



Ulisse

Soft Skills for Employability

IO4 GENERAL EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR SOFT SKILLS TRAINING



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Intellectual Output 4 - GENERAL EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR SOFT SKILLS TRAINING COURSES

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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 Intellectual Output 4 of ULISSE Project.

According with the project proposal submitted to the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Union the aim of this Intellectual Output is to develop an evaluation methodology for assessing soft skills training courses.

In the first part we introduce general issues on evaluation methodology in training courses on soft skills, highlighting several important aspects to consider while planning the evaluation methodology to be used.

The second part of this report presents the general evaluation methodology developed in this project. Detailed guidelines are described and all specific planning steps are explained in detail to allow readers to replicate the evaluation methodology in other projects.

Finally, the references of several resources on soft skills assessment are made available for further exploration.

Evaluating soft skills training courses

This session addresses general guidelines related to evaluation methodology. Several essential steps should be considered while preparing the evaluation of training courses on soft skills.

To design the evaluation processes it is necessary to begin with a clear definition of assessment goals. These may be related to pre-training motivation, course units' satisfaction, overall course satisfaction, course efficacy and/or training transfer.

The next step is defining *what* needs to be assessed in order to accomplish the assessment goals. To accomplish this task one needs to know the expected learning outcomes from the training. Indeed, expected learning outcomes are strictly linked to the planning of course evaluation. Consequently, a focus on evaluation is needed while the course is being planned and the syllabus are being prepared. This aspect is paramount because it will guide what to assess.

In the soft skills area, it is also important to consider three elements that need to be present to exhibit a competent behavior: knowledge, practice and motivation. **Knowledge** refers to cognitive understanding about a soft skill and we may say that it reflects the “not-so-soft” component of each soft skill. Once cognitively understood, one needs experience in applying it behaviorally (**practice**). Finally, **motivation** is key to exhibit a skill. In fact, once a skill is developed, a person may choose to use it (exhibit it) or not. If people believe that their actions will not have the desired consequences, they have little incentive to engage in those actions (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Therefore, the context in which it is expected to use soft skills is a key element when we consider motivation. Additionally, soft skills self-efficacy is essential. Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Consequently, individuals tend to choose activities in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy has been identified as a key individual's positive psychological state of development necessary to effectively acquire soft skills and employability outcomes (Audibert et al., 2020; Erozkan, 2013; Vieira & Coimbra, 2008; Vieira & Theotonio, 2018). The assessment should be considered in terms of an evaluation of probability about future performances. In fact, one needs to explore the likelihood that something will happen, in this case, the likelihood to use the soft skills learned in the training course (Cimatti, 2016). To conclude, when assessing soft skills, it is important to consider the knowledge, behaviours and attitudes that relate to each soft skill considered in the course. In the process of developing a soft skill, it is also important to consider the learner needs to know what the skill is (knowledge), how to do it (behaviour) and his/her thoughts or feelings about the skill (attitude).

When assessing soft skills, a set of several instruments may be used. Questionnaires for self-assessment and/or peer assessment are the most common (Cinque, 2015). External observation of performance may be also used, preferably with the support of checklists to be used by observers.

To design expected learning outcomes questionnaires trainers may create questions on skill knowledge that reflects the kind of cognitive learning expected to be acquired by

trainees. Behaviours or practice may be evaluated through direct observation of structured situations (e.g. role-playing) and/or by creating scenario questions in which trainees need to identify the most appropriate behaviour in specific situations. Attitudes may be evaluated through questionnaire's sentences related to thoughts, emotions and/or behaviours needed when applying the respective skill. As stated before, motivational aspects should not be neglected and self-efficacy evaluation is appropriate in these circumstances. The number of questions, scenarios and/or sentences depends on the number of the expected learning outcomes.

When considering who should participate in the evaluation process, the best option when evaluating soft skills is to collect evidences deriving from multiple sources. Considering the training context, this means that not only the trainees should assess themselves but also be evaluated either by their course peers as well as the trainers (Cimatti, 2016; Ricchiardi & Emanuel, 2018). Finally, the evaluation moments should be defined during the course planning phase. Trainees may be evaluated before, during and after the course.

ULISSE General assessment framework

In this part of the report we will address the general evaluation methodology developed in this project. First of all, it is important to clarify evaluation specific procedures that were used.

Trainers are responsible for implementing the tools for evaluating the learning outcomes. On the first day of each course, trainers allocate students by pairs and by the groups, explaining that throughout the course, pairs and groups will always include the same students. This is important to facilitate the knowledge among trainees in order to facilitate the peer evaluation that take place at the end of the course.

Other important issue of the evaluation process was the creation of **control groups** composed by students not taking part in the course that were asked to complete some questionnaires. Control groups were created in order to evaluate the learning outcomes on the students attending the course referring to students who did not. The partners included in the control group students that applied for the course but that were excluded (due to not fulfilling the course registration criteria or because the target number of participants was already reached) or non-applicant students willing to support the evaluation of the course. The control group assessment was done twice: before the course and just after it.

All questionnaires were translated into the respective National languages before the beginning of the course. The online platform Limesurvey has been identified as the most appropriate tool to collect participants' feedback throughout the soft skills course. The online questionnaires were available in English and the respective National languages: Spanish, Italian, Latvian and Portuguese.

Table 1 summarizes the evaluation methodology used at ULISSE project in order to evaluate the soft skills course, specifying data collection moments, assessment goals for each tool, identification of the questionnaires to be used in each moment and the respective assessment target group.

Table 1 - ULISSE general evaluation methodology

When	Assessment Goal/Why	How (Questionnaires)	Who
Before the course During application	Assess student's pre-training motivation to use as criteria for admission	1.1. Main questionnaire with application form	Applicants students (if there were 25 registered students that will not participate in the course, these will be the control group)
	Create a baseline	1.2. Main questionnaire without application form	Non-applicants students (This questionnaire will be needed only if there were less than 25 registered students that will not participate in the course, these will be the control group)
During the course End of each workshop	Evaluate workshop satisfaction	2. Workshop Satisfaction Questionnaire	Participants (students selected to participate in the course)
In the end of the course End of the last workshop	Evaluate course satisfaction	3. Course Satisfaction Questionnaire	Participants
	Evaluate the course efficacy in the development of soft skills	1.2. Main questionnaire without application form	Participants Non- participants / Non-applicants students
		4. Peers questionnaire	Training Peers
One month after the course	Training transfer	5. Post-training transfer and learning questionnaire	Participants

In the context of ULISSE project, several questionnaires were developed. All questionnaires were mainly composed of close questions based on a Likert response scale. A description of each tool (questionnaire) is presented below. The full English version of the tools used for the evaluation during the four soft skills courses that took place in Italy, Latvia, Portugal and Spain are presented in the annexes.

