

ROADMAP IN AUSTRIA

Introduction

In the Austrian higher education sector, a disparity is evident between the academic knowledge and skills acquired through higher education and the competencies required by the increasingly dynamic and technologically advanced labour market. Globalization and digital transformation introduce new challenges that demand high levels of adaptability and digital literacy. However, traditional higher education models often fail to adequately foster the development of transferable skills such as critical thinking, complex problem-solving, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovation.

Austrian Students facing the demand for flexibility in work schedules, the importance of inclusivity in workplace culture, and the rise of hybrid work preferences. Therefore, the need of developing digital proficiency, especially in artificial intelligence and social media management are crucial competencies for modern professions. Additionally, students' perceptions of the relevance of their academic programs significantly influence their educational and professional trajectories. A lack of clear connections between academic curricula and subsequent employment opportunities can lead to diminished motivation for study, consequently contributing to higher dropout rates from higher education institutions. These includes also the awareness rising for students regarding the demanded competencies.

Studies (e.g., Education at a glance: OECD indicators. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) indicate that practical training programs, which facilitate the early integration of students into the workforce, are often insufficiently developed or implemented on a limited scale. The absence of systematic linkages between academia and the labour market results in a misalignment between employer expectations and graduate competencies, impeding their employability. In the study Empowering Individuals through Career Guidance and Lifelong Learning, CEDEFOP reports that employers frequently claim that while young graduates possess the necessary theoretical knowledge, they often lack practical experiences and soft skills, such as communication abilities, teamwork, entrepreneurial thinking, and adaptability to rapidly evolving business environments. Especially the stakeholders in the labour market stressed the importance of AI expertise and and cross-disciplinary skills including communication, leadership, adaptability, and resilience.

The ELIX Project directly addresses the core challenges of the Austrian higher education system by introducing innovative pedagogical methods that enhance student engagement and improve their employability. One of the central strategies of the project is the implementation of Community Service Learning (CSL), a transformative approach that bridges academic education with professional and societal environments.

The Austrian higher education model relies in some educational approaches still on traditional economical and pedagogical perspectives, and therefore emphasising theoretical knowledge based on traditional theories and models while focusing less on developing practical competencies. This results in limited opportunities for experiential learning, allowing students to apply their acquired knowledge in real-world contexts. The ELIX Project acknowledges the critical role of developing transferable competencies, such as entrepreneurial thinking, innovation, digital literacy, resilience, and interdisciplinary collaboration—competencies that employers identify as essential for success in the modern labour market as stated in the study of European Commission Education and training monitor: Skills for the digital era.

Furthermore, the project promotes collaborative partnerships between universities, businesses, and non-governmental organisations, fostering a sustainable ecosystem where students gain practical experience and develop key competencies for their future careers. By integrating CSL into academic curricula, the ELIX Project allows students to apply their knowledge and skills to address real-world societal and economic challenges in cooperation with local communities and organizations.



In doing so, the ELIX Project not only bridges the gap between higher education and the labour market but also contributes to greater social inclusion, the promotion of active citizenship, and the strengthening of competencies for sustainable development. Through a comprehensive approach to education, the project establishes the conditions for the long-term enhancement of the quality of higher education in Austria and the improved success of graduates in transitioning to the workforce.

Overview of completed tasks

UASB actively contributes to the development of localised career pathways by fostering collaboration among key stakeholders and implementing strategic initiatives to enhance career opportunities and civic engagement with the following tasks:

Task 1: Organized and coordinated participants, including labour market actors, career consultants, and community stakeholders, for the Localized Career Pathways, Think Tank Series. Task 2: Facilitated focused discussions and interactive workshops over two days to identify and refine local career pathways. These sessions fostered stakeholder collaboration, promoting a shared understanding of local challenges and opportunities to drive targeted and effective interventions. Task 3: Conducted an in-depth analysis of labour market trends and challenges to inform discussions and develop innovative solutions. Task 4: Collaborated with stakeholders to create a comprehensive roadmap with actionable steps for enhancing career opportunities within partner communities. Partner organisations collected qualitative feedback through surveys and interviews, assessing the impact of think tank sessions, toolkit guidance, and teaching programs on student learning and community engagement.

These efforts resulted in a strategic roadmap for advancing career development and civic engagement at the local level. This roadmap identifies and refines existing career pathways and adapts them to evolving community needs, fostering meaningful and targeted interventions. Achieved goals and results In the following, we present specific results achieved through the completed tasks (previously presented). The first part outlines the findings from the think tank focus groups, followed by an in-depth analysis of the survey on labour market trends, competencies and youth employability conducted with students and stakeholders.



Think Tank Series STUDENTS

Basic information

Number of participants: 19 students from bachelor and master programs (variety of fields such as Business Relations, HR Management, Marketing, and Communication)

Date of implementation: three focus groups on 18/10/2024, 25/11/2024 and 26/11/2024

Mode of delivery: Mixed (online and in-person at UASB, application for online: MS Teams)

Results

The focus groups with bachelor and master students revealed that digitalization, changing values, and demographic shifts are among the most impactful trends on the labour market. Students emphasized the demand for flexibility in work schedules, the importance of inclusivity in workplace culture, and the rise of hybrid work preferences. They also highlighted digital proficiency, especially in artificial intelligence and social media management, as crucial competencies for modern professions.

Key skill gaps identified include communication, teamwork, resilience, and adaptability. Students also noted the importance of digital literacy and leadership, particularly for managing workplace stress and navigating technological challenges.

To address these gaps, students suggested integrating real-world applications into their studies, such as project-based tasks, internships, and networking with professionals. Many also expressed a desire for more online tools and resources, including e-learning platforms, virtual labs, and recorded lectures, to better prepare them for future workplace demands.

Thematic analysis of students' statements on social and market trends, skills gaps, and training delivery.

Table 3 Trends and Phenomena Observed in the Labour Market

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Changing Work Values	Demand for flexibility and balance	Young people prioritize flexible hours and mental health.	"Young people want to work from home, flexible working hours, and value leisure time more." (Interviewee 32)
	Fair workplace culture	Emphasis on equity and inclusivity.	"The shift in values includes a greater emphasis on creating inclusive and fair workplace cultures." (Interviewee 34)



	creates jobs	automation on job roles and skill demands.	<i>simultaneously creating new professions." (Interviewee 35)</i>
	Digital proficiency as a core skill	Fundamental requirement across most job sectors.	<i>"Digital competence is a requirement for adapting to current market demands." (Interviewee 36)</i>
Demographic Shifts	Ageing workforce	Creating shortages in key job sectors.	<i>"An ageing population leads to labour shortages in certain areas." (Interviewee 33)</i>
Hybrid Work Trends	Balancing remote and in-person work	Preferences shift post-remote work experiences.	<i>"Many now prefer hybrid options or even a return to offices for social interaction." (Interviewee 40)</i>

Table 4 Competencies Identified as Gaps

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Digital Skills	Digital and AI literacy	Understanding AI tools and their application.	<i>"We need more advanced digital skills, including how to analyze data and use AI tools effectively." (Interviewee 36)</i>
	Social media management	Effective use of platforms for work goals.	<i>"There's a lack of focus on how to use social media as a tool for communication and marketing." (Interviewee 37)</i>
Soft Skills	Communication	Confidence and teamwork remain lacking.	<i>"Young professionals struggle with communication and the ability to ask for help in challenging situations." (Interviewee 32)</i>
	Resilience and adaptability	Coping with stress and rapid change.	<i>"Resilience and stress management are critical but often not taught." (Interviewee 38)</i>

Table 5 Proposed Methods to Integrate Competencies into Education

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Professional Exposure	Networking and mentorship	Engagement with industry experts.	<i>"Universities need to bring more external experts into the classroom to teach what is happening outside." (Interviewee 39)</i>
	Internships	Practical experience in relevant fields.	<i>"Partnerships with companies for internships would prepare us better for real-world challenges." (Interviewee 34)</i>
Learning Formats	Project-based learning	Hands-on tasks reflecting industry scenarios.	<i>"Workshops to analyze real data and solve current market issues would be very beneficial." (Interviewee 40)</i>
	Online and hybrid tools	Accessibility through digital platforms.	<i>"Using Moodle or Teams to offer recordings and materials in advance would help with preparation." (Interviewee 41)</i>



STAKEHOLDERS

Basic information

Number of participants 38 stakeholders from businesses, NGOs, research institutions, and academia

Date of implementation: five focus groups on 18/10/2024 and 12/11/2024 and 13/11/2024

Mode of delivery: Mixed (online and in-person at UASB)

Results

The stakeholders emphasized the profound impact of digitalization, demographic shifts, and migration on the labour market. Stakeholders stressed the critical need for AI expertise, cross-disciplinary skills, and leadership capabilities to address the demands of evolving industries. They also noted that younger workers struggle with mental health challenges, resilience, and workplace adaptability.

