Youth Employability Competences

EMPLOYABILITY COMPETENCES TRAIN
THE TRAINER COURSE

YEC – Youth Employability Competences
Train the Trainer
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FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND OF THIS TRAINING COURSE

The labor market is constantly changing, and never before, has the experience of the pandemic demanded greater efforts from young people, especially those looking for a job. New skills required by an increasingly digitized job market, but where soft skills are increasingly valued as a way to obtain and keep a job.

In twenty years the ability to work in a team will count as much or more of specific technical knowledge, also because many of the current tasks will be carried out by automated systems, equipped with artificial intelligence. While half of the jobs have yet to be invented: it is not possible to predict what companies will require in the long run, but there is a much closer perspective to be taken into account: within five years one third of the skills required will be tied to skills that are now still considered marginal. As well as Microsoft's Tomorrow's Jobs (2018) predicts that 65% of today's students will do a job that doesn't exist yet. Also for this reason, addressing the issue of employability, starting from the emergence and development of soft skills, appears to be absolutely a key essential choice…

YEC project overview:

YEC project was born from the awareness that young people are often encouraged to develop the technical skills needed to enter the labour market, but competencies on how to conduct themselves in the workplace, as well as create opportunities for employment mobility for themselves can be neglected, despite disadvantaged young people having few opportunities to be exposed to these key skills. In this regard, YEC project aims to help young people & youth workers identify key gaps in employability competences & address these through youth worker led training modules. The objectives of the project are: Increase employability of young people Increase validation of young people's employability competences Increase engagement of young people & employers in competency tool development Increase the focus on young people's employability among young people & their practitioners.

During the project, employability competencies training modules for young people were created, with particular focus on the personal, social & learning to learn competency from the Council of European Union, in order to create a guide for local youth workers & practitioners to map the modules from the train the trainer course, or any employability skills training, onto current validation systems under ET 2020. In this regards, a full suite of employability training modules was produced, and enclosed to this compendium as annexes. These were piloted with young people in Ireland, Poland, Italy and Finland, resulting in their increased employability, in order to enhance the skills of youth workers and practitioners who partake in piloting them.

Purposes of this training course

With this short compendium, we want to provide the trainer/counsellor with indications for the management of the training materials of the project, useful for improving the soft skills for employability. Although both the modular structure and the individual contents lend themselves to flexible use even for different targets, the materials produced have a strong Youth based vocation.

This train the trainer course has a specific focus on youth workers and guidance practitioners engaging with young people who are seeking employment, as the role of youth work represents a vital resource for many young people when seeking appropriate training and interventions with employability.

The technique used is the Theatre of Oppressed, under the perspective of the Theory of Change[1] with the Youth approach[2] which lead all project activities.

The Theatre of Oppressed was developed by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal during the 1950's and 1960's. His explorations were based on the assumption that dialogue is the common, healthy dynamic between all humans, that all human beings desire and are capable of dialogue. Theatre of the Oppressed is an arsenal of theatre techniques and games that seeks to motivate people, restore true dialogue, and create space for participants to rehearse taking action. It begins with the idea that everyone has the capacity to act in the "theatre" of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator. We are "spect-actors!" — a term which Boal coined. From his work Boal evolved various forms of theatre workshops and performances which aimed to meet the needs of all people for interaction, dialogue, critical thinking, action, and fun.

So, the Theatre of Oppressed can be composed by:

Image theatre through which, bodies are used to express oppression. No words are being used. Our bodies tell us faster where abuse of power lies. This technique is very much appreciated since it allows people to express an issue without exposing oneself. Bodies are sculpted in order to tell a story other people will have to guess. People watching the image will also project their own stories. It is impossible to identify who exactly is talking about what. All are building knowledge on a common oppression. Shy people can act out a very hot topic without saying any word. Image will gradually allow participants to put words on a tricky issue. Untold stories come out, and no one will be exposing oneself. Attention won't be focused on anyone but on the issue to be overcome.

Image theatre can be used in schools, in the street, for a Theatrical assembly, for voting a City Budget. It allows to identify issues at stake and quickly go for collective problem solving.