1.1. Main questionnaire with application form

This tool is based on the questions that the trainers prepared in order to evaluate: a) soft skills knowledge; and, b) practice (based on scenarios). Additionally, based on the learning outcomes expected for each workshop, a self-efficacy questionnaire was designed by a self-efficacy specialist to assess the soft skills attitudes of the learners (motivational part). In these three sections we included the knowledge or practical technique/ that were treated were trained in each workshop. When designing the questionnaires, it is important not to refer to broad concepts (e.g. "creativity") but divide them into micro-skills because these are more easily assessed.

Table 2 - Content design methodology

Skill	Knowledge “not-so-soft part”	Practice knowledge in practice	Motivation/Attitude (self-efficacy) From behavioural Learning Outcomes
Creativity Problem solving	3 questions	3 scenarios	5 sentences
Conflict management Flexibility	3 questions	3 scenarios	5 sentences
Focus on customers’ needs Willingness to learn	3 questions	3 scenarios	5 sentences
Critical thinking	3 questions	3 scenarios	5 sentences

1.2. Main questionnaire without application form

This questionnaire has the same structure as the 1.1. questionnaire but not the questions used for the course application related to pre-training motivation.

2. Workshop Satisfaction Questionnaire

Each workshop was evaluated separately and this questionnaire was answered by the trainees at the end of each training day, focusing in five different dimensions: a) Clearness of workshop objectives; b) Interactivity level; c) Relevance of the topics presented; d) Quality of the delivery; and, e) Workshop usefulness to soft skill development. Questionnaire 2 was applied daily to evaluate each workshop and to monitor the course process.

3. Course Satisfaction Questionnaire

For a general assessment, course satisfaction questionnaires were distributed at the end of the course.

4. Peers questionnaire: This questionnaire is composed of 20 questions relating to behavioural aspects expected to be developed by the course. It is important that the trainers clarify to the learners that this questionnaire does not aim to evaluate the learners themselves but it is just to evaluate the course. Also, the answers are anonymous and the project team will only know who is being evaluated but not who did the evaluation.

5. Post-training transfer and learning questionnaire

The most important outcome is the actual implementation of the soft skills in everyday life. To effectively assess this aspect, one needs to know if the trainees are using the learned soft skills in their day-to-day life.

ULISSE Guidelines for data analyses

The guidelines for data analysis based on ULISSE evaluation tools is provided in table 3. The Limesurvey platform allows the trainees answers exportation to an excel file. After this process, the table below refers to basic calculations that can be done by excel.

Table 3 - Guidelines for data analysis

Assessment Goal	Questionnaire	Who	
Assess student's pre-training motivation to use as criteria for admission Create a baseline	1.1. Main questionnaire with application form	Applicants students	1) "SECTION 1": Confidence" Compare means of each 5 questions group (related to each workshop) "SECTIONS 2 & 3": Compare means of correct answers in knowledge and situations (3 questions related to each workshop)
	1.2. Main questionnaire without application form	Non-applicants students	2) Compare means before and after
Evaluate workshop satisfaction	2. Workshop Satisfaction Questionnaire	Participants	(3) Means for each question by workshop
Evaluate course satisfaction	3. Course Satisfaction Questionnaire	Participants	(4) Means for each question
Evaluate the course efficacy in the development of soft skills	1.2. Main questionnaire without application form	Participants Non- participants / Non-applicants students	Same procedure described as (1)
	4. Peers questionnaire	Training Peers	(5) Means for each question
Training transfer	5. Post-training transfer and learning questionnaire	Participants	(6) Describe number of yes/no in the first 2 questions; question 3 (confidence): compare with (1) and (1.1) means for each grouped questions (the 5 questions for each workshop) - question 4: Means for each question

Conclusions

The methodology presented in this report was tailor-made for assessing the learning outcomes of ULISSE workshops on soft skills. However, this example can be applied in other soft skills trainings.

As mentioned before, the evaluation methodology adopted in the project is closely linked to the work previously developed in IO3 (in particular to “A4 - Design of syllabi, collection and preparation of training materials for the missing skills”) and to the definition of learning expected outcomes. The outcomes are the starting point for designing the training evaluation.

In this context, success training outcomes can be identified by answering the following questions: a) What will the training course success look like?; b) Will the trainees react favourably to the training?; c) To what degree will trainees acquire the intended knowledge and skills based on their participation in the training?; and, d) Will the trainees apply what they learned during training when they are back to their daily environment?

It is very important to include the focus on the training transfer, i.e. the extent to which what is learned in training is applied in the daily life of the trainees. The post-training transfer and learning questionnaire aims to capture in what measure training transfer has occurred.

Additionally, for evaluating soft skills one needs to avoid the bias due to the common misunderstanding on soft skills meaning of them. This can be achieved by using behavioural, cognitive and motivational indicators for each skill, instead of its nomenclature.

In conclusion, we expect that the development soft skills that are of great value for companies will positively impact the employability of students/graduates (Robles, 2012; Succi & Canovi, 2019; Vieira et al., 2017).

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ANNEX - ULISSE QUESTIONNAIRES

1.1. Main questionnaire for registration



ULISSE Soft Skills Training Course - Application Form

This questionnaire is a part of the international project “*ULISSE - Understanding, Learning and Improving Soft Skills for Employability*” supported by the EU Erasmus + Programme (Project Number: 2018-1-IT01-KA203-048286).

One of our aims is to contribute to adjust the profile of Higher Education graduates to the skills required by the labour market. In this context, the soft skills training course aims to develop skills that are very valued by employers.

To complete your application, answer to all the questions below. Thank you.

Privacy policy and consent

I understand that my answers to this form will be confidential and will exclusively be used in the context of the ULISSE project. I agree that my data may be used by ULISSE project even if I am not selected to the soft skills training course. If that is case, I will still allow to be contact by ULISSE project in the future.

