



# Ulisse

Soft Skills for Employability

## SOFT SKILLS MIND MAP



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## Intellectual Output 2 - SOFT SKILLS MIND MAP

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## INTRODUCTION

The present report is part of the ULISSE Project; Understanding, Learning and Improving Soft Skills for Employability, 2018-1-IT01-KA203-048286. More precisely, it is the final result of the activities 3 and 4 of the Intellectual Output 2 of ULISSE Project.

In the first part we introduce the revised version of the soft skills list and respective definitions. From this moment on, this final list will be used throughout the end of the project.

A soft skills mind map is introduced in the second part of the report.

## SOFT SKILLS LIST

Based on the results obtained from the employers' survey conducted in the previous activity of the Intellectual Output 2, together with a revisited literature review, the final soft skills list is composed of 17 soft skills, namely:

1. Communication
2. Conflict management
3. Creativity
4. Critical thinking
5. Decision-making
6. Diversity sensitivity
7. Emotional management
8. Flexibility
9. Focus on costumers needs
10. Leadership
11. Orientation to results
12. Planning
13. Problem-solving
14. Teamwork
15. Time management
16. Willingness to learn
17. Work ethics

To define the soft skills, our approach focused mainly on observable behaviours. The definition for each soft skill is described in Table 1.

*Table 1. Soft Skills List and definitions*

SOFT SKILLS	DEFINITION
<b>Communication</b>	Communicate appropriately either one-to-one, in groups or in public; express opinions while respecting the other person; respond appropriately to others during conversations / meetings; effective writing of formal documents (e.g. reports, e-mails); give full attention to what other people are saying; ask questions when appropriate, not interrupting at inappropriate times
<b>Conflict management</b>	Identify sources of conflict and negotiate towards a resolution; take steps to overcome conflicts with others, or among others.
<b>Creativity</b>	Come up with unusual and useful ideas about a given topic or situation; create new solutions or ideas; demonstrate originality; suggest innovative proposals; develop creative ways of doing things.
<b>Critical thinking</b>	Identify relevant and reliable information; make sense of complex and ambiguous information; ask relevant questions; question either own and others ideas with humbleness; combine information from different sources.

<b>Decision-making</b>	Make responsible decisions autonomously; make timely decisions taking into account the consequences (e.g., effects on others, political and/or ethical implications); take responsibility for the decisions made.
<b>Diversity sensitivity</b>	Communicate and work effectively with individuals from diverse cultures, countries, races, ages, religions, lifestyles and points of view; respect and make the most out of people differences.
<b>Emotional management</b>	Manage stress; resilient; work well under pressure; self-motivated; manage own and others emotions; demonstrate a positive attitude.
<b>Flexibility</b>	Adaptability; open-minded; easily adapt to changes; respond adequately to constructive criticism; deal well with unexpected situations; polyvalent.
<b>Focus on costumers needs</b>	Listen carefully to others; understand correctly the message of the other; act in accordance to other's needs.
<b>Leadership</b>	Coordinate and guide the work of others; delegate tasks efficiently; motivate others to give their best; identify and develop the strengths of others to achieve common goals; encourage positive group relations and influence others views or behaviours.
<b>Orientation to results</b>	Goal-oriented; proactive; responsible; focus on achieving results; responsible attention to details without losing sight of the ultimate goal; carefully and efficiently complete tasks; show initiative.
<b>Planning</b>	Determine the tasks to be carried out towards goals; allocate tasks; monitor the progress made according to the plans; update plans to adapt to unexpected events or new information.
<b>Problem-solving</b>	Identify and prioritize problems; sort out the many facets of a problem; proactively contribute with ideas/answers regarding the problem while considering respective consequences; ability to solve novel and ill-defined problems in complex and real-world settings.
<b>Teamwork</b>	Contribute actively in a group to achieve a common goal; share resources and responsibilities; encourage the participation of all group members.
<b>Time management</b>	Manage several tasks at once; be on time; be able to set priorities and allocate time efficiently in order to meet deadlines; manage own time and the time of others.
<b>Willingness to learn</b>	Ability to learn from daily experiences and mistakes; proactivity in the search for continuous improvement; humble attitude towards people with more experience and knowledge; continuously update in the field of knowledge.
<b>Work ethics</b>	Demonstrate integrity, ethical behaviour and loyalty; act responsibly to address individuals and social interests; show work-related behaviours that do not have a negative impact on others as well as on society.

## SOFT SKILLS MIND MAP

The approach used to build the conceptual soft skills mind map aimed at identifying the soft skills prerequisites or antecedents, that is, what needs to be trained in order to develop each skill.

In order to identify the elements for each skill, we used the following methodology:

- literature review on soft skills definitions and developmental/training interventions;
- content analysis on MOOC list of free online courses ( <https://www.mooc-list.com>);
- content analysis on LinkedIn online training courses ([www.linkedin.com/online-training](http://www.linkedin.com/online-training));

In the mind map below (Figure 1), circles identify the 17 soft skills while squares relate to its antecedents. The grey arrows link the antecedents to each skill.

The dotted arrows in Figure 1 show the conceptual links among the skills, highlighting the main direction of dependence. For example, the arrow that starts at the skill “Critical thinking” and points to the skill “Problem-solving” means that critical thinking is needed in order to do problem-solving.

The blue curved lines represent the conceptual interrelationships among a set of skills that are strictly interconnected. That means that all of these skills are interdependent.

However, as stated by Le Boterf (2017), one person may possess the skill but that is not enough to put it in practice.

Having that in mind, Figure 1 also highlights some elements that need to be present in order to exhibit a competent behaviour: knowledge, practice and motivation. Knowledge about the soft skill reflects the “not-so-soft” component of each soft skill. The second element is practice because once we cognitively understand a skill, we need to experience in showing it behaviourally. Finally, when a skill is developed, a person may choose to use it (exhibit it) or not; this will depend on the motivation to put the skill in practice.



In respect to motivational issues, Albert Bandura and his Social Cognitive Theory clearly state that self-efficacy and outcome expectations

are crucial motivational elements, together with goals (Bandura, 1986; 1997). Self-efficacy may be defined as the level of confidence one feels about his or her ability to successfully behave in a certain manner and/or perform an action. However, if one does not anticipate positive consequences for performing a task or to behave in a skilful way, then there will be not enough motivation to do it. In fact, outcome expectations may be defined as the anticipated consequences of a person's behaviour.

To summarize, the knowledge and practice of a skill is necessary for skill development. However, once the skill is developed, motivation to use it plays a key role for putting the skill in practice.

Finally, as a skill only “exists” as action-in-context (Le Boterf, 2003), in Figure 1 context is represented in the same back colour of the mind map. This highlights the role context plays in skills demonstration.

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