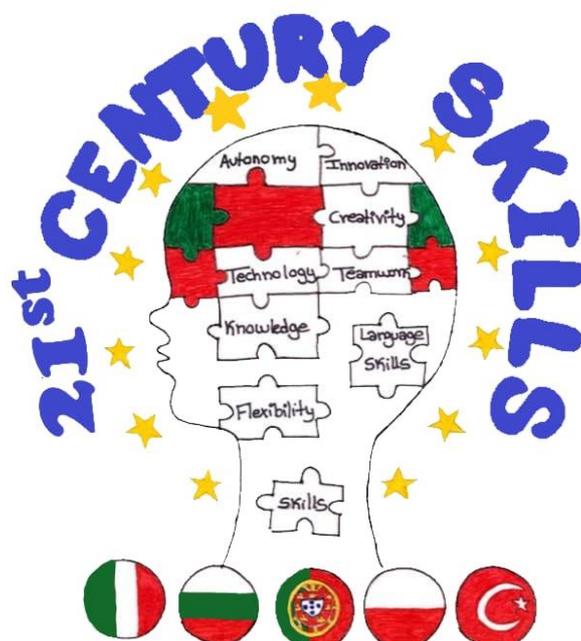


A Teacher's Guide on: Employability and Skills Development of European VET Students

ENHANCING THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS OF STUDENTS

2019-1-PL01-KA229-064969



2019 - 2022

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



COORDINATOR



Technikum Energetyczne
Poznan, **POLAND**

PARTNERS



Secondary Vocational School of Economics "Prof. Dr. Dimitar Tabakov"
Sliven, **BULGARIA**



Istituto Omnicomprensivo "R. Mattioli - S. D'Acquisto"
(Istituto D'Istruzione Superiore R. Mattioli until 01.09.2022)
San Salvo, **ITALY**



INSIGNARE - ASSOCIAÇÃO DE ENSINO E FORMAÇÃO
Ourem, **PORTUGAL**



Seyitgazi Ramazan Canigur Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi
(Seyitgazi Mesleki Ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi – until 24.03.2022)
Eskişehir, **TURKEY**



Contents

Introduction 3

Chapter 1 - Online Job Seeking Tools 4

Chapter 2 - Learning Skills and Soft Skills for Career Development 5

Chapter 3 - Literacy Skills in the 21st Century 8

Chapter 4 - Life Skills that Employers Value 10

Chapter 5 – Job Seeking and Job Application. Developing Entrepreneurial Skills
of VET students 13



Introduction

The project “**Enhancing 21-century skills of students**” is a project that started in 2019. The countries involved in its implementation were: Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, and Turkey. One of the main objectives of the project was to create the ground for peer learning where participants can exchange best practice examples in the VET field as well as enhance 21st-century skills, meaning to develop the skills to face, adapt to, and overcome problems that are not yet apparent but will be in a few years. As originally intended, the project aimed to be a key instrument in a student-centered approach to developing students' life skills (social skills, productivity, flexibility, leadership), learning skills (creative thinking, collaboration, critical thinking), literacy (information, media, and technology) so that students can enhance their employability after they graduate.

Why 21st-Century Skills?

21st-century skills are more important to learners now than ever before. Not only do they provide a foundation for successful learning in the classroom, but they ensure that students can thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never ends. They are also immensely valuable to the well-being of our people. It goes without saying how important it is in today's world for students to learn teamwork, shared responsibility, problem-solving or critical thinking.

Why did we decide to do this guide?

First of all, we wanted to keep everything that we had worked out during the project. The cooperation between 5 countries: Poland, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, and Turkey was very successful. This guide helps us to share the experience we have as VET educators with others who are in the field every day.

Secondly, we want to reach as many teachers as possible from different parts of Europe. This collaborative effort is supposed to be a guide and a help for those who want to develop 21st-century competencies in young Europeans. We strongly believe that this guide for practitioners has its place among all the existing documents.

Appendix:

[VET Educational Analysis](#)



Chapter 1 - Online Job Seeking Tools

In this section of our guide, you will learn about the most popular sites and ways to get a job. All 5 countries: Poland, Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Turkey list the top job-seeking tools that young people can use to find the most suitable job for themselves.