I agree that my data will be stored in ISCAP’s servers (Polytechnic of Porto, P.PORTO) and I am informed that I can, at any time, exercise my rights of access, to rectification, cancellation and opposition (ARCO rights), as regulated in art. 15 to 21 of the GDPR, by mail to gaie.edu@iscap.ipp.pt. Information: In case of conflict of ARCO rights with Legislation in force, the latter will be applied. You can ask P.PORTO's Data Protection Officer (DPO) for a copy of all your personal details via <https://ipp.pt>. If you believe that your data's protection rights are not being observed by the organisation or individual, you should contact the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner to ask for help.

I agree to the terms of the privacy policy and consent set above and I wish to continue ___

SECTION 0 - Identification

1. Country: Italy Latvia Portugal Spain

2. Name and Surname:

3. Age (in numbers):

4. Gender: Male Female Non binary

5. Course:

6. Level: Bachelor Master Other (indicate)

7. Do you have work experience? no yes (how many years (in numbers))

8. Email:

9. Mobile:

10. Why are you applying to this training? _____

11. For each statement below, please, indicate the number that best describes your situation.

1 = Totally disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Partially agree 4 = Agree 5 = Totally agree

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

11.1. Learning new contents and behaviours is easy for me	1	2	3	4	5
11.2. I will be able to attend all workshops	1	2	3	4	5
11.3. I do everything I can to develop myself as a professional	1	2	3	4	5
11.4. I love having an active role during workshops	1	2	3	4	5
11.5. I really need to develop my soft skills	1	2	3	4	5
11.6. I am willing to apply the skills from this course to my daily life	1	2	3	4	5
11.7. I will have time for the activities between the workshops	1	2	3	4	5
11.8. This course will enhance my employability					
11.9. I do everything I can to develop as a person	1	2	3	4	5
11.10. I like thinking about ways to improve my behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
11.11. I am very motivated to attend this course	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 1 - Confidence

1. Indicate your degree of confidence in your ability to do each activity described below.

1 = Not confident at all 2 = A little confident 3 = Confident 4 = Very confident 5 = Completely confident

	Confidence level				
1.1. Cooperate with others to produce creative outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. Be creative when trying to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Use creativity techniques	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Apply the Brainstorming technique	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Apply the Random words association technique	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. Use empathic communication skills to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. Select the most appropriate style in the resolution of a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
1.8. Apply negotiation skills	1	2	3	4	5
1.9. Be assertive when communicating with others during a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
1.10. Prevent conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
1.11. Take right decisions while solving a problem	1	2	3	4	5
1.12. Apply a structured method to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
1.13. Identify my own cognitive biases	1	2	3	4	5
1.14. Face problems in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
1.15. Identify cognitive biases in others	1	2	3	4	5
1.16. Understand the other person's actual needs	1	2	3	4	5
1.17. Design/lead conversation	1	2	3	4	5
1.18. See the conversation in the long run	1	2	3	4	5
1.19. Recognize behavioural style	1	2	3	4	5
1.20. Know how to talk to different people	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 2 - Knowledge

2. For each statement/question below, choose the option you think is right.

2.1. Regarding the divergent thinking, which of the following statements is true?

- a) It is governed by patterns
- b) Moves with a defined purpose

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- c) Create new ways
- d) I don't know

2.2. Which of the following IS NOT a barrier to creativity?

- a) Fear of failure
- b) Trust yourself
- c) Conformism
- d) I don't know

2.3. Which of the following behaviours boosts creativity?

- a) Rise your eyebrows
- b) Cross your arms and legs
- c) Look at the floor continuously
- d) I don't know

2.4. Regarding the Team Conflict, which of the following statements is true?

- a) We must avoid
- b) Is important for the team success
- c) They're always destructive
- d) I don't know

2.5. Which of the following is the better communication style for Interpersonal Conflict?

- a) Aggressive style
- b) Passive-aggressive style
- c) Assertive style
- d) I don't know

2.6. Which of the following variables promote best Organizational Conflict Management?

- a) Psychological safety environment
- b) Good salary
- c) Good facilities
- d) I don't know

2.7. Critical thinking can be defined as:

- a) The ability to critically think about your own and other's thoughts and arguments
- b) An attitude for being critic about other person's behaviour
- c) Use arguments for impose your point of views on specific topics
- d) I don't know

2.8. An argument is:

- a) Two peoples having different point of views on a topic to be reconciled
- b) A connected series of premises that are intended to give a reason of conclusions
- c) A topic on which someone can discuss about using logical statements
- d) I don't know

2.9. One of the most common barriers to solving problem is:

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- a) Having a low I. Q.
- b) Lacking in knowledge about a subject matter
- c) Functional fixedness
- d) I don't know

2.10. What is customer?

- a) An individual that purchases goods or services
- b) Business that purchases another company's goods or services
- c) An individual or business that purchases another company's goods or services
- d) I don't know

2.11. What is the first important factor in the dialogue with the buyer?

- a) Present yourself in detail
- b) Paying great attention to the needs and opinions of customers
- c) Describe the product or services in as much detail as possible
- d) I don't know

2.12. What does customer buy?

- a) Price, cost, value
- b) Transformation they want in their lives
- c) Both previous answers are correct
- d) I don't know

SECTION 3 - Situations

3. Read the situations described below and choose the option you think is right:

3.1 In your first day of work, the manager gives you instructions of how to perform the tasks related to your job. The day starts very well and you feel you are doing a great job. However, at the beginning of the afternoon your computer starts getting very slow. What would you do?

- a) You keep working as if nothing had happened, after all this is a tool the company has given you to work with.
- b) Before getting back to your boss you brainstorm about the possible causes of the trouble and the strategies you could do to solve the problem, and if it is appropriate (eg. Re-start the computer, install an update of the software, etc.), you try to implement some of them on your own.
- c) You would never try to solve a problem on your own, the manager should have all the responses and you go straight away to report to your boss.
- d) I don't know

3.2. A customer comes to you to report that he is not having the expected results when using one of the products of your company. What would you do?

- a) You ask him under which circumstances and how he is applying the product, and try to brainstorm with him where is the problem and how could he get better results using the product.
- b) You report the problem to your boss and wait for an answer.
- c) You are sympathetic with your customer and encourage him to complain formally against your company.

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d) I don't know

3.3. One of the processes you are responsible needs to be updated and improved in order to maximize the output. You comment the circumstances to one of your colleagues and she says that you should not think too much and leave it as it is. What would you do?