Stakeholders identified several key skill gaps, including communication, ethical decision-making, and team management. They also highlighted a lack of proficiency in cybersecurity and data protection, which are increasingly essential. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of teaching leadership, empathy, and intercultural collaboration to prepare graduates for a diverse and dynamic job market.

To bridge these gaps, stakeholders recommended closer collaboration between academia and industry, with a focus on internships, mentorship, and project-based learning. They also advocated for more role-playing exercises and digital training tools, such as AI platforms and virtual simulations, to enhance both technical and soft skills.

Table 6 Impact of Social Trends on the Labour Market

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Changing Values	Shift to individualism and quick solutions	Lack of cooperation, disrespect for authority, and focus on personal gain.	<i>"Nowadays, everyone looks after themselves, people no longer respect authority, everyone expects quick solutions."</i> (Interviewee 3)



	Workplace fairness and collaboration	Need for cooperation across sectors like education and business.	<i>"Business must also take responsibility for educating students." (Interviewee 22)</i>
Digitalisation	Impact on creativity and physical jobs	Technology creates new roles while reducing traditional ones.	<i>"Digitalisation and AI create new jobs, but there's less interest in professions requiring physical work." (Interviewee 19)</i>
	Demand for AI experts and influencers	Growing need for specialized digital roles and media creators.	<i>"Influencers and AI experts are becoming essential across industries." (Interviewee 5)</i>
Demographic Changes	Ageing workforce	Shortages in technical and caring professions.	<i>"The ageing population is causing a severe shortage in healthcare jobs." (Interviewee 1)</i>
Migration Flows	Impact on low-wage labor supply	Migration fills critical gaps in demanding industries.	<i>"Migration flows are essential for meeting labor needs in sectors like construction and care." (Interviewee 8)</i>
Mental Health Awareness	Younger generation struggling with stress	Rising absenteeism due to lack of resilience.	<i>"The younger generation is not immune to pressures, leading to high absenteeism." (Interviewee 14)</i>

Table 7 Competencies Identified as Gaps

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Soft Skills	Communication and empathy	Lack of skills to motivate, inspire, and lead effectively.	<i>"There's a serious shortage of staff who know how to motivate, engage, and coordinate." (Interviewee 21)</i>
	Ethical decision-making	Critical thinking and ethical judgment in technological contexts.	<i>"We need people who can critically evaluate AI outputs and consider ethical implications." (Interviewee 4)</i>
	Adaptability and resilience	Difficulty managing change and accepting new work environments.	<i>"Students often struggle to adapt to varying expectations across departments." (Interviewee 19)</i>
Digital Skills	AI literacy and cybersecurity	Need for advanced knowledge in AI tools and data privacy.	<i>"Graduates lack understanding of cybersecurity and data protection, which are critical today." (Interviewee 15)</i>



Leadership Skills	Team management	Skills to build, lead, and manage diverse teams effectively.	<i>"Training in leadership, including team building and conflict resolution, should be mandatory." (Interviewee 18)</i>
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Table 8 Recommendations for Higher Education

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Professional Integration	Increased internships	Opportunities to engage with real-world projects and workplace settings.	<i>"Internships should be an integral part of the curriculum to bridge the gap between theory and practice." (Interviewee 5)</i>
	Mentoring by practitioners	Regular interaction with labor market experts.	<i>"Connecting students with experienced professionals helps them prepare for future challenges." (Interviewee 7)</i>
Applied Learning	Project-based problem solving	Tasks that address current market demands and challenges.	<i>"Students need hands-on experience solving real-world problems to develop critical skills." (Interviewee 8)</i>
	Role-playing for empathy	Activities fostering emotional intelligence and teamwork.	<i>"Empathy and altruism should be taught through role-playing exercises to prepare students for caregiving roles." (Interviewee 4)</i>
Technological Access	Digital platforms and tools	Training with AI tools, virtual labs, and simulation software.	<i>"Platforms like LinkedIn and virtual internships are crucial for career preparation." (Interviewee 15)</i>

Summary of the findings of the focus groups at the University of Applied Sciences Burgenland

The focus groups with students and stakeholders revealed significant insights into the evolving labour market and the competencies needed to thrive within it. Both groups highlighted the transformative effects of digitalization, demographic changes, and shifting societal values on job roles and workplace expectations. Students emphasized the need for flexibility and inclusivity, while stakeholders stressed the importance of AI expertise and cross-disciplinary skills.

Key gaps identified by both groups include communication, leadership, adaptability, and resilience. Students also pointed to a need for better preparation in teamwork and digital literacy, while stakeholders highlighted ethical decision-making, cybersecurity, and empathy as critical areas for development.

Both groups agreed that academia must strengthen ties with industry by integrating practical experiences such as internships, mentorships, and real-world projects into study programs. Additionally, the use of online tools, digital platforms, and interactive workshops was recommended to ensure that graduates are equipped to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing labour market.

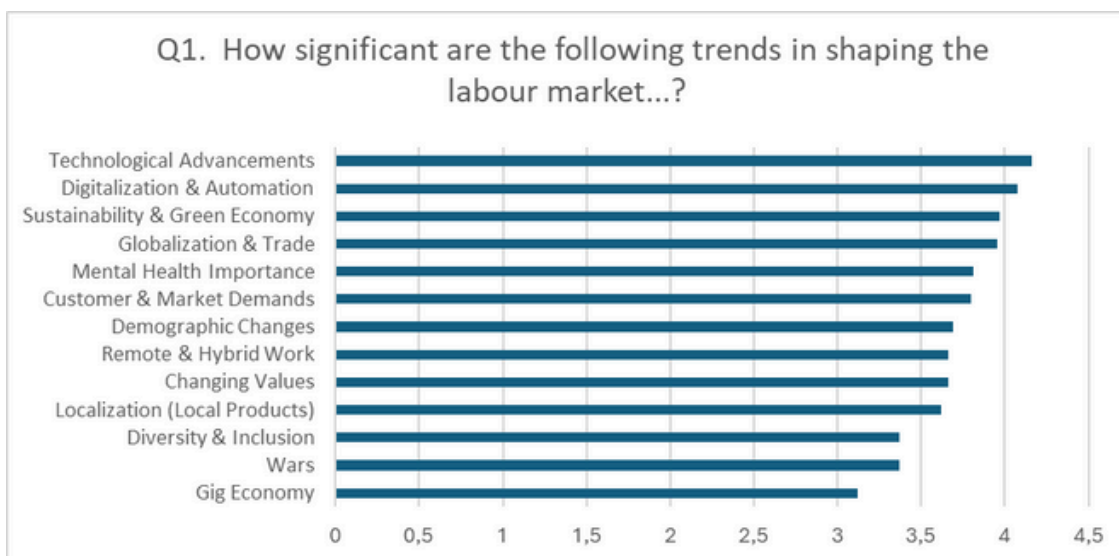
Quantitative analysis

Survey on Labor Market Trends, Competencies, and Youth Employability for Students

The Austrian survey on labour market trends, key competencies, and youth employability provides a comprehensive analysis of students' perceptions regarding their career readiness and alignment with industry demands. The findings highlight the evolving expectations within the labour market and how well academic programs equip graduates with necessary skills. Students identified digital literacy, problem-solving, and leadership as critical areas for their professional success, while also emphasizing the need for stronger industry collaborations and practical learning experiences. This section explores key insights from the student perspective and compares them with stakeholder priorities to formulate actionable recommendations for bridging the education-employment gap.

