Skills4Employability

Enhancing the presence of Soft Skills in Higher Education Curricula
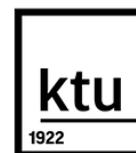
Guidelines for improving European HEIs student's employability - SKILLS4EMPLOYABILITY

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Skills4Employability

Enhancing the presence of Soft Skills in Higher Education Curricula

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Skills4Employability, Enhancing the presence of Soft Skills in Higher Education Curricula is a collaboration between five countries: Belgium, Romania, Lithuania Italy and Spain. Skills4Employability has been developed and cofunded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. The aim of the project is to support HEI in their efforts to improve the quality of education by adapting their curricula to the soft-skill demand of the labour market and, as a result, ensure a greater impact on the employability of future graduates.

We would like to thank the European Commission for the support and the opportunity to research and develop this material, and to carry our Skills4Employability project. We would also like to thank all parties who have contributed to the development of this guide helping us to improve it by sharing their knowledge and experiences.

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Aim of the project

"Skills4Employability. Enhancing the presence of Soft Skills in Higher Education Curricula" is an Erasmus+ Project (under the Key Action 2, Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, Strategic Partnerships for higher education) that seeks to support universities in their efforts to improve the quality of their education offer by adapting their curricula to the soft-skill demand of the current labour market and, as a result, ensure a greater impact on the employment situation of future graduates.

The project aims at strengthening HEIs capacity to assess whether and to what extent their programmes match the soft-skills identified by the project's research as the most valued in the labour market. Skills4Employability is structured in two different outputs: The Intellectual Output 1 "Guidelines for Integrating soft-skills in HEIs' curricula" carries out a preliminary research about the definition, relevance and gaps regarding soft-skills in the context of higher education and employment. The research aims to help define what the most relevant soft-skills are, the objective being to establish a common set of soft skills and a common understanding on the need to integrate them in the HEIs curricula, that will later serve as a basis for the development of the assessment procedure in Intellectual Output 2 "Assessment of Soft-Skills in HEIs curricula".

Once the Intellectual Output 1 concludes with the publication of this document "Guidelines for improving European HEIs student's employability: embedding the most demanded soft skills in the curricula", the research work for the implementation of Intellectual Output 2 will begin, in which all partner organisations involved in the project will focusing on exploring the best way for measuring the soft-skill content in the universities curricula and identifying those criteria and indicators that better capture the soft-skill dimension within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The soft skill assessment guidelines foreseen to be delivered by this project, aim to help universities have a better knowledge on how to better include the most relevant soft skills in their curricula and boost the adaptation of their programmes to them, providing therefore a more valuable education offer to their students.

Aim of this guide

In recent years, the growing importance of soft-skills in fostering student academic achievement and long-term success has been recognised by actors involved in education and in the labour market all across Europe. Soft skills are cross-cutting across jobs and sectors and relate to personal competences and social competences. Its development is intended to enable and enhance personal development, participation in learning as well as improve career prospects.

HEIs in Europe should react fast and shape its educational programs in order to ensure that its graduate students enter the work equipped with the sort of skills required by employers. HEIs can indeed play an important role in identifying needs at the local level and facilitating the transition from education to employment. Their direct involvement in the local socio-economic fabric would allow to enhance the employment environment and positively contribute to the overall labour market performance. For universities to have a real impact on labour market outcomes, it is essential that

their educational offer matches the skills gaps at local, regional and international level. Equally, it is increasingly important to make the existing curricula more competitive and tuned to the forthcoming changes. One of the keys to making HEIs more responsive to skill demands is to help them effectively assess the extent to which their programs offer an appropriate curricula for acquiring and developing the skills that are relevant to the labour market.

This guide is designed to inspire HEIs to open their curricula to the training of soft skills by analysing, from a pan-European perspective, the current situation of the labour market demand regarding soft skills and proposing a better harmonised view of which are the most relevant soft skills to be embedded in the HEIs curricula. Combining the findings of the research carried out so far by the project, this guide aims to help HEIs identify their situation regarding the soft skills and provide them with useful information on how to open their curricula to them. This information will be further developed in the second phase of the project, with the guidelines delivered under the already mentioned Intellectual Output 2 "Assessment of Soft-Skills in HEIs curricula".

