

BOOST

Boosting Outstanding
Omnicompetent
Successful Talents

Handbook For Youth Workers



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



HUMAN
RESOURCE
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BSDA
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Official project name
**BOOST: Boosting Outstanding
Omnicompetent Successful Talents**



Project acronym
#BOOST



Project lifetime
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Project webpage
www.boostskills.eu



Project Facebook page
www.facebook.com/BoostSkillsEU

About the #BOOST Project

“BOOST: Boosting Outstanding Omnicompetent Successful Talents” is a 24-month strategic partnership co-funded by the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme. The project aims to create new educational and personal development opportunities for young people in Europe by delivering interactive educational formats and methods based on transversal skills development.

In today’s increasingly complex reality, basic and transversal skills development is a high priority to satisfy employer requirements and the imperatives of a concrete citizenship exercise, as advanced by the EC in “New Skills Agenda for Europe” (2016). A rapidly evolving society and global transformations observed over the last decade are paving the way for new educational trends, increased labour market demands and adaptive educational opportunities: especially during biosecurity emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This new reality calls for skills and knowledge that go beyond the confines of a specific profession, leading to an emerging need for more robust transversal skills, including among young people. “Transversal skills are those typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline

or area of knowledge but as skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings” (IBE 2013). “These skills are increasingly in high demand for learners to successfully adapt to changes and to lead meaningful and productive lives” (UNESCO UNEVOC). One specific challenge BOOST addresses is the development of transversal skills through explicit tools that emphasise their importance in effective, goal-oriented personal and professional development of young people in the EU. In doing so, BOOST employs transnational cooperation for organisational outreach to project target groups—with the consortium comprising NGOs and youth associations with rich experience and recognized quality with respect to youth policies.

The BOOST proposal is fully aligned with Erasmus+ objectives to:

- Boost skills and employability;
- Modernise education, training and youth work;
- Focus on young people.

Primary needs BOOST will fulfill:

- Empower young people and youth workers through all BOOST activities and outputs;
- Practical, youth-friendly eLearning MOOC for transversal skills development among young people;
- User-friendly BOOST handbook for youth workers.

The BOOST project will target two primary groups:

- Young people from partner countries;
- Youth workers from partner countries, who can refer to innovative handbook materials to foster development of transversal skills in young people they work with.

Expected results:

- Implementation of quality educational and research activities that aim to develop transversal skills among young people;
- Development, testing and launching of a fully functional BOOST eLearning MOOC aiming to develop a transversal skillset within young people. The eLearning platform is a transversal skills online hub that will provide various youth-friendly resources;
- Development of a practical BOOST handbook for youth workers that aims to empower them to develop transversal skills among young people they work with;
- Four transnational project meetings, including management and content development activities and two dissemination events/country;
- Ensured sustainability of project results stemming from tangible outputs for youth development and the wide dissemination of programme implementation/value in partner countries and across the EU.

Through a series of outputs and activities, the BOOST project strongly contributes to youth sector development, and in the present challenging situation, specifically, will help cultivate transversal skills among this group. Through interactive tools, the associated content allows young people to tackle their level of development and glean tips and tricks for further growth across the following areas: critical thinking, innovative thinking, presentation skills, communication skills, organisational skills, teamwork abilities, self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, media literacy, information literacy, ability to locate and access information, ability to analyse and evaluate media content, physical health, religious values (UN definition). Given high competency levels within the labour market, these transversal skills are crucial for proper professional and personal development.

Long-term, sustainable benefits afforded by BOOST zero in on the extremely important topic of transversal skills development, which will be even more relevant during the post-pandemic recovery period with the help of both the eLearning MOOC and handbook after the project concludes.

Project consortium:

Coordinator:

- Bulgarian Sports Development Association (Bulgaria), www.bulsport.bg

Partners:

- Bosnian Representative Association for Valuable Opportunities (Bosnia and Herzegovina), www.bravo-bih.com
- Vere Montis (Croatia), www.veremontis.com
- L'ORMA (Italy), www.ormasite.it/en

“BOOST: Boosting Outstanding Omnicompetent Successful Talents” (BOOST) is co-funded by the European Union’s Erasmus+ Programme and is managed in Bulgaria through the Erasmus+ National Agency/Human Resources Development Centre.



BOOST Handbook

The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027 recognises young people are architects of their own lives, contributing to positive change in society and enriching EU ambitions. It also acknowledges youth policy can help create a space where young people can seize opportunities and relate to European values. In light of the changing employment landscape, the European Union should support personal development and growth to autonomy among young people, building their resilience and equipping them with the necessary resources to participate in society: ultimately helping eradicate youth poverty and all forms of discrimination while promoting social inclusion. “The future of work” is an umbrella term that describes the evolution of professional work in the medium-to-long term as affected by various trends. In a diverse EU youth context, “The future of work” is driven by a demand for stronger skills within the labour market. Employers already find it difficult to fill vacancies for high and medium-level jobs just as the workforce comprises three times more low-skilled workers than needed for corresponding occupations. Since the demand for low-skilled workers continues to decline in varying degrees throughout member states, young people entering the labour market will need higher levels of education and training—equipping them with key competences for lifelong learning as well as specific digital, vocational and personal skills that will help them navigate the path toward a diverse future career. In helping young people successfully transition to and within the labour market and build rewarding careers, a solid foundation of skills and appropriate guidance backed up by high-quality intelligence and adaptable/responsive education and training systems—including the promotion of lifelong learning—are needed. In bolstering their capabilities to effectively benefit from the changing nature of work, it’s also important to equip young Europeans with key competences involving soft skills related, inter alia, to problem solving, communication, entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, self-presentation, self-expression and negotiation (Council of the EU, Conclusions on Young People and the Future of Work, 2019).

With an eye on the forthcoming Industrial Revolution 4.0, the whole world must swiftly adapt to change; the youth sector is no different. The primary goal of the #BOOST handbook is to empower youth workers to raise awareness among young people that skills development is crucial for labour market inclusion and quality personal development within their individual lives.

Beyond youth workers, all actors who engage with young people such as educational institutions, career orientation entities, sports organisations, and even active players within the formal educational system represent the primary target for the BOOST handbook.

Innovation: The novel nature of the BOOST handbook within the youth sector helps ensure its innovative benefits and that it will greatly contribute to the quality of structured youth activities within partner countries and across Europe during the lifetime of the project. Further, BOOST focuses on “skills and knowledge of the future” and how we can support parties that deliver youth activities to recognise and transmit these to the target groups they work with. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 and its impact on the youth sector itself is still a new approach in high demand already across varying economic fields within the EU; as project deliverables are based on the principle of OER/open educational resources, outputs will easily reach all youth workers including those who work with youngsters facing fewer opportunities.

Impact: This will represent one of the first handbooks in the field of transversal skills development, focusing on practical application by youth workers and stakeholders on various levels. Provided printed copies (50pc per country) will serve as a guidebook youth organisations can use to improve their processes while at the same time empower them to prioritise transversal skills development. Beyond this, sports schools and universities can also refer to this educational material.

Transferability: This approach is transferable to other sectors such as education, sports, and the culture social field, all of which work with young people; possessing a concrete product geared specifically toward actual needs will allow these sectors to carry out related activities with a clear focus on exact skillsets ripe for development. At the same time, this is also transferable to all youth policy levels spanning local youth organisations and national or European youth structures. The output can also serve as a useful tool for HR departments of private companies, which can use the accumulated knowledge to foster professional and personal development among their employees.

The BOOST handbook will ultimately serve as a practical tool for any youth organisation, youth worker and educational expert who is engaged with youth empowerment in both Europe and the world at large. It will also channel vital information to multiple business organisations looking to develop transversal skills within potential employees across all sectors. The handbook will be available online (pdf), on the BOOST e-platform at www.boostskills.eu (EN, BG, BH, HR, IT), and via a paper copy (in English) set for distribution to interested actors at both the local and international level. As one of the first editions available for the youth sector, the handbook will devote itself to transversal skills—regarding both their overall importance and how to further develop them in young people.



Current State of Transversal Skills Development in the EU and Partner Countries

European Union

Union landscape

Skills are a means to increase one's employability and affluence. People with the necessary skills are prepared for high-quality professions and may reach their full potential as self-assured, active citizens. In a fast-changing global economy, skills will determine competitiveness and the ability to drive innovation to a large extent. They operate as a magnet for investment and a stimulus for job creation and growth in the virtuous circle. They're essential for social cohesion.

Nonetheless, the situation in Europe necessitates an appropriate response. Seventy-million Europeans are illiterate in reading and writing—with millions more lacking numeracy and digital skills—placing them at risk for unemployment, poverty, and social marginalisation. More than half of 12 million people who have been unemployed for an extended period of time are considered low-skilled. Higher education institutions must ensure graduates are equipped with current and relevant skills.

Skills disparities and mismatches are remarkable, and many people hold jobs incompatible with their abilities. Simultaneously, 40% of European firms face difficulties recruiting employees with the skills required to expand and innovate. Education providers, on one hand, and businesses and learners on the other have opposing views defining whether or not graduates are qualified to enter the job market. Too few people possess the entrepreneurial mindset and abilities required to start a firm.

While EU member states are responsible for instructional content and how education and training systems are organised, effective and long-term results require a concerted effort. The European Semester, Europe 2020 Strategy (with its two-fold education target), Investment Plan for Europe, strategic framework for cooperation in education and training “ET2020,” and European Structural and Investment Fund interventions all contribute significantly to strengthening Europe's skills base. In the period from 2014–2020, the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund injected almost EUR 30 billion to assist skills development, while the Erasmus+ programme has invested nearly EUR 15 billion to support skills development in education and training.

Transversal knowledge, skills and competences

A wide range of jobs and economic sectors benefit from transversal knowledge, skills, and competences. Also known

as fundamental skills, basic skills, or soft skills, they're the foundation of a person's personal development: developing the “hard” talents and competencies needed to succeed within the job market.

Transversal knowledge, skills, and competences are organised in a hierarchical structure inside the skills pillar, spanning the following five areas:

- Thinking
- Language
- Knowledge application
- Social interaction
- Values and attitudes

During ESCO, the Cross-sector Reference Group created both the principles and hierarchical structure of transversal knowledge, skills, and competences. This development is based on a review of varied existing national and sectoral categories, as well as information from the European Dictionary of Skills and Competences (DISCO) and other sources.

Recommendations for improvement

The Skills Agenda was at the top of the Commission Work Programme 2016's list of significant projects: promoting a shared commitment and striving to achieve a shared understanding of the strategic importance of skills in preserving jobs, growth, and competitiveness. This Skills Agenda strengthens and, in some cases, streamlines current programmes in order to better help EU member states with national reforms and to encourage individuals and organisations to alter their mindsets. In a handful of areas where Union activity adds the most value, it seeks a shared commitment to reform and revolves around three major work strands:

Improving the quality and applicability of skills development

To achieve their full potential at work and in society, people require a diverse set of abilities.

The EU's policy, focused on educational attainment, has yielded substantial results. Around 10 million more persons completed higher education in 2014 than in 2010, with the number of

young people dropping out falling to 4.5 million from 6 million in 2010.

However, data increasingly shows that policies to raise attainment alone are insufficient. The quality and relevancy of subjects studied occupy the forefront of learner minds. Yet, many young individuals leave school or training unprepared to enter the labour market and without the skills or mindset needed to start their own business.

Increasing the visibility and comparability of skills and credentials

Qualifications tell companies what people know and can do, but they rarely represent abilities acquired outside of formal education: putting them at risk of underestimation. Persons with weaker qualifications, the unemployed, those at risk of becoming unemployed, people who need to change careers, and migrants all benefit from identifying and recognising these skills. They enable people to better demonstrate and utilise their skills and experiences, as well as identify additional training needs and pursue re-qualification possibilities.

Employers find it challenging to judge employee knowledge and skills using qualifications from nations other than their own due to differences in education and training systems across the EU.

Cross-border mobility can help labour markets function well and improve lives. However, because their qualifications are often misunderstood and undervalued, EU and non-EU workers who migrate overseas suffer difficulties finding work or are paid less than individuals with identical qualifications earned in the host country.

Improving intelligence and talents

Universities and vocational education and training (VET) programmes prepare students for the workforce. As a result, they must stay informed regarding labour market developments and how easily their graduates find work, adjusting their programmes accordingly. Students and their families also require this knowledge in order to make educated decisions about what and where they should study. Curricula revision, on the other hand, takes time and is a challenging procedure.

Higher education and VET graduate labour market outcomes and learning development should be more easily accessible and comparable, relying on quality assurance indicators, administrative data (such as taxes and Social Security), and survey-based methodologies—making use of social platforms and social media where possible.

A number of EU member states have implemented tracking measures for tertiary graduates. Systems for large-scale tracking of VET graduates are less well developed, and there is room to assist member states in improving information in this area as well.

Council conclusions on enhancing cross-sectorial policy cooperation to effectively address socioeconomic challenges facing young people

Develop, implement, and evaluate a systemic approach towards cross-sectorial youth policy

Strengthen institutional cooperation—including improved communication and information sharing at the national, regional, and local levels—to ensure youth issues are fully considered when formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies in other fields that affect the socio-economic circumstances of young people: such as education and training, employment, health and well-being, social policy, urban planning, sports, and culture.

Employ tailor-made cross-sectorial approaches to projects, initiatives, and programmes addressing socio-economic challenges facing young people

Strengthen cross-sector partnerships in implementing the Youth Guarantee and other measures and share best practices, particularly in the area of youth outreach.

Seek suitable funding for the long-term development and implementation of youth-focused programmes currently funded through Youth Guarantee projects.

Strengthen the visibility of the value of youth work and other youth policy tools and their complementary role in effectively addressing challenges facing young people

Use existing or new youth engagement channels, such as the structured conversation process, to involve young people in crucial policy choices that affect them.

Promote youth work and non-formal learning, as well as concrete instruments like Youthpass, among other sectors such as employment, education, training, culture, and other key stakeholders.

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

Country landscape

By definition in Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, all human beings have the right to education. No person shall be denied the right to education. However, education often lacks quality. The question is whether the current state of the education system is good enough to prepare capable workers.

As a consequence of the current labour market situation, the Ministry of Education and Science of Bosnia and Herzegovina is working to equip young people with essential skills through a quality education system. This has enabled young people to acquire knowledge and skills through quality formal and non-formal education, ensuring they receive a successful education with which they achieve their long-term labour market goals.