Perception of Current Social Phenomena Students evaluated various social trends regarding their impact on necessary competency development for future employment. The results indicate that mental health awareness, digitalization, and technological advancements are seen as the most pressing factors influencing skill requirements. The increasing importance of remote and hybrid work models and sustainability-related competencies is also evident. Conversely, wars and the shift toward a gig economy are perceived as less critical for competency development.

Figure 19: Relevance of Social Trends for Competency Development



Essential Competencies for Labor Market Integration

Students identified several key challenges when transitioning into the workforce. Lack of relevant work experience, insufficient practical skills, and unclear career paths emerged as the most significant barriers. Many students feel underprepared for professional roles due to limited exposure to real-world projects and industry-specific training during their studies. Additionally, gaps in soft skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and communication, were highlighted as areas where students seek more support. Job market competitiveness and uncertainty about employer expectations further contribute to employment difficulties. These findings underscore the need for stronger career guidance, more opportunities for internships and hands-on learning, and better alignment between academic programs and labor market requirements to ensure smoother transitions from education to employment.

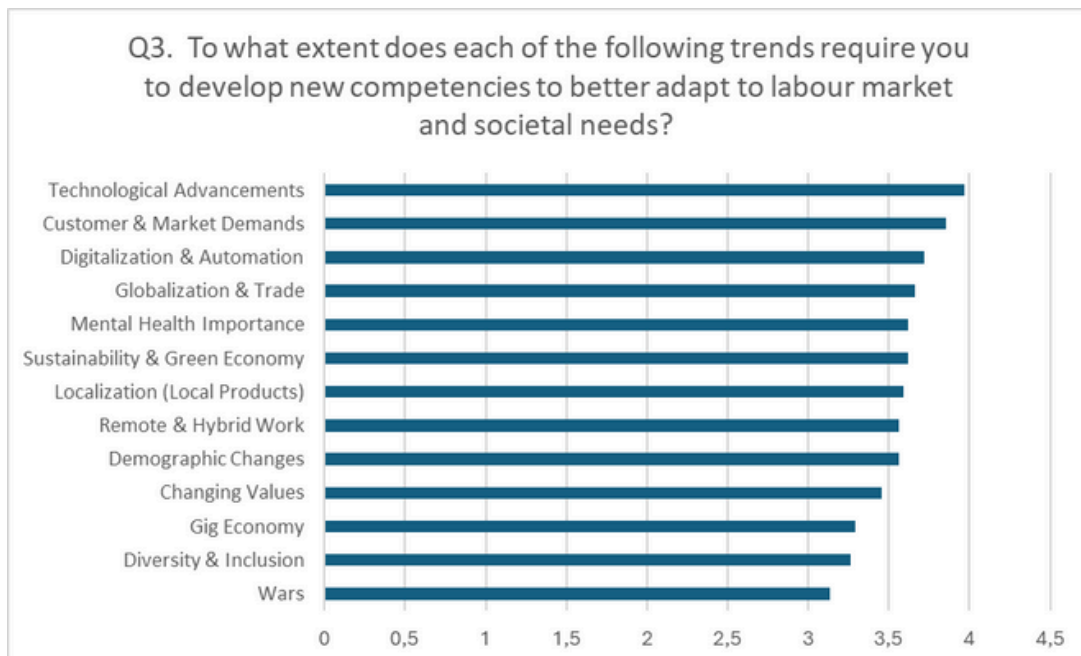


Figure 20: Students' Perception of Barriers to Employment



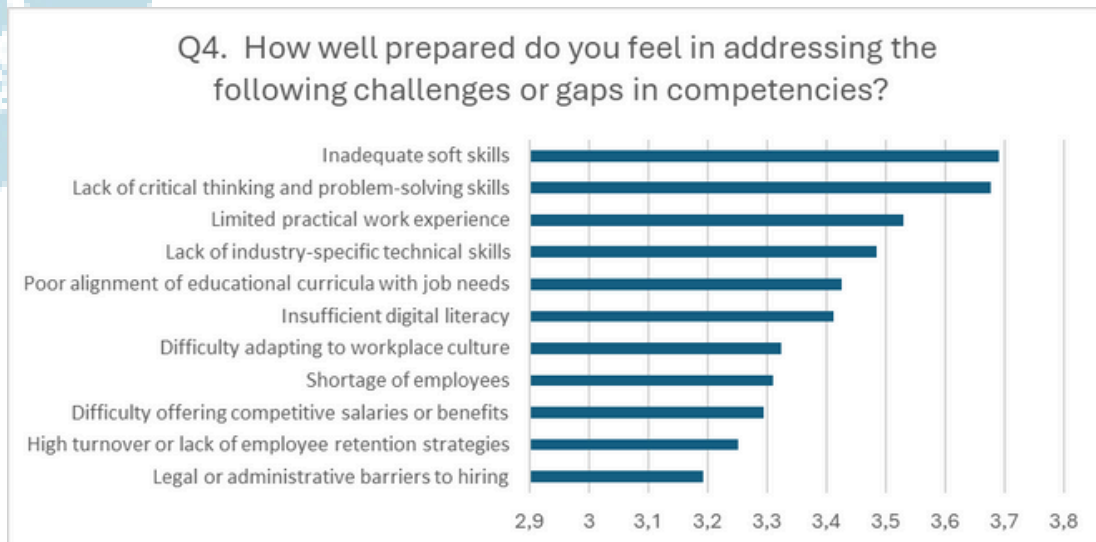
Students rated the importance of various competencies for their future careers, with problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and adaptability ranking as the most critical. Many students feel confident in their ability to collaborate and adapt to different work environments, but express concerns about leadership, career planning, and decision-making skills. Digital literacy and AI-related competencies were acknowledged as increasingly important, though students recognize that more training is needed to fully prepare for technology-driven workplaces. While students generally feel they possess a strong foundation in critical thinking and creativity, they acknowledge the need for further development in self-employment skills, networking, and career-specific expertise. These insights suggest that academic programs should focus on providing structured opportunities for leadership development, real-world problem-solving, and digital skills training to better equip students for the evolving job market.

Figure 21: Students' Self-Assessment of Essential Competencies



Students assessed their readiness to face key challenges in the labour market. The findings highlight that while students feel relatively confident in their digital literacy and teamwork abilities, there are gaps in leadership, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Additionally, preparedness for handling workplace stress and adapting to new work environments was rated lower, suggesting a need for targeted training and real-world application opportunities.

