It Works!
The Employable Youth

SOFT SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY:

IT WORKS!

PART II – METHODOLOGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the It Works! project, the curriculum sets the framework for planning teaching and learning experiences. Learning outcomes, as an important part of the curriculum, guide teachers and trainers on the teaching process and inform the learners about what they are expected to know, understand and are able to do after a given learning activity.

The objective of IO3 "Soft Skills for Employability: It Works!" is to design a collation of training activities inspired by EQF framework addressed to low skilleded, out of education and away of formal education beneficiaries.

2. ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

2. 1 European Qualification Framework (EQF)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF), implemented in 2008, is a common European reference system which is linking different countries National Qualifications Systems (NQF) and frameworks together. In practice, it works as a translation mechanism making qualifications more readable. As an instrument for the promotion of lifelong learning, the EQF encompasses general and adult education vocational education and training as well as higher education. It is structured in 8 qualifications where each level is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

The 8 levels cover the entire span of qualifications from those achieved at the end of compulsory education to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional or vocational education and training and are described in terms of level descriptors for the expected knowledge, skills and competences (responsibility and autonomy) for each level of qualification.

The Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the establishment of the EQF (23 April 2008) explicitly stated out that the Member States shall use "(…) an approach based on learning outcomes to define and describe qualifications" and to promote the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The new recommendation from the European Parliament and the Council on EQF for lifelong learning (17 May 2017), reinforces that objective encouraging "the use of EQF by social partners, public employment services, education providers, quality assurance bodies and public authorities to support the comparison of qualifications and transparency of the learning outcomes.".

2.2 Understanding EQF

At the core of the EQF are eight common European reference levels, which are described in learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences. Each of the eight levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications. This makes it more understandable what a learner with a qualification related to the EQF knows, understands and is able to do. Its eight common European reference levels are described in terms of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences as detailed below.

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KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).	In the context of the EQF responsibility and autonomy is described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page

2.3 Implementing the EQF on a national and EU level

The EQF was adopted by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament in the Recommendation of 23rd April 2008, committing them to put the EQF into practice across Europe. This makes it possible to compare qualifications awarded through all types of education and training from school education to academic, professional and vocational at each of its levels (European Commission, 2016).

EQF LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
LEVEL 1	Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context .
LEVEL 2	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy
LEVEL 3	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems

2.4 EQF in the context of the It Works! project

The It Works! project specified in its application that the project would seek to create a module based on EQF soft skills for NEET's, based on their diagnosed needs. The aim of the project was thus to create an educational module that followed EQF standards for Employability Soft Skills. Our assumption was that general EQF levels would (and should) be manageable to follow, regardless of each country's requisites.

Each organisation gathered their policies for their national qualification framework, to compare and to set the basics. There was no doubt that the target group of the project would be found on level 1 and on level 2, as presented in the section above.

Questions were raised about the challenges that our (diverse) target group was/is facing and how we could place these diverse challenges into one of our two levels. We carried out our practices inspired by the qualifications of NQF and EQF.

However, during the ongoing pandemic in which this project was developed, patterns have been identified; the target group was certainly on level 1 or 2 and they shared similar backgrounds and challenges, regardless of their country of origin. But it became clear that their needs often couldn't be fulfilled through the EQF because of the different requisites in each country.

Often participants did not have suitable working environment (such as no personal learning space, no personal computer, no stable internet, sharing the same space with many family members, being responsible for younger siblings, among others).

This led to the impossibility of participants to take part in online learning and to complete necessary learning hours in order to cater to the EQF standards. This is not by any means surprising to the professionals working with the target groups. It does show the difficulties in creating common systems and frameworks across Europe, despite co-work with countries with a common belief of values.

That is why certain standards that are a part of the EQF (learning hours, formal and informal learning situations etc.) could not be met. This target the pandemic situation where learners were forced to distance practices, whether they would cope with it or not.

It certainly highlights national challenges that might interfere with the European Qualification Framework: our target group might be facing similar challenges.

How can we build a common framework when the national requisites require different solutions on different levels? The consortium believes that this should be an important thematic of another Erasmus+ project, which would be able to highlight the actions that need to be changed for this matter. How can EU maintain common frameworks, despite different national challenges?

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES: SOFT SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

3.1 Soft Skills

Skill development has been one of the four main areas of the European Union's flagship initiative "*An agenda for new skills and new jobs in Europe"* mentioning the importance for young people to be given opportunities to develop soft skills, such as entrepreneurial skills, coping skills (i.e. the capacity to deal with a problem in a creative way), learning to learn and other soft skills in order to assist them successfully enter the labour market.

