

ROADMAP IN GREECE

Introduction

Like in many other nations, Greece's education system faces a number of structural issues, most notably the need to adapt higher education courses to the quickly shifting demands of the labor market. The knowledge that university students learn and the real-world abilities that companies look for in today's fast-paced workplace frequently diverge significantly. Because they lack practical experience, problem-solving skills, and critical soft skills like communication, cooperation, and flexibility, many graduates find it difficult to find work in their professions. Greece's traditional educational model emphasizes theoretical learning, frequently at the expense of developing practical skills and critical thinking, which are essential for success in today's job market. Additionally, because higher education institutions and industry stakeholders don't work together as much, students have fewer opportunities to gain real-world experience, which makes it harder for them to transition into the workforce after graduation.

Additional difficulties are brought on by the digital transformation's quick speed. Despite the growing use of digital tools in Greek higher education, there is still a significant digital literacy gap that affects both students and teachers. Graduates run the danger of not being adequately equipped for an increasingly digitalized and internationally connected economy if digital capabilities are not successfully incorporated into curricula. Furthermore, civic participation and social responsibility are frequently underemphasized in traditional teaching approaches, depriving students of the knowledge and expertise needed to actively solve social issues in their communities. Students are not adequately equipped to meet the demands of a global, socially conscious workforce as a result of the dearth of practical learning opportunities.

By bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world experience, the ELIX project provides a creative solution to these problems. Through the incorporation of Community Service Learning (CSL) into academic programs, ELIX enables students to apply their knowledge in practical settings, obtaining invaluable experience and contributing significantly to society. By fostering vital abilities like problem-solving, collaboration, and digital literacy, this method makes sure that students are more prepared to face the demands of the job market. Through experiential learning, the project also promotes creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset. ELIX encourages students to think creatively and come up with original solutions to pressing issues by including them in mentorship programs, innovation challenges, and partnerships with nearby companies. In addition to improving their employability, this fosters a proactive, problem-solving mentality that advances their career and personal development.

Through its focus on employability, digital skills, and civic engagement, the ELIX project provides a comprehensive response to the educational challenges in Greece, helping to prepare students for the complexities of the 21st-century economy. Moreover, by introducing modern teaching methodologies and strengthening ties between academia and industry, the project contributes to creating a more dynamic and responsive higher education system that effectively meets the needs of both students and employers.



Overview of completed tasks

Task1: We successfully organized and facilitated the Localized Career Pathways Think Tank sessions, bringing together students from our college and stakeholders from various sectors. These workshops fostered meaningful discussions to tackle local career pathway challenges and explore innovative solutions.

Task 2: Over the two-day workshops, we promoted active engagement and focused discussions among students and stakeholders to assess and refine local career pathways. The sessions aimed to build a collective understanding of both the challenges and opportunities within the local job market.

Task 3: We carried out an in-depth analysis of current job market trends and obstacles, using these insights to guide our discussions and generate innovative strategies for enhancing local career pathways.

Task 4: Drawing from the think tank sessions and survey findings, we developed a detailed roadmap. This plan outlines concrete steps to enhance career opportunities and strengthen collaboration between education, the community, and the labor market.

Achieved goals and results

The following section highlights the key outcomes derived from the completed tasks. It begins with an overview of the findings from the think tank focus groups, followed by a detailed analysis of the survey conducted with students and stakeholders on labor market trends, essential competencies, and youth employability.

Think Tank Series

STUDENTS

Basic Information

Number of Participants: 20 students

Date of Implementation: 11-12/12/2024

Mode of Delivery: Live in Greece

Summary of the findings

Discussions showed the need for universities to reconsider their educational approaches in an attempt to better fit the changing labour market demands. Students stressed that it was important to develop both technical and soft skills, since these are the only elements that can help someone have success in today's challenging and dynamic work environment however, they also warned that traditional academic programs fail to provide them with such skills in the rapidly changing workplace. Key recommendations included making the curriculum more practical. Students wanted internships, co-op programs, and project-based learning to be added to better link theory to practice. Such initiatives would go a long way in enhancing the technical capabilities of students, besides other important skills like problem-solving, leadership, and adaptability. Other important suggestions made by students include increased collaboration between universities and industries.

Students suggested that the university should collaborate with industries to provide mentorship opportunities, job fairs, and networking events to help students be more updated about the current situation in the industry, which can give them better opportunities when entering the workforce. Besides, learners acknowledged how digital tools and online platforms might revolutionize the way they learn. Students suggested embedding virtual simulations, e-learning platforms, and digital resources to enhance their technical competencies and make them better prepared for a global, technology-driven economy. It could also give students a chance to learn about such emerging fields as artificial intelligence, digital marketing, and sustainability. By accepting these recommendations, universities would be in a better position to prepare students for challenges and opportunities in the current job market. Such a change would ensure that the graduates are knowledgeable and adequately equipped with the right kind of skills to flourish in the ever-evolving work atmosphere.