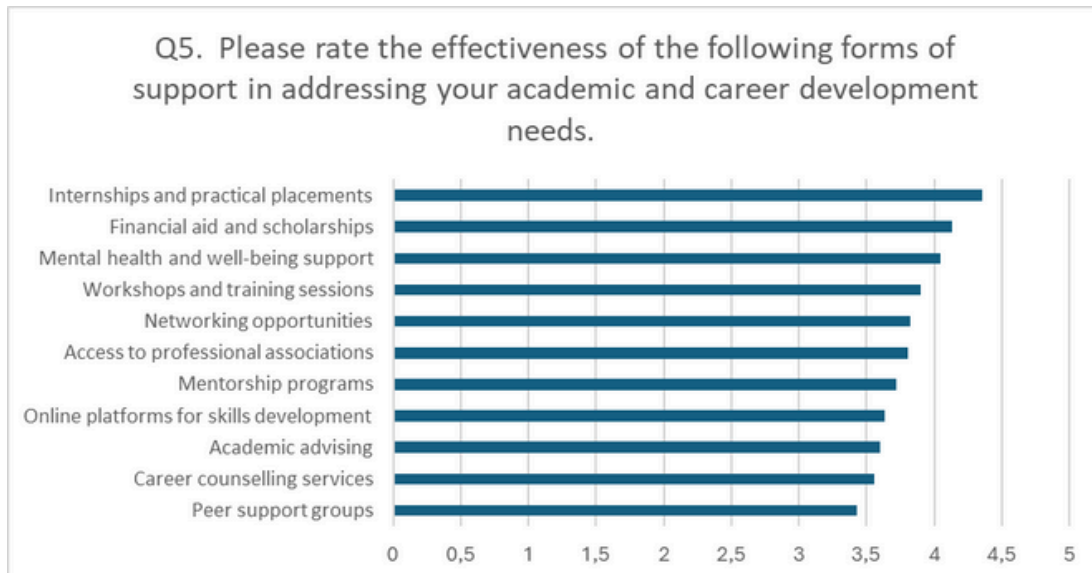
Figure 22: Student Preparedness for Labour Market Challenges



Support for Academic and Career Development

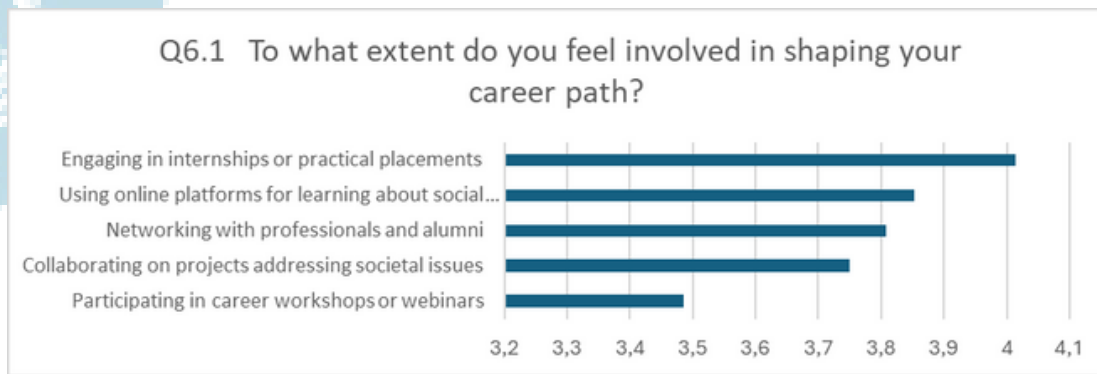
Students were asked to evaluate various career development support measures offered by universities. Internships, mentoring programs, and career counselling received the highest effectiveness ratings, underlining their role in bridging the gap between education and employment. In contrast, online career services and alumni networks were seen as less effective, indicating areas for potential improvement in institutional career guidance.

Figure 23: Perceived Effectiveness of Career Support Services



The results reveal that participation in career workshops and networking events is relatively high, yet many students express a desire for more hands-on experience, such as project-based learning and mentorship opportunities. The suggested activities align with findings from other parts of the survey, reinforcing the demand for practical career readiness initiatives.

Figure 24: Participation and Suggested Career Activities

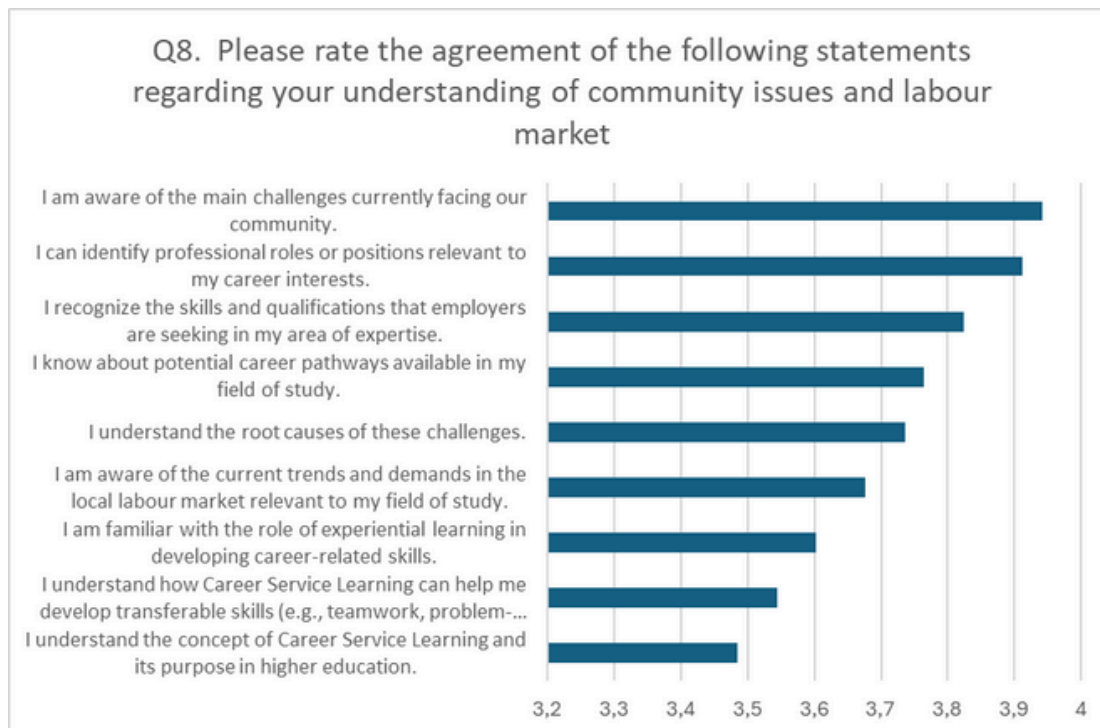


When asked in an open question (Q7) for suggestions on how support could be improved, students emphasized the need for more practical learning, including interactive case studies, workshops, and expert-led discussions. Many highlighted the importance of career fairs, networking projects, and stronger university-employer connections. Suggestions also included more direct industry exposure, such as company partnerships, part-time job opportunities, and sustainability sector roles. Some students advocated for less academic workload and more hands-on experience. These insights suggest that universities should expand career-focused initiatives and strengthen industry collaboration to better prepare students for the job market.

Knowledge about Career Service Learning

Students were asked about their understanding of Career Service Learning (CSL) and its connection to professional development. The data suggest that while many students recognize the general concept of CSL, fewer understand its practical applications or relevance in community-based career experiences. This highlights a need for better communication and integration of CSL in academic programs.