Youth strategies employed in Canton Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) from 2019-2023 set out to provide a system of support for young, talented innovators and creatives while also supporting the development of their knowledge and skills. In an improved support system for youth education programmes through non-formal education, one primary activity is job-research clubs: the long-term effects of which are improved competencies and business skills as well as independent job search skills.

The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance has a mission to foster the continuous development and enhancement of quality in higher education in BiH and set quality standards in line with the best European and inter-

national practices—implementing this through various work programmes and workshops.

Recommendations for improvement

The Start-Up 2021 programme aims to encourage at least 2,000 persons from the register of unemployed workers in the Federation of BiH to seek out self-employment, launch an activity/company, and employ other persons from the register of unemployed workers in these ventures. Although this programme has enjoyed continuity, there is much room left to improve its overall quality.

The BiH Youth Retention Programme (“General Mobilization”) support cooperation between sectors that have not yet joined up to address migration challenges among young people from BiH, namely youth organisations and entrepreneurs (i.e., employers). The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of youth CSOs to participate in education and employment reforms that seek to retain young people in BiH.

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Bulgaria

National landscape

In the last few years, a number of thorough discussions have taken place regarding basic competencies every person should have. The results of these discussions outline specific competencies considered essential and important for the holistic development of a person as both a human being and professional. Bulgaria is no exception when it comes to this, and the public's attention increasingly focuses on education system results. There is consensus between the business sector, the government, and the civil sector for the need to shape educational competencies for successful realisation in students. Specifically, the Law for Preschool and School Education regulates the inclusion of nine key competency groups as part of general education. These include digital competencies, learning skills, initiative and entrepreneurship, communication skills in a foreign language, social and civic competences, and others. This is a fundamental step in the right direction, leading to significant changes in almost all other educational system elements such as state educational standards, teacher training and qualifications, the role and content of textbooks, mechanisms for assessing student performance, and the education system as a whole.

The worldwide pandemic accelerated green, digital transitions and posed new challenges to the professional development of many people: who are forced to learn new skills or improve pre-existing ones in order to adapt to the rapidly changing labour market. As an important task of the Employment Agency, skills development sets out to support workforce preparations for the post-crisis labour market. New structural trends require raising qualifications and retraining and improving skills (including digital) among both unemployed and employed workers.

A proactive approach will include forecasting skills needs and strengthening skills in close cooperation with labour market stakeholders. This also includes identifying growing sectors and sought-after occupations and ensuring appropriate career guidance for the workforce, including through career centers.

The State enterprise “Bulgarian-German Center for Vocational Training” provides an opportunity to conduct additional courses for a longer duration of time in professions lacking a sufficient, suitable staff. In addition to training programmes utilised to acquire professional qualifications and key competencies, the company also conducts adult educator trainings for teachers in vocational high schools or vocational training centers and mentors within companies.

Within the context of the new European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Justice, and Sustainability—which focuses on enhancing digital skills and creating solid training conditions for such skills—other key competencies,

such as “digital competence” trainings, were also financed in 2021. These will improve digital skills among the unemployed, a tremendous value for the future. In 2021, small, micro, and medium-sized enterprises once again had the opportunity to apply for the inclusion of their employees in key competency acquisition training. Employers have a commitment to uphold the employment of those who successfully complete the training for a period of no shorter than 6 months.

Recommendations for improvement

One main priority of active labour market policy is to provide conditions and employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed, in line with the EU Council Recommendation on integrating long-term unemployed workers within the labour market. “The program for training and employment of the long-term unemployed” is implemented to increase the employability of persons by including them in training, leading to increased knowledge and skills. The programme was valid until 31.12.2021, but based on programme monitoring and implementation evaluation, its validity can be extended.

The Refugee Employment and Training programme supports the labour market integration of foreigners granted refugee or humanitarian status in the current year or in the previous two calendar years by increasing their employability through inclusion in Bulgarian language training, training for acquiring professional qualification, and providing subsidised employment.

The Career Start programme aims to provide employment opportunities for unemployed young people who have graduated from higher education, in order to facilitate the transition between education and employment as well as achieve a flexible combination of knowledge, skills, and experience that meets market economy requirements.

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Croatia

Country landscape

At the national level, Croatia has adopted various strategies and plans. Yet, their implementation is not satisfactory.

In 2014, the Croatian Parliament adopted the **“Strategy of Education, Science and Technology”** as part of the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports proposal.

The Ministry of Science and Education has adopted the **Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2022**.

In October 2019, as part of the Ministry of Science and Education proposal, the **“Curriculum for the Development of Basic Digital, Mathematical and Reading Skills of Adults”** was adopted.

Croatia’s National Council for Development of Human Potential is a central strategic body for CROQF development in the country. The National Council assesses, validates, and coordinates public policies such as educational policy, employment policy, lifelong professional guidance policy, and regional policy—keeping in mind their influence on the development of human potential and Croatia’s ability to achieve strategic goals and stay competitive. The National Council monitors and validates the impact of the CROQF, respective qualifications, and the work of Sectoral Councils. Based on their regular reports, the Council offers recommendations on how to better connect educational offerings with labour market needs. In line with the Republic of Croatia’s Strategy for Development, the National Council offers recommendations for planning and developing human potential—conveying to the minister responsible for education and science its opinion on Sectoral Council recommendations for admission policies, admission quotas, and qualification financing from public sources.

Recommendations for improvement

In international knowledge assessments (PISA), Croatian 15-year-olds achieve average results in language and mathematical literacy—indicating the approach used to acquire knowledge, teach basic skills, and (especially) application orientation must change in primary schools.

From an early age, it is important to acquire both transversal and basic knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). These are necessary for coping in a technology-dependent society and for later action within the areas of scientific research and technological development—serving as a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

Study programmes at Croatian universities continue to lack methods geared toward developing transversal competencies such as communication and presentation skills, management skills, and entrepreneurship. Rather, learning outcomes are often evaluated on the basis of students’ memorised knowledge instead of their acquired knowledge and skills.

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Italy

Country landscape

How is creativity exercised? The answer is simple: at company schools. In 2018, the Council of the European Union, through a recommendation, underlined the need to provide all citizens with key competences: “Those that everyone needs for personal fulfillment and development, employability, social inclusion, a sustainable lifestyle, a fruitful life in a peaceful society, health-conscious life management and active citizenship.” This recommendation was implemented by introducing “Pathways for Transversal Skills and Orientation” (or PTSO) within schools. These paths, formerly defined as “school-to-work alternation,” give high school students the opportunity to gain work experience that allows them to not only acquire the skills inherent to their field of study but also develop soft skills. These provide training moments of indisputable importance that enrich student preparation, offer curricula material, and above all else, help students take the first steps toward orienting themselves to the world of work. Some attitudes are innate as peculiarities that are part of one’s nature. While some people are notably practical and able to find effective solutions to complex problems in a short time, others are diplomatic by nature and can resolve any conflict. Soft skills are acquired in the field by accumulating experiences, meeting colleagues, and weaving business relationships. Yet, this does not mean transversal skills cannot be developed from scratch, trained, or improved through targeted study paths. If you have not had the opportunity to participate in “alternation school work” courses, it is always possible to study with the acquisition of these skills in mind.

Recommendations for improvement

The main purpose of pathways for transversal skills and orientation (PTSO) is to help the student acquire functional skills for his/her study path and transversal skills aimed at orientating to the world of work or continued higher education. This spans the dimensions of curricula, experience, and orientation. Starting from this fundamental premise, PTCOs can develop across varied organisational forms: not only on the basis of the curriculum or the territorial specificity of the school but also according to the personal needs of each student. Path personalisation is an essential aspect because it allows the student to become aware and self-orientate with respect to his or her personal growth project. It is in fact possible to develop varied PTCO types within the same class group. Furthermore, one must consider the possibility of completing the path abroad, always per an activity as coherent and functional as possible to the specific path of the pupil. It is precisely for this reason that the programme presents multiple options with respect to the institution the school can collaborate with. In addition to public and private entities, third-sector and entrepreneurial realities are becoming increasingly important. The PTCO design must therefore assume flexibility as a fundamental organisational

criterion, within a well-defined regulatory framework. The educational institution, for example, can independently choose the duration of the course but must also respect constraints for the minimum number of hours carried out in the last three years:

- 90 hours for high schools
- 150 hours for technical institutes
- 210 hours for professional institutes



For a PTSO to find success, the role of disciplinary departments is fundamental—ensuring consistency with the three-year training offer plan. However, it is class councils that plan the course (alone or in collaboration with external parties), manage activities, and carry out final evaluations. In fact, the class council first selects the skills for the class group before each individual teacher identifies specific skills from this set they deem functional to their teaching. This careful selection of skills set for development is fundamentally important and must allow for the self-orientation of the student, involving him/her in activity planning and stimulating reflection and active participation. Likewise, communication with families, documentation of all journey stages, and sharing experience results are crucial for the PTSO outcome. Finally, it is essential that in the event the project is carried out in collaboration with a third party, the educational institution operates from a co-planning perspective and involves external subjects in defining objectives and educational methods.



Coordination between the parties involved is the responsibility of the tutor, who is designated by the school to perform fundamental functions in working to realise the path. In addition to coordination between the school, third parties, and the family, the tutor constantly monitors the development of activities, assists the student, and informs the school regarding any critical issues that may arise.

The PTSO evaluation must perform functions to ascertain the process and final result. Therefore, not only are objectives achieved evaluated, but through the structured observation of the entire process, importance is assigned to the acquisition of transversal skills: thus also attributing value to character and motivational aspects. The most-used tools for participatory observation to date are rubrics, diaries, digital portfolios, and observation cards. The final results, on the other hand, are evaluated across different phases ranging from identifying ob-

jectives to verifying contents learned along the way. Obviously, observation of the entire process (carried out by the tutors) influences the evaluation of final results: which is performed by class council teachers and affects behavior and the final grade. Finally, it's important to emphasise that as the document attached to the final diploma certifying skills acquired by the student during the course of study, the curriculum must include activities related to the PTSO.

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The Concept of Transversal Skills and Ideas for Development

In this part of the handbook, you will find information regarding all necessary and relevant transversal skills. What are they? Why are they important, and how can we develop them in order to thrive in the 21st century? These are the competences individuals possess that are relevant to jobs and occupations other than those they currently or recently worked in. These competences were perhaps also acquired through non-work or leisure activities or via education or training. More generally, these competences were acquired in one context or used to master a unique situation/problem but can be transferred to another context.

Despite unprecedented levels of unemployment in European countries, 32% of employers face difficulties filling jobs due to so-called “competences gap.” Hence, there are about 509,000 job vacancies currently registered in the European ICT sector. The highly competitive European labour market requires increased transversal competences (TCs) key for employability.

Yet, most young and adult learners, job-seekers, and professionals are not aware of these, nor do they know how to assess them to improve their employability potential.

The competences about which you will read on the following pages of this handbook are UNESCO-listed and considered key areas that work toward holistic development within a knowledge-driven society.

These competences are:

Critical thinking, innovative thinking, presentation skills, communication skills, organisational skills, teamwork abilities, self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, media literacy, information literacy, ability to locate and access information, ability to analyse and evaluate media content, physical health, and religious values.



1. CRITICAL THINKING

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is a relatively old term that was in fact a subject of interest among Plato and Socrates, all the way up to modern philosophers like Locke, Bacon, and Bloom. There are many broad definitions, but one sums up all others well: “careful thinking directed to a goal.” Critical thinking is how we think in full capacity, quite clearly, and rationally in order to make logical connections between ideas. No matter what you do in life (e.g., marketing, manufacturing, education, law, etc.) critical thinking is a must-have skill in the 21st century. It encourages us to think analytically and without prejudice

to find the best solution to a particular problem. Such higher-order thinking is crucial to distinguish important sources of information from irrelevant ones and to find and evaluate relevant arguments. “In essence, critical thinking requires you to use your ability to reason. It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information.” At its best, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend the divisions of the subject: namely clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, solid evidence, good reason, depth, breadth, and honesty.

Why is critical thinking important?

- ❖ Critical thinking improves students’ flexibility and capacity to learn. It also helps us think about our learning methods and encourages self-evaluation.
- ❖ Critical thinking makes education less passive and more interactive. Teaching students how to approach any topic critically makes it more relevant to them. It also fosters a better understanding and improved focus on a given topic and its significance within their lives, making them feel like active participants.
- ❖ Critical thinking and problem-solving skills boost academic success. Instead of relying on teachers and classroom time for teaching and guidance, students with critical thinking skills become independent and self-directed learners.
- ❖ Critical thinking is the foundation of science and a liberal-democratic society. Science requires the critical use of reason in the process of experimenting and validating theory. For a liberal democracy to properly function, citizens must be able to think critically about social problems to make informed decisions about proper governance and overcome bias and prejudice.

How can you develop critical thinking skills?

- ❖ Engage in active listening, which means to carefully read, hear, and observe what is happening around us.
- ❖ Analyse observations to think about and evaluate claims we hear or read about.
- ❖ Ask basic questions, deciphering the reasons why something was said, how it was said, when it was said, and where it was said.
- ❖ Take a stand on what we hear or read, which is very important.
- ❖ Try reversing items in any given scenario, which is a great way to get “unstuck” when facing a difficult problem. It may seem obvious that “X caused Y,” but what if “Y caused X” instead?
- ❖ Self-evaluate. Ask yourself, “Was I biased while seeking this information?”
- ❖ Decide which arguments are relevant to your issue, flagging the most consequential pieces of information.

2. INNOVATIVE THINKING

What is innovative thinking?

Innovative thinking is the ability to come up with new ideas and novel approaches to problems. As technology moves quickly, your ability to remain flexible and adapt to change is crucial if you want to enjoy a successful, or perhaps even lengthy, career.

An innovative thinker is someone who thinks creatively and positively to achieve a meaningful and valuable outcome no matter what comes his or her way. He or she is a creative problem solver who thinks purposefully and holistically to live better and make the world a better place.

People who learn to become innovative thinkers share a number of creative characteristics. They're curious, open-minded, flexible, self-aware, persevering, perceptive, possibility-focused, and comfortable with taking risks to move towards

their goals—and they know how to manage associated emotions in the process.

There is no organisation in the world that does not wish for greater productivity or growth. However, this requires innovation and reform. Ground-breaking pioneers such as Apple, Virgin and Toyota are proof of this. They are all market leaders and remain far ahead of the competition. Yet, how do they do that? By joining creativity and innovation and fully deploying this when launching new products and services.

Now more than ever, people must think innovatively. Innovative thinking is a highly valued skill in today's workplace. Those with the ability to think creatively to provide solutions for business challenges are highly sought after by employers. Nurturing skills like critical thinking and creativity can help you grow your innovative-thinking capabilities and feed new ideas into your workplace.

