

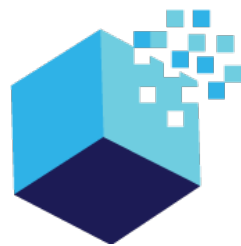


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**KA220-ADU – COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS IN ADULT EDUCATION
PROJECT**

"Digital Educational Platform for Soft Skills & Culture of Labour Market - DEPS-Skills"

No. 2022-1-LT01-KA220-ADU-000085928



**DEPS
Skills**

„ANALYSIS OF SOFT SKILLS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY INTO THE LABOUR MARKET“

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Soft Skills - are character traits and *interpersonal skills* that characterize a person's ability to interact effectively with others. In the workplace, soft skills are a complement to *hard skills*, which refer to a person's knowledge and occupational skills.

Migration - in general circumstances - the movement of a person crossing an international border (international migration) or within a state (internal migration) when leaving for a period longer than one year, regardless of whether he / she left voluntarily or not, legally or not.¹

Immigration - in general, the act of entering a country with the intention of staying there for more than one year.²

Emigration - in general circumstances - leaving the country with the intention to stay abroad for more than one year.³

Integration - in the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual adaptation between all immigrants and the population of the Member States.⁴

Reintegration is the act or process by which a person returns to a society, in this case to his or her home country.⁵

Emigrant - a person who has moved to another country.

Return migration - return to one's country of origin from emigration.

IOM - International Organization for Migration.

Non-formal adult education - education in accordance with the interests of the individual and society in accordance with various programs for meeting the needs of non-formal adult education, qualification improvement, acquisition of additional competence, provided to persons not younger than 18 years of age.⁶

Competence - the ability to perform certain activities.

Andragogic - a person who has acquired the education and competencies established by the state, confirming the possibility to teach adults.

Lifelong learning is all learning activities at any age to improve personal, civic, social and professional competences.

Participants in non-formal adult education are persons at least 18 years of age who are enrolled in non-formal adult education programs.

Provider of non-formal adult education and continuing education - a school, freelance teacher or other education provider (library, museum, third-age university, education centre and other institution, enterprise, organization, as well as a legal entity or other organization established in a Member State or established in the Republic of Lithuania units for which education is not the main activity), which have the right to carry out non-formal adult education and continuing education in accordance with the procedure established by legal acts.

Self-education is self-directed learning that is based on a person's knowledge from various sources and his or her practical experience.⁷

¹ EMN Glossary of Asylum and Migration Terms. <http://emn.lt/glossary/>

² <http://emn.lt/glossary/>

³ <http://emn.lt/glossary/>

⁴ <http://emn.lt/glossary/>

⁵ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/reintegration>

⁶ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/ce0399a00cd411e497f0ec0f2b563356>

⁷ LR Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo ir tęstinio mokymosi įstatymas <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.60192/asr>

Continuing education is a part of lifelong learning, which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning, when the acquired competence of a person can be recognized as a completed part of the formal education program.

ERASMUS + is a European Union support program that provides learning and development opportunities for people of all ages, status, professions and the opportunity for various organizations and institutions to implement projects that meet the criteria of the program.⁸

EPALE is a European electronic platform for adult learning.

Nomad (Digital) - Digital nomads are people who use telecommunication's technology to make a living and generally live their lives nomadically. Such employees often work remotely from foreign countries, cafes, public libraries, community workplaces, or recreational vehicles.

Networking - the exchange of information and ideas between organizations or individuals with a common special interest.⁹

Creative industries are the fields of art, culture, business, and technology that cover the creation, production and distribution of goods and services. An activity based on an individual's creative abilities and talents, the purpose and outcome of which is intellectual property, potentially creating added value.¹⁰

⁸ <https://erasmus-plus.lt/programa/>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_nomad

¹⁰ https://lt.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C5%ABrybin%C4%97s_industrijos

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Analysis of soft skills for the integration of cultural identity into the labour market

The aim of the ANALYSIS OF SOFT SKILLS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY INTO THE LABOUR MARKET DOCUMENT:

- To define labour market of soft-skills at the culture context;
- To explore the soft-skills required by employers for local employees from a migrant's perspective;
- To identify the demand of soft-skills methodical materials for educational perspective;
- To provide the examples of good practices in matching the requirements for migrants soft-skills and labour market;
- To generalize the main trends and requirements for the adult education of soft-skills at the partners labour markets.

The analysis is important to reach the first project objective for identification of right digital tools for teaching and learning process of SOFT SKILLS and what is important for integration of migrants to labour market.

Finally - Analysis generalize the main trends and requirements for the adult education of soft-skills at the partners labour markets.

Here by our perspective in our project we adapted the profile of participants the staff from educational organizations and volunteers to participate in survey: Staff; Employers; Personnel managers; Workers - Ex-migrants; Migrants; Refugees.

The main project activities:

1. „Analysis of Soft Skills for the Integration of Cultural Identity into the Labor Market“ (LT, PL, EN).
2. „Digital Educational Boxes“: 1) *Emotional intelligence*; 2) *Negotiation and entrepreneurial skills*; 3) *Communication skills*; 4) *Professional ethics*; 5) *Career management*; 6) *Time management*; 7) *Digital literacy*; 8) *Critical thinking*; 9) *Creative problem solving*; 10) *Cultural intelligence and teamwork*, which will include: a) Learning/training materials (NOTEBOOKS), b) An IT tool adapted with game elements, c) Self - assessment tests.
3. „Digital Soft Skills for Labor Market Cultures“ training programs -10 units of 40 ah each. (LT, PL, EN).
4. „Digital Open Online Course“- DOOC - 160 academic hours to develop soft skills: Emotional Intelligence; Negotiation and Entrepreneurial Skills; Communication Skills; Professional Ethics; Career Management; Time Management; Digital Literacy; Critical Thinking; Creative Problem-Solving; Cultural Intelligence; Teamwork.
5. „Digital Educational Labs“ - 5 forums organized in Lithuania, Poland, Ireland and Norway, focusing on 10 soft competences and the development and dissemination of career opportunities.

Results of project:

1. New Adult Education services in the regions;
2. Improved competencies of adult educators to deliver digital literacy services to more vulnerable groups (migrants, refugees, marginalized adult learners);
3. A COMMON DIGITAL EDUCATIONAL PLATFORM /www.deps-skills.eu / to improve soft skills and labor market culture in a /MOODLE/ environment.

2. Concept of the document

“Analysis of Culture identity with Soft Skills and integration to Labour Market”- the study about skills of refugees, migrants, connected with partners countries - PL, IRL, NO, LT. Here will be very important opinion and participation of volunteers and members of Irish, Polish, Norwegian and Lithuanian communities. Different Cultures and different mentalities of migrants and standards of professional ethics in labour markets are important points in every country, when you are looking for new job or you would like to create your private business.

The skills of existing workers, and the characteristics of the host economy are critical factors that impact the labour market in any country. Our task to Identify the demand of Soft Skills to special labour markets in LT, PL, IRL and Norway for successful integration of migrants and refugees.

DOCUMENT of the Adult Education Services Sector for Enhancing Reintegration to Labour market it will be the first document prepared for regional authorities as a pilot document identifying the most attractive adult education sectors and leaders (providers) in policy-making and the development of the adult education sector for the development of new education services.

3. Working methods

The “Analysis of Culture identity with Soft Skills and integration to Labour Market” document was prepared using a couple of different methods were used:

- clear separation of the non-formal adult education sector and analysis of interactions;
- analysis of economic situation in every partnership country (LT, NO, UK, IT);
- connection Between Adult Education Services Sector and Soft Skills for the integration of cultural identity into the labour market problems
- the main skills and positions analysis;
- survey of participants and case studies.

All data was collected using these types of sources:

- open direct and indirect online sources;
- questionnaire;
- interviews;
- in the analysis of statistical data.

4. Connections Between Adult Education Services Sector and Soft Skills for the integration of cultural identity into the labour market

Integration and inclusion are aspects that are crucial for new arrivals, for local communities, and for the long-term well-being of our societies and economic stability. Ensuring the effective integration and inclusion of migrants in a country is a social and economic investment that contributes to social cohesion, resilience, and prosperity. However, for integration and inclusion to be successful, they must be a two-way process: migrants, whether foreigners or newcomers, should be offered integration assistance and should make active efforts to integrate. The integration process also involves the host society, which should enable immigrants to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political life. It also involves the adjustment of migrants, all of whom have rights and responsibilities in their new country of residence.

Some migrants are highly educated. They offer resources, high aspirations, and motivation. On the other hand, many migrants have only primary education and need further support. Newly arrived migrants often face several difficulties in integrating into the society of the country, due to factors such as their mode of arrival, skill level, language skills and origin. In such cases, targeted and tailor-made support mechanisms should be put in place to help new arrivals integrate quickly. One example is the provision of complementary courses designed to help them make the most of their skills in their new job.

Civil society organizations, educational institutions, employers and socio-economic partners, social economy organizations and migrants themselves all have an important role to play in ensuring a truly effective and comprehensive integration policy. Adult education and non-formal education are the basis for successful participation in society and one of the most effective tools for building a more inclusive.

To integrate migrants into the labor market more quickly and equitably, it should be possible to make full use of their competences and skills by offering courses to acquire the missing knowledge. This can also help migrants to continue their studies in the host country, thus increasing their participation in higher education and lifelong learning programs.

The number of foreigners arriving in Lithuania is increasing every year. Integration challenges and barriers to employment are becoming more apparent. One of them is the lack of knowledge of the Lithuanian language. This problem has been further accentuated by the difficulties experienced by Ukrainians, who have entered the country's labor market in large numbers. Learning the language is essential for successful integration.

However, learning the language should not be interrupted a few months after arrival. Intermediate and advanced language courses should also be supported and adapted to the needs of different groups. Combining language learning with the development of other skills or work experience has proven to be particularly effective in increasing access to language learning and improving language learning outcomes. Finally, to ensure that migrants can participate fully in the life of the host society, it is essential that they begin to understand the laws, cultural norms and values of the host society as early as possible. As of December 2023, over 140,000 foreigners are working in the country, including 45,000 Ukrainians, but there is still a lack of solutions for effective learning of the Lithuanian language and access to such services. The problem of language barriers is a matter of public policy making. Measures are available, but there is also a serious lack of motivation to learn. However, the year 2023 shows that motivation and willingness to integrate into both social life and the labor market is increasing. According to the Employment Service, more than 3,000 foreigners participated in Lithuanian language training programs this year, compared to only 100 in 2022.

The importance of soft skills - communication, cooperation, creating a positive atmosphere - is now being emphasized to increase people's employability and strengthen their position in the labor market. Different soft skills are required in each field, in each area of work. It all depends on the activity, its specifics, but most jobs require intensive or more intensive communication with people. The most important and universal soft skills are often identified as time management, teamwork, intercultural communication, and conflict management. Soft skills are therefore relevant for many employers. Employers are interested in the soft skills of an individual because these skills are very transferable. The International Stanford Research Institute has found that as much as 75% of success in the long term in a job is based on mastering soft skills, and only about 25% of that success comes from technical or hard skills. The possession of soft skills is usually an indication of a person's ability to learn, to develop the hard competences, or a set of competences, required for a particular job.

Like other countries, Lithuania has restructured most jobs and equipped them with hard skills. However, it has become clear that workplaces lack not only systems and decision-making skills, administrative and management knowledge, but also related soft competences such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, collaboration, leadership, etc. Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Training (VET) institutions should encourage users to focus more on teaching methods that contribute to the development of student's soft competences. Adult retraining and training programs should be supplemented with activities specifically designed to develop soft competences. Employers could encourage employees to develop soft competences, both through self-directed opportunities and on-the-job training: mentoring and supervision practices could be expanded. Soft competences are considered as important as hard competences by Lithuanian HE students and students in VET institutions. This trend is also observed in other countries. This confirms the importance of developing soft competences and the need to focus more

on this area in the educational process. Continuous monitoring and forecasting of the need for specialists is essential to enable training institutions to respond more quickly to changing market needs and to adjust the number and context of programs offered accordingly. This requires cooperation between training institutions, public authorities, businesses and think tanks.

4.1. Non formal adult education programs today in LT, PL, NO, IRL

4.1.1. Non formal adult education programs today in LT

Non formal adult education goal – to contribute development of the society - to ensure opportunities to adults to get right qualifications and skills which would be helpful for professional career, in education process, to fulfil cultural, social, economic interests. There are these kinds of adult educations kinds in Lithuania:

- formal general adult education,
- adult vocational training,
- continuing studies in colleges and universities,
- non formal adult education.

In Lithuania non formal educational services may be provided in accordance with the procedure established by legal acts by legal or natural persons (freelance teachers) who have prepared appropriate programs and have the necessary human and material resources for their implementation.

Non formal adult education is implemented by programs. It can be provided by contacts, remotely or mixed ways. Types of programs:

General competencies - meant to develop lifelong learning:

- literacy (communication in the mother tongue),
- foreign languages,
- mathematics, science, technology, and engineering,
- ability to use digital technology,
- personal, social, and learning,
- being civil,
- entrepreneurship,
- cultural awareness and expression.

Qualification improvement - programs aimed at the development of (special) competencies of a specific profession in order for flexibility in entering the changing labour market and / or plan a professional career;

Self-expression - programs designed to develop a person's creative powers and abilities, to implement meaningful leisure and / or volunteering projects;

Targeted (outsourced) - programs aimed at educating the public on strategic issues of society and state development (for example, healthy lifestyle, prevention of violence, energy saving, protection of ecosystems, etc.), promoting public solidarity, active citizenship, and participation.

Today from 2024 in Lithuania adults are invited to study and develop their competences on www.KURSUOK.lt, the new one-stop digital education platform. This is the first adult education platform in Lithuania, where you can choose the training, you want and receive state funding.

On this platform, learners can have their own individual accounts and receive funding for studying in the state's priority areas. Digital skills are one of the priority areas, which will receive as much as 50% of the state's funding for the programs.

State funding will also be used to support the programs to improve adult digital, literacy, multilingualism, mathematical and science, technology, and engineering competences, personal, social, and learning to learn competences, as well as citizenship, entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and expression competences.

Adults who choose these priority programs will be eligible for state funding of up to €500. The funding will be available to working people aged 18-65 who have already obtained a professional qualification or higher education. Foreigners living in Lithuania can also apply for the funding.

4.1.2. Non formal adult education programs today in PL

The idea of lifelong learning is a top priority for public action in Poland, with the education system gradually opening to non-formal education and informal learning. Since September 2012, external vocational examinations have allowed individuals to obtain qualifications based on professional knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education. In 2016, Poland implemented the Integrated Qualifications System, including the Polish Qualifications Framework and Integrated Qualifications Register (ZRK), enabling validation of learning outcomes from various sources, including non-formal education and informal learning.

Despite these advancements, there's still a relatively short tradition of assessing basic skills and key competences outside the education system. Access to experienced specialists for skills recognition and advice remains limited. Free services are offered by Poviast Labour Offices (PUP) and Provincial Labour Offices (WUP) for adults, including the unemployed and jobseekers, aimed at improving basic skills and general competences.

Enhancing adult skills and economic and social activation of individuals aged 50+ are strategic priorities outlined in the Strategy for Responsible Development. Projects like 'Local Knowledge and Education Centres' (LOWE) target adults with low skills in disadvantaged areas. However, adult participation in non-formal education remains low, with only 39% of Polish adults engaging in such activities in 2021, according to EUROSTAT research.

The development of non-formal education largely depends on employer attitudes, particularly in the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector. There is a need for increased investment in employee development, especially for unskilled and low-skilled workers. The establishment of the National Training Fund (KFS) in 2014, representing 2% of the Labour Fund, aims to subsidize continuing education for employees. Measures to support lifelong learning for employees and employers include financing lifelong learning, providing a database of development service offers, and implementing tripartite training agreements.

Efforts are underway to create a demand-driven mechanism for selecting and financing development services, with the Development Services Database operational since 2015. It contains offers such as training, vocational courses, counselling, postgraduate studies, mentoring, and coaching, aimed at supporting lifelong learning and skills development in Poland.

4.1.3. Non formal adult education programs today in NO.

In Norway, adult education is often organized by various institutions, including folk high schools (folkehøgskoler), community colleges, adult education centers, online platforms, vocational training centers and universities. Non-formal adult education programs can cover a wide range of subjects, including cultural competence training, language courses, vocational training, cultural enrichment, personal development etc.

- **Language Courses:** Many adult education programs offer language courses to help individuals improve their communication skills in a foreign language.

- **Professional Development:** Courses and workshops focused on enhancing professional skills and knowledge, ranging from specific job-related skills to broader leadership and management training.

- **Vocational Training:** Programs that provide practical skills training for specific occupations, helping adults gain or enhance their skills for the workforce.

- **Personal Enrichment:** Classes on personal development, hobbies, arts, and other creative pursuits designed to enrich individuals' lives outside of the workplace.

- **Technology and Computer Skills:** Given the importance of technology in today's world, many adult education programs offer courses on basic computer skills, digital literacy, and advanced technical skills.

- **Health and Wellness Programs:** Courses related to physical and mental health, including fitness classes, stress management, and nutrition.

Folk high schools known as "folkehøgskoler" in Norwegian, are a unique and distinctive part of the education system in several Nordic countries, including Norway. We decided to look at the main key features and aspects of this institution.

Philosophy and Purpose: Folk high schools are rooted in the philosophy of personal and social development. They focus on holistic education, emphasizing personal growth, community, and learning for its own sake.

The primary goal is not to prepare students for specific exams or careers but to provide an environment where individuals can explore their interests, develop life skills, and enhance their understanding of society and culture.

Duration and Structure: Programs at folk high schools typically last for one academic year, although shorter courses may also be available.

The academic year is often divided into quarters or terms, each with a different thematic focus.

Curriculum and Courses: Folk high schools offer a wide range of courses covering various subjects, including arts, culture, outdoor activities, sports, humanities, and social sciences.

The courses are designed to be interactive, participatory, and often project-based.

No Formal Exams: Unlike traditional schools and universities, folk high schools generally do not have formal exams or grades. The emphasis is on the learning experience rather than assessment. Students are encouraged to explore their interests, engage in creative activities, and participate in communal life.

Community Living: Students often live on or near the school campus, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. The communal living aspect is considered integral to the learning process, encouraging social interaction and personal development.

Diverse Student Body: Folk high schools attract a diverse group of students, including recent high school graduates, adults seeking a gap year, and individuals of various ages and backgrounds. The inclusive environment encourages the exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Non-Formal Education: Folk high schools fall under the category of non-formal education. They provide an alternative to more formal and structured educational institutions, offering a unique learning experience.

Democratic Values: Many folk high schools operate based on democratic principles, involving students in decision-making processes, and promoting a sense of responsibility for the community.

International Exchange: Some folk high schools offer international exchange programs, allowing students to experience different cultures and educational approaches.

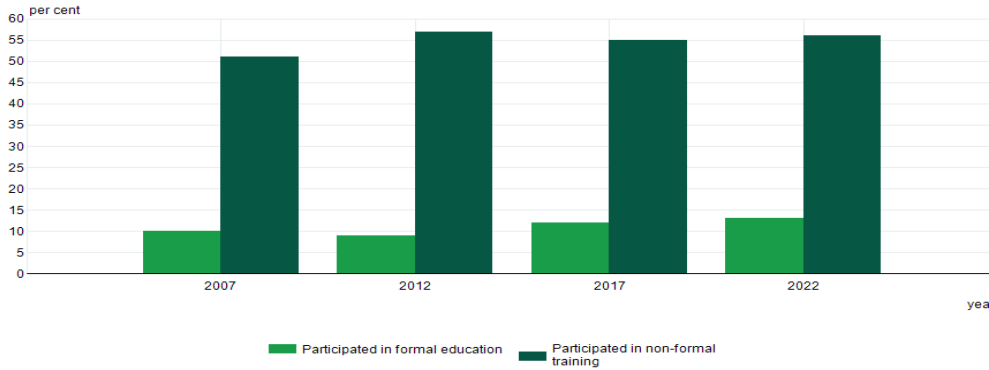
Folk high schools contribute to the development of well-rounded individuals, fostering a love for learning and a sense of community. They provide a space for personal exploration and growth, and the experience gained is often valued for its impact on students' lives beyond the academic setting.

Additionally, adult education centers and universities may offer evening classes, short courses, or workshops tailored for adults seeking to enhance their skills or pursue new interests.



Participants between the ages of 25-64 clearly dominate non-formal adult education and make up about 55% of the population. Table 06699.

06699: Participation in formal education and non-formal training in the last 12 months amongst the population 25-64 years (per cent), by contents and year. Both sexes, Total.

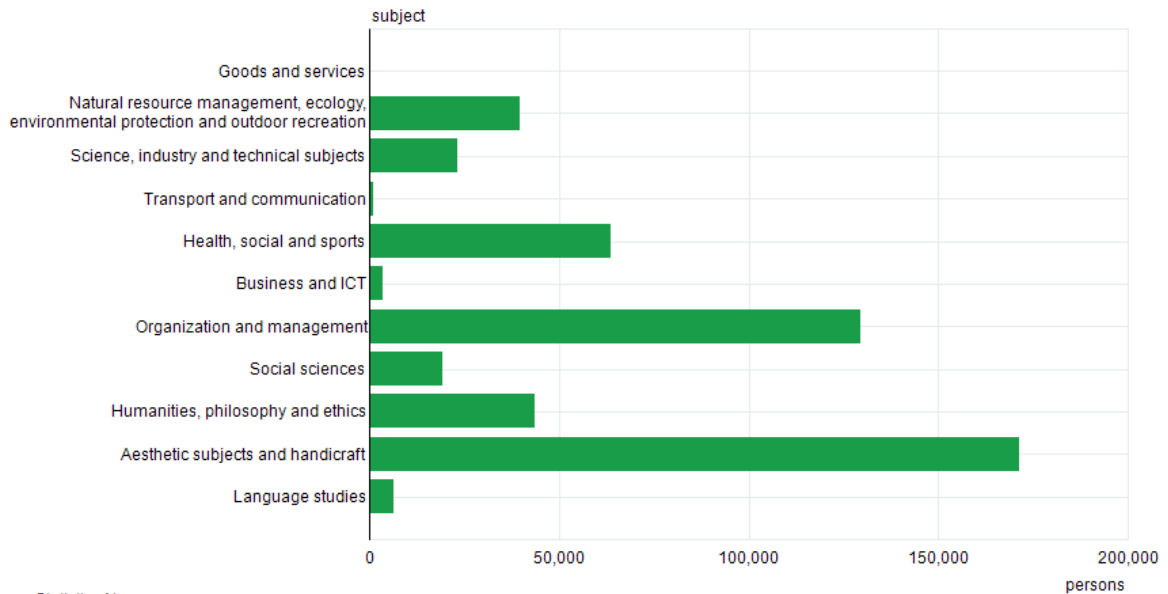


Source: Statistics Norway

Table 06699

What are the most popular subjects for people attending non-formal courses? The following table 07441 shows that ‘Aesthetical subjects and handicraft’ attracted about 200,000 participants in 2022. Many courses in this category are about song, music, folk culture, and handicraft.

07441: Popular education organisations. Participants, by subject. All popular education organisations, Both sexes, Years, total, Participants, Total, 2022.



Source: Statistics Norway

Adult education plays a vital role in promoting soft skills that are particularly relevant for the integration of cultural identity into various aspects of life, including the workplace. Soft skills create individuals who are not only skilled professionals but are also culturally competent and capable of fostering inclusive environments. These skills are increasingly recognized as valuable assets in a globalized and diverse world.

4.1.4. Non-formal adult education programs today in IRL

In the contemporary labor market, the importance of soft skills cannot be overstated. As organizations evolve to embrace diversity, the ability to effectively navigate cultural identity becomes crucial. This paper explores the nexus between soft skills, cultural identity, and non-formal adult education programs in Ireland.