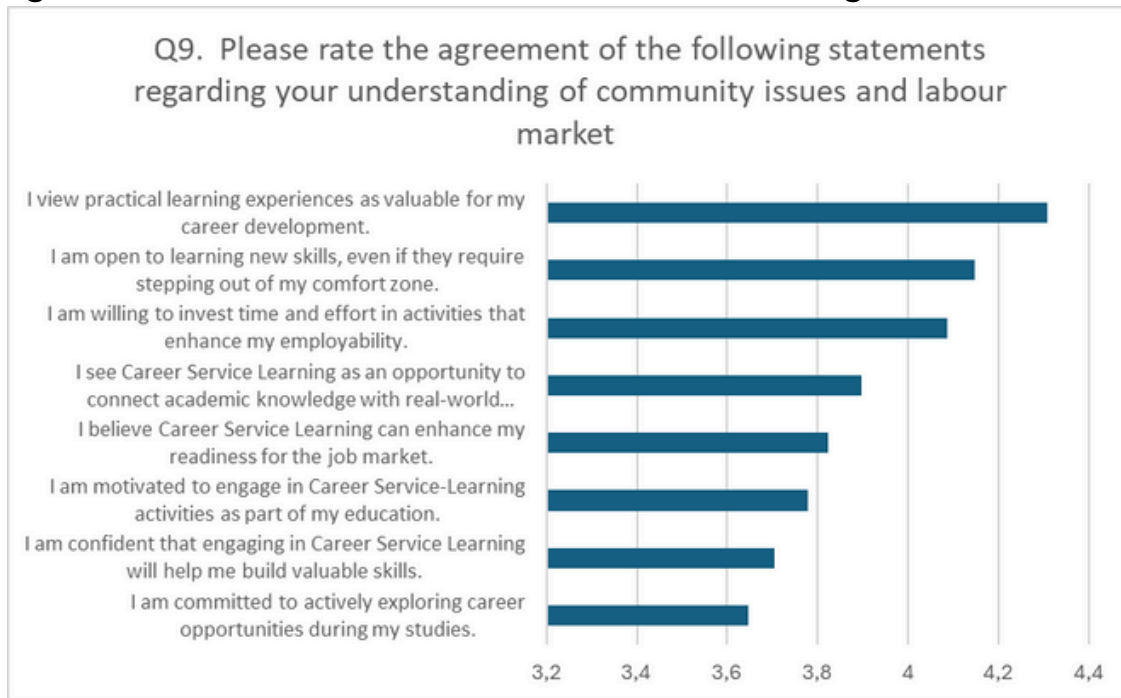
Figure 25: Student Awareness of Career Service Learning (CSL)



Attitudes toward Career Service Learning

Survey results show that most students have a positive perception of CSL, particularly regarding its role in fostering professional skills and civic engagement. However, the degree of enthusiasm varies, with some students questioning the direct career benefits of CSL participation. These findings suggest that universities should further emphasize the practical advantages of CSL experiences.

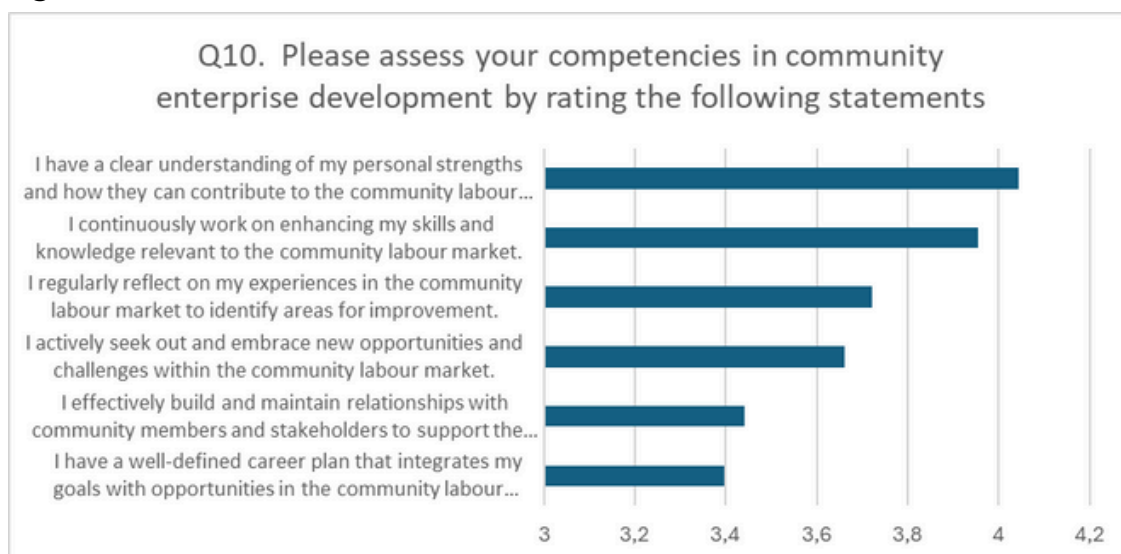
Figure 26: Student Attitudes Toward Career Service Learning



Behavioral Intentions and Actions

Students were asked about their career planning behaviors and future actions. While many report actively seeking internships and acquiring industry-relevant skills, there is less engagement in structured career planning activities such as long-term goal setting and professional coaching. This suggests that universities could enhance career services to support structured career development.

Figure 27: Students' Career-Related Intentions and Actions

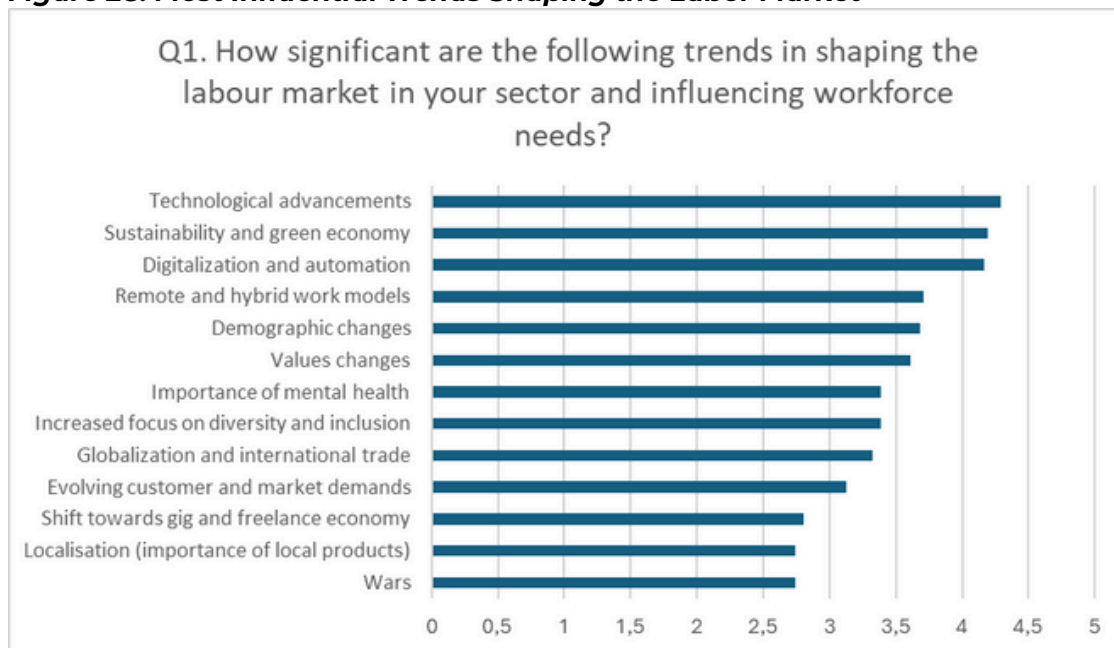


Survey on Labor Market Trends, Competencies, and Youth Employability for Stakeholders

