

ROADMAP IN SERBIA

Introduction

Education in Serbia, like in many other countries, faces several systemic challenges, especially in terms of aligning higher education curricula with the rapidly evolving needs of the labor market. There is often a disconnect between what students are learning in universities and the practical skills that employers are seeking in today's dynamic work environment. As a result, graduates frequently struggle to find employment in their fields due to a lack of necessary practical experience, problem-solving abilities, and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability. The traditional education model in Serbia tends to focus on theoretical knowledge, often neglecting the development of critical thinking and practical competencies that are essential for success in the modern workplace. Furthermore, the lack of integration between higher education institutions and industry partners means students miss out on opportunities to gain hands-on experience, making it more challenging for them to transition into their careers after graduation.

Digitalization and the fast-paced changes in technology present additional challenges. Although the Serbian education system is increasingly adopting digital tools, there is still a significant gap in digital literacy among students and educators. Without proper integration of digital skills into the curriculum, students' risk being ill-prepared to succeed in a globalized, tech-driven economy. Moreover, a limited focus on civic engagement and social responsibility in traditional teaching methods means students are often not fully equipped to engage with and address the complex social issues facing their communities. This lack of experiential learning opportunities leaves students underprepared for the demands of a globalized, socially conscious workforce.

The ELIX project can play a transformative role in addressing these challenges by bridging the gap between theoretical education and practical experience. ELIX's integration of Community Service Learning (CSL) into curricula enables students to apply what they have learned in real-world settings, allowing them to gain valuable experience while contributing to the community. This model fosters the development of essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and digital literacy. By collaborating with industry partners, ELIX ensures that students are exposed to the practical demands of the job market, helping them develop skills that align with employers' needs.

Additionally, the project's focus on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and innovation through experiential learning helps students develop the confidence and skills required to succeed in the modern workforce. Through mentorship, innovation challenges, and partnerships with local businesses, ELIX empowers students to think creatively and pursue innovative solutions to real-world problems. This not only improves their employability but also encourages a proactive, solution-oriented approach to social and economic challenges. By embracing these innovative teaching methodologies and focusing on employability, digital skills, and civic engagement, the ELIX project offers a comprehensive solution to the education challenges in Serbia, ultimately preparing students for the complexities of the 21st-century economy. The project can also help elevate the role of Serbian universities in creating a more dynamic, responsive education system that meets the needs of both students and employers.



Overview of completed tasks

Task1: We successfully organized and coordinated the Localized Career Pathways Think Tank workshops, engaging students from our college and stakeholders from different sectors. These workshops facilitated productive discussions to address local career pathway challenges and explore innovative solutions. Task 2: During the two-day workshops, we encouraged active participation and focused dialogue among students and stakeholders to identify and refine local career pathways. The workshops aimed to create a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the local job market. Task 3: We conducted a thorough analysis of current job market trends and challenges, using these insights to inform our discussions and develop innovative solutions for local career pathways. Task 4: Based on the think tank sessions and survey results, we developed a comprehensive roadmap. This roadmap outlines actionable steps for improving career opportunities and strengthening connections between education, community, and the labour market.

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: 20 students: 7 bachelor students (1st, 2nd, 3rd year) Project Management and 10 bachelor students (1st, 2nd, 3rd year) IT and 3 master students (1st year) Project Management.

Date of implementation: 16/11/2024

Mode of delivery: Live in the amphitheater of Fakultet za projektni i inovacioni menadžment

Results

After attending the workshop, students discussed shifting career trends, noting the growing appeal of alternative paths like influencing, which may lead to a shortage of skilled labour in fields requiring formal education. They questioned the value of traditional degrees amidst the rise of short-term training programs and platforms like LinkedIn and Coursera, which provide essential skills and mentorship. Students acknowledged the challenges posed by AI, including job displacement and its socio-economic impact, despite its productivity benefits.

They emphasized the importance of leadership qualities like emotional intelligence and decision-making, best gained through experience in lower roles to understand team dynamics. There was consensus that universities should better prepare students for the workforce by fostering adaptability, offering practical opportunities such as job interview simulations and internships, and improving communication and teamwork skills. Students also cautioned against over-reliance on technology, stressing its potential to hinder creativity and interpersonal development, crucial for career success.