- **Soft Skills and Cultural Identity:** Soft skills, encompassing communication, teamwork, and adaptability, are foundational for success in any professional setting. These skills play a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive work environment by promoting effective interaction among individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds. Effective communication bridges cultural gaps, teamwork leverages diverse perspectives, and adaptability ensures a harmonious coexistence within the workplace. The development of these skills not only enhances personal growth but also contributes significantly to career success.

- **Opportunities:** Integrating cultural identity into the labor market is not without its challenges. Individuals often face barriers such as cultural bias, stereotypes, and communication gaps. Non-formal adult education programs in Ireland, however, present valuable opportunities to address these challenges. These programs offer a dynamic platform for individuals to enhance their soft skills, fostering a more inclusive work environment. Erasmus+, with its commitment to promoting international collaboration, plays a pivotal role in supporting initiatives that bridge cultural divides and enhance employability.

- **Case Studies or Examples:** Real-life examples underscore the impact of soft skills development on individual's professional trajectories. Success stories from non-formal adult education programs in Ireland provide tangible evidence of the positive outcomes associated with such initiatives. These case studies serve as beacons of inspiration, showcasing how the acquisition of soft skills can lead to meaningful career advancements and successful integration into the labor market.

- **Recommendations and Future Outlook:** To further enhance soft skills training in non-formal adult education, it is imperative to tailor programs to address specific cultural challenges. Incorporating culturally sensitive content and promoting cross-cultural collaboration within the curriculum can significantly amplify the impact of these initiatives. The potential improvements in this area lie in continuous evaluation and adaptation of programs to meet the evolving demands of the globalized workforce. Additionally, partnerships with industry stakeholders can facilitate the development of programs that align with the current needs of the labor market.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the symbiotic relationship between soft skills, cultural identity, and non-formal adult education programs is instrumental in shaping a workforce that thrives on diversity. Continuous efforts in developing soft skills are essential for creating an inclusive labor market that embraces cultural differences. Non-formal adult education programs, supported by initiatives like Erasmus+, play a pivotal role in ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of today's diverse workplace. As we move forward, it is imperative to recognize the integral role of soft skills in cultural integration and the invaluable contribution of non-formal education programs towards shaping a dynamic and skilled workforce.

4.2. The State Education Strategy for 2024-2030

4.2.1. The State Education Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Lithuania

The National Education Strategy for 2013-2022 reflects the State's main needs. These are named in the State Progress Strategy "Lithuanian Progress Strategy 'Lithuania 2030'" (Lietuva 2030), which sets out a vision for a smart Lithuania. Society must become active, solidary and continuously educated. Each person must be open to change, creative and responsible. That is why education policy and the provided directions for changes in education must bring together the education society and all the people of Lithuania (solidarity) to constantly and continuously develop (education) in seeking individual and national success (activeness) ensuring equal opportunities.

<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/lithuania/lifelong-learning-strategy>

Non-formal adult education is described in the [Law on Non-formal Adult Education and Continuing Education](#).

The current priorities of adult education policy are set in the Long-Term Development Strategy of the State 'Lithuania's Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"' and the [National Education Strategy 2013-2022](#)

Lithuania aims to move from being ranked 22 among other EU Member States (Eurostat data, 2010) to 17 or higher by 2030.

4.2.2. The State Education Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Poland

A key factor in realizing lifelong learning is the development of skills, crucial for strengthening social capital, driving economic growth, and enhancing quality of life. Poland's achievement in this regard is the adoption of the Integrated Skills Strategy 2030, a comprehensive document developed in collaboration with relevant government bodies and stakeholders, covering the entire education and training system.

While there's no single document outlining Poland's education development directions, provisions in the Partnership Agreement, designed for transferring EU funds to Member States, emphasize activities in the area of 'Education, training, skills'. These include initiatives to change traditional teaching models, with a focus on leveraging modern technologies, and expected outcomes such as the development of 'soft' and pro-innovative competences among students, as well as increased adult participation in learning and skills enhancement.

4.2.3. The State Education Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Norway

Lifelong learning is a part of the Norwegian Government's policy, inspired by the European Commission, OECD, and other international organizations. Lifelong learning is an important principle in Norwegian education policy. The goal is that all Norwegians should have the possibility of getting an education and developing their skills throughout their whole life. Lifelong learning is considered as a way of increasing the individuals' quality of life, strengthening the skills and resilience of individuals in the labor market, thereby providing higher economic growth and more flexibility at the workplace.

Norway is facing many challenges. Growing global collaboration and competition, global environmental and poverty problems, and national welfare issues, require an updated evidence base in order to be properly addressed and solved. Norway's economy is largely based on industries that require highly skilled labor, and this will continue to be the case in the future. The ability to learn and the availability of appropriate forms of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities are keys to allow the labor force to respond to the needs of the labor market and society more generally.

Data from the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) from 2013 shows that on average, adults in Norway are more proficient in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments than the average across all participating countries. However, a relatively large share of the adult population in Norway has poor foundation skills. Young people, older people and immigrants are overrepresented among adults with poor foundation skills.

In 2020, the government presented a [white paper](#) on lifelong learning.

The field of adult education is fragmented, and the OECD Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report for Norway highlighted the potential problem of institutional complexity. In the report from the study, OECD gave recommendations and pointed especially at the priority areas:

- Improving the effectiveness of Norway's skills system
- Tackling skills imbalances
- Strengthening education and training for low-skilled adults

To improve these three areas in a better way, five key actions were suggested:

- Set up a “Skills Strategy for Norway” incorporating a whole-of-government approach
- Establish an action plan for continuous education and training
- Strengthen the link between skills development and economic growth
- Build a comprehensive career guidance system
- Strengthen incentives for people to move into shortage occupation.

In the field of adult learning, there are several actors in addition to the ones mentioned above, such as the social partners, The Adult Learning Associations (NGOs), the Folk High Schools, Flexible Education Norway (organizes 40 Norwegian providers of flexible education, FuN) and universities and university colleges offering continuing education to adults. In Norway, there is a strong tradition for cooperation in this field, as the tripartite cooperation between the main social partners and public and private actors.

"In the tapestry of a thriving society, a wise State Education Strategy is the loom that weaves knowledge, compassion, and opportunity into the fabric of every learner's future."

4.2.4. The State Education Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Ireland

The State Education Strategy for Ireland is a comprehensive plan aimed at improving the quality of education in Ireland. The strategy, which was launched in 2016, sets out a vision for education in Ireland over the next decade and beyond. The key priorities of the strategy include:

Improving literacy and numeracy skills: The strategy aims to ensure that all students have strong literacy and numeracy skills by the time they leave primary school.

Promoting STEM education: The strategy seeks to promote science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education to ensure that Ireland has a skilled workforce for the 21st century.

Enhancing creativity and innovation: The strategy recognizes the need to nurture creativity and innovation in students to prepare them for careers in the knowledge economy.

Supporting inclusion and diversity: The strategy is committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or ability, have access to high-quality education that meets their needs.

Investing in infrastructure and resources: The strategy seeks to invest in modern facilities and resources to provide a high-quality learning environment for students.

Fostering a culture of continuous improvement: The strategy encourages a culture of continuous improvement in education, with a focus on enhancing teaching and learning methods.

Overall, the State Education Strategy for Ireland is a forward-thinking plan that aims to improve the quality of education in Ireland and prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century.

4.3. Labour market problems and Soft Skills for integration

4.3.1. Labour market problems and Soft Skills for integration in LT:

Labor market problems in Lithuania encompass various challenges that impact employment, workforce development, and economic stability. Some of the key issues include:

1. **Unemployment:** Like many countries, Lithuania faces fluctuations in unemployment rates due to factors such as economic downturns, structural changes in industries, and technological advancements that may lead to job losses. High unemployment rates can strain social welfare systems and hinder overall economic growth.

2. **Skills Mismatch:** There often exists a gap between the skills possessed by the workforce and those demanded by employers. This discrepancy can result from rapid changes in industries, advancements in technology, and evolving job requirements. As a result, individuals may struggle to find employment that aligns with their qualifications, leading to underutilization of human capital and inefficiencies in the labor market.

3. **Underemployment:** Some individuals may find themselves employed in positions that do not fully utilize their skills, education, or qualifications. Underemployment can arise due to limited job

opportunities, mismatched skill sets, or unstable labor market conditions. This situation not only affects individual job satisfaction but also diminishes overall productivity and economic output.

4. Globalization: The increasing integration of economies on a global scale can bring both opportunities and challenges to the labor market in Lithuania. While globalization opens up new markets and investment opportunities, it also exposes domestic industries to heightened competition from international counterparts. This competition can lead to job outsourcing, market saturation, and disruptions in traditional employment sectors.

5. Automation and Technological Advances: Advances in automation and technology have the potential to transform industries and reshape the labor market. While automation can improve efficiency and productivity, it may also lead to the displacement of certain jobs and require workers to acquire new skills to remain employable. Without adequate training and support, individuals may struggle to adapt to these changes, resulting in increased unemployment or underemployment.

Addressing these labor market problems requires a comprehensive approach involving collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders. Policy interventions, investment in education and training programs, promoting entrepreneurship, and fostering innovation are some strategies that can help mitigate these challenges and create a more resilient and inclusive labor market in Lithuania.

4.3.2 Labour market problems and Soft Skills for integration in Poland

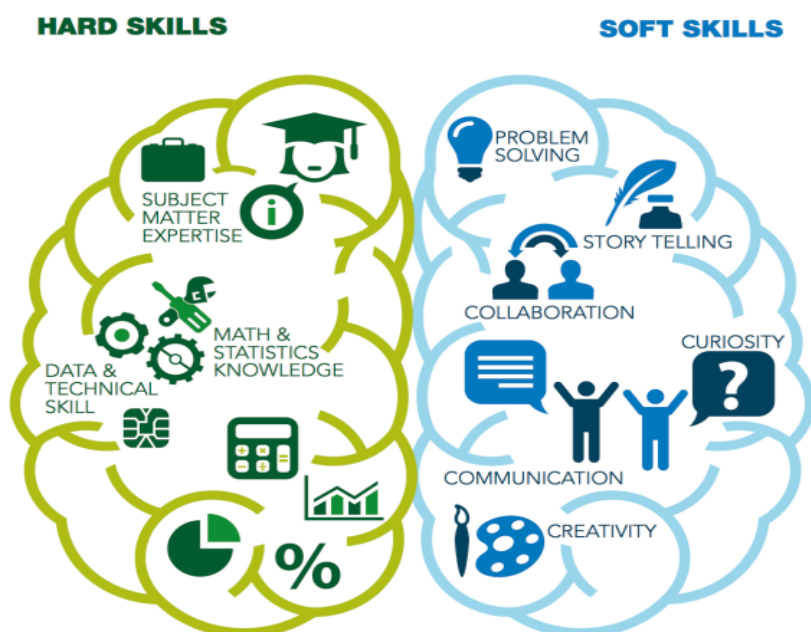
The main challenge facing the labor market in Poland is the growing gap between the skills possessed by employees and those currently sought after by employers. This issue is exacerbated by advancements in modern technologies, making it increasingly difficult to recruit professionals with the right skills. Soft skills are gaining importance in this context, as automation takes over routine tasks, highlighting the need for interpersonal skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities for career success.

Soft competencies, such as self-organization and interpersonal skills, are highly valued by employers in Poland, particularly in large urban centers. However, the education system in Poland does not adequately address the development of these skills, leaving employees to acquire them on the job. This mismatch between job requirements and the lack of soft skills, despite high technical competence, leads to lower productivity among Polish employees and reduces the competitiveness of companies in both national and international markets.

The international report "The Future of Jobs 2023" underscores the importance of soft skills, with three out of five key competencies highlighted being in this area. Employers are increasingly seeking candidates with strong soft competencies, emphasizing attributes like self-organization, communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution abilities. Enhancing these skills is crucial for both individual career success and the overall success of companies in the evolving labor market landscape.

4.3.3 Labour market problems and Soft Skills for integration in Norway

“Hard skills are the base of your career pizza; soft skills are all the delicious toppings.”



Addressing labor market problems often involves not only technical skills but also soft skills, which are crucial for successful integration into the workforce. Let us look over some common labor market problems and the role of soft skills in facilitating integration with and *subjective comments from practical experience of living in Norway*:

Limited Job Opportunities. Effective soft skills, such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving, can enhance one's ability to stand out in a competitive job market. Networking and relationship-building skills are also

important for accessing hidden job opportunities.

Comments. From an early age, the Norwegian education system is not focused on the object of learning itself, but it is much more important to shape his opinion, encouraging him and motivating him to learn, without forcing or pressuring him. Every child of healthy development can ably express his opinion on one issue or another. Whether that opinion is correct or not is another question. In this way, self-confidence is formed, which is often an obstacle for job seekers as an adult.

Skills Mismatch. Soft skills complement technical skills and can bridge the gap when there is a mismatch. Being adaptable and eager to learn can help individuals acquire new skills to meet market demands.

Comments. In Norwegian society, it is common for people to have voluntary activities after work, not just hobbies or favorite activities. These are various volunteering activities at the Red Cross, nursing homes and other social assistance. It develops personality, develops certain social skills, expands network connections - which often influences the labor market.

Cultural Barriers. Cultural competence, empathy, and effective communication are essential for navigating diverse work environments. Individuals with strong cultural awareness can contribute positively to team dynamics and organizational culture.

Comments. For those who have children in Norway and attend various after-school clubs, there is a great opportunity to interact with parents and thus develop communication skills and learn more about cultural similarities and differences in communication within and between families. It is not criticism, but respect for another culture that overcomes any barriers.

Unemployment or Underemployment. Resilience, perseverance, and a positive attitude are essential in the face of challenges such as unemployment or underemployment. Soft skills contribute to a proactive and solution-oriented mindset.

Comments. It is not easy for those who come to Norway (like any other country) to find a job they like in the beginning, while finding a job they do not like is maybe a little easier and faster. Patience,

persistence, and belief that success will inevitably lead to what they want. This does not mean sitting and waiting, NO. Needed to look for tools that will help to find the job person want. One success story in brief. A woman worked for 4 years in a cleaning job she disliked. She had a master's degree but did not speak Norwegian. Her obstacle was the Norwegian language. After learning the language, she improved in her professional field and now works in a job she likes.

Language Barriers. Effective communication skills, including language proficiency, are critical. Soft skills such as active listening and clarity in communication help individuals overcome language barriers and enhance collaboration in the workplace.

Comments. There are many ways and programs to learn Norwegian in Norway. One of them, "Språkkafé" in Norwegian or language cafe, is free. They are organized by local commune libraries. This is a fantastic opportunity to find friends, get to know cultures, develop communication skills, and learn the language at the same time.

There are also some courses of self-supporting group of volunteers that creates a meeting point for everyone who is interested in language(s) and at the same time facilitates integration. They focus on newly arrived immigrants and promote peer support.

The Lithuanian Community of Rogaland recently received an offer from the school that it can teach the Norwegian language to the members of the Lithuanian Community of Rogaland and that the costs will be financed by the Norwegian state. The courses are planned for the spring of 2024, the number of interested participants is quite high.

Lack of Professional Network. Networking and relationship-building skills are crucial for creating professional connections. Soft skills such as interpersonal communication, networking, and relationship-building can lead to job referrals and opportunities.

Comments. As already mentioned, voluntary activities contribute greatly to the development of personal connections and acquaintances. Active participation in the social platform LinkedIn also helps to build networks. Sometimes very unexpected situations lead to acquaintances that have a response, like this success story. A small cleaning company helped clean up the rooms for refugees to Norway from the war in Ukraine for free. The owners of the premises were grateful and offered large objects what helps to this small company to strengthen and grow up.

Discrimination and Bias. Soft skills related to emotional intelligence and conflict resolution can help individuals navigate situations involving discrimination or bias. Building a reputation for professionalism and collaboration can counteract negative stereotypes.

Comments. Lithuanians in Norway try to earn a good name and reputation by working honestly, being friendly and helpful. However, there are cases when dishonest Lithuanians do anti-reputational things, and it is embarrassing and unpleasant because of them. In the communities, efforts are made to set a good example and discipline compatriots who have behaved badly. The Lithuanian Community in Rogaland sets a good example of behavior and teaches and educates its members. Charitable events are organized, donations are collected for victims of war, disasters, etc. Each member of the community contributes with his personal unpaid work - which helps the awareness of personality and self-understanding as an individual in society. As a result, negativity, hostility, and intolerance disappear/reduce.

Technology and Automation. As automation increases, soft skills become even more valuable. Creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence are difficult for machines to replicate and are increasingly sought after in the job market.

Comments. Our partnership in the Erasmus project on soft skills and adult education will bring great benefits to each participant, because it is learning new things, promotes initiative, creativity, and innovation through critical thinking. We will briefly mention the book "Emotional Intelligence" - it is the world's most popular emotional intelligence test. Emotional intelligence is not a soft skill, but through it

we can reveal it. The book is recommended for everyone who wants to creatively manage their emotions and use their intellect.

Lack of Soft Skills Training. Implementing soft skills training programs can help individuals develop and enhance these skills. This can be especially beneficial for those entering the workforce or seeking to improve their employability.

Comments. In Norway there are more and more online or onsite, instructor-led live Soft Skills (also known as people skills, interpersonal skills, social skills and transferable skills) training courses demonstrate through discussion and exercises how to understand the dynamics of human relations in a business environment and how to apply Soft Skills techniques, habits and mindsets to improve relationships as well as business results, while creating a more fulfilling experience in work and life.

Work-Life Balance and Well-being. Employers value individuals who demonstrate strong time management, stress management, and work-life balance. Soft skills that promote well-being contribute to job satisfaction and productivity.

*Soft skills, the unsung heroes of our quest,
In the journey of life, they bring out the best.*

*Not just skills, but a heart's manifesto,
In the symphony of existence, where emotions echo...*

In the end, integrating soft skills into education and training programs, promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and offering support for continuous skill development can all contribute to addressing labor market challenges and facilitating successful integration.

4.3.4. Labour market problems and Soft Skills for integration in Ireland:

1. **Unemployment.** Cause: Structural changes, technological advancements, and economic fluctuations.

Solution: Developing adaptability, resilience, and continuous upskilling.

2. **Skills Mismatch.** Cause: Discrepancy between workers' skills and employers' demands.

Solution: Effective communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking to complement technical skills.

3. **Underemployment.** Cause: Workers not fully utilizing their skills.

Solution: Networking, interpersonal skills, and a proactive attitude to find suitable opportunities.

4. **Globalization.** Cause: Increased competition from global markets.

Solution: Cultural intelligence, cross-cultural communication, and a global mindset.

5. **Automation and Technological Advances.** Cause: Automation replacing jobs.

Solution: Learning agility, creativity, and innovation to adapt to new technologies.

Soft Skills for Integration:

1. **Communication Skills.** Importance: Fosters collaboration, understanding, and teamwork.

Application: Clear expression, active listening, and versatile information conveyance.

2. **Adaptability and Resilience.** Importance: Vital for adapting to new roles and situations.

Application: Embracing change, learning from setbacks, and maintaining positivity.

3. **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving.** Importance: Valued for analyzing situations and making informed decisions.

Application: Logical reasoning, data interpretation, and creative problem-solving.

4. **Interpersonal Skills.** Importance: Enhances workplace harmony.

Application: Teamwork, conflict resolution, and empathy.

5. **Continuous Learning.** Importance: Essential in rapidly evolving industries.

Application: Seeking professional development opportunities and embracing a growth mindset.

6. **Cultural Competence.** Importance: Necessary in a globalized workforce.

Application: Respect for cultural differences and cross-cultural communication.

Collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and individuals, along with supportive policies, is crucial in addressing labor market challenges and fostering soft skills for integration. Individuals should take a proactive approach to continuously improve their soft skills and adapt to changing labor market demands.

4.4. Business creation and the one-stop shop principle

One stop shop for current and future startups in Lithuania: Startup Lithuania is the national startup ecosystem facilitator between fast-growing business, venture capital funds, accelerators, startup friendly enterprises, and the government.

- Publishing [startup ecosystem startup news](#), providing [startups database](#), job [marketplace](#) and sending a weekly newsletter that covers the ecosystem;
- Organizing [startup events](#): Seminars, BarCamp, Workshops, and Startup Fair – main startup event of the year;
- Consulting, advising, introducing, networking – we know everyone in the ecosystem;
- Educating the ecosystem and future entrepreneurs.

Startup Lithuania is powered by [Innovation Agency Lithuania](#), which is the official public agency responsible for the development of Lithuanian innovation ecosystem and the promotion of innovation at all stages of business development.

1. **Business idea** – search and check.

<https://inovacijagentura.lt/pradek-versla/start-business/business-idea---search-and-check.html?lang=en>

2. **Business plan.** Business plan is a highly important part of business idea development, during which a business model is purified, the demand for funds is calculated, risks and business perspectives are assessed. **Recommended structure of the business plan:**

https://inovacijagentura.lt/site/binaries/content/gallery/images/verslo-planas_eng-e1535350929289.png

3. **Selection of a business form:**

[Individual activities](#); We recommend this form of activity when you are sure that you are able to implement your business idea on your own, and especially when you are planning to implement economic-commercial activities for a limited period of time.

[Small partnership \(MB\)](#); A small partnership is a private legal entity with limited liability. This means that members are not liable for their assets for the unfulfilled obligations of the small partnership. A small partnership may be established by no more than 10 natural persons (there may be one founder). A small partnership may engage in any activity not prohibited by law.

[Individual enterprise \(II\)](#); Individual enterprise (II) is a private legal entity with unlimited liability. This means that the owner is liable for his outstanding obligations with his own property. Only one natural person may be the founder and owner of an individual enterprise, who may not be the owner of another individual enterprise.

[Private limited liability company \(UAB\)](#). When establishing a private limited liability company in Lithuania, the amount of the authorized capital must be 1000 Eur. In order to obtain a residence, permit in Lithuania, your investment / value of the share capital must be at least 14 000 Eur.

Registration can be established electronically using model founding documents through the [self-service system of State Enterprise Centre of Registers](#) (just for electronic signature holders).

https://www.registrucentras.lt/jar/e-gidas_en/

A **foreigner** who wishes to use the administrative, public or commercial services provided electronically (remotely) in the Republic of Lithuania may submit an application for granting the status of an electronic resident of the Republic of Lithuania.

Registration of a company. [The setting up of a legal entity](#) covers the process from the decision to establish a Legal Entity in the chosen legal form to its entry in the Register of Legal Entities. Several stages in establishing a company, typical of a Legal Entity of any legal form, can be distinguished:

1. **A clear choice of goals and objectives for the business.**
2. **Selection of the most appropriate legal form of the company.**
3. **Selection of premises for the registered office;** the consent (notarized) of the owner of the premises to provide the premises to the registered office of the LE if the owner of the premises is other than the founder.
4. **Selection and registration of the name of the LE.** There is an option of submitting a request to the registrar of the Register of Legal Entities for the temporary entry of the name in the Register of Legal Entities ([JAR-5](#)).
5. **Drawing-up of the constituent documents.**
6. **Opening of an accumulation account.** The founders have the right to select the bank of their choice. The persons authorized by the LE who are opening a bank account on behalf of the LE must have an identity document and the constituent document (memorandum of association or document of incorporation). Later, after registering the LE, the accumulation account is changed to a current bank account (upon presentation of the registration certificate of the LE, the document certifying the appointment of the manager, the identity document of the manager, and the stamp of the LE).
7. **Payment of required initial contributions (if any).** Initial contributions can only be paid in cash to the savings account.
8. **Drawing-up of articles of association / regulations.** It is the document by which the LE will be guided in its business activities.
9. **Convening of the constituent meeting.** During this meeting, the articles of association are approved, the management and supervisory bodies (manager, board, supervisory board, etc.) are elected, and authorizations for representation in the Register of Legal Entities is granted. If there is one founder, the decision of the sole founder is drawn up. The constituent meeting may not be convened if the memorandum of association or the document of incorporation includes the management bodies, persons authorized for representation.
10. **Completion of JAR forms required for the Register of Legal Entities (JAR-1 and others, depending on the legal form).**
11. **Submission of the documents to a notary and the Register of Legal Entities.**
<https://inovacijagentura.lt/pradek-versla/start-business/starting-and-running-a-business.html?lang=en>

One stop shop for current and future startups in Poland

- The process of starting a business in Poland begins with registration, which involves submitting an application to the Central Register of Business Activity and Information. Sole traders and partners in civil partnerships must also apply for a REGON number, tax office registration, and social security registration (ZUS or KRUS) through a one-stop shop procedure. Additionally, if opting for VAT registration, a VAT-R application must be submitted before generating revenue.