This guide aims to be the basis for the development of the soft-skills assessment guidelines (activity "Development of the soft-skill assessment guidelines" under Intellectual Output 2) with which the project will conclude and which will, in a comprehensive way, serve as a reference manual with different aspects to be considered by HEIs when moving towards programmes that involve soft-skill development.

Methodology of this guide

This guide is structured based on the results of the research done about the relevance of the soft skills in the current labour market and the existing gaps regarding the HEIs offer, carried out throughout the IO1 "Guidelines for Integrating soft skills in HEIs' curricula". This research work has been undertaken by each partner of the consortium and afterwards clustered and studied from a pan-European perspective.

With the ultimate goal of contributing to providing HEIs with tools to better implement soft skills training in their curricula, the information is structured as follows:

- In section 2, Context, a broader overview of the soft skills as a concept is given and concrete EU efforts towards soft skills development are presented. This is followed by an overall view of the conclusions extracted from analysing the particular contexts of each of the Skills4Employability consortium's countries.
- In section 3, Proposal of Soft Skills Categorisation, a proposal for an aligned classification and definition of soft skills is made in order to be used as the basis of the later guidelines and recommendations the project will publish, and in order to give users a base from where to continue the joint efforts for better embedding soft skills in HEIs curricula.
- In section 4, Best Practices and Sources of Literature: guidelines for embedding soft skills in HEI curricula some key points extracted from the project's research work are presented as guidance for HEIs to follow in the process of incorporating soft skills in their programs and the research work made under the activity "Collection of sources of literature and practices related to soft-skills in Universities " is presented as inspirational examples for that process.

CONTEXT

International context

Providing students with the right skills for employment has been identified as one of four priorities of the flagship initiative 'An agenda for new skills and jobs' (COM/2010/682 final). Higher Education Institutions in Europe should react fast and shape their educational programs in order to ensure that their graduate students enter the labour market equipped with the sort of skills required by employers. However, there is a different understanding of soft skills between academia and labour market and among the different countries of the European Union.

In this section the term soft skill will be defined according to a European perspective and the efforts the EU is making towards a more soft skilled workforce will be highlighted.

What are soft skills?

The term "skills" is a broad one, and is one of the four pillars of Competency, as explained below.

Competences can be defined as a set of inborn and acquired personal characteristics, attitudes, knowledge and skills leading to high-quality performance[1]. 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.

- *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 (cognitive 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.

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 most 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

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as: Generic Skills, Essential Skills, Skills for Life or Basic Skills, People Skills, Key Skills/Competences[2] , Employability Skills, Core Skills, Transversal Skills[3].

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) gives us also a clearer vision of which are the skills that will be most in demand in 2030 and therefore now all young people will have to develop them. Students who are best prepared for the future are change agents. They can have a positive impact on their surroundings, influence the future, understand others intentions, actions and feelings, and anticipate the short and long-term consequences of what they do. People will need to apply their knowledge in unknown and evolving circumstances. For this, they will need a broad range of skills, including cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn and self-regulation); social and emotional skills (e.g. empathy, self-efficacy and collaboration); and practical and physical skills (e.g. using new information and communication technology devices). The use of this broader range of knowledge and skills will be mediated by attitudes and values (e.g. motivation, trust, respect for diversity and virtue).

Building on the OECD Key Competencies, the OECD Education 2030 project has identified three further categories of competencies, the "Transformative Competencies", that together address the growing need for young people to be innovative, responsible and aware:

- Creating new value: People should be able to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new sectors, new business models and new social models. Increasingly, innovation springs not from individuals thinking and working alone, but through co- operation and collaboration with others to draw on existing knowledge to create new knowledge.

- Reconciling tensions and dilemmas: Individuals have to learn to think and act in a more integrated way, taking into account the interconnections and inter-relations between contradictory or incompatible ideas, logics and positions, from both short- and long-term perspectives. In other words, they have to learn to be systems thinkers.

- Taking responsibility: The third transformative competency is a prerequisite of the other two. Creativity and problem- solving require the capacity to consider the future consequences of one's actions, to evaluate risk and reward, and to accept accountability for the products of one's work. This suggests a sense of responsibility, and moral and intellectual maturity, with which a person can reflect upon and evaluate his or her actions in light of his or her experiences, and personal and societal goals, what they have been taught and told, and what is right or wrong.