- a) You follow her advice and do nothing.
- b) You prepare a strategy to blame your colleague in case your boss realizes that you should have proposed an improvement of the process.
- c) You analyse the process, ask other colleagues, customers and suppliers and propose to your boss some changes in order to improve the profitability of the process.
- d) I don't know

3.4. In a situation of conflict with another person, before arguing, it is important to:

- a) Explore the situation well and be sure that there is no misunderstanding possibly caused by prejudice or stereotype
- b) Be quick to respond to the situation to gain competitive advantage and mark territory
- c) Let the situation go by, because the problem will be solved by itself
- d) I don't know

3.5. In a negotiation between two teams, where the goal is for each team to convince the other to change the pitch, what would be their best strategy to achieve the goal?

- a) Offer something material for others to switch field, so they can win the competition
- b) Hide your intentions and try to convince the opposing team to do what interests you
- c) Present your intentions and ask for the intentions of others, to assess whether they are compatible
- d) I don't know

3.6. As the main strategy to intervene in the organization in terms of conflict management, I would choose to:

- a) Offer mindfulness services and training on negotiation
- b) Create a culture of psychological security through coach leadership and where feedback is practiced daily
- c) Create regulations that can punish negative behaviours and reward organizational citizenship behaviours
- d) I don't know

3.7. You are reading some news about the COVID-19 situation. The journalist writes that "Given the information about past pandemics, we can say that Covid-19 is the least severe pandemic ever." What would you think about this statement?

- a) The journalist has made a proper argument and you believe on what she has written.
- b) The journalist did not make a proper argument, so you stop reading the article because it is not credible any more.
- c) The journalist has made a proper argument but the premises are weak and some concepts are ill defined. You ask yourself how you can say if the argument is true or not.
- d) I don't know

3.8. You are working on a project at work, and due to a strong delay of a supplier you will not be able to wait for his delivery, otherwise you will go late with your client. What would you do?

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- a) You use critical thinking techniques in order to convince your customer that a delay in the project is not a big deal.
- b) You identify, among the ones that you know, which is the proper tool of problem solving in order to reply to this situation.
- c) You prepare yourself to have an argument with your supplier.
- d) I don't know

3.9. You are doing a project with 3 people for a class of your Master Degree. When it comes to finding a solution to a problem and to design the task in order to solve that problem, you notice that your team is strongly un-efficient: every meeting is about 4 hours long and you struggle to come out with clear solutions. What do you do?

- a) You decide to move the meeting online. Working remotely can mitigate the useless activities that are done during the meetings.
- b) You plan a structured brainstorming. You pick a problem solving tool and structure the brain storming based on it, you communicate the rules to your team-mates, setting a clear goal and a time frame.
- c) You decide to do the problem solving activity by yourself, using the TRIZ approach. Then you communicate the result to the rest of the team and eventually discuss with them about changes.
- d) I don't know

3.10. The customer does not want to buy a product or service because its price and quality do not seem to satisfy him/her.

- a) You will immediately start talking about another product - you will explain how good this other product is and that it is very popular among other customers.
- b) You will ask additional questions to explore the customer's needs in more depth and then, by highlighting the features of the existing or some other product, explain why it may be useful to the customer.
- c) You will explain that actually your company has a different target group and that the customer does not seem part of it.
- d) I don't know

3.11. The customer cannot yet decide whether to purchase this product, as he has two other similar products in mind, which he saw in other shops.

- a) You will answer: "Sure, take a look at the other two products and if you still decide to buy this product, I will be waiting for an e-mail from you".
- b) Offer to try the product for 14 days and after 14 days you will call to inquire how satisfied the customer is with the product.
- c) You will say, "No, I have heard bad reviews about those goods, I do not recommend you take them".
- d) I don't know

3.12. The client has come to solve household issues, health problems, express political views or solve other similar issues

- a) You will listen and agree that the situation is really sad and you will add more peers from your life.
- b) You will answer: "Yes, I understand your situation. However, could please more specify what your needs would be and maybe we can help you? And then, by highlighting the features of the existing or some other product, explain why it may be useful to the customers' problems.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- c) You will answer: I'm sorry, but I can't help you in any way and to be honest, I don't have time for such talks, because I have a daily plan that needs to be filled out, so I have to deal with selling products.
- d) I don't know

4. If you wish, leave your comments here.

Thank you for your collaboration.

ULISSE Project Team

1.2. Main questionnaire without application form



ULISSE Soft Skills

This questionnaire is a part of the international project “**ULISSE - Understanding, Learning and Improving Soft Skills for Employability**” supported by the EU Erasmus + Programme (Project Number: 2018-1-IT01-KA203-048286).

One of our aims is to contribute to adjust the profile of Higher Education graduates to the skills required by the labour market. In this context, the soft skills training course aims to develop skills that are very valued by employers.

Please, answer to all the questions below. Thank you.

Privacy policy and consent

I understand that my answers to this form will be confidential and will exclusively be used in the context of the ULISSE project. I agree that my data may be used by ULISSE project even if I am not selected to the soft skills training course. If that is case, I will still allow to be contact by ULISSE project in the future.

I agree that my data will be stored in ISCAP’s servers (Polytechnic of Porto, P.PORTO) and I am informed that I can, at any time, exercise my rights of access, to rectification, cancellation and opposition (ARCO rights), as regulated in art. 15 to 21 of the GDPR, by mail to gaie.edu@iscap.ipp.pt. Information: In case of conflict of ARCO rights with Legislation in force, the latter will be applied. You can ask P.PORTO's Data Protection Officer (DPO) for a copy of all your personal details via <https://ipp.pt>. If you believe that your data's protection rights are not being observed by the organisation or individual, you should contact the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner to ask for help.