- Registration can be done at the municipal office, via post with a notarized signature, or online through the municipality website. Upon registration, the authorities forward the application to the statistical office, ZUS, and the tax office to complete remaining formalities.

- For partnerships or limited companies, registration is made with the National Court Register via forms available at district courts. If a sole proprietor already has a NIP (Tax Identification Number), it

remains unchanged. Otherwise, it will be assigned after registration, necessary for tax purposes such as VAT. The REGON number is essential for dealings with tax authorities or the Social Insurance Institution.

- Business income is taxed based on chosen forms of taxation, which may include general taxation according to the tax scale, flat tax, or lump-sum tax on registered income, depending on individual preferences and applicable legislation.

One stop shop for current and future startups in Ireland

January 2022, Ireland has been working on simplifying and streamlining its processes for business creation through initiatives such as the "One Stop Shop" principle. However, it's important to note that the specifics of government programs and regulations can change, and you should verify the latest information from official sources.

As of my last update, **here are some general points related to business creation and the one-stop shop principle in Ireland:**

Companies Registration Office (CRO). The Companies Registration Office is the central authority for the incorporation and registration of companies in Ireland. It plays a crucial role in facilitating the establishment of new businesses.

Online Services. Ireland has been promoting online services to simplify the registration process. The CRO provides an online platform where businesses can submit their registration forms and other necessary documentation.

Business Registration Process. The one-stop shop principle aims to consolidate various registration processes into a single point of contact, making it more convenient for entrepreneurs. This might include the registration of business names, filing company documents, and other related activities.

Support Agencies. There are various support agencies and government bodies in Ireland that help for entrepreneurs. These organizations may provide information, resources, and support to help with the establishment and growth of businesses.

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs). Local Enterprise Offices, present throughout Ireland, provide advice, information, and support for starting or growing a business. They often act as a point of contact for entrepreneurs looking to navigate the business landscape.

Business.gov.ie The Irish government provides a centralized website, business.gov.ie, which serves as a source of information for businesses. It is designed to make it easier for entrepreneurs to find relevant information and services.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance. Entrepreneurs need to be aware of and comply with various legal and regulatory requirements when starting a business in Ireland. The one-stop shop principle may help streamline the process of meeting these obligations.

For the most up-to-date and accurate information, it is recommended to check the official websites of relevant government agencies in Ireland, such as the Companies Registration Office (CRO), the Department of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation, and the Local Enterprise Offices. They should provide comprehensive and current details on the business creation process and the implementation of the one-stop shop principle.

One stop shop for current and future startups in Norway.

We chose an example to show the model of ONE-STOP SHOP in Norway. Platform called ALTINN what means **ALL INCLUDED**.

Examples of combined business and citizen one-stop shops

The one-stop shop solution Altinn fulfils the most sophisticated one-stop shop model. It is a common web portal for transactions and information, but it is also a platform where governmental agencies can develop and run their services.

The service owners have developed about 1 000 forms and services on the Altinn platform.



Citizens and companies find these services in the forms overview on the website. The users, that is both businesses and citizens, can both submit forms and receive messages from the public agencies in their Altinn inbox, i.e. a digital dialogue.

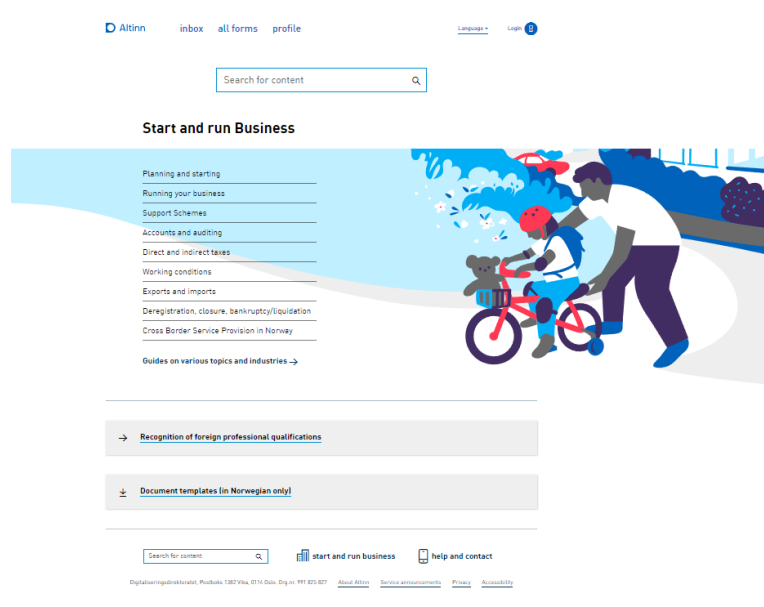
Altinn has paid especially close attention to collaboration between the various agencies, with joint reporting and feedback adapted to the user's business processes, cutting across formal organizational boundaries between government agencies and administrative levels. This has provided opportunities to disseminate practices across governments and to discuss experiences which can potentially be integrated into other parts of the government.

Identification and authentication mechanisms in Altinn, which started in 2003, uniquely identify users by their social security numbers sourced from the Norwegian Population Register. Initially, Altinn established authentication mechanisms, later replaced by the national service ID-porten. To operate business enterprises, Altinn refers to the Central Coordinating Register for Legal Entities.

Altinn utilizes data from the Population Register and the Central Coordinating Register for Legal Entities to prefill forms and grant access to personal or enterprise information. This aids in tracking user demographics and usage patterns, informing managerial decisions and service improvements.

Altinn also gathers user feedback on ease of compliance, safety, and stability. Users can easily register their businesses and complete necessary procedures online, without leaving home.

Implementing the one-stop shop principle streamlines administrative procedures and fosters a business-friendly environment, attracting entrepreneurs and fostering economic growth. This approach is adopted globally to enhance business registration and drive economic competitiveness.



"Efficiency is the compass, and the one-stop shop is the destination."

II. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Short description about partner's organizations activities and history

Alytus Business Advisory Centre, Lithuania - established on May 13, 1993, Alytus Business Advisory Centre is Lithuania's first business consulting center, initially formed as a non-profit organization. It now operates as a commercial entity, offering business and educational services. Founded by local entrepreneurs and Alytus City Municipality with EU PHARE program support, its mission is to promote small and medium business development in the Alytus region.

Our services:

- Business Start Up;
- BRAND development: Logo creation works; Layout of business cards; Letterhead layout; Layout of promotional banners; Layout of advertising flyers; pamphlets; Soc. of various visualizations; Development for networks or websites;

- Accounting services;
- Projects for educational programs development competency and business;
- Export development services;
- Non – Formal Adult Education Trainings: “Business Start-Up“; Management; Finance; Marketing; Team building; Communication; Negotiation etc.;
- Seminars on accountancy, Labour laws and other company management issues;
- Corporate governance documents in e-Shop:

<https://www.avkc.lt/lt/el-parduotuve/imonės-valdymo-irankiai/>

Alytus Business Advisory Centre is coordinator of:

1. Non-Formal learning activity of the “Council of the Alytus City Municipality of Adult Educational Strategic Partnership Platform” from 2014 till now (Alytus city municipality AE-SPP);
2. „Alytus City Municipality Local Activity Group“ (2015);
3. Cluster “Food Technologies Digitalization LT” /FTD LT/, www.ftd.lt (from 2019), where the axis - companies of metal and machinery industry in value chain with food industry, logistic, digital and science - educational organizations.
4. Founder of „Alytus Region Bookkeeping Association“ (2008);
5. Founder of „Alytus Land Businessmen Association“(1995).

Website: www.avkc.lt

ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences established in 2000. ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences is a state university focused on practical higher education, aligning with Lithuania's new Law on Higher Education. It offers 11 internationally accredited study programs, including 5 in English, emphasizing competence-based and professionally oriented studies in Business, Public Management, Informatics, Engineering, Technologies, and Health sciences.

Key Features:

- Flexible, internationalized curriculum;
- Professional integration and career prospects;
- Strong ties with companies and entrepreneurship support;
- Individualized student support;
- Erasmus+ mobility for international experience;
- International study environment and visiting staff;
- Applied research cooperation and networking;
- Excellent accommodation facilities.

The institution plays a vital role in research and development, adapting to rapid technological changes. It actively participates in educational EU programs, fostering European higher education

integration. Through collaborations with universities, industries, and public organizations, ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences contributes to curriculum development and adult education.

Active involvement in EU programs also strengthens international relations, facilitating cooperation with foreign partners in research, education associations, and businesses, fostering innovation and creating favorable conditions for development.

Association "Euroregion Niemen" was established on 27 November 1997 and is an organization, which was set up to support cross-border cooperation. Our basic assumption is that in case of border regions cooperation with a neighbor may be one of the factors stimulating social and economic development of the region. Currently the Association brings together 30 local governments from the Podlaskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodeships.

The main objective of the Association is a comprehensive activity for socio-economic development of border territories of the Polish part of the Cross-Border Association Euroregion Niemen, including improvement of living conditions of inhabitants, flourishing of all legally permissible forms of border and cross-border co-operation with the regions of neighboring countries. The objectives of the Association are carried out, in particular, taking into account specificity of the region's location in the area of borders' meeting point of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Russia.

The Association pursues its statutory aims by:

- 1) organizing and coordinating all cross-border cooperation of subjects of the Polish side with subjects of the region of other countries within the Euroregion Niemen,
- 2) managing European Union funds in the framework of promoting cross-border cooperation,
- 3) running the Secretariat of the Polish side of the Council of the Cross-Border Association "Euroregion Niemen",
- 4) implementation of own and partner projects within the aid programs
- 5) conducting training and educational activity,
- 6) conducting publishing and promotional activity,
- 7) carrying out activity for the benefit of socio-economic development of the area of the Euroregion Niemen in the field of:
 - spatial economy,
 - environmental protection, including counteracting climate change and activities in the field of renewable energy development,
 - development of entrepreneurship,
 - tourism, sport, and recreation,
 - transport and communication,
 - education, science, culture, arts,
 - health protection, including preventive health care,
 - labour market, including activities for the disabled, persons excluded or threatened by social exclusion and the elderly,
 - social and solidarity economy,
 - innovation, including information and communication technologies
 - Rural renewal and agriculture,
 - crime prevention,
 - mutual assistance in case of disasters and natural disasters,
- 8) initiating and supporting the activities of non-governmental organizations,
- 9) supporting the activities of local governments and legal and natural persons, consistent with the objectives of the Association,
- 10) cooperation with authorities and institutions,
- 11) cooperation with related national and foreign associations,

12) The Association realizes its statutory aims, among other things, by realizing its own projects within the aid programs and carrying out training and educational activities. In 1997-2023, the "Euroregion Niemen" Association implemented 34 own projects, which were financed mainly from the European Union funds. In total, support in the amount of about PLN 12.8 million was obtained.

In 2001-2014, the Association managed European Union funds of a total value of 26.5 million EUR, within which 526 cross-border cooperation projects were co-financed, implemented by non-governmental organizations, local governments, and other non-profit entities, in such fields as: social and economic development, tourism, environmental protection, local democracy, social affairs.

As a result of the implementation of the projects, the following results were achieved, among others:

- 1511 partner organizations/institutions from different countries involved in projects,
- 727 events organized,
- 641,928 event participants,
- 152 studies/analyses/strategies/databases developed,
- 540 cross-border cooperation agreements concluded,
- 452,749 people participating in trainings,
- 163 institutions participating in education and competence enhancement activities.

The association has its own building with an area of 530 m², which includes offices for 5 workstations, a conference room for 70 people, an archive, and social facilities.

The Lithuanian Society of Rogaland (RLB) was founded on January 14, 2012, in Sandnes, Norway. It is one of the largest Lithuanian communities in Norway, with around 260 members. The board, elected every two years, is led by Saulius Trepekunas as chairman, along with Zenonas Mačiulaitis as deputy chairman, Dainora Japerteitė as cashier, and Jurgita Jensen as secretary, among others.

Initially focusing on committees like Catholic, charity, handicrafts, and basketball, the community has expanded its activities over time. Various groups such as the Lithuanian folk-dance group "Jorė," the Lithuanian mixed choir "Baltija," and the Rogaland Lithuanian vocal ensemble "Šeimyna" have become actively involved.

The Rogaland Lithuanian School, now led by Jurgita Jensen, offers educational activities. In 2022, the association marked its 10th anniversary, coinciding with the renovation of the Lithuanian House, a project spearheaded by Saulius Trepekunas. The renovation took nearly four years and involved significant human and financial resources.

LABAS (Union of Communities and Members of Lithuanians in Ireland) is a non-profit organization founded in December 2015. Since then, we have undertaken numerous projects, proudly representing Lithuania in Ireland.

One significant project is the Lituanica II replica memorial in Ballinrobe, co. Mayo, Ireland, erected in September 2016 on the 81st flight anniversary. Additionally, we organized the first and only Lithuanian Parliament election debates in Ireland in 2016, increasing voter participation among Lithuanians abroad and engaging youth volunteers in event preparation.

We have consistently organized annual Lithuanian celebrations and festivals like LABAS Spring Fest, Baltic Days, and Fly Mayo, involving both youth and adults. Entertainment events featuring Choir DAGILELIS, traditional Lithuanian music band RATILAI, ROLANDAS KAZLAS, and LABAS theatre productions have brought joy to our community.

Our Lithuanian school LABAS plays a crucial role in preserving Lithuanian culture, language, and heritage, nurturing the younger generation's connection to our beautiful country.



L.A.B.A.S - Union of Lithuanian Persons and Communities in Ireland

2. Description of PARTNERS REGION'S CULTURAL SPECIFIC

Lithuanian Cultural Highlights:

In the southeastern part of Lithuania lies Dzūkija, known for its rich singing traditions, environmental care, and foraging skills. Visiting a Dzūkija village offers a glimpse into a bygone era, with a chance to experience the serene, nature-centred life amidst forests and lakes.

Alytus, nestled in southern Lithuania, is integral to the Dzūkija region, boasting a rich history dating back to 1377. Its strategic location on the Nemunas River has made it a vital center for trade and interaction. Alytus earned the Magdeburg rights in 1581, symbolized by its iconic white rose on a red background.

Culturally vibrant, Alytus was designated the Lithuanian Capital of Culture in 2022, honoring its commitment to preserving heritage. The city offers a blend of historical landmarks like the Church of St. Bartholomew and modern attractions.

Surrounded by the picturesque Dzūkija National Park, Alytus County is a haven for nature lovers. The park's hiking trails through lush forests and serene lakes attract outdoor enthusiasts.

Hosting cultural events and festivals, Alytus County celebrates its traditions and history, showcasing local talent. Museums and cultural sites offer insight into the region's past and ongoing cultural evolution.

Today, Alytus thrives amidst its lush greenery, embodying its traditions, culture, and warm hospitality. With its blend of history, culture, and natural beauty, Alytus contributes significantly to Lithuania's cultural landscape, making it a must-visit destination for cultural enthusiasts.

Polish Cultural Highlights

The project area in Poland is culturally rich, with inhabitants deeply connected to their "little homeland," fostering integration among the population. Over centuries, it has developed a diverse culture, including customs, traditions, beliefs, legends, folklore, and language elements, passed down through generations. This cultural heritage encompasses architectural, folk, and technical monuments, as well as traditional professions like weaving, pottery, blacksmithing, and folk sculpture.

Local cuisine reflects tradition, featuring dishes like smoked vendace, tench in cream and dill sauce, soczewiaki, kartacze, and the renowned sękacze, a distinctive regional specialty. The Suwałki region hosts various cultural events of regional and supra-regional significance, such as the ARS MUSICA International Music Festival, Augustowskie Lato Teatralne (August Theatre Summer), Suwałki Music Summer, and the Blues Festival in Suwałki, among others. These events celebrate the rich cultural heritage and artistic diversity of the region.

Norwegian Cultural Highlights:

Language: Norwegian, with its Bokmål and Nynorsk forms, is widely spoken alongside English.

Norse Heritage: Viking legacy enriches art, literature, and festivities, imbuing the country with ancient lore.

Sami Culture: Indigenous Sami traditions are cherished, especially in the northern regions.

Outdoor Lifestyle: Norwegians embrace nature, indulging in activities like hiking and skiing.

Music and Dance: Traditional instruments and folk dances showcase Norway's vibrant musical heritage.

Architecture: Wooden churches and colorful timber houses reflect Norway's historical aesthetic.

National Day: "Syttende Mai" celebrates independence with parades and festivities.

Food: Seafood, berries, and reindeer meat are culinary staples, complemented by traditional dishes.

Folklore: Myths of trolls and elves are woven into Norway's cultural fabric.

Equality and Welfare: Norway prioritizes social equality and welfare, embodying progressive values.

Irish Cultural Highlights

Language: Gaelic, or the Irish language, though not widely spoken, remains significant, reflected in official signage and place names.

Traditional Music: Traditional Irish music, played on instruments like the fiddle and flute, embodies Irish culture, often narrating tales of history and folklore.

Literature: Renowned Irish writers like James Joyce and W.B. Yeats contribute to the rich literary tradition, alongside traditional storytelling.

Dance: Irish step dancing, popularized globally by Riverdance, holds a prominent place in Irish cultural expression.

Food and Drink: Traditional Irish fare includes stew, fish and chips, and soda bread, accompanied by the iconic Guinness stout.

Sports: Hurling and Gaelic football are deeply ingrained in Irish culture, with rugby and soccer also enjoying popularity.

Mythology: Irish mythology, steeped in tales of gods, fairies, and leprechauns, endures as a cherished aspect of Irish heritage.

Holidays and Festivals: Celebrations like St. Patrick's Day, Halloween (originating as Samhain), and the Galway Races punctuate Ireland's cultural calendar.

3. BRIEF ECONOMICS DATA ANALYSIS (Growth; GDP; Unemployment rate; Personal income average; Minimum wage; Migration rate for 2023-2026 period)

In the second quarter of 2023, total employment in the country reached 1.4 million, showing a 0.6% increase compared to the same period in 2022. The services sector drove most of this growth, particularly in trade, transport, accommodation, and food services. Conversely, sectors like agriculture, forestry, fishing, public administration, education, and health care saw declines in employment.

The slowing employment growth over the past year is partly attributed to a high comparative base effect from the integration of war refugees into the labor market the previous year. Additionally, factors like economic downturns, winter energy price spikes, geopolitical tensions, uncertainties in the international environment, rising interest rates, and tighter monetary policies have contributed to decreased hiring and cautious corporate activity outlooks.

Despite the less optimistic outlook, daily administrative data from SODRA shows continued growth in the number of employed persons, with a 0.9% increase compared to the previous year.

In the first three quarters of 2023, 61.2 thousand young people registered as unemployed, slightly fewer than the previous year. However, their share of total registered unemployed increased by 1.4 percentage points. Middle-aged individuals (30-49 years) comprised the largest share of registered unemployed, with 84,000 individuals, showing a decrease compared to the previous year.

Economic forecast for Lithuania

Year	Inflation	Wages	GDP Growth	Unemployment Rate
2023	+8.8%	+12.2%	-0.2%	6.7%
2024	+2.5%	+9.4%	+1.8%	6.5%
2025	+2.5%	+8.7%	+3.1%	6.4%
2026	+2.4%	+8.3%	+3.3%	6.3%

Lithuania economic forecast 2023-2026 Source: <https://www.lb.lt/lt/mv-ekonomikos-analize-ir-prognozes>

On October 1, 2023, the lowest registered unemployment rates were found in Neringa (2.7%), Klaipėda district (5.1%), Kretinga district (5.8%), Skuodas district (6%), and Birštonas (6.2%). Conversely, the highest rates were recorded in Ignalina (12.3%), Kalvarija (12.2%), Jonava (10.7%), and Kazlų Rūda and Zarasai (10.6% each).

Compared to October 1, 2022, registered unemployment increased in 41 out of 60 municipalities, remained stable in 3, and decreased in 16. The largest increases were observed in Varėna (2.4%), Kupiškis (2.3%), Pagėgiai (2.1%), and Kelmė, Plungė, and Prienai (1.7%). The largest year-on-year decreases were recorded in Akmenė (2.5%), Palanga, Rokiškis, and Kaišiadorys (0.9%), and Neringa (0.8%).

Among the country's five largest cities, Šiauliai had the lowest registered unemployment rate (6.6%), while Kaunas had the highest (9.3%). Over the year, registered unemployment decreased in Vilnius and Šiauliai (-0.2% each), remained unchanged in Kaunas, and increased in Klaipėda and Panevėžys (+0.1% each).

Poland. Economic Recovery: Poland and the EU economy are gradually recovering from a period of slowdown. In 2023, Poland's GDP grew by 0.3%, close to the EU average of 0.6%. A rebound is anticipated in 2024, with Poland's economic growth projected to reach around 2.3%, compared to the EU's optimistic forecast of 1.3%.

Inflation and Salary Increases: Inflation is on a downward trend, with Poland's average rate dropping from 11.6% in 2023 to 5.1% the following year. Despite this, double-digit salary increases are expected, reaching 10.3% in 2024.

Unemployment and Minimum Remuneration: The unemployment rate in December 2023 was 5.1%. Additionally, the minimum remuneration for work increased to PLN 4242 from January 1, 2024, representing a rise of PLN 752 compared to the previous year's amount (PLN 3490).

Foreign Migration: Data from the Central Statistical Office (CSO) indicates a balance of 1.9 thousand for permanent residence in 2022, with immigration at 15.6 thousand and emigration at 13.6 thousand. Unfortunately, no data is available for 2023.

Norway's economy is growing and stable. Some of the following factors reflect the indicators of the Norwegian economy:

GDP growth: Norway's GDP growth has historically been influenced by its oil and gas sector. The country has a significant state asset fund, the Government Pension Fund Global, which is financed by oil revenues. However, such industries as shipping, forestry, and fisheries also contribute strongly to economic growth. Norway's GDP increased by 3.8 percent. NOK 1,045,341 per capita in gross national product.

Unemployment rate: Norway maintains a relatively low unemployment rate compared to many other countries. The labour market is influenced by factors such as economic growth, oil prices and government policies. The unemployment rate during this period was 3.7%

Average personal income: Norway is known for a high standard of living and relatively high per capita income levels. The country has a high-level social welfare system and high salaries. According to Statistics Norway, the average salary in Norway is NOK 637,800 per year or NOK 52,150 per month.

Minimum wage: There is no single statutory minimum wage in Norway, as the tax system is progressive. The wage level is determined in negotiations between employers' representatives of specific economic sectors and trade unions. Agreements vary by industry and profession.

Migration rate: Norway experiences a consistent influx of people compared to those departing, primarily due to factors like favorable job prospects, a high quality of life, and political stability. Immigration surged notably following the onset of the Russian-Ukrainian war, with many Ukrainians seeking refuge in Norway. However, migration statistics vary annually. In 2023, Norway's migration rate stood at 5.058 persons per 1,000 inhabitants, marking a 0.84% decrease compared to 2022.

Ireland. In 2022, Ireland experienced a 9.4% increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a 3.9% rise in Gross National Product (GNP), as per updated estimates compared to earlier figures. The updated data reveals weaker performance in sectors like Industry, Information & Communication, and Construction, offset by stronger results in Agriculture, Distribution, and Public Administration, among others. Despite a 1.9% GDP contraction in Q3 2023, Modified Domestic Demand remained stable.

The unemployment rate in Ireland declined to 4.36% in 2022 after a prior increase. As of December 2023, it slightly increased to 4.9%. Ireland has seen a significant drop in unemployment rates since the early 2010s post-global financial crisis.