Table 13: Thematic statements

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Changing Values	Remote work	Hybrid model	<i>"I would like to find a job that can offer me remote work, it would be very convenient for me personally."</i>
Digitalization	AI intelligence	Technology	<i>"Artificial intelligence and digital tools are something that helps us a lot in our university work, but I still think that our use is not correct, and I think there should be some training on how to use them more effectively."</i>
Environmental Demands	Sustainability	Green jobs	<i>"I am very passionate about sustainability, but I feel that no one is interested in it and I don't know if I can make a career out of it. I am very worried about the current situation in this field"</i>
Mental Health	Mental health	Mental Health roles	<i>"Regarding the field of mental health, I would like to state that there is a rapid increase but unfortunately our studies do not guide us properly to be able to cope with something like this. "</i>
Soft Skills	Communication and leadership	Soft skills	<i>"We do not have enough courses that emphasize communication and leadership which are quite important for our later development in the working environment. "</i>

STAKEHOLDERS

Basic Information

Number of participants: 18 stakeholders (including representatives from NGOs, private employments, directors, entrepreneurs, career coaches)

Date of implementation: 11-12/11/2024

Mode of delivery: Live in Greece

Summary of the Findings

Discussions highlighted how imperative it was that education and professional development systems at large became adapted to respond to continuous change in modern labor market demands. According to stakeholders, traditional methods of education are not efficient for the proper training of students for the challenges posed by the work environment today. This is a dynamic, open system of education that would prepare students and professionals with the appropriate sets of skills necessary for a very competitive, dynamically changing job environment.

Key recommendations from the discussions included a stronger emphasis on embedding practical work experiences into academic curricula. Such internships, cooperative education programs, and project-based learning were identified as key tools that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application in real-world scenarios. Stakeholders stressed that such experiences not only enhance technical proficiency but also cultivate essential soft skills like problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability, which are critical for success in professional environments.

Another cornerstone of the proposed strategy is the collaboration between academia and industry. In stronger partnerships, universities and businesses will be able to develop synergistic opportunities for students to learn from industry practitioners, access mentorship programs, and participate in events such as job fairs, workshops, and hackathons. The collaboration will keep the institutions current with market trends and thus enable them to design programs that meet employers' expectations.



Table 14: Thematic statements

Themes	Categories	Codes	Quotes
Changing Values	Work-life balance	-Flexibility	" Young people demand remote work, flexible hours and more free time. They generally choose less work for more money."
Digitalization	AI-driven	-Technology	" Artificial intelligence is reshaping jobs, creating new roles in data science and virtual reality, while at times limiting and reducing some jobs."
Environmental Demands	Sustainability	-Green jobs	"The shift towards environmentally friendly practices is driving demand for sustainability experts and better awareness of these issues for everyone."
Mental Health	Aging population	-Healthcare roles	" In Greece we face a major problem regarding skilled health workers while we are in a country with a high birth rate and large percentages of elderly people."
Communication Skills	Leadership	-Soft skills	" Strong communication and keeping everything properly informed is key to motivating teams and connecting with stakeholders."

Quantitative analysis

Survey on Labor Market Trends, Competencies, and

YouthEmployabilityfor Students

Perception of Current Social Phenomena

First of all, we asked the students how the social phenomena influencing the labour market. The Evolving customer and market demands was in the highest average value 3,70 and in the second place the Localization (importance of local products) with 3,68. With the scale 1- not significant and 5- very significant and the penultimate place was the Demographic changes and at the last place Wars (Ukraine and Israel).

Figure 75: Significance of Labour Market



Essential Competencies for Labor Market Integration

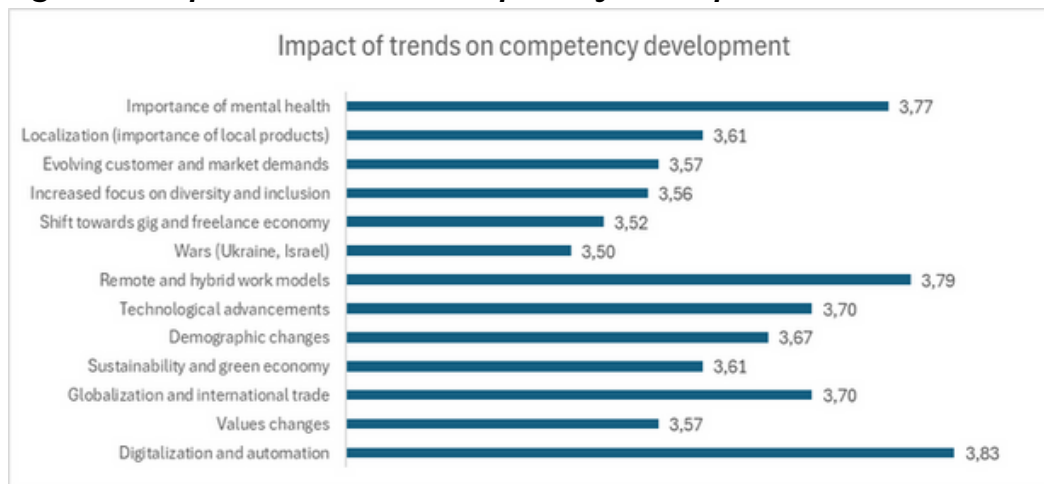
We proceed in the next question when we asked them to evaluate what essential competencies for Individual are to have a successfully integrate in the labour market and the highest rate was Self-awareness with 3,84 and Labour Market Awareness with 3,80 and at the last places where the Self-employment Skills with 3,67 and Curiosity and Inquisitiveness with 3,64.