Table 11: Thematic analysis of students' statements on social and market trends, skills gaps, and training delivery

Themes	Categories	Codes
The impact of social trends on the market	Changing values	-Young people are increasingly attracted to alternative careers, such as influencing, which diverts attention from traditional professions. -This shift may lead to a shortage of skilled labor in fields that require formal education and specialization. -As AI evolves, the labor market faces challenges in adapting. -The lack of clarity about how technology will continue to develop creates uncertainty for both employers and workers, complicating the situation.
	Digitalisation	-AI brings significant changes, improving processes and productivity but raising concerns about job losses. -AI is increasingly replacing humans in various professions, leading to socio-economic issues like unemployment and the migration of highly educated workers in search of better opportunities. -People, especially students, are increasingly turning to technology as their first choice for problem-solving, reducing the use of their intellectual capabilities. -This can negatively affect the development of creativity, analytical thinking, and independent decision-making skills. -Digital platforms facilitate connections but affect the ability to communicate effectively in person. -This is particularly noticeable among younger generations, who increasingly avoid face-to-face interactions, potentially complicating professional relationships and processes like job interviews or teamwork. -AI enables the automation of many tasks, reducing the number of available jobs in certain industries. -Sectors with repetitive tasks are particularly affected, as technology replaces the need for human labor.
	Environmental requirements	-Over-reliance on written and virtual communication leads to a decline in skills like spontaneous verbal interaction and real-time problem-solving. - This can negatively affect both professional and personal socialization in the long term.
	Migration flows	-The job market is competitive, with a focus on higher education, experience, and skills. - Social media and short-term training challenge the value of formal education. - There is a trend promoting the idea that short courses and basic skills are sufficient to secure a job, leading to decreased interest in formal education. -This shift may have long-term consequences on the quality of the workforce and decision-making in institutions and organizations.
	Communication and digital competences	-Clear, Professional, and Empathetic Communication is essential for job acquisition (e.g., interviews) and effective communication with clients, colleagues, and stakeholders. -Involves improving speech, active listening, and adapting to different situations. -Proficiency in computer use and various software tools is a standard requirement in the job market. -Specialization in industry-specific software is emphasized. -English remains essential, while languages like German and Portuguese offer additional advantages due to increasing internationalization. -Practicing public speaking and handling uncomfortable situations boosts confidence and enhances presentation skills. -Important for negotiations, presentations, and business meetings.

How to integrate missing content into the higher education curriculum	Flexibility	-Due to rapid changes in the job market, developing flexibility in learning and adapting to new technologies and business models is essential. -Experience in dynamic environments with diverse people fosters flexibility and adaptability, which are crucial for success in the job market.
	Teamwork	-Many students lack teamwork skills, often due to the absence of practical activities during their studies. Developing these skills is essential, as managers are frequently expected to work in teams. -Active citizenship is indirectly linked to openness to teamwork, idea exchange, and public speaking—key elements for contributing to the community.
	Leadership	- Leaders must have emotional intelligence, empathy, decision-making ability for the team's benefit, and motivation skills. - Good leadership involves humility and understanding team dynamics, gained best through experience in lower positions. - Leadership is a process, not just a role, requiring experience in lower positions to understand team members' daily challenges. - Experience in teamwork helps leaders gain deeper insights into work dynamics and interpersonal relationships.
	Professional work and networking with labour market experts	-The university should organize more events where company representatives visit and interact directly with students, giving them insights into real business conditions and helping develop practical skills needed in the job market. - Instead of students having to search for internships on their own, the university could guide them toward companies offering internships or organize events like "career days" where employers directly offer internship and job opportunities. -This approach would ease students' entry into the job market and provide valuable experience during their studies.
	Practical workshops and applied project tasks	-The university should promote regular feedback practices, where professors track student progress and provide constructive guidance based on individual needs and skills. -The university should be more transparent about its services and resources, investing in better access to information and opportunities. Using spaces for events or company visits can enhance student integration with the job market. -The university should be more active in preparing students for employment by organizing job interview simulations and offering advice on overcoming challenges like long selection processes and miscommunication between companies and candidates. -Organizing online and offline events, conferences, and panel discussions on topics such as social change, work dynamics, and new technologies can help students make informed career decisions.
	Online tools	-Platforms like Coursera, Udemy, and LinkedIn Learning offer courses on social phenomena, labor markets, and essential skills for business and professional success, helping students better prepare for the job market. -Platforms like LinkedIn allow students to connect with professionals and companies relevant to their career development, enabling them to follow industry trends and communicate with mentors who can shape their careers. -Platforms that connect students with industry mentors provide practical advice, feedback, and guidance on integrating into the professional community while understanding social and market phenomena. -Tools like CareerExplorer, MyPlan, and Socratic methodologies through apps help students explore career paths, understand labor market challenges, required competencies, and the social changes shaping industries.