I agree to the terms of the privacy policy and consent set above and I wish to continue __

SECTION 0 - Identification

1. Country: Italy Latvia Portugal Spain
2. Name and Surname:
3. Age (in numbers):
4. Gender: Male Female Non binary
5. Course:
6. Level: Bachelor Master Other (indicate)
7. Do you have work experience? no yes (how many years (in numbers))

SECTION 1 - Confidence

1. Indicate your degree of confidence in your ability to do each activity described below.

1 = Not confident at all 2 = A little confident 3 = Confident 4 = Very confident 5 = Completely confident

	Confidence level				
	1	2	3	4	5
1.1. Cooperate with others to produce creative outcomes					

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

1.2. Be creative when trying to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Use creativity techniques	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Apply the Brainstorming technique	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Apply the Random words association technique	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. Use empathic communication skills to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. Select the most appropriate style in the resolution of a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
1.8. Apply negotiation skills	1	2	3	4	5
1.9. Be assertive when communicating with others during a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
1.10. Prevent conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
1.11. Take right decisions while solving a problem	1	2	3	4	5
1.12. Apply a structured method to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
1.13. Identify my own cognitive biases	1	2	3	4	5
1.14. Face problems in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
1.15. Identify cognitive biases in others	1	2	3	4	5
1.16. Understand the other person's actual needs	1	2	3	4	5
1.17. Design/lead conversation	1	2	3	4	5
1.18. See the conversation in the long run	1	2	3	4	5
1.19. Recognize behavioural style	1	2	3	4	5
1.20. Know how to talk to different people	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 2 - Knowledge

2. For each statement/question below, choose the option you think is right.

2.1. Regarding the divergent thinking, which of the following statements is true?

- a) It is governed by patterns
- b) Moves with a defined purpose
- c) Create new ways
- d) I don't know

2.2. Which of the following IS NOT a barrier to creativity?

- a) Fear of failure
- b) Trust yourself
- c) Conformism
- d) I don't know

2.3. Which of the following behaviours boosts creativity?

- a) Rise your eyebrows
- b) Cross your arms and legs
- c) Look at the floor continuously
- d) I don't know

2.4. Regarding the Team Conflict, which of the following statements is true?

- a) We must avoid
- b) Is important for the team success
- c) They're always destructive
- d) I don't know

2.5. Which of the following is the better communication style for Interpersonal Conflict?

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- a) Aggressive style
- b) Passive-aggressive style
- c) Assertive style
- d) I don't know

2.6. Which of the following variables promote best Organizational Conflict Management?

- a) Psychological safety environment
- b) Good salary
- c) Good facilities
- d) I don't know

2.7. Critical thinking can be defined as:

- a) The ability to critically think about your own and other's thoughts and arguments
- b) An attitude for being critic about other person's behaviour
- c) Use arguments for impose your point of views on specific topics
- d) I don't know

2.8. An argument is:

- a) Two peoples having different point of views on a topic to be reconciled
- b) A connected series of premises that are intended to give a reason of conclusions
- c) A topic on which someone can discuss about using logical statements
- d) I don't know

2.9. One of the most common barriers to solving problem is:

- a) Having a low I. Q.
- b) Lacking in knowledge about a subject matter
- c) Functional fixedness
- d) I don't know

2.10. What is customer?

- a) An individual that purchases goods or services
- b) Business that purchases another company's goods or services
- c) An individual or business that purchases another company's goods or services
- d) I don't know

2.11. What is the first important factor in the dialogue with the buyer?

- a) Present yourself in detail
- b) Paying great attention to the needs and opinions of customers
- c) Describe the product or services in as much detail as possible
- d) I don't know

2.12. What does customer buy?

- a) Price, cost, value
- b) Transformation they want in their lives
- c) Both previous answers are correct

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

d) I don't know

SECTION 3 - Situations

3. Read the situations described below and choose the option you think is right:

3.1 In your first day of work, the manager gives you instructions of how to perform the tasks related to your job. The day starts very well and you feel you are doing a great job. However, at the beginning of the afternoon your computer starts getting very slow. What would you do?

- a) You keep working as if nothing had happened, after all this is a tool the company has given you to work with.
- b) Before getting back to your boss you brainstorm about the possible causes of the trouble and the strategies you could do to solve the problem, and if it is appropriate (eg. Re-start the computer, install an update of the software, etc.), you try to implement some of them on your own.
- c) You would never try to solve a problem on your own, the manager should have all the responses and you go straight away to report to your boss.
- d) I don't know

3.2. A customer comes to you to report that he is not having the expected results when using one of the products of your company. What would you do?

- a) You ask him under which circumstances and how he is applying the product, and try to brainstorm with him where is the problem and how could he get better results using the product.
- b) You report the problem to your boss and wait for an answer.
- c) You are sympathetic with your customer and encourage him to complain formally against your company.
- d) I don't know

3.3. One of the processes you are responsible needs to be updated and improved in order to maximize the output. You comment the circumstances to one of your colleagues and she says that you should not think too much and leave it as it is. What would you do?

- a) You follow her advice and do nothing.
- b) You prepare a strategy to blame your colleague in case your boss realizes that you should have proposed an improvement of the process.
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- a) Offer something material for others to switch field, so they can win the competition

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- b) Hide your intentions and try to convince the opposing team to do what interests you
- c) Present your intentions and ask for the intentions of others, to assess whether they are compatible
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- c) The journalist has made a proper argument but the premises are weak and some concepts are ill defined. You ask yourself how you can say if the argument is true or not.
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- c) You prepare yourself to have an argument with your supplier.
- d) I don't know

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- b) You plan a structured brainstorming. You pick a problem solving tool and structure the brain storming based on it, you communicate the rules to your team-mates, setting a clear goal and a time frame.
- c) You decide to do the problem solving activity by yourself, using the TRIZ approach. Then you communicate the result to the rest of the team and eventually discuss with them about changes.
- d) I don't know

3.10. The customer does not want to buy a product or service because its price and quality do not seem to satisfy him/her.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

- a) You will immediately start talking about another product - you will explain how good this other product is and that it is very popular among other customers.
- b) You will ask additional questions to explore the customer's needs in more depth and then, by highlighting the features of the existing or some other product, explain why it may be useful to the customer.
- c) You will explain that actually your company has a different target group and that the customer does not seem part of it.
- d) I don't know

3.11. The customer cannot yet decide whether to purchase this product, as he has two other similar products in mind, which he saw in other shops.

- a) You will answer: "Sure, take a look at the other two products and if you still decide to buy this product, I will be waiting for an e-mail from you".
- b) Offer to try the product for 14 days and after 14 days you will call to inquire how satisfied the customer is with the product.
- c) You will say, "No, I have heard bad reviews about those goods, I do not recommend you take them".
- d) I don't know

3.12. The client has come to solve household issues, health problems, express political views or solve other similar issues

- a) You will listen and agree that the situation is really sad and you will add more peers from your life.
- b) You will answer: "Yes, I understand your situation. However, could please more specify what your needs would be and maybe we can help you? And then, by highlighting the features of the existing or some other product, explain why it may be useful to the customers' problems.