European Union efforts towards soft skills

The European Union is aware of the importance of soft skills as a means to increase employability, therefore is directing its efforts towards the development of soft skills. For instance, in the framework of skills:

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[2] 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

[3] ESCO (European Skills, Competencies and Occupations Taxonomy) uses "transversal skills" as a synonym for soft skills.

Skills framework: European skills strategy[4]

The new Skills Agenda for Europe, adopted by the Commission on 10 June 2016, launched 10 actions to make the right training, skills and support available to people in the EU. The 10 actions are designed to:

- improve the quality and relevance of training and other ways of acquiring skills
- make skills more visible and comparable
- improve information and understanding of trends and patterns in demands for skills and jobs (skills intelligence) to enable people make better career choices, find quality jobs and improve their life chances.

All ten actions have been launched and where appropriate agreed by the Council and Parliament. All are currently delivering on the ground to help people in communities across Europe advance their skills.

The Commission also calls on EU countries, employers' associations, trade unions, industry and other interested parties to continue to work together to ensure that these initiatives produce the best possible outcomes. Among these actions the creation of a broader and improved European Qualifications Framework aimed at improving transparency, comparability and understanding of the qualifications of people has been approved by the Council in May 2017. The Commission is now working with EU countries and other interested parties to implement the new recommendation so as to make better use of all available skills in the European labour market.

Moreover, at European level there are more initiatives on skills development:

- A recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning stimulates EU countries to develop the provision of key competences for all as part of their lifelong learning strategies. Skills development is a lifelong process. The skills, competences, and qualifications that people need change over time and must be developed in line with the evolving needs of the labour market. People need to be equipped with a variety of basic skills (including literacy, numeracy, foreign languages and digital skills) and equally higher and more relevant skills as the needs of the labour market evolve. Transversal skills, such as the ability to learn and take initiative, to work with others and solve problems, will help people deal with today's varied and unpredictable career paths.

- The EU Digital Competence Framework[5] (DigComp) and the EU Entrepreneurship Competence Framework[6] (Entrecomp) are common reference tools that can be used as a basis for an online self-assessment test, which allows people to measure their digital competence or entrepreneurial skills and identify gaps in their knowledge, skills and attitudes as the development of entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and attitudes will help contribute to employability, support new business creation and benefit individuals and society on the whole.

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[4] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223#upskilling

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1315&langId=en

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp

⟩ Context in partner countries

In order to gain a better understanding of the soft skills current situation from a pan-European perspective, Skills4Employability project partners undertook the activity of elaborating a National Report in their organisation's countries: Universita Degli Studidi Roma La Sapienza (Italy), Agencia per a Laqualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya (Spain), Kauno Technologijos Universitetas (Lithuania), Universitatea Politehnica Din Bucuresti (Romania) and CONEXX-EU (Belgium). The methodology used was a desk research focused on exploring the labour market national situation with regard to the issue of soft skills mismatch. The desk research was followed by a process of benchmarking and drawing conclusions contrasting partner countries' situation amongst each other and regarding the EU context.

This research resulted in a final report (National Reports on Soft Skills current scenarios by Skills4Empolyability Erasmus+ Project -IO1.A3-)[7] that sheds light on the common points and trends, as well as the main differences. Amongst the conclusions drawn in it by the partners in this project Kaunas University of Technology (KUT), the difficulty to measure and compare soft-skills imbalances in different countries due to the absence of information and the lack of a common assessment system, verified the need of the project to bring clarity in the definition and classification of the identified as internationally relevant soft skills.

The following is a profile per country extracted from the above mentioned Skills4Employability project's report:

Belgium. Despite the obstacles related to the national standardization system and lack of coordinated authority between different regions, Belgium is making great efforts to introduce soft-skills to the curricula of HEIs. Belgium has made a substantial investment in the high education system with a strong emphasis on hard skills strengthening in past years. However, this caused the foreseen effect - an increasing tendency of labour force overqualification, while authorities are trying to break up the labour bottlenecks that affect several sectors of Belgium economy. From the other side, HEIs have a commitment to increase the employability of its students, despite they are producing standardized generations of future competitors on job applications. This creates a challenge for HEI on how to strengthen soft-skills and facilitate the personalization of the future profile of students as a potential employee.