In terms of earnings, the median annual salary for men is €45,537, compared to €37,782 for women, with the national average at €41,824 in 2022. The top 1% of earners had median earnings of €285,672 for men and €277,613 for women. Dublin residents earn the highest median annual wage at €46,136, €4,313 above the national average.

From 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022, the following rates applied:

Age	Amount	% of NMW
Under 18	€7.35	70%
18 years old	€8.40	80%
19 years old	€9.45	90%
National Minimum Wage (20+)	€10.50	100%

From 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023, the following rates applied:

Age	Amount	% of NMW
Under 18	€7.91	70%
18 years old	€9.04	80%
19 years old	€10.17	90%
National Minimum Wage (20+)	€11.30	100%

In the year leading up to April 2023, Ireland experienced a significant increase in immigration, with 141,600 people arriving in the country, marking a 31% rise from the previous year. However, emigration also saw an uptick, with 64,000 individuals leaving Ireland during the same period, reflecting a 14% increase from the year before. As a result, net inward migration stood at 77,600, representing a 50% increase from the previous year. In 2023, the number of immigrants entering the Republic of Ireland increased to approximately 141,600, compared to 120,700 in the previous year, with the highest number recorded in 2007 at 151,100.

III. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS IN LITHUANIA, POLAND, NORWAY, AND IRELAND

1. Partnership and networking of the organizations

The Alytus Business Advisory Centre actively engages in partnerships and networking initiatives to enhance its services and quality. Alytus Business Consulting Centre, which has been operating in the region for 30 years, has created the Reintegration Network REINBRIDGE - 2020, which is the hub and axis of the network of non-formal education services.

<https://www.facebook.com/ReintegracijaLietuvaPlatform>



Based on the content of the new DEPS-Skills project, the Alytus BASC is further developing the strengthening of this network by involving Polish and Irish organizations. It is a spatial and mainly education-oriented reintegration network, like other networks of this kind, in some places alive and taking care of the platform and initiatives.

Such non-formal education centers can be set up anywhere: in Ireland, Suwalki, Oslo, Rome, Hommersak or any other smaller city where Lithuanian communities can organize a reintegration model based on the platform, prototype, organizational skills, and projects developed by the Alytus Centre. This polycentricity of the platform www.deps-skills.eu allows Alytus BASC to operate dynamically, anywhere in the network. The results of this Project will go beyond the possibilities of the City of Alytus.

Networking and collaboration play a pivotal role in success across various fields, facilitating relationship building, information sharing, and access to opportunities. ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences actively participates in international associations such as

EAIE, EURASHE, and BMDA, fostering partnerships with academic, governmental, and corporate entities.

University partnerships offer mutual benefits, enabling research collaboration, funding acquisition, and access to a diverse talent pool. ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences prioritizes creating high-quality links with partners to enhance employment prospects for students and equip them with relevant workplace skills.

Innovative higher education and community partnerships have transformative potential, boosting institutional reputation and student satisfaction. ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences collaborates with 55 institutions in 21 countries under the Erasmus+ program, promoting internationalization and implementing numerous international projects across various programs.

Since 2020, ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences has executed multiple international projects, including those under the EUROPE FOR CITIZENS program, EU Structural Funds program, Lifelong Learning program, ERASMUS+ program, and others, demonstrating its commitment to strategic networking and cooperation for sustainable growth.

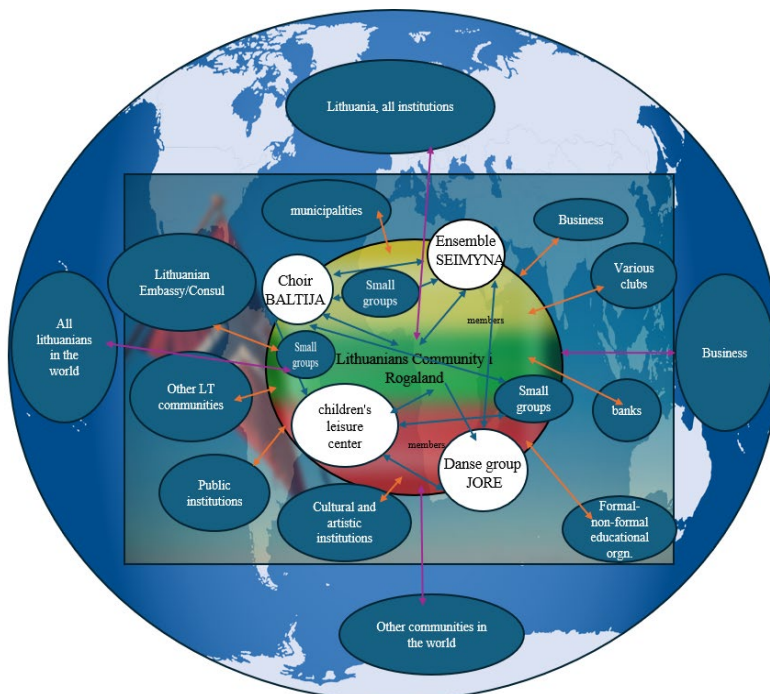
Association "Euroregion Niemen" created a member of the following networks-organizations:

1. Local Action Group "Augustow Canal";
2. Local Fishery Group "Suwalsko-Augustowskie Lakeland";
3. Podlaskie Regional Tourist Organization;
4. Confederation of Euroregions of the Republic of Poland;
5. Eastern Poland Tourism Brands Cluster;
6. Metalworking Cluster - strategic partner;
7. Podlaskie Forum of Non-governmental Organizations;
8. European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation NEMUNAS-NIEMEN.

Training is not our main activity, but rather a complementary one. In its daily work, the Association cooperates with many NGOs, including those specializing in adult training. Between 2017 and 2020, we implemented a project on raising professional qualifications for 3,500 people, with training delivered through institutions from all over Poland gathered in the Development Services Database.

Lithuanians Society in Rogaland - such organization, partnership between members, groups inside **Lithuanians Society in Rogaland**, and outside – between Norwegian institutions and rest of the world and networking as global shown in scheme.

Partnership
and Networking
are the lifeblood of
growth and
success in
the professional
world.
Let's
Explore
Their
significance...



The Lithuanian community in Rogaland actively participates in various European Lithuanian events, fostering cultural exchange and collaboration. Through projects like the "Re-In-Bridge" initiative under the Erasmus program, they connect with Lithuanian communities in the UK and Italy, promoting cultural ties and knowledge exchange. Representatives engage in annual gatherings such as the "Friendship Bridge" of European Lithuanian schools, traveling to countries like Ireland, Italy, and Sweden.

Individual members contribute to diplomatic missions and consular activities, attend World Lithuanian Community events, and participate in sports competitions like the World Lithuanian Sports Games. Remigijus Ratkevičius, the sports curator, organizes participation in events like the XI World Lithuanian Sports Games, where participants achieve notable success.

Cultural exchange is also vibrant, with Lithuanian choirs, dance groups, and ensembles performing in cities like Oslo, Bergen, and Stockholm. These performances showcase Lithuanian culture and heritage, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. Additionally, collaborations with institutions like the Stavanger Museum highlight Lithuanian traditions, as exhibited in the national costume exhibition.

Overall, the Lithuanian community in Rogaland actively contributes to cultural enrichment and cross-cultural understanding, both within the Lithuanian diaspora and among Norwegian communities.

In Ireland, adult education and lifelong learning are provided through a range of institutions, including universities, vocational training centers, adult education centers, and community education centers. The focus is on improving access to education and promoting lifelong learning, with particular attention on supporting those with low skills levels or from disadvantaged backgrounds. The government provides funding for adult education programs and offers financial incentives for employers to encourage employee training and skill development.

- The focus of adult education programs in Ireland is on promoting access to education and lifelong learning for all adults, with particular emphasis on supporting those from disadvantaged backgrounds and

with low skills levels. The aim is to provide opportunities for skills development, upskilling, and career progression, and to support social and economic inclusion. Adult education programs in Ireland cover a wide range of subjects and can be delivered through universities, vocational training centers, adult education centers, and community education centers. The government provides funding for adult education programs and offers financial incentives for employers to encourage employee training and skill development.

2. SERVICES of other's organizations in network /Adult training centers; NGO of cultural, economic, sports and other individual educational providers; Formal and Non-formal programs/

Lithuania has a strong network of adult learning opportunities, but there's room to improve accessibility through distance and

- e-learning,
- vocational training, and
- educational-cultural partnerships.

Public authorities prioritize non-formal adult education with grants, focusing on labour market needs and promoting lifelong learning.

Various entities, including education centers, universities, and NGOs, offer non-formal adult education, with some employers providing workplace learning.

The Employment Service, under the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, supports unemployed individuals with free services and funding for retraining.

Non-formal training is also available through formal education institutions and ministries.

However, regional differences in implementation result in disparities in vocational education and training availability between urban and rural areas.

Poland. The training services market in Poland is robust, valued at approximately PLN 4 billion and growing at an average of 5% per year. Despite a slight decline during the pandemic and uncertainties linked to the war in Ukraine, the market is gaining momentum again. This resurgence is driven by dynamic changes in training needs and preferences, along with new technical possibilities.

The market structure is diverse, with many small, one- or two-person companies competing or cooperating with larger players. These organizations often set standards for the local training market. The Polish Chamber of Training Companies (PIFS) is a key trade organization with nearly 400 members, promoting high-quality standards, supporting the development of trainers' and consultants' competences, and representing industry interests.

Despite intense competition, the training industry in Poland offers strong growth prospects, driven by evolving organizational development needs and individuals seeking suitable training, counselling, and mentoring opportunities.

The Lithuanian Society in Rogaland collaborates closely with partners in non-formal adult education, including Skolert AS, a Norwegian language school offering courses nationwide since its establishment in 2014. Skolert AS focuses on providing language courses tailored to adults speaking foreign languages across various industries, in collaboration with companies, public entities, and voluntary organizations. Approved by HKDir, many of their courses are publicly funded, making them free for participants.

Recognizing the importance of meaningful and useful learning experiences, Skolert AS emphasizes active participation and authenticity in their teaching approach. They work closely with businesses to create authentic communication scenarios integrating conversation, grammar, reading, writing, and problem-solving. Skolert educators prioritize relationship building and creating a conducive learning environment,

setting realistic goals for each participant and providing concrete assessments throughout the learning journey.

Skolert AS understands the significance of professional language in the workplace, especially for non-native Norwegian speakers. By focusing on both basic Norwegian and professional language skills, they aim to improve workplace communication effectively. Starting from participants' life situations ensures authentic and relevant learning experiences tailored to their needs. Skolert AS offers the following Norwegian language course programs:

- Norwegian course – traditional language;
- Professional Norwegian – industries language;
- Vocational training - practical candidate language;
- Leadership development - focus on the management of multicultural workplaces, but can also offer courses within the topics of behavior, communication, sales and marketing, relationships, problem solving and conflict management.

Ireland. SOLAS (Further Education and Training Authority). As the state agency overseeing further education and training in Ireland, SOLAS funds, plans, and coordinates a broad spectrum of courses and services for adults in collaboration with Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Operating locally, ETBs are instrumental in providing adult education programs, night classes, and community-based courses.

Higher Education Institutions. Universities and Institutes of Technology offer continuing education and professional development courses, often collaborating with other entities on joint programs and research projects.

Community Education Centers. These centers deliver educational services at the grassroots level, often partnering with local organizations and communities to address specific needs.

Employment Services and Organizations. Collaboration with employment services ensures alignment between adult education programs and job market demands, while networking with businesses and industry associations leads to relevant training opportunities.

Skillnet Ireland. This national agency supports skills development in Irish businesses, identifying needs and aiding in the creation of training programs through collaboration with industry groups.

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA). NALA assists adults with literacy challenges, integrating literacy support into various educational programs through collaboration with similar organizations.

European Social Fund (ESF) and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). These funds provide financial support for education, training, and employment projects, fostering collaboration among organizations to access funding and implement initiatives.

Networking Events and Conference. Participation in educational conferences, workshops, and networking events facilitates collaboration among stakeholders on a national and international level.

Online Platforms and Resources. Utilizing online platforms allows organizations to share educational content and collaborate on virtual projects, promoting cohesion and effectiveness in the adult education ecosystem.

Collaboration and networking among these organizations contribute to a diverse, accessible, and responsive adult education landscape in Ireland, meeting the evolving needs of adult learners.

3.MOST POPULAR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN LABOUR MARKET IN LITHUANIA, POLAND, NORWAY AND IRELAND (Non-formal programs)

In Lithuania from 2024 were interested of proposal in the website of the adult education platform www.Kursuok.lt was visited by 71 thousand people.

There are currently 66 training programs for adults to choose from on the platform.

The most popular courses on the platform are:

- Project management,
- English,
- Public speaking,
- Accounting.

This is the first platform in Lithuania where you can choose the training you want and receive 500 euros in financing - it is intended for five years. The platform is also open to all training providers. All working residents of Lithuania between the ages of 18 and 65 who have a higher or professional education can apply for state support. Those who wish to pay for the training can also use their personal funds.

In Poland education and training services are provided by various entities, including private companies, universities, and other institutions. Co-financed training can be obtained by selecting a registered training company from the Development Services Database (Baza Usług Rozwojowych), a public platform managed by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development. This database offers a wide range of training and counseling services with European co-financing, enabling individuals to continue their education, acquire knowledge, and enhance their competences and qualifications. With over 670,000 beneficiaries to date, the Development Services Database is the largest training platform in the country, with approximately 15,000 people opting for training courses, workshops, vocational courses, counseling, postgraduate studies, and mentoring every month.

For companies interested in providing training, registration in the provincial labor office's register of training institutions is necessary to offer services financed from public funds. This register is publicly accessible online.

Training and courses are increasingly popular, especially for those entering the labor market, as they enhance employability and competitiveness. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote learning methods, with online training gaining popularity alongside traditional classroom-based formats. The training market offers a diverse range of courses covering various topics, catering to different preferences. According to the Labour Market Monitor report, younger respondents show a strong interest in training, with those under 30 preferring online formats, while those over 50 favor stationary training.

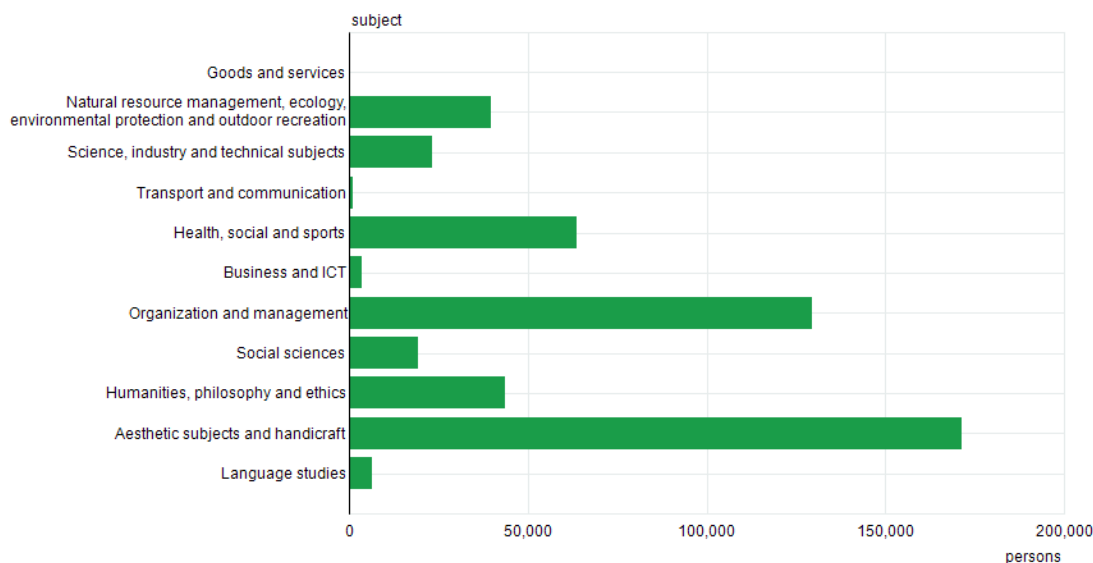
Here are the most popular courses in Poland in 2023:

- 1. Data Science:** Courses cover data analysis, machine learning, and artificial intelligence using tools like Python, R, or TensorFlow.
- 2. IT Security:** With increasing cyber threats, courses focus on risk management, security auditing, and penetration testing.
- 3. Design Thinking:** These courses teach an innovative approach to problem-solving based on empathy and creativity.
- 4. Personal Finance:** Learn budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management for financial literacy.
- 5. Soft Skills:** Essential for professional success, courses cover communication, time management, and negotiation.
- 6. Online Logistics Course:** Offers flexibility to learn logistics knowledge and skills conveniently.
- 7. Electrician Online Course:** Covers electrical engineering, electronics, automation, and safety.
- 8. Public Administration:** Includes administrative law, organization, management, and public finance topics.
- 9. Online Physiotherapy Course:** Covers physiotherapy methods, anatomy, physiology, diagnosis, and therapy.

10. Team Management Course: Develop skills in team dynamics, communication, leadership, and conflict resolution.

According to **Norwegian statistic** “Popular education organizations by subject, 2022” shows extremely big number of participants attracted in category “Aesthetical subjects and handicraft”. Many courses in this category are about song, music, folk culture, and handicrafts.

07441: Popular education organisations. Participants, by subject. All popular education organisations, Both sexes, Years, total, Participants, Total, 2022.



Source: Statistics Norway

Category’s course “handicrafts” shortly

The Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association’s goal is to keep handicrafts alive as a culture and industry in Norway. In 2014 they were accredited by UNESCO as an expert organization within traditional crafts, and they were very proud of the work all their members do to preserve intangible cultural heritage!

Have classes in Bunad (national costume) construction, forging, weaving, wood- turning and much more, and most of the classes take place under the direction of local divisions, which together have over 23,000 members. Counties and local authorities account for 65,000 study hours in crafts annually, organized through the Association for Studies of Culture and Traditions.



Fine ladies in Vestfold 1956-bunad from Vest-Agder with pleated apron. Photo: Anne Marte Før

The national costume of Norway is known as the "Bunad". The Bunad is a traditional and festive outfit that represents Norwegian cultural heritage and regional diversity. It is worn on special occasions such as weddings, confirmations, and national holidays.

The Bunad is a source of pride for many Norwegians, and wearing it is a way to celebrate and honor their cultural roots. The intricate craftsmanship and attention to detail in each outfit make the Bunad a symbol of Norwegian tradition and identity.

Facts:

- Annually around 65.000 course hours

- A total of 15,000 course participants annually
- 2,600 different classes have been offered in recent years
- Among these classes the bunad course was the largest, with over 1,000 participants

Embroidered tales on fabric unfold, A symphony of colors, stories untold. Bunad, the costume of Norway's heart, in each stitch, a cultural work of art.

In Ireland, adult educational services are diverse, including formal and non-formal programs. Key services in the labor market include:

- **Adult Training Centers:** Offering vocational and skills-based training with input from employers.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Providing training across various domains like culture, economics, and sports.
- **Cultural Organizations:** Offering language courses, arts workshops, and cultural competency training.
- **Economic Organizations:** Providing training in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and business skills.
- **Sports Organizations:** Offering coaching certifications, sports management courses, and fitness training.
- **Individual Educational Providers:** Offering specialized skills training like coding bootcamps and language schools.
- **Formal Educational Institutions:** Providing evening classes, workshops, and short courses for upskilling.
- **Skillnet Ireland and Industry-Specific Networks:** Facilitating collaboration between businesses and training providers.
- **Employment Services:** Collaborating with training providers to address employer demands.
- **Online Learning Platforms:** Offering flexible, self-paced learning options.
- **Job Seeker Support Centers:** Providing workshops on resume writing, interview skills, and job search strategies.
- **Partnerships and networking** among these organizations create a comprehensive adult education network, ensuring relevance and accessibility to meet labor market demands effectively.

4. DEFINITION. IMPORTANCE AND EXAMPLES OF SOFT SKILLS.

Soft skills are essential attributes that enable employees to work effectively both independently and as part of a team, fostering positive outcomes and solutions. They influence how individuals interact with others, facilitating relationship-building, trust, and teamwork. Soft skills encompass various qualities such as longevity, teamwork, relationship maintenance, organizational skills, confidence, growth facilitation, and reputation establishment. They are indispensable for success in the workplace, contributing to both individual and company achievements.

Soft skills play a crucial role in employment, aiding individuals in securing jobs and contributing positively to team dynamics. They are utilized daily at work and are pivotal for winning business and advancing career trajectories. Conversely, a lack of soft skills can hinder personal growth and business success. Developing strong leadership, delegation, teamwork, and communication abilities can lead to smoother project execution, satisfactory results, and improved interpersonal interactions, benefiting both professional and personal life.

The World Economic Forum's "Future of Jobs Report" highlights the increasing importance of soft skills in the workplace, with complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, and emotional intelligence being among the most sought-after skills by 2025.

The project DEPS-Skills is directed to soft skills of labour market and culture identity like below:

1. Emotional intelligence - is the ability to perceive, interpret, demonstrate, control, evaluate, and use emotions to communicate with and relate to others effectively and constructively. This ability to express and control [emotions](#) is essential, but so is the ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others. Some experts suggest that emotional intelligence is [more important than IQ](#) for success in life.

2. Negotiations and Entrepreneurial skills. “**Negotiation** is a conversation whose goal is to reach an agreement with someone whose interests are not perfectly aligned with yours.”
<https://www.mightycall.com/blog/business-soft-skills-successful-entrepreneurs/#Negotiation>

Entrepreneurial skills can encompass a broad range of various skill sets like technical skills, leadership and business management skills and creative thinking. Because entrepreneurial skills can be applied to many different job roles and industries, developing your entrepreneurial skills can mean developing several types of skill sets.

3. Communication skills are abilities that allow you to give and receive different types of information. Some examples include communicating ideas, feelings or what's happening around you. Being able to communicate with those around you is important because it can help you work together as a team or relay ideas that you might have to a broader group.

<https://ca.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/communication-skills>

4. Professional ethics. Professional ethics refers to the ethical principles and standards that govern the behavior and decisions of professionals in their specific fields. These principles and standards are established to ensure that professionals act with integrity, honesty, and accountability while providing services to their clients, customers, or stakeholders.

Professional ethics cover a wide range of professions, including medicine, law, engineering, accounting, teaching, and others. Each profession has its own set of ethical standards that are designed to guide the behavior of its members.

<https://edukedar.com/what-is-professional-ethics/#gsc.tab=0>

5. Career management. Career management is the process of taking an active role in planning the future of your career through structured plans and short-term and [long-term goals](#). Career management includes achieving desired positions and rewards like improved financial compensation or better benefits. It can also include being hired at a company or organization you particularly admire. You can document these strategies and goals for future reference and evaluate them regularly to ensure they still meet your needs. You can detail your goals on a computer, write them down on paper or purchase a planner made for planning goals.

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/career-managment>

6. Time management. Time management is the process of consciously planning and controlling time spent on specific tasks to increase how efficient you are. You may be familiar with setting deadlines, writing to-do lists, and giving yourself small rewards for accomplishing certain activities.

<https://www.coursera.org/articles/time-management>

7. Digital literacy. Digital literacy is the ability to use technology to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information safely and responsibly. The concept, which applies to individuals, societies, and economic groups, encompasses skill sets that may also be referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, data literacy, or data fluency.

<https://www.techopedia.com/definition/digital-literacy-digital-fluency>

8. Critical thinking. Critical thinking is the ability to effectively analyze information and form a judgment. To think critically, you must be aware of your own biases and assumptions when encountering information, and apply consistent standards when evaluating sources.

<https://www.scribbr.com/working-with-sources/critical-thinking/>

<https://iep.utm.edu/critical-thinking/>

9. Creative problem solving. Creative problem-solving is a way of moving beyond predictable and obvious [solutions to problems](#). When we have a creative approach to problem-solving, we expand our

thinking out from what we already know about a problem, and from solutions that we have used in the past, to generate innovative and effective solutions.

Problem-solving skills are vital for understanding and resolving issues creatively and analytically.