Why is innovative thinking important?

"Imagination is more important than knowledge." As one of Albert Einstein's most recognisable quotes, this musing on imagination is often invoked during discussions about the importance of innovative thinking. While knowledge is limited to what is already known, innovative thinking may expand upon existing concepts or create entirely new ideas.

As such, individuals with creative minds are highly sought after in the workplace. For one, they are innovators capable of stimulating a currently stagnant work environment. While some issues may stump their colleagues, these individuals find creative solutions with ease.

Innovative thinking is a creative thought process used to generate ideas and solutions. It is a complex task that involves finding new methods to approach problems or procedures. Innovative thinking produces results that change or challenge the status quo. In the workplace, this means looking for ways to think differently to produce better business practices for both employees and customers.

Technology has replaced myriad human jobs over the years, and sophisticated artificial intelligence is only speeding up that process. Now, machines even handle some of the most complex tasks out there: in fact doing so far more efficiently and with much greater accuracy than people. Human error creates major losses for companies, and computers aren't prone to the same issues. Artificial intelligence, however, is far from perfect. Regardless of how well these machines perform, someone must monitor their use. Even if this becomes unnecessary, some areas exist wherein human ingenuity will always remain in demand. For example, machines don't possess the capacity for creative analysis and development.

Employees who innovate are valued for how they actively pursue initiatives that improve efficiency and bring new offerings to customers and clients. Their innovative thinking often invigorates the work environment.

Here are the traits innovators possess that help them contribute new ideas: creativity, originality, problem-solving, critical thinking, curiosity, collaboration, and communication skills.

How can you develop innovative thinking skills?

Everyone has the potential to be innovative. Here are some ways you can improve your innovative thinking skills:

• Nurture your creativity

Seek out opportunities to get creative at work and in your personal life. When you're faced with a challenge, make a list of solutions. Use your imagination to brainstorm ideas that start with "What if?". Glean advice from other creative thinkers in your industry and in other disciplines that interest you.

• Learn to use failure in a positive way

Many innovators believe failure is the best teaching tool. Giving yourself room to fail and then evaluating mistakes can increase your ability to think creatively. Consider failed attempts a means to test an idea and move on to the next solution.

• Consider every idea

Innovative thinkers let their ideas flow without limits. Create a mindset for yourself wherein every concept has potential during the initial thinking process. Input from others is also an important part of forming ideas.

• Widen your knowledge base

Those who innovate recognise that ideas can come from any source. Increase your knowledge through professional and personal development, finding opportunities to learn and advance your skills.

• Recognise innovation

Celebrate innovative thinking in others. Explore their methods for creative problem-solving and learn how they generate ideas to help inspire your own creativity.



3. PRESENTATION SKILLS

What are presentation skills?

Presentation skills are “a set of abilities that enable an individual to: interact with the audience; transmit the message with clarity; engage the audience in the presentation; and interpret and understand the mindsets of the listeners.” The term “presentation” is rather inexact, encompassing anything from an elevator pitch to a eulogy; but it is safe to say that nowadays, anything involving an audience of more than two people can be considered a presentation.

A good presentation contains many of the same constituents as a good book: an interesting topic choice, engaged audience, easy-to-follow structure, coherent sentences, engaging word selection, and ease of access are just some of the criteria by which we judge both good books and good presentations. However, the most important factor leading to success for either the book or presentation is the attitude of the content consumer: the reader or listener, respectively. Audience attitudes, responses, reactions, and needs throughout the presentation are of paramount importance, since without an audience, there is no presentation. Force-feeding unnecessary, irrelevant, unstructured, and/or indigestible information is a surefire way to lose your audience in the quickest way possible.

Presentations can vary as their delivery often depends on the occasion. For this reason alone, not all require the same approach, nor is there a single set of rules that applies to all presentations. There are a few commonalities, however, which include the following:

- Effective preparation – Saying the right thing, to the right people, in the right way requires time, interest, and organisational investments.
- A clear message – What is your message, and what is the best way to present it?
- Limited time – The shorter the message, the stronger the effect on the audience.
- Respect for the audience – Most audience members show initial interest, but it is the speaker’s job to keep them engaged.
- A willingness to adapt – If the presentation is not working, it is worth adjusting midway and trying something new.

It is worth remembering that presentation skills are not set in stone. With a little bit of work and commitment, considerable improvements are possible.

Why are presentation skills important?

The ability to present a case clearly, cogently, and confidently is enormously valuable in every stage of our lives. This is a transferable skill that we can carry into the future and which—once developed—adds value to our remaining days. Interaction is an indelible part of presentation skills, so our ability to persuade and influence the audience serves as the criterion by which to judge our performance. To understand why presentation skills are such an important commodity for our success, it is worth examining what makes them so significant:

• Individual success

Each time we deliver a successful presentation, we enhance our opportunity to grow. Team members who possess outstanding presentation skills are more often in the limelight, enjoy in-demand status among their peers, and have the privilege of heightened recognition from their bosses or teachers earlier than others—quickly leading to new opportunities.

• Solid time management

A well-organised presentation that adheres to pre-set time limits exemplifies respect for the audience. Presenters who don’t waste time are often preferred for future presentations since the audience appreciates their efficiency and effective-

ness in delivering the message.

• Built-up confidence

When a presentation is well-prepared and delivered effectively with poise, it helps build self-confidence for the presenter—which often spills over in other areas as well. Leaders always look for people who contribute good ideas to the team and create value; but the secret is to have the confidence to raise your voice and share your ideas with the rest of the group.

• Leadership

Delivering a message with confidence and clarity is expected from leaders in all walks of life. Presentation skills are considered such an integral part of leadership that without the ability to express one’s ideas in a way that inspires the audience, it is very difficult to assert yourself as a leader.

• Connecting and networking

Building a rapport with the audience offers a powerful edge to any presenter. Memorable and engaging presentations leave the audience inspired, empowered, and emotionally connected. Never forget that every audience is comprised of individual listeners who each represent the next networking opportunity and potential for life advancement.

How can you develop presentation skills?

Effective presentation skills require a combination of effort, commitment, and the right mindset. Many of us avoid speaking in public at all costs and break into a cold sweat at the mere thought of giving a formal presentation to our superiors, or even worse, to strangers. This fear of public speaking, also known as glossophobia, is estimated to affect as many as 75% of all people, making it one of the most common phobias in the world. Luckily, public speaking is a skill that can be learned and developed through time. There are many small things you can do to gradually become a more effective and confident public speaker. Here are some of the best tips and tricks to hone your presentation skills:

Research your audience

Information on the size of the group, along with their genders, occupations, origins, educational backgrounds, and the like, will enable you to better understand the audience and develop/target your messages per their needs.

Set your goals and expectations

Always first ask yourself what your presentation sets out to achieve. Managing your expectations in advance will help you clarify your goals and set the stage for how to accomplish them.

Structure your presentation

Don't make the audience feel like they've fallen down a rabbit hole. Introduce them to the topic, the reasons behind the presentation, what will you cover, and what the conclusions are. A sense of structure and order will tremendously improve overall impressions of an organised presentation.

Practice, practice, practice

While rehearsing to the point of memorisation can give the impression that you are reciting a speech, it will also make you appear mechanical and reduce audience engagement. Instead, rehearse to the point where you feel you can control your anxiety and eliminate unnecessary stress—while leaving room for some audience feedback in the form of questions, comments, and a free exchange. It's those interruptions that will count and stick in the audience's memory, not your perfect rendition of sentences memorised in advance.

Add passion and personality

No one will remember your presentation if you deliver it without passion. To foster a high degree of memorability, you need to make the audience care. You can achieve this by weaving in personal stories that are easily relatable and memorable. And remember, humor is always a plus if done with care and respect.

Include take-home points

Try to summarise all points that you hope will leave a lasting impression on the audience. This will, once again, clarify the intended message and ensure the audience doesn't leave the presentation wondering why they even listened to it in the first place.

Respect the allotted time

If there is one thing you will be judged most harshly on, it's the respect you show towards the time each attendee is giving you to present your speech. Make sure you don't go overboard monopolising the set amount of time, and if that happens, make sure you apologise and wrap up the presentation gracefully. Should some members of the audience insist on continuing, suggest a post-presentation discussion for everyone still interested.



4. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

What are communication skills?

Communication is the act of giving, receiving, and sharing information—in other words, talking or writing and listening or reading. Good communicators listen carefully, speak and write clearly, and respect different opinions. Skills needed include some more specific forms of communication such as presentation, writing, and personal skills.

The ability to effectively communicate is perhaps the most important of all life skills—enabling us to pass information to other people and understand what is said to us.

It is also helpful to understand inherent differences in communicating through face-to-face interaction, phone conversations, or digital communication such as via email and social media.

There are different types of skills you can learn and practice to help you become an effective communicator. Many of these skills work in tandem, making it important to practice communication in varied contexts whenever possible.

Active listening

Active listening means paying close attention to the person speaking to you. People who are active listeners are well-regarded by their co-workers due to the attention and respect they offer others. You can engage in active listening by focusing on the speaker, avoiding distractions like cell phones and laptops, and preparing questions, comments, or ideas to fully respond.

Adapting your communication style to your audience

Different communication styles are appropriate in different situations. To make the best use of your communication skills, it's important to consider your audience and the most effective format to communicate with them.

Friendliness

In friendships, characteristics such as honesty and kindness often foster trust and understanding. The same characteristics are important in workplace relationships. When you work with others, approach your interactions with a positive attitude, keep an open mind, and ask questions to help you understand where others are coming from.

Confidence

In the workplace, people are more likely to respond to ideas presented with confidence. There are many ways you can exude confidence such as by making eye contact when you

address someone, sitting up straight with your shoulders open, and preparing ahead of time to polish your thoughts.

Giving and receiving feedback

Strong communicators can accept critical feedback and provide constructive input to others. Feedback should answer questions, provide solutions, or help strengthen the project or topic at hand.

Volume and clarity

When you speak, it's important to do so clearly and audibly. Adjusting your speaking voice so others can hear you in a variety of settings is a critical skill for effective communication. Likewise, speaking too loudly may be disrespectful or awkward in certain settings.

Empathy

Empathy means you can understand and share the emotions of others. This communication skill is important in team and one-on-one settings. In both cases, you will need to understand other people's emotions and select an appropriate response, accordingly.

Respect

A key aspect of respect is knowing when to initiate communication and respond. In a team or group setting, allowing others to speak without interruption is seen as a necessary communication skill. Respectfully communicating also means using your time with someone else wisely—staying on topic, asking clear questions, and fully responding to any questions you are asked.

Understanding nonverbal clues

A great deal of communication happens through nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact. When you listen to someone, you should pay attention to what they are saying as well as their nonverbal language. By the same measure, remain conscious of your body language when you communicate to ensure you send appropriate cues to others.

Responsiveness

Whether you are returning a phone call or replying to an email, fast communicators are viewed as more effective than those who are slow to respond.

Why are communication skills important?

Good communication skills are essential to ensure you and others digest information shared quickly and accurately. In contrast, poor communication skills lead to frequent misunderstandings and frustration.

Developing your communication skills can improve all aspects of your life, from your professional life to social gatherings and everything in between. The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly, and as intended is a vital life skill that should not be overlooked. It is never too late to work on your communication skills, and in doing so, you may well find that you improve your quality of life.

Communication skills are needed in both professional and personal arenas:

• In your professional life

If you are applying for jobs or seeking a promotion with your current employer, you will almost certainly need to demonstrate good communication skills. These are needed to speak appropriately with a wide variety of people whilst maintaining good eye contact, demonstrating a varied vocabulary, tailoring your language to your audience, listening effectively, presenting your ideas appropriately, writing clearly and concisely, and working well in a group. Many of these are

essential skills sought after by employers.

You will use your communication skills in every step of the job search and on the job as well. Everything from your resume to the job interview and beyond will require different types of these skills. For example, a well-written resume demonstrates strong written communication skills. Ensure your resume is structured appropriately and free of spelling and grammar errors. Nevertheless, verbal communication skills are ranked first among a job candidate's "must-have" skills and qualities.

• In your personal life

Good communication skills can improve your personal relationships by helping you understand others and be understood as well. It is through communication that we convey our thoughts, feelings, and connect with one another. Developing good communication skills is critical for successful relationships whether they're with our parents, children, spouses, or siblings. We've all had experiences wherein we feel heard and understood. Likewise, we can also remember times when we felt misunderstood and perhaps even ignored. Generally, when we feel heard, we are less angry, less stressed, and more open to resolving problems than when we feel misunderstood.

How can you develop communication skills?

With experience and practice, you can learn and improve upon your communication skills. Start by identifying your strengths and then practice and develop those areas, specifically.

- Ask a close friend or colleague for constructive criticism. It's often difficult to know how you are perceived as a communicator. To obtain an objective opinion, ask a trusted friend for his/her honest feedback. Understanding areas ripe for improvement can help you identify what to focus on.
- Practising new habits can make you a better communicator. This might include increasing responsiveness to communications upon receiving them, reminding yourself to make eye contact, practising giving positive feedback, and asking questions during conversations.

- Attend communication skills workshops or classes. There are online and offline seminars, workshops, and classes that can help you become a better communicator. These may include instruction, role play, written assignments, and open discussions.
- Seek out opportunities to communicate, both on and off the job, that require you to use these skills. This will help you improve existing skills and allow you to practice new ones.

By more deeply understanding yourself and employing a more relaxed, positive outlook on life, you are more likely to project charisma: a trait that can further aid the communication process. Good communication is also linked to assertiveness, or standing up for what you believe in.

During times of stress or when we are angry, we may communicate less effectively!

5. ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS

What are organisational skills?

Organisational skills are the ability to use your time, energy, and resources effectively to achieve set goals. These include:

- ✦ Self-discipline and organisational skills that are crucial for success in any profession.
- ✦ Organisational learning—a process whereby managers and employees within a company or organisation learn to address new situations and problems—to gain skills and experience.
- ✦ Organisational models: descriptions, diagrams, etc. depicting the structure of an organisation and the relationships between the different people, departments, or jobs within that organisation.
- ✦ Organisational planning: the process used to learn what an organisation wants to achieve and decide how to achieve this.
- ✦ Organisational strategy: plans executed by a large company or organisation to develop and thrive within evolving markets.
- ✦ Organisational structure: the way in which a large compa-

ny or organisation is organised (for example, the types of relationships that exist between managers and employees).