Figure 76: Essential Competencies for Labour Market Integration



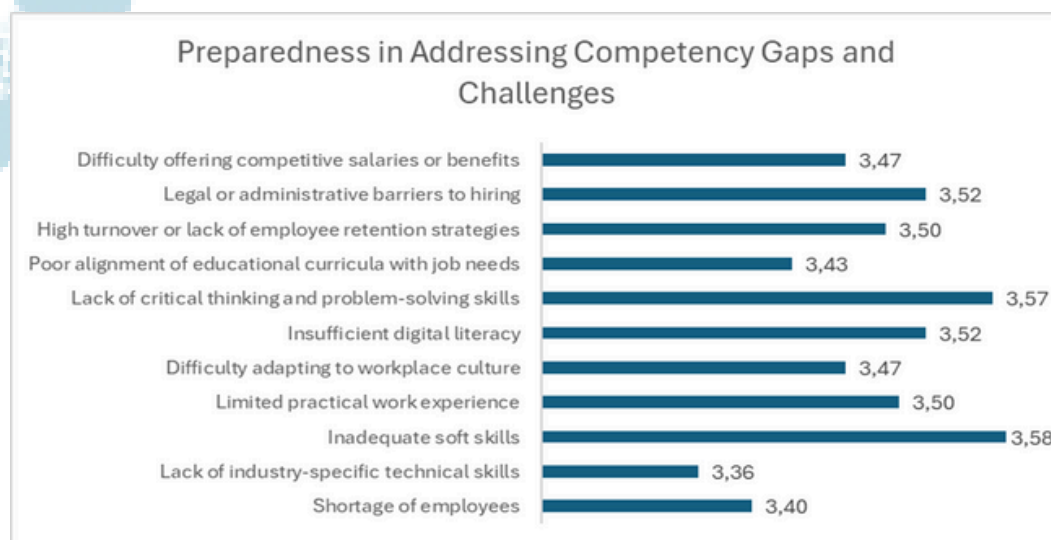
At the next question, what extent does each of the following trends require to develop new competencies to better adapt to labour market and societal needs the most of the students answered Digitalization and automation on 3,83 and Remote and hybrid work models on 3,79 and at the last places where Shift towards gig and freelance economy on 3,52 and again the Wars(Ukraine, Israel) on 3,50.

Figure 77: Impact of trends on competency developments



At Self-Perceived Readiness to Address Competency Gaps and Challenges question, they responded that Inadequate soft skills 3,58 and Lack of critical thinking and problem-solving skills on 3,57 were on top and Lack of industry-specific technical skills with 3,36 at the end.

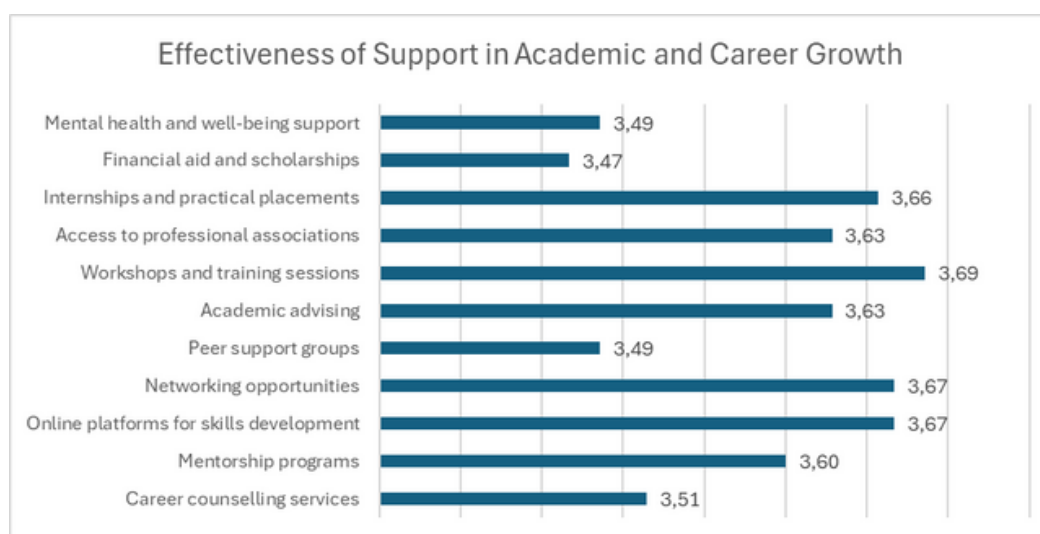
Figure 78: Preparedness in Addressing Competency Gaps and Challenges



Support for Academic and Career Development

The first question of the next following series of questions was the effectiveness of the following forms of support in addressing students' academic and career development needs and at the first place was the Workshops and training sessions (3,68) and at the second place were the Online platforms for skills development and the Networking opportunities (3,67) and at the last place was the Financial aid and scholarships (3,47).

Figure 79: Effectiveness of Support in Academic and Career Growth



At the next question the students had to answer how their own Self-assessment of being involved in shaping career paths, proposal of additional activities on the first place was Using online platforms for learning about social phenomena (3,64) and at the last place was Engaging in internships or practical placements (3,48). And also, we asked them to evaluate if they proposed this activity and yes to all activities was far away to no, hyper to yes.