<https://www.learning-mind.com/creative-problem-solving/>

10. Cultural Intelligence and Teamwork. Cultural intelligence is the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures. It goes beyond mere awareness of practices, languages, and customs. Instead, it involves actively understanding and appreciating cultural differences and adapting your behavior and attitude accordingly¹.

Cultural intelligence, or cultural quotient (CQ), is the ability to relate to others and interact effectively across cultures. Since large companies often operate on a global scale, employees adapt to the respective cultures of their peers.

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/cultural-intelligence>

People management skills, including empathy, communication, active listening, and organizational aptitude, are crucial for effective leadership and team collaboration. Emotional intelligence, encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, enhances understanding and management of emotions, fostering positive interpersonal interactions and conflict resolution.

In summary, **soft skills are fundamental for success in both professional and personal life**, fostering effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. They are indispensable assets for navigating today's dynamic workplace landscape, driving individual and organizational growth, and fostering positive relationships and environments.

IV. SURVEY RESULTS

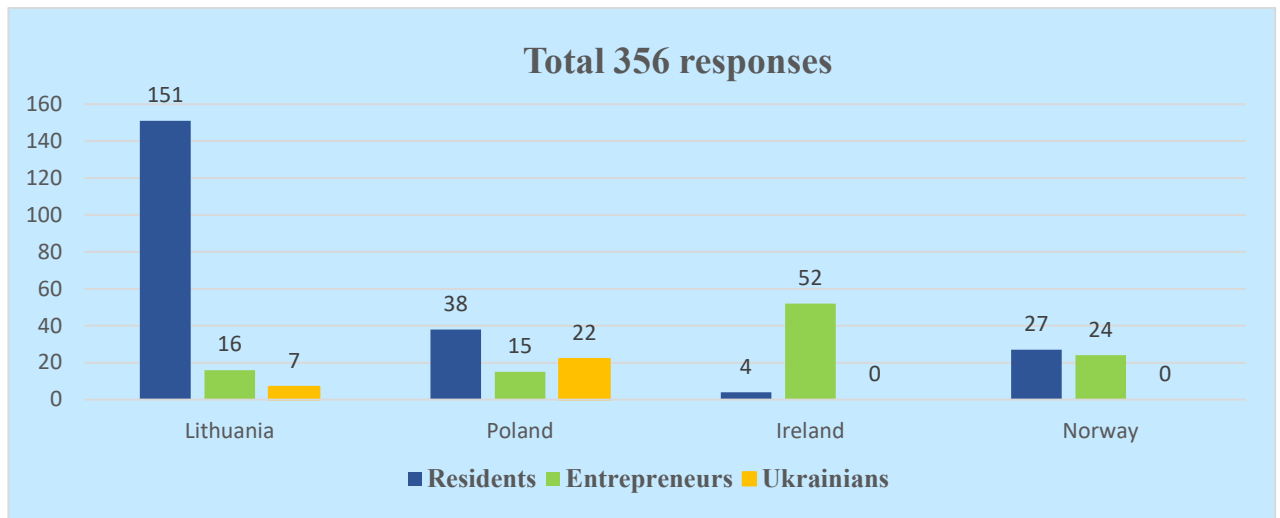
In an increasingly globalized and culturally diverse labor market, the Erasmus+ project "**Digital Educational Platform for Soft Skills and Culture of Labor Market**" (DEPS-Skills) delves into the intricate relationship between cultural identity and soft skills across Lithuania, Ireland, Poland and Norway. This project explores how cultural identity influences essential soft skills, particularly in the integration of diverse groups into evolving employment landscapes.

Led by Alytus Business Advisory Centre and in collaboration with partners such as ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences (LT), the project conducted a comprehensive survey over four months across the four countries. The survey, available in Lithuanian, Polish and English, targeted various demographics, including employed and unemployed adults, migrants, refugees, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

Focused on ten core soft skill areas, the survey provided insights into competencies crucial for effective integration into the labor market. It covered topics such as professional ethics, career management, negotiation skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence. The findings aim to inform the development of specialized online training courses to enhance these essential soft skills and facilitate smoother integration into diverse work cultures.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The survey was conducted anonymously leveraging Google Forms as the platform of choice with a result of participation from a total of 356 respondents, comprising 107 entrepreneurs and 249 residents, including Ukrainians. This allowed wider participation while maintaining respondent confidentiality.



As depicted in the chart,

- Irish entrepreneurs showed the highest level of interest in the survey, with 52 responses, accounting for 48.60% of the total feedback.

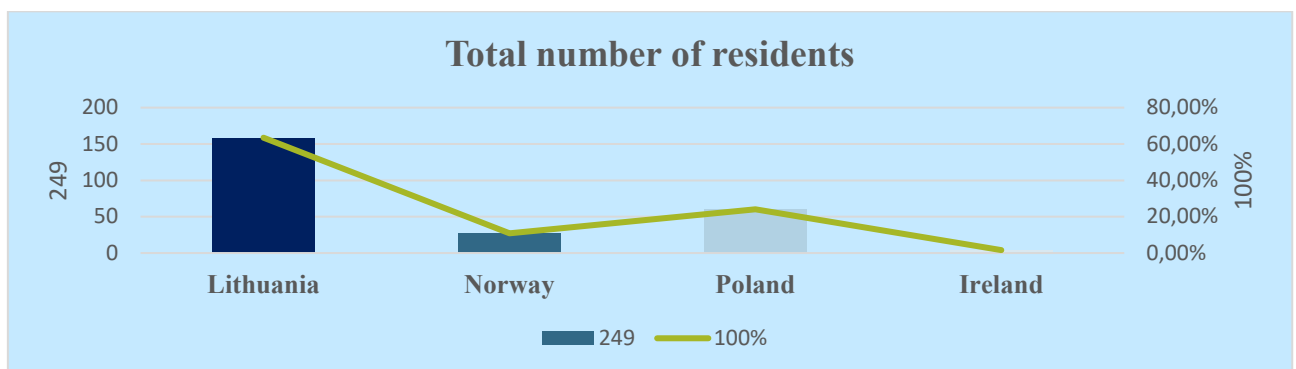
- In contrast, entrepreneurs from Lithuania and Poland had lower participation rates, contributing 16 (14.95%) and 15 (14.02%) responses, respectively.

- Norway fell in the middle, with a total of 24 responses, representing 22.43% of the feedback.

Ireland's Engagement: Irish entrepreneurs demonstrated the highest level of interest in the survey, likely due to the country's strong entrepreneurial culture and supportive environment for startups and business ventures. The rapidly evolving economy, particularly in technology and innovation sectors, places a high value on power skills like communication and problem-solving.

Lithuania and Poland: In contrast, entrepreneurs from Lithuania and Poland showed lower participation rates. This could be attributed to different economic contexts and business priorities. Entrepreneurs in these countries, often managing smaller businesses with limited resources, prioritize operational tasks over survey participation. Additionally, cultural values such as privacy and data sharing may influence reluctance to share opinions on business needs and labor qualifications.

Norway's Perspective: Norway, characterized by a well-established foundation of soft skills ingrained in its corporate culture, may exhibit less interest in surveys exploring this area. This is because soft skills are already significantly incorporated into organizational practices.



Lithuanian Engagement: The Lithuanian resident responses stand out with a robust 151 entries, showcasing a high level of community engagement.

Overall Participation: The data chart represents diverse participation of 249 residents across 4 nations, with varying numbers from each country. Notably, there are 29 Ukrainians, out of whom 7 are from Lithuania, 22 from Poland, 27 Norwegians, and 4 Irish individuals.

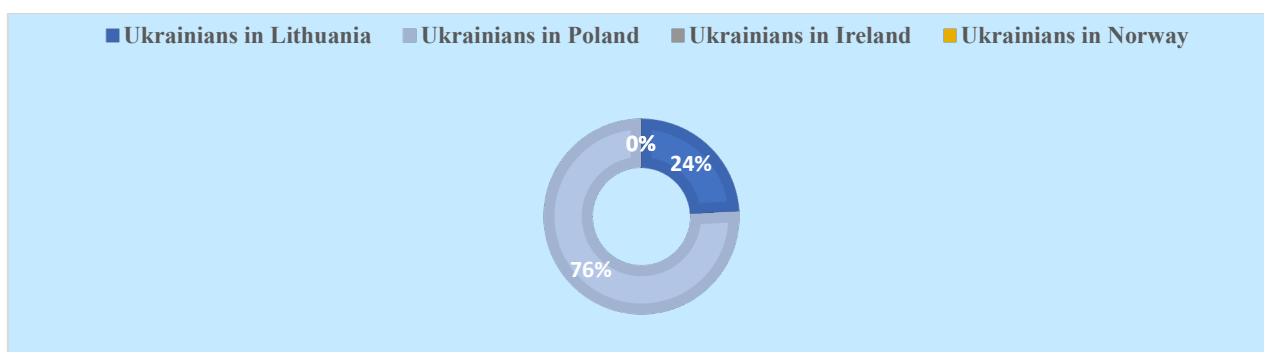
Contribution to Analysis: Each group, including 27 residents from Norway and 38 from Poland, adds valuable depth to the analysis. Despite the modest contribution from Ireland with only 4 individuals, their input remains crucial to the diversity of the response pool.

Rich Perspective: This resident dataset, combined with the 107 responses from entrepreneurs, offers a rich, multi-dimensional perspective essential for a deep understanding of the survey's thematic scope.

Exceptional Ukrainian Participation: Ukrainians residing in Poland and Lithuania have shown exceptional participation, likely influenced by the close geographical proximity of these countries. Poland and Lithuania served as primary destinations for many Ukrainians fleeing ongoing conflict.

Poland's Response: According to Eurostat data, Poland granted temporary protection to the highest number of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, with approximately 968,390 individuals displaced there as of September 3, 2023.

Lithuania's Impact: Lithuania has also experienced an increase in its population due to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Close to 49,970 refugees reside in the country, comprising about 1.785% of Lithuania's total population. This percentage reflects a significant impact, underscoring Lithuania's welcoming stance towards Ukrainian refugees amidst the crisis.



Active Ukrainian Participation: The active participation of Ukrainians in Lithuania and Poland in the survey reflects their eagerness to assimilate into local societies and labour markets, likely driven by their awareness of the importance of cultivating soft skills for integration.

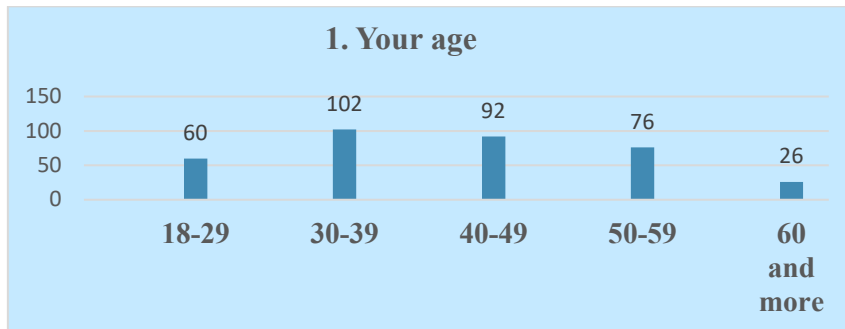
Cultural Bonds and Receptiveness: Historical and cultural bonds between countries may foster a sense of belonging for Ukrainians, contributing to their receptiveness. Additionally, the linguistic landscape in Poland and Lithuania may be more accommodating for Ukrainian residents compared to English-dominated environments like Ireland and Norway.

Value for DEPS-Skills Project: The survey results offer valuable insights for the DEPS-Skills project, guiding the development of tailored training programs to enhance specific soft skills necessary for smoother integration into diverse labour markets.

Identification of Emphasis Areas: By analyzing opinions on key soft skills such as communication, professional ethics, time management, career management, and digital literacy, project partners can identify areas of emphasis to effectively nurture these skills in individuals from diverse backgrounds during their integration journeys into labour markets.

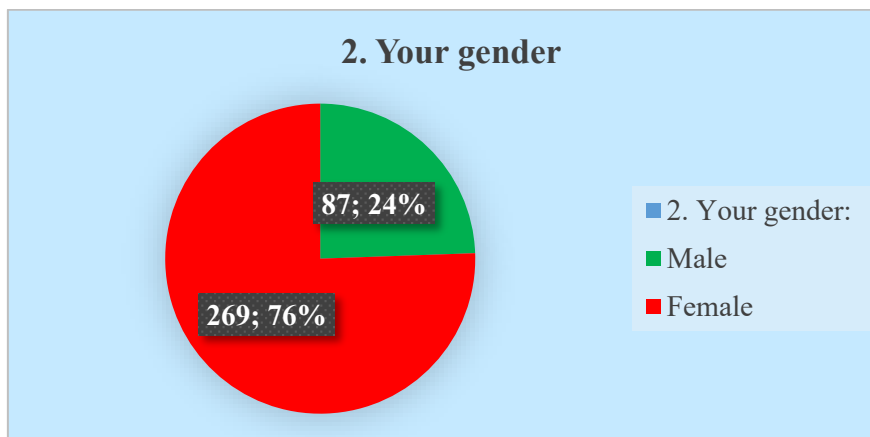
Below You can see Respondents by age group. More than 54.5% of the respondents were in two age groups, i.e. 30-39 years old - 28.65% and 40-49 years old - 25.84%.

1.1 Respondents age



1.2 Respondents gender

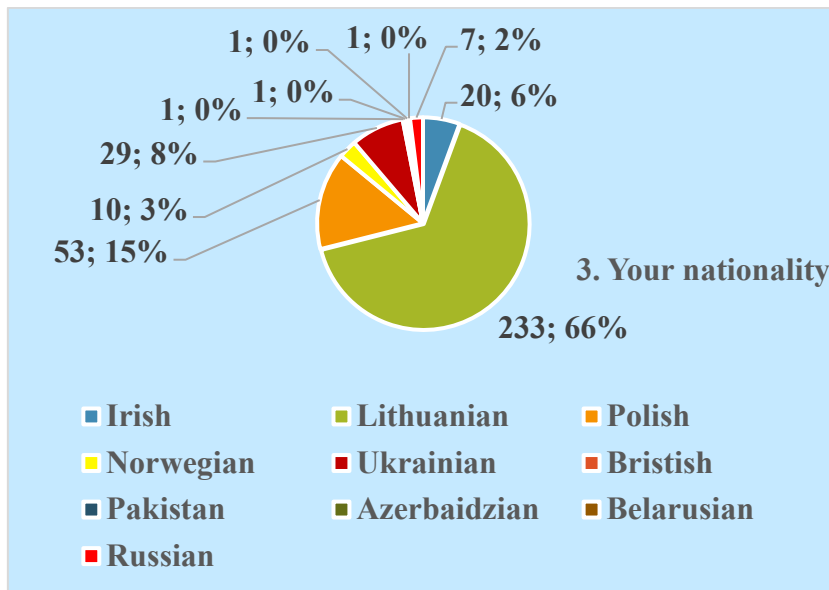
Respondents by gender: Male - 87,24 % and Female -76%.



1.3 Respondents nationality

Respondents by nationality here participated 10 national groups of respondents.

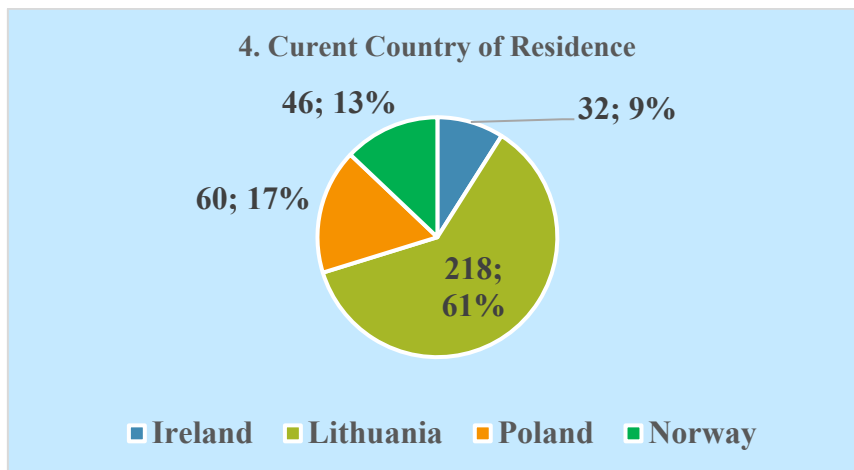
- The largest group is Lithuanians - 233 resp. i.e. 66 %;
- Polish - 53 resp. i.e.15 %;
- Norwegians -10 resp. i.e. 3 %;
- Irish -20 resp. i.e. 6 %;
- Ukrainians - 29 resp. i.e. 8 %.



1.4 Respondents current country of residence

Currently residing in Lithuania - 218 respondents, i.e. - 61 % of all respondents.

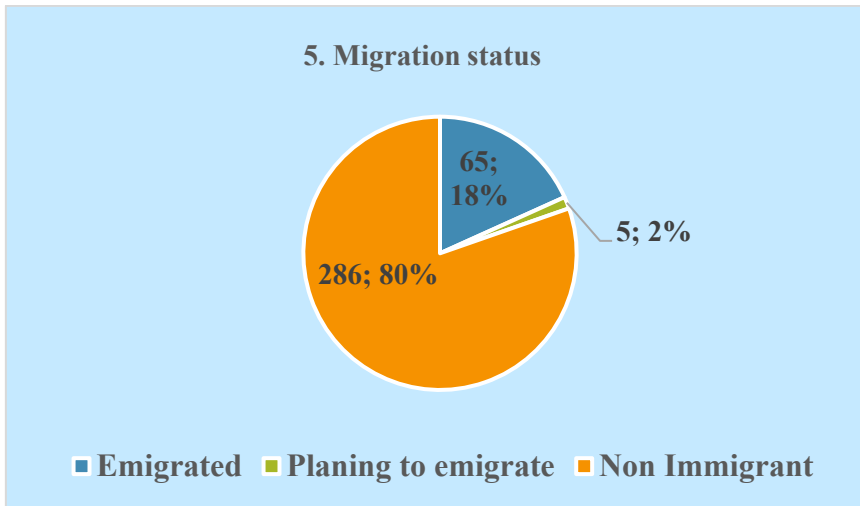
- In Poland - 6 resp. i.e. -17 %;
- In Norway – 46 resp. i.e. – 13 %;
- In Ireland - 32 resp. i.e. - 9 %. Look below.



1.5 Respondents migration status

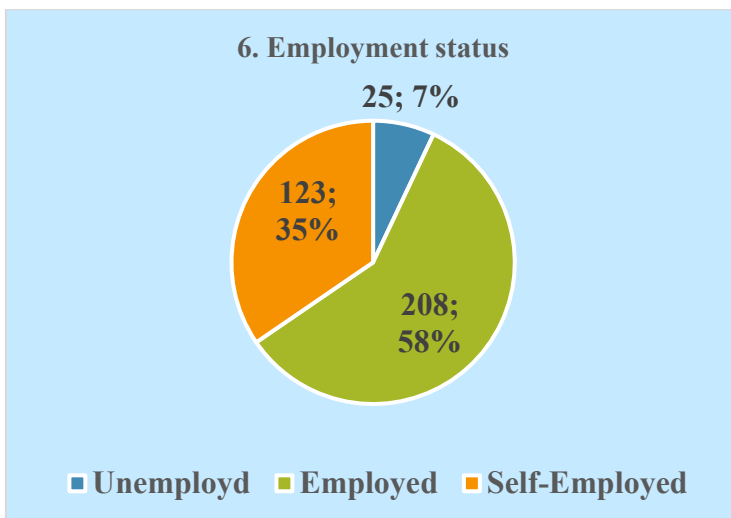
By Migration status here participated 286 resp. i.e. 80 % respondents - Non migrated.

65 respondents i.e. 18 %, who emigrated from their country and only 2 % i.e. 5 respondents planning to migrate. Look below.



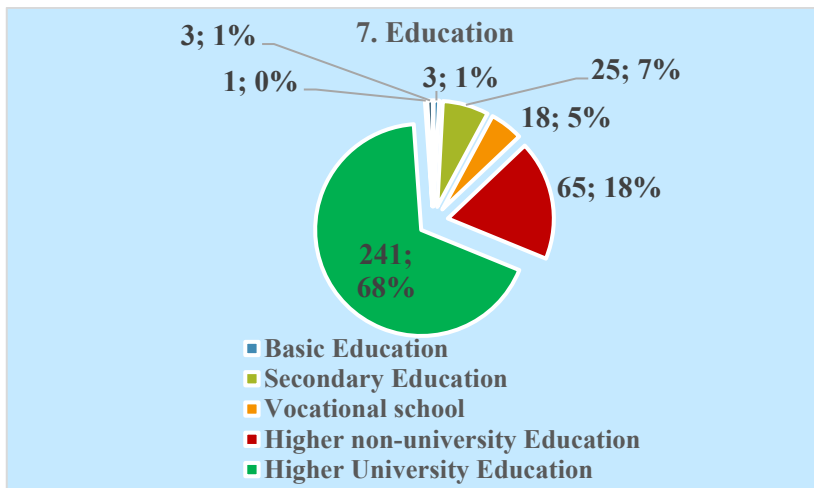
1.6 Respondents employment status

By employment status - 208 respondents i.e. 58 % are employed and 123 respondents i.e. 35 % have the business. Only 25 of respondents i.e. 7 % - unemployed.



1.7 Respondents education

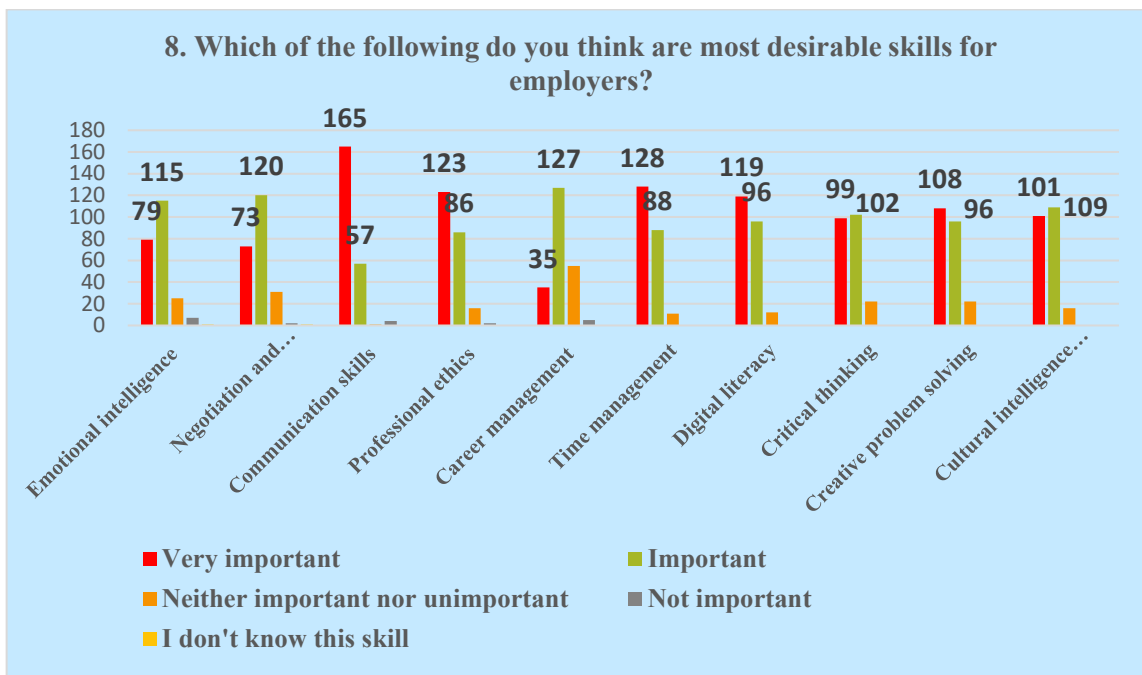
By education – most of them have Higher University education – 241 resp. i.e.68 % and 65 resp. with Higher non-university Education i.e.18 %. Total 86 % is with good competency by education.