STAKEHOLDERS

Basic information

Number of participants 35 (16 from companies, 12 from NGOs and 7 education institutions)

Date of implementation: 16/11/2024 and 20/11/2024

Mode of delivery: Live in the amphitheater of Fakultet za projektni i inovacioni menadžment

Results

The analysis of participants' perspectives highlighted the need for modernizing curricula by integrating practical tools, interdisciplinary programs, and opportunities for internships. The importance of developing emotional and social intelligence, critical thinking skills, and soft skills—such as teamwork, personal branding, and initiative in problem-solving—was emphasized through workshops, case studies, and guest lectures from industry professionals. Particular focus was placed on aligning education with digitalization trends, including the use of artificial intelligence and automation tools, as well as the role of sustainable development in business practices.

Participants proposed several strategies for improving education, such as establishing long-term collaborations between universities and companies to provide quality internships and align curricula with industry demands. The significance of incorporating practical tools into teaching and fostering interdisciplinary programs that integrate technical, social, and economic aspects was also underscored. Greater emphasis on developing communication skills, conflict resolution, and digital literacy was suggested to better prepare students for work in a globalized and digitized environment.

Table 12: Thematic analysis of students' statements on social and market trends, skills gaps, and training delivery

Themes	Categories	Codes
The impact of social trends on the labour market	Changes in preferences among younger generations	-A focus on work-life balance, leading to expectations for greater flexibility and opportunities for learning while on the job. -Learning and applying practical knowledge to facilitate easier employment.
	Digitalisation	-Remote work and hybrid work models – viewed as necessary to implement as standard practices. -AI influences communication and the overall execution of all business processes. -Hiring people from abroad – offers more opportunities but also cheaper labour. -Integrating modern tools such as AI and automation into education, with an emphasis on understanding concepts rather than merely using the tools.
	Migration flows	-The arrival of Russians and Ukrainians has increased competitiveness in the labour market. While they create new job opportunities, a requirement to know Russian and Ukrainian limits local students from securing these positions despite being otherwise qualified, as these languages are not commonly taught. -The emigration of local workers to other countries – driven by the prospect of a better standard of living.
	Entrepreneurial spirit	-A focus on fostering entrepreneurial spirit and adaptability to prepare students for a rapidly changing market. -The application of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary.
	Environmental requirements	-The impact of climate on the environment, and consequently on business operations. -Air pollution significantly affects health, causing more frequent illnesses and sick leaves.
	Globalisation and localisation	-English has become a mandatory competency.
Labour market trends with emerging job roles	Job roles in digitalization	-Increasing amounts of personal and business data are stored online, necessitating the development of new roles in cybersecurity to ensure adequate data protection. -Cloud platforms. -Adapting to constant changes brought by digitalization. -Digital entrepreneurs and freelancers – as students strive for independence and the ability to work from anywhere in the world. -Outsourcing. -Blockchain.
	Developing social and emotional intelligence in young people	-Young people lack social intelligence; the world is leaning toward individualism, further discouraging the development of social skills. -Developing critical thinking in young people. -Encouraging networking. -Promoting informal education. -Bridging the generational gap between older employees and students. -Raising awareness of the importance of mental health among young people.
	Digital media	-New roles in digital marketing, such as TikTok marketing and branding. -Social media profiles that are 100% AI creations.