Labor Market Trends and Challenges

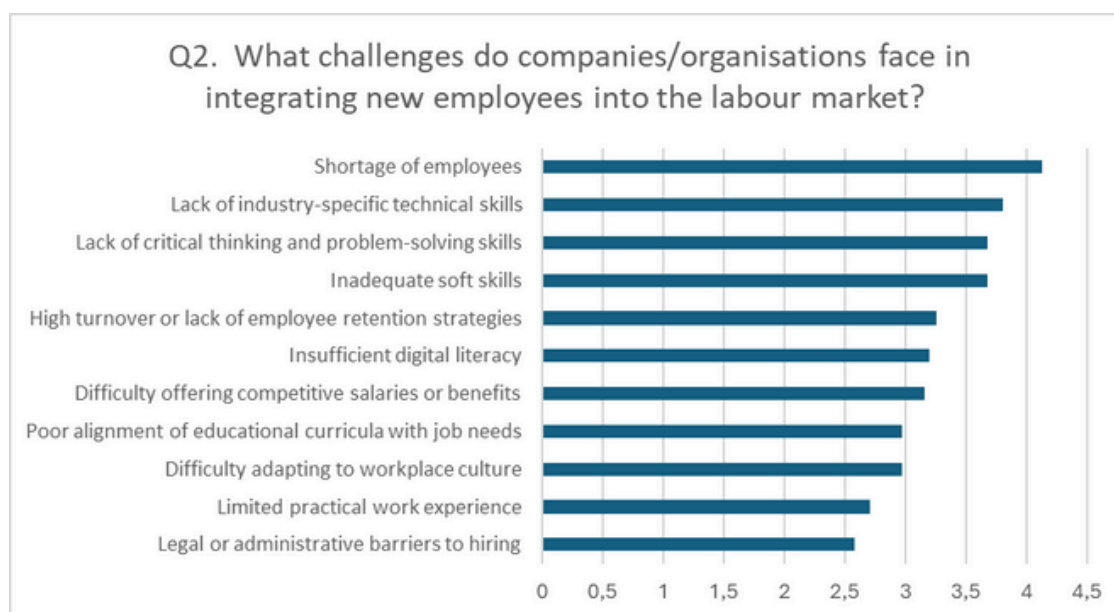
Stakeholders identified digitalization, automation, and sustainability as the most significant labor market trends. Technological advancements, evolving customer demands, and demographic changes were also ranked highly, reflecting the need for continuous adaptation. In contrast, wars, localization of products, and the shift toward the gig economy were considered less influential. These insights highlight the increasing demand for digital skills, sustainability-focused competencies, and agile work practices in modern workplaces.

Figure 28: Most Influential Trends Shaping the Labor Market



Stakeholders reported that the shortage of skilled employees, lack of technical competencies, and insufficient soft skills are the most pressing barriers to workforce integration. Many also pointed to the limited practical experience of graduates, which makes the transition into employment more challenging. High employee turnover and salary competitiveness were also noted as obstacles. These findings suggest that stronger collaboration between education providers and businesses is needed to ensure graduates develop the necessary skills before entering the job market.

Figure 29: Key Challenges in Workforce Integration



Stakeholders highlighted problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills as the most essential competencies for workforce readiness. While students also valued these skills, stakeholders placed greater emphasis on leadership, practical work experience, and digital literacy. The findings suggest that graduates need more opportunities to develop industry-relevant skills through hands-on projects, leadership training, and digital upskilling.

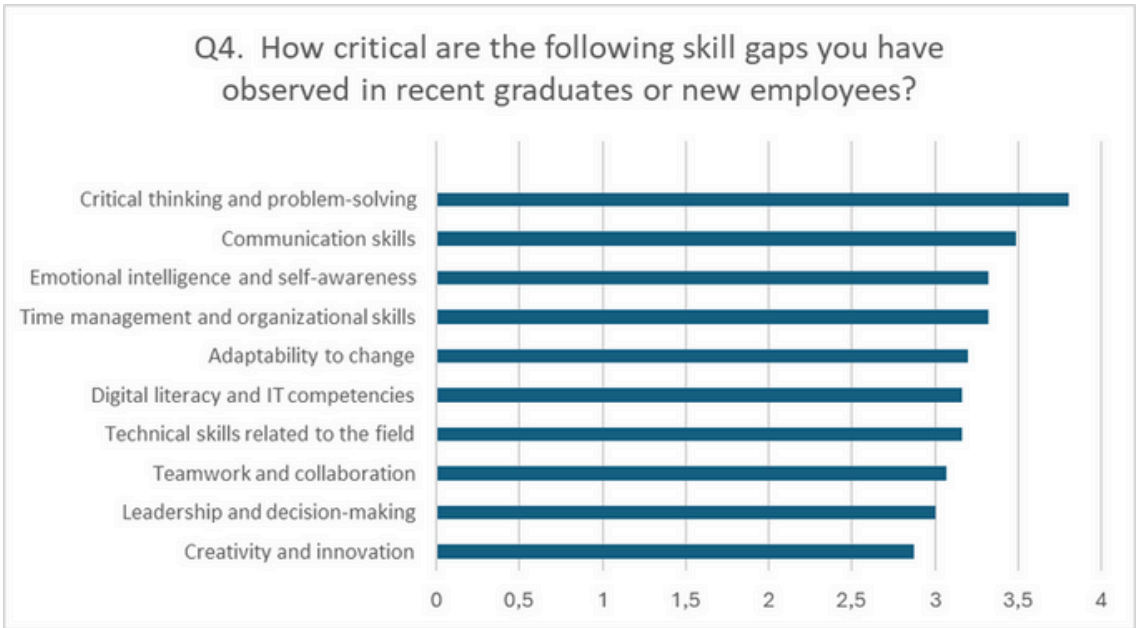
Figure 30: Competencies Rated Most Important by Employers



Impact of Trends on Competencies and Skill Gaps

Employers identified technical expertise, problem-solving, and leadership as the most common deficiencies among graduates. Many also noted gaps in adaptability, communication, and resilience, which are essential for navigating dynamic work environments. The findings reinforce the need for applied learning opportunities, leadership training, and industry collaborations to bridge these gaps.

Figure 31: Most Critical Skill Gaps in Graduates



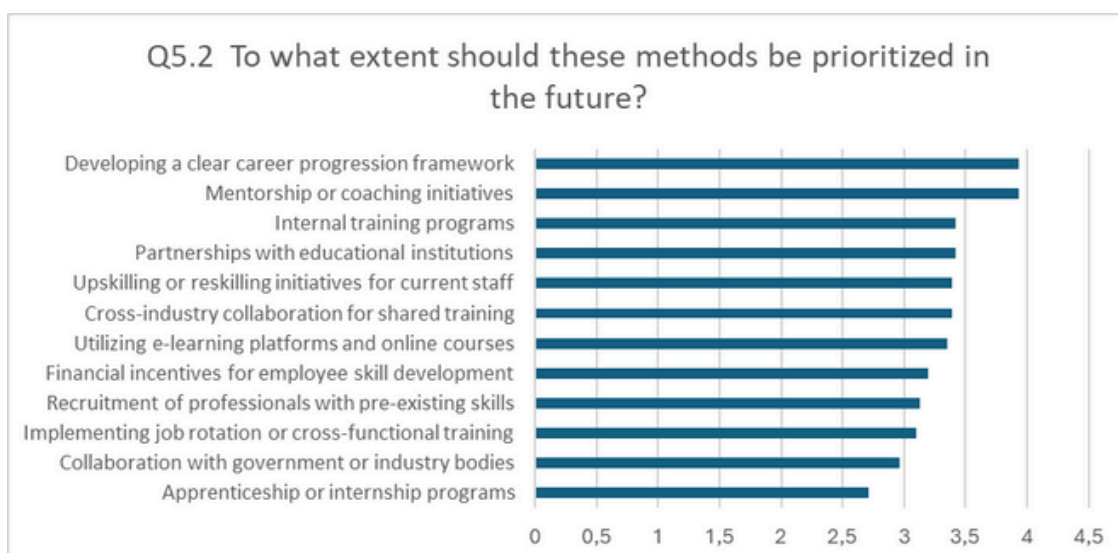
Stakeholders rated internal training programs, mentorship, and academic-industry partnerships as the most effective methods for addressing skill gaps. However, cross-sector collaboration and government incentives received lower scores, suggesting room for improvement in these areas. Expanding structured training initiatives and stronger business-academia connections could help better prepare graduates for the workforce.