2. MY VIEWS AND UNDERSTANDING OF SOFT SKILLS

2.1 Which of the following do you think are the most desirable skills for employers? Employers often seek candidates with a diverse set of skills that are not only job-specific but also transferable across various roles and industries. Some of the most desirable skills for employers include:

Communication Skills -165 resp. answered - is very important. The ability to convey information clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing, is highly valued in almost every workplace. Strong communication skills facilitate collaboration, client interactions, and team cohesion.



Time Management – 128 resp. said that is very important. Employers appreciate individuals who can manage their time effectively, prioritize tasks, and meet deadlines consistently. Strong organizational skills contribute to productivity, efficiency, and overall success in the workplace.

Professional ethics – 123 resp. said as a soft skill is crucial for entrepreneurs as it underpins their reputation, credibility, and long-term success in the business world.

Digital literacy – 119 resp. - is a critical skill for entrepreneurs in today's technology-driven business landscape. Continuous Learning and Adaptation in the market place requires continuous learning and adaptation to stay relevant in a rapidly changing digital landscape. Entrepreneurs who invest in ongoing digital skills development, training programs, and professional certifications can future-proof their businesses and capitalize on emerging opportunities in the digital economy.

Creative problem-solving Skills – 108 resp. Employers value individuals who can identify challenges, analyze them critically, and develop creative solutions. The skill demonstrates resourcefulness, adaptability, and the ability to think strategically.

Cultural intelligence –101 resp. Cultural intelligence, or CQ, is crucial for entrepreneurs in diverse environments. Here's why: Global Opportunities; Building Trust; Effective Communication; Negotiation and Conflict Resolution; Cultural Sensitivity in Marketing; Adaptation and Innovation; Respect for Diversity; Cross-Cultural Leadership. Cultural intelligence empowers entrepreneurs to thrive in a globalized world, seizing opportunities and building sustainable businesses across diverse cultural landscapes.

Critical Thinking - 99 resp. Critical thinking involves evaluating information, analyzing situations, and making informed decisions based on evidence and logic. Employees who possess strong critical thinking skills can assess complex problems, weigh alternatives, and arrive at sound conclusions.

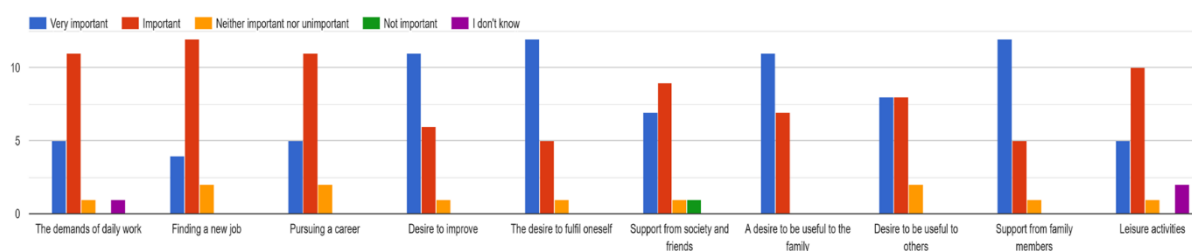
Emotional Intelligence – 79 resp. Emotional intelligence encompasses self-awareness, empathy, and social skills, which are increasingly valued by employers. Individuals with high emotional intelligence can navigate interpersonal relationships, manage conflicts, and collaborate effectively with others.

So, employers appreciate candidates who demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning and professional development. A willingness to acquire new skills, pursue further education, and stay updated on industry trends signals an individual's drive for personal and professional growth.

Overall, a combination of soft skills (such as **communication, problem-solving, and adaptability**) and technical skills, complemented by qualities like leadership, emotional intelligence, and a growth mindset, makes candidates highly desirable to employers across various sectors.

1. The development of soft skills is stimulated by a variety of environmental factors. Please rate how important the following factors are to you in developing soft skills?

9. The development of soft skills is stimulated by a variety of environmental factors. Please rate how important the following factors are to you in developing soft skills? (Please tick the most appropriate option for each factor)



A rating scale for the factors that contribute to the development of soft skills:

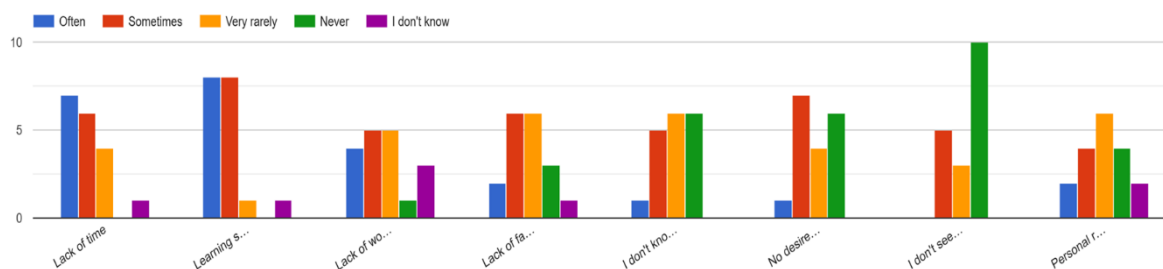
1. The desire to fulfil oneself;
2. Support from family;
3. A desire to be useful to the family.

Work Environment – must be demand of daily work. **Training and Development Programs with Feedback and Coaching.** **Personal Initiative** and **Cultural Exposure** here is important too.

2. How often do you find the following barriers to soft skills training?

Assessing the frequency of encountering barriers to soft skills training:

10. How often do you find the following barriers to soft skills training? (Please tick the most appropriate option for each barrier).



- 1) Too expensive learning;
- 2) Lack of Time;
- 3) Lack of Organizational Support

3. ABOUT SOFT SKILLS

10.1 Which of the following negotiation and entrepreneurial skills would you like to develop if possible?

Respondents /employees/ consider the following to be the most important:

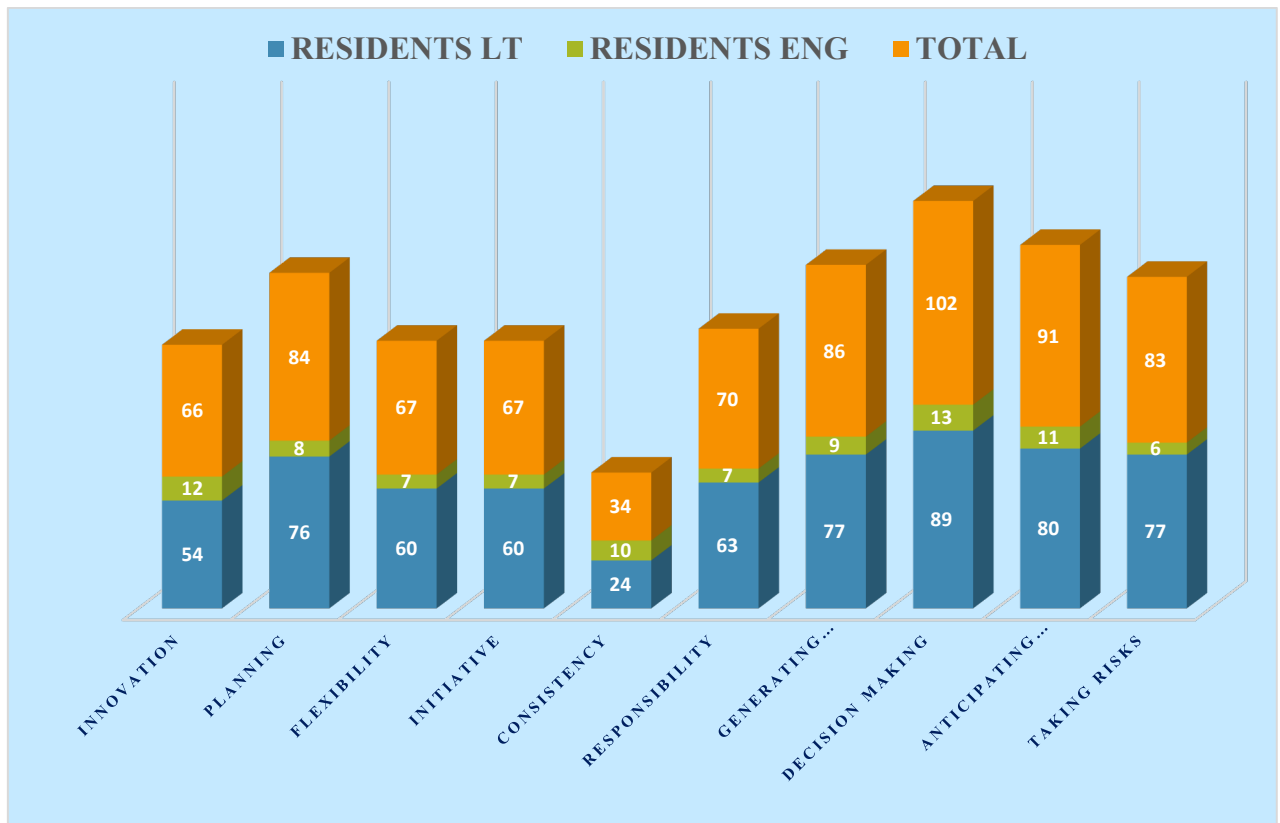
1. Decision-making skill are very important in both negotiation and entrepreneurship, as they are the most frequently used skills in these areas:

- **In negotiation, decision-making** involves evaluating options, weighing trade-offs, and choosing the best course of action to achieve the desired outcome. Effective decision-making skills enable negotiators to evaluate alternatives, anticipate consequences and make sound decisions that maximize value for all parties involved. Whether it is deciding on price, terms and conditions, concessions, or strategic steps in the negotiation process, strong decision-making skills are essential for reaching favorable agreements.

- **Decision-making** is at the heart of entrepreneurial development, as entrepreneurs are constantly making decisions that affect the direction and success of their businesses. From identifying market opportunities and choosing business models to allocating resources and managing risk, entrepreneurs must make decisions at every stage of their activities. Effective decision-making skills enable entrepreneurs to assess risks, prioritize tasks, allocate resources wisely and change direction when necessary to adapt to changing market conditions or unforeseen challenges. By making the right decisions, entrepreneurs can innovate, grow and be sustainable.

In both negotiation and entrepreneurship, honing decision-making skills involves factors such as gathering relevant information, analyzing data, considering multiple perspectives, assessing risks, and being decisive in acting. Continuously developing and refining decision-making abilities can enhance effectiveness and contribute to success in navigating complex situations and achieving desired outcomes.

See below of Respondents /employees/ opinions on which skills they would like to improve:

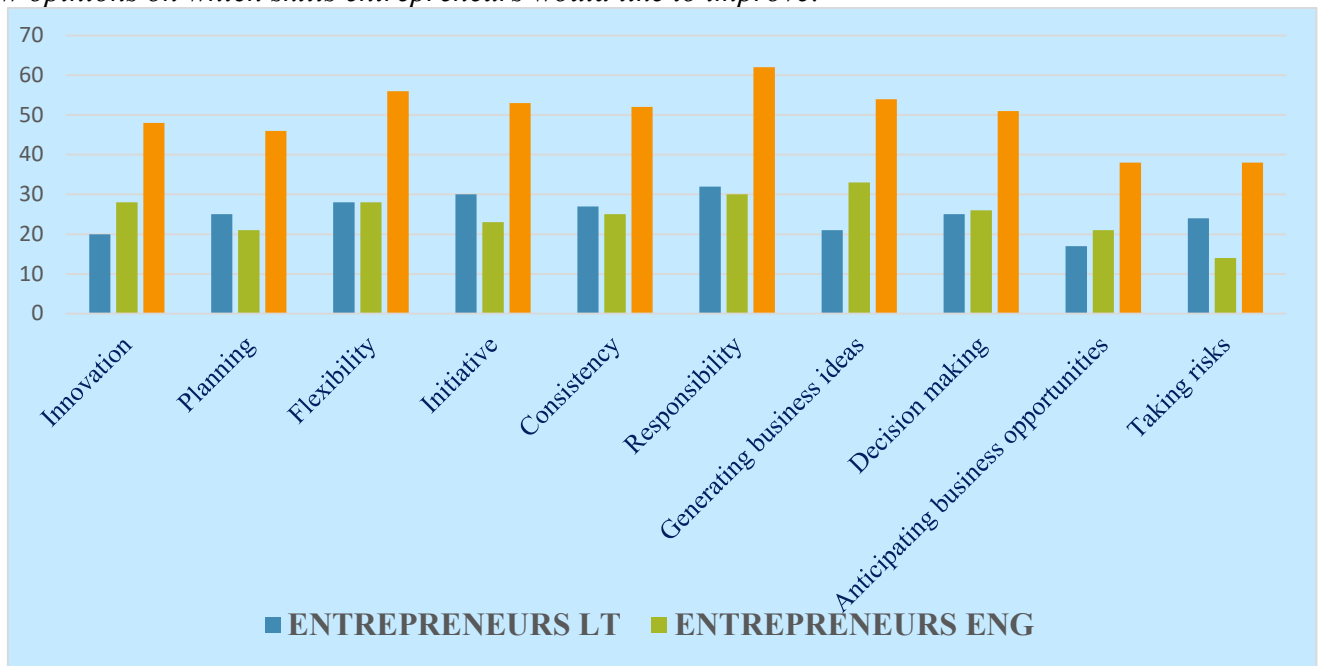


Skill No 1 - Decision making: 102 resp.

Skill No 2 - Anticipating business opportunities: 91 resp.

Skill No 3 - Generating business ideas: 86 resp., others - Planning - 84 resp., Risk-taking - 83 resp. and Responsibility skills only in 6th place - 70 resp.

Bellow opinions on which skills entrepreneurs would like to improve:



1. Responsibility is a fundamental skill in both negotiation and entrepreneurship:

- In negotiation, taking responsibility involves owning one's actions, words, and commitments throughout the negotiation process. Responsible negotiators uphold ethical standards, honor agreements, and follow through on promises made during discussions. They demonstrate accountability for their decisions and actions, ensuring that they act in good faith and with integrity. By taking responsibility for their role in negotiations, individuals contribute to building trust, fostering positive relationships, and achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.

- In entrepreneurship, responsibility encompasses various aspects, including accountability for business decisions, financial management, customer satisfaction, and ethical conduct. Entrepreneurs bear the responsibility for the success or failure of their ventures and must make decisions that align with their vision, values, and goals. They take ownership of their actions, learn from mistakes, and adapt to challenges in pursuit of their entrepreneurial objectives. Responsible entrepreneurship involves considering the impact of business activities on stakeholders, communities, and the environment, and taking proactive measures to minimize negative consequences while maximizing positive outcomes.

In both negotiation and entrepreneurship, responsibility involves a commitment to ethical behavior, professionalism, and integrity. Responsible individuals prioritize honesty, transparency, and fairness in their interactions with others, striving to uphold standards of conduct that contribute to trust, credibility, and sustainability in their endeavors. By embracing responsibility, negotiators and entrepreneurs demonstrate their dedication to making ethical choices, fulfilling obligations, and contributing positively to their respective fields.

2. Flexibility or adaptability, is crucial in a fast-paced and ever-changing business environment. Employees who can quickly adjust their strategies and approaches in response to new information or shifts in the market are highly valuable. Flexibility allows employees to navigate uncertainties and pivot when necessary, ensuring that the business remains resilient and responsive to changing circumstances.

3. Generating of Business Ideas. The ability to generate innovative and viable business ideas is a key entrepreneurial skill. Employees who can think creatively and propose new products, services, or process improvements contribute significantly to the company's growth and competitive edge. This skill involves not only coming up with ideas but also evaluating their feasibility and potential impact, which can lead to the development of new revenue streams and market opportunities.

To the question "**Which of the negotiation and entrepreneurial skills would you most like to give your employees?**" The answers:

RESPONSIBILITY	62
FLEXIBILITY	56
GENERATING BUSINESS IDEAS	54

10.2. Which of the following Emotional intelligence skills would you like to develop if possible?

Emotional intelligence skills listed below:

Self-awareness: involves recognizing and understanding your own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations. It allows you to accurately assess your feelings and reactions to various situations, enabling better self-regulation and decision-making.

Self-regulation: refers to the ability to manage and control your emotions, impulses, and behaviors, particularly in challenging or stressful situations. It involves staying calm under pressure, resisting impulses, and maintaining emotional stability to make reasoned decisions.

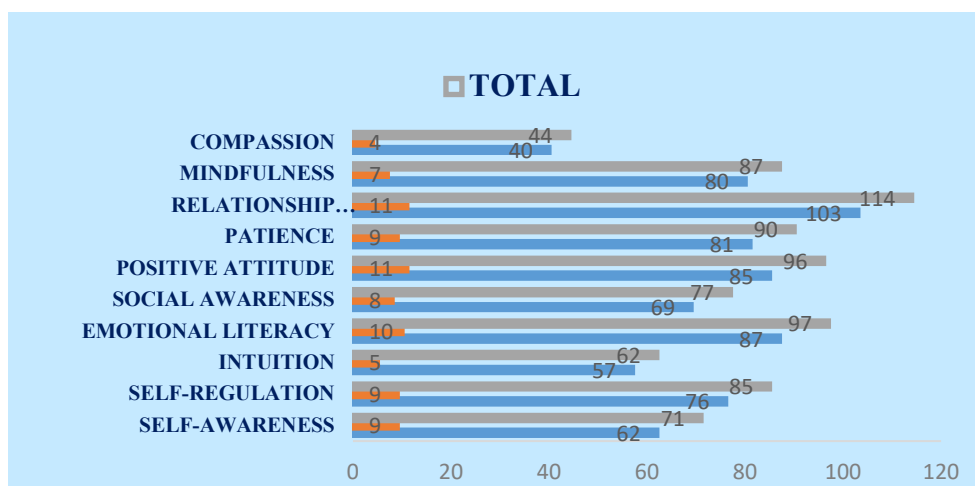
Empathy: is the capacity to understand and share the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of others. Developing empathy enables you to connect with people on a deeper level, build rapport, and demonstrate genuine concern and understanding for their emotions and needs.

Social skills: involve effectively navigating social interactions, building and maintaining relationships, and communicating with others in a constructive and positive manner. Enhancing social skills enables you to collaborate, negotiate, and influence others successfully, fostering teamwork and cooperation.

Motivation: encompasses the drive and persistence to pursue goals with energy and enthusiasm, even in the face of challenges or setbacks. Developing motivation involves setting meaningful goals, staying focused, and maintaining a positive attitude and resilience in the pursuit of personal and professional aspirations.

Each of these **emotional intelligence** skills plays a vital role in personal and professional success, and further development in any of them can enhance your effectiveness in various aspects of life. Identifying which skill(s) you'd like to prioritize for development can depend on your specific goals, challenges, and areas for growth.

In summary, **emotional intelligence skills** are foundational for cultivating healthy, fulfilling, and lasting **relationships**. By developing self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation, individuals can create deep connections based on understanding, trust, and mutual respect, enriching their personal and romantic lives.



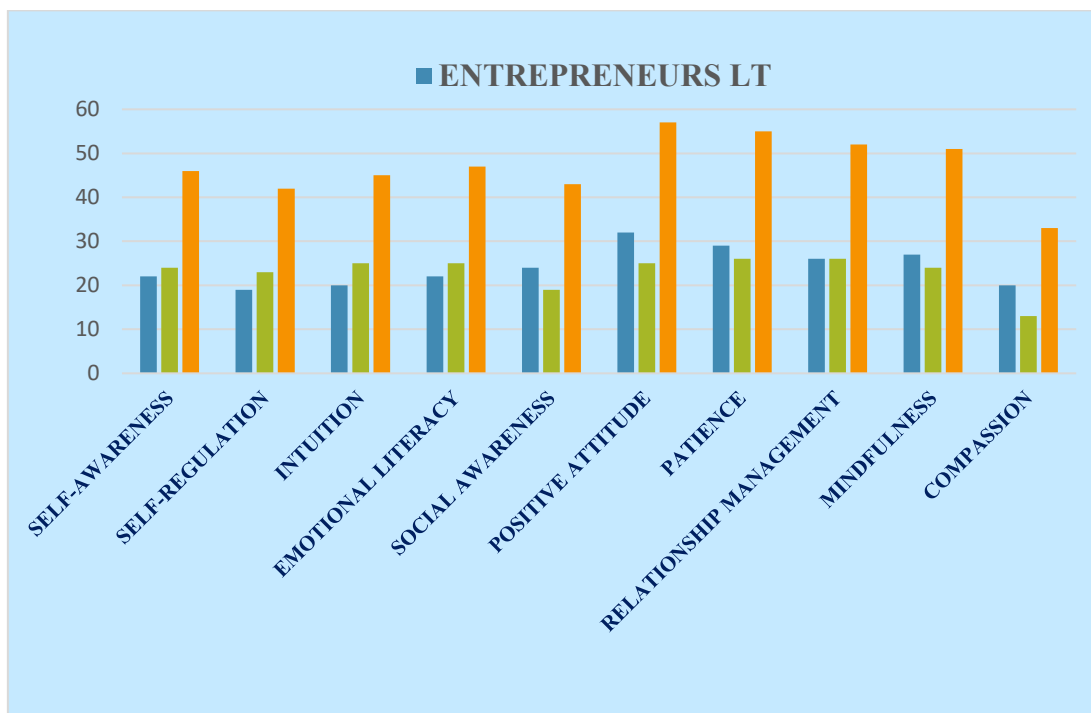
Residents/employees would like to improve their emotional intelligence skills:

1. Relationship management - 114 resp.
2. Emotional Literacy - 97 resp.
3. Positive attitude - 96 resp.

Emotional Intelligence skills would like to improve in Entrepreneurs:

1. Positive attitude - 57 resp. **From third to first place in relation to employee attitudes.*
2. Patience - 55 resp.
3. Relationship management - 52 resp. **From first to third place in relation to employees.*

Entrepreneurs votes:



1. Positive attitude is a powerful asset in relationships, contributing to their success and longevity in several ways:

2. Patience is a crucial soft skill for entrepreneurship, playing a significant role in the success and sustainability of a business. Here is important for •Strategic Growth: Building a successful business often takes time. Patience allows entrepreneurs to plan strategically, setting long-term goals and working steadily towards them without expecting immediate results.

- Resilience in the Face of Setbacks: Patience helps entrepreneurs remain focused on their long-term vision, even when short-term challenges and setbacks occur.

- Networking: Establishing meaningful business relationships and partnerships takes time. Patience is essential for building trust and rapport with clients, investors, and partners.

- Customer Relations: Cultivating a loyal customer base requires consistent effort and time. Patience helps in understanding customer needs, providing excellent service, and addressing concerns effectively.

In summary, patience is a foundational soft skill that underpins many aspects of entrepreneurship. It enables entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of business development, build strong relationships, make informed decisions, and achieve long-term success.

3. Relationship management is a critical skill in entrepreneurship, as it directly impacts the success and sustainability of a business. Effective relationship management involves building and maintaining positive relationships with various stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, suppliers, and partners. Relationship management is vital for entrepreneurial success, as it helps in building a loyal customer base, retaining talented employees, gaining investor confidence, ensuring reliable partnerships, and maintaining a positive brand reputation. By focusing on effective communication, empathy, reliability, conflict resolution, networking, personalization, and continuous improvement, entrepreneurs can master the art of relationship management and drive their businesses toward long-term success.

Overall, a **positive attitude is a catalyst for nurturing love, happiness, and fulfillment in relationships**. By embracing optimism, gratitude, resilience, mindfulness, support, and effective communication, couples can cultivate a thriving partnership built on mutual respect, trust, and joy.

To the question "**Which of the emotional intelligence skills would you most like to see in your employees?**" Answers:

POSITIVE ATTITUDE	57
PATIENCE	55
RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	52

10.3. Which of the following Professional ethics skills would you like to develop if possible?

Professional Ethics. Professional ethics has gained prominence in the corporate world, with businesses increasingly focusing on ethical practices, corporate social responsibility, and transparency. In the realm of professional ethics within the labour market, the data from the survey presents the values and competencies considered most critical by different demographic groups. The survey posed questions to **residents** regarding *which professional ethics skills they would like to develop if possible*, and to **entrepreneurs** on *the skills they would most like their staff to have*.