First of all, graduates can take advantage of job search methods that have been known for years, such as employment agencies or job fairs where you can learn about the recruitment process, consult your CV or take part in a simulated job interview.

However, in the computer age, it is the internet that is the greatest source of opportunities for young graduates. The internet is a great source of hundreds or even thousands of websites, job boards, social media channels as well as applications and programs that offer prospective job candidates the chance to use tailored searches, saving them time and energy. Not only do they help you to search for jobs, but they also enable employers to find you by allowing you to submit your resume.

For many young people, the position of social media on the list of job-seeking tools is surprising. Most people associate them with entertainment, making friends. However, these social media platforms can be valuable job search tools when used to connect with the professional community to increase your professional network.

Appendix:

1. [Online Job Seeking Tools](#)
2. [EURES – The European Network](#)



Chapter 2 - Learning Skills and Soft Skills for Career Development

Hard skills are gained through years of training, education, and practical experience getting to grips with all manner of challenges in the workplace. But increasingly, a person's employability depends on how well they can apply these hard skills in a team environment where personalities and work ethic differ from individual to individual. This is where soft skills will give you the edge.

From adaptability and critical thinking to strong communication, we'll round up the valuable soft skills that are crucial to continuing on the path to career development.

What are soft skills?

Characterised by how a person interacts with others in the workplace, soft skills are attributes, traits, inherent social cues, and communicative skills that can translate to success in a given role.

Different from hard skills which tend to be learned, soft skills are more akin to emotions or insights. They can be difficult to evaluate and measure but are attractive to employers; most jobs require employees to interact with each other. Showing that you're adept at this engagement may come over time, but the inherent transferability and adaptability of soft skills means they can be applied in any role.

How to improve your soft skills?

1. Know the importance of communication

The crux of many soft skills is the ability to communicate effectively. Essential in fostering strong relationships within team and group projects, top-notch communication skills are essential, whether it's through email, phone calls, or in person. Whether it's verbally or in writing, communication skills are essential because they illustrate the type of worker you are and let you form relationships with your peers.

2. Practice public speaking

Practicing public speaking is beneficial because it serves to not only sharpen up your skills with presenting to an audience, but in doing so, it helps you to take note of your pace, body language, volume, eye contact and tone of voice – all of which can be valuable to improving a breadth of soft skills. Next time you're in a meeting, it can come in handy when you need to communicate your ideas to others.

3. Get into good habits

Creating new habits that weave your desired soft skills into your behaviour is a great idea. Focus on shifting certain habits and developing more desirable ones. For example, if you struggle with listening in meetings, consider leaving your phone or laptop at your desk so you're not distracted by their presence.



4. Help others out

If others are struggling with their workloads, then stepping into an ad-hoc leadership role allows you to improve soft skills such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving in a way that positively impacts others.

5. Ask for feedback

Receiving feedback shows both a willingness to grow and a desire to find out which areas you need to work on. It also gives the person receiving the feedback a glimpse into how they are perceived by others and how they can adjust their behaviour going forward.

What are learning skills?

Learning skills are habits that can be used throughout your life to complete projects and communicate effectively. They can continuously be developed and improved to help you accomplish daily tasks or achieve your career milestones.

Examples of learning skills

There are a variety of learning skills that can be beneficial for you to have, whether you are a student or a seasoned professional in the workforce. It is important to note that many of the below skills could be applied to one or more skill categories, but for simplicity, the following section will separate these skills into five distinct categories:

1. Organizational skills
2. Communication skills
3. Collaboration skills
4. Critical-thinking skills
5. Creative skills

How to improve your learning skills

The following section will identify ways you can improve your learning skills and, in doing so, become a desirable job candidate to potential employers:

1. Identify weak areas.
2. Practice better habits in your daily life.
3. Take a community course.
4. Participate in volunteer opportunities.

Appendix:

1. [Belbin's Team Roles Questionnaire – Bulgaria](#)
2. [Belbin's Team Roles Questionnaire – Italy](#)
3. [Belbin's Team Roles Questionnaire – Poland](#)



4. [Belbin's Team Roles Questionnaire – Portugal](#)
5. [Belbin's Team Roles Questionnaire – Turkey](#)
6. [The Avatar Game – Guess What's my Job](#)
7. [Peer Learning](#)



Chapter 3 - Literacy Skills in the 21st Century

21st Century Literacies open up a range of connotations referring to Ethical, Basic, Media, Digital, Information, Intercultural, Network Literacies and 21st Century Citizenship: this chunk of literacy skills is required to prepare students for their lives after high school, either to continue a higher level of education, such as University, Masters, Professional Training Courses or to start their job careers. By properly developing Literacy Skills, educators help also to close the digital divide that currently exists between students from high socio-economic families and those from low socio-economic ones.