Organisational skills allow you to use your resources efficiently and effectively. Staying organised means you manage your time, energy, and workspace well and can accomplish all your assigned tasks successfully. Organisational skills can take on different forms depending on your particular workplace and job title, but they typically involve maintaining an orderly workspace, meeting deadlines, and communicating well with your team.

Staying organised in the workplace involves using a range of important skills, including:

- ✦ Time management
- ✦ Communication
- ✦ Goal-setting
- ✦ Delegation
- ✦ Working under pressure
- ✦ Self-motivation
- ✦ Analytical thinking
- ✦ Attention to detail
- ✦ Decision-making
- ✦ Strategic planning

Why are organisational skills important?

To keep up within the fast-paced business world, you need to stay organised. Maintaining top-notch organisational skills can further your career and make you an invaluable asset to your employer. Organisational skills will help you keep things straight and simplify tasks to manage your workload, schedule, and files. Staying organised can also reduce the clutter on your desk, making you more productive within your workspace.

✦ Do organisational skills make an impact?

In business, disorganisation is a risky game. Lacking the proper organisational skills puts you at risk for losing documents, misplacing valuable client contact information, forgetting meetings, miscalculating your appointments, and becoming frustrated with a messy desk.

✦ Are organisational skills significant?

Organisation has a lot to do with your productivity. When you are organised, you know which tasks to complete first and can do so more effectively.

If you've ever wondered whether personal and task organisation are the same, we have the answer for you. There are

different types of organisation. Personal organising has to do with managing aspects of yourself, such as your office and paperwork. Conversely, you use task organisation to create order for your projects.

Staying organised leads to better work quality as it helps you avoid costly mistakes, such as overlooking information or missing appointments. Losing track of the memo from your boss can lead to errors that waste both time and money. Forgetting to write down important information can force you to restart a project from scratch. Consider how much easier it is to double-book yourself or forget a meeting if you keep multiple calendars instead of consolidating them into one. Getting organised helps you avoid mistakes and allows you to do your job with fewer errors.

Organisational skills development will afford you significant added value, including always making a good impression. Consider the following scenario: The president of your company and a key client walk past your desk, which looks like a disaster area; or an executive stops by unexpectedly and finds your workspace well-organised and tidy. Staying organised can help you make a positive impression on superiors, clients, co-workers and visitors to your company. You can earn respect on your own behalf and that of your company by maintaining professional-grade organisational habits.

How can you develop organisational skills?

Time management

Time management is planning and exercising strategic control of one's time spent on various activities. This can help you become more innovative and take up new challenges.

Planning

There is a famous saying, "If you don't plan, you plan to fail." With the help of proper planning for the future, you can greatly reduce the number of things that may go wrong and lessen the risk of uncertainty by coordinating activities in the best way possible.

Scheduling

Scheduling will help you get organised. Even though it's similar to planning, it has its own importance as an underrated method for enhanced employee management.

Resource allocation

Resources are extremely valuable. Efficient resource allocation is required for cost-effective strategies that help projects stay on budget.

Delegation

Delegation is the process of allocating and entrusting work to another person. Employees can't handle all aspects of a project by themselves. As this simply requires too much time and energy, delegating tasks is an essential organisational skill.

Prioritising

Prioritising is organising tasks so that the most important ones are completed first. Employees should have clarity here

so they can prioritise better: thus maintaining clarity of the ultimate goal.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a group of employees who work together and contribute their skill set to achieve a common goal. This is beneficial for both the organisation as well as employees. Collaborating with others will significantly benefit the outcome of any project. Yet, it's not something that can be forcefully imposed on employees. Good collaboration occurs amidst the presence of a healthy workplace culture.

Goal-setting

Every leader with good organisational skills should be goal-oriented and able to distinguish between short and long-term goals. By staying focused on set plans, you can achieve goals with efficiency.

Maintaining efficiency

Efficiency and organisation go hand in hand. Efficiency necessitates planning because the smoother projects run, the fewer problems will arise. Staying efficient allows you to know where you are at any given point in time, as you are well-organised and can hence prevent problems from popping up along the way.

Communication

Within any organisation, effective communication is a key organisational skill that fosters productivity and strong relationships among employees. This is currently more essential than ever amidst the Covid-19 outbreak since most employees must work remotely.



6. TEAMWORK ABILITIES

What are teamwork abilities?

Teamwork abilities encompass a set of skills that foster productivity and a healthier teamwork experience. They are applied both in one-on-one engagements and in group settings. It would be very difficult to name every single skill within this set, so let's emphasise a distinct few while truly believing in their importance for team functioning.



Without a doubt, communication is the very foundation of successful teamwork. It is extremely important to discuss and tackle all topics required for team members to have a clear picture of not only team objectives but personal responsibilities as well. Beyond this, communication is beneficial for productivity but the overall atmosphere as well. Have you ever wanted to inquire about what exactly you were supposed to do but stayed silent due to a fear of judgement? Healthy team communication should never put you in that position. Rather, each member is invited to speak up, share ideas and opinions, and pose questions, while simultaneously never insulting others' views. Communication must stay respectful, even in the midst of the toughest disagreements.

When such disagreements do happen, it is useful to employ conflict-management skills: meaning the ability to manage how conflicts affect you, others you work with, and the workplace as a whole. In practice, that means staying unbiased, wanting to find the solution (rather than winning an argument), addressing the issue immediately, and of course knowing how to take constructive criticism. Creating feedback-oriented teams leads to significant improvements, so do not be afraid to recognise flaws when they exist or praise positive elements. Encouragement and support are not only a platform for growth but also help forge valuable human bonds.

However, there is one component of successful communication that most people forget, so let's emphasise active listening. Giving your undivided attention to the speaker, paying attention to nonverbal cues, and maintaining eye contact are some basic elements of this skill.

Another important building block of "teamwork abilities" is reliability. If your team cannot rely on you, it's difficult to forge solid relationships with colleagues. The simplest way to define reliability is accomplishing job tasks and finishing assignments before the given deadline. The reason why one should pay special attention here is that your professional actions directly impact others. Would you value a relationship with someone who constantly misses deadlines and makes you work overtime? If something goes wrong and you miss a deadline, stay accountable. This means not shifting blame onto others but instead owning the mistake, apologising, and doing your best not to repeat it. This personal error acknowledgement leads to the development of trust.

Being part of a team is not a static category; rather, it implies constant personal and professional growth as well as learning about yourself and others. Self-awareness is crucial because it's impossible to act as a helpful team member if you do not understand yourself or how you appear to others. Perhaps the most important thing to understand about teamwork abilities is that one is not born with these, nor are we miraculously gifted them overnight. Rather, each one of us must work and practice them on a daily basis until such behaviours become habit. So, try practicing open communication, conflict management, giving and receiving feedback, staying reliable, accountable, and encouraging, and seeking to better understand yourself—as these are the building blocks to develop good relationships, a healthy approach to conflict resolution, and effective collaboration habits.



Why are teamwork abilities important?

Consider the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Colosseum, and the Great Wall of China. Of course, you know what these are: but do you know what it took for them to be built? If you guessed teamwork, you're right! Hundreds of men working together for months and years surely knew that one pyramid block weighing an average of 2.5 tons was impossible to move with only two hands. Look at what teamwork accomplished!

Today, the ability to work in teams is one of the most sought-after skills on resumes—as almost every company from Tokyo to Paris is comprised of numerous small and large teams. Even your direct manager is part of a managerial team, and the CEO himself cannot function completely alone. Keep in mind that digitalisation, a massive catalyst for teamwork, is not going away. Consequently, in the 21st century now more than ever, to work means being part of a team.

Naturally, this does not pertain solely to careers: families, friends, and university or high school peers represent teams as well. Take, for example, holiday preparations. It's necessary to divide up work, and if dad does not communicate with mum regarding what is needed for meal preparation, issues will arise. These

consequences are mostly emotional and, yes, perhaps money is wasted on the wrong products; but when this concept is applied to business firms, millions (or billions!) of dollars are at stake. Effective communication helps prevent errors from happening and drives talent retention as well (up to 4.5 times) as a platform for innovation and progress.

Acting supportive helps build group morale and drive motivation, making others feel comfortable to fully express themselves and thereby cultivating the largest value within teams: diversity. To know that one will not be crucified for making mistakes is a true blessing and grows feelings of belonging.

Dysfunctional teams in fact require more time and energy to solve any problem versus one person, but high-functioning teams will solve even bigger problems much faster than an individual. This is why developing accountability, responsibility, healthy conflict management, and communication leads to accelerated problem-solving. By working on your individual aptitude for teamwork, you help breed efficiency for the entire team. Given that teams exist in almost every aspect of our lives, it is our responsibility to know how to successfully behave within them.

One small final remark: successful teams are often paid better, as well.

How can you develop teamwork abilities?

Take your time

Before even starting this journey, understand that it will take time to improve teamwork abilities—just like the time required to learn how to drive a car or ride a bike. All skill development processes require practice and mistakes to be made: so don't get discouraged!

Request and give feedback

Many people assume that posing questions and asking for help is a sign of weakness, but it's quite the contrary as a signal to others about your will to improve. There is also a common belief that by inquiring about possible mistakes, one is somewhat subordinate in that relationship: forgetting the bravery that comes with admitting a mistake and owning up to it.

Clarify roles, rules, goals, and the purpose

The famous author Brené Brown often uses a phrase: "Clear is kind." This short sentence, in practice, can help prevent so many workplace conflicts and thus help employees maintain good relationships. It implies that upon assigning tasks or taking on responsibilities, one should explain him or herself as clearly as possible so that others are well-aware of associated expectations.

Keep the discussion where it belongs

Another very simple practice is to avoid voicing your opinions outside of formal meetings. Instead of using your coffee break to comment on the idea your colleague had previously presented,

react immediately after the presentation. It is important to understand that expressing your opinion outside of team meetings can be considered gossiping—which doesn't benefit overall collaboration nor a teamwork atmosphere. After all, undermining your colleagues helps no one.

Accept differences

Diversity is one of the most beautiful aspects of teams and helps drive innovation. Consequently, even if you are not initially open to some distinct ideas or opinions, do not immediately refuse them and instead try to understand them.

Observe, recognise, apply

If you are not at all sure about how you should behave in any given situation, observe others you believe are acting appropriately and enhancing the teamwork atmosphere. By noticing good practices, you will be able to easily recognise your own mistakes and work to fix them, accordingly.

Set goals

Sometimes people have difficulty wrapping their heads around the idea of goal setting and possess stubborn thoughts that goals are mostly very concrete such as "get that job" or "win that competition." As ridiculous as this might sound, you can set equally concrete goals in this area we're discussing right now: voice at least one opinion during a meeting, ask at least two of your team members how their day is going, etc. At the moment these efforts might seem small and not useful, but they represent your first step toward building healthy team habits.

7. SELF-DISCIPLINE

What is self-discipline?

Self-discipline is the ability to act within the big picture, form and conduct life plans and personal projects, and assert rights, interests, limits, and needs.

If you are an undisciplined person, your chances of achieving success are drastically reduced no matter how much intelligence and how many capabilities you possess. If you do not add order to your life, it will be very difficult to achieve your goals. Avoiding responsibilities is not a good option, which is

why self-discipline provides many advantages.

When you apply self-discipline while engaging in any activity, these repeated actions will form very marked habits in your life. Creating this internal adaptation will prove difficult at the beginning, especially if you typically possess very erratic behavior that lacks strict agenda planning. Obviously when you are able to complete tasks without failure, change will be evident. Moreover, when you've already reached high levels of self-discipline, even greater opportunities will come into your life.

Why is self-discipline important?

First and foremost, it will boost your confidence. By developing the habit of consistent discipline, you will increase your self-esteem, which in time will increase your confidence. You will also be more productive and accomplish more in less time. When you refuse to pay attention to the temptations and desires that tend to distract and limit your pace of work, you increase your level of productivity.

This ultimately improves your ability to remain calm and stay positive in the midst of challenges and obstacles. These, of course, will not cease to arise in planning to achieve your goals. Self-discipline fosters the habit to stay the course no matter the circumstances.

As the Italian poet Pietro Aretino once said; "I am, indeed, a king, because I know how to rule myself."

How can you develop self-discipline?

Acquiring self-discipline requires determination and practice whenever possible so that it becomes a habit. To do this, it is important to take into account some strategies you can use to strengthen this virtue.

Use time well

We must schedule our activities to achieve our daily goals.

Identify your strengths

It is important to recognise what we know how to do to use this to our advantage.

Identify obstacles

You must identify the obstacles you'll likely face when working toward your goal, devising a strategy for overcoming each one.

Monitor your progress

Consider keeping a journal to write down your self-discipline goals and track your progress. This reinforces the positive

changes you're implementing in your life and gives you a record to look back on and see the progress you've made.

Know your priorities

It is necessary to set a clear order of importance for our tasks.

Make decisions with limited information

Acting quickly gives focus to what we seek to do and not put off indefinitely.

Choose to act

Given the choice to "do" or "not do" something, the former is always preferable.

Stop striving for perfection

The habit of discipline takes time, so if we stop acting like perfectionists, we avoid nervousness and act accordingly.

8. ENTHUSIASM

What is enthusiasm?

Enthusiasm is the energy, the fuel, the blazing fire that summons successful results. A famous writer once said that nothing great ever happened without enthusiasm. If you want to accomplish great things, realise great goals, and live a great life, you absolutely must possess enthusiasm for everything you do. Enthusiasm is a personality trait that is positively infectious. Whether you're an athlete training on the field, a manager sharing ideas in the boardroom, or a consultant discussing options with a candidate, enthusiastic professionals are a sought-after commodity in every profession. These types of people outwardly express energy in everything they do. They attack all activities with a sense of positive urgency. They look forward to new challenges with zest, with every obstacle becoming an opportunity to recharge and refocus. Enthusiastic professionals are like magnets that draw people to

them. Peers can learn from them and accept their support, and superiors will often point to them as "best practice" examples. They continually grow their networks, meaning more opportunities will come their way and thus breed success.

Enthusiastic people are productive in executing their roles with energy. These professionals are very conscious of their own high self-expectations, meaning they consistently deliver high-quality results.

They also readily motivate staff around them, as enthusiasm is infectious. Whether this is through inspiration or the fear of an inability to measure up, the outcome is still the same.

Join the enthusiasts yourself! Become a person who is happy to get out of bed in the morning, ready to execute his or her mission. It's all about finding your passion and living it out!

Why is enthusiasm important to success?

The primary reason here is that the difference between success and failure is often very minute. Two people with virtually the same amount of skill and talent can vastly differ in the amount of success they achieve. This difference is not attributed to a disparity in abilities. In fact, in many cases, the more successful person actually possesses less ability overall. The difference is in enthusiasm.