Italy. The current situation of soft-skills mismatch in Italy might be solved by placing more efforts on education and lifelong learning and using an effective human resource management system that allows implementing hiring procedures and staff allocation on skills needed in each job vacancy. Some research shows that there is still a long path to reach an adequate level of awareness on soft-skills, both in HEIs and in the work environment in Italy. Some recommendations in terms of national coordination and support of soft-skills in Italy are related to 1) improving the quality and relevance of soft-skills acquired in HEIs; 2) increasing funding linked to performance indicators based also on employability and skills' acquisition outcomes; 3) widening the training and other initiatives offering soft-skills strengthening; 4 supporting a closer link between education and regional smart specialization strategies; 5) fostering collaboration between universities and companies, thus offering work-based training opportunities.

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[7] *Document available at: http://skills4employability.eu/use-our-results/*

Lithuania. Despite a reasonable supply of soft-skills provided by HEI, the research showed the shortages of soft-skills among employees in Lithuania. The shortages are concentrated among content skills (i.e. reading comprehension, writing, speaking, and active listening), process skills (i.e. critical thinking and active learning), complex problem-solving skills, and social skills (i.e. instructing, social perceptiveness), etc. Lithuanian governmental institutions with various stakeholders making many efforts for the successful improving the Lithuanian longer-term skills forecasting capability and integration of them into the new study programs and courses of HEI. The importance of soft-skills is obvious as they are valuable and highly demanding elements in the entire Lithuanian skills system.

Romania. The problem of the soft-skills mismatch in Romania is solved using the support by the stakeholders which try to explore new ways for HEIs by offering the initiatives for study programs as well maintaining professional development level, through project-based learning, service-learning, and project-based dual learning methods, correlated with internships and practical stages within socio-economic actors. Even the soft-skills are presented within all the qualification frameworks for HEIs study programs, there are few activities/events organized especially for their development in Romania. A common practice is that soft-skills are acquired through non-formal learning in interaction with colleagues and teachers.

Spain. The main problems regarding the soft-skills imbalance in Spain are related to 1) shortage of employees having the balance of soft and hard skills; 2) inability to present oneself, to express one's needs and work in a team; 3) lack of understanding of values and attitudes towards the work; 4) low impact of HEIs in developing of soft-skills. Many employees are acquiring high-quality hard skills that usually exceed the requirements of their jobs but missing an appropriate level of soft-skills. A mismatch between those skills implies a waste of talent and negatively cause the productivity of the companies and aggregate growth of the country. The main soft-skills will be important in the future for the Spanish labor market are the following 1) problem solving and decision making; 2) practical training; 3) project management; 4) languages.

By summarising and studying the findings of the research in Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Romania and Belgium, it became obvious that HEIs are actively searching for new methods for a better integration of soft-skills into their study programs. Clarity was brought also into the major dilemmas HEIs face when it comes to ensuring graduate employability: the importance and role of specific knowledge in developing graduates' skills, the need to strike a balance between developing skills that improve short-term employability and skills that improve long-term employability, and the question about which skills should be developed inside HE and which skills can better be developed outside.

PROPOSAL OF SOFT SKILLS CATEGORISATION

Despite the definition and classification of soft skills differs between countries – due mainly to background differences – there is a common understanding in the identification of the most relevant sets of soft skills.

The research undertaken by the project to this stage led to consider that a better aligned classification of these skills will help moving from the current situation where authorities create responses according to the demands of particular countries or regions, to a joint pan-European response coming from HEIs working in an aligned way to adapt better their curricula to the overall relevant soft skills.

Therefore, this section provides two soft skills classifications based on the consortium's previous experience in the field of soft skills training and researching that has been considered as relevant after the analysis of the research work done by Skills4Employability project. This proposal for more harmonized criteria in regard of the classification and definition of soft skills aims at offering HEIs several possibilities to carry out an analysis of the soft skills present in their curricula, or those that they want to incorporate. More details in how to approach this process will be delivered in the second guide envisaged by the project (IO2.A4: Development of the Soft Skills Assessment Guidelines).

❯ Reboot categorisation

Reboot "Rebooting, Re-rooting and Re-skilling Unemployed and Underemployed Higher Education Graduates for Work 4.0" is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission. This project aims at increasing the employability potential of the unemployed and underemployed Higher Education graduates by upskilling and developing relevant and high-quality skills and competencies for Work 4.0, as well as their ability to recognise and demonstrate these skills.