Figure 80: Involvement in shaping Career Path

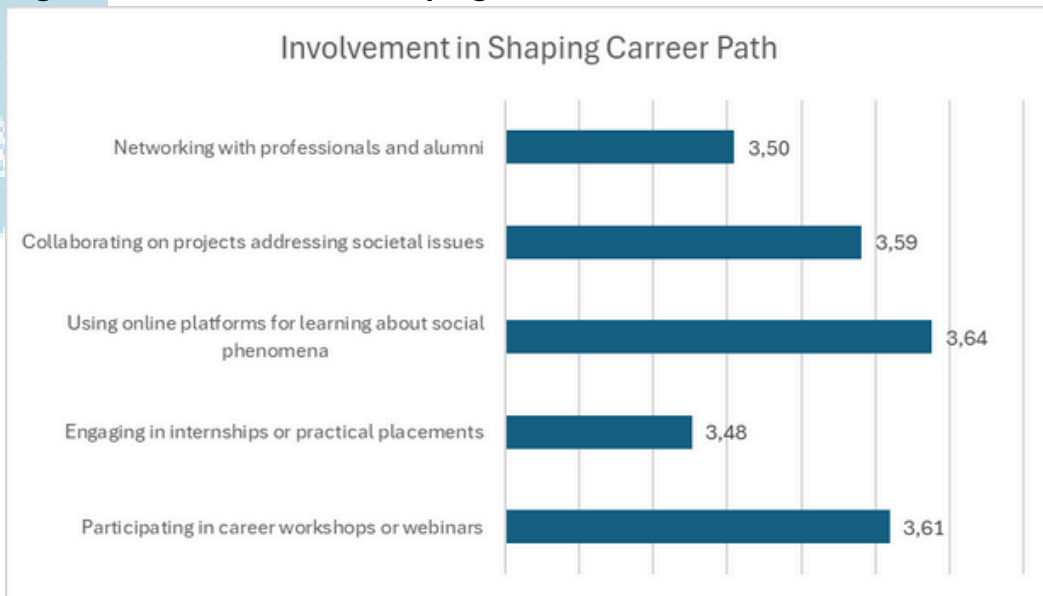
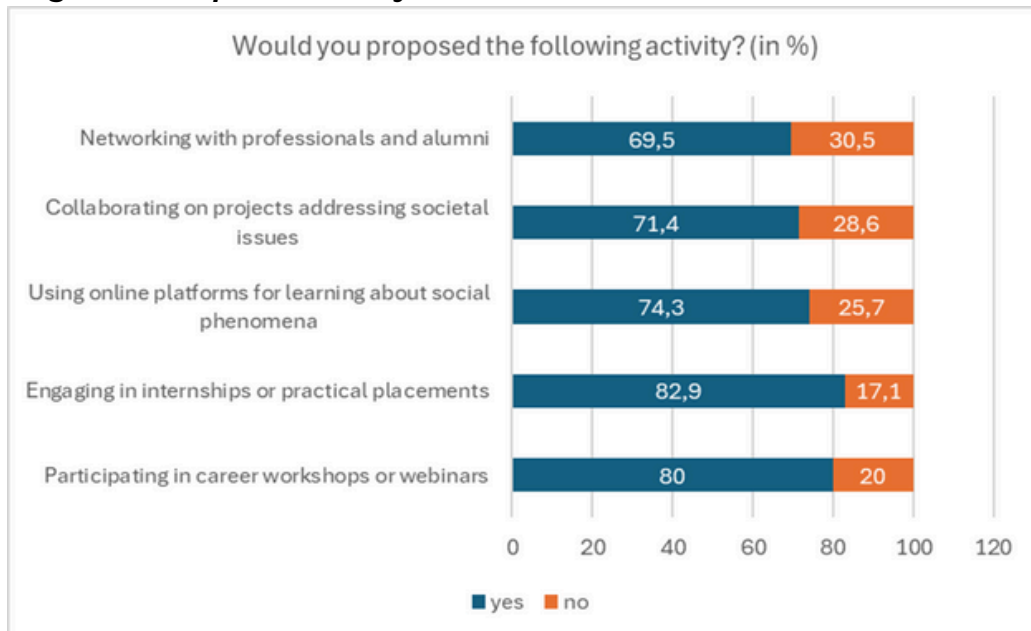


Figure 81: Proposed activity



At the next question that it was to write some comments and suggestions, the students suggested that the universities in Greece need career coaches, to have mentorships and also to have full inform for the relevant things based on the labour market needs to be ready for the future. The most of them, preferred to not write anything because they are very disappointed about education in Greece and also, they were negative for many things on the educational program.

Knowledge about Career Service Learning

At the following question, we asked students to evaluate how it is their understanding of community issues and labour market. At the top with 3,67 the answer "I can identify professional roles or positions relevant to my career interests." And at the end, with 3,48 the answer "I understand the root causes of these challenges."



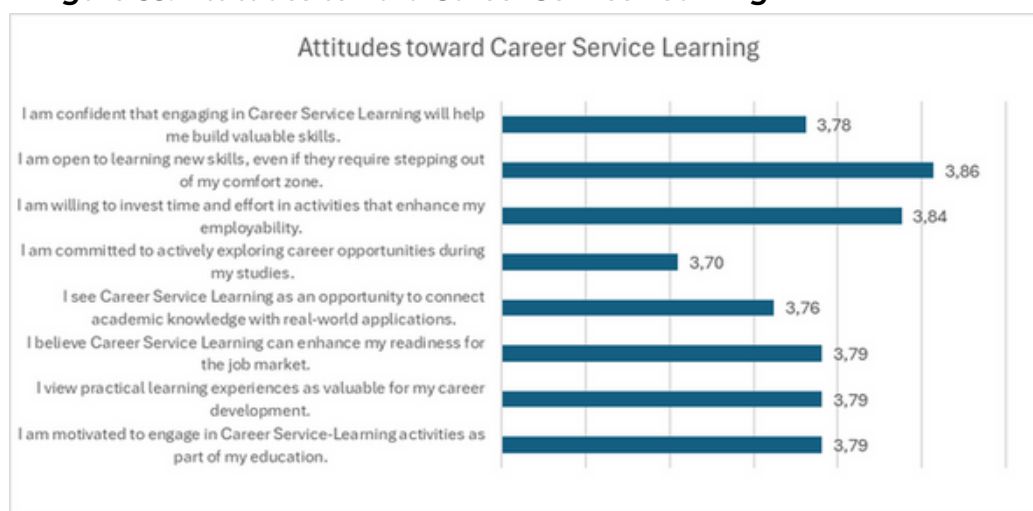
Figure 82: Knowledge about Career Service Learning