As seen in the above chart provided, the top five preferred skills across all groups surveyed are: **professionalism** (184 votes), **motivation to improve** (172 votes), **self-discipline** (150 votes), **responsibility** (145 votes) and **listening and hearing** (143 votes).

Professionalism emerges as the most valued skill. This trait is highly appreciated by entrepreneurs, both Lithuanians and other partner countries, with 61 combined votes, suggesting that in the fast-paced and competitive world of business, maintaining a professional demeanour is vital. Professionalism is often seen not just as a sign of reliability and commitment but also as the backbone of a reputable entrepreneur. It is also a sign of every individual being able to deal with different personalities and resolve conflict situations and challenges with a calm stance and wise assertiveness of situation.

Motivation to improve stands out too (172 total votes), particularly for the Lithuanian residents, who gave 77 votes highlighting the importance of this specific skill. This could possibly indicate the growing awareness of the dynamic nature of the labor market and the need for continuous self-improvement to remain competitive in one's role.

Ukrainian residents gave significant number of votes to **motivation to improve** (19 votes) and **professionalism** (16 votes) too, indicating that both skills are highly important, which reflects possible resilience and aspirational mindset necessary for those facing the challenges of displacement and integration into a new society.

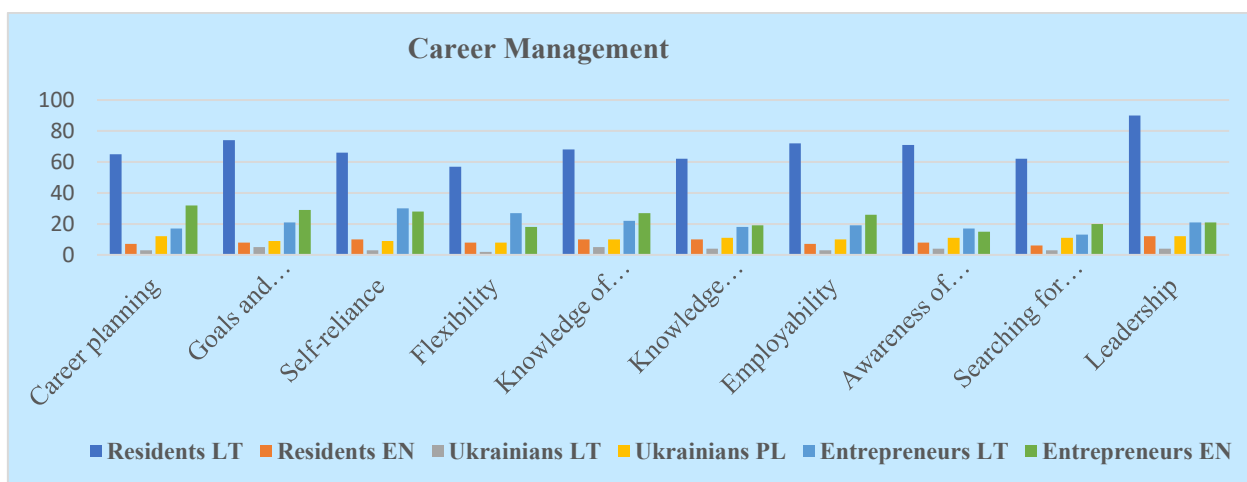
Entrepreneurs expressed the opinion that **motivation to improve** is the second most important skill (64 entrepreneurial votes) after responsibility (65 entrepreneurial votes), reflecting a very important stance that current employee is expected to be able to manage complex situations, be able to stay in charge when needed and strive for constant improve in order to be able to take even more responsibilities and lead the team.

The overall survey data also echoes that **self-discipline and responsibility** are held in high regard with a total of 150 and 145 votes respectively, therefore stating that these skills are fundamental to personal accountability and are indicative of an individual's ability to adjust to multiple standards and keep up with commitments, which are invaluable traits along with the skill of **listening and hearing**, which has collected 143 votes in total and highlighted the importance of the ability to be active and empathetic listener in order to be able to process and understand different information, coordinate the activities, distribute the work and deliver high-quality product.

Therefore, digital online open-access training programs should cultivate these key professional ethics. The programs should target the needs of entrepreneurs, residents, refugees, and migrants and focus on providing essential soft skills to enter new workspaces as well as grow within old ones. Such well-planned programs could be beneficial for not only low-skilled workers, migrants, and refugees, but also to professionals and entrepreneurs who must consistently navigate diverse workflows and intercultural dialogues. It would foster ethical work principles as well as adaptability, reliability, integrity, accountability, and continuous personal growth.

10.4. Which of the following Career management skills would you like to develop if possible?

Career Management. The dynamic nature of the modern job market requires individuals to actively manage their careers, focusing on continuous learning, adaptability, and personal branding.



The survey probed two inquiries, presenting **residents** with the opportunity to reflect on the career management skills they aspire to develop, and **entrepreneurs** with the chance to consider the skills they

deem most valuable for their staff. The resulting data, captured in the bar chart, reveals a resounding consensus on the significance of six career management skills: **leadership, goal setting (goals and interest), self-reliance, knowledge of professions, employability, and career planning.**

Residents (including Ukrainians) show a strong inclination towards leadership and overall career management, when all the top priority skills are combined (leadership – 118 votes, goals and interests – 96, awareness of the labor market – 94, knowledge of professions – 93, employability – 92), indicating a desire for direction and foresight in career management.

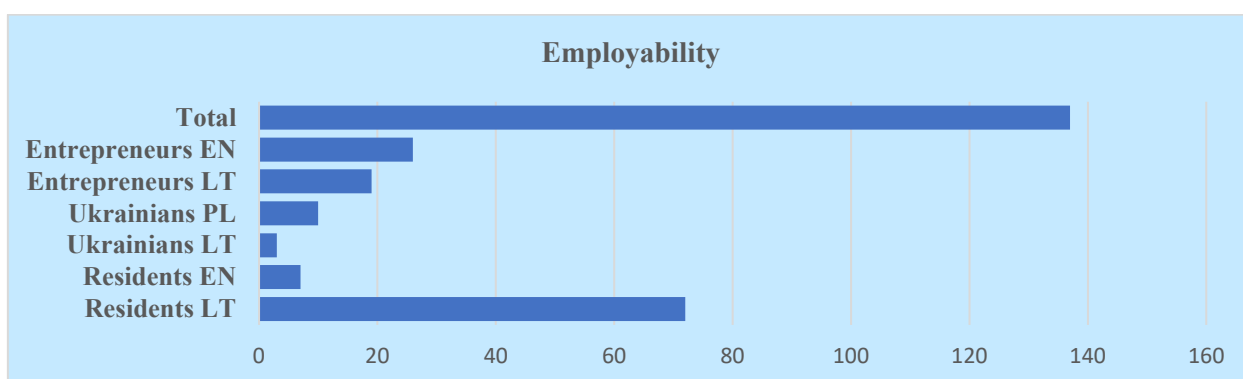
The importance of **leadership** stands out with residents in Lithuania too showing the highest number of votes (90 in total), followed by the quite strong emphasis showed by entrepreneurs in Lithuania as well as other partner countries (42 votes), which indicates that residents in Lithuania are becoming more aware of its importance and are willing to take the leading roles and grow professionally in their environments rather than focusing on keeping the same job positions they currently are at.

Goals and interest appear as a high priority to those in Lithuania accounting to 74 residential votes and are strongly supported by Lithuanian as well as other entrepreneurs, whose combined 50 votes place this skill to the second position and support the value of its importance in the labor market.. The total votes of 146 respondents followed by the same number of opinions towards **self-reliance** show wish to seek freedom in shaping one’s career and financial independence as well as strive for higher personal aspirations and values within personal and work settings.

Career planning appears to be important to residents (72 votes), and entrepreneurs (49) as well as Ukrainians (15 votes), who show moderate distribution in their preferences with a strong interest, exhibited by Ukrainians, residing in Poland (the highest – 12 – votes along with the same number of votes given to leadership). Considerable importance to career planning (49 votes) was given by entrepreneurs too, who are presumably interested in individuals strategic thought process and desire to grow.

While it is not the top skill preferred by the residents, it is the most desired trait which entrepreneurs from other countries would like their employees to have, which clearly shows that entrepreneurs seek to have motivated labor force, who would show constant improvement, undertake various trainings, and keep developing their competences and knowledge, which is essential for running business to the future tomorrow.

High inclination towards **awareness of the labor market** was expressed by the residents (79 votes) and Ukrainians (15 votes) which may be reflective to strive in understanding new workforce environments and ability to integrate into the market better, when speaking of refugees and migrants as well as strive to understand different market possibilities and climb career ladders.



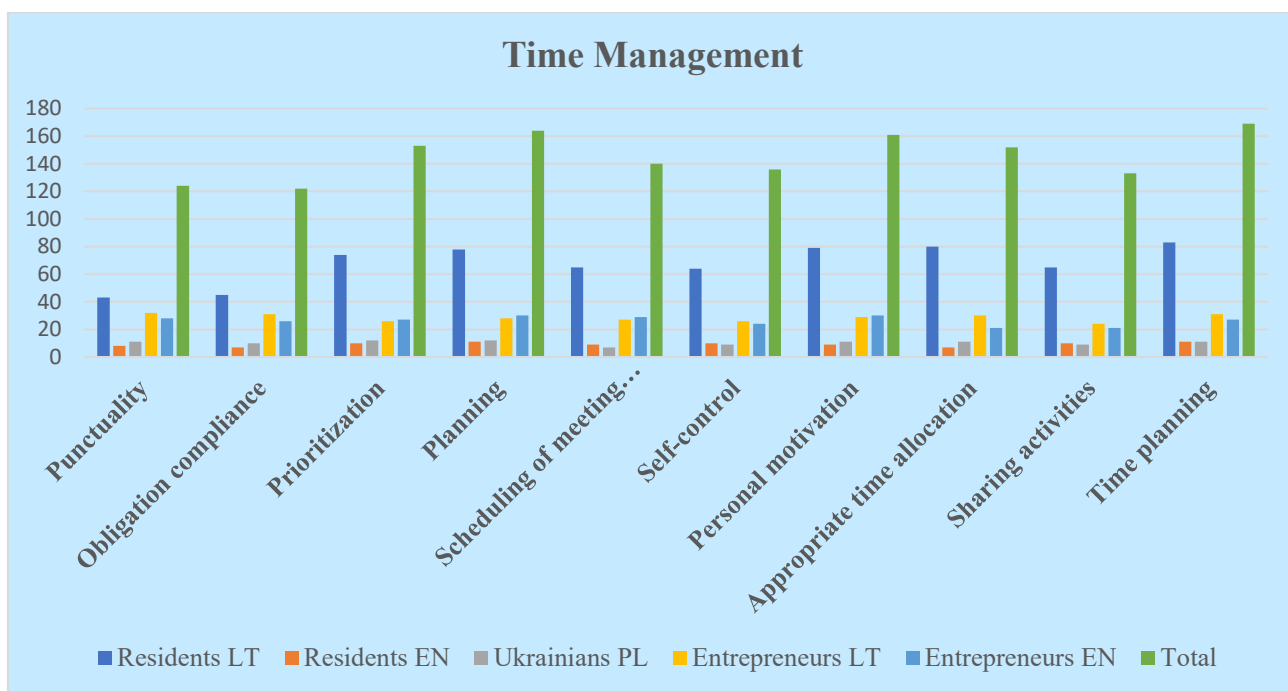
Employability receives special attention from residents, with Lithuanians allocating 72 votes towards it, perhaps reflecting economic apprehensions, higher unemployment in certain areas, and a recognition of the challenges in job attainment.

While each skill has invaluable importance when weighed separately, such skills like searching for a job (115 votes), flexibility (120 votes), knowledge about studies and training (124 votes), awareness of the labor market (126 votes), are the least preferred skills when all the votes (residential, Ukrainian and entrepreneurial) are combined, representing the overall opinion that these skills are not as important as those of **leadership** and **goals and interests** as well as **self-reliance**, which stand at the forefront of most valued attributes.

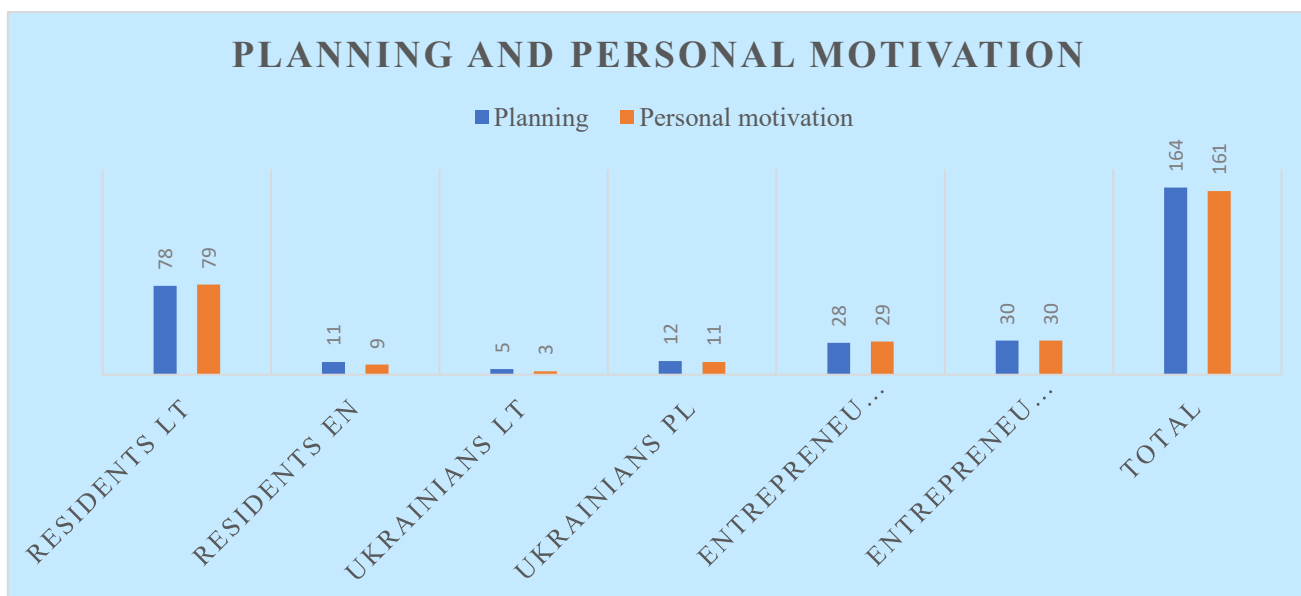
Career management programs should hence be tailored to cultivate these specific competencies, with a special focus on goal setting, personal development planning, leadership cultivation, and adaptability to market fluctuations. Such programs would foster the career management capabilities of individuals from diverse backgrounds in various labour environments.

10.5. Which of the following Time management skills would you like to develop if possible?

In today's dynamic work settings, where workloads are escalating, mastering time management is essential for enhancing productivity and ensuring a harmonious work-life balance. This likely explains why surveyed entrepreneurs, asked about the top soft skills they would like their employees to have, placed a strong emphasis on the value of **punctuality** (60 votes), **planning** (58 votes), and **time planning** (58 votes), as evidenced by almost equal distribution of votes and underlining the importance of timely execution, effective planning and managing responsibilities.



Likewise, **time planning (169 votes)** and **planning (164 votes)** are valued across all groups, indicating a universal appreciation of these skills as essential to successful operation of organizations and significant to personal growth. For Ukrainians, specifically, the highlighted importance of time planning and planning, collecting 17 votes each, could be again reflective of a desire to adapt and succeed in a new environment, where efficient use of time is critical.



An impressive tally of **161** responses highlighted the role of **personal motivation**, with residents contributing 88 votes to this total. Entrepreneurs also placed this skill as their second-highest priority with 59 votes. This clearly emphasizes the value of self-motivation—a key for entrepreneurial success and a vital trait for individuals navigating transitional phases, whether assimilating into new cultural environments, engaging with the labour market, or spearheading innovative ventures. The data reflects a shared understanding that inner drive is a cornerstone of both personal growth and professional achievement.

Prioritization and appropriate time allocation take the toll too with 153 and 152 votes respectively. This seems to be of the utmost importance for Polish Ukrainians, who place prioritization as the key skill for development with the highest number of votes (12) alongside with planning (12 votes too), which possibly indicates their focus on efficiency and productivity, and are for individuals trying to establish themselves in a new labor market. This thought is supported by overall Ukrainian votes, which indicates that the most important skills they would like to develop are those of time planning (17 votes), planning (17 votes) and prioritization (16 votes), especially speaking of those residing in big countries, where ability to set priorities and manage one’s time appropriately is essential to work and life balance and professional as well as personal success.

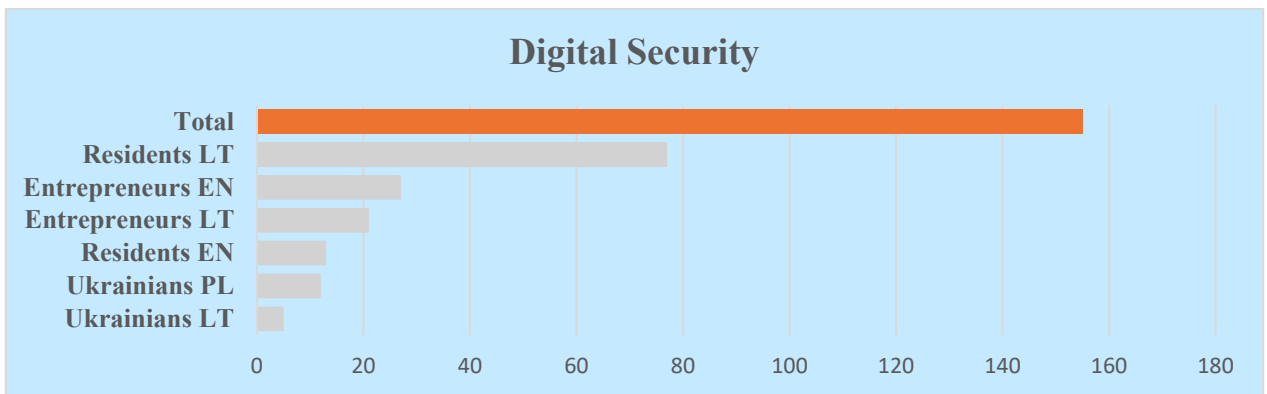
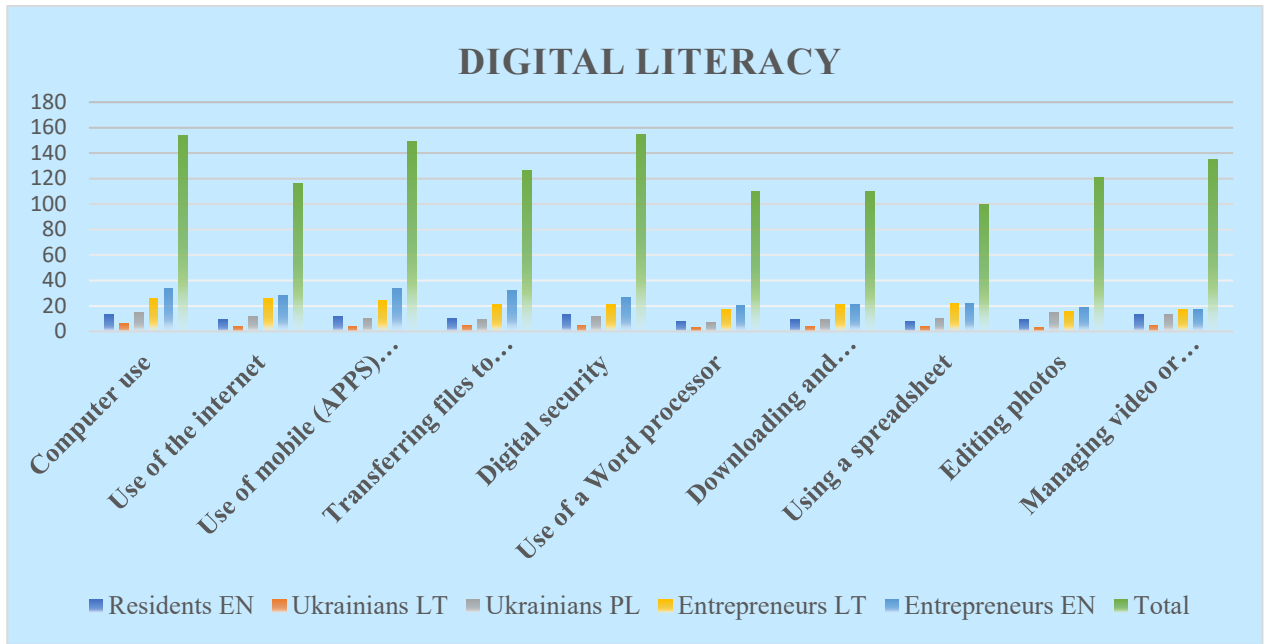
Considering the core priorities identified by all the respondent groups, it would be essential to tailor digital online open-access programs that involve prioritization techniques, tools for workload management, and insights on balancing professional and personal life. It is crucial to design a curriculum that integrates goal-setting frameworks, inspirational communication, and self-leadership principles.

10.6. Which of the following Digital literacy skills would you like to develop if possible?

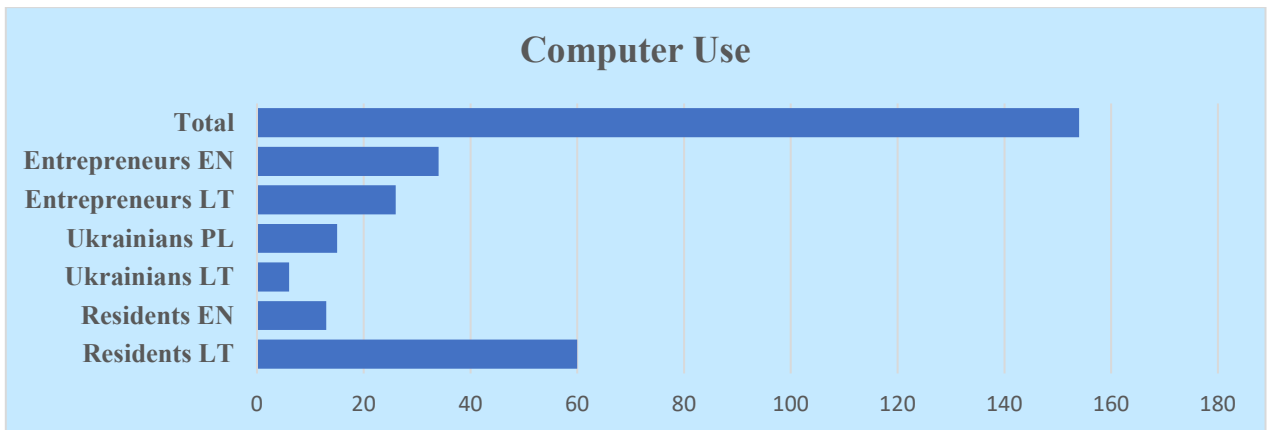
The digital revolution has made digital literacy an essential skill across industries, with a growing emphasis on cybersecurity, data management, and digital communication tools. In today’s digitally driver society, the proficiency of individuals in various digital competencies is not just advantageous, but essential. The survey conducted posed an insightful question to residents:

“Which of the following digital literacy skills would you most like to develop if possible?” and to entrepreneurs:

“Which of the following digital literacy skills would you most like your employees to have?” The responses paint a vivid picture of the digital capabilities deemed most vital across various demographics.



Digital Security stands as the most desired skill with a significant 155 votes in total, which implies a keen wish to gain awareness of online risks and the need for safe digital practices for safeguarding information in a cyber-centric world. This skill is notably prioritized by Lithuanian residents, accumulating 77 votes, which clearly indicates their critical wish to protect data integrity and personal privacy within interactions.