- **Forum Theatre**, which is a performance where the audience can intervene to change a story. An unhappy ending story. First people see the play. At the end a facilitator will start a dialogue with the audience to trigger participation and decide if the story could change. If the audience considers the story unveils real oppression and if people believe this kind of injustice should not be accepted anymore, then the story will start again. But this time the audience can stop it when they believe change could happen. The facilitator stimulates and invites people to step in the play to try their ideas and proposals in a protected framework. Actors interact and show the consequences of any intervention. The audi-

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1 A theory of change is a tool to help you describe the need you are trying to address, the changes you want to make (your outcomes), and what you plan to do (your activities). The approach can be used for organisations of all shapes and sizes—from service-delivery charities, to campaigning organisations, to funders. (...) Theory of change is actually a very simple concept. Throughout our work and personal lives, we have aims, objectives and ideas about how to achieve our goals, but we rarely take the time to think these through, articulate and scrutinise them. All a theory of change process does is to make these assumptions explicit and therefore more testable. https://www.thinknpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Creating-your-theory-of-change1.pdf

2 Youth Work focuses on personal and social development – the skills and attributes of young people – rather than to 'fix a problem'. It is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person's understanding of themselves, their community and the work in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive change.
   - Youth Work is informed by a set of beliefs which include a commitment to equal opportunity, to young people as partners in learning and decision-making and to helping young people to develop their own set of values.
   - Youth Work Values
   - A Youth Work Approach is one that is underpinned by a clear set of shared values, which can include:
   - Young people choosing to take part
   - Utilising young people's view of the world
   - Treating young people with respect
   - Working with young people to help them make informed choices about their personal responsibilities within their communities
   - Helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities
   - Respecting and valuing differences
   - Promoting the voice of young people

ence assesses the progress and the risks. At the end participants decide collectively which actions should be started when the performance will end.

• **Legislative Theatre**, which is complementary to the Forum Theatre. At the end of the Forum the audience votes for Law proposals or new policies. These are then advocated for or implemented. In some cases, moments of advocacy can be tried on stage.

• **Invisible Theatre**, which is a performance happening in a public space where people are not aware theatre is being used to trigger participation on tricky issues. This technique is not meant to manipulate people. Theatre is being used to raise a clear question where everybody will have an opportunity to take action. The goal is to stimulate intervention on issues that people often don't know how to tackle. Here again Theatre allows to give a protected framework where mistake has no cost. In general, is not revealed to participants that theatre was used. We want people to talk about the issue, not about theatre.

Example 1: In a public event a man constantly interrupts a woman until people react. Why is this man doing that? is it common? Do women also do that in the public sphere? we trigger debate and reaction. At minute 1 of this video you can see the Italian version of this performance.

Example 2: A man (actor:) beats his dog in a crowded place. People react: "dogs should be respected etc.". In the same place a man starts beating his partner. Nobody intervenes. (actors) passers-by then raise questions. How come we are all so prone to intervene when a dog is beaten but not when it is a woman? What should be done?

How the modules were co-designed

Through the Advisory Boards[3], young people and Youth workers were strongly involved in the co-construction and review of the individual training modules, which therefore took into account their needs and expectations. The youth and employer advisory boards had a key role in advising the partnership on how to create training programmes to respond to the needs of young people and support them in developing these personal, social and employability competencies.

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[3] Each of the Boards will have a slightly different focus, as follows:
Youth Advisory Boards:
• Enabling young people to engage with project partners and local employers to address what they feel are their training needs when it comes to lifelong employability skills competencies.
Employer Advisory Boards:
• Allowing an exchange of learning and insight between young people and employers
• Providing employers an opportunity to express the gaps they are witnessing in young people's employability skills.

Below it is a summary diagram to get an idea of how the AGs were scheduled at local level:

