%), **administration and accountancy** (9%), **R&D** (8%), **sales, marketing** and **general services** (6%), **human resources, management, logistics** and **quality, personal care services** (5%), **communication** and **import/export** (2%).



**38%** of the interviewed target declare themselves interested in hiring foreign human resources against **27%** who express a negative interest, but there is a wide area of persons who do not express any opinion (**35%** of “do not know”).

### 2.2.3. Factors of influence for the recruitment of immigrant resources

Among those organizations who declare not to be interested in hiring immigrants (either EU or non-EU), **10%** say they had bad past experiences with foreigners and **10%** express negative prejudices (“immigrants may cause a negative impact on the organization” and “native workers are preferable”); **25%** claim bureaucratic problems related to immigration local policies and procedures (the only country where this aspect is not relevant is Sweden).



Other reasons, which represent a wide area of **55%**, are:

- companies have never received applications from foreigners (**23%**),
- companies have never thought about the possibility to hire migrants (**16%**)
- other specific reasons e.g.: foreigners may cause language comprehension problems, local people are preferred because they share the same culture of the organization, foreigners may have high mobility which may put long-term investments on human resources at serious risk (**16%**).

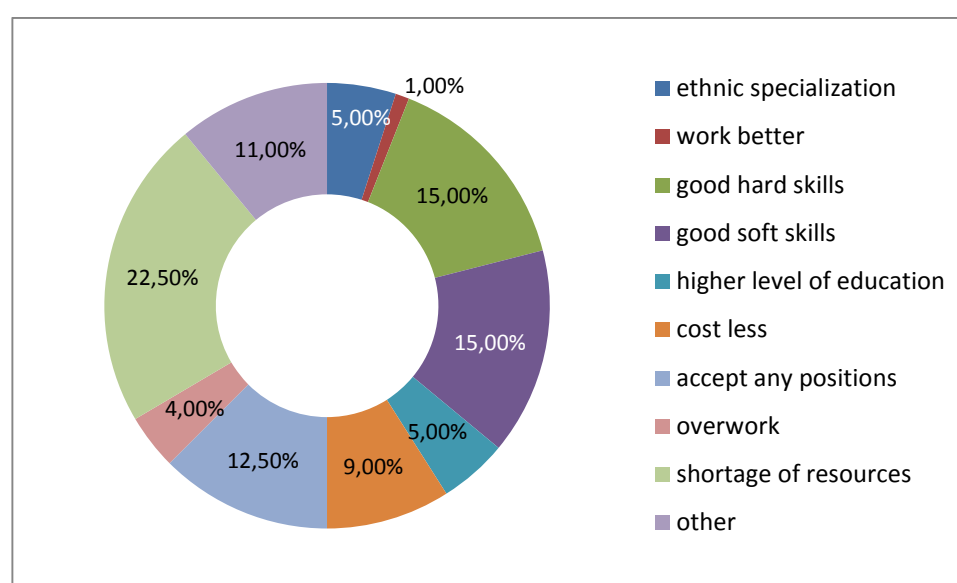
The above data reveal that a large part of employers does not hire immigrants/foreigners just because they do not consider this option at all. This is particularly evident in Bulgaria where the issue is becoming socially and economically relevant since many work places requiring high skills remain vacant despite the average high unemployment rate. It has also to be noticed that in all European countries among the supply-side factors which may contribute to a lower level of immigrant's employment, there are problems related to migrant's poor professional networks and unfamiliarity with local labour market processes and conventions.

The above data highlight that it should be strategic to support migrants in improving their self-promotion capacity to increase their employment opportunities. This is also confirmed by the answers of companies who declare to be interested in hiring migrants; they hire them because of:

- their good hard and soft skills (**30%**),
- their higher level of education (**5%**),
- their willingness to accept any position even if these are lower than their educational background (**12,5%**),
- their willingness to do overwork (**4%**).
- a shortage of specific local profiles (**22,5%**).

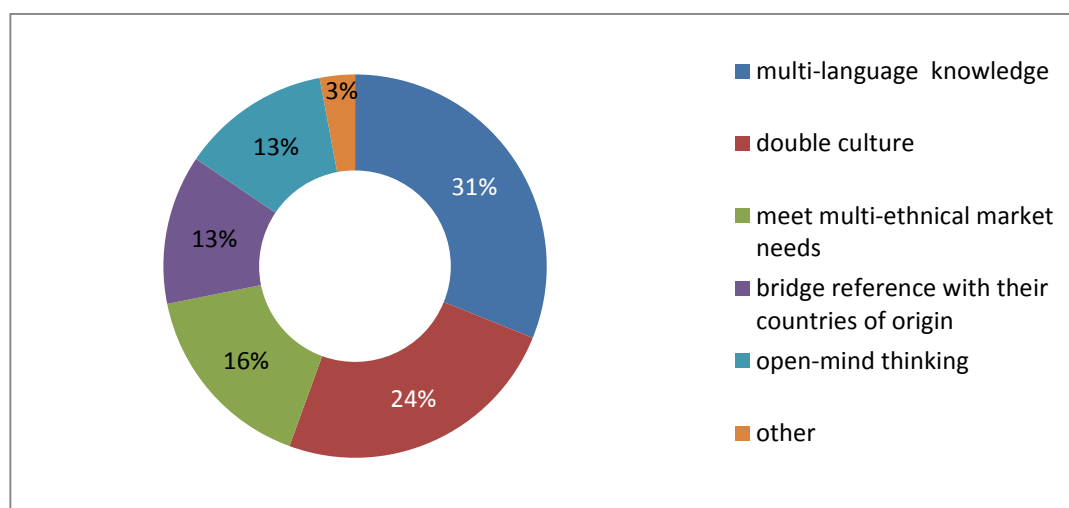
There is a range of opportunities to be explored yet.

Finally **9%** of companies declare to hire foreigners because they accept lower wages. The ethnic specialization counts only **1%**. Other specific reasons (**11%**) concern selection criteria based on competences rather than on nationalities, diversity management strategies (integration of different competences and cultures, specific mother language knowledge).





**68%** of companies think that migrants may represent an added value inside the organization thanks to their multi-language and double culture knowledge, which facilitate their open-minded thinking. **13%** of companies consider them as a strategic bridge reference with their origin country (they are the organizations actively involved in the internationalization process) and **16%** declare that their added value is represented by the fact that immigrants help companies to meet the needs of a domestic market which is becoming more and more ethnically diversified. The research confirms this data. In the future companies which are aware to compete for an increasingly diverse customer base, *“will require a similarly diverse employee population to develop products for, effectively communicate with and service those customers”*.<sup>28</sup>



It is important to underline that all the interviewees consider the importance of soft skills as a necessary requisite for employment disregarding ethnicity or country of origin. In other words they consider these skills as important and necessary for employees in general. This is confirmed by the fact that no interviewee specifies any soft skills required specifically to high-skilled migrants (**question 5.9.**).

In conclusion the data gathered through the interviews reveal the following factors which may positively influence the immigrants' job insertion (**pull factors**):

<b>INTERNAL FACTORS</b>	• Multi-language knowledge	Mastery of their mother language and language of the resident country
	• Cross-cultural competences (soft skill)	Ability to manage intercultural understanding and communication, awareness and sensitivity of other practices and cultures, which immigrants learn going through their life experiences.
	• Geographical mobility	Immigrants are generally more inclined to move from a place to another one for job reasons
	• Education level	It is often higher than the tasks they are effectively assigned to

<sup>28</sup> Research conducted by Anderson and Gantz, IDC on behalf of Microsoft, *Skills requirements for tomorrow's best jobs. Helping educators provide students with skills and tools they need. White Paper.* (2013).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical and professional skills</li> </ul>	It is a strong strength when it refers to an economic sector or professional where there is a shortage of manpower
EXTERNAL FACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrepreneurs' positive beliefs on immigrants</li> </ul>	There is a common widespread idea among many businessmen that immigrants are more reliable, highly motivated, more flexible, more resilient to manage stress situations and most of them are willing to work overtime.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Firm culture and company level of internationalization</li> </ul>	Any company has its own "culture" which plays a very important role: the possibility to be integrated within the organization and to upgrade is much more higher in a multinational or internationalized SME than in a small local firm <sup>29</sup> .
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Images on immigrants socially spread and shared by local culture</li> </ul>	As an example Egyptians are considered as excellent in the building sector because of their long-lasting migration experience in the Gulf countries where they are mostly employed in this economic sector; Romanians are well known for their dynamism and entrepreneurship attitude, etc.

Otherwise the following are the **factors which may discourage** the immigrant's employment (**push factors**):

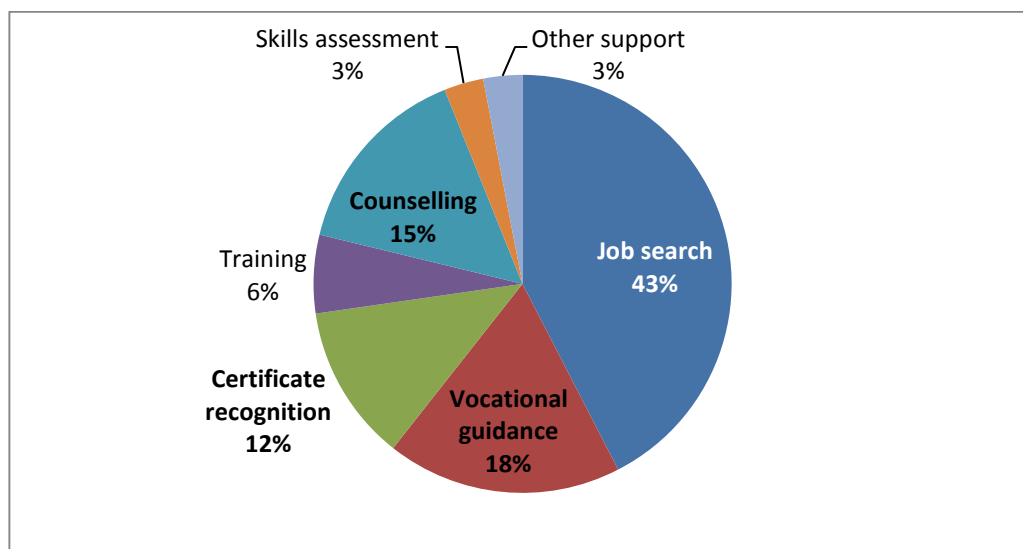
INTERNAL FACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unfamiliarity with the code culture of the host country</li> </ul>	This unfamiliarity may have a strong negative impact on communication with heads, colleagues and clients, causing conflicts inside the organization.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different representation of hierarchical models due to cultural aspects (implicit or explicit)</li> </ul>	This is a culture-related factor and it may cause incomprehension problems and conflicts on the working place.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deficiency in soft skills</li> </ul>	It can undermine the value of migrants' hard skills, which make them less readily employable or underemployable.
EXTERNAL FACTORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entrepreneurs' and people's negative beliefs on specific ethnic groups</li> </ul>	Prior negative experiences with immigrants or individual or social prejudices (on specific ethnic groups) may be a big barrier to the job insertion of migrants.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bureaucracy to get residency permits</li> </ul>	Long, costly and complicated procedures to employ immigrants may deter firms from hiring foreigners.

Considering the demand-side factors, discrimination is hardly being detected especially in such a research where employers are interviewed face-to-face and they can conceal their motivations and behaviours. Nonetheless research demonstrated that it is prevalent both during the recruitment phase and throughout a worker's career, but it is also widespread in education and training, i.e. outside the labour market, playing an indirect effect on it. OECD research across the countries,

<sup>29</sup> This is also confirmed by the research carried out by the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute in Florence in 2013 (Venturini A., *Innovation and Human capital: the role of migration*).

found that immigrants from certain ethnic backgrounds have to send between 10 and 150 per cent more applications than non-migrant to get a job interview.<sup>30</sup>

The services which are mostly requested by immigrants to CVET, guidance and labour services organizations (**question 5.4.** of the questionnaire B for “other stakeholders”) are supporting actions in job search (**43%**), vocational guidance (**18%**) and counselling (**15%**). Skill assessment represent only 3%.



<sup>30</sup> OECD (2013), *Discrimination against immigrants – measurement, incidence and policy instruments*, International Migration Outlook (191-230 pages).

## PART THREE

### FRAMEWORK OF SOFT SKILLS DEMANDED BY THE LABOUR DEMAND

#### 3.1. Survey results

The hereinafter tables A, B, C show the degree of importance and frequency given by the 77 interviewees to each one of the 21 soft skills identified within VHSM<sup>31</sup>. Two indicators were used:

- the level of **importance/significance** of the skill
- its **difficulty to be found** while recruiting.

As far as the skill significance is concerned, a quantitative four level scale was proposed to measure it, according to the following scheme:

Score assigned to the importance of the skill by the interviewee(1-4) (mean and mode were combined)	Level of importance assigned to the score	Hiring entailment
1	Not important	The skill is not considered strategic by the company at all and <u>the candidate must not prove to have it to be hired</u>
2	Slightly important	Proving the skill by the candidate may be an advantage for the company, but the choice of her/his hiring is not at risk if s/he has not it. <u>The candidate is assumed to learn it at work</u>
3	important	The candidate is much appreciated if s/he prove to have this skill. <u>The hiring of the candidate will strongly depend on proving this skill</u>
4	Extremely important	<u>The candidate must absolutely have this skill to be hired.</u> In case s/he has not, s/he is not hired

Both arithmetical means and mode were calculated in order to analyze the average choice and the most frequent one.