	AI experts	-Artificial intelligence automates tasks that no longer require human intervention, reducing time spent on certain jobs and allowing individuals to focus on more critical tasks. -Working on AI ethics. -Roles related to advancing AI and training employees on the most efficient ways to utilize it. -Teaching professionals from other fields how to apply and adapt AI to their work (e.g., medicine, education, agriculture). -AI management. -As a result, new academic programs are needed to familiarize students with AI, its functionalities, and the opportunities it offers.
	Jobs in sustainable development	-Green management. -Environmental management. -Environmental policy implementation experts.
Gaps in students' competences and curriculum integration	Communication skills	-Professional communication. -Conflict resolution. -Learning foreign languages. -Digital communication. -Understanding different work cultures.
	Internships	-Learning through practical examples in higher education. -Internships in companies. -Encouraging students to engage in as many different internships as possible. -Universities should establish long-term agreements with companies from various fields to provide students with adequate practical experience. -Bachelor's, master's, and doctoral theses should add value to the labour market, addressing both students' interests and market needs. -Recognizing students' values and attitudes to better connect them with companies.
	Self-initiative through problem solving	-Critical thinking and problem-solving in real-world settings. -Students' work ethics. -Creating an environment where students are encouraged to take initiative.
	Teamwork and collaboration	-Promoting collaboration among students through teamwork on joint projects. -Sharing knowledge among peers. -Learning about group dynamics and functioning.
	Technical and social skills	-Digital literacy. -Practical tools commonly used in the labour market. -Developing social skills through workshops on various topics. -Self-awareness and learning about personal branding. -Introducing the use of practical tools in university courses. -Integrating interdisciplinary programs that combine technical, economic, and social aspects. -Advising students on effective learning strategies and adapting to changes. -Guest lectures from various organizations on diverse topics covered in higher education. -Conducting case studies to allow students to exchange knowledge and experiences. -Developing students' soft skills, as these set them apart in the labour market.
	Entrepreneurial and leadership skills	-Encouraging entrepreneurial spirit among students during their studies through various initiatives and projects they can implement independently. -Acquiring leadership skills through group work on academic projects. -Participating in workshops that introduce students to entrepreneurship and leadership through practical examples.
Developing a roadmap for youth employability and the involvement of higher education institutions and the world of work	Professional work experience and networking with labour market experts	-Connecting with industries to create relevant academic curricula. -Mapping the needs of companies. -Mapping the needs of students. -Facilitating connections between students and companies through guest lectures, workshops, and competitions. -Sharing experiences of alumni with current students on how they secured employment. -Encouraging and supporting students in accessing international projects.
	Entrepreneurial skills	-Promoting entrepreneurship through workshops and start-up competitions. -Sharing experiences and best practices of entrepreneurs through guest lectures. -Focusing on acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.
	Improvement of higher education institutions	-Increasing the visibility of universities. -Clearly defining university values and connecting them with students. -Providing scholarships and subsidies for students and professors involved in applied research. -Universities participating in projects directly linked to industrial trends and implementing those trends. -Motivating professors to enhance their teaching. -Exchanging knowledge and experiences among professors. -Companies shaping curricula or at least providing suggestions for improving existing programs.



Summary of the findings of the focus groups at the University of EDUCONS – Fakultet za projektni i inovacioni menadžment

In conclusion, the workshop highlighted the need for education systems to adapt to the evolving job market by modernizing curricula and aligning them with industry demands. Participants emphasized the importance of integrating practical tools, interdisciplinary programs, and sustainable development into education while fostering critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and soft skills such as teamwork, personal branding, and conflict resolution.

The discussions underscored the value of experiential learning through internships, long-term university-industry collaborations, and the incorporation of AI and automation into teaching practices. By addressing these areas and emphasizing digital literacy, communication, and adaptability, educational institutions can better equip students for the challenges of a globalized and digitized workforce. Ultimately, these measures aim to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional requirements, ensuring students are not only career-ready but also capable of thriving in a rapidly changing labor market.

Quantitative analysis

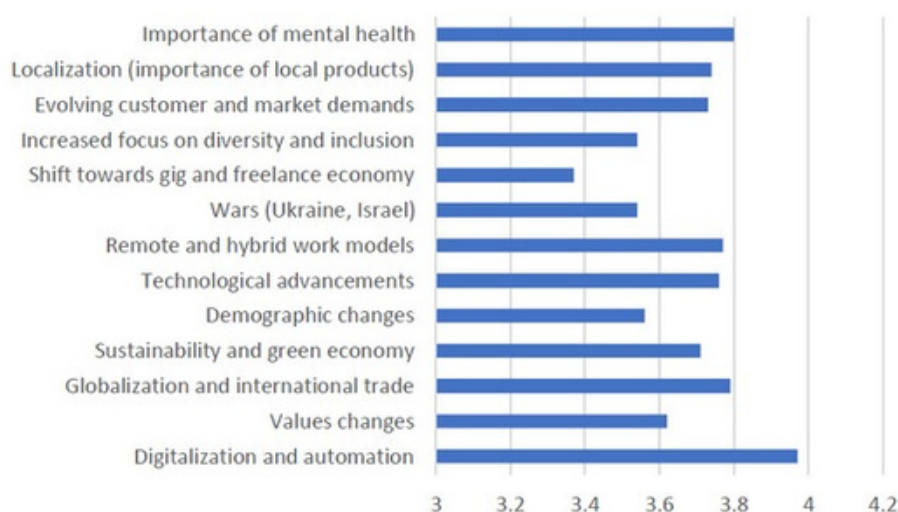
Survey on Labor Market Trends, Competencies, and Youth Employability for Students