	FORMING		STORMING	NORMING	PERFORMING		PERFORMING & ADJOURNING	ADJOURNING
Advisory Board Meetings	Meeting 1 May '19	Meeting 2 August '19	Meeting 3 November '19	Meeting 4 February'20	Meeting 5 May '20	Meeting 6 July '20	Meeting 7 November '20	Meeting 8 February '20
Topic of Meeting	Advisory Group/ Individual Profiles Group dymanics - IO1 6 Competencies - IO2 Forming Exercise	Creation of Group Theory of Change Introduction to other advisory groups Forming Exercise Young People & Employeer Socialx	Theory of Change Storming Exercise	Discussion (focus group) potential course materials IO2 Norming Exercises Prepare for Young people and Employer groups to merge	Revisew of IO2 Materials Discussion (focus group) on potential course materials - IO3 Performing Exercise Merge Young People and Employer Groups Forming Exercise	Feedback from Train the Trainer - IO3 Personal development through partecipation in groups - IO1 Performing Exercise	Employer board - How to present skills validation as a young jobseeker - IO4 Youth board - Qualification/ validation discussion. Employer Expectations - IO4 Performing & Adjourning Exercise	Review of IO1 Guide Reflection on project journey - IO1 Review fo Skiils gained and achievements - IO1 Next steps / Exit Strategy Adjourning Exercise Celebration
Reports/Forms to be completed from meeting	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from	Completion of: (a) IO1 report, (b) Relevant IO, feedback forms, (c) Participant evaluation from

Practitioners can utilize the training modules either in totality, or pick selected modules, according to a young person's needs, in order to help them progress their journey towards employment. In this direction, the modules are dynamic in nature and seek to create real work interactions and group work, enabling young people to learn and practice these competencies in safe youth spaces before entering the world of work. This will ensure that those who have no previous experience of these skills, or have never observed them in use will have ample opportunity to understand and master the competencies.

In this regards, the course will provide methodologies for providing a full training course on all modules to young people, as well as structures in which youth workers and practitioners can pick and choose individual modules to use with their clients as they feel appropriate. This is to reflect that different young people have different needs, and in order to facilitate as many young people benefitting as possible the training course will need to be flexible in nature.

• Targets

The projects targeted Youth, including marginalised young people who are NEET, facing obstacles for engagement in the form of social, cultural, economic or education difficulties. It means that training modules, approaches and methodologies were developed using a Youth approach, taking into account those target groups.

The age range for the project is 18-30 years. It has been decided to keep this range quite broad as many young people, even those who are in the older cohort, struggle with their employ ability skills. Anyway, the training, its methodologies, and the training materials, are flexible, adaptable and suitable also for different target groups.

• Which feed-back from pilot experimentations: from Youth, trainers, guidance practitioners and employers

The project is aiming to establish as many real-world skills as possible within this course for young people and so the input of employers is vital here, ensuring the examples being used in the training course are accurate to their experiences of engaging with employees.

Young people are involved in tool development and piloting throughout the lifetime of the project. Practitioners and youth workers have been involved in content development for all project outcomes.
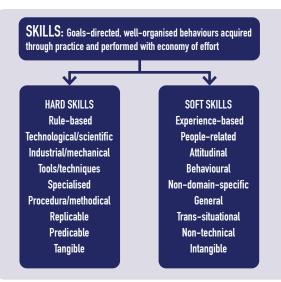Employers have been involved through their role on the advisory boards that feed into content development, as well as piloting a methodology for engagement of stakeholders such as employers and young people.
During the Advisory Groups, many feedback, tips and suggestions had been collected, and some of them could be very useful for future activities with and focus on young people. In this regard, could be interesting to keep in mind:

- *The need to build up confidence in young people*. They need to be really encouraged and it definitely helps to build connections between them (e.g. joint working and social), so they are committing to each other, and supporting each other. Also that they feel clear about their role and contribution, to lessen any fears.

- *Taking some ownership.* They need to feel heard and even the 'experts' in some things. They definitely have things to say but need to be encouraged to say them.

- *Increasing motivation*. They need to find ways to encourage their 'buy in', for them to feel the relevance of any activity. With this buy-in in place then other issues (e.g. organisational and time management can be faced and worked with less risk of them wanting to opt out). It is important that young people can see how what they are doing links to their aspirations and goals.

- *Ways to support commitment/motivation*. Feeling heard and having an active participation supports commitment.

- *Skills and ability to talk in groups*. The joint meetings encourage the young people to build their confidence and ability to interact with older professionals.

Can soft skills be taught, and measured? If so, what and how?

If hard skills are technical skills that are mostly transferable in formal education contexts, soft skills see informal and non-formal education as the context for their development. This has led to the long questioning of how much they could really be taught, transferred or learned, often dealing with aspects and character inclinations that belong to each individual. Certainly if we are here it is because we think that transferring and teaching soft skills is possible, although it is undeniable that many of these may already naturally belong to the baggage that each of us carries.