Figure 32: Effectiveness of Current Approaches to Closing Skill Gaps



Looking ahead, stakeholders emphasized expanded mentorship programs, better integration of work-based learning, and upskilling opportunities as key strategies. Digital transformation training and stronger industry engagement were also highlighted as essential. These findings suggest that education systems must evolve to incorporate lifelong learning and industry-driven curricula to meet future workforce demands.

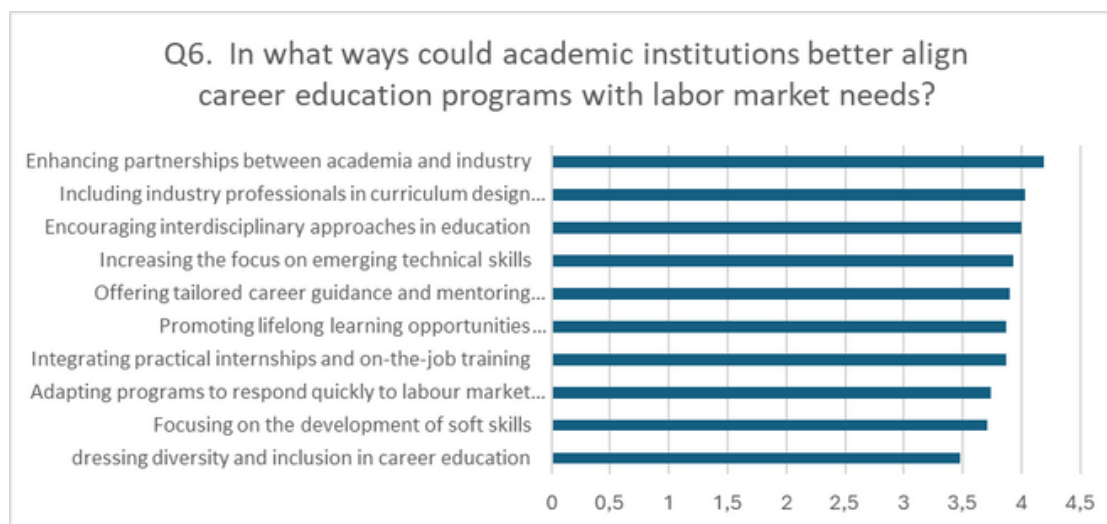
Figure 33: Stakeholder Prioritization of Future Skill Development Strategies



Social Phenomena and Career Education

Stakeholders stressed the importance of strengthening practical learning experiences, improving digital competencies, and fostering employer collaborations. Many emphasized greater involvement of industry professionals in curriculum design to ensure students acquire relevant skills. These insights indicate that a closer link between education and the labour market is crucial for preparing future professionals.

Figure 34: Most Important Strategies for Career Education Reform



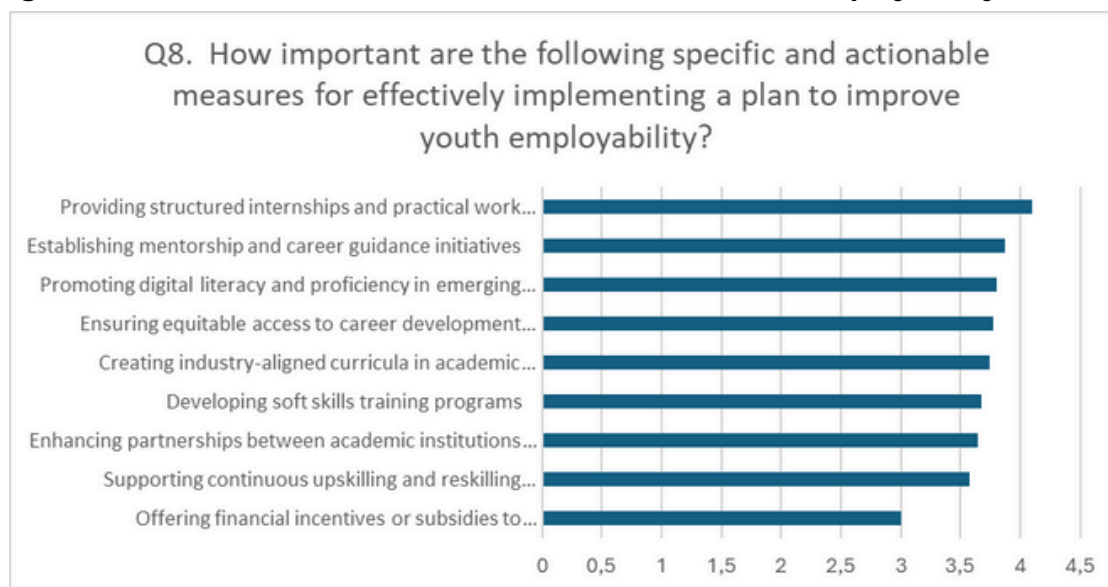
When asked in an open question (Q7) to give examples of effective collaboration between organizations and academic institutions, Stakeholders mentioned various forms of collaboration between organizations and academic institutions. Examples included alumni associations and participation in EU-funded industry-university collaborations. One organization described cooperation with a local university to develop terminology databases for a specific industry, while another highlighted joint research projects. Specific institutions such as Hochschule Burgenland and Akademie Burgenland were named as partners in continuing education and quality exchanges. Internships with international organizations, applied projects in consumer behaviour, and job fairs were also cited as forms of cooperation. Some responses referred to course-based projects where students solve real-world business problems, while others noted that collaboration is still in early stages or that no relevant partnerships were known.

These responses illustrate different ways in which academic institutions and businesses engage in workforce development, research, and industry-specific training.

Improving Youth Employability

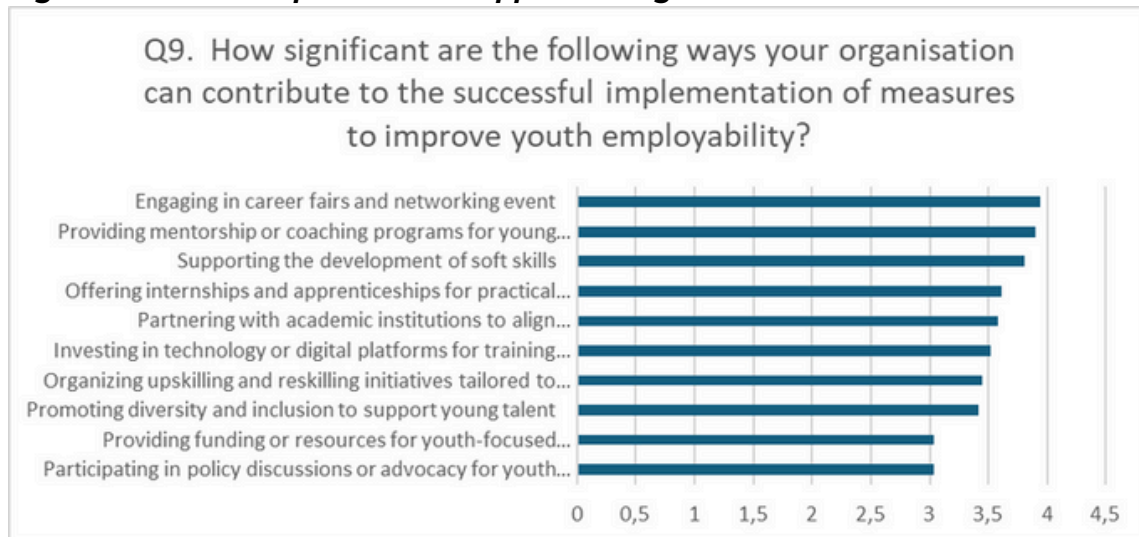
Internships, structured mentorship programs, and digital skills training were ranked as the most effective ways to improve employability. Stakeholders also highlighted the need for better career guidance, networking opportunities, and hands-on experience. These findings reinforce the call for stronger career services and more industry engagement in education.