<sup>31</sup> Question no. 6.1. of both the questionnaires: typology A - company "Please indicate the importance which your company assign to each skill, when looking for new high-skilled workforce"; typology B – other stakeholder "Based on your experience and perception, please indicate the importance which companies generally assign to each skill, when looking for new high-skilled workforce"

Instead the level of difficulty to find the skill was measured only by three possible choices: “no”, “yes”, “don’t know”.

**Table A. navigate the world of work**

	Mean score (1-4)	Significance level	Mode	Significance level	Difficulty to find		
					Yes	No	don't know/ no answer
<b>A. Navigate the world of work</b>							
Adaptability and flexibility	3,38	important	3	important	53%	18%	29%
Motivation	3,38	important	3	important	49%	20%	31%
Time management	3,37	important	4	extremely important	35%	36%	29%
Managing responsibilities	3,28	important	3	Important	42%	27%	31%
Learning to learn	3,22	important	3	important	44%	23%	33%
Identifying work goals	3,12	important	3	important	35%	27%	38%
Recognizing/ applying work protocols and values	3,08	important	3	important	30%	43%	27%
Respecting hierarchical levels and rules	3,00	Important	3	important	17%	57%	26%
Managing the digital process	2,76	Slightly important	3	important	19%	43%	38%

**Table B. Social skills**

	Mean score (1-4)	Significance level	Mode	Significance level	Difficulty to find		
					Yes	No	don't know/ no answer
<b>B. Social skills</b>							
Service skills	3,43	important	4	extremely important	32%	43%	25%
Team working	3,40	important	4	extremely important	31%	42%	27%
Communication skills	3,27	important	3	important	27%	43%	30%
Personal effectiveness and integrity (PE&I) – stress man.	3,27	important	3	important	42%	23%	35%
Conflict management	3,09	important	3	important	60%	14%	26%
Managing the communication circle	3,08	important	3	important	40%	27%	33%
Leadership	2,88	Slightly important	3	important	53%	16%	31%
Cross-cultural awareness	2,79	Slightly important	3	important	40%	26%	34%

**Table C. Achieving results**

	Mean score (1-4)	Significance level	Mode	Significance level	Difficulty to find		
					Yes	No	don't know/ no answer
<b>C. Achieving results</b>							
Problem solving	3,18	important	4	<b>extremely important</b>	<b>48%</b>	26%	26%
Creativity and innovation	3,17	important	3	important	<b>56%</b>	17%	27%
Critical and structured thinking	3,17	important	3	important	<b>56%</b>	19%	25%
Decision making	3,17	important	3	important	<b>41,5%</b>	30%	28,5%

Among the skills which are deemed lacking or must be improved, considering the company current workforce (**question 6.4.** of the questionnaire), the top five results to be:

1. *TIME MANAGEMENT* and *CREATIVITY & INNOVATION* (ex aequo 47%),
2. *TEAM WORKING* (46%),
3. *ADAPTABILITY & FLEXIBILITY* and *PROBLEM SOLVING* (ex aequo 39%),
4. *MOTIVATION* (38%),
5. *MANAGING RESPONSIBILITY*, *CONFLICT MANAGEMENT* and *CRITICAL & STRUCTURED THINKING* (ex aequo 36%)

It must be noted that the interviewees' perception changes if they are asked which skills, if lacking, may have the greatest negative impact on their company (**question 6.5.**). In this case the five skill top list is:

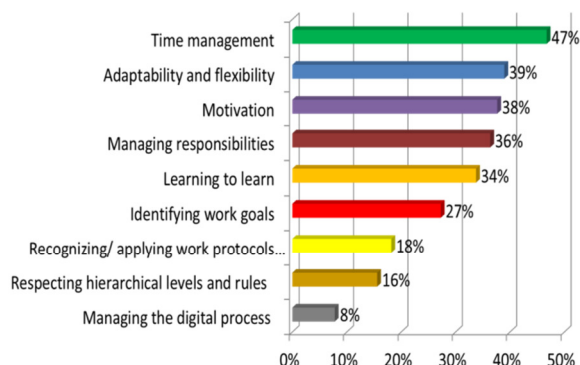
1. *MOTIVATION* (56%)
2. *DECISION MAKING* and *PROBLEM SOLVING* (ex aequo 55%)
3. *TIME MANAGEMENT*, *TEAM WORKING*, *CONFLICT MANAGEMENT*, *COMMUNICATION SKILLS*, *CREATIVITY & INNOVATION* (ex aequo 44%)
4. *ADAPTABILITY & FLEXIBILITY* (43%)
5. *IDENTIFYING WORK GOALS* (40%)

It is interesting to notice that motivation and problem solving comes up to the first and second rank and there are some "new entries", such as decision making and communication skills (they were not included in the top five in the previous answer).

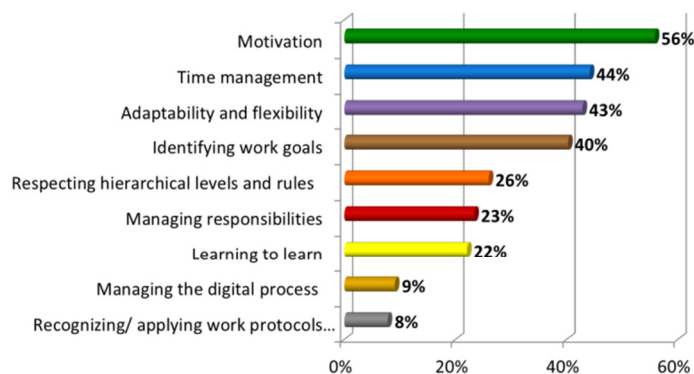
Hereinafter the graphics shows in detailed the answers given to each skills split up by cluster.

### Cluster A.

#### Current HR's Skills to be improved/lacking (Q6.4.)



#### Skills which have a negative impact on the company if lacking (Q6.5)



### Cluster B.

#### Current HR's Skills to be improved or lacking (Q6.4.)

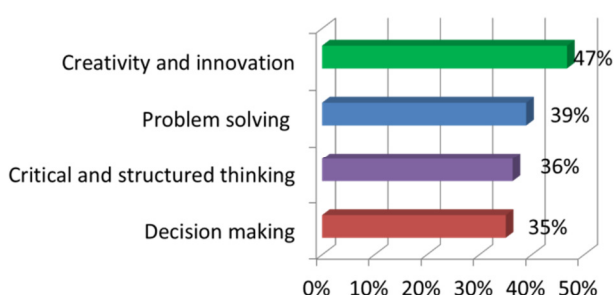


#### Skills which have a negative impact on the company if lacking (Q6.5.)

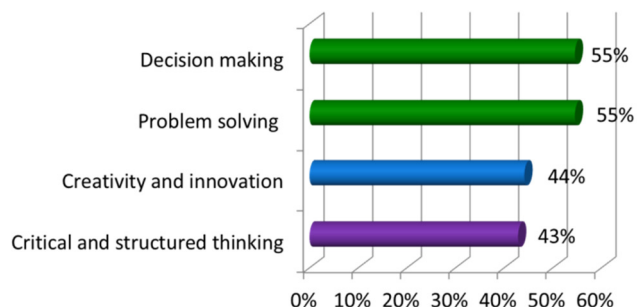


### Cluster C.

#### Current HR's Skills to be improved or lacking (Q6.4.)

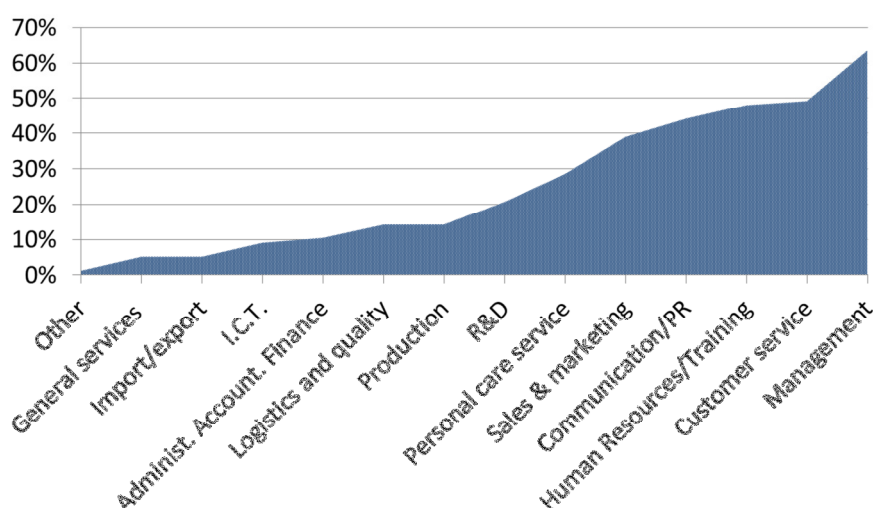


#### Skills which have a negative impact on the company if lacking (Q6.5.)





Soft skills are considered as extremely important for MHS workforce in company areas such as management, customer services, HR and training, communication and PR, sales and marketing, personal care service and R&D.



It has to be considered that labor market changes quickly. This requires mobility and adaptability from individuals who are expected to change jobs frequently and even to switch careers when their skills become obsolete.

### 3.2. Conclusion remarks of the survey

Considering the data gathered, companies consider soft skills important in the candidate's assessment, after hard skills and previous experiences (3<sup>rd</sup> rank for importance level), but only few of them know exactly how to assess such skills in the recruitment process. Indeed 57% of the sample declares to evaluate them by traditional interviews, only and 9% does not evaluate them at all. 35% says that they do not know to evaluate them and 14% declares to have never thought about it. So there is a lot of work to do:

*Companies **need to be sensitized on how to successfully evaluate Soft Skills, in rather fast time** (91% recruitment process last  $\leq$  3 months).*

Only **38%** of companies are interested in recruiting foreign people. **23%** of them consider migrants as an interesting target due to difficulties in finding native candidates for specific job profiles, **15%** because of their **soft skills**, **15%** because of their hard skills, **13%** because they accept any positions. **29%** of interested companies feels that migrants are useful to meet multi-ethnic market needs and to be a bridge with their origin countries, **55%** highlights their double-culture & multi-language skills as a strength. Among the companies which are not interested in recruiting foreign people (62%), **21%** in fact never received applications from foreigners and **16%** say that they never thought about it. Around **10%** have prejudices or prior negative experiences on foreigners.



**Companies** should be **sensitized on added values which foreigners might give to them** (diversity management) and should be **supported on bureaucracy burden**.

**Migrants** should be **empowered to improve their self-promotion abilities** (soft > hard skills) and supported to apply more to companies' job search.

The company areas where **soft skills** are mostly recognized as important are the ones where migrants are not inserted, apart from **customer services** (they result to be more employed in production, administration and IT). So their soft skills may risk not to be considered as an important value.

**Migrants** are commonly considered to have mastery of **cross-cultural awareness** (40% of companies recognize they have double culture or they easily meet multi-ethical market needs and 31% they have multi-language knowledge), but this soft skill is bottom-ranked (8th rank) by companies and it is considered as slightly important/important in all types of questions (importance, skill to be developed, negative impact if lacking). Nonetheless it results rather difficult to be found (40%).

Any **empowerment and self-promotion actions on migrants** shall take into consideration the above aspects and a **niche approach must be required**.

### 3.3. Soft skills selection

The field-survey conducted concerned 21 soft skills, but since the beginning it was clear enough that this list was too long to implement the MOSSA (assessment), MOSSE (training) and MOSP (promotion) within VHSM, especially for the experimentation phase. So we decided to select a smaller group of skills to work on during the further steps of the project, in order to simplify the management and experimentation of the assessment-training-promotion models. To do this, it was necessary to clearly classify the skills according to the labor market priorities.

For this reason the questionnaire results got for each skill were carefully analyzed combining the following indicators:

- **Significance** (the 1 to 4 score assigned to the importance of the skill by the interviewees: both mean and mode were calculated and combined): the skills resulted to be classified as "not important", "slight important", "important" and "extremely important"
- **Difficulty to be found** among the candidates during the recruitment process (the indicator was calculated on the percentage of "yes" answers). The following classification resulted:
  - very high (>50%)
  - high (40-50%)
  - medium (30-39%)
  - low (0-29%)

- The **negative impact** caused to the organization **if the skill is lacking**: the skills were classified according to their rank:
  - very high (1-2 rank)
  - high (3 rank)
  - medium (4-5 rank)
  - low (>5 rank)

The mix of the above indicators allowed us to distinguish among the skills which the candidates:

- **must absolutely** have to be hired (they are absolutely requested by companies during recruitment)
- **is better to have** (they are preferable requested by companies)
- can **easily learn at work** (they are not strictly required by companies)

The following tables show the results relevant to each cluster.

### Cluster A. Navigate the world of work

Skill	Significance level		The candidate to be hired ...	Difficulty to find	Negative impact if lacking
	(mean)	(mode)			
Adaptability & Flexibility	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	VERY HIGH (>50%)	HIGH (3 rank)
Motivation	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	HIGH (40-50%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Time management	IMP	EXT. IMP.	must have it	MEDIUM (30-39%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Managing responsibility	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	HIGH (40-50%)	LOW (6-9 rank)
Learning to learn	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	HIGH (40-50%)	LOW (6-9 rank)
Identifying work goals	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	MEDIUM (30-39%)	MEDIUM (4-5 rank)
Recognizing/ applying work protocols/values	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	MEDIUM (30-39%)	LOW (6-9 rank)
Respecting hierarchy levels & rules	SL. IMP	IMP	can learn it at work	VERY LOW (<20%)	MEDIUM (4-5 rank)
Managing the digital process	SL.IMP	IMP	can learn it at work	VERY LOW (<20%)	LOW (6-9 rank)

The only two soft skills which are not considered strategic by companies while recruiting are “respecting hierarchy levels and rules” and “managing the digital process” because each individual is assumed to be able to learn them at work. It should be noted that these skills are context-driven because companies have their own rules, procedures and tools.