This difference between success and failure is what we call the "slight edge." This means that you don't have to be 10 times or 100 times better than the next person. You must simply be slightly better to achieve great success.

How do you take advantage of this? The key is enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is like a magnet. It attracts you to everything you set out to achieve, creates the conditions for a successful result, and enables you to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

A number of recent books zero in on the importance of emotional intelligence, showing that the critical determinant of success is not a person's academic intelligence but rather his or her emotional intelligence: the ability to control and manage emotions in various situations and settings. Enthusiasm is the key to this emotion management. It allows you to control the emotional climate within any given situation.

How can you develop enthusiasm?

One can develop the power of enthusiasm with three critical steps:

Interest

First, you must have a strong interest or curiosity in knowing about a specific subject. In other words, if you want to show enthusiasm toward other people, you must be interested in them. If you want to show enthusiasm toward your work, you must strive to know everything there is to know about it. You must read and study more about it during your downtime, wishing to learn, learn, learn.

Knowledge

Many people are interested in any number of subjects, but until they truly learn about these things, they'll never develop the knowledge necessary to create enthusiasm. Action is the key to transforming interest into knowledge. When you are interested in something, you must act on it to glean the knowledge you're seeking. As you build knowledge of the subject you are interested

in, this creates the right conditions for the third, important step.

Belief

This occurs when you transform your knowledge from simple academic information and facts into emotional commitment. This is when true enthusiasm is created. It is not enough just to know everything about a subject: you must believe it. The only way to believe something is to test your knowledge of that subject. By putting your knowledge to the test, you create belief in the validity and truth of that knowledge. This belief generates a strong emotional commitment that fosters intense enthusiasm.

Most people sleepwalk through life, suffering "quiet lives of desperation." Will this be the story of your life, or will you wake up? Will you feel the enthusiasm and passion of living the life you always dreamed of? The problem is that most people wait to show enthusiasm about something. Unfortunately, enthusiasm doesn't just hit us: we must create it and take responsibility for doing so in our lives. It is only then that we can fulfill our dreams and truly accomplish what we set out to do in the future.

9. PERSISTENCE

What is persistence?

Persistence is the persistence to keep doing something despite encountering difficulties or delays in achieving success: in other words, the ability to forge ahead in spite of obstacles. People who persevere show steadfastness in their activities despite how difficult or time-consuming it is to reach their goals.

Persistence is an important value feeding into personal de-

velopment and interpersonal relationships. In every relationship, project, activity, or task we encounter, conflicts arise. Persistence, control, and an ability to shun apprehension regarding potential failures and mistakes are necessary to find a resolution and thus personally improve and grow.

Therefore, knowing and remaining aware of difficulties is essential to remain optimistic in difficult moments and exercise persistence.

Why is persistence important?

Many people think of persistence as moving forward with a project despite obstacles that may arise, but this notion is incomplete because it also includes the ability and will to continue efforts—even amidst setbacks—to achieve a goal. When we persevere, we overcome fatigue and frustration to get closer to a dream or make a specific goal a reality. All our efforts are valid because we know the value of what we desire. People who persevere always finish what they start with determination and a strong will. This is a value highly recognised and appreciated in society. Anyone who sets a goal and fights against all odds to achieve it has what it takes to succeed.

Persevering people know no limits; while everyone else sees a closed window, he or she sees a latent opportunity and works very hard to achieve a related goal. He or she can even devise a strategy to make the best use of these efforts. Persistence is closely related to effort, will, fortitude, and patience. Therefore, with practice and strong conviction, this set of values can pull us through any difficult situation we face.

As the Scottish politician Walter Elliot once said, “Persistence is not a long race; it is many short races one after another.”

How can you develop persistence?

When you select an activity you want to persevere through, employ these simple, straightforward tips:

Set a realistic goal

Spend some time thinking about the precise results you wish to achieve, being as specific as you can. Set a timeframe for achieving each step, placing your sights on a goal that is reasonably attainable.

Divide the goal into smaller parts

Break the goal down into specific tasks that each require a set amount of time to complete. For example, you can break

a 1-hour goal into 15-minute segments. You can also divide a task into segments, such as organising a specific quantity of files each day.

Dedicate a set amount of time to the goal each day

You can even start by setting aside 5 minutes each day to work toward your goal. Then, increase this to 10 minutes in the second week, and so on. If you have a busy schedule, this will make working on the goal simply another part of your routine: boosting the chance you'll follow through.

10. SELF-MOTIVATION

What is self-motivation?

Self-motivation is the force that constantly pushes us to go on. It's our internal drive to achieve, produce, develop, and keep moving forward. It's the ability to take opportunities and show commitment when facing different activities and challenges in our daily lives.

However, the real motivations that drive us to do things are often very different, and it is interesting to understand what's behind our will or even the lack thereof.

For example, when we work on something we don't really like but are instead motivated by the money we receive for this work, this is called "extrinsic" motivation. This is not based on the satisfaction of performing a chain of actions that comprise

our efforts but rather on a reward that is only indirectly related to it: as if it were a byproduct.

On the other hand, "intrinsic" motivation is the impulse we feel that comes from within ourselves to perform an activity, rather than an external reward we might reap from doing so. In this case, we feel pleasure and satisfaction in the process of engaging in the activity and not only upon its completion—such as when playing a sport we truly enjoy.

In conclusion, self-motivation is a forceful energy that can help us fulfill our goals and objectives in life, improve our resilience in facing difficulties, and challenge ourselves. However, it is also interesting to reflect on our true motivations to understand why we do what we do in order to set clear and realistic goals in accordance with our real motivations and will.

Why is self-motivation important?

Self-motivation can help you push yourself to meet your goals, helps widen your perspective, and allows you to see things differently with a higher degree of approachability. Thus, you can in turn categorise your goals more efficiently when you learn to reflect on your actions. When you're ready to quit or just don't know where to start, your self-motivation is what pushes you to go ahead.

Moreover, self-motivation is a key component of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the measure of one's ability to recognise and manage his or her own emotions and those of other people. Self-motivation's relevance to emotional intelligence

highlights its role within our ability to understand ourselves, relate to others, and succeed in reaching our goals.

Therefore, self-motivation involves the following components:

- Achievement and goal orientation
- Commitment to established objectives
- Initiative/willingness to act
- Optimism/positive outlook

As American president Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Believe you can and you're halfway there."

How can you develop self-motivation?

Given the benefits of self-motivation explained above, your next question might revolve around if you can become more self-motivated.

The answer is a definite "yes." Here are some related tips:

- Set realistic goals
- Take an appropriate level of risk
- Constantly seek feedback to learn how to improve
- Engage in your passions
- Stay committed to personal and/or organisational goals and go the extra mile to achieve them
- Continue learning and acquiring knowledge
- Spend time with motivated, enthusiastic, and supportive people
- Cultivate a positive mindset and build your optimism and resilience
- Identify and work on your strengths and weaknesses
- Avoid procrastination and work on your time management skills
- Get help when you need it, and be willing to help others succeed (Skills You Need)
- Maintain the ability to address setbacks and continue to pursue your goals despite obstacles
- Use difficulties as an impetus; obstacles or problems that come our way can make us feel bad and weaken us, or they can help us become stronger and move forward (it's up to us!)

11. TOLERANCE

What is tolerance?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines tolerance as a “willingness to accept behavior and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them.” Merriam-Webster adds in its definition: “the act of allowing something: toleration.”

Tolerance is indeed patience towards and acceptance of respect for diversity: in beliefs, values, cultures, religions, opinions, preferences, ideas, identities, and lifestyles.

Tolerance makes it possible for people to coexist peacefully. It is the basis for a fair society in which everyone can lead their lives as they wish. Tolerance means one doesn't put his or her opinion above that of anyone else. Tolerant people show strength in that they can accept different opinions and perspectives. Tolerance doesn't just make peaceful coexistence

possible; another advantage is that remaining open to other ways of thinking can help with personal development. When you know more about unique thinking and ideas from around the world, you can better understand that world.

It is important to recognise that tolerance is much more than not having prejudices towards others or “putting up with” someone who has preferences, ideas, and/or beliefs that differ from ours. At the same time, tolerance cannot be indiscriminate. Indiscriminate acceptance in its most extreme form could lead to questionable practices and human rights violations. It is important to keep in mind that we should draw a line with respect to tolerance, remaining aware that our societies rest on this value.

As French historian and philosopher Voltaire said, “Toleration is prerogative of humanity; we are all full of weaknesses and mistakes; let us reciprocally forgive ourselves. It is the first law of nature.”

Why is tolerance important?

In an age when electronic media draws us closer together into what is called a “global village,” its benefits are only felt when mutual goodness, mutual respect, and understanding prevail. As part of this globalisation wherein people of unique backgrounds, cultures, and religions live together—in a world filled with diverse multicultural perspectives—establishing tolerance and harmony is crucially important. It is therefore vital to foster mutual feelings of love and affection. The world is full of diversity, which is the beauty of our universe. In the absence of this, the world would appear boring and unattractive and lack competition of any kind.

In the workplace, tolerance helps employees build bridges and capitalise on differences present within a team. A lack of tolerance thwarts team and company progress, breeding misunderstandings and unethical behavior. For a small business, tolerance is needed to work toward goals and develop creative solutions for a wide range of workplace challenges. Demonstrating tolerance in the workplace requires a concerted effort to fully understand another's background, experiences, and beliefs.

The ability to accept one another's differences has a positive effect on overall wellbeing. Tolerance removes one's self-imposed barriers and allows him or her to think more broadly and

enjoy greater inner peace. Tolerance leads to less stress and greater happiness within the overall community.



How can you develop tolerance?

As the secretary-general of the United Nations said, “Tolerance is not passive. It demands an active choice to reach out on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, especially where disagreement exists. Tolerance means recognising that our diversity is a strength – wellspring of creativity and renewal for all societies. Tolerance can, and must, be learned. We need to teach girls and boys not just how to live together but how to act together as global citizens.”

People can nurture tolerance by promoting cultural understanding and respect while rejecting social exclusion based on gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, or ethnic or religious backgrounds. It is not easy to act with tolerance because individuals rely so heavily on their own experiences and world-view; hence, it is difficult to see things from another person’s perspective. Yet, it’s great to know that tolerance is a skill that people can develop. Here are four tips to help you build tolerance for others:

Take ownership of your feelings

Recognise that no one can make you feel any given way without your permission. Move from an attitude of “this person upset me” to “I feel upset because of something this person said or did, but it doesn’t have to be that way. I have the power to choose my reactions.”

Develop curiosity

In many cases, when we lack tolerance towards others it is simply because we do not understand them. By cultivating

an open mind, learning about other cultures and people, and broadening our horizons, we increase our ability to understand and in turn accept others.

Change your perspective

Sometimes hurt feelings or a lack of tolerance surface because we fail to see where the other person is coming from. You may not fully understand another person’s experiences, but you can shift your perspective away from yourself. Move from an attitude of “I cannot believe that person was so rude to me” to “Maybe that person is having a hard time right now. I know I also sometimes say things I don’t mean when life gets me down.”

Practice respect

When you don’t agree with the opinions of others, focus on respecting their right to think for themselves and believe what they choose. Just as we would never want that right taken away from us, we have a responsibility to extend that same courtesy to other people and treat others with respect.

Prioritise communication

Encourage yourself to engage in an open dialogue with others to help gain a better understanding of their views and beliefs. Place emphasis on polite and considerate communication, whether in-person, over the phone or a screen, or through written correspondence.



12. OPENNESS

What is openness?

Openness, how open-minded a person is, is one of five personality traits outlined in the “Big Five” personality theory. People with a high level of openness enjoy trying new things. They are imaginative, curious, and open-minded. Individuals who are low in openness to experiences would rather not try new things. They are close-minded, literal, and enjoy routines.

High openness means being creative and open to new ideas. Individuals with a high level of openness often have a general appreciation for unusual ideas and art. They are usually imaginative, rather than practical. Being creative, open to new

and different ideas, and in touch with one’s feelings are all characteristics of high-openness people. Individuals who don’t possess this quality are generally more closed-off, resistant to change, and analytical.

Openness traits include:

- Imagination
- Artistic interests
- Emotionality
- Boldness
- Intellect
- Liberalism
- Careers grounded in openness

Maintaining a high level of openness is important in jobs that require creative thinking and a flexible attitude. Jobs such as advertising, research, and other artistic occupations all benefit from this trait.

Why is openness important?

Being open is associated with creativity, curiosity, and a hunger for knowledge and learning. People who possess this trait are also divergent and abstract thinkers who can come up with many novel solutions for any given problem. Openness is how open-minded, imaginative, creative, and insightful a person is or can be. More open-minded people tend to prefer variety, seek out new experiences, and are curious and perceptive to their environment. Less open-minded people tend to avoid change, dislike disruption, and focus on a few specific interests.

Openness is correlated with higher measures of well-being, including overall happiness. People rich in this trait feel more positive and enjoy warm and loving relationships with the people around them. Research has never found any noteworthy correlation between openness and anxiety or other mood disorders.

People high in openness are willing to try new things, such as eating an exotic dish or travelling to a strange land. They are inquisitive and seek out knowledge. People who are more open may be less practical and less analytical than others; instead, they rely on their inventiveness and are more receptive to change.

Openness reflects a tendency to pursue and enjoy unfamiliar things. Therefore, it makes sense that this trait shares a positive correlation with innovative thinking: those particularly open to experiences have more active imaginations and a greater appreciation for aesthetics and beauty. Receptivity to change and new experiences and an ability to “think outside the box” are a few ways to understand this personality trait. Think of your workplace or work environments where openness to experience is essential for sustained growth.

How can you develop openness?

Though personality traits tend to remain stable throughout one’s lifespan—making it difficult to simply “become” more extroverted or conscientious, for example—our behaviors become malleable with some focus and persistence. Even if you naturally possess more conservative, rigid thinking patterns, you can develop and maintain specific openness-to-experience habits that can maximise your potential for creative growth.

• Use your imagination

Even if this is something that does not come spontaneously to you, consider devoting 10 to 20 minutes a day to let your imagination to run wild. This might take shape as playing fantasy-based games, brainstorming ideas for short stories, or employing a “no-filters approach” when thinking about future possibilities.

• Expose yourself to other artists’ work

One characteristic of those who score high on the openness-to-experience measure is their involvement in aesthetically triggering

experiences and an appreciation for artistic events. Accepting invitations to art galleries and plays or even going for a nature walk may stimulate your perceptions and increase your aesthetic sensitivity.