Perception of Current Social Phenomena Q1: Trends Influencing the Labour Market The following trends indicate their significant impact:

- Digitalization and automation (3.97): Recognized as a dominant force reshaping industries and societal operations.
- Importance of mental health (3.80): Highlights the growing awareness and prioritization of mental well-being.
- Globalization and international trade (3.79): Reflects the ongoing importance of international collaboration and market integration.
- Remote and hybrid work models (3.77): Points to the shifting dynamics of the workplace.
- Technological advancements (3.76): Highlights the crucial role of innovation in driving progress.
- Localization (importance of local products) (3.74): Reflects an increased interest in locally sourced goods.
- Evolving customer and market demands (3.73): Shows the importance of adapting to changing consumer preferences.
- Sustainability and green economy (3.71): Indicates the growing emphasis on environmental responsibility in societal and economic systems.

Figure 58: Trends Influencing the Labour Market

Q1: Trends Influencing the Labour Market



Essential Competencies for Labor Market Integration

Q2: Essential Competencies for Labour Market Integration

The skills showcasing their relevance for preparing students for the workforce:

- Self-awareness (4.36): Essential for personal development and effective decision-making.
- Employability (4.20): Highlights the need to equip students with job readiness skills.
- Leadership (4.03): Underlines the need for individuals who can guide and inspire teams.
- Communication and customer orientation (4.03): Crucial for engaging with clients and stakeholders.
- Resilience (4.01): Demonstrates the importance of adaptability in overcoming challenges.
- Problem-solving and critical thinking (3.99): Key for tackling real-world problems effectively.
- Career planning (3.98): Stresses the value of strategic preparation for professional growth.
- Collaboration (3.97): Emphasizes teamwork as a core workplace competency.

Figure 59: Essential Competencies for Labour Market Integration

Q2: Essential Competencies for Labour Market Integration



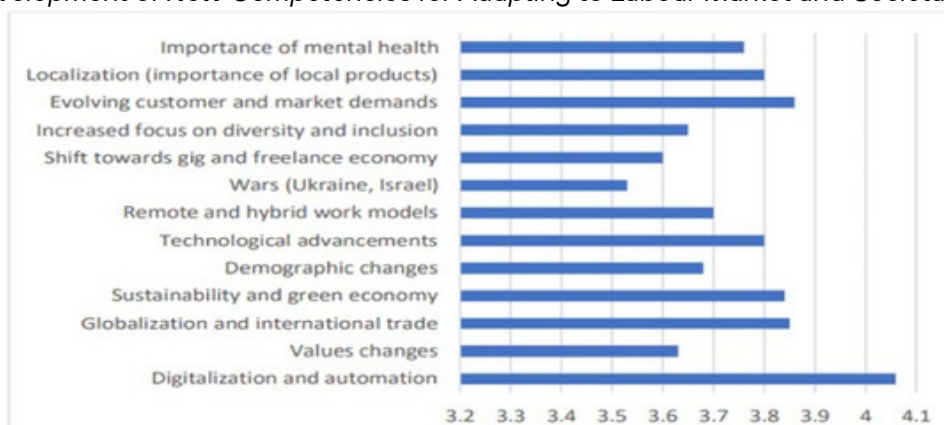
Q3: Development of New Competencies for Adapting to Labour Market and Societal Needs

The most prominent challenges identified include:

- Digitalization and automation (4.06): Recognized as a transformative force.
- Evolving customer and market demands (3.86): Indicates a need for responsive education systems.
- Globalization and international trade (3.85): Highlights the global interconnectedness of industries.
- Sustainability and green economy (3.84): Reflects the importance of eco-conscious practices.
- Technological advancements (3.80): Stresses the urgency of staying updated with new innovations.
- Localization (3.80): Points to the value of incorporating regional products and services.