According to the Skills Panorama Glossary of Cedefop of European Union[i], Soft Skills are "*the skills that are cross-cutting across jobs and sectors and relate to personal competences (confidence, discipline, self-management) and social competences (teamwork, communication, emotional intelligence)".* IBE- UNESCO (2013), defines soft skills as "***A set of intangible personal qualities, traits, attributes, habits and attitudes that can be used in***

many different types of jobs. *As they are broadly applicable they are also seen as transferable skills, even if the idea of transferability is often questioned because individuals learn to perform tasks in particular contexts and may not be able to apply them to others. Examples of soft skills include: empathy, leadership, sense of responsibility, integrity, self-esteem, self-management, motivation, flexibility, sociability, time management and making decisions".*

3.2 Employability

Employability is defined by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in its Skills Panorama Glossary as "*a combination of factors (such as job-specific skills and soft skills) which enable individuals to progress towards or enter into employment, stay in employment and progress during their careers".* **The aim of employability is to prevent long-term unemployment and to facilitate access to the labour market**.

Employability makes individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. Soft skills are referred as a means to increase employability and this is the reason that the European Union is directing its efforts towards the development of this kind of skills.

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Given that **employability refers to the quality of working life of the individuals and it functions as a form of confidence in one's career**, the development of the potential of young people -and especially of youngsters with low skills and out of education- through the provision of skills development training programs aiming to the acquisition of new or additional knowledge is a very useful tool not only for these youngsters themselves but also for employers.
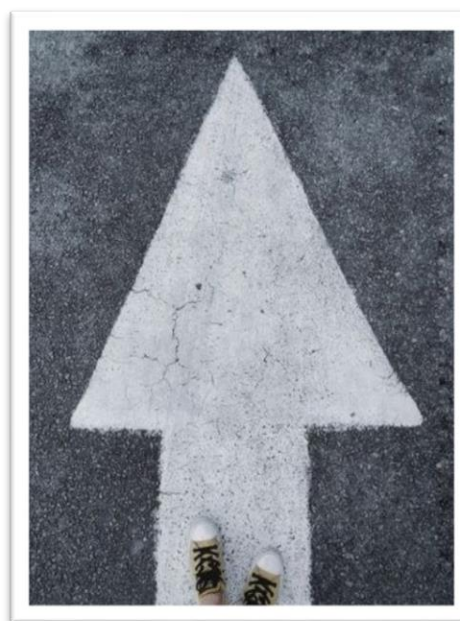
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3.3 Learning Outcomes of the Handbook

VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION: EXPLORING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 Vocational Interests' Exploration

Upon completion of this earning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Advanced knowledge on: • existing fields that matches one's personality • corresponding professional type according to vocational interests • Various professional environment corresponding to professional types	Developing vocational orientation techniques for successful employability Integrate relevant methodologies and techniques for enhancing self-knowledge and employability skills.	Be responsible for the implementation, evaluation and planning of specific tasks related to the selection of vocational field. Demonstrating skills towards employability

1.2 Skills Exploration

Upon completion of this learning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Advanced knowledge on: • Recognize the significance of skills per vocational type • Develop an awareness of personal interests, skills and abilities • Identify potential job opportunities through skills' exploration	Assess current strengths, weaknesses and areas for development Enhance employability skills Target to specific suitable vocational environments	Identify job roles relevant for the individuals Identify specific skills and qualities individual need in order to do particular jobs

DECISION MAKING & GOAL SETTING

2.1 Decision Making

Upon completion of this learning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Recognize all the steps involved in a decision-making process.

To identify personal strengths and weakness.

To recognize which external opportunities and threats can appear from a person's strengthen and weakness. | To be able to select an alternative from several options available and to negotiate and to cooperate with a group.

To be able to differentiate between a decision that is made for them from another person and what they would really want.

To apply the personal strengths and weakness into a professional context.

To be able to reflect on their personal expectations and on their previous intern/job experience. | To decide how to actively follow the steps described to achieve the goal set.

To assume the consequences involved in the decision made.
To be able to weight the alternatives in place and to justify the decision.

To justify the decisions made according to the conventional level. |

2.2 Goal Setting

Upon completion of this learning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Identify who makes one's personal decisions and what influences their decisions.

To be able to list and to remind the priorities to achieve a goal set.

Illustrate the life project in a | Define the appropriate formulation of a goal and the path to reach it.

Decide which images and photos are more related to the life project.

Make use of the PATH | Make use of the SMART Method to formulate own goals.
Demonstrate the necessary steps to achieve the life project.
Decide which path to follow and to feel entitled to it.
Act upon the activities that |

visual way. Identify each of the steps that are necessary to reach a goal. Recognize that one goal can only be reached by several coordinated steps. Remember that clear communication about a goal helps to reach it. Identify which goals are urgent and what are long term goals.	model to select the appropriate steps to reach a goal. Make use of time management skills to establish the goals.	are more urgent and important.