• Switch up your routine

While it may feel comfortable to follow a predictable schedule, commute, diet, and after-work routine, this can limit your sense of receptiveness to new experiences. In order to benefit from the creativity correlated with this personality trait, you may want to incorporate an adventurous spirit in your day-to-day life. Adding variety to daily choices may help bring out the openness-to-experience side of your personality.

• Engage your intellect and cognitions

A thirst for knowledge and interest in new information may come more naturally to some than others. However, making a conscious effort to read up on new ideas, pay attention to sensory experiences, learn a new language, and pick up new skills can stimulate the active process of openness to new experiences.

13. RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

What is respect for diversity?

Diversity is the condition of possessing or being comprised of varied elements or qualities. Beyond simply suggesting variety, it refers to a range of human differences and the inclusion of different races, cultures, religious and political beliefs, genders, sexual orientations, marital and parental statuses, and physical abilities within any group or organisation. Diversity involves a broad understanding that each individual is unique and valuable because of their differences, not in spite of them.

In that respect, inclusion and tolerance are terms closely associated with diversity; as it is impossible to explore differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing manner and create synergies for the future in a climate lacking equity and mutual respect. Diversity is also closely connected to discrimination since bias and discriminatory practices projected towards groups with specific socio-demographic characteristics can stifle their ability to have equal opportunities alongside other members of the organisation.

Therefore, diversity is a set of “conscious practices” that include:

- Understanding and appreciating the interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences different from our own
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing
- Recognising that personal, cultural, and institutionalised discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination

Given the above, there is no culture or status inherently superior to another. While some anti-discrimination policies are now protected by law, building diverse teams and teaching respect for others are actions that require extra effort from everyone involved. Developing an awareness and respect for our inherent differences is the first step towards building a truly global team and organisation.

Why is respect for diversity important?

As nature repeatedly shows us, diversity adds physical, financial, and emotional health and resilience within our lives. Not only does it help us survive, but it also leads to higher degrees of variability and strength through innovation and creativity. While diversity has served as an important factor since the very beginning, it has never been more significant than it is now in the 21st century. There are many reasons for this, but some of the most important are:

• It provides varied perspectives

Developing empathy through acceptance widens our world view and expands even the narrowest of minds. While familiarising ourselves with different values and beliefs may seem intimidating at first, doing so helps us understand other people’s attitudes and behaviors and provides us with new perspectives.

• It helps teach tolerance, acceptance, and respect

When we experience varied perspectives, we are much less likely to engage in discrimination or unfair treatment. Building bridges between different cultures is a surefire way to reduce your own

prejudices and biases and embrace a life of inclusion and acceptance.

• It builds a more balanced world

The freedom to express your opinion—no matter how much it strays from the majority—reduces fear towards differences and improves the balance of opinions and views.

• It provides a richer life experience

Once we become comfortable enough to interact and socialise with those reflecting varied backgrounds and opinions, we open our lives to embrace new horizons and enriched life experiences.

• It increases productivity and innovation

Diversity enriches the talent pool and helps develop and maximise skillsets, which in turn boosts productivity and innovation and invites even those who differ from the majority to rise to the top.

Diversity should therefore become systemic and embedded in every team and organisation. In order for this to happen, it is necessary for everyone in the team or organisation to commit to the cause and embrace it wholeheartedly.

How can you develop respect for diversity?

A diverse organisation is a successful organisation. In order to become inclusive and tolerant, it is important for an organisation to change its culture and prioritise diversity as a strategic imperative. This change can be rather challenging as it requires leaving the status quo behind, but in the end, the rewards are plentiful for all involved.

Here are some well-tested strategies that can help your organisation improve diversity:

Develop respect for diversity as a continuous activity

Once your organisation has committed to creating an open, inclusive, and diverse culture, it is not enough to hold yearly trainings and claim goal achievement. Rather, diversity requires identifying key points where behavioural changes are necessary as well as making a full-time commitment to act on them.

Ensure leadership reflects the organisational membership pool

If you are unsure about whether or not your organisation is diverse, just look at your leadership. The structure of that team must reflect the diversity of your membership as well as other stakeholders.

Acknowledge and honor multicultural practices

Introduce policies that will celebrate and honor different holidays within the organisation.

Build a fair process for entering the organisation

When recruiting candidates as new members or employees, shift your focus towards expanding the talent pool from under-represented groups.

Discuss diversity, especially in terms of pay

If your members are remunerated financially for their efforts within the organisation, it is imperative to learn whether or not there is a wage gap between certain groups. Pay equity is the first step in showing true respect for diversity in material, rather than just declarative, terms.

On a personal level, here are the most important actions you can undertake to develop a healthier attitude and hone your skills to become a more tolerant, open, and equitable individual.

Make an effort to establish a sense of belonging

Leave your comfort zone, show empathy for those different from the rest, and do your best to create an environment where everyone can shine as the best versions of themselves.

Celebrate differences

When you apply a positive focus on what makes everyone different, you help overcome stereotypes, build cultural awareness, and develop a healthy respect for diversity and tolerance.

Seek out feedback, and act on it

Don't get defensive if someone gives you negative feedback with regards to diversity; use this as a chance to improve your attitude and keep looking for opportunities to improve your behaviour.



14. INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

What is intercultural understanding?

This refers to profound sociocultural differences understood by individuals or groups, reflecting an understanding of related social positions, practices, and power relations.

Discussions, which are complex in nature, vary regarding the definition of intercultural understanding. In 2006, this was defined as knowledge about other cultures at a cognitive level combined with a set of attitudes at an affective level. Knowledge includes understanding about one's own culture, other cultures, and the similarities and differences between cultures. However, knowledge on its own does not comprise intercultural understanding. One can know, yet continue to judge and dismiss. Attitudes of empathy, respect, and open-mindedness are essential to move from initial awareness to understanding when it comes to other cultures.

Intercultural understanding is an essential part of living amongst others in a 21st-century world defined by diversity. It assists young people in becoming responsible local and global citizens

via an education that equips them to live and work together in an interconnected world.

Intercultural understanding combines personal, interpersonal, and social knowledge and skills. It involves people learning to value and critically view their own cultural perspectives and practices and those of others through interactions with people, literature, and contexts across the world. Now, let's touch on organising elements that are particularly important for intercultural understanding, which include:

- Recognising culture and developing respect
- Interacting and empathising with others
- Reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility

Ultimately, we can define "intercultural fluency" as an important part of "intercultural understanding". The former term refers to a combination of awareness, attitudes, and interpersonal capacities (cultural knowledge, intercultural communication skills, and relationship-building skills).

Why is intercultural understanding important?

In a multicultural world, most of us encounter a need for at least some intercultural awareness every day. For anyone who lives or works away from his/her native country or lives or works closely with others from another country, this is absolutely vital.

Yet, even for a simple two-week holiday abroad, intercultural awareness is a vital quality that can prevent offensive behaviours. Understanding that people from different cultures possess unique values lays the foundation for solid intercultural relationships. Intercultural awareness is, quite simply, understanding both your own and other cultures—most notably similarities and differences between them, often with respect to values, beliefs, or behaviour. These may be large or small and matter very much when you meet or interact with people from varied cultural backgrounds.

Zooming in, there are four groups of people most in need of intercultural awareness:

- Expatriates
- People who work globally
- People who work in multicultural teams
- Tourists

Expatriates

Expatriates, or expats, are people who live and work away from their native country. Usually employed by multinational corporations rather than local companies, expats may live away from home for quite some time: perhaps two to three years. They are often quite senior in their organisations and expected to apply skills learned elsewhere

within their new post. A lack of intercultural awareness, specifically with respect to "how things are done around here," can often damage or derail expat assignments.

People who work globally

Even those based in their native country may, in a global economy, need to work with people from other countries and cultures. A little intercultural awareness may prevent them from unnecessarily giving or taking offence.

People who work in multicultural teams

There are very few of us lacking at least some contact with colleagues or acquaintances who are non-native. Some industries and organisations in fact have large numbers of migrant workers: for example, healthcare and social care fields wherein nurses are highly sought-after and in turn often recruited from abroad.

Tourists

You may feel that a two weeks' holiday does not justify learning a bit more about the culture of the place you are visiting. Yet, as a visitor, you are—like it or not—seen as a representative of your country. Without the proper awareness, it's easily possible to engage in offensive behavior inadvertently.

In summary, we can say that intercultural understanding is an essential part of living amongst others in a highly diverse 21-century world. Specifically, it assists young people in becoming responsible local and global citizens via an education that equips them to live and work together in an interconnected world.

15. MEDIA LITERACY

What is media literacy?

Modern media encompasses many different formats, including print (magazines, newspapers), broadcast (TV, movies, radio), and digital (blogs, vlogs, social media). Since these media offer an incredible array of sources and cover every imaginable topic, it is important to understand inherent risks that can accompany such abundance. New information communication technologies and the ease of access to various media formats have enabled in unprecedented escalation in the production, circulation, and consumption of false content through not only broadcast and digital media, but traditional channels as well. While disinformation is not new, mass media has accelerated overall uptake and amplified the effects of negative media dimensions—so that fake news, media manipulation, gender/racial stereotyping, underage sexualisation, loss of privacy, cyberbullying, and internet predation have spread globally like a contagion.

When you achieve higher degrees of media literacy, the following outcomes are expected:

- Your appetite for a wider variety of media messages will grow
- You will learn to protect yourself from the media's ability to exert a mental and emotional toll on you
- You will enjoy the ability to exercise more control over the media and your media diet

Individuals operating at lower levels of media literacy have fewer related perspectives, which are in fact supported by knowledge structures containing little information in a disorganised manner. As media consumers, such individuals are more susceptible to manipulative media tactics as they don't critically evaluate messages they consume (nor do they reflect on source reliability or the motivation behind presented facts). Given that media access is democratised, everyone can now spread their message across numerous media channels. This has led to a weakened belief in expert opinions, as large numbers of small media producers with limited knowledge overcrowd the few sources with expert knowledge. Without proper information hygiene and reliable data sources, media consumers become confused and are unable to make informed choices: thus affecting the public sphere of democratic discussion, which, as recent history shows, can destabilise societies as a whole.

Why is media literacy important?

As we are surrounded by myriad messages in today's world, the ability to critically analyse media content and adopt an active attitude in choosing information sources is more important than ever. Beyond media exposure itself, the media's power and influence is an additional reason to fortify competencies because said channels can encourage manipulation or support democracy.

In addition to the development of a quality media system and public policies for which the social community and State are primarily responsible, it is also becoming increasingly important for media education to enable message recipients, readers, or viewers to become media literate and capable of critical analysis.

Globalisation, information technologies, and the presence of media in everyday life have shaped modern society. Not only is media content available to the masses, but citizens enjoy the opportunity to create content as well. For all the reasons mentioned above, it is necessary to acquire specific skills related to media literacy.

Media literacy education provides students with skills that will help them, first and foremost, think critically about media. It also cultivates other 21st-century skills like creativity, collaboration, and communication, as well as increasing digital literacy skills via media, information, and technology interaction.

Young people in particular must understand the nature of media, especially mass media and its techniques and impact with respect to shaping values, attitudes, and behaviours. For this reason, media literacy is a skill that must be acquired in supervised educational surroundings. Moreover, if we consider life preparation

as a primary objective of education, media education speaks for itself. Therefore, contemporary education should create conditions for developing and improving student communication skills and a critical approach to media in education as well as everyday life.

Although exposure to the media and information sources is often uncontrolled and occurs almost automatically, it is media literacy that develops the skills needed to make conscious decisions about exposure to and critical analysis of media content—creating opportunities for self-expression and positive media use while mitigating harmful effects of exposure.

We cannot educate young people regarding citizenship and political participation without teaching them to understand and employ new media sources, which are an essential means to express ideas, form public opinions, and build institutions and movements. Yet, the challenge of media literacy education is a serious one. Students need advanced and constantly evolving skills to engage in effective online participation. They must understand the relationship between new media and social and political institutions, a topic that is rarely understood by even the most advanced social theorists. They must also develop the motivation to use digital media for civic purposes in the absence of incentives from major institutions. Until we address these challenges, students will struggle to make sense of the new media environment let alone take constructive action.

The digital age makes it easy for anyone to create media content. We don't always know who created something, why they made it, and/or whether it's credible. This makes media literacy tricky to learn and teach. Nonetheless, this is an essential skill in the digital age.

How can you develop media literacy?

How can we learn how to distinguish and evaluate the quality of various media messages thrown at us every single day, hour, and minute? A fundamental element of media literacy is its status as a critical thinking skill, so it is important to develop specific aspects of this such as:

- Understanding how the media industry works and how media messages are constructed
- Questioning content producer motives to make informed choices about selection and use
- Recognising different types of media content and evaluating the same for truthfulness, reliability, and overall value
- Recognising and managing online security and safety risks

In an effort to do all of the above and not fall prey to fake news and media manipulation, following the same sequence of actions when consuming media content can greatly help in developing your own media literacy. Here are some time-tested steps to get you started on the right path:

• Don't believe everything you see, read, and hear

As technology is easily accessible, it has never been cheaper or easier to create and circulate fake content.

• Check your sources

Are sources available at all? And, if they are visible, were they ever deemed unreliable in the past? Do other sources confirm the same information and/or belong to the same "family" (country, company, political cause)?

• Remain open to other opinions

Start with the idea that your way of thinking may be slightly biased or even flawed, remembering that your opinion is perhaps not the only one that is correct/valuable. Embrace other opinions and ways of thinking.

• Ask and discuss

If something is unclear or seems slightly "off," probe, ask, and discuss it with others either in person or online. You'll be amazed at the wealth of other information you may uncover.

• Dig deeper

Never settle for anything served to you as ready-to-consume content without putting the right amount of effort into it. Do your own research.

As a final step, ask yourself if you're willing to put your beliefs and principles aside when someone you love and/or trust shares information with you. Letting our guard down amongst people in our inner circle—who claim they saw something on YouTube or read about it on Facebook—will result in roundabout manipulation. Always keep your eyes open!



16. INFORMATION LITERACY

What is information literacy?

Over time, this has become a core concept within our information society. There are now numerous definitions, and the concept is still evolving. How information literacy is defined and understood differs not only between disciplines, nations, and languages but also when moving from yesterday to today.

At its core, information literacy is the ability to locate and evaluate reputable information and use it appropriately. It is also a means to empower people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use, and create information to achieve their personal, social, occupational, and educational goals in an effective manner.