The categorising model and methodology this project uses to differentiate soft skills are divided into three categories based on their use in the labour market and are the result of the analysis of the consortium of the Reboot project of the report developed from the survey and interviews carried out during the research activities of the project.

A. Soft Skills "About Me: How I Work"

Skills needed to gain a better understanding of oneself and how one function.

1. Self-awareness	Consciousness about oneself; Recognise own feelings, behaviours and characteristics, and understand the cognitive, physical and emotional self.
2. Understanding change	Openness to change, ability to embrace it and harness it into new opportunities; Anticipate and manage change, including personal adaptation.
3. Curiosity	Desire to explore and learn (as life-long element); Seek out new knowledge and/or apply knowledge in new ways; Acquire an

	inquisitive nature and reflect on existing curiosity and interests.
4. Openness	Be imaginative, open to experience, welcoming and seeing the benefits of novelty, variety and diversity; Challenge the familiar, conventional and traditional; Move beyond, or temporarily set aside, own presumptions.
5. Resilience	Withstand changes and adapt to adverse conditions; Positively and proactively respond to difficult situations; Find inspiration, motivation and strength to rise above challenges.
6. Adaptability	Confront and deal with change in a constructive way; Adapt plans to achieve goals in light of change; Ability to think flexibly and develop different attitudes/opinions in different situations
7. Self-efficacy	Identify and assess individual strengths and weaknesses and harness them in delivering a task/performance; Show appropriate belief in your ability to influence the course of events despite uncertainty, setbacks and failures.
8. Motivation	Show determination, initiative and an ability to act in order to achieve either to solve problems or to exploit opportunities; Be committed to short-, mid- or long-term goals; Remain motivated under pressure or when facing adversity, setbacks, challenges or problems.

B. Soft Skills "Context: How We Work"

Fundamental skills and capabilities which could fit individuals well to operate optimally in the modern workplace:

1. Teamwork	Work together and cooperate with others to develop ideas or take action; Gain an understanding of how to create a team of people who can work together.
2. Communication (oral and written) in different contexts and audiences	Communicate ideas to others persuasively by using different methods; Produce narratives and scenarios that motivate, inspire and guide people; Take part in constructive discussions with others about ideas; Understand and present user-friendly solutions.

3. Multicultural Skills	Show respect for others, their background and situations and support diversity; Address intolerance, drawing from cultural/personal aspects; Value diversity as a possible source of ideas and opportunities; Work with people who represent different work and social cultures than their own and having empathy and tolerance for beliefs and practices that differ, or even conflict, with their own.
4. Negotiation skills	Create and maintain a dialogue between two or more people/parties; Reach understanding and finding resolution and overcome resistance from others; Effectively pitch and put forward a convincing argument; Conduct effective questioning to diagnose and elicit needs and, where possible, create win/win solutions.
5. Networking	Openness and ability to establish new contacts, relationships and cooperation with others. Maintain and manage contacts and use a network to bring together different perspectives maximising engagement; Understand the importance of good workplace relationships as foundations for positive and productive work environments.
6. Leadership	Inspire, enthuse and mobilise others; Gather support where needed to achieve valuable outcomes; Demonstrate effective communication, persuasion and negotiation; Lead by example, harnessing empathy to support others to reach desired outcomes.
7. Interdisciplinary skills	Combine and harness knowledge from multiple sectors to produce effective solutions; Analyse and think critically, using various approaches; Evaluate and challenge pre-existing concepts/biases in themselves and others.

C. Into Action: Get to Work!

Skills required on a daily basis in the workplace. Translation of the own skills into efficient, effective and successful performance of professional responsibilities.