The health emergency due the outbreak of Pandemic has thought us how much the socio-economic backgrounds affect the students' academic achievements as well as their capacity of interacting with each other, avoiding isolation, mental and emotional stasis.

What are new literacies?

They may be defined as the ability to:

- Develop proficiency and fluency with digital tools;
- Build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;
- Design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
- Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;
- Create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts;
- Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

Today's ever-evolving, technological society impose a well structured use of new literacy skills tied to proper use of digital tools, thus it is paramount for teachers to prepare the students for the future by guiding them through a correct knowledge and practice of the different technology platforms.

Students need to be able to work effectively with information, using it at all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Information literacy involves traditional skills such as reading, researching, and writing; but new ways to read and write have also introduced new skills, such as *consuming information and producing information*.

Consuming information refers to the ability to handle properly the amount of data coming from the Internet by choosing the most reliable and fit for the purpose datum, editing, checking and cross-checking information, watching for signs of bias, datedness, and errors. Students need to look at all information as the product of a communication situation, with a sender, subject, purpose, medium, receiver, and context.

Producing information, on the other hand, is about the awareness that writing is one of the main ways students communicate which has real-world applications and consequences, this is why they need to take on the role of professional writers, learning to be effective and ethical producers of information.

Literacy skills and career

It is clear that information literacy skills refer to the ability to identify, assess, organize, utilize and communicate information in any format. Thinking of them from an educational point of view, teachers should enhance these soft skills because they are crucial in a wide range of situations, for example they are particularly valuable when evaluating the quality and credibility of a website, attributing credit to a source, acquiring new knowledge, solving a



problem or making a decision, which is why they are essential for functioning effectively in the workplace.

Thus Problem-solving, Time management, Note-taking, Attention to detail, Critical Thinking, Computer Technology or Communication skills are definitely what students need to acquire and manage to compete in today's work environment.

Employers, in fact, have become more and more demanding: a highly qualified and trained employee can still be an excellent investment for public and private companies, as long as he proves to be able to communicate effectively. It is this efficiency that can help to build and maintain positive working relationships.

When searching for employment, students or job/position seekers have to demonstrate that they are quality candidates and possess key skills throughout the hiring process. Employers look for certain keywords that relate to information literacy skills when evaluating a resume and cover letter, such as research, communication, computer and critical thinking but also flexibility, collaboration, active listening and presentation abilities, friendliness, confidence, respect and so on.

As we move closer toward the employability sector, our students, who are all potential candidates in their future, need to develop their skills to write and adapt their CVs to the specific job required, articulate an appropriate cover letter, participate in a job interview in the most appropriate ways possible, also from an emotional, relational and empathetic point of view.

How to teach literacy skills

As far as methodology is concerned there is no specific one, but certainly the traditional teaching (frontal lesson) is the least suitable while the most innovative and active teaching, such as project works, laboratory teaching, peer learning, reciprocal teaching, learning by doing or cooperative learning are more useful to the cause by focusing on the construction of learning by the student and the development, at the same time, of the whole range of soft skills needed to ensure awareness, confidence, familiarity with the key moments of the whole hiring process.

The final objective is to maintain and advance literacy. It is an integral part of lifelong learning „*a driver for sustainable development in that it enables greater participation in the labour market ... The “multiplier effect” of literacy empowers people, enables them to participate fully in society and contributes to improve livelihoods*” (<https://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy>).

Appendix:

1. [Developing Literacy Skills for VET students](#)
2. [Do You Know the Future?](#)
3. [What is a Domain?](#)
4. [Sketchnoting](#)
5. [Free Software and Apps for Personal Productivity](#)



Chapter 4 - Life Skills that Employers Value

In this chapter the focus will not be the hard skills, those that each employee should put into practice in one's job, but the skills, attitudes and behaviours the person shall develop throughout one's life, which have a direct impact in the way he / she works.