Attitudes toward Career Service Learning

And at the next question we counted the attitudes toward CSL and how the students understand them with the first answer "I am open to learning new skills, even if they require stepping out of my comfort zone." on 3,86 and the last "I am committed to actively exploring career opportunities during my studies" on 3,70.

Figure 83: Attitudes toward Career Service Learning



Behavioral Intentions and Actions

At the last question, we asked the students to make a self-assessment of their skills in community enterprise development. They understand their strengths with the highest rate "I continuously work on enhancing my skills and knowledge relevant to the community labour market." with rate 3,81 and the last one with the lowest rate "I have a well-defined career plan that integrates my goals with opportunities in the community labour market." with rate 3,63. This shows us that most of the students are not ready to know what they will do in the future or to know from the beginning of their studies what their following career will be.

Figure 84: Behavioural Intentions and Actions



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

Labor Market Trends and Challenges

At the first question, we asked the stakeholders which are the most significant trends in shaping the labour market, with the highest answer the Digitalization and automation on 4,06 and the lowest Wars (Ukraine, Izrael) on 3,28.

Figure 85: Significance of Labour Market



At the following question they had to answer and to evaluate the challenges that organizations show integration of new employees. The highest answer was Shortage of employees with 3,75 and the last one the Difficulty adapting to workplace culture with 3,44.

Figure 86: Challenges in Integrating New Employees into Labour Market



At the next question, Self-awareness: building a realistic self-image and healthy self-esteem, mindfulness, and reflectivity was at 3,94 with the highest reach and at the lowest participation the Resilience: strength to cope with uncertainty and stress; flexibility and openness to change, career transition skills (change management), and work- life integration with 3,44.



Figure 87: Essential Competencies for Successful Labour Market

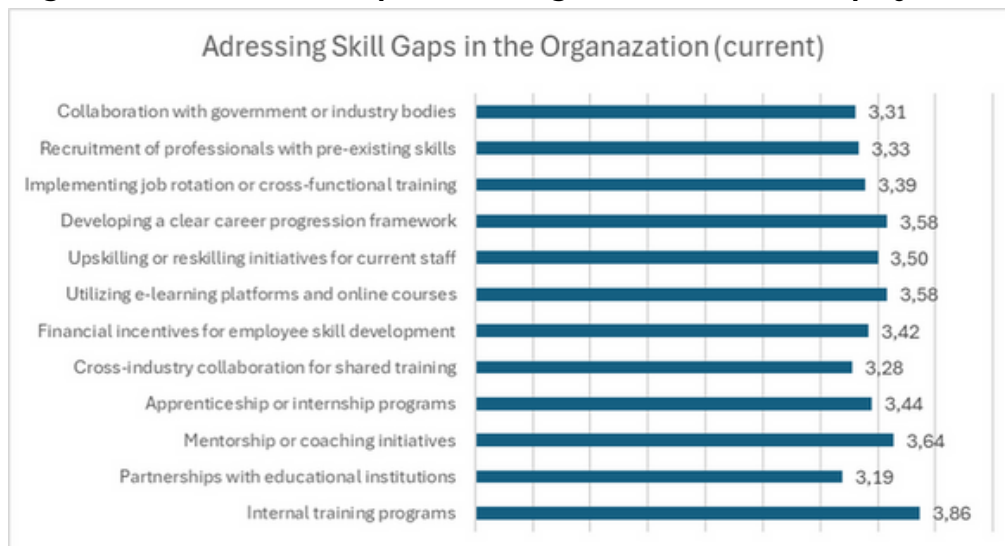


Impact of Trends on Competencies and Skill Gaps

Stakeholders

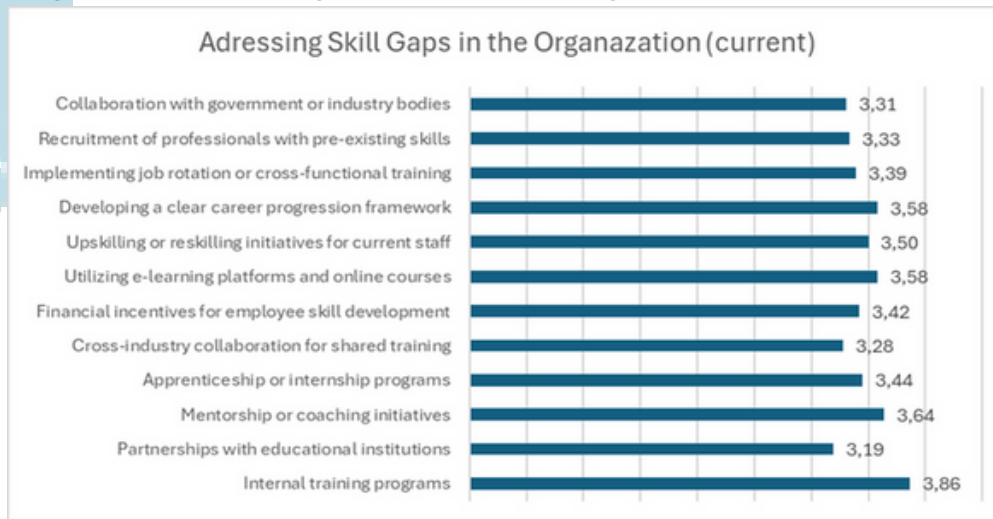
At the next stage we asked the stakeholders to answer the critical skill gaps in recent graduates of new employees. The answers that we got were at the highest level the Emotional intelligence and self-awareness (3,86) and technical skills related to the field (3,83) and the lowest level the Adaptability to change and the Teamwork and collaboration on 3,53 both.