1. Taking initiative	Spot opportunities and initiate processes; Take up challenges; Act and work independently to

	achieve goals; Stick to intentions and proactively carry out planned tasks.
2. Creativity	Approach and view things from different or unconventional angles; Use imagination to develop creative and purposeful ideas and to identify opportunities; Identify and combine knowledge, connections and resources to achieve value.
3. Learning from experience	Use experiences as learning opportunities Learn with and from others and reflect on your learning; Reflect and learn from both success and setbacks (your own and other people's)
4. Planning	Set long, medium and short-term goals for the future; Define priorities, deadlines and action plan, according to workload; Deliver intended outcomes within agreed quality standards and deadlines; Adapt to unforeseen changes and adjust plans accordingly.
5. Time management	Use time effectively to achieve goals; Help others to manage their time effectively; Develop and apply time-management techniques.
6. Change management	Understanding the 'bigger picture by using analytical thinking to identify issues in the environment; Adapt actions according to changes perceived to achieve outcomes; Seek input from others, research, other sources of information to enhance decisions; Identify next steps and purposeful actions in fast-moving situations
7. Problem-solving	Identify and define a problem; Use knowledge, previous experiences, data and other sources of information to contribute to solving a problem; Develop and evaluate alternative solutions; Select the optimum solution.

Skill set proposed by Skills4Employability

The proposed set of soft skills selected by the project takes as starting point that fact that this document is targeted firstly to academics, and therefore the soft skills pointed out as the ones that should be considered to be incorporated in the HEIs programs are those the students should develop in order to improve their employability, those related to their performance in the work environment. The above mention Reboot Categorisation is used as a reference, along with each project's partner

previous research work and experience in the field and following the criteria of selection the soft skills that have been repeatedly pointed out as needed in the National Reports carried out by the project.

At this point the project's consortium agrees on selecting from the Reboot categorisation the skills in section B "Context: How We Work" and C "Into Action: Get to Work!" as the more relevant Skills to be incorporated transversally in HEIs programmes following the criteria above explained, and at the same time as the more feasible to design, embed to the curricula and assess their achievement. Skills in section A "About Me: How I Work" introduce several complexities when it comes to design training activities in which these skills could be worked.

Taking this into account, we propose to categorize them in the following way:

INTELLECTUAL SKILLS	- Interdisciplinary skills to combine knowledge, analyse and think critically - Problem solving skills - Creativity - Learning from experience
SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS	- Planning skills - Time management skills - Change management skills - Taking initiative/ Owernship
ORAL AND WRITING COMMUNICATION SKILLS	- Multicultural skills - Networking skills - Negotiation skills - Team working skills

BEST PRACTICES AND SOURCES OF LITERATURE: GUIDELINES FOR THE INCORPORATION OF SOFT SKILLS IN HEI'S CURRICULA

From the information collected so far by the project's research work, it is extracted the need of working in the incorporation of soft skills in the HEIs curricula in the following terms:

1. Identify the soft skills relevant for each degree and define the accordingly.
2. To guarantee their training, it is necessary for each lecturer to embed the selected soft skills in the curricula.
3. It is required to define accordingly to the education level (bachelor, master or doctoral degree), the level of competency of those skills and the expected learning objectives to obtain from students.
4. It is required to define accordingly to the discipline or field of knowledge. For instance, "creativity" is a soft skill whose definition and assessment will be different in an "Arts and Design" program or in an "Engineering" program.
5. Design learning activities in the class for the acquisition of the defined soft skills.
6. Evaluate the acquisition of those competencies.

All of the previous described steps are reflected to a greater or lesser extent in the documents elaborated so far by this project based on the research work done in its first stage, establishing this way the basis for a work oriented towards the higher education institutions, and specially the academics, when it comes to embed and guarantee the formation of students in soft skills. Formation of students in soft skills must not be worked separately from the other learning outcomes that constitute the curricula.

The document "Report on the Collection of Best Practices and Sources of Literature - Skills4Employability project" (Collection of Best Practices and Sources of Literature -IO1.A2-)[8] produced by the project, it is expected to be used as inspiration and examples on how to follow the process above mentioned. Containing information from different cultural contexts, education systems and sectors, this is meant to be a reference document for those HEIs willing to find inspiration and guidelines in how to proceed with the adaption of their curricula to the most relevant soft skills with an international perspective. The information clustered in this document is the result of the collection by each partner of the Skills4Employability consortium of five sources of literature and five good practices about how soft skills are defined, identified, trained and assessed in the Higher Education's institutions. By refering to this document in this section of the guide, it is the intention to give HEIs a more clear and detailed perspective on how to embed soft skills in their study programs.

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[8] Document available at: http://skills4employability.eu/use-our-results/

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