Those skills are mentioned in the CV as something that the candidate has, but quite frequently it is not mentioned how the employer can actually confirm it. Unlike the detail the CV has about the candidate's work experience, which can be validated through network or personal knowledge.

Moreover, which are the most relevant life skills? Which ones should be highlighted and explained in a CV?

After researching from Human Resources (HR) experts, major companies' recruiters, and from personal experience, as a former HR person who conducted interviews for several job positions in SME's, national and international, there is somehow a common conclusion.

In the following paragraphs we will try to explain how a recent high school graduate can demonstrate to a potential employer one's life skills and how it can be useful for the organization. For each skill there will be key words that the candidate should use in the explanation – however, it should be avoided the simple statement that „I am / I have”; activities, life moments, part-time jobs, hobbies, ..., can and should be used to explain how it allowed the candidate to develop that specific skill.

1. Time management

Time management is a crucial skill, as time is a limited resource. It goes for productivity, for being capable to prioritize tasks, for being able to respect deadlines.

The candidate should explain how he / she is an organized person, is able to plan tasks and to implement it.

2. Communication

Communication stands for the ability to work well with others, inside an organization, in a polite, structured and assertive way.

The candidate should explain how he / she is able to share the message in verbal and non-verbal ways, how he / she is an active listener and is able to provide constructive feedback, besides being able to speak in public.

3. Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability to cope with the change: work environment, work processes, equipment, tools, teams' members, ..., are in constant change. How can the candidate demonstrate he / she is able to update his / her own mind set and his / her own hard skill set? He / she should explain how he / she is willing to learn, to try new tasks close to the core he / she learnt. Motivation, mostly self-motivation, and handling emotions are also very important.

4. Problem-solving

This happens when the candidate is able to critically analyse and creatively solve problems. Regardless of the job position, all face problems, obstacles and challenges. The candidate should provide examples how he / she is / was able:



- a) To define the actual problem;
- b) To identify its causes and consequences;
- c) To suggest (a) viable solution(s), individually and/or in group;
- d) To structure the solution, after validation;
- e) To implement it;
- f) To assess it.

5. Teamwork

Teamwork is when one's skills, attitudes and behaviours are a perfect compliment to his / her colleagues'. For that, the candidate should present evidences that he / she is able to manage conflicts, to work collaboratively with other people in order to exchange ideas in an assertive and useful way.

6. Creativity

People usually connect creativity to Art, but this skill is also an attitude, regardless of the job position one has. One of the most well-known keywords is „thinking outside the box”, which requires questioning why it has been done like that, for example, or to be open to innovation, that demands experimenting and failing, and to start over again.

7. Leadership

Leadership still is somehow connected to authoritarianism, but it is a skill that is required in all organizations. How can a newly graduate show he / she has it? Try to explain he / she has played a key role in groups: from a collective sport team, as captain; to boys / girls scouts' leader; or school workgroups. The idea is to show he / she is able to guide, to motivate, „to get things done” assertively and efficiently, giving his / her personal example. Closely connected is the ability to be and to show a human side; in other words, to worry about others and being able to hear their opinions before making a decision. Then, being able to explain it.

8. Interpersonal Skills

These set of skills focuses on the interaction with one's peers and customers, being able to provide a lasting positive impression. This can be done being empathic, tolerant and with a good sense of humour, which will lead to a positive work environment. Yet again, detailing examples of workgroups, or having done part time jobs in a front office position, is how a newly graduate can highlight his / her set.

9. Work Ethic

This skill and attitude should show to the applicant's potential employer he / she is a reliable person, someone who can be trusted. Hence, examples of when responsibility, commitment, professionalism were put into practice are required.

10. Attention to Detail

Attention to detail is when one provide evidence of being thorough and accurate in the tasks he / she are given to perform. The best example is ... the CV and the email where it is send. Read it carefully several times, until there are no grammar mistakes, misspellings, or other similar situations.



Appendix:

1. [Critical Thinking](#)
2. [Team Building](#)
3. [Giving an Oral Presentation](#)
4. [Developing Personal Skills Required for Companies](#)
5. [Know Yourself Better](#)



Chapter 5 – Job Seeking and Job Application. Developing Entrepreneurial Skills of VET students

Job seeking skills are some of the most important concepts you can teach to high school students. Students who have this valuable skillset are confident in their worth, and stand ready to find and apply to the job they need.