Figure 88: Critical Skill Gaps in recent graduates of new employees



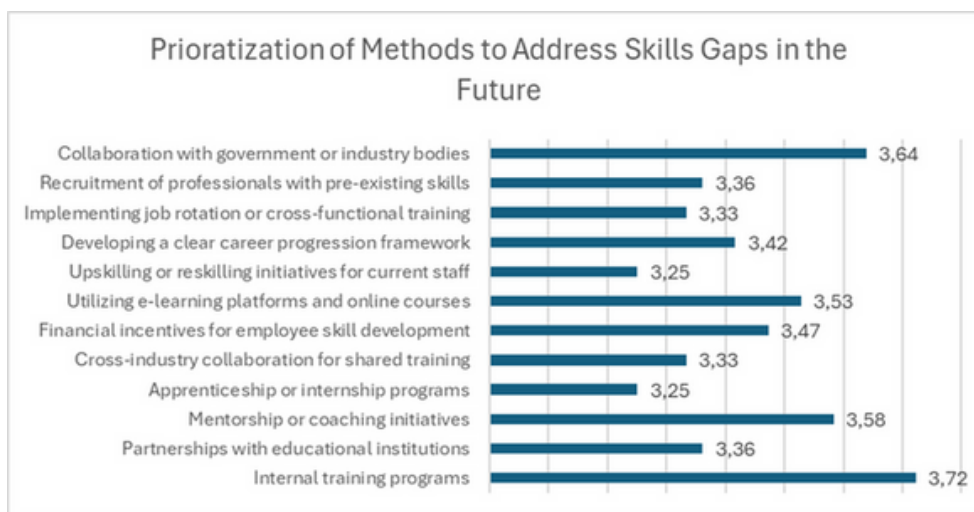
In continuation we asked them to evaluate how does their organization currently address skill gaps, and they answered as the highest answer the Internal training programs with 3,86 and at the lowest answer Partnerships with educational institutions with 3,19.

Figure 89: Addressing Skill Gaps in the Organization (current)



At the last question of this stage, stakeholders at the question "To what extent should these methods be prioritized in the future?" we received with the most responses again the Internal training programs (3,72) and the lowest the apprenticeship or internship programs and the Upskilling or reskilling initiatives for current staff (3,25).

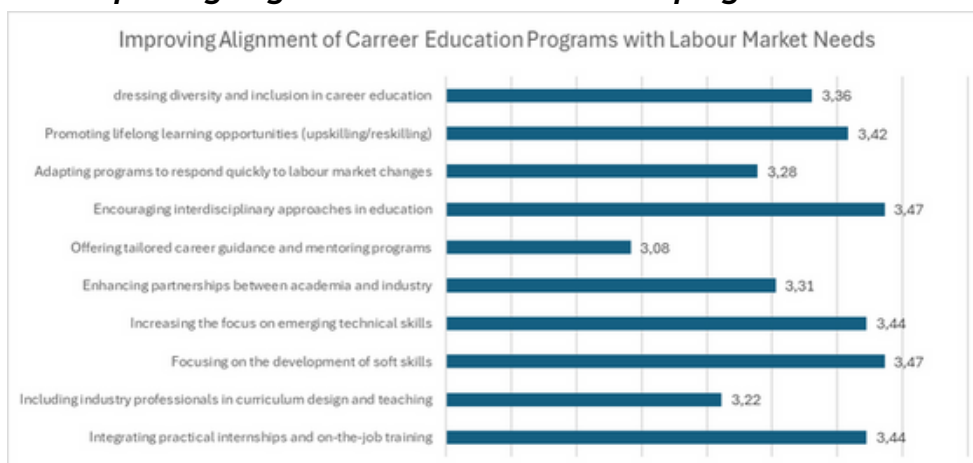
Figure 90: Prioritization of Methods to address skills gaps in the future



Social Phenomena and Career Education

At the next part, we asked them to evaluate the role of academic institutions to better align career education programs with labour market needs and we took back the Focusing on the development of soft skills and the Encouraging interdisciplinary approaches in education on 3,47 and at the last place Offering tailored career guidance and mentoring programs on 3,08.