The most requested ones are motivation, adaptability & flexibility, time management, managing responsibility and learning to learn.

### Cluster B – Social skills

Skill	Significance level		The candidate to be hired ...	Difficulty to find	Neg. impact if lacking
	(mean)	(mode)			
Conflict management	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	VERY HIGH (>50%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Team working	IMP	EXT. IMP.	must have it	MEDIUM (30-39%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Service Skills	IMP	EXT. IMP.	must have it	MEDIUM (30-39%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Managing the communication cycle	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	HIGH (40-50%)	MEDIUM (4-5 rank)
Communication skills	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	LOW (20-29%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
PE&I (stress management)	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	HIGH (40-50%)	MEDIUM (4-5 rank)
Leadership	SL. IMP	IMP	can learn it at work	VERY HIGH (>50%)	HIGH (3 rank)
Cross-cultural awareness	SL. IMP	IMP	can learn it at work	HIGH (40-50%)	LOW (6-9 rank)

In this cluster, too there are two skills which result bottom-ranked as regards their significance level, namely “leadership” and “cross-cultural awareness”. Nevertheless it must be noted that both skills are considered difficult or very difficult to find while recruiting and “leadership”, in particular, is considered to have a negative impact if lacking inside an organization. These data may seem contradictory, but it has to be considered that these skills strictly depend on the specific type of organization and on the specific position and role required by the companies.

## Cluster C – Achieving results

Skill	Significance level		The candidate to be hired ...	Difficulty to find	Neg. impact if lacking
	(mean)	(mode)			
Problem solving	IMP	EXT. IMP	must have it	HIGH (40-50%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Creativity & innovation	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	VERY HIGH (>50%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Decision making	IMP	IMP	is better to have it	HIGH (40-50%)	VERY HIGH (1-2 rank)
Critical and structured thinking	IMP	IMP	Is better to have it	VERY HIGH (>50%)	HIGH (3 rank)

In cluster C all the skills are considered strategic by companies from all points of views.

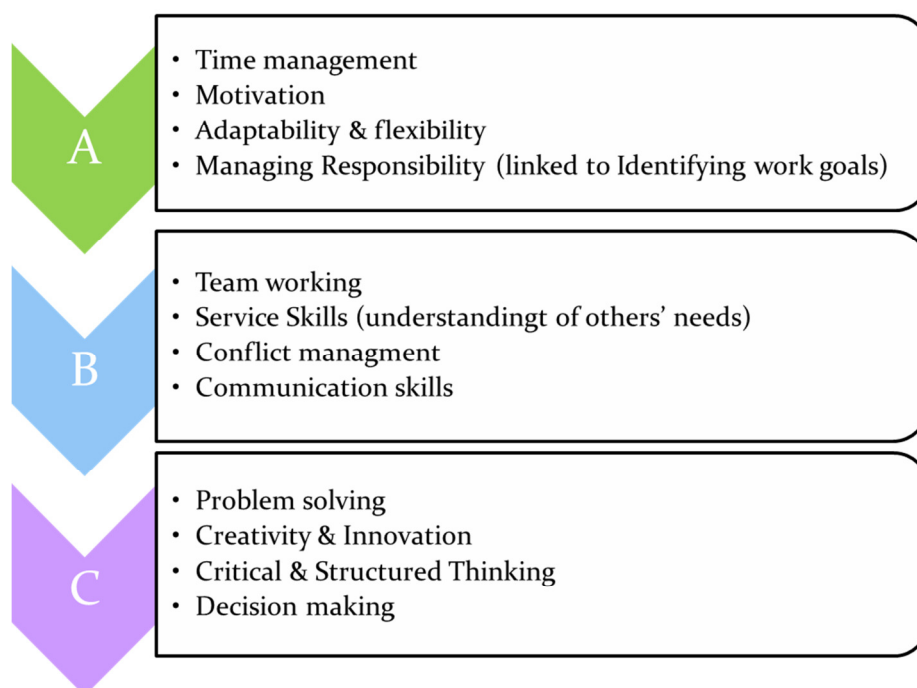
A final **soft skill Top List** resulted from the above mentioned analysis and indicators. It represents the **Common Framework of Soft Skills** proposed for the implementation of the further project phases (MOSSA<sup>32</sup>; MOSSE<sup>33</sup>; MOSP<sup>34</sup>).

<sup>32</sup> MOSSA (Model of Soft Skills Assessment) is an assessment model to be developed and tested from the VHSM top 12 common framework of skills, with the aim to evaluate the MHS migrants soft skills.

<sup>33</sup> MOSSE (Model of Soft Skills Empowerment) is a training model to be developed and tested to strengthen the MHS immigrants' 12 soft skills, as a further step of MOSSA.

<sup>34</sup> MOSP (Model of Promotion and Self Promotion) is a model to be developed and tested to strengthen the self promotion capacities of HSM migrants looking for a job or a new better position, as a further step of MOSSA and MOSSE.

Here is the resulting **top 12 Soft Skills**.



The hereinafter tables include the description of each skill in each cluster.

Cluster A: Navigating the world of work	Description
<b>A.8. Time management</b>	Capacity to respect schedules and deadlines and being on time
<b>A.4. Motivation</b>	Attitude to be energetic, enthusiastic and capacity to self-motivate and motivate others.
<b>A.3. Adaptability &amp; Flexibility</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept changes as a new challenge,</li> <li>• adapt to the new situations and modify approaches if required by the context.</li> </ul>
<b>A.7. Managing responsibility</b> (strictly linked to <b>A.1. Identifying work goals</b> <sup>(*)</sup> )	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• check to have understood the task assigned and ask assistance if needed</li> <li>• take responsibility for one's own actions without blaming anyone else for something s/he is liable for</li> </ul>

The skills **A.7. managing responsibility** and **A.1. Identifying work goals**<sup>35</sup>(<sup>\*</sup>) imply cross abilities, knowledge and attitudes.

<sup>35</sup> In VHSM it is considered as the ability to take decision about how, when, where to work developing personal insights into goals.

Cluster B: Social Skills	Description
<b>B.4. Team working</b>	Capacity to understand the benefits of working in a team and work in a collaborative style with others to achieve results.
<b>B.5. Service Skills</b> (understanding of others' needs)	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offer support to others when asked for (empowerment)</li> <li>• identify and respond to client needs (customer orientation)</li> </ul>
<b>B.7. Conflict management</b>	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detect a conflict at an early stage without being afraid of calling it "conflict";</li> <li>• manage a conflict when it arises and understand which conflicts cannot be solved;</li> <li>• mediate, acting in such a way that one's and other's goals will be achieved (win-win approach)</li> </ul>
<b>B.1. Communication skills (*)</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak clearly and politely to any typology of speakers (heads, colleagues, clients, etc.)</li> <li>• Use body language, gesture, tone/pitch of voices properly at different levels and contexts</li> <li>• Know which medium to use when communicating at different levels and contexts</li> <li>• Present information (also technical ones) clearly and in a style easily understood</li> <li>• Understand and interpret data (tables, figures, statistical data) accurately to support one's work effectively</li> </ul>

The skills **B.1. communication skills** and **B.2. managing the communication cycle**<sup>36</sup> (\*) imply cross abilities, knowledge, attitudes and share training methods and tools.

Cluster C: Achieving results	Description
<b>C.2. Problem solving</b>	Capacity to find and solve effectively routine and non-routine problems to achieve work goals, as well as to anticipate them and reflect on the outcomes
<b>C.3. Creativity &amp; Innovation</b> (strictly linked to C.2. for assessment & training)	Ability to come up with new solutions, approaches, etc. and to think "out of the box"
<b>C.4. Critical and Structured Thinking</b> (strictly linked to C.2. for assessment & training)	Ability to analyze and valorize information and accept construction criticism
<b>C.1. Decision Making</b>	Capacity to make a choice from a range of possibilities; (also prioritizing actions) and use different decision-making approaches and reflect on the outcomes of decision

<sup>36</sup> In VHSM it is considered as active listening, repeating, recollecting, interpreting (paraphrasing), empathy (being aware of others' feelings), giving feed-back.

On the basis of the analysis results, it was decided not to include the here-below soft skills for different reasons:

Skills not selected for MOSSA-MOSSE-MOSP	because...
A.1. Identifying work goals	M-H skilled migrants are assumed to have already acquired it it is strictly linked to A.7 Skill “managing responsibility”
A.2. Learning to learn	• in spite it is top ranked by companies, M-H skilled migrants are assumed to have already acquired it
A.5. Recognizing and applying work protocols/values	employers declare it is very easy to find (survey ref.)
A.6. Respecting hierarchy levels & rules	• it is assumed to be learnt at work, depending on the type of job, sector and company (survey ref.)
A.9. Managing the digital process	it is assumed to be learnt at work, depending on the type of job, sector and company (survey ref.) M-H skilled migrants are assumed to have already acquired it many materials and tools on assessment/training are already available
B.2. Managing the Communication Cycle	• such skills share the same training methods and tools used for the development of communication skills (B.1.)
B.3. Personal effectiveness and integrity (Stress Management)	• its development or strengthening requires long and complex training and deep work on oneself, which cannot be provided during VHSM experimentation
B.6. Leadership	• it is strongly linked to specific positions and mostly depends on the company’s career pathways and structure (survey ref.) • It is assumed to be learnt at work, depending on the type of job, sector and company (survey ref.)
B.8. Cross cultural awareness	• it is assumed to be learnt at work, depending on the type of job, sector and company (survey ref.) • M-H skilled migrants are assumed to have already acquired it because of their migration experience

As a consequence the above mentioned 9 skills are not included in MOSSA, MOSSE and MOSP development and experimentation.

Both desk and field analysis done within VHSM was supported by literature available at international level. So the final selection of VHSM **top 12 Soft Skills** was also compared with existing literature and survey, where we have found many confirmations to our data interpretations.

The UK National Career Centre<sup>37</sup> identifies as the 10 most important soft skills which employers look for, the following ones: communication, making decisions, showing commitment, flexibility, time management, creativity and problem solving, being a team player, accepting responsibility, ability to work under pressure (time management/ stress management): nine to ten are the same skills

<sup>37</sup> UK National Career Centre website, “What are the ‘soft skills’ employers want?”  
www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk



identified by VHSM, but if we assume that “showing commitment” means being motivated, there is a total correspondence to VHSM list.

Similarly, Doyle (2015), an expert in job searching, identifies the following 7 most important soft skills, based on recruiters’ opinions: acting as a team player, flexibility, effective communication, problem solving skills, accepting feedback (similar to “managing the cycle of communication”), confidence, creative thinking. These soft skills largely correspond to the ones resulting from VHSM survey.

Outside Europe, a US online survey conducted in 2014<sup>38</sup> among more than 2,000 firms revealed that 77% of employers thinks that soft skills are just as important as hard skills and 16% believes they are more important than hard skills when evaluating candidates for a job. Among the top ten most popular soft skills identified by the survey, seven are the same selected within VHSM, namely motivation, team-orientation, communication, flexibility, working under pressure (reminding to “time management” or “stress management”), reliability and work ethically (remind to “managing responsibility”). The research mentions additional three skills which were not considered by the present research: managing multiple priorities, having a positive attitude and being confidence (the last two ones are more related to personal attitudes rather than skills<sup>39</sup>).

In a 2008 survey of more than 2,000 businesses in the state of Washington<sup>40</sup>, employers said entry-level workers in a variety of professions were lacking in several areas, including problem solving, conflict resolution and critical observation. The following 6 skills resulted the most requested ones: communication, teamwork and collaboration, adaptability, problem solving, critical observation, conflict resolution: they are all included in VHSM.

A Bloomberg research conducted on more than 1,300 recruiters from around 600 companies identified the following most desired and hardest to find skills: communication, leadership, problem solving, strategic thinking.

At the beginning of 2015 restaurant giant McDonald's launched a three-month consultation in UK with the aim of publishing a series of recommendations later in the year. The report warned that more than 500,000 UK workers will be "significantly" held back by 2020 by a lack of skills covering communication, time-keeping and teamworking.

A survey sponsored by Microsoft in 2012 was conducted in the USA to understand the skills which will be required for high-growth and high salary jobs in the future.<sup>41</sup> Within the top 20 skills (both hard and soft) representing the most common a worker is requested to have, half of them are soft skills: the most required across all occupations are communication, customer service focus, self-motivation, time management, organization, problem solving, work ethics, team work.

The International Labour Organization<sup>42</sup> enumerates three groups of skills (teamworking, problem solving, communication skills) among the ones which make individuals more employable. More

<sup>38</sup> The survey was conducted in 2014 by CareerBuilder, which is a global leader in head hunting and has the largest career site in the USA.

<sup>39</sup> See par. 1.2. for the distinction between attitudes and skills.

<sup>40</sup> Washington Workforce Training Board (2008).

<sup>41</sup> Anderson C., Gantz J.F. (2013), *Skills requirements for tomorrow's best jobs. Helping educators provide students with skills and tools they need. White Paper*, IDC, sponsored by Microsoft, USA. The survey analysed data for 748 Standard Occupational Classifications, which is the US equivalent of the ISCO. The result was 19 clusters of occupations.

<sup>42</sup> ILO (2005), Resolution concerning youth employment, International Labour Conference, 93<sup>rd</sup> session, Geneva.



specifically the ILO identifies the following core work skills as essential for entrepreneurs: learn to learn, adaptability; effective communication; creative thinking, problem solving independently; managing oneself at work; interacting with co-workers; working in teams or groups; leading effectively as well as follow supervision.