2. Workshop Satisfaction Questionnaire

ULISSE Soft Skills Training Course - Workshop Satisfaction

Name of the workshop:

Your Name and Surname:

Email:

Date:

Country:

1. Think about the workshop you have just attended. For each statement below, please, indicate the number that best describes your opinion:

1 = Totally unsatisfied 2 = Unsatisfied 3 = Partially satisfied 4 = Satisfied 5 = Totally Satisfied

Satisfaction level

1.1. Clarity of the workshop objectives	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. Level of interaction	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Content relevancy	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Trainer/s clarity	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Workshop usefulness	1	2	3	4	5

2. What did you like the most about this workshop?

3. What aspects of the workshop could be improved?

4. If you wish, leave your comments here.

Thank you for your collaboration.

ULISSE Project Team

3. Course Satisfaction Questionnaire

ULISSE Soft Skills Training Course - Overall Satisfaction

Your Name and Surname:

Email:

Date:

Country:

1. Think about the Soft Skills Training Course you have just attended. For each statement below, please, indicate the number that best describes your opinion:

1 = Totally unsatisfied 2 = Unsatisfied 3 = Partially satisfied 4 = Satisfied 5 = Totally Satisfied

	Satisfaction level				
1.1. Clarity of the course objectives	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. Level of interaction	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Content relevancy	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Trainer/s clarity	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Course usefulness	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. Theoretical part of the course	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. Practical part of the course	1	2	3	4	5
1.8. Soft skills learning	1	2	3	4	5

2. What did you like the most about this course?

3. What aspects of the course could be improved?

4. If you wish, leave your comments here.

Thank you for your collaboration.

ULISSE Project Team

4. Peers questionnaire

ULISSE Soft Skills Training Course - Peer Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of the international project “ULISSE - Understanding, Learning and Improving Soft Skills for Employability” supported by the EU Erasmus + Programme (Project Number: 2018-1-IT01-KA203-048286).

Our aim is to know your opinion about your colleague’s skills, based on your personal experience and observations during this training course. This evaluation is just for improving the course, it is not an evaluation on your colleague.

The results will be confidential and only the trainers will have access to them.

Thank you for your collaboration.

0. Country _____

1. Your colleague’s name: _____

2. For how long do you know this colleague? _____

3. Below there is a list of several skills. For each of them, please indicate the number that best describes the skill level of your colleague. Consider that:

1 = Very low 2 = Low 3 = Average 4 = High 5 = Very high

SKILLS	Very low	Low	Average	High	Very high
3.1. Cooperate with others to produce creative outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
3.2. Be creative when trying to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5
3.3. Use creativity techniques	1	2	3	4	5
3.4. Apply the Brainstorming technique	1	2	3	4	5
3.5. Apply the Random words association technique	1	2	3	4	5
3.6. Use empathic communication skills to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
3.7. Select the most appropriate style in the resolution of a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
3.8. Apply negotiation skills	1	2	3	4	5
3.9. Be assertive when communicating with others during a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
3.10. Prevent conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
3.11. Take right decisions while solving a problem	1	2	3	4	5
3.12. Apply a structured method to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
3.13. Identify his/her own cognitive biases	1	2	3	4	5
3.14. Face problems in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
3.15. Identify cognitive biases in others	1	2	3	4	5

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

3.16. Understand the other person's actual needs	1	2	3	4	5
3.17. Design/lead conversation	1	2	3	4	5
3.18. See the conversation in the long run	1	2	3	4	5
3.19. Recognize behavioural style	1	2	3	4	5
3.20. Know how to talk to different people	1	2	3	4	5

4. If you wish, leave your comments here.

Thank you for your collaboration.

ULISSE Project Team

5. Post-training transfer and learning questionnaire

ULISSE Soft Skills Training Course - Transfer Questionnaire

Name and Surname:

Email:

Country:

1. Since the end of the course, did you notice any difference in your behaviour that may relate to the soft skills training you attended?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe.

2. Did anyone comment on differences in your behaviour that may be related to the soft skills training?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe.

3. Indicate your degree of confidence in your ability to do each activity described below.

1 = Not confident at all 2 = A little confident 3 = Confident 4 = Very confident 5 = Completely confident

	Confidence level				
	1	2	3	4	5
3.1. Cooperate with others to produce creative outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
3.2. Be creative when trying to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5
3.3. Use creativity techniques	1	2	3	4	5
3.4. Apply the Brainstorming technique	1	2	3	4	5
3.5. Apply the Random words association technique	1	2	3	4	5
3.6. Use empathic communication skills to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
3.7. Select the most appropriate style in the resolution of a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
3.8. Apply negotiation skills	1	2	3	4	5
3.9. Be assertive when communicating with others during a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
3.10. Prevent conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
3.11. Take right decisions while solving a problem	1	2	3	4	5
3.12. Apply a structured method to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5
3.13. Identify my own cognitive biases	1	2	3	4	5
3.14. Face problems in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
3.15. Identify cognitive biases in others	1	2	3	4	5

GENERAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

3.16. Understand the other person's actual needs	1	2	3	4	5
3.17. Design/lead conversation	1	2	3	4	5
3.18. See the conversation in the long run	1	2	3	4	5
3.19. Recognize behavioural style	1	2	3	4	5
3.20. Know how to talk to different people	1	2	3	4	5

4. Indicate how often you have been applying each skill described below:

1 = Never 2 = Few times 3 = Sometimes 4 = Several times 5 = A lot of times

4.1. Cooperate with others to produce creative outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
4.2. Be creative when trying to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5
4.3. Use creativity techniques	1	2	3	4	5
4.4. Apply the Brainstorming technique	1	2	3	4	5
4.5. Apply the Random words association technique	1	2	3	4	5
4.6. Use empathic communication skills to resolve conflicts	1	2	3	4	5
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4.13. Identify my own cognitive biases	1	2	3	4	5
4.14. Face problems in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
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4.16. Understand the other person's actual needs	1	2	3	4	5
4.17. Design/lead conversation	1	2	3	4	5
4.18. See the conversation in the long run	1	2	3	4	5
4.19. Recognize behavioural style	1	2	3	4	5
4.20. Know how to talk to different people	1	2	3	4	5

5. If you wish, leave your comments about the soft skills training course.

Thank you for your collaboration.