Computer Use and Use of Mobile (APPS) Devices also appear to be of a high demand and show great attention with impressive totals of 154 and 149 votes, respectively. The strong preference for computer uses and mobile device proficiency among entrepreneurs (60 and 68 votes accordingly) demonstrates the need to align with the digital nature of modern businesses. These skills are foundational pillars in today's technology landscape, essential for the seamless navigation of daily professional tasks and personal activities and are a must to have for those who strive to successfully develop their future careers.

Managing Video or Audio Files has collected a significant number of votes (135), suggesting a burgeoning recognition of multimedia's role in communication, information dissemination, and content creation.

Editing Photos, although not the highest, still captures a respectable 121 votes, indicative of a visual-centric culture where image manipulation and enhancement are increasingly becoming commonplace skills in personal and professional domains.

For Ukrainian respondents, the emphasis on **computer use** (21 vote in total) and **editing photos** (18 votes) could be reflective of a broader need for basic digital literacy that supports a range of activities from communication to content creation—skills that are indispensable in today's job market.

Entrepreneurs, both in Lithuania and other partner countries, have shown quite balanced demand across all skills, with a higher preference shown towards computer use and use of mobile (APPS) devices, signaling the importance of basic digital fluency in business.

The data calls for the necessity to build a curriculum that does not solely focus on the most voted skills but also considers the integration of broader digital literacy competencies. This could ensure a comprehensive digital skill set that empowers individuals to navigate the web of today's digital ecosystem effectively. Thus, while the emphasis may rest on **digital security, computer use, and mobile device proficiency**, a wider approach to digital literacy would undoubtedly include elements of multimedia management, content creation, and cloud services proficiency to equip a workforce that is versatile, adaptive, and future-ready. Therefore, digital literacy training should include basic computer skills, cybersecurity awareness, and advanced digital tools proficiency.

10.7. Which of the following Critical thinking skills would you like to develop if possible? (PL)

Critical thinking is the ability to gather and analyses information and then draw conclusions. It is an important skill to have in virtually every industry and is applicable to many different professions. Critical thinking is not tied to a specific topic - rather, it is the ability to analyses information, data and statistics in order to find a satisfactory solution.

As part of the project activities, a survey was carried out to investigate the needs of adults (employed, unemployed and migrants) in terms of soft skills development and how successfully they integrate into the labour market.

The survey was carried out in 3 variants:

- questionnaire for individuals,
- a survey for entrepreneurs,
- survey for refugees from Ukraine.

	Individuals	Entrepreneurs	Refugees from Ukraine
Answer 1	Analytical thinking	Analytical thinking	Leadership/ adaptability

Answer 2	Leadership/ Innovation	Flexibility	Open mind
Answer 2	Generation of ideas	Generation of ideas	Creativity/ Innovation

The question asked in the survey was: **Which critical thinking skills would you like to develop if possible?**

Analyzing the answers, analytical **thinking** is the most desired by employers, and individuals think the same.

Refugees from Ukraine would first like to develop **leadership and adaptive** skills. This was followed by responses such as innovation, flexibility, and an open mind.

For both individuals and employers, **generating ideas** should be an important skill.

10.8. Which of the following Creative problem-solving skills would you like to develop if possible?

Introduction: L.A.B.A.S. CLG, a non-profit Lithuanian diaspora organization in Ireland, participated in the Erasmus+ project "DEPS-Skills" as partners in 2023. As part of this initiative, an independent voting process was conducted in Ireland to understand the preferences of employers and employees regarding the development of creative problem-solving skills. The survey aimed to identify the most sought-after skills among participants.

Voting Results:

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Top Choice: 121 votes. The most prominent result from the voting process was the overwhelming preference for developing skills related to the use of artificial intelligence. With 121 votes, it emerged as the top choice among participants. This suggests a growing recognition of the importance of AI in problem-solving and a desire to enhance proficiency in this area within the Irish community.

Critical Thinking: Second Choice: 114 votes. Critical thinking closely followed as the second most favored skill, with 114 votes. This indicates a strong interest in honing the ability to analyze, evaluate, and make informed decisions, showcasing the participants' awareness of the significance of critical thinking in problem-solving scenarios.

Analytical Thinking: Third Choice: 102 votes. Analytical thinking secured the third position with 102 votes. This result underscores the participants' recognition of the importance of breaking down complex problems into manageable components, demonstrating a commitment to fostering a structured and systematic approach to problem-solving.

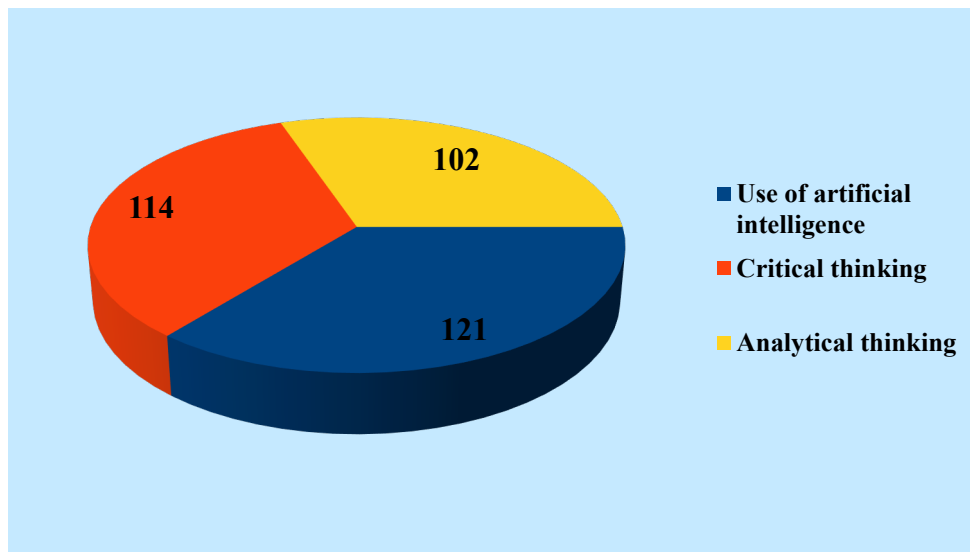
Implications and Recommendations: The overwhelming preference for the use of artificial intelligence indicates a need for incorporating AI-related training and workshops into the "DEPS-Skills" program.

Critical thinking and analytical thinking are also highly valued, suggesting the importance of including modules that focus on these fundamental problem-solving skills.

Tailoring the program to address the specific preferences of the Irish participants will likely lead to higher engagement and better outcomes.

Conclusion: The voting results reflect the keen interest of the Irish community in developing creative problem-solving skills, particularly in the areas of artificial intelligence, critical thinking, and analytical

thinking. Understanding these preferences will enable L.A.B.A.S. CLG and the Erasmus+ project partners to design a more targeted and effective program, aligning with the aspirations of the participants in Ireland.



* [Ukrainians granted temporary protection in December - Products Eurostat News - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1&code=sdg_8_4_1)

** [Ukrainian refugees by country 2023 | Statista](https://www.statista.com/statistics/375232/unemployment-rate-in-ireland/)

Information resources:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/pana/annualnationalaccounts2022/gdpandgrowthrates/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/375232/unemployment-rate-in-ireland/>

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid41288857.html#:~:text=The%20median%20annual%20salary%20for,women%20it%20was%20%E2%82%AC277%2C613>

https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/what_you_should_know/hours-andwages/national%20minimum%20wage/previous-rates-of-pay-under-the-national-minimum-wage.html

<https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/social-affairs/2023/11/29/immigration-rose-significantly-in-2022-23-but-emigration-grewtoo/#:~:text=This%20represents%20a%2031%20per.increase%20from%20the%20year%20before.>

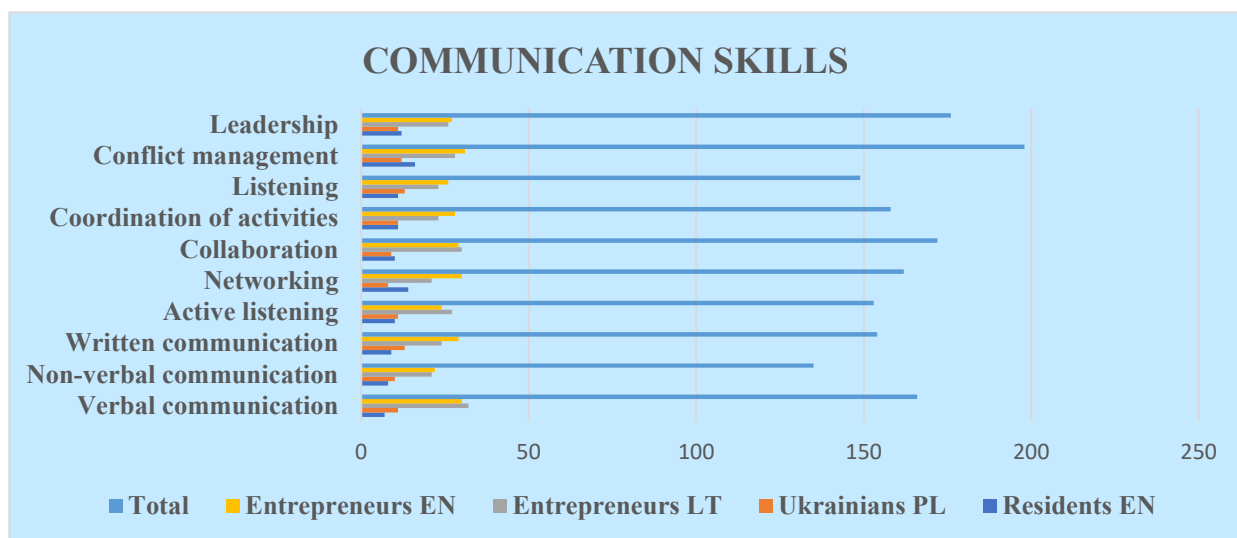
10.9. Which of the following Communication skills would you like to develop if possible?

Communication Skills. In today's interconnected world, effective communication is paramount for global business operations, team collaboration, and cross-cultural interactions. The data gathered from the survey to the given question for residents “Which of the following communication skills would you like to develop if possible?” and “Which of the following communication skills would you most like your staff to have?” for entrepreneurs indicates that conflict management is the most valued skill across all groups, with a total of 198 votes. This skill is particularly prioritized by the residents (Lithuanian and English votes combined) with 122 responses, which suggests that in a diverse workforce, the ability to manage and resolve conflicts is of utmost importance.

It is also one of the top skills along with collaboration (59 votes) for entrepreneurs, when both Lithuanian and English votes are combined (59 votes too), indicating its importance in entrepreneurial activities, likely due to the need to navigate complex negotiations and maintain team cohesion.

For Ukrainians the skill of **conflict management** is equally important to those of **listening and written communication** each collecting 17 votes, likely due to the challenges of adapting to new linguistic and cultural environments and current geopolitical tensions affecting Ukraine.

The equanimity in votes across these specific skills stresses on the various challenges faced by refugees in terms of language acquisition, cultural adaptation, and the negotiation of space within foreign labour markets and emphasizes critical role of communication competencies when speaking of socio-economic integration of refugees into the labour markets and diverse cultural surroundings.



Provided chart above suggests that **leadership** is the next most valued skill with **176 total votes**, followed closely by **collaboration** and **verbal communication** (172 and 166 votes respectively), which highlights the importance of working well with others and building professional relationships. It is worth noting that while verbal communication is not the top skill overall, it is the most valued by entrepreneurs who place **verbal communication** as the top skill (62 votes in total) across all surveyed countries, showing its critical role in business negotiations and client interactions and the need to be able to guide teams and communicate clearly and effectively.

While **non-verbal communication** is the least valued skill with 135 votes, it should be included into the training programs as it also holds considerable importance when developing all forms of communication which are inseparable part of integral teamwork in the workplace.

The insights gathered from the survey emphasize the need to cultivate harmonious relationships and adaptability in multicultural workspaces. The ability to communicate with clarity and precision emerges as a fundamental aptitude. Furthermore, the data reflects a corporate face that values collaboration and seeks to employ individuals who can work in team-oriented environments, as collective effort leads to growth and expansion.

Therefore, it is essential to develop the most desirable skills for employees to have as indicated in the survey data: **conflict management (198 votes)**, **leadership (176 votes)**, **collaboration (172 votes)**, **verbal communication (166 votes)** and **networking (162 votes)**.

Given different factors like diverse workforces, cultural identity, and challenges of integration into the labour markets, the survey data implies the need to create training programs with an emphasis on cross-cultural and empathetic communication. These soft skills would support diverse groups such as low-skilled workers, residents, migrants, and refugees in better integrating into new work environments and would be particularly valuable for entrepreneurs who operate across cultural boundaries.

10.10. Which of the following Cultural intelligence and teamwork skills would you like to develop if possible? (NO)

We acknowledge the importance of all the **Cultural intelligence and teamwork skills** listed. However, based on the results of the voting process, Cooperation in Team is the skill that our community is most eager to develop, with 107 votes in favor. This indicates a strong desire for fostering collaborative environments and effective teamwork.

Additionally, Responsibility within the team received significant support with 97 votes, followed closely by Adherence to team objectives with 96 votes. This underscores the community's commitment to fulfilling their roles effectively within a team setting and staying aligned with collective goals.

Furthermore, from a **Cultural intelligence** perspective, knowledge of the language emerged as the top priority with 89 votes. Language proficiency is recognized as a crucial aspect in understanding and engaging with diverse cultures effectively. It serves as a foundation for developing other cultural intelligence skills, facilitating smoother communication, and building stronger relationships across cultural boundaries.

Considering these results, we will prioritize the development of Cooperation in Team skills while also emphasizing Responsibility within the team, Adherence to team objectives, and the acquisition of Language knowledge to enhance our **Cultural intelligence** capabilities.

V. CONCLUSIONS. RECOMMENDATIONS. Prof. Genutė Gedvilienė

Conclusions

The empirical study and the soft skills of the respondents revealed that negotiation skills and entrepreneurial skills are very important to the respondents. In negotiation development, the ability to evaluate options and choose the best course of action to achieve the desired results is essential for decision-making. Effective decision-making skills enable negotiators to evaluate alternatives, anticipate consequences and make sound decisions that maximize value for all parties involved.

Entrepreneurial skills can be used to select the right model and to apply and innovate. Responsibility, flexibility, and the generation of business ideas are therefore important in both negotiation and entrepreneurial development. This skill involves not only proposing ideas, but also assessing their feasibility and potential impact, which can lead to new revenue streams and market opportunities.

In terms of the importance of emotional intelligence skills, respondents would like to improve their self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and motivation skills. This can help with social skills, i.e. communication and cooperation between employees. Emotional intelligence skills have been found to be important for personal and professional success. In other words, emotional intelligence skills are the foundation for the development of positive relationships between employees.

The results on professional ethics skills showed that respondents would like to improve their professional ethics, professionalism, and motivation to improve. Respondents believe that self-discipline and responsibility are important for this. It was noted that professional ethics could be developed and made available in the web-based accesses developed. Such programs could be useful not only for low-skilled workers, migrants, and refugees but also for professionals and entrepreneurs. It would reinforce ethical working principles.

The respondents' career management skills revealed that they would like to improve their career management, leadership, goal-setting, autonomy, knowledge of professions, employability, and career planning. Respondents felt that each of these skills was important and relevant for those working and looking for work. Career management programs should therefore be designed and tailored to develop these specific skills. This would serve a broad coverage of the whole labour market.

Time management skills were also found to be highly significant for respondents. The entrepreneurs interviewed emphasized the punctuality of their employees, their ability to plan and allocate time properly. It was found that respondents from all groups considered it would be very important to adopt digital online open access programs that integrate goal setting systems, inspirational communication, and self-development principles.

Digital literacy skills are important to respondents. The digital revolution has made digital literacy a critical skill across all industries, with an increasing focus on cybersecurity, data management and digital communication tools. According to respondents, in today's digital society, knowledge of various digital competences is not only useful but also essential. Digital security, use of computers and mobile devices, managing video or audio files, photo editing, using a computer were identified as important. To develop digital literacy competences, digital literacy should include basic computer skills, an understanding of cybersecurity and the ability to use advanced digital tools.

A review of the need for critical thinking skills has shown that employers prioritize analytical thinking skills. However, for expatriate Ukrainians, the skills of leadership, innovation, flexibility, and open-mindedness are particularly relevant.

Creative problem-solving skills are relevant for all respondents. Critical and analytical thinking is particularly important. The overwhelming preference for the use of artificial intelligence suggests the need to include AI-related training and workshops in the DEPS-Skills program.

When analyzing the importance of communication skills, respondents revealed that in today's world, effective communication is crucial for business, teamwork, and intercultural communication. The insights gained from the survey underline the need to develop harmonious relationships in multicultural workplaces. This requires the development of the most desirable skills for employees, such as conflict management, leadership, cooperation, verbal communication, and partnership development. Considering various factors such as the diversity of the workforce, cultural identities, and the challenges of integration into the labour market, the survey findings point to the need to develop training programs focusing on intercultural and empathetic communication. These soft skills would help different groups, such as low-skilled workers, residents, migrants, and refugees, to better integrate into new working environments, and would be particularly valuable for entrepreneurs operating in intercultural environments.

Recommendations

As the global economy continues to develop, the need for soft skills in the labour market is becoming increasingly important. Both the European Commission's Skills Pact and studies by the World Economic Forum highlight the growing importance of not only technical skills (IT literacy, digitalization), but also soft skills such as negotiation development, the application of entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and team communication in the jobs of the future (Poláková et al., 2023) (Dogara et al., 2020) (Taylor, 2019) (Ramlall, 2014).

The shift from an industrial to an information economy has led to a greater focus on interpersonal skills and adaptability in the labour market (Ramlall, 2014). Employers are now looking for individuals who can cope with the complexity of modern work environments characterized by rapid technological advances and reduced face-to-face communication, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Poláková et al., 2023). Soft skills, such as the ability to develop negotiation skills, work collaboratively in a team, think creatively, and respond flexibly to changing circumstances, are increasingly seen as human resources that give organizations a competitive advantage (Taylor, 2019) (Dogara et al., 2020).

In addition, these soft skills are recognized and valued in the labour market for their ability to provide flexibility and adaptability, allowing workers to succeed in the changing industry of Industry 5 (Poláková et al., 2023).

In the world of work, the growing demand for soft skills is no longer limited to specific industries. In other words, this trend is observed across occupational sectors, including the entire labour market, where narrow professional/technical knowledge is no longer sufficient for success (Ramlall, 2014). To address this issue, both education providers and employers need to prioritize the development of soft skills for those in employment and/or learning, including migrants. By equipping individuals with the necessary interpersonal, emotional, and problem-solving skills, organizations and companies can better adapt to future labour market challenges and maintain a competitive edge at international level (Dogara et al., 2020).

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs 2023 report provides some of the key messages, including:

- The rise of automation and artificial intelligence (AI): Automation and AI are displacing workers in many occupations, but also creating new opportunities.

- Automation will displace workers but also create new opportunities. Companies expect 42% of jobs to be automated by 2027, up from 34% in 2020. But there will also be new and emerging occupations, with 97 million new jobs expected by 2027.

- The growing outsourcing economy: The gig economy is growing rapidly, with significant implications for the nature of work.

- The soft skills gap is widening. Employers say they will find it difficult to find workers with the right skills and this is likely to continue as the labour market is changing rapidly. The most important soft skills employers are looking for are career management, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, creative problem-solving and understanding of professional ethics.

- Employees will need to be lifelong learners. The pace of change is accelerating and employees will need to be able to adapt to new technologies (digital literacy) and skills throughout their careers. This will require a commitment to continuous learning and education to adapt and/or update and possibly acquire new soft skills.

Recommendations for policy makers, businesses, and workers (World Economic Forum):

- Policymakers should invest in education and training for workers. This could include vocational education, funding for various training programs, and facilitating workers' access to vocational competences that will help them, especially jobseekers and/or migrants, to integrate successfully into the labour market.

- Companies should systematically invest in improving the soft skills of their employees, including migrants. This could include training in new technologies (artificial intelligence and soft skills), as well as encouraging employees to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities through dual training, i.e. on-the-job training.

- Employees should take responsibility for their own career development. This could include identifying their own soft skill deficiencies, taking advantage of training opportunities through information networks, networking, engaging in partnerships and networking with other professionals.

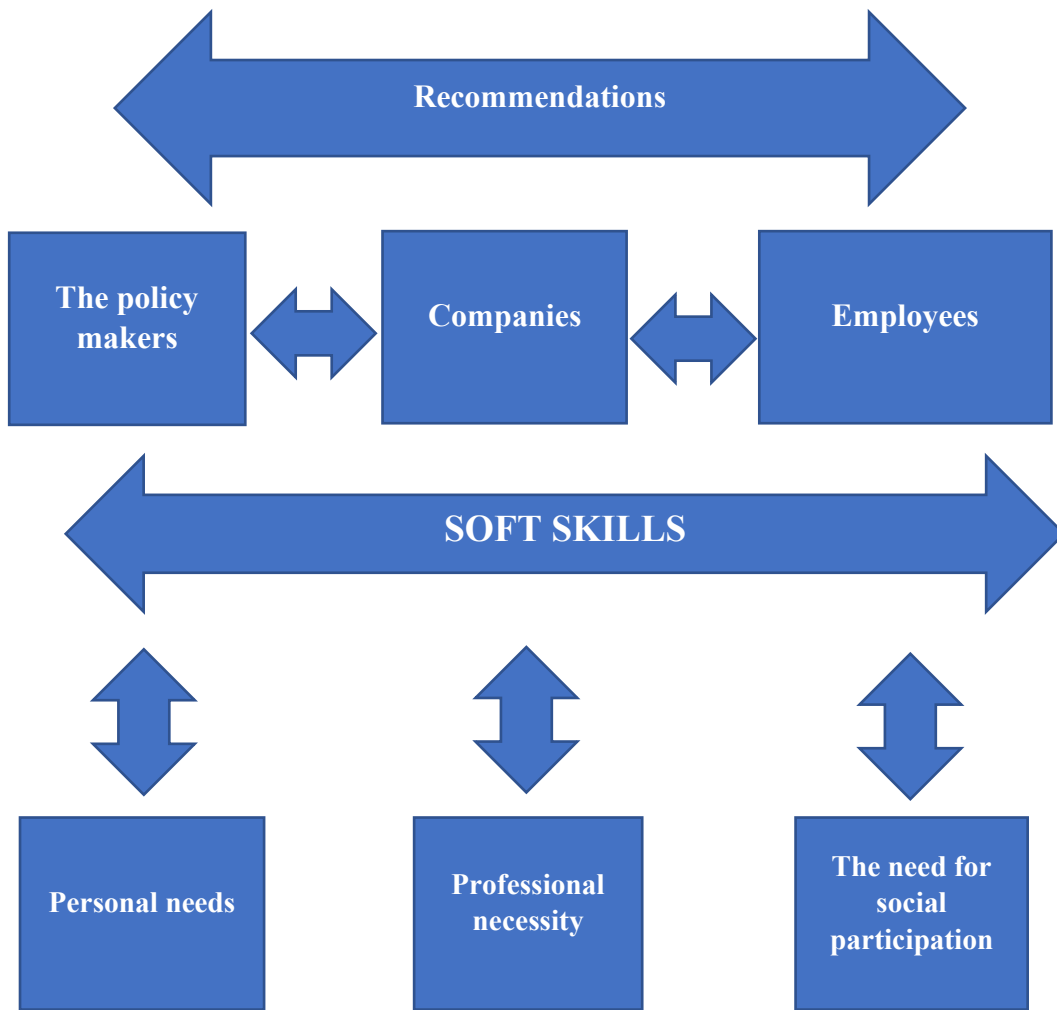


Figure 1. The importance of soft skills

In summary, it can be assumed that the future labour market, as the global economy continues to transform, will place more and more emphasis on soft skills (critical thinking, creative problem solving, communication and teamwork, cultural adaptability) to continuously improve personal, professional, and social participation goals (Figure 1). Meeting these needs will require the efforts of the individual, the employers' association, formal and non-formal educational institutions, and organizations providing a range of educational services to promote the development of these essential skills.

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