Figure 35: Most Effective Measures to Enhance Graduate Employability



Employers see internships, partnerships with universities, and structured career development programs as the most impactful ways to support young talent. Offering job shadowing opportunities, industry workshops, and early career mentoring were also seen as crucial. This highlights the need for closer cooperation between businesses and academic institutions to ensure graduates are well-prepared for the workforce.

Figure 36: How Companies Can Support Young Professionals



Comperative analyse – introduction of main findings and recommendations

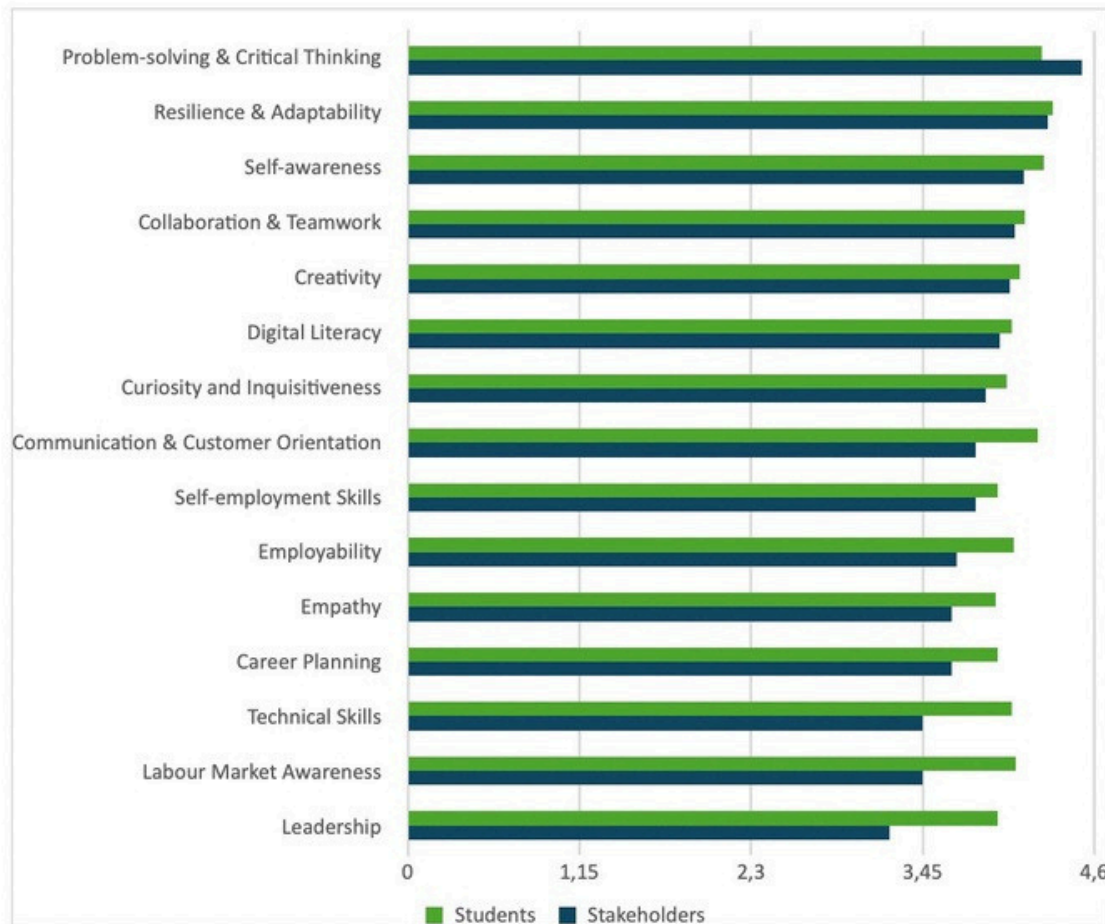
Local challenges and opportunities

The Austrian labour market is undergoing rapid transformation due to technological advancements, digitalization, demographic changes, and evolving work values. Students and stakeholders both recognize these shifts but emphasize different aspects. While students are particularly concerned about workplace flexibility, mental health awareness, and digital competencies, stakeholders highlight the growing need for specialized technical skills, leadership development, and cross-industry collaboration. A major challenge remains aligning academic education with industry needs. Stakeholders stress that graduates often lack practical experience and industry-relevant competencies, making the transition into employment more difficult. However, Austria's strong university-business ecosystem presents opportunities to close these gaps through internships, mentoring programs, and industry-driven curriculum design.

Competency gaps

Both groups identified communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and adaptability as essential yet underdeveloped competencies. Additionally, stakeholders noted a significant gap in digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and AI-related expertise, which are increasingly in demand across industries. Students feel insufficiently prepared for job market expectations, particularly in intercultural competence, career planning, and employability skills. Stakeholders echo this concern, emphasizing that graduates need stronger critical thinking skills, ethical decision-making capabilities, and real-world project experience to be competitive in the labour market.

Figure 37: Importance Rating Gaps in Competencies (Q3)



Guidelines for action

1. Awareness of Real Challenges and the Real World of Work Both students and stakeholders emphasize the need for stronger problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability skills. Stakeholders further highlight technical skill shortages, lack of work experience, and insufficient leadership capabilities among graduates. To address these gaps, career education should place greater emphasis on applied learning formats, such as real-world consulting projects, case-based learning, and collaborative research between students and businesses.

2. Strengthening Career Readiness Through Practical Experience Internships remain the most effective employability measure according to both groups. However, while bachelor students already engage in internships, master's students have fewer structured opportunities for applied learning. Industry-driven capstone projects, co-teaching models with practitioners, and structured career coaching should be expanded to ensure that all students benefit from hands-on industry exposure before entering the workforce.



3. **Enhancing Soft Skills and Digital Competencies** Employers consistently rate communication, teamwork, leadership, and resilience as essential yet underdeveloped among graduates. Additionally, digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, and AI-related skills are increasingly seen as core competencies across industries. Universities should integrate targeted soft skills training, digital transformation courses, and entrepreneurship programs into all curricula to ensure graduates are prepared for rapidly evolving job markets.

4. **Expanding Industry Collaboration and Lifelong Learning** Stakeholders stress the need for stronger academic-industry partnerships in designing career education programs. Companies should play a more active role in shaping curricula, participating in skill development workshops, and providing direct mentorship to students. Additionally, lifelong learning and upskilling initiatives should be expanded, ensuring that graduates remain competitive and adaptable throughout their careers.

5. **Aligning Educational Programs with Emerging Labor Market Trends** The most impactful labor market trends identified include digitalization, sustainability, and evolving customer demands. Graduates must be prepared to navigate shifting workforce structures, including remote work models, automation, and the gig economy. Career education should provide students with greater exposure to industry-relevant technological tools, sustainability practices, and agile work environments, ensuring they are equipped for long-term professional success.

Next planned activities

Short-Term (Next 12 Months) Structured mentoring programs should be launched, pairing students with industry professionals to provide career guidance. Job application bootcamps and mock interviews should be expanded to prepare students for competitive hiring processes. Industry-sponsored real-world projects should be integrated into curricula, ensuring that both bachelor and master students gain practical work experience.

Medium-Term (1–3 Years)

Academic institutions should formalize long-term partnerships with industry leaders, allowing for co-created learning programs and joint research initiatives. Digital transformation training programs should be implemented, equipping students with AI, data analysis, and automation skills. Entrepreneurial education should be strengthened through business incubation programs, allowing students to develop and scale innovative solutions.

Long-Term (3+ Years) Applied career education should become an institutionalized model, ensuring that all students receive structured exposure to industry-driven learning throughout their studies. Lifelong learning pathways should be established, offering graduates and professionals continuous opportunities for upskilling and reskilling. In collaboration with industry and government, policy frameworks should be developed to promote workforce adaptability, ensuring that education remains aligned with evolving labor market demands.