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SKILLS: Goals-directed, well-organised behaviours acquired
through practice and performed with economy of effort
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HARD SKILLS
Rule-based
Technological/scientific
Industrial/mechanical
Tools/techniques
Specialised
Procedura/methodical
Replicable
Predicable
Tangible

SOFT SKILLS
Experience-based
People-related
Attitudinal
Behavioural
Non-domain-specific
General
Trans-situational
Non-technical
Intangible

What is not taken for granted, however, is the awareness of how much the care of certain character and emotional aspects, not surprisingly defined as life skills, are essential, and therefore also the investment in terms of training and learning is undoubtedly useful to "function" or be successful in the world of work, as well as in relational and everyday life.

If working in a team can be an easier learning skill, such as active listening or punctuality, "educating" to creativity, empathy or problem solving may undoubtedly require some more effort. For this reason, **awareness** is a fundamental access key in helping young people to bring out their soft skills, or in investing in their learning. In this direction, if for hard skills the theoretical aspect is no less decisive than the practical one, for soft skills the **experiential** and **relationship dimension** is a sine qua non, accompanied through **maieutic work** that helps them to bring out and bring in surface potentialities still unexpressed or unexplored.

It will probably not be possible for everyone without distinction to reach the optimal objectives set to improve the soft skills useful for their employability in the round, but to work on margins for improvement, taking into account the starting levels of each and/or the sometimes difficult contexts of belonging, it is a crucial investment to improve the employability of young people.

The YEC project is working to support the implementation of assessment and validation of competencies with specific focus on the competency of personal, social and learning to learn. of these competencies with specific focus on the competency of personal, social and learning to learn. Through experience of previous Erasmus + projects, it has been established that NEET young people face major barriers to progression towards employment or indeed sustaining long term employment, due to a lack of these social, personal competencies. Some specific examples of these competencies identified by employers, young people, and practitioners are: Job-orientation and searching skills, Motivation & autonomy, Wellness, Communication skills, Professionalism, Perceived or actual discrimination, Gap between expectation and reality.

Soft skills for new jobs: how the soft skills required in the job market change

The world of work is changing. The rapidly evolving skill needs raise challenges for labour market, contributing to skill mismatch and shortages.

Skill needs are changing as a result of the digital transformation, globalisation, climate mitigation and demographic changes, but soft skills won't be completely replaced by automation, even if of course they are interested in this changing.

In this regard, certain soft skills are more likely to be relevant in the next five years than others, such as:
• Creativity
• Critical & analytical thinking
• Communication and business acumen
• Agile Solutions Methodologies
• Computational thinking
• Team Leadership
• Planning
• Problem solving Skills
• Effective Communication Skills
• Efficient use of time, time keeping and reliability
• Socio-emotional intelligence
• Multi Tasking
• Attitude to continuous learning
• Entrepreneurial thinking, innovation and self-initiative
• Open-mindedness
• Ability to work in a team-oriented and flexible manner
• Openness and willingness to change and learn
• Project management knowledge
• Social, communicative and dynamic corporate culture
• Active listening and nonverbal communication skills
• Self-study skills
• Knowledge sharing skills
• Coping with stress
• Taking criticism
• Empathy skills, mutual understanding and holistic thinking (for new type of cooperation)
• Intercultural competence
• Negotiate compromise
• Mentoring, support colleagues, give advice to others, motivate and interact with others
• Accept constructive criticism
• Self Regulation/Control/Stress Management
• Adapability
• Resilience

So, transversal skills such as communication skills, organisational skills and self-motivation, along with core competencies such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills, will be critical across all job sectors. Skills such as advanced cognitive skills, logic, social and emotional skills, will be of particular importance and skills which will be needed in order to adapt and respond to technological change.

According to UNESCO, the main transversal skills will be: critical and innovative thinking; Inter-personal skills (e.g. presentation and communication skills, organisational skills, teamwork, etc.); Intra-personal skills (e.g. self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, etc.); Global citizenship (e.g. tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, etc.); and Media and information literacy such as the ability to locate and access information, as well as to analyse and evaluate media content.

Skills such as creativity, problem solving and cognitive flexibility, will play a bigger part in the recruitment and retention of employees within specific sectors, along with a capacity to change and adapt to new and challenging situations.