Figure 60: Development of New Competencies for Adapting to Labour Market and Societal Needs

Q3: Development of New Competencies for Adapting to Labour Market and Societal Needs



Q4. Preparedness in Addressing Challenges or Competency Gaps

Challenges exceeding include:

- Shortage of employees (3.99): Indicates a need for better alignment between workforce supply and demand.
- Limited practical work experience (3.81): Suggests that internships and practical placements are critical.
- Inadequate soft skills (3.80): Highlights the necessity for improving interpersonal abilities.
- Lack of critical thinking and problem-solving skills (3.77): Underscores the importance of developing analytical capabilities.

Figure 61: Preparedness in Addressing Challenges or Competency Gaps

Q4. Preparedness in Addressing Challenges or Competency Gaps



Support for Academic and Career Development

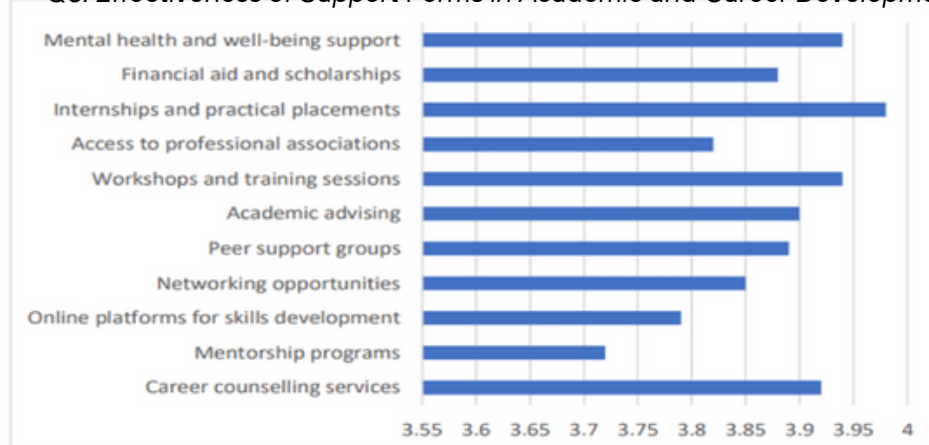
Q5: Effectiveness of Support Forms in Academic and Career Development

The highest-rated support services include:

- Internships and practical placements (3.98): A vital bridge between academic learning and professional application.
- Workshops and training sessions (3.94): Offer hands-on opportunities to enhance skills.
- Career counseling services (3.92): Essential for guiding students in their career paths.
- Mental health and well-being support (3.94): Demonstrates the importance of emotional support for student success.
- Peer support groups (3.89): Emphasizes the value of collaborative and shared learning experiences.

Figure 62: Preparedness in Addressing Challenges or Competency Gaps

Q5: Effectiveness of Support Forms in Academic and Career Development



Q6: Involvement in Shaping Career Path

Key opportunities include:

- Using online platforms for learning about social phenomena (3.99): Highlights the importance of leveraging digital tools for education.
- Participating in career workshops or webinars (3.90): Indicates strong interest in structured learning opportunities.

Figure 63: Involvement in Shaping Career Path

Q6: Involvement in Shaping Career Path



Q7: Suggestions for Universities to Better Support Students in Labour Market Preparation:

- Internships and events where students can connect with companies.
- More practical experience—real-world application, not just theory.
- Throughout their education, students should participate in internships and be introduced to various professions.
- Successful individuals from different fields could give lectures, and students could visit developed corporations.
- Public speaking, teamwork, and projects.
- Internships and workshops are a great help in preparing students for the job market.
- Working in companies that FON collaborates with, as part of internships, would make it easier for students to adapt to their future jobs after graduation.
- Replace older professors with younger ones in fields where innovation has advanced significantly.
- Providing concrete problems that students can solve in groups or individually, which would serve as practice.
- Enable students to combine different disciplines to develop skills applicable in various contexts.
- For example, engineering students could learn about ethics and sustainability, while social sciences could incorporate technological skills.
- Greater focus on practical work.
- Organizing extracurricular activities and sections.