At last, synthesizing the available literature it is possible to identify the key soft skills of highly skilled employability. Such skills are the following<sup>43</sup>:

- Professionalism (it seems more an attitude than a skill and it is too general; not included in VHSM experimentation)
- Reliability (considerable as an attitude which is transversal to some VHSM skills such as “adaptability and flexibility”, “managing responsibilities”, “time management”)
- The ability to cope with uncertainty (in VHSM it is included in “problem solving” e.i. to face and solve new problems and situation, which is in the top 12);
- The ability to work under pressure (in VHSM it is represented by what was called “personal effectiveness and integrity or stress management”), which is not included in the experimentation as its development/strengthening requires a too long and complex training, as well as deep work on him/herself)
- The ability to plan and think strategically (in VHSM it is called “managing responsibility” and is in the top 12);
- The capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking (it is the so-called “team working” in VHSM and is in the top 12);
- Good written and verbal communication skills (in VHSM it is the “communication skill” which is considered in a broader sense indeed and it is in the top 12);
- Information and Communication Technology skills (in VHSM these skills were put aside the questionnaire for two reasons: 1) they may be considered more hard than soft skills, 2) a lot of material and tools targeting them is already available. Instead we included “Managing the digital process”, but it did not result as a strategic soft skill by the interviewees).
- Creativity and self-confidence (“creativity and innovation” is among the top 12 included in VHSM experimentation);
- Good self-management (it is not classified among VHSM skills as it seems too generic)
- Time-management (it included in VHSM top 12)
- Willingness to learn (not included in the top 12 as highly skilled individuals, either native or migrants, are assumed to have already acquired this skill)
- Accept responsibility (in VHSM it is called “managing responsibilities” and it is among the top 12 of the experimentation)
- Adaptability (in VHSM it is among the top 12 together with “flexibility”)
- Conflict management (in VHSM it is included in the top 12)

Some authors include “cross cultural” skills<sup>44</sup> as strategic soft skills for the future. Such skill is not included in VHSM experimentation because the data got through the interviewees were rather contradictory on their strategic role; moreover highly skilled migrants are assumed to have already

<sup>43</sup> Adapted from McLarty, 1998; Tucker et al., 2000; Nabi, 2003; Elias and Purcell, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Davies A., Fidler D., Gorb M. (2011), *Future Work Skills 2010*, Institute for the Future for University of Phoenix Research Institute.

acquired it because of their migration experience and any individuals are assumed to learn it at work, depending on the type of job, sector and company (survey ref.)

In VHSM among the 12 top skills we have added the following ones which seem not to be classified or less frequently enumerated as soft skills by literature or surveys:

- Motivation there is plenty of research on benefits of motivation at work place: the more motivated the employees are, the more empowered the team is and the more is the teamwork and individual contribution, more profitable and successful is the business; motivation is likely to lead to optimistic and challenging attitudes at work. To adjust to the changing society, employees will need to be increasingly self-motivated, self-directed and able to anticipate needs.
- Service skills (understanding of others' needs): due to fast-changing economic, technology and social environments employers are supposed to increase their search for applicants with capabilities to better deal with customers which will be more and more ethnically and culturally diversified.
- Decision making is strongly linked to problem solving, which is a preliminary step to take effective and sustainable decisions. Due to the increasingly level of complexity of our societies and business structures, employers need more and more human resources who can feel comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, are able to face new challenges taking initiatives and evaluating the outcomes of their decisions.

### 3.4. Level of competences<sup>45</sup>

Five stages of competences have been considered. Each stage implies increasing levels of:

- **awareness** on one's own competence
- **autonomy** in the skill performance
- **responsibility** and taking risks of own actions

<b>0</b>	<b>NOVICE:</b> the candidate/worker may have theoretical knowledge but has no (or little) practical experience of the skill and needs to be supported to put into practice what s/he knows. S/he relies on explicit rules and needs constant supervision and support.	<b>Explicit rules</b> (instructions, procedures, manuals, models,...)
<b>1</b>	<b>BEGINNER PERFORMER:</b> the candidate/worker has some practical experience of the skill and can perform it under significant supervision and guidance and only in basic routine and predictable tasks; A/he still relies on explicit rules and has little individual responsibility in putting into practice the skill.	
<b>2</b>	<b>CAPABLE PERFORMER:</b> the candidate/worker performs the skill in a range of contexts relying to both explicit and implicit rules. S/he plays a sufficient level of individual responsibility and autonomy in routine actions only; s/he may need supervision in more complex circumstances;	<b>Implicit rules</b> (unspoken/ unwritten rules, cultural aspects, personal experiences/ interactions, intuition...)
<b>3</b>	<b>PROFICIENT PERFORMER:</b> the candidate/worker performs the skill in complex and non-routine contexts, with significant responsibility and autonomy using intuitive and flexible approaches. S/he has high levels of performance and is able to adapt to the context changes.	
<b>4</b>	<b>EXPERT:</b> the candidate/worker is completely autonomous to perform the skill in any situations s/he meets (even in highly complex ones); s/he has excellent level of performance, can help others to develop the skill and act as change actors (can teach to others).	

A level “zero” is included since it has to be considered that even medium-high skilled individuals with excellent technical and hard competences may have poor experience or practice in soft skills (e.g. a well educated and highly performing technicians with gaps in interpersonal communication).

A detailed grid with performance level and features is developed for each one of the 12 selected Soft Skills. It is reported in the following pages.

<sup>45</sup> This part of the handbook was drawn down by the authors with the support of Pierre L. Carrolaggi of the Laboratoire pédagogique du Greta du Velay.

### 3.4. Table of Soft Skills and level of competences

Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster A – Navigate the world of work</b>						
<b>Adaptability and flexibility</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept changes as a new challenge,</li> <li>• adapt to the new situations and modify approaches if required by the context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has difficulties in adapting to changes at work</li> <li>- Never proposes re-assignment of tasks and deadlines.</li> <li>- Does not understand the reasons why to adapt to changes in routine-situation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May adapt to adapt to changes at work but needs to be encouraged or pushed to do so.</li> <li>- Starts to propose re-assignment of tasks and deadlines.</li> <li>- Tends to adopt the same approach in different situations (repetition of past success stories).</li> <li>- May understand the reasons why to adapt to changes in routine-situation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands the need to diversify own approach according to different situations and asks for others' help or suggestions to adapt own behaviours to the needs of new situations.</li> <li>- Begins to adapt to changes at work or re-assignment of tasks and deadlines without being pushed to do so by others, but needs feedbacks and incentives.</li> <li>- In complex situations may meet some difficulties in performing adaptability and flexibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to quickly adapt to changes while remaining focused on deadlines, without any assistance.</li> <li>- Able to diversify own approach freely, if required by the context.</li> <li>- Able to modify the priority order of tasks and goals if requested by the situation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to make others understand the changes which the situation requires.</li> <li>- Able to articulate a compelling change vision for the organization where works.</li> <li>- Able to act as an aware change agent within the organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attitude to be energetic, enthusiastic and capacity to self-motivate and motivate others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has a negative vision of work and does not find any driving forces (internal or external) to encourage him/her to fulfill the tasks.</li> <li>- Has an attitude that shows that s/he is not motivated at work (or to perform the given tasks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs feedbacks or encouragement to seek new learning opportunities and to propose own ideas.</li> <li>- Needs to be motivated by others at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Begins to reflect on own performance as an occasion for further job and personal improvement.</li> <li>- Still needs others' feedback and incentives to seek new opportunities, but starts to be pro-active.</li> <li>- Starts to find self-motivation forces in some cases, but still needs to be encouraged.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has a pro-active attitude and reflects on own performance and job experience as an integral part of own development</li> <li>- Shares with peers, asks for feedbacks from others on own strengths and weaknesses to improve oneself.</li> <li>- Looks for learning opportunities which may improve his/her performance.</li> <li>- Has an endogenous motivation (coming from within).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to treat every activity as a source of insights both for him/herself and others.</li> <li>- Devotes him/herself to a continuing self-improvement (both technical and behavioural).</li> <li>- Able to motivate other persons working with him/her.</li> </ul>

Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster A – Navigate the world of work</b>						
<b>Managing responsibilities</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• check to have understood the task assigned and ask assistance if needed,</li> <li>• take responsibility for one's own actions without blaming anyone else for something s/he is liable for.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has difficulties to take own responsibility for his/her tasks.</li> <li>- Needs that others explain him/her the responsibilities which are related to the tasks s/he has been assigned to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can complete a limited set of well-defined tasks and may need guidance to identify the tasks, risks and responsibility linked with the situation and his/her role.</li> <li>- Takes responsibility for personal actions only in routine situations (where s/he can use past experiences).</li> <li>- In non-routine needs to ask for support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fully understands tasks, purposes, risks and associated responsibilities related to the situation and his/her role.</li> <li>- Analyses situations and describes its associated risks and cause-effect relations.</li> <li>- Is aware of how his/her tasks contribute to the works of others.</li> <li>- Feels personal ownership of the outcome of own actions.</li> <li>- In non-routine situations attempts to take responsibility for personal actions only under the supervision of a coach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands how own tasks and role integrate with the contribution of others.</li> <li>- Analyses situations and takes calculated risks.</li> <li>- Works independently and collectively with a strong sense of responsibility.</li> <li>- Feels personal ownership of goals, plans, decisions and outcomes, being aware of possible mistakes.</li> <li>- In non-routine situations takes responsibility for personal actions independently of others and identifies changes to improve collective outputs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Considers own tasks and role in terms of his/her contribution to achieve broader goals inside the organization.</li> <li>- Analyses situations, takes risks and decisions also when not all information is available, if the situation requires a quick intervention.</li> <li>- Able to adapt and renegotiate roles and responsibilities according to the circumstances.</li> <li>- Highly autonomous, takes full responsibility and ownership for all aspects of own work.</li> <li>- Able to recognize and remind others their own responsibilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Time management</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be punctual</li> <li>• Organize and respect schedules, determining priorities</li> <li>• Manage workflows and meetings efficiently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has difficulties in being on time and respect deadlines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs helps to rightly prioritize tasks and goals.</li> <li>- Needs to refer to fixed frames or past experiences to respect schedules: is able to get work done on time only in routine-situations.</li> <li>- Interruptions or programme changes may invalidate his/her time effectiveness and efficiency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can work on several tasks or projects at the same time dividing time and resources appropriately, not only in routine but also in more complex situations.</li> <li>- In teams can act as a good timekeeper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly able to evaluate the priority of tasks and work in every situation.</li> <li>- Has a high autonomy and self-discipline in controlling and managing interruptions or changes and assuring time-effectiveness and time-efficiency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to manage both one's and others' time</li> <li>- Able to guarantee time-effectiveness and time efficiency.</li> <li>- Able to lead the others to respect deadlines.</li> </ul>

Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster B – Social Skills</b>						
<b>Communication skills</b>	<p>Ability in active listening, repeating, recollecting, interpreting (paraphrasing), empathizing (being aware of others' feelings), giving feed-back.</p> <p>Capacity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• speak clearly and politely to any typology of speakers (heads, colleagues, clients, etc.),</li> <li>• use body language, gesture, tone/pitch of voices properly at different levels and contexts,</li> <li>• know which medium to use when communicating at different levels and contexts,</li> <li>• present information (including technical) clearly in a style easily understandable,</li> <li>• understand and interpret data (tables, figures, statistical data) accurately to support one's work effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generally understands what to communicate, with whom and how in routine work and highly familiar situations.</li> <li>- Is not properly aware of different types of communication and how communication may vary according to the different contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is aware of different types of communication (written, spoken, non-verbal) understanding the main features in different contexts (formal, informal, scientific, journalistic...) and how they are important for social interaction.</li> <li>- Is aware of body language and attempts to use it properly in different contexts (non-verbal communication).</li> <li>- Identifies (and learns to follow) communication practices and protocols in use within the organization.</li> <li>- Understands and uses data to support own work.</li> <li>- Follows communication protocols.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands the variability of language and communication forms over time and in different contexts.</li> <li>- Is able to speak and write clearly and express his/her opinions concisely, give feedbacks, understand others and make others understand.</li> <li>- Is able to use properly body language in different contexts.</li> <li>- Understands what to communicate, with whom and how, in routine work situations and in a limited set of unfamiliar situations.</li> <li>- Is able to paraphrase and make additional questions to verify if s/he has understood.</li> <li>- Learns how to identify the requirements of less familiar contexts.</li> <li>- Is able to accurately interpret data and select the appropriate protocols and conventions when communicating in a range of familiar work contexts.</li> <li>- Attempts to use and adapt communication protocols to the context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is able to express his/her opinion (either in favour or against) both in written and spoken language in a convincing manner.</li> <li>- Evaluate pros and cons of media and strategies communication.</li> <li>- Is able to organize information in a systematic way using active listening.</li> <li>- Manages effectively multi-communication channels.</li> <li>- Takes into consideration opinions and points of view of others when communicating and analyses feedbacks.</li> <li>- Is able to understand and recognize the implication of implicit rules governing communication (who communicates with whom, how, goals, status and power of persons involved).</li> <li>- Seeks new strategies in new situations and select appropriate communication protocols and conventions in a broad range of work situations, being aware of the impacts of own choices.</li> <li>- Feels confident in intercultural communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is able to approach the opinions and arguments of others with an open mind attitude and engage in constructive and critical dialogue in any contexts and circumstances.</li> <li>- Is able to efficaciously formulate arguments and disapprovals without adopting defensive or aggressive attitudes.</li> <li>- Takes accounts of other points of view and is highly sensitive to the impact of both explicit and implicit communication practices and protocols.</li> <li>- Discloses the reactions to his/her message in advance by adapting his/her communication consequently.</li> <li>- Is confident in speaking in a group and in public contexts.</li> <li>- Manages the communication cycle selecting, using and adapting practices and processes in order to optimize maximum impact.</li> <li>- Has a positive pro-attitude towards intercultural communication in order to find personal and professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>

Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster B – Social Skills</b>						
<b>Team working</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity to work in a team and in a collaborative style to achieve results.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tends to work alone. Is not able to find his/her place in a working group.</li> <li>Does not share information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understands the importance of team working, but needs to be encouraged to contribute to workgroup process.</li> <li>Is aware of personal team working skills.</li> <li>Seeks to cooperate with others in immediate work context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperates with others as part of familiar routine activities and contributes to specific activities which require joint responsibility and reporting.</li> <li>Plays an active roles in workgroup discussions paying attention to the perspectives of others.</li> <li>Voluntarily keeps others informed of his/her work, shares information, discusses problems and seeks/give help when required.</li> <li>Is aware of consequences of behaviours which may undermine effective interpersonal relations and group cohesion (e.g. malicious gossip, individual work).</li> <li>Begins to establish connections with others who can contribute to effective work outcomes (e.g. builds up and cultivates informal networks).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperates with others to achieve common outcomes</li> <li>Is able to adapt own behavior when working in team and plays an active role in facilitating group interaction.</li> <li>Is able to influence the group direction and plays a lead role on occasion.</li> <li>Looks for strengths in others and finds ways to work with them sharing knowledge, experiences and ideas freely.</li> <li>Avoids behaviours which may undermine effective interpersonal relations and group cohesion (e.g. private criticisms, prejudices, breaking confidences).</li> <li>Able to set a good example for others within the work team.</li> <li>Give others specific feedback information rather than blanket positive or negative statements.</li> <li>Begins to build and cultivate formal and informal networks within and beyond work context (e.g. community of practices, professional associations...).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invests time and energy in building and maintaining effective working relations.</li> <li>Encourages a collaborative culture within own sphere of influence and acts as a facilitator of group cohesion (encourages an active participation of all members and valorizes others' contribution).</li> <li>Plays a lead role in all situations which require effective collaboration, being able to influence, engage and motivate others (also those who are geographically dispersed).</li> <li>Gives feedback to others in a way that everyone can easily understand.</li> <li>Actively builds formal and informal networks within and beyond work context, including key people (e.g. theme experts, think tanks, decision makers...).</li> </ul>



Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster B – Social Skills</b>						
<b>Conflict management</b>	<p>Ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detect a conflict at an early stage without being afraid of calling it "conflict";</li> <li>• manage a conflict when it arises (and understand which conflicts cannot be solved)</li> <li>• mediate, acting in such a way that one's and other's goals will be achieved (win-win approach).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increases the conflicts or reduce the possibilities to solve them by remaining firm on his/her position without making efforts to change his/her mind or attitude</li> <li>- Is often a source of conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With guidance detects a conflict and identify how many parties are involved in it.</li> <li>- With guidance may identify impacts of own emotions and behaviours on others which may lead to conflict in a work situation.</li> <li>- If encouraged, may seek support from peers or supervisors when dealing with conflicts.</li> <li>- Let the conflict be managed by others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listen freely the perspectives of each party involved in the conflict and reports accurately and objectively.</li> <li>- Understands the difference between solving and managing a conflict and understands when a conflict cannot be solved.</li> <li>- Tries to find solutions, recognizes and use a small set of strategies to contain the conflict avoiding further escalation.</li> <li>- If unable to resolve a major conflict directly, seeks advice and assistance of others in accordance with workplace protocols.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listen freely and asks questions to clarify concerns and needs in order to identify the root problem.</li> <li>- Reflects on personal reactions to behaviours and perspectives which may undermine work relationships and contribute to conflict.</li> <li>- Use a wide set of strategies to contain and manage the conflict, avoiding further escalation.</li> <li>- If involved personally in a conflict, is able to control his/her behaviours when other explain their feelings and different perspectives, resisting blaming or becoming defensive or aggressive.</li> <li>- Seeks specialist advice if necessary.</li> <li>- Reflects on conflict resolution process and outcomes, being aware that a conflict may arise from the resolution way of a previous one.</li> <li>- Is aware of cultural factors that can be sources of conflicts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify in advance, also intuitively, possible conflicts which may occur in the future and seeks to establish a comprehension climate avoiding the burst of contrasts.</li> <li>- Acts pro-actively to reduce the conflicting atmosphere clearing real needs and issues of all the parties involved.</li> <li>- Able to confront problems quickly and directly, engage with counterparts to reach agreement according to a win-win approach (where all the parties can optimize results).</li> <li>- Able to come up with a conflict resolution using a wide range of strategies on the basis of a plan of actions envisaging shared responsibility for the solution and consequences.</li> <li>- Able to act as a negotiator both inside the organization and outside with counterparts from other cultures.</li> </ul>



Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster B – Social Skills</b>						
<b>Service skills (understanding of others' needs)</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offer support to others (colleagues, co-workers and clients),</li> <li>• identify and respond to client needs (customer orientation),</li> <li>• deal politely with clients problems (customer orientation).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performs his/her work without taking into account formal and informal needs of others (employees or clients)</li> <li>- Needs to perform back office tasks because s/he has difficulties to manage relations with clients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands that everybody has one's own need to be satisfied.</li> <li>- Able to actively listen clients'/others' needs and communicate politely.</li> <li>- Offers help if asked.</li> <li>- Able to identify clients'/others' needs and use past experiences to meet them appropriately (routine work situation).</li> <li>- In complex situation needs guidance in fitting clients'/others' needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands clients'/others' perspectives.</li> <li>- Able to take care of clients'/others' claims and manage them politely, understanding when to involve a supervisor.</li> <li>- Offers help voluntarily.</li> <li>- Communicates with clients/others giving reports on how their needs have been fit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to adapt to clients'/others' needs.</li> <li>- Able to analyse the clients'/others' interests as well as the constraints of the situation.</li> <li>- Is highly sensitive to the impact of customers' services and customers' satisfaction within the organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposes new solutions to improve customers' services.</li> <li>- Encourages a customer-oriented attitude within the organization (both external and internal customer driven).</li> </ul>

Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster C – Achieving results</b>						
<b>Decision making</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make a choice from a range of possibilities prioritizing actions,</li> <li>• use different decision-making approaches and reflect on the outcomes of decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Always relies on superiors or colleagues to take decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follows step by step, instructions (verbal or written) for routine decisions directly relevant to own role, selecting from a limited set of pre-determined options.</li> <li>- When faced with decisions on issues not clearly covered by guidelines, needs encouragement to seek assistance from others.</li> <li>- Takes responsibility for routine low-impact decisions within familiar situations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes decisions on the basis of the guidelines and protocols of the organization, being able to interpret and adapt them to unfamiliar work situations.</li> <li>- Takes responsibility for routine and low-impact decisions within familiar work contexts and in situations related to own role.</li> <li>- If the situation is not clear enough, seeks assistance and asks for suggestions to more competent peers or supervisors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes decisions quickly and intuitively in routine situations which require immediate attention relying to key variables based on past experience or to new variables resulting from the analysis of the context.</li> <li>- Makes decisions in non-routine situations and, in case specific rules or protocols are absent, identifies and evaluates different options.</li> <li>- Takes responsibility for the outcomes of routine and non-routine decisions related to own role.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has a diversified approach to decision making, based on the awareness that there is no pre-defined formula and that “it all depends” on context.</li> <li>- Makes rapid decisions when required in any situations, based on multi-factor analysis and risk evaluation with a systemic and analytical diagnosis of the context.</li> <li>- Takes responsibility for high impact decisions in complex situations with involvement of many variables/constraints.</li> <li>- Can take difficult decisions and have them accepted/supported by others (also if they have negative impact on one side).</li> </ul>
<b>Problem solving</b>	Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find and solve effectively routine and non-routine problems to achieve work goals,</li> <li>• anticipate problems and reflect on the outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has difficulty to respond to any problems which may arise at work (even the routine ones).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May recognize and respond to highly routine problems in the work context.</li> <li>- Follows, step by step instructions to solve a small set of routine problems strictly linked to own role.</li> <li>- Needs encouragement to seek assistance from others in unfamiliar work situations.</li> <li>- If no instruction or advice is available, attempts to use a “trial and error” approach with a limited awareness of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizes and responds quickly to predictable and less predictable problems in familiar work contexts.</li> <li>- Understands when to take responsibility for problem solving or to notify others and ask for others assistance.</li> <li>- When tackling unfamiliar problems, applies formal procedures, but is able to split up complex issues into smaller manageable parts and evaluate different options to act.</li> <li>- When using a “trial and error”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizes and anticipates a certain set of problems, being able to detect early warning signs and adopt contingency plans.</li> <li>- Able to analyse the general problem by splitting it into smaller problems according to their “cause and effect” relation.</li> <li>- Able to re-define the problem and analyse the underlying causes, even the most concealed ones (explicit and implicit problems).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizes and anticipates complex problems involving multiple variables.</li> <li>- Recognizes that the problem may be surface indicator of a deeper one and is able to define the “tree of problems” based on “cause and effect” relations so as to identify the prime root cause.</li> <li>- Use both analytical and lateral thinking techniques to identify issues and generate possible solutions.</li> <li>- Invest time to reflect on the</li> </ul>

			<p>the potential impact of solutions envisaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In case of unfamiliar situations tries to solve problems by applying to past success-stories and solutions which may appear to have some relevance to the current situation.</li> </ul>	<p>approach has full awareness of the potential impact of solutions envisaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeks feedbacks and advice before implementing a solution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When tackling with new and complex problems, is able to combine analytical processes and intuition, including lateral thinking, to generate possible new solutions.</li> </ul>	<p>outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May ask for further information or advice from relevant experts.</li> </ul>
Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster C – Achieving results</b>						
<b>Creativity and innovation</b>	<p>Ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• come up with new solutions, approaches, etc.,</li> <li>• think “out of the box”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Always relies on others to find a solution to a new situation.</li> <li>- Does not support any new idea that can potentially create change in his/her working environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May recognize the opportunities for the application of new ideas proposed by others when they imply immediate and obvious benefits to his/her job.</li> <li>- Has limited awareness of the difference between analytical and lateral thinking.</li> <li>- Needs to be encouraged to think “out of the box”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizes the value of creativity for the organization and his/her work.</li> <li>- Supports the application of new ideas proposed by others when the benefits to his/her work are immediately obvious.</li> <li>- Contributes to the design and adoption of new approaches and methods.</li> <li>- When the solution to a problem is not obvious, recognizes the value of looking for different perspectives.</li> <li>- Applies some basic principles of analytical and lateral thinking.</li> <li>- Needs to be encouraged to think “out of the box”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognizes that the current way of working is not the only one way of doing something and takes mental risks to explore other possibilities.</li> <li>- Invests time and energy in looking for new ideas, opportunities, changes in procedures.</li> <li>- Takes advantages from others perspectives and ideas as a stepping stones to “think out of the box”, being able to integrate and adapt others’ perspectives.</li> <li>- Uses a combination of analytical and lateral thinking to tailor ideas to suit needs.</li> <li>- Feels free to express own flow of ideas and contributes to create a comfortable climate where others feel free to suggest, explore, adapt and adopt new ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uses mental questioning and doubting to explore news ideas in work situation (e.g. “is this the only way...?”, “are there better ways to...?” , “shouldn’t be better if we....”).</li> <li>- Reframes and redefines problems in order to get new perspectives and generate new ideas.</li> <li>- Is used to thinking “outside of the box” and rethinking current approaches or ideas.</li> <li>- Is able to explore and incubate new ideas which can lead to radical changes from the current situation.</li> <li>- Acts as a facilitator for creativity and innovation.</li> </ul>

Skill	Skill description	0 (novice)	1 (Beginner performer)	2 (Capable performer)	3 (Proficient performer)	4 (Expert)
<b>Cluster C – Achieving results</b>						
<b>Critical and structured thinking</b>	Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyze and valorize information,</li> <li>• accept construction criticism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Has difficulties in thinking critically (evaluating a situation from different points of views)</li> <li>- Does not accept critics by others also when they might be constructive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Needs to be encouraged to think critically.</li> <li>- Understands that criticism may be constructive, but needs still to be helped to accept it as an opportunity for own development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understands that others' construction criticism may be an opportunity for own development.</li> <li>- Attempts to think critically (evaluating a situation from different or non-conventional points of views).</li> <li>- Understands not only what s/he is learning but also why and how it can be used at work..</li> <li>- Is able to use own priorities and criteria to select and adapt information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyses, evaluates, selects information and valorizes it according to the context needs and constraints using different and non-conventional points of views.</li> <li>- Is able to look beyond immediate application of the information acquired and to envisage future implications.</li> <li>- Is able to define purposes and objectives which are clear, reasonable, and fair, but also others that may appear unclear, inconsistent, unrealistic, and unfair.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is able to decide if an information or idea is worth, combining analysis and intuition, also if it is non-conventional.</li> <li>- Is able to rethink an idea or redesign information.</li> <li>- Help and leads the others' to look beyond immediate application of the information acquired and to envisage future implications.</li> </ul>

## ANNEX A

### A.1. Organizations involved in the survey

#### Austria:

**10** organizations interviewed: ❖ a small book store, ❖ a big public employment centre ❖ a medium non-profit association working in the field of continuing training ❖ a micro advisory and training non-profit company ❖ a small media company (magazine) ❖ a medium non-profit association in the environmental field ❖ a big travel agency ❖ a small non profit company working in the field of continuing education ❖ a small car dealer ❖ a medium do-it-yourself store

#### Bulgaria

**10** organizations interviewed: ❖ Arte Translation Agency – Dobrich, [www.artedoc.com](http://www.artedoc.com) ❖ Career Center at International University College – Dobrich, [www.vumk.eu](http://www.vumk.eu) ❖ Dobrich Chamber of Commerce and Industry, [www.cci.dobrich.net](http://www.cci.dobrich.net) ❖ Econivest Assets – Devnya, (large enterprise in waste management, <http://ekozaavod.com>) ❖ Ecotel AD – Dobrich, (hotel management company), ❖ E-Tours – Dobrich, (small company, tour agency), <http://e-tours.bg> ❖ Inter Accounting House - Varna, (small company, accounting house, [www.inter-agency.eu](http://www.inter-agency.eu)) ❖ International Solutions Youth Organization, Dobrich, ❖ Plastchim – Aksakovo, (large production enterprise), [www.plastchim-t.com](http://www.plastchim-t.com) ❖ Varna Business Agency - Varna, ([www.vba.bg](http://www.vba.bg)).