Over the past decade, a crisis of authenticity has emerged. We now live in a world wherein anyone can publish an opinion or perspective, true or not, and see that opinion amplified within

the information marketplace. At the same time, Americans enjoy unprecedented access to diverse and independent sources of information—as well as institutions such as libraries and universities—that can help separate truth from fiction and signals from noise.

Several competencies are associated with information literacy:

- ✦ Recognising when you need information
- ✦ Understanding the type of information you need
- ✦ Knowing how to search for information
- ✦ Knowing how to interpret information
- ✦ Knowing how to use and cite information

By using critical perspectives when consuming, evaluating, or producing information, people develop these competencies that are now conceptualised as “a basic human right in a digital world.”

Why is information literacy important?

Today’s digital landscape offers young people unprecedented access to learning tools and resources. The information students encounter, however, is not always accurate or high-quality. Foundational information and digital literacy skills, such as conducting strategic online searches, judging the legitimacy of online sources, sifting out misinformation, and recognising advertising, can set students up for success as lifelong learners.

Information literacy is crucial because it helps locate and evaluate quality information. This is of extreme importance because people increasingly use internet search engines that

lack a content quality filter: a particular concern with respect to information about health and wellbeing and/or social and environmental concerns.

Information literacy education involves learning to use formal and informal information networks available to individuals in their professional lives and as private citizens. Formal information networks are available through libraries and information agencies: for example, access to scholarly and professional information, government information, and content disseminated through the media. Informal information networks provide access to information that has not yet entered formal channels or does not belong to those channels.

How can you develop information literacy?

If you’re hoping to improve your information literacy skills, try following these simple steps:

✦ Develop your ability to recognise quality sources

One of the most important aspects of information literacy is your ability to discern which sources are credible. To determine if a website is trustworthy, check the credentials of the author and the source, assess sources the author cites, and examine the date the piece was written. It can also be helpful to learn if the publisher is reputable and examine any reviews and endorsements the source has received.

✦ Learn the intricacies of plagiarism

Information literacy is about finding and using quality information, so learning about copyright laws and plagiarism is key. Decipher the steps you should take to determine which content you can use and how to appropriately cite your sources.

✦ Utilise advanced search techniques

Use specific search strategies that unearth more relevant, accurate online search results. This involves properly using keywords and quality databases other than basic search engines.

✦ Practice your research skills

By regularly practicing your information literacy skills, you can further develop your abilities in this area. Try taking on research projects both at work and in your personal life.

17. ABILITY TO LOCATE AND ACCESS INFORMATION

(BASIC, SCIENTIFIC, ECONOMIC, TECHNOLOGICAL, VISUAL, INFORMATION, AND MULTICULTURAL LITERACIES)

What is the ability to locate and access information?

As society evolves, the skills needed to negotiate the complexities of life do the same. In the early 1900s, a person who had acquired basic reading, writing, and calculating skills was considered literate. Only in recent years has the public expected all people to build on those basics and develop a broader range of literacies. To achieve success in the 21st century, people must also attain proficiency in science, technology, and culture while gaining a thorough understanding of information in all its forms.

The ability to locate and access information includes: basic, scientific, economic, technological, visual, information, and multicultural literacies. Let's examine each element separately:

Basic literacy

This means language proficiency and numeracy at levels necessary to function on the job and in society to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential.

Scientific literacy

This means the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision-making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity.

Economic literacy

This means the ability to identify economic problems, alternatives, costs and benefits; analyse incentives at work in economic scenarios; examine the consequences of changing economic conditions and public policies; collect and organise economic evidence; and weigh costs against benefits.

Technological literacy

This means knowledge about what technology is, how it works, what purposes it can serve, and how people can use it efficiently and effectively to achieve specific goals.

Visual literacy

This means the ability to interpret, use, appreciate, and create images and videos using both conventional and 21st-century media in ways that advance thinking, decision-making, communication, and learning.

Information literacy

This means the ability to evaluate information across a range of media; recognise when information is needed; locate, synthesise, and use information effectively; and accomplish these functions using technology, communication networks, and electronic resources.

Multicultural literacy

This means the ability to understand and appreciate similarities and differences in the customs, values, and beliefs of one's own culture and that of others; whereas global awareness means the recognition and understanding of interrelationships among international organisations, nation-states, public and private economic entities, socio-cultural groups, and individuals across the globe.

By using critical perspectives when consuming, evaluating, or producing information, people develop these competencies that are now conceptualised as "a basic human right in a digital world."

Why is this ability important?

This ability is of extreme importance in the 21st century because it promotes problem-solving approaches and thinking skills: asking questions and seeking answers, finding information, forming opinions, evaluating sources, and making decisions fostering successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. The ability to locate and access information is vital to social, political, and economic advancement. Traditionally, information was disseminated in a variety of widely accessible formats, often through public libraries. Many individuals also relied on other people and the media for information. However, computer technology advances have revolutionised access: making vast stores of content related to business, education, health, government, and entertainment accessible on the World Wide Web. Effective use of said content requires a complex set of

competencies. Given the uneven quality of web resources as well as the absence of a consistent organisational structure, locating relevant and reliable information is often difficult and time-consuming—which is why people must be able to identify what is real and relevant not just for school, but for life and work as well.

It is true that we live in an information society, and nowadays more than ever, we can access anything we want. Yet, this is not as good as it sounds because the availability of information also summons a sense of overwhelming: especially if the information is low-quality, unreliable, irrelevant, or fake. With information available in so many formats and of varying qualities, it is essential that people employ skills enabling them to exploit the wide range of resources available in their drive to retrieve, evaluate, and use information effectively—distinguishing real information and navigating a polluted environment of shady sources.



How can you develop this ability?

Here are some basic tips you can employ to stimulate this ability within yourself:

Basic literacy

Can you demonstrate language proficiency and numeracy at levels necessary for on-the-job success and in a digital-age society?

Scientific literacy

Do you know the scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision-making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity?

Economic literacy

Can you identify economic issues, analyse incentives, examine the consequences of evolving economic conditions and public policies, collect and organise economic evidence, and weigh costs against benefits?

Technological literacy

Do you know what technology is, how it works, what purposes it can serve, and how it can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve specific goals?

Visual literacy

Can you interpret, use, appreciate, and create images and video using both conventional and 21st century media in ways that advance thinking, decision-making, communication, and learning?

Information literacy

Can you evaluate information across a range of media, recognise when information is needed, locate, synthesise, and use content effectively, and accomplish this using technology, communication networks, and electronic resources?

Multicultural literacy

Can you understand and appreciate similarities and differences between the customs, values, and beliefs of your own culture and the cultures of others?

18. THE ABILITY TO ANALYSE AND EVALUATE MEDIA CONTENT

What is the ability to analyse and evaluate media content?

Essential amidst our technological society in the 21st century, this ability is defined by the capacity to analyse the codes, messages, and statements that appear in videos, images, and other audiovisual media we're exposed to day in and day out via digital devices and other technologies. In this means of communication, the message can be adapted to any age and any need, shaping varied advertisements and publications to attract eyeballs and earn profits: sometimes in a harmful, rather than beneficial, way.

With respect to digital capability developments that have occurred over the years, varied sectors and brands have invested in making their image and presence known across digital platforms. In one nefarious example, ads displayed on Google

or YouTube sometimes become a weapon whereby companies hit consumers with aggressive messages that promote harmful dynamics such as scams, unfair competition, or sales funnels.

Traditional communication channels have also extended their activity to the internet, with newspapers and TV sources using webpages to publish their content. However, these parties sometimes also use gimmicks to attract more readers using clickbait, fake ads, or even sensationalist headlines. Publishers are thus responsible for posting honest information, while readers are tasked with detecting hoaxes and falsehoods in the fight against misinformation.

This ability to analyse and evaluate multimedia content allows both consumers and stakeholders to examine messages and behaviours across digital platforms while educating them about the importance of sharing positive messages and content.

Why is the ability to analyse and evaluate media content important?

Improvements in this area help people develop their capacity to analyse and evaluate content in a critical and concise way while maintaining an active stance around consumption and content creation. Analysis and evaluation can help us detect what these messages are and through what language they are expressed—helping us differentiate positive messages from negative and aggressive messages found in images and

advertisements that seek to boost consumption among the population.

On the other hand, awareness regarding learning and training will help us create more attractive multimedia content. This presents itself as prime messaging opportunity using existing audiovisual tools, giving us the chance to create clear and concise content with direct messages that convey our ideas while respecting the freedoms of people and consumers across society and in digital markets, specifically.





How can you develop the ability to analyse and evaluate media content?

To develop this skill both within students and people merely interested in the subject, it is vitally important to introduce new and ground-breaking activities within the media world and its messages and codes, understanding how to work with them creatively to develop fresh content for all groups—while learning how to interpret the impact of this content using metrics such as the average number and scope of visits or e-commerce conversion rates, helping interested parties develop the following competences:

Improved participation within digital communities

Becoming an active participant on digital platforms not only helps users detect hoaxes and false information, but it also helps them examine content with critical eyes to identify the best resources and specific needs to improve the content and platforms average viewers consume.

Ability to understand digital codes

Understanding how to communicate through digital media is vital to develop clear messages, in turn acting in fairness, sincerity, and respect for the target audience.

Ability to resolve conceptual and technical challenges through digital means

Given the capacity to analyse and evaluate media, people will be able to identify—both in their own digital content and others—which mistakes could ruin the experience for clients surfing platforms and consuming information. The ability to detect and fix these mistakes is of great importance for maintaining relevant digital content while remaining fair and honest with the people who consume it.

Using technologies in a creative way

Understanding varied forms, codes, and messages associated with different types of multimedia content helps creators express themselves in all possible imaginative and creative ways as they create, edit, and generate a wealth of content targeting consumers: who will in turn value creators thanks to this diversity.

Ability to update media content competences

Constantly generating and expanding on new designs, codes, and digital platforms afford us the ability to expand our online content generation knowledge and skills—enriching our background and providing consumers with attractive, competitive audiovisual material.

19. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

What is physical activity?

“Health,” according to the World Health Organisation, is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely absence of disease and infirmity.”

There are six primary aspects of personal health: physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual. In order to be considered “well,” it is imperative not to neglect any of these areas.

Physical health

This refers to the state of your physical body and how well it operates: consisting of many components including physical activity, nutrition and diet, alcohol and drugs, medical self-care, rest and sleep.

Mental health

This is the overall level of psychological wellbeing or absence of mental illness. Good mental health doesn't mean lack of a mental illness. Rather, it's about having a sense of purpose, getting involved with various activities, coping with stress and setbacks, forming close relationships, and staying in touch with your own thoughts and emotions.

Emotional health

This refers to a person's feeling and encompasses everything about you, governing all of your decisions, your mood, and who you are. Every single aspect of you is determined by how you feel about something: using your heart, not your head.

 Social health

This is how you get along with other people, involving your ability to form satisfying interpersonal relationships and com-

fortably adapt to varying social situations and act appropriately in a variety of settings.

Environmental health

This is the field of science that studies how the environment influences human health and disease. Environment in this context means elements in the natural environment like air, water, and soil, and also all physical, chemical, biological, and social features of our surroundings.

Spiritual health

This refers to possessing a meaning and purpose in life, having a clear set of beliefs and living in accordance with your morals, values, and ethics: essentially knowing what is right and wrong and living accordingly.

Health is determined by many things:

- Social and economic factors
- Physical environment
- Health care
- Health behaviours
- Genes and biology

It is easier to diagnose an infectious disease and offer appropriate therapy than to enter into the complex sociological and emotional reality of an individual: especially when important circumstances or factors are ignored or keep silent. Therefore, the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of problems related to mental, physical, and social well-being is much more difficult. Causes are often unearthed from an intimate place that many patients do not want to talk about.



Why is physical activity important?

Everyone knows physical activity is beneficial for one's well-being, but not many people know why: something very important to understand. It's only when you know the true benefits and importance of exercise that you will be motivated to move your body and in turn feel better in your own skin. The type of physical activity is a huge factor, which is why you should choose an activity that fits your lifestyle and preferences.

People who are physically active and at a healthy weight live about seven years longer than those who are not active and obese. Staying active helps delay or prevent chronic illnesses and diseases associated with aging.

Here are just a few of the ways physical activity can help you feel, look, and live better:

- It's a natural mood filter

Regular physical activity can relieve stress, anxiety, depression, and anger. You know that "feel good sensation" you get after doing something physical? Think of it as a happy pill with no side effects. Most people notice they feel better over time, as physical activity becomes a regular part of their lives.

- It keeps you physically fit and able

Without regular activity, your body slowly loses strength, stamina, and the ability to function properly. It's like the old saying, "You don't stop moving when you grow old, you grow old when you stop moving." Exercise increases muscle

strength, which in turn increases your ability to perform other physical activities.

- It helps keep the doctor away

Too much sitting and other sedentary activities can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. One study showed that adults who watch more than four hours of television a day had an 80% higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

It's medically proven that people who engage in regular physical activity have lower risk of:

- Coronary heart disease and stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- Bowel cancer
- Breast cancer (in women)
- Early death
- Osteoarthritis
- Hip fracture
- Depression
- Dementia

Other benefits you may reap from regular physical activity revolve around its ability to:

- Boost your energy level so you can get more done
- Help you manage stress and tension
- Promote a positive attitude and outlook
- Improve your self-image and self-confidence
- Encourage you to spend more time outdoors





How can you become more physically active?

The best way to maintain health is to preserve it through a healthful lifestyle rather than waiting until sickness or infirmity to address health problems.

There are many ways to build physical activity into your life. Staying physically active is easier than you think, especially if you make activity part of your daily routine. For most of us, daily chores such as shopping or housework don't count towards your activity target. This is because your body doesn't work hard enough performing these activities to get your heart rate up.

You can exercise alone or under supervision, outdoors or indoors, in a fitness or sports club, but what is most important to emphasise is that you can exercise every day while performing various tasks:

- Walk to school, to visit friends, or to shops or other places in your neighbourhood
- Create a new routine wherein you walk or run every day when you get from school, university, or work
- Remember that cycling is a great alternative to taking a car or bus
- Get off one stop early when taking a bus or other public transit
- If you need to drive, try to park farther away from your destination to enjoy a longer walk

- Take the stairs instead of the lift, or leave the lift a few floors early to use the stairs
- Dance in front of the TV

Tips to jumpstart physical activity!

Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity: walking quickly, jogging, dancing, or other types of aerobic activities make your heart beat faster and may cause you to breathe harder. Try to stay active for at least 10 minutes at a time without breaks.