BOUNDARIES IN THE WORKPLACE

3.1 Identify your teamwork skills

Upon completion of this earning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Basic knowledge on: - One's existing strengths in team working skills. - Why team working is a highly valued skill among employers. - Various ways that team working can be exercised.	**Develop** strategies to refine one's teamworking skills. **Acknowledge** how challenges can lead to an improvement and awareness of one's current needs in a labour market perspective.	**Decide on** what strengths (if any) that needs to be adjusted in order to match with the labour market. **Demonstrate** skills towards employability.

3.2 Time Management

Upon completion of this earning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Basic knowledge on: - How problem-solving can be managed with an easy strategy. - The correlation between the personal and the professional life.	**Develop and master** a technique that will increase one's independence regarding challenges such as time management. **Decide** how current challenges can affect a work situation, if not being dealt with.	**Show responsibility** thanks to participation in a self-developing group process. **Demonstrate** skills towards employability

COMMUNICATION: VERBAL /NONVERBAL

4.1 Communication Styles

Upon completion of this learning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Identify forms and skills of communication. Recognise the importance of active listening. Identify opportunities to develop communication skills. Identify how to avoid communication breakdown.	Apply verbal, para-verbal (tone, volume and rhythm of the voice) and non-verbal (physiognomy, mimic, gestures) strategies with individuals and groups in the labour environment. Select problem solving skills to demonstrate ways to communicate with a range of different people in companies.	Apply action plans to future personal and professional development opportunities. Be responsible for the implementation, evaluation and planning of specific tasks related to the goal planning topic. Act in compliance with the training framework dedicated to goal planning.

4.2 Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Upon completion of this earning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Recognise how communication impact on relationships in labour market. Identify how verbal and non-verbal communication helps us find a job. Define communication skills that are involved in the labour market.	Apply verbal and non-verbal communication skill to get a job. Develop communication skills that enhance relationships in the labour market. Combine skills for enhancing self-knowledge and employability skill.	Be responsible for the implementation, evaluation and planning of specific tasks related to the goal planning topic.

TEAMWORK & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

5.1 Conflict resolution in the workplace

Upon completion of this earning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY & RESPONSIBILITY**
Understand there is a process and theory underpinning conflict resolution. Understand the difference between assertive, passive and passive aggressive behaviours.	Increased awareness of conflict resolution skills Develop role play skills practicing real life situations in the workplace and how to deal with that in a non-aggressive manner. To challenge existing beliefs and opinions in how to deal with conflict. Increased understanding of the negative effects certain conflict resolution techniques have.	Increased awareness of self and the power we have in escalating or de-escalating conflict. Understand empowerment and the responsibility we have to control our own behaviours and reactions.

5.2 Self-Regulation

Upon completion of this earning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY & RESPONSIBILITY**
Understand there is a process and theory underpinning self-regulation.	Increased awareness of self-regulation and its importance to our daily lives and mental health. Develop empathy for others who may not be able to self-regulate well. To be able to challenge own existing beliefs and opinions. Increased understanding of the negative effects poor self-regulation can have.	Increased awareness of self and that we all have the ability to control negative or destructive thinking and behaviours. Understand the responsibility we have to control our own thinking, behaviours and reactions. Explore our own self-regulation issues and where they come from. To be able to identify our own negative behaviour triggers.

ADAPTABILITY

6.1 Subtle prejudice activity

Upon completion of this learning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Understand better what means discrimination/ prejudices and how this can influence their life. Understand the similarities and differences between different groups. To be able to link these terms with theories of social psychology. Understand why discrimination and prejudices are ethical problems	Develop critical thinking. To be more tolerant towards other people. Improve social skills. Develop cognitive skills. To see the results of their actions due to the judgements with limited information in the society. To be able to reflect on their personal thoughts. Differentiate various discrimination types in different segments of the society	Raise awareness about people that belong to different race, religion, ethnicity etc. Raise Awareness about how their actions can influence other people. Assume the consequences of their prejudmental actions in the society. Take initiative to combat discrimination and prejudices

6.2 Negative Attitudes

Upon completion of this learning unit the learner will be able to:		
KNOWLEDGE	**SKILLS**	**AUTONOMY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
Defining the term of stereotypes and prejudices. A better understanding of the difference between prejudices and stereotypes.	Be more emphatic. Become understanding. Be more tolerant. Be more open-minded.	Responsibility to address discrimination. Responsibility to know own rights.

Imprint:

Text: IEKEP
2.4 EQF in the context of the It Works! project: Hannah Degerman (Piteå Kommun)

Learning Outcomes of the Handbook:
Vocational orientation: exploring job opportunities: IEKEP
Decision making and goal setting: BAG KJS, YES Forum
Boundaries in the workplace: Piteå kommun
Communication: Verbal / Nonverbal: Centro San Viator
Teamwork and Conflict Resolution: The Inclusion Network
Overcoming prejudices: Nevo Parudimos

Coediting and design: YES Forum