#### France

**11** organizations interviewed: ❖ CFAS (Regional apprenticeship organisation), [www.cfas-auvergne.com](http://www.cfas-auvergne.com) ❖ Centre Hospitalier Sainte Marie (association, one of the main local employers), [www.groupe-sainte-marie.fr](http://www.groupe-sainte-marie.fr) ❖ CIO (career guidance and public counselling services), ❖ CIDFF Haute-Loire (association for equal rights), [www.cidf43.com](http://www.cidf43.com) ❖ Gagne (medium sized company from building sector) [www.gagne.fr](http://www.gagne.fr) ❖ Laboratoires MSD Chibret (medium sized company belonging to a pharmaceutical group), [www.msd-france.fr](http://www.msd-france.fr) ❖ Mission Locale Jeune-Loire (employers' association), [www.mljeuneloire.org](http://www.mljeuneloire.org) ❖ Mission Locale du Velay (association promoting youth social and labour inclusion) [www.missionlocalevelay.fr](http://www.missionlocalevelay.fr) ❖ Pole Emploi, ville de Monistrol-sur-Loire (public job centre), ❖ UT 43 DIRECCTE Auvergne (Regional directorate of companies, work and employment) [www.auvergne.direccte.gouv.fr](http://www.auvergne.direccte.gouv.fr) ❖ VELFOR PLAST (plastics manufacturing company) ([www.velfor.com](http://www.velfor.com)).

#### Germany

**12** organizations interviewed: ❖ 2 Universities ❖ 2 large companies from media sector (TV and radio) ❖ a large company from engineering ❖ a medium company from ITC sector ❖ a medium manufacturing company in the electronic and energy sectors ❖ a small company in the digital media sector ❖ a large public employment agency ❖ 2 small insurance companies ❖ a small education organization.

#### Italy

**23** organizations interviewed: ❖ Alte Professionalità e Grandi Clienti Coordinamento Centri per l'Impiego – Città Metropolitana Torino (High-Skilled Profiles Job Centre - Metropolitan City of Torino), [www.cittametropolitana.torino.it/cms](http://www.cittametropolitana.torino.it/cms) ❖ Altran Italia Spa (large private company working in the field of

Innovation and high-tech engineering consulting), [www.altran.it](http://www.altran.it) ❖ API Formazione Srl (training centre of SME Association), [www.apiform.to.it](http://www.apiform.to.it) ❖ Associazione ASAI (non profit large association), [www.asai.it](http://www.asai.it) ❖ Cooperativa ORSO Scs (training and labour services), [www.cooperativaorso.it](http://www.cooperativaorso.it) ❖ Della Rava e della Fava (micro cooperative company trading organic food products), [www.ravafava.it](http://www.ravafava.it) ❖ Dimensione Spa (medium company from building sector), [www.gruppodimensione.com](http://www.gruppodimensione.com) ❖ Facet Srl (medium manufacturing company in the automotive field), [www.facet.it](http://www.facet.it) ❖ Graziadio & C. (small manufacturing company from mechanical sector), [www.graziadio.it](http://www.graziadio.it) ❖ Job centre of a Local Municipality ❖ Lanzi Srl (small company from trade sector), [www.lanzi.easybit.it](http://www.lanzi.easybit.it) ❖ M\*\* Bun M2Srl (micro food company, slow fast food), [www.mbun.it](http://www.mbun.it) ❖ micro company from ICT sector ❖ Orienta Spa (job services private medium company), [www.orienta.net](http://www.orienta.net) ❖ Professione Lavoro Srl (micro private company, business services), [www.proflavoro.it](http://www.proflavoro.it) ❖ Regola Srl (small company from ICT sector), [www.regola.it](http://www.regola.it) ❖ RES NOVA Spa (medium company in the field of services and Facility Management) ❖ SAP Srl (small manufacturing company from mechanical sector), [www.sapsrl.com](http://www.sapsrl.com) ❖ Scanferla Bruno Srl (small manufacturing company from mechanical sector), [www.scanferla.com](http://www.scanferla.com) ❖ small manufacturing company from IT sector ❖ small company from mechanical sector ❖ Taurus'80 Spa (medium manufacturing company from mechanical sector), [www.taurus80.it](http://www.taurus80.it) ❖ Tosi F.lli Srl (medium manufacturing company from mechanical sector), [www.tosi.it](http://www.tosi.it) ❖ Unimpiego Confindustria Srl (labour and company services), [www.unimpiego.it](http://www.unimpiego.it);

## Sweeden

**11** organizations interviewed: ❖ Foundation (with morethan 500 employees), ❖ 4 private profit companies (1 micro, 2 small, 1 large), ❖ 3 public bodies with more than 500 employees), ❖ 1 public/private small organization, ❖ 2 career centres (1 profit and 1 nonprofit).

Belonging sectors: building, IT, food chain, training, labour market services and recruiting, social insurance and public services.

## A.2. Questionnaires used in the survey (English version)

### VHSM PROJECT - SOFT SKILLS FOR WORK

#### Employers' and recruiters' interview and questionnaire on Soft Skills evaluation

#### Typology A. Companies

##### Section 1. Interviewee data

- 1.1.Name of the contact person.....  
 1.2.contact (phone/e-mail).....  
 1.3.position:  
☐ Entrepreneur ☐ General Manager, CEO, his/her deputy  
☐ Human Resources Manager ☐ Department Manager (specify the area.....)  
☐ Other (specify.....)

##### Section 2. Organization data

- 2.1.Organization name.....  
 2.2.Sector of activity.....  
 2.3.Address.....2.4.City.....  
 2.5.Country .....2.6.Web-site.....

##### 2.7. Type of Organization:

- ☐ Private owned company ☐ Public/Private company (public bodies %.....)  
☐ Co-operative ☐ Public Body  
☐ Chamber of Commerce ☐ Foundation  
☐ Association – NGO ☐ Employers Association  
☐ University ☐ Training agency  
☐ Public Employment Centre ☐ Career Centre, Job placement  
☐ Other (specify .....

##### 2.8.Size<sup>46</sup>

- ☐ Micro ☐ Small ☐ Medium ☐ Big ☐ Group

##### 2.9.Profit orientation

- ☐ Profit oriented ☐ Not-for-profit

##### 2.10.Number of employees

- ☐ < 10 ☐ 11 – 49 ☐ 50 – 249 ☐ 250 – 499 ☐ > 500

##### Section 3. Recruiting policies

##### 3. 1 How does your company conduct candidate search? (more choices are possible)

- ☐ Educational Institutions (School, University, CVET agency)  
☐ Company web site ☐ On line job search site  
☐ Social Networking ☐ Local newspapers  
☐ Job fairs ☐ Word of mouth  
☐ Public Employment Services ☐ Temporary Employment Services

<sup>46</sup> Referred to the EU definition of SMEs (EC, *The new SME definition User guide*):

Micro enterprise: < 10 employees and ≤ 2 million euro turnover or annual balance sheet  
 Small enterprise: <50employees and ≤ 10 million euro turnover or annual balance sheet  
 Medium enterprise: <250 employees and ≤ 43 million euro turnover or annual balance sheet

- ☐ Head-hunter/placement firm
 ☐ Recruitment from other companies  
☐ Other (specify.....)

### 3.2 How long does the candidate search last on the average?

- ☐ Few days
 ☐ 1-2 weeks  
☐ Less than 1 month
 ☐ 1 – 3 months  
☐ 4 – 6 months
 ☐ More than 6 months

### 3.3. How does your company test medium/high-skilled<sup>47</sup> candidates competencies<sup>48</sup> (knowledge, basic, soft & hard skills)?

- ☐ Interview with HR manager
 ☐ Interview with the manager of the involved sector  
☐ Simulation (assignment of a concrete task and time for accomplishing it)  
☐ Group assessment
 ☐ Written test  
☐ Internship/trial period
 ☐ Other (specify ..... )

### 3.4 How does your company test candidates' soft skills?

- ☐ Interview
 ☐ Aptitude test  
☐ Group assessment
 ☐ We do not test soft skills  
☐ Simulation (assignment of a concrete task and time for accomplishing it)  
☐ Other (specify ..... )

### 3.5 Which difficulties does your company generally encounter in recruiting personnel as regarding soft skills?

- ☐ difficulties in skills assessment (how to evaluate them?)  
☐ long-time requested for proper evaluation  
☐ candidates may conceal behaviours/manners
 ☐ never thought about it  
☐ other (specify ..... )

### 3.6 Are these difficulties supposed to be general or are they related to a specific area?

- ☐ General
 ☐ Specific (specify ..... )

### 3.7 In your experience, when recruiting high-skilled human resources which importance does your company assign to each of the following criteria?

	Not important	Slightly important	Important	Extremely important
Educational background (diploma, certificates)				
Prior working experience				
Soft skills (non-job specific abilities, such as communication, problem solving, team working, flexibility, etc.)				
Hard skills (job-specific knowledge and abilities)				
Foreign languages				
Computer/IT skills				
References				
Candidate living in the neighborhood				

<sup>47</sup> By **medium and high-skilled** human resources we mean people with at least a high-school diploma (EQF ≥ 4)

<sup>48</sup> By **Soft Skills** we mean all those **non-technical and non-job specific abilities and knowledge** which are closely connected with personal attitudes, such as social abilities (communication, team working, empathy, etc.) and management abilities (decision making, problem solving, time keeping, etc.).

Soft skills differ from **Hard or Technical skills** which are strictly job-specific and closely connected with knowledge and proved by academic certificates and diplomas. They depend on the company activity, job role and field of activity.

Soft skills also differ from **Basic Skills** which are related to numeracy, literacy, language and office automation. Medium and High-Skilled people are assumed to have full mastery of basic skills.



Notes and further comments

#### Section 4. Training

**4.1 Did your company carry out training for your employees in the last 3 years or are you planning training for the current year?**

☐ yes ☐ no

**4.2 If no, why?**

☐ it is too costly ☐ we have no time to implement training actions  
☐ employees have no time to attend courses (too much work to do)  
☐ we do not need it ☐ other (specify.....)

**4.3 If yes, it preferable concerns** (more choices are possible)

☐ mainly hard skills ☐ mainly soft skills ☐ both hard and soft skills  
☐ only compulsory training (e.g. safety measures) ☐ IT  
☐ foreign languages

**4.4 Which company departments/roles are mainly involved in training?** (more choices are possible)

**Departments:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Administration, accountancy, finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication/PR
<input type="checkbox"/> Customer service	<input type="checkbox"/> General services (i.e. maintenance)
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources – Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Import/export
<input type="checkbox"/> IT	<input type="checkbox"/> Logistics and quality
<input type="checkbox"/> Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal care service
<input type="checkbox"/> Production	<input type="checkbox"/> R&D
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales & marketing	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify .....)

**Roles:**

☐ managers/supervisors ☐ employees ☐ workers

**4.5 How does your company consider skills acquisition?**

**Soft skills** ☐ a cost ☐ a benefit ☐ a responsibility of the company  
☐ a responsibility of the employee ☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

**Hard skills** ☐ a cost ☐ a benefit ☐ a responsibility of the company  
☐ a responsibility of the employee ☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

**Technical knowledge** ☐ a cost ☐ a benefit ☐ a responsibility of the company  
☐ a responsibility of the employee ☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

Notes and further comments

## Section 5. Migrants

### 5.1 Are there any foreigners within your organization workforce?

☐ yes ☐ no If yes, in which percentage? .....

### 5.2 From which countries? (more choices are possible)

☐ UE countries ☐ other European countries (extra UE)  
☐ Africa ☐ Asia ☐ Middle East  
☐ Latin America ☐ Other (specify .....)

### 5.3. Are they:

☐ Unskilled<sup>49</sup>? ☐ Semi-skilled<sup>50</sup>? ☐ Skilled<sup>51</sup>? ☐ Highly skilled<sup>52</sup>

### 5.4 In which department/area of your company are they occupied? (more choices are possible)

☐ Administration, accountancy, finance ☐ Communication/PR  
☐ Customer service ☐ General services (i.e. maintenance)  
☐ Human Resources – Training ☐ Import/export  
☐ IT ☐ Logistics and quality  
☐ Management ☐ Personal care service  
☐ Production ☐ R&D  
☐ Sales & marketing ☐ Other (specify .....)