ULISSE Project Team



Ulisse
Soft Skills for Employability

IO4 SOFT SKILLS COURSE EVALUATION

Diana Aguiar Vieira, Ana Cláudia Rodrigues, Isabel Ardions, Manuel Salvador
Araújo, Paula Carvalho & Viviana Meirinhos
ISCAP – Polytechnic of Porto
August 2021



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Intellectual Output 4 - SOFT SKILLS COURSE EVALUATION

Authors:

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Statement of originality:

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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 consists of the data analysis related to the Intellectual Output 3 and 4 of ULISSE Project.

According with the project proposal submitted to the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Union the aim of this report is to present the soft skills course evaluation. Although the project involved four courses (one per country), the evaluation will include the total sample to obtain the necessary number of students to perform the data analysis.

In the first part we introduce the sample of participants in the soft skills training (the experimental group) as well as the sample of non-participants (the control group).

The second part of this report presents the results obtained in terms of soft skills knowledge, soft skills applied knowledge to hypothetical situations and self-efficacy related to the soft skills. Subsequently we report the frequency of soft skills use in participants’ daily lives (one month after the course) followed by participants’ satisfaction referring to each workshop and the course.

Finally, some general conclusions are presented.

SAMPLE

One important issue of the evaluation process was the creation of a control group composed of students not taking part in the course that were asked to complete some questionnaires. The control group was created in order to evaluate the learning outcomes of the students attending the course referring to students who did not. The control group assessment was done twice: before the course and just after it.

Among the four countries, we collected data from 110 students (62 participants and 58 of the control group). The majority of students were female (60%). The mean age was 24 years old. The majority was studying for a bachelor degree (62%) and 38% for a master degree.

Table 1. Sample per country (time 1)

Country	Participants	Control
Italy	18	23
Latvia	12	0
Portugal	15	7
Spain	17	28
Total	62	58

It is important to clarify that table 1 reflects the number of students who answered the questionnaire in time 1 (before the beginning of the course). The students included in the control group comprise the ones that were not selected to participate in the course or non-applicant students willing to support the evaluation of the course.

COURSE EVALUATION

The evaluation course planning included three moments: before the course, on the last day of the course and one month later. Additionally, at the end of each workshop and on the last day of the course we evaluated participants' satisfaction.

In terms of soft skills related-contents assessed and, as stated by Vieira et al. (2021), it is important to consider three elements: knowledge, practice and motivation. Knowledge refers to the cognitive understanding of a soft skill and we may say that it reflects the "not-so-soft" component of each soft skill. Once cognitively understood, one needs experience in applying it behaviorally (practice). Finally, motivation to use a skill is paramount. Self-efficacy is key to motivating behaviour and it may be considered as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1986). Consequently,

individuals tend to choose activities and/or behaviours in which they feel competent and confident (Bandura, 1997). Moreover, self-efficacy has been identified as a key individual's positive psychological state necessary to effectively acquire soft skills and positive employability outcomes (Audibert et al., 2020; Erozkhan, 2013; Vieira & Coimbra, 2008; Vieira & Theotonio, 2018). Table 2 summarizes the evaluation used at the ULISSE project specifying data collection moments, assessment contents and target groups.

Table 2. ULISSE evaluation by moments, assessment content and target group

Moment	Assessment content	Target group
Before the course (Time 1)	Soft skills knowledge Soft skills in practice (scenarios) Soft skills self-efficacy	Participants Control
Last day of each workshop	Workshop Satisfaction	Participants
Last day of the course (Time 2)	Course Satisfaction	Participants
	Soft skills knowledge Soft skills in practice (scenarios) Soft skills self-efficacy	Participants Control
	Soft skills level	One peer per participant
One month after the course (Time 3)	Soft skills self-efficacy Soft skills use	Participants

All the data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 27. Table 3 shows scores descriptives for knowledge, scenarios, self-efficacy and skill level for the experimental and control groups. A detailed description of the ULISSE project evaluation framework is available in a previous report (see Vieira et al., 2021).

Table 3 Descriptives for knowledge, scenarios, self-efficacy and skill level

	Experimental group (Participants)					Control group (Non-participants)				
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
T1_Knowledge	62	1.00	11.00	7.35	2.57	46	3.00	12.00	7.83	1.94
T2_Knowledge	43	5.00	12.00	8.56	1.93	12	4.00	10.00	8.67	1.92
T1_Scenarios	62	3.00	12.00	9.90	2.59	45	4.00	12.00	10.69	1.74
T2_Scenarios	42	7.00	12.00	10.74	1.61	12	6.00	12.00	10.67	1.83
T2_Skill_Level_Peers	49	2.70	5.00	4.06	0.69	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
T1_Self_efficacy	62	1.40	5.00	3.19	0.96	50	1.95	5.00	3.92	0.67
T2_Self_efficacy	43	2.50	4.85	3.62	0.63	12	2.05	5.00	3.98	0.86
T3_Self_efficacy	32	3.00	5.00	3.98	0.56	1	4.40	4.40	4.40	n.a.