Figure 91: Improving Alignment of Career education programs with labour market needs



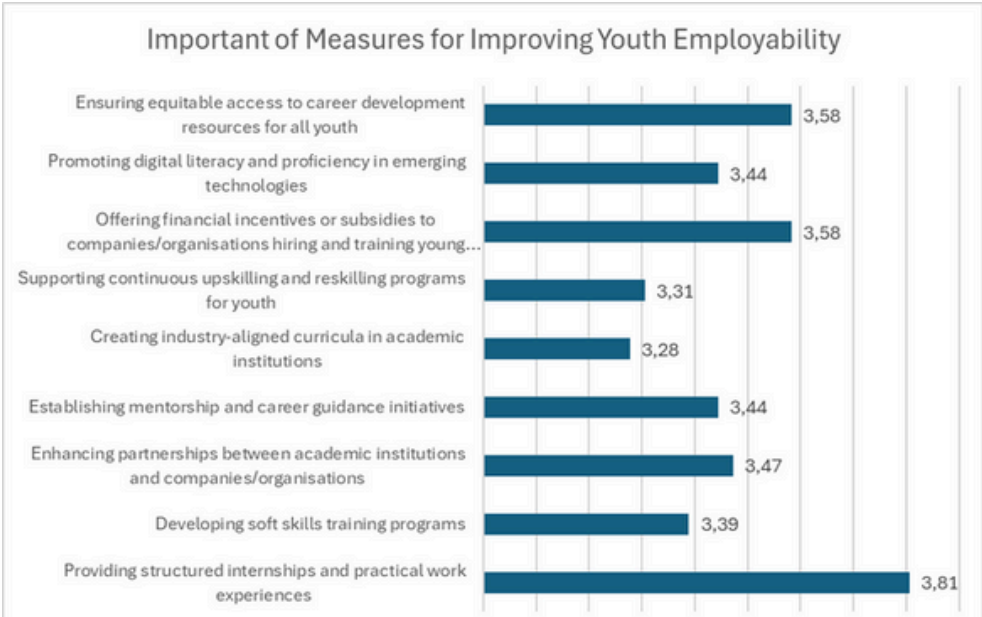
Some answer to the next question about "Specific examples of collaboration between stakeholders and academic institutions" were:

- Mental health training sessions and coaching for life balance
- Researching projects and mentorship projects
- Society practice-based week (e.g planting with students)
- Community semester consultation sessions

Improving Youth Employability

At the following question, we asked them to rate importance of specific and actionable measures for effectively implementing a plan to improve youth employability, the most important according to the answers was the Providing structured internships and practical work experiences (3,81) and not so important the Creating industry- aligned curricula in academic institutions (3,28).

Figure 92: Important of measures for improving youth employability



At the last question of this survey "How significant are the following ways your organisation can contribute to the successful implementation of measures to improve youth employability?" The most significant answers were "Organizing upskilling and reskilling initiatives tailored to industry" and "Offering internships and apprenticeships for practical experience" (3,83 both) and not significant was "Partnering with academic institutions to align educational programs" (3,42).

Figure 93: Significance of organizational contributions to youth employability measures



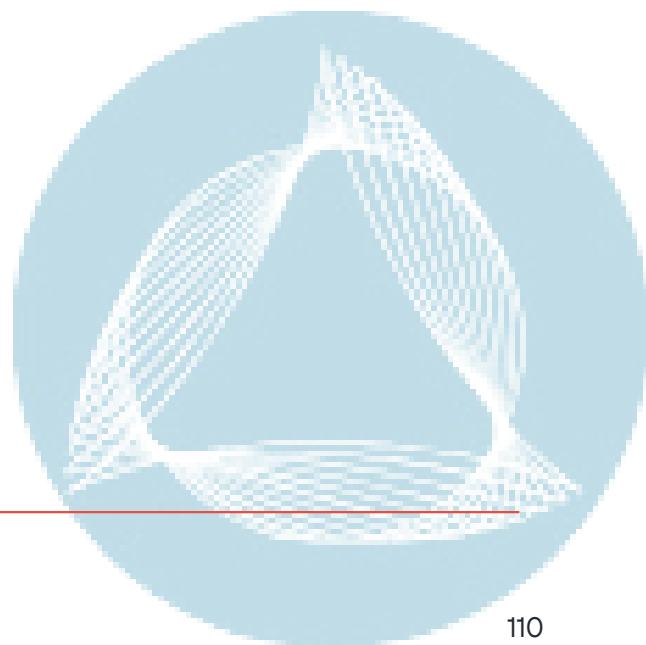
Comparative analysis – introduction of main findings and recommendations

Introduce:

Local challenges and opportunities Workforce Shortages and Retention Issues: One of the most pressing challenges facing the labor market today is the shortage of employees, which was rated at 3.75. This issue reflects the difficulties organizations face in attracting and retaining skilled talent. A combination of demographic shifts, evolving job expectations, and a lack of qualified professionals in key sectors has contributed to this labor shortage. As companies struggle to fill vacancies, productivity and economic growth may be adversely affected, highlighting the urgent need for workforce development strategies, targeted recruitment efforts, and employee retention initiatives. Adaptation to Workplace Culture: While not as highly ranked as other challenges, with a rating of 3.44, the difficulty in adapting to workplace culture remains a concern. Many new employees, especially recent graduates, often face challenges in adjusting to the dynamics, values, and expectations of a professional setting. Factors such as generational differences, communication barriers, and a lack of structured onboarding programs can make workplace integration difficult. Organizations must invest in mentorship programs, clear communication strategies, and inclusive work environments to help employees transition smoothly and contribute effectively.

Digitalization and Automation: Rated as the most significant labor market trend at 4.06, digitalization and automation are transforming the workforce landscape. As industries continue to integrate advanced technologies, employees must develop digital literacy and technological skills to remain competitive. Automation has reshaped job roles, reducing demand for routine tasks while increasing the need for specialized expertise in data analysis, programming, and artificial intelligence. To address this shift, both educational institutions and employers must prioritize digital upskilling initiatives, ensuring workers are equipped to thrive in an increasingly tech-driven economy.