### 5.5 May your company be interested in recruiting foreign employees?

☐ yes ☐ no

### 5.6 If no, why?

☐ never thought about it ☐ never received applications  
☐ bad experience in the past ☐ they might have a negative impact on the working climate  
☐ bureaucratic problems ☐ other (specify .....)

### 5.7 If yes, why?

☐ because of their ethnic specialization  
☐ they work better than others  
☐ because of their hard skills (technical/professional skills /ethnic specialization)  
☐ because of their soft skills (motivation, resilience, adaptability in pressure situation)  
☐ their education level/qualification are often higher than the tasks they are effectively assigned to  
☐ they cost less  
☐ they accept positions that natives generally do not accept  
☐ they are more available to do overwork or to work during the weekend  
☐ companies have shortage of some specific profiles  
☐ other (specify .....)

### 5.8 In your opinion which added value may immigrants give to your company? (more choices are possible)

☐ multi-language knowledge ☐ double culture  
☐ bridge reference with their countries of origin  
☐ meet multi-ethnic market needs ☐ open-mind thinking

49 Unskilled: person who does simple operations, which require no independent judgment or previous experience.

50 Semi-skilled: person who is assigned to routine operations, which require little independent judgment and where important decisions are made by others.

51 Skilled: person exercises considerable autonomy and independent judgment, discharging his duties with responsibility.

52 Highly skilled: person who, besides working efficiently in autonomy, with independent judgment and taking his responsibilities, supervises efficiently the work of other skilled employees.

☐ Other (specify .....)

**5.9 Are there special skills which your company requires to high-skilled migrants applying for a position?**

Notes and further comments

## Section 6. Soft skills

**6.1** Hereinafter you find a list of Social Skills grouped up by 3 clusters: **A. Navigating the world of work**, **B. Social Skills**, **C. Achieving results**. Each cluster contains a list of specific skills with an appropriate description. Please indicate the importance which your company assign to each skill, when looking for new high-skilled workforce:

### Legend:

- 1. Not important** = The skill is not considered strategic by the company at all and the candidate must not prove to have it to be hired
- 2. Slightly important** = Proving the skill by the candidate may be an advantage for the company, but the choice of her/his hiring is not at risk if s/he has not it. S/he is assumed to learn it at work
- 3. Important** = The candidate is much appreciated if s/he prove to have this skill. Her/his hiring will strongly depend on proving this skill)
- 4. Extremely important** = The candidate must absolutely have this skill to be hired. In case s/he has not, s/he is not hired

A. Navigate the world of work	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know
<b>Identifying work goals</b> Ability to take decision about how, when, where to work, developing personal insights into goals							
<b>Learning to learn</b> Attitude to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>curiosity (questioning, looking for information);</li> <li>pursue one's own learning according to one's needs (responsibility for one's own self-development);</li> <li>be aware of opportunities</li> </ul>							

	1	2	3	4	Yes	No	I don't know
<b>Adaptability and flexibility</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accept changes as a new challenge;</li> <li>adapt to new situations and modify approaches if required by the context</li> </ul>							
<b>Motivation</b> Attitude to be energetic and enthusiastic and capacity to self-motivate and motivate others							
<b>Recognizing/ applying work protocols and values</b> Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize and apply company values, culture and etiquette</li> <li>adapt/act in accordance to places and situations (properly dressed, accepting customs of the work environment, etc.)</li> </ul>							
<b>Respecting hierarchical levels and rules</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand/recognize the organization policies and structure,</li> <li>manage work roles, workplace rights/duties, requests and expectations</li> </ul>							
<b>Managing responsibilities</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>check to have understood the task assigned and ask assistance if needed,</li> <li>take responsibility for one's own actions without blaming anyone else for something s/he is liable for</li> </ul>							
<b>Time management</b> Capacity to respect schedule and deadlines and being on time							

	1	2	3	4	Yes	No	I don't know
<b>Managing the digital process</b> (not related to the knowledge and use of SW packages and office automation) Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>get information using digital systems &amp; technology;</li> <li>work with <i>Netiquette</i>;</li> <li>manage risks associated with on line environments</li> </ul>							

## B. Social Skills

	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know
<b>Communication skills</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak clearly and politely to any typology of speakers (heads, colleagues, clients, etc.)</li> <li>Use body language, gesture, tone/pitch of voices properly at different levels and contexts</li> <li>Know what medium to use when communicating at different level and contexts</li> </ul>							
<b>Managing the communication circle</b> Ability in active listening, repeating, recollecting, interpreting (paraphrasing), empathy (being aware of others' feelings), giving feed-back							
<b>Personal effectiveness and integrity</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain good level of performance when dealing with environmental pressures and difficulties (self-control, resilience, self-confidence)</li> </ul>							

	1	2	3	4	Yes	No	I don't know
<b>Team working</b> Capacity to understand the benefits of working in a team and work in a collaborative style with others to achieve results							
<b>Service skills (understanding of others' needs)</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer support to others when asked for</li> <li>Identify and respond to client needs and deal politely with clients problems (customer orientation)</li> </ul>							
<b>Leadership</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lead her/himself first</li> <li>lead groups of people and make them work for a common goal</li> <li>inspire/influence on others producing an impact</li> <li>give and receive feedback on good/poor performance</li> <li>delegate to direct subordinates in the team</li> </ul>							
<b>Conflict management</b> Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>detect a conflict at an early stage without being afraid of calling it "conflict"</li> <li>manage conflict when it arises and understand which conflicts cannot be solved</li> <li>mediate, acting in such a way that ones' and other's goals will be achieved (win-win approach)</li> </ul>							
<b>Cross-cultural awareness - Capacity to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize and use diverse perspectives according to different values, beliefs and behaviours of different cultures, by demonstrating respect</li> <li>take appropriate actions to minimize cultural, gender or other diversity difficulties, actual or perceived</li> </ul>							

C. Achieving results	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important	Slightly	Important	Extremely	Yes	No	I do not

	1	important 2	3	important 4			know
<b>Decision making</b> Capacity to make a choice from a range of possibilities (also prioritizing actions) and use different decision-making approaches reflecting on the outcome of decision							
<b>Problem solving</b> Capacity to find and solve routine and non-routine problems to achieve work goals, as well as to anticipate them and reflect on the outcomes							
<b>Creativity and innovation</b> Ability to come up with new solutions, approaches, etc, and to think “out of the box”							
<b>Critical and structured thinking</b> Ability to analyse and valorize information and accept constructive criticism							

## 6.2 Are there other Soft Skills, not included in the previous list, which are relevant to your company?

☐ YES

☐ NO

If YES, please fill the following table?

	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know

## 6.3 Are there specific Soft Skills which are required mainly to migrants by your company?

☐ YES

☐ NO

If YES, please fill the following table?

	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important	Slightly	Important	Extremely	Yes	No	I do not



	1	important 2	3	important 4			know

**6.4 Considering your current highly-skilled workforce, which skills do you think are lacking or need to be better developed? Tick your choices.**

CLU	Skill	Tick	CLU	Skill	Tick	CLU	Skill	Tick
A	Identifying work goals		B	Communication skills		C	Decision making	
A	Learning to learn		B	Managing the communication circle		C	Problem solving	
A	Adaptability and flexibility		B	Personal effectiveness and integrity		C	Creativity and innovation	
A	Motivation		B	Team working		C	Critical and structured thinking	
A	Recognizing/ applying work protocols and values		B	Service skills (understanding of others' needs)		C		
A	Respecting hierarchical levels and rules		B	Leadership		C		
A	Managing responsibilities		B	Conflict management		C		
A	Time management		B	Cross-cultural awareness		C		
A	Managing the digital process		B			C		
A			B			C		

**6.5 Which of these soft skills, in case they are lacking, may have the greatest negative impact on your company performance? Tick you choices.**

CLU	Skill	Tick	CLU	Skill	Tick	CLU	Skill	Tick
A	Identifying work goals		B	Communication skills		C	Decision making	
A	Learning to learn		B	Managing the communication circle		C	Problem solving	
A	Adaptability and flexibility		B	Personal effectiveness and integrity		C	Creativity and innovation	
A	Motivation		B	Team working		C	Critical and structured thinking	
A	Recognizing/ applying work protocols and values		B	Service skills (understanding of others' needs)		C		
A	Respecting hierarchical levels and rules		B	Leadership		C		
A	Managing responsibilities		B	Conflict management		C		
A	Time management		B	Cross-cultural awareness		C		
A	Managing the digital process		B			C		
A			B			C		

**6.6 Which are the main departments of your company where Soft Skills are considered extremely important for high-skilled workforce?**

Tick your choices (max. 3).

Department	Tick	Department	Tick
Management		R&D	
Administration – Accountancy - Finance		IT	
Communication – P.R.		Import/export	
Human Resources - Training		Production	
Marketing & sales		General Services (i.e. maintenance)	
Customer Services		Personal care service	
Logistics and Quality		Others (specify)	

Note and further comments

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire!

<indicate contact person, references and logo >

<Add privacy policy>

**VHSM PROJECT - SOFT SKILLS FOR WORK**  
**Employers' and recruiters' interview and questionnaire on Soft Skills evaluation**

## Typology B. Other Stakeholder

### Section 1. Interviewee data

- 1.1. Name of the contact person.....
- 1.2. contact (phone/e-mail).....
- 1.3. position:
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Manager, CEO, his/her deputy       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department Manager (specify the area.....) |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiter                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Selector             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational guidance expert                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Trainer              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Company consultant                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify.....) |

### 2. Organization data

- 2.1. Organization name.....
- 2.2. Sector of activity.....
- 2.3. Address..... 2.4. City.....
- 2.5. Country ..... 2.6. Web-site.....

#### 2.7. Type of Organization:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private owned company    | <input type="checkbox"/> Public/Private company (public bodies %.....) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Co-operative             | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Body                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chamber of Commerce      | <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Association – NGO        | <input type="checkbox"/> Employers Association                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> University               | <input type="checkbox"/> Training agency                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Employment Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> Career Centre, Job placement                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify .....     |  |

#### 2.8. Size<sup>53</sup>

- ☐ Micro      ☐ Small      ☐ Medium      ☐ Big      ☐ Group

#### 2.9. Profit orientation

- ☐ Profit oriented      ☐ Not-for-profit

#### 2.10. Number of employees

- ☐ < 10    ☐ 11 – 49      ☐ 50 – 249      ☐ 250 – 499      ☐ > 500

### Section 3. Recruiting policies

**3.1 Based on you experience and perception, how do companies generally conduct candidate search? (more choices are possible)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Institutions (School, University, CVET agency) |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Company web site   | <input type="checkbox"/> On line job search site          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Networking  | <input type="checkbox"/> Local newspapers                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job fairs  | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Employment Services                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Employment Services    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Head-hunter/placement firm                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment from other companies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify.....)                                       |   |

**3.2 Based on you experience and perception, how long does the candidate search generally last on the average?**

<sup>53</sup> Referred to the EU definition of SMEs (EC, *The new SME definition User guide*):

Micro enterprise:	< 10 employees and ≤ 2 million euro turnover or annual balance sheet
Small enterprise:	< 50 employees and ≤ 10 million euro turnover or annual balance sheet
Medium enterprise:	< 250 employees and ≤ 43 million euro turnover or annual balance sheet

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Few days          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 weeks          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 month | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 3 months       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 – 6 months      | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 6 months |

### 3.3 Based on you experience and perception, how do companies generally test medium/high-skilled<sup>54</sup> candidates competencies<sup>55</sup> (knowledge, basic, soft & hard skills)?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview with HR manager  | <input type="checkbox"/> Interview with the manager of the involved sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Simulation (assignment of a concrete task and time for accomplishing it) |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group assessment   | <input type="checkbox"/> Written test                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internship/trial period  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify .....)                             |

### 3.4 Based on you experience and perception, how do companies generally test candidates' soft skills?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interview  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aptitude test                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group assessment   | <input type="checkbox"/> They do not test soft skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Simulation (assignment of a concrete task and time for accomplishing it) |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify .....)  |   |

### 3.5 Based on your experience and perception, which difficulties do companies generally encounter in recruiting personnel as regarding soft skills?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> difficulties in skills assessment (how to evaluate them?) |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> long-time requested for proper evaluation                 |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> candidates may conceal behaviours/manners                 | <input type="checkbox"/> never thought about it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify .....)                                     |   |

### 3.6 Based on your experience and perception, are these difficulties supposed to be general or are they related to a specific area?

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific (specify .....) |
|----------------------------------|---|

### 3.7 Based on your experience and perception, when recruiting high-skilled human resources which importance do companies assign to each of the following criteria?

	Not important	Slightly important	Important	Extremely important
Educational background (diploma, certificates)				
Prior working experience				
Soft skills (non-job specific abilities, such as communication, problem solving, team working, flexibility, etc.)				
Hard skills (job-specific knowledge and abilities)				
Foreign languages				
Computer/IT skills				
References				
Candidate living in the neighborhood				

Notes and further comments

<sup>54</sup> By **medium and high-skilled** human resources we mean people with at least a high-school diploma (EQF ≥ 4)

<sup>55</sup> By **Soft Skills** we mean all those **non-technical and non-job specific abilities and knowledge** which are closely connected with personal attitudes, such as social abilities (communication, team working, empathy, etc.) and management abilities (decision making, problem solving, time keeping, etc.).

Soft skills differ from **Hard or Technical skills** which are strictly job-specific and closely connected with knowledge and proved by academic certificates and diplomas. They depend on the company activity, job role and field of activity.

Soft skills also differ from **Basic Skills** which are related to numeracy, literacy, language and office automation. Medium and High-Skilled people are assumed to have full mastery of basic skills.