Note. n.a.= not applicable

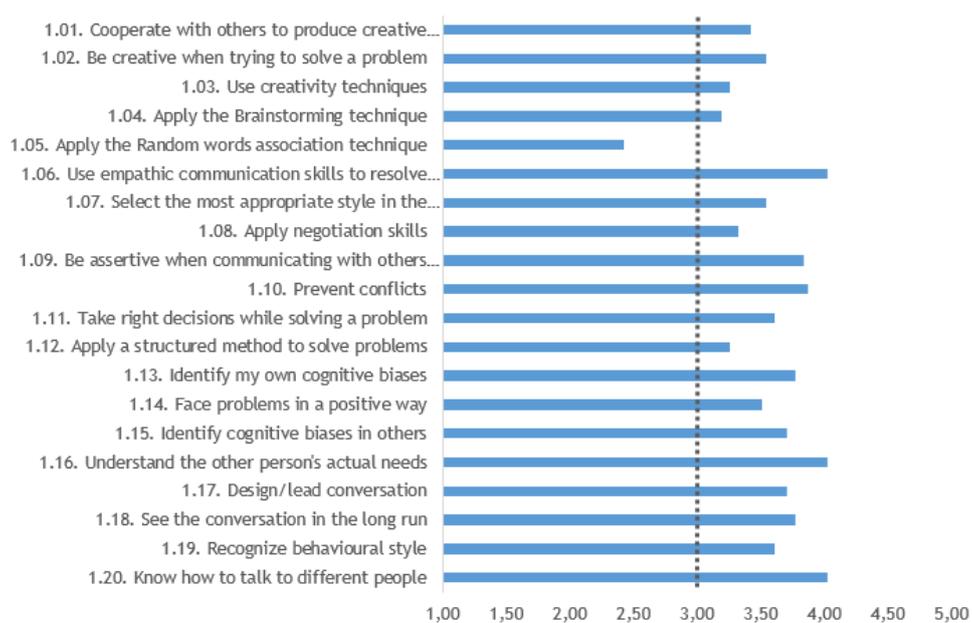
SOFT SKILLS COURSE EVALUATION

Soft skills knowledge and soft skills scenarios were evaluated before and at the end of the course. To compare the right answers means we performed two paired-samples T-test. Results show a significant statistical increase in soft skills knowledge for the participants group ($M_{T1}= 7.02$; $M_{T2}= 8.55$; $p < .001$) but not in the control group ($p = .999$). Similar results were found for right scenarios answers with a significant statistical increase in the participants group ($M_{T1}= 9.52$; $M_{T2}= 10.73$; $p < .001$) but not in the control group ($p = .052$).

Soft skills self-efficacy was evaluated in time 1 and 2 for both groups and in time 3 (one month after the course) only in the participants' group. Three paired-samples T-test were performed. In the participants group there was a statistical significant increase in the soft skills self-efficacy level from time 1 to time 2 ($M_{T1}= 3.01$; $M_{T2}= 3.62$; $p < .001$) and no changes from time 2 to time 3 ($p = .299$). In the control group, there were no statistically significant changes from time 1 to time 2 ($p = .610$). Subsequently we compared the soft skills level reported by peers with the self-reported soft skills self-efficacy, both in time 2. There were no statistical significant differences ($p = .052$).

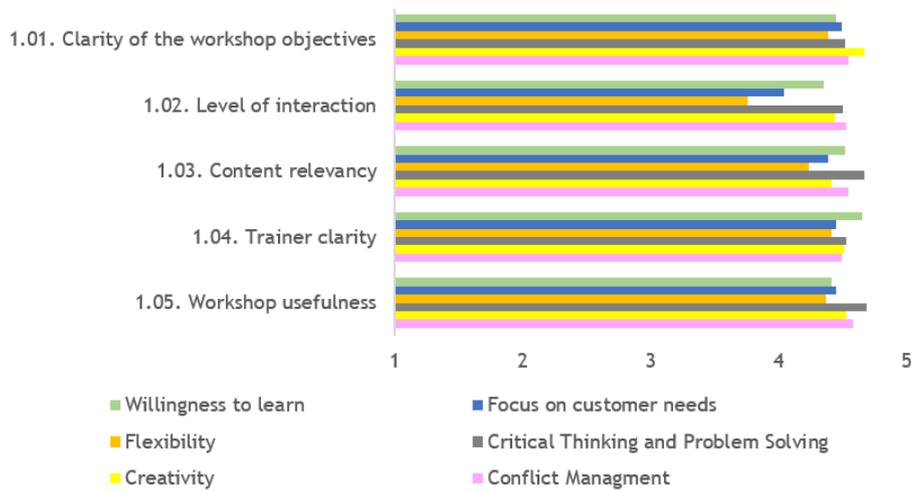
In time 3 we also asked participants how much have they been using the learned soft skills in their daily lives (1=never to 5=a lot of times). Figure 1 shows that all soft skills are being used sometimes or several times, except for one skill. In fact, “apply the random words association technique” requires a very specific context in order to be used.

Figure 1 - Soft skills use one month after the course (means)



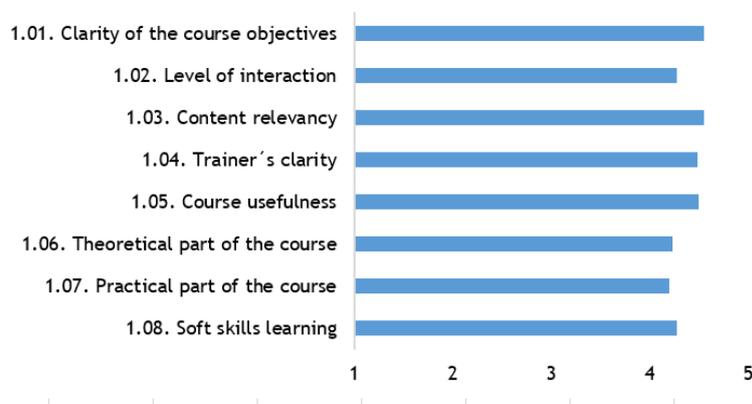
In terms of workshops satisfaction figure 2 shows that the great majority of criteria was above 4 which reflects high levels of satisfaction with all workshops.

Figure 2 - Workshops satisfaction (means)



Finally, participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the soft skills course once all criteria were evaluated above 4 (Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Course satisfaction (means)



Conclusions

This report aimed to report the soft skills course evaluation and globally we consider that we have obtained very positive outcomes. Our sample comprised of a group of participants in the soft skills training (the experimental group) as well as another group of non-participants (the control group). These two groups are important to check if the changes observed in the course participants were due to the course itself and not to other reasons such as time.

In terms of soft skills knowledge, soft skills applied knowledge to hypothetical situations and soft skills self-efficacy, all analyses gave support to a positive increase in the participants' group. On the other hand, and as expected, no differences were found in the control group. These results suggest that the increase in soft skills knowledge, in their right application to hypothetical situations and in the confidence to use them were due to the participation at the ULISSE soft skills course.

It is important to highlight that the positive soft skills self-efficacy levels achieved by participants at the end of the course were maintained one month after the course. Additionally, participants reported that they were using the soft skills in their daily lives, after one month after the course. These results point to the training transfer which is much valued when developing soft skills.

Each workshop as well as the overall soft skills course deserved a very positive level of satisfaction from participants. Also, taking into consideration that there were no differences between the peers and the self-reported evaluations, at the end of the course, also give support to the course efficacy in terms of learning outcomes.

In conclusion, the diversity of analysis that was used to evaluate the ULISSE soft skill course is in favour of the course efficacy in developing soft skills among higher education institutions.

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