Wars and Geopolitical Uncertainty: Although rated lower at 3.28, the impact of geopolitical conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and Israel, remains a factor influencing economic stability and labor market shifts. Wars and political instability can disrupt supply chains, cause economic downturns, and lead to workforce displacement, affecting both local and global employment markets. Additionally, uncertainty in geopolitical landscapes can influence investment decisions, job security, and migration patterns, further complicating labor market dynamics. Addressing these challenges requires proactive economic policies, contingency planning, and international cooperation to mitigate disruptions and foster workforce resilience.



Competency gaps Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness: Rated the highest at 3.86, the gap in emotional intelligence and self-awareness highlights a growing need for better social and emotional training in both educational settings and workplace environments. Employees who lack these competencies may struggle with interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and effective communication—factors crucial to maintaining a productive and harmonious work environment. Organizations should integrate structured programs that foster emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and empathy, ensuring that employees are equipped to navigate complex social interactions and leadership responsibilities.

Technical Skills Related to Specific Fields: Following closely at 3.83, technical skills related to specific fields remain a critical component of workforce readiness. As industries evolve and technological advancements continue to redefine job roles, there is an increasing demand for highly specialized expertise in areas such as engineering, IT, healthcare, and manufacturing. Employers and educational institutions must collaborate to bridge this skill gap by aligning academic curricula with industry needs, offering hands-on training, and providing continuous professional development opportunities to keep employees proficient in their respective fields.

Adaptability and Teamwork: Although scoring the lowest at 3.53, adaptability and teamwork remain essential competencies in today's fast-paced and interconnected work environments. The ability to quickly adjust to changes, collaborate across diverse teams, and embrace new challenges is becoming increasingly valuable. Many workplaces require employees who can think critically, work efficiently in team settings, and contribute to a culture of innovation. To address this gap, companies should foster team-building initiatives, implement cross-functional projects, and encourage a mindset of continuous learning, enabling employees to thrive in dynamic professional landscapes.

Key competencies	Stakeholders	Students
Digitalization and automation	4,06	3,60
Values changes	3,39	3,57
Globalization and international trade	3,97	3,56
Sustainability and green economy	3,67	3,59
Demographic changes	3,39	3,50
Technological advancements	3,67	3,64
Remote and hybrid work models	3,75	3,65
Wars (Ukraine, Israel)	3,28	3,48
Shift towards gig and freelance economy	3,44	3,61
Increased focus on diversity and inclusion	3,78	3,55
Evolving customer and market demands	3,50	3,70
Localization (importance of local products)	3,69	3,68
Importance of mental health	3,75	3,64



Guidelines for action

ActiveCitizenshipandWorkforce Readiness

In an era shaped by digitalization and automation, fostering active citizenship among youth is essential for navigating the evolving labor market. Enhancing self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and adaptability is critical in addressing skill gaps and preparing young individuals for career transitions. Providing mindfulness training, resilience-building initiatives, and mentorship programs can equip youth with the necessary competencies to engage proactively in their professional and civic lives.

Career Development and Employability Strategies

This survey highlights a pressing need to bridge the gap between labor market demands and youth competencies. Emotional intelligence and technical skills are identified as the most critical skill gaps, emphasizing the need for tailored career development initiatives. Organizations should prioritize internal training programs to upskill employees and ensure they remain competitive in the workforce. Additionally, structured internships and practical work experiences should be expanded to provide hands-on learning opportunities that enhance employability.

Strengthening Local Cooperation and Partnerships

Collaboration between stakeholders, including businesses, academic institutions, and community organizations, is crucial for aligning educational programs with labor market needs. Current efforts, such as mental health training, mentorship projects, and community-based activities, have demonstrated positive outcomes. However, greater emphasis should be placed on forming partnerships that facilitate practical learning experiences, such as apprenticeships and industry-driven educational curricula. Strengthening these partnerships can lead to more effective workforce integration and long-term economic development.

Next planned activities

- Expanding Digital Skills Training

With digitalization and automation shaping the labor market, the focus will be on practical, short-term training programs rather than large-scale initiatives. Employers and training centers will collaborate to offer affordable and accessible digital skills workshops, targeting unemployed youth and recent graduates. These will include basic coding, data analysis, and the use of digital tools relevant to different industries.

- Tackling Employee Shortages with Targeted Recruitment and Training

Since businesses struggle to find skilled workers, more direct partnerships between companies and educational institutions will be encouraged. This will involve guest lectures, company visits, and small-scale mentorship programs where professionals share real-world insights with students. Employers will also be incentivized to invest in on-the-job training, reducing the need for immediate high-skill hires.

- Developing Emotional Intelligence and Workplace Readiness

Rather than broad personal development programs, practical steps such as soft skills workshops, peer mentoring, and stress management training will be integrated into existing career services. These will focus on building emotional intelligence, teamwork, and adaptability, with real case studies and role-playing exercises to simulate workplace challenges.

- Strengthening Internships and Apprenticeships

To make internships more meaningful, businesses will be encouraged to offer structured placements with clear learning objectives. A push will be made to formalize these experiences, ensuring that they are not just unpaid labor but provide actual skills development. Efforts will also focus on creating more paid internship opportunities, possibly through public-private partnerships or EU-funded programs.