Successful job seeking is based on understanding your personal competence, strengths and motivation. Knowledge of various career options and requirements is equally necessary. Applying for jobs is about really selling yourself to a potential employer – why should they pick you over other applicants? Think about how you can stand out from the crowd. When looking for a job, it is important to identify your personal competence and describe your areas of expertise. Important areas of self-knowledge include personal skills, motivation, interests, goals, values, strengths and areas for development.

Think about the skills you feel most confident in and those attributes that make you unique—these can be valuable selling points for potential employers. It's common for students and new graduates to have limited work or internship experience. If this is true for you, consider any roles you've had in your community or school, volunteer work you've done and other experiences where you applied your skills and interests.

Applying for a job is an important step in the hiring process. Your application shows your interest in the job and informs the employer of your relevant skills and experience. Knowing how to complete a job application well can have a significant impact on your chances of receiving an invitation to interview. Submitting a job application is often the first contact you have with a potential employer, so you better make a good impression. If you present your skills positively and accurately, relate your relevant experience well and proofread all your information, you will show yourself to be a more eligible candidate for any position.

If you are considering becoming an entrepreneur, there are several essential skill sets that you can develop to increase your entrepreneurial success. Hard skills—like technical and financial skills—can be extremely important to managing a business. Additionally, soft skills—like communication and leadership skills—can also ensure you develop as an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial skills can encompass a large range of both soft and hard skills. Because of the many business roles entrepreneurs may take on, they may also develop a variety of different skill sets to accommodate the growth of their businesses and brands.

You might also consider highlighting your entrepreneurial skills as you look for other employment opportunities. You might consider highlighting your technical skills, management and leadership skills and other entrepreneurial skills that can show employers your professionalism and your motivation to succeed. You might use your cover letter to illustrate how your skills have helped you achieve success in past roles. For instance, if your management skills helped build an effective team, you might mention it in your cover letter.

How can entrepreneurial skills prepare you for the 21st century? The future is shaped by the creators and innovators. If so, do we possess the skills to create or innovate? Do the skills that entrepreneurship offers enable us to do better and be better?



As we continue to strive for peace, to end poverty, achieve equality, fight climate change, and make more conscious and sustainable decisions, it's important that we not only learn how to make things better, but that we learn how to make better things. Entrepreneurship education can teach us the skills and mindset that enable us to do better in the 21st century.

"I don't know, but I can and will learn" is the kind of attitude and mindset entrepreneurship education develops. People with a desire to learn have a tendency to embrace challenges and to persist even in the face of setbacks. They understand that success takes work and each mistake or failure is not a loss, but a learning experience.

Starting a business comes with a lot of questions and uncertainty that will require a growth mindset to succeed. You'll most likely learn that you don't have the answer to everything, but what you do have, is the choice to see it as an opportunity to learn and grow. And this mindset is exactly what entrepreneurship cultivates and rewards. They contribute to your personal and professional growth.

Entrepreneurship education takes you through the ABCs of starting a business. That means you learn a varied set of skills: from specific business skills including marketing, accounting, sales, finance, etc., to soft-skills such as communication, problem solving, empathy, and creativity. These are skills that can be applied to any industry, any company, anywhere. As we head towards the 4th industrial revolution where extraordinary technological advances are reshaping the way we work, live, and interact with one another, we believe that one of the best ways we can seize these new opportunities is by being willing to learn.

One of the many awesome lessons we can learn from entrepreneurs is their courage to pursue challenges and take on risks. But more importantly, it's their ability to embrace failure and learn from them. Entrepreneurship helps you see that failure is not final; it is an opportunity to learn and try again. Because goals and dreams are not achieved without perseverance.

Entrepreneurship has the ability to transform communities. It can help communities thrive by creating new jobs, bringing hope, prosperity, and drive change through innovation.

Appendix:

1. [Job Seeking and Job Application](#)
2. [How to Write a CV](#)
3. [European CV](#)
4. [Kahoot – How to Become a Perfect CV Writer](#)
5. [Employability Skills – Creating a Cover Letter](#)
6. [Developing Entrepreneurial Skills of VET Students. How to Create Your Own Start-up](#)