Aim for at least 300 minutes of aerobic activity per week to gain additional benefits: especially if your goal is to lose or maintain weight. Adding a brisk walk is one way to boost the amount of aerobic activity in your life.

Perform strengthening activities twice per week to help strengthen your entire body and work all major muscle groups including those in your legs, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms.

Strategies to keep your body healthy!

- Eat healthy foods
- Engage in regular exercise
- Get enough sleep
- Reduce stress
- Drink water

20. RELIGIOUS VALUES

What are religious values?

The word “value” represents relative worth, utility, or importance. “Religious” or “religion” typically refers to manifesting faithful devotion to an acknowledged ultimate reality or deity. Human action is motivated by many factors, and values have an outstanding role. Each individual is guided by fundamental values that determine his or her behaviour. Values are principally important because they are regarded as belonging to a superior level. It is difficult to replace them; they are not negotiable and at the same time are highly desirable. Throughout human history and evolution, religion has served as one of the most important and comprehensive social institutions: touching and shaping virtually all spheres of culture and society and providing a frame of reference for the general organisation of life—whether individually or in a group and through its mysteries and existential/metaphysical questions about absolute beginnings and ends.

Religiosity and values play a crucial role in the history of human civilisation, as religious differences based on values have greatly contributed to social conflicts over time.

Religious values define what people expect of themselves and others based on beliefs common to the religions they practice. When we think of religious values, we refer to what people strive to achieve, transcending specific actions and situations; that is, they are broad objectives relevant in various situations. They have an abstract nature, meaning we can distinguish them from norms and attitudes.

For a clearer picture of this skill, take the following example. Compassion is a core value in Buddhism. Followers of this religion believe in the interconnectedness of all things and the universality of suffering. Such interconnectedness makes compassion empathetic in nature; compassion extended to others is reflected in the person showing that compassion. Also central to this value is the belief in reincarnation and karma. Bad deeds might go unpunished in this life, but, through karma, the person performing them might pay when he or she is reincarnated as a lower form of life: such as an insect. Conversely, acting with compassion and in a nonviolent manner is rewarded with good karma and a better life.

Why are religious values important?

To those who adhere to them, religious values provide a guide for how to live one's life in respect to others and themselves. Those with a set of established religious values might find it easier to navigate through various obstacles, challenges, and drawbacks but also find successes and achievements—which are all constituent parts of life. Religious values give us a roadmap and direction for reaching varied places in life. At the same time, we ensure our means are moral, don't cause harm, and are in line with ethics. There are in fact similarities between education and adopting religious values. In both cases, we are expected to understand and learn previously established concepts, which makes it easier for us to navigate life since we don't have to learn from scratch. In considering major religious values such as compassion, respect, kindness, charity, etc., we quickly notice that even those who do not adhere to a particular religion or any form of spirituality possess norms of living that are very similar and in some ways identical to religious values. Such values are rooted in the principle of humanity, which makes us different from other species in that we can distinguish good from bad and enjoy consciousness. Therefore for the majority of the people, adhering to religion or no religion at all still involves basic principles of living and efforts to be a good person. Actually, if we examine the origin of the word “religion,” some sources say this comes from the Latin word “religio,” meaning obligation, bond, and reverence—showing that religion obliges us to act in a certain way that is morally acceptable. Therefore, all people essentially live according to some form of religious values, even if they do not practice organised religion. Not only does religion clarify many doubts people would perhaps have otherwise, but it also offers reassurance and a sense of safety and personal integrity when one acts according to religious values. Since most of these are derived from sacred texts, it is important to understand that religions are ripe for misinterpretation:

a widespread phenomenon we unfortunately witness in certain parts of the world where people justify inhumanity with misinterpreted passages. Religious values also teach a very important life lesson in treating others the way we want to be treated. Various religions may espouse related concepts explaining how we receive what we give or attract to ourselves what we wish for others; but it's truly at the core of human psychology to remember both good and bad and replicate what we learn. Therefore, we tend to like and appreciate people led by religious values and avoid those who violate them: depicting how religious values play an important role in how others see us. As humans are social beings, how we are perceived is an important determinant of our social status. Moreover, religious values represent a common bond between people, and learning about similarities in the same provides an instant feeling of closeness and understanding with others. As religion is an important part of individual's life, it is no wonder that we bond more easily and quickly with people who have similar beliefs. People often feel like they aren't forced to explain their life choices, habits, and behaviors to those who understand their religious values.

Therefore, it is not only important to hold these values dear but to also understand different sets of religious values and stay well-informed, open-minded, tolerant, and educated. Possessing well-established religious values fosters enhanced interreligious and intercultural dialog, acceptance, and adjustment to diversity as well as a responsibility and respect toward others. Finally, we can perhaps say that human imperfection is what makes religious values particularly important and effective in guiding people in their behavior and relationships with others—as well as between themselves and their sanctity—preventing them from harming others or themselves and providing a sense of relief that everything has a reason and they are not responsible for what they can't control.

How can you develop religious values?

This must start with a clear vision of what and who we want to be. Religious values, just like anything else, should not be forced upon people by society for the simple reason that they are intangible and invisible. Belief is a personal choice, and someone other than ourselves simply has no idea what our individual beliefs are. Once we are ready to adopt a set of religious beliefs, there are several ways in which we can proceed further. Most religions derive their practices and beliefs from sacred texts, which are holy books that provide universal truths and guides for people willing to follow them. Therefore, religious beliefs can easily spring from reading holy books—not just from one's own personal religion but from other religions as well. Not only do we in turn educate ourselves and become more knowledgeable, but we also benefit by gaining exposure to similarities, differences, common points, and roots of different religions: which helps us better understand others and expand our views. Alternatively, those who prefer not to read can listen to lectures, podcasts, and discussions given the current digital age. This material is often presented by highly educated religious scholars who account for changes and shifts in the world since the time of holy book origins. These scholars can provide a guide, especially for those who struggle to sort out their values and align their contemporary lifestyles with their religious values. Religious values are also often learned from the closest people to us, usually parents or siblings, which is often the most common way of introducing children to religion and encouraging them to establish a set of values

to live by. Parents are the most important people in a child's life, and even as they grow up, children generally trust in their parent's values and decisions. Therefore, parents' religious beliefs are likely to be passed onto children and shape a person's behavior from the earliest age. Even if this is not the case in the early childhood, people who decide to reconnect with their religious values may start by consulting their close family members. As religion is an important part of life for many, it is sometimes overwhelming to revisit it in isolation; family support is therefore very important. In addition, our family knows us best, shares common values, and will often not pass judgement. Another way to develop religious values is to join a local religious community. Some religious institutions offer study programmes, not only for children but for adults as well: presenting a good way to reconnect with a religion while also finding like-minded people. In developing religious values, the most important step is to fully understand said values and how they benefit an individual's life. Religious values should not be taken at face value without discovering a personal connection to those beliefs. Hence, we should be able to explain in simple language why we believe in certain things and why we act in certain ways. This shows we have established a personal connection to those beliefs and did not just adopt them as simple rules to abide by. We need to understand what religious values represent to us, making many life choices and dilemmas simpler as we can turn to a set of values that will guide our decisions. Therefore, in establishing a personal set of religious values, we must believe in them and realise they make us better people overall.





Good Practices/Case Studies Re: Transversal Skills Usability and Application

This section will take a closer look at practical examples from various partner countries, including case studies that apply these crucial transversal skills and competences. Specifically,

we will learn how these competences are used, who uses them, and corresponding results.

Innovative Training Laboratory

Country of implementation

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Short description

Lifelong learning, retraining, and non-formal adult education programmes not only present an opportunity to improve work-force skills and qualifications but also to increase the youth employment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As digital age skills, IT and technical capabilities are necessary for survival in today's market as well as for sustainable development and competitiveness among companies within this country.

An innovative training laboratory enables the acquisition of digital skills through training and practical work on digital product and service development. Activities are implemented via a training programme in the form of short courses, courses within approved educational programmes for digital skills training, and individual and group work whereby acquired skills are applied to real-life examples. The Goražde ITLab enables monitoring of the latest digital trends and creating new, professional staff who can successfully cope with all digital economy challenges.

Organisation that has implemented the good practice/case study

ALDI Association

Website

<http://www.aldi.ba/services/itlab.php>

Which aspect(s) of transversal skills development applies to the mentioned practice

The main goal of this project is to strengthen participant skills and improve employment opportunities by fostering youth skills development through an internal training programme.

Aside from digital skills, this project also equips participants

with soft skills development. By providing users with additional knowledge and growth in these self-skills, this project makes them more qualified to tackle new labour market challenges.

Why this is considered a good practice and ripe for adoption by other entities

The innovative training laboratory is considered a good practice due to its comprehensive concept of connecting digital skill development with soft skills among users.

Additionally, the programme allows users to develop real-life ideas by providing access to the knowledge and resources necessary to put ideas into practice.



Padawan Generation

Country of implementation

Bulgaria and other partner countries

Short description

The main objective of this programme is to develop new protocols/methodologies among various actors participating in work-based learning in the hospitality sector (apprentice, company tutor, and VET trainer), with the goal of improving employability among young people from different countries (especially those with lower qualifications) and focusing on unique hospitality sector characteristics, specifically.

The innovative Padawan project methodology is, on one hand, to transform the apprentice into a proactive person during his/her apprenticeship in the company and throughout his/her life: facilitating a virtual space wherein he/she can structure and organise all available online resources with varied training content in the world of hospitality, providing soft competences to apply in his/her workplace.

Organisation that has implemented the good practice/case study

“Culinary Arts and Hospitality Association”

This is a culinary and hospitality sector cluster within North-east Bulgaria. Its main objective is to contribute to the development of comprehensive high value-added tourist products in its region of operation and to build a lasting and strong relationship between education and business in support of regional economic development and social cohesion.

Website

<https://clustercollabouration.eu/cluster-organisations/culinary-arts-and-hospitality-association#section-2>

Which aspect(s) of transversal skills development applies to the mentioned practice

One specific Padawan project initiative is to propose an innovative methodology for the way in which the VET trainer and company tutor interact when monitoring and evaluating the apprentice's learning, both in the training center and in the workplace: facilitating a personalised virtual space for each training itinerary and where all comments regarding the training plan for each apprentice are registered in a simple, visual manner.

Project outputs are as follows:

- Output 1: Collaborative virtual environment for the Padawan European Apprenticeship School and Padawan Community
- Output 2: Transversal training module for the development of SOFT key-competences in hospitality sector
- Output 3: Handbook for company tutors within the hospitality sector to approach the training process with a clear vision of their role and tasks

Why this is considered a good practice and ripe for adoption by other entities

The Padawan project is considered a good practice because all existing studies, including elements of the VET-business cooperation, show the link between the educational world and business world is one important axis for VET quality and appeal. More specifically, work-based learning and apprenticeships are at the core of VET, wherein systematic cooperation between VET schools and companies is one identified principle to ensure high-performing apprenticeships and work-based learning.



Pokrenimo Otok

Country of implementation

Croatia

Short description

The aim of this project is to provide education to a minimum of 40 long-term unemployed workers, from retraining to training and development so they can become more competitive in the labour market. Targeted workshops raise self-confidence and strengthen target groups, reducing social exclusion.

Organisation that has implemented the good practice/case study

Municipality of Otok - Javna ustanova RERA d.d. za koordinaciju i razvoj Splitsko-dalmatinske županije

Website

<https://p-otok.com/o-projektu/>

Which aspect(s) of transversal skills development applies to the mentioned practice

This is a targeted programme for the development and improvement of soft and transversal skills among long-term unemployed workers.

Why this is considered a good practice and ripe for adoption by other entities

Soft skills include activities and development across other areas such as successfully searching for a job, writing CVs, preparing for interviews with employers, simulating job interviews, and engaging in activities related to teamwork, organisational skills, time management, entrepreneurial skills, and self-employment.



eLene2learn - Learning to learn

Country of implementation

Italy

Short description

As lifelong learners, it is highly likely that many of us will face a number of transitions throughout our lives: moving from secondary school to university, entering employment, and moving back into training or education to learn new skills or upgrade competencies. Such transitions represent a challenge for learners as they must adapt to new physical and virtual environments and diverse teaching/learning approaches and learn to live, learn, and work within new communities. Moreover, not every learner succeeds—particularly when transitioning from secondary education (SE) to higher education (HE), as illustrated by high dropout rates during the early HE years in countries as diverse as France and Finland. While a number of efforts to bridge the gap between SE and HE are employed across Europe, the vast majority exist mainly in pockets and at a disciplinary level (remedial support in mathematics and access to university lectures for 6th form pupils). Similarly, other initiatives focus on practical support such as open days and virtual campus guides.

Organisation that has implemented the good practice/case study

Centro METID – Politecnico di Milano

Website

<http://www.elene2learn.eu/>

Which aspect(s) of transversal skills development applies to the mentioned practice

The main activity developed around Italian experimentation was online sharing of open multimedia content (especially video) on mathematical topics addressed during the fourth and

fifth years of upper secondary schools: with the goal of developing transversal skills and supporting students as they look to overcome admission testing barriers for scientific universities. The project involved four schools in Lombardy (three high schools and a technical institute), for a total of five classes and four teachers. Specifically, the experimentation sought to act on “learning-to-learn skills” and stimulate students to improve communication, collaboration, self-confidence, the will to learn, autonomy, and critical senses. Contents were identified and chosen by upper secondary school mathematics teachers who participated in experimentation based on topics identified by Polytechnic of Milan mathematics professors. There were no restrictions with respect to formats or sources, which varied tremendously and spanned both professional and amateur content within online repositories, MOOCs and open courseware, and YouTube or Vimeo video publications.

Why this is considered a good practice and ripe for adoption by other entities

This experimentation positively impacted collaborative skills, as students were encouraged to organise their work by distributing activities among group members. Students admit they were forced to review strategies with those who prepared their own lesson: valuing this approach as challenging, yet more effective because it requires a profound knowledge of the topic to effectively present it to others. Some students describe difficulty in creating and developing their presentations, given that content and connections therein were not defined a priori by a guide (diverging from traditional lessons under the guidance of the teacher). In this case, in fact, teachers provided only an initial idea of how to develop the group activity: leaving students free to build their own presentation. The majority of students believe the integration of tools is ripe for improvement in supporting group work activities. None deem the experiment too demanding. Compared to normal teaching activity, this type of approach requires greater time and energy investments. Yet, feedback indicates perceptions of satisfaction, the ability to interact with classmates, and improvement in topic comprehension all positively balance the investment made.

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Handbook For Youth Workers



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