#### Section 4. Training

**4.1 Based on your experience and perception, which are the companies which mostly carry our training programmes for their employees?**

☐ micro ☐ small ☐ medium ☐ big

☐ private owned ☐ public ☐ cooperative

**4.2 Based on your experience and perception, which are the main reasons why companies generally do not organize training programmes for their workforce?**

☐ they think it is too costly ☐ they have no time to implement training actions

☐ They think that employees have no time to attend courses (too much work to do)

☐ they think they do not need it ☐ other (specify.....)

**4.3 Based on your experience and perception on those companies which organize training for their workforce, such training preferable concerns** (more choices are possible)

☐ mainly hard skills ☐ mainly soft skills ☐ both hard and soft skills

☐ only compulsory training (e.g. safety measures) ☐ IT

☐ foreign languages

**4.4 Based on your experience and perception, which company departments/roles are mainly involved in training?**  
(more choices are possible)

**Departments:**

☐ Administration, accountancy, finance

☐ Customer service

☐ Human Resources – Training

☐ IT

☐ Management

☐ Production

☐ Sales & marketing

☐ Communication/PR

☐ General services (i.e. maintenance)

☐ Import/export

☐ Logistics and quality

☐ Personal care service

☐ R&D

☐ Other (specify .....

**Roles:**

☐ managers/supervisors

☐ employees

☐ workers

**4.5 Based on your experience and perception, how do you think most company consider skills acquisition?**

**Soft skills**

☐ a cost

☐ a benefit

☐ a responsibility of the company

☐ a responsibility of the employee

☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

**Hard skills**

☐ a cost

☐ a benefit

☐ a responsibility of the company

☐ a responsibility of the employee

☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

**Technical knowledge**

☐ a cost

☐ a benefit

☐ a responsibility of the company

☐ a responsibility of the employee

☐ other\_\_\_\_\_

Notes and further comments

## Section 5. Migrants

### 5.1 How many foreigners were involved as your services' users in the last year?

Quantitative number	% on total users

### 5.2 From which countries? (more choices are possible)

- ☐ UE countries   ☐ other European countries (extra UE)  
☐ Africa   ☐ Asia   ☐ Middle East  
☐ Latin America   ☐ Other (specify ..... )

### 5.3. Were they:

- ☐ Unskilled<sup>56</sup>?   ☐ Semi-skilled<sup>57</sup>?   ☐ Skilled<sup>58</sup>?   ☐ Highly skilled<sup>59</sup>

### 5.4. Which services did they use? (more choices are possible)

- ☐ Job search   ☐ Vocational Guidance   ☐ Certificate/diploma recognition  
☐ Training   ☐ Counselling   ☐ Skills assessment (bilan des compétences)  
☐ Other (please specify.....)

### 5.5 Based on your experience and perception, which may be the reasons why companies are not interested in recruiting foreign employees?

- ☐ they have never thought about it  
☐ they do not receive applications  
☐ they had bad experience in the past  
☐ they think foreigners might have a negative impact on the working climate  
☐ they think that, due to high natives' unemployment, it is better to recruit natives  
☐ they think there are too many bureaucratic problems in hiring foreigners  
☐ other (specify ..... )

### 5.6 Based on your experience and perception, which may be the reasons why companies are interested in recruiting foreign employees?

- ☐ because of their ethnic specialization  
☐ they work better than others  
☐ because of their hard skills (technical/professional skills /ethnic specialization)  
☐ because of their soft skills (motivation, resilience, adaptability in pressure situation)  
☐ their education level/qualification are often higher than the tasks they are effectively assigned to  
☐ they cost less  
☐ they accept positions that natives generally do not accept  
☐ they are more available to do overwork or to work during the weekend  
☐ companies have shortage of some specific profiles  
☐ other (specify ..... )

### 5.7. In your opinion which added value may immigrants give to companies? (more choices are possible)

- ☐ multi-language knowledge   ☐ double culture  
☐ bridge reference with their countries of origin  
☐ meet multi-ethnic market needs   ☐ open-mind thinking  
☐ Other (specify ..... )

<sup>56</sup> Unskilled: person who does simple operations, which require no independent judgment or previous experience.

<sup>57</sup> Semi-skilled: person who is assigned to routine operations, which require little independent judgment and where important decisions are made by others.

<sup>58</sup> Skilled: person exercises considerable autonomy and independent judgment, discharging his duties with responsibility.

<sup>59</sup> Highly skilled: person who, besides working efficiently in autonomy, with independent judgment and taking his responsibilities, supervises efficiently the work of other skilled employees.

**5.8 Based on your experience and perception are there special skills which companies require to high-skilled migrants applying for a position?**

Notes and further comments

## Section 6. Soft skills

**6.1** Hereinafter you find a list of Social Skills grouped up by 3 clusters: **A. Navigating the world of work**, **B. Social Skills**, **C. Achieving results**. Each cluster contains a list of specific skills with an appropriate description. **Based on your experience and perception, please indicate the importance which companies generally assign to each skill, when looking for new high-skilled workforce:**

### Legend:

**1.Not important** =The skill is not considered strategic by the company at all and the candidate must not prove to have it to be hired

**2.Slightly important** = Proving the skill by the candidate may be an advantage for the company, but the choice of her/his hiring is not at risk if s/he has not it. S/he is assumed to learn it at work

**3.Important** = The candidate is much appreciated if s/he prove to have this skill. Her/his hiring will strongly depend on proving this skill)

**4.Extremely important** = The candidate must absolutely have this skill to be hired. In case s/he has not, s/he is not hired

A. Navigate the world of work	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know
<b>Identifying work goals</b> Ability to take decision about how, when, where to work, developing personal insights into goals							
<b>Learning to learn</b> Attitude to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>curiosity (questioning, looking for information);</li> <li>pursue one's own learning according to one's needs (responsibility for one's own self-development);</li> <li>be aware of opportunities</li> </ul>							



	1	2	3	4	Yes	No	I do not now
<b>Adaptability and flexibility</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accept changes as a new challenge;</li> <li>adapt to new situations and modify approaches if required by the context</li> </ul>							
<b>Motivation</b> Attitude to be energetic and enthusiastic and capacity to self-motivate and motivate others							
<b>Recognizing/ applying work protocols and values</b> Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognize and apply company values, culture and etiquette</li> <li>adapt/act in accordance to places and situations (properly dressed, accepting customs of the work environment, etc.)</li> </ul>							
<b>Respecting hierarchical levels and rules</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand/recognize the organization policies and structure,</li> <li>manage work roles, workplace rights/duties, requests/expectations</li> </ul>							
<b>Managing responsibilities</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>check to have understood the task assigned and ask assistance if needed,</li> <li>take responsibility for one's own actions without blaming anyone else for something s/he is liable for</li> </ul>							
<b>Time management</b> Capacity to respect schedule and deadlines and being on time							
<b>Managing the digital process</b> (not related to the knowledge and use of SW packages and office automation). Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>get information using digital systems &amp; technology;</li> <li>work with <i>Netiquette</i>;</li> <li>manage risks associated with on line environments</li> </ul>							

## B. Social Skills

	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important	Important	Extremely important	Yes	No	I do not know

		2	3	4			
<b>Communication skills</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak clearly and politely to any typology of speakers (heads, colleagues, clients, etc.)</li> <li>• Use body language, gesture, tone/pitch of voices properly at different levels and contexts</li> <li>• Know what medium to use when communicating at different level and contexts</li> </ul>							
<b>Managing the communication circle</b> Ability in active listening, repeating, recollecting, interpreting (paraphrasing), empathy (being aware of others' feelings), giving feed-back							
<b>Personal effectiveness and integrity</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain good level of performance when dealing with environmental pressures and difficulties (self-control, resilience, self-confidence)</li> </ul>							
<b>Team working</b> Capacity to understand the benefits of working in a team and work in a collaborative style with others to achieve results							
<b>Service skills (understanding of others' needs)</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offer support to others when asked for</li> <li>• Identify and respond to client needs and deal politely with clients problems (customer orientation)</li> </ul>							

	1	2	3	4	Yes	No	I don't now
<b>Leadership</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lead her/himself first</li> <li>• lead groups of people and make them work for a common goal</li> <li>• inspire/influence on others producing an impact</li> <li>• give and receive feedback on good/poor performance</li> <li>• delegate to direct subordinates in the team</li> </ul>							
<b>Conflict management</b> Ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detect a conflict at an early stage without being afraid of calling it “conflict”</li> <li>• manage conflict when it arises and understand which conflicts cannot be solved</li> <li>• mediate, acting in such a way that ones’ and other’s goals will be achieved (win-win approach)</li> </ul>							
<b>Cross-cultural awareness</b> Capacity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognize and use diverse perspectives according to different values, beliefs and behaviours of different cultures, by demonstrating respect</li> <li>• take appropriate actions to minimize cultural, gender or other diversity difficulties, actual or perceived</li> </ul>							

C. Achieving results	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know
<b>Decision making</b> Capacity to make a choice from a range of possibilities (also prioritizing actions) and use different decision-making approaches reflecting on the outcome of decision							
<b>Problem solving</b> Capacity to find and solve routine and non-routine problems to achieve work goals, as well as to anticipate them and reflect on the outcomes							
<b>Creativity and innovation</b> Ability to come up with new solutions, approaches, etc, and to think “out of the box”							
<b>Critical and structured thinking</b> Ability to analyse and valorize information and accept constructive criticism							

6.2 Based on your experience and perception, are there other Soft Skills, not included in the previous list, which, in your opinion, are relevant to companies?

☐ YES

☐ NO, If YES, please fill the following table?

	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know

6.3 Based on your experience and perception, are there specific Soft Skills which are generally required specifically to migrants by companies?

☐ YES

☐ NO, If YES, please fill the following table?

	How much is it considered important in your company?				Is it difficult to find?		
	Not important 1	Slightly important 2	Important 3	Extremely important 4	Yes	No	I do not know

**6.4 Based on your experience and perception, which of these soft skills, in case they are lacking, might have the greatest negative impact on a company performance? Tick you choices.**

CLU	Skill	Tick	CLU	Skill	Tick	CLU	Skill	Tick
A	Identifying work goals		B	Communication skills		C	Decision making	
A	Learning to learn		B	Managing the communication circle		C	Problem solving	
A	Adaptability and flexibility		B	Personal effectiveness and integrity		C	Creativity and innovation	
A	Motivation		B	Team working		C	Critical and structured thinking	
A	Recognizing/ applying work protocols and values		B	Service skills (understanding of others' needs)		C		
A	Respecting hierarchical levels and rules		B	Leadership		C		
A	Managing responsibilities		B	Conflict management		C		
A	Time management		B	Cross-cultural awareness		C		
A	Managing the digital process		B			C		
A			B			C		

**6.5 Based on your experience and perception, which are the main departments of a company where Soft Skills are considered extremely important for high-skilled workforce?**  
Tick your choices (max. 3).

Department	Tick	Department	Tick
Management		R&D	

Administration – Accountancy - Finance		IT	
Communication – P.R.		Import/export	
Human Resources – Training		Production	
Marketing & sales		General Services (i.e. maintenance)	
Customer Services		Personal care service	
Logistics and Quality		Others (specify)	

Note and further comments

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire!

<indicate contact person, references and logo >

<Add privacy policy>

### A.3. Invitation letter (English version)

(partner headed paper)

<date>

To whom it may concern:

- Companies
- Job Placement Centres
- Training Agencies
- Career Guidance Centres
- Skill Assessment Centres
- Employers Associations
- Chambers of Commerce

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Survey on “Which are the Soft Skills most requested by employers and recruiters?”**

Our organization is conducting a cross-country **survey on employers and recruiters** in order to analyse the main recruitment criteria used to select candidates and perceptions on the so-called Soft Skills. The survey is developed in six European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden) by an international partnership within the project “*Valorize High Skilled Migrants*” funded by the Programme Erasmus+.

We would much appreciate if your company could actively take part in the survey. You can do that in two different ways:

- c) By a **direct interview** with our experts on scheduled appointment (the estimation time for the interview is around 45-60 minutes) at your working place or on the phone, as you prefer. The interview will be based on the here-attached questionnaire:
  - **Typology A** for companies (private, semi-public, cooperative, etc.)
  - **Typology B** for all other stakeholders
- d) By **filling the** here-attached **Questionnaire** (choosing the opportune typology) and transmitting it, **within** **<date>** to the following mail: **<e-mail address>**

The research is done to industry representatives from micro to big companies and organizations involved in recruitment of human resources in each project country. It covers two aspects. Firstly employers’ and recruiters’ perceptions about the importance of Soft Skills in working place and the availability or difficulty in finding candidates with such skills, on the labour market. Secondly, perceptions on the added value which high-skilled migrant candidates may give to companies, considering the increase of migration flows in Europe.

The data collection and analysis will be of great importance to implement the further steps of the VHSM project. These steps will consist in designing and implementing assessment and empowerment methods and tools specifically for soft skill, which may be as coherent as possible with companies real needs in order to fill the existing gap between labour demanders and suppliers, which is cause of unemployment or under-employment.

We point out that the survey focuses on medium and high-skilled human resources and on Soft Skills (any other skills, such as technical or basic ones are not subject of the present survey).

We guarantee that the confidentiality of any information you may communicate to us will be preserved forever. We will spread only the general data resulting from the research maintaining the privacy of your company data.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for any further information or clarification **<indicate contact person and references>**

Hoping you may be interested in taking part in this survey, we thank you very much for your kind collaboration.

Yours faithfully,

**<signature>**

**Enclosures:**

- **Questionnaire Typology A** for enterprises
- **Questionnaire Typology B** for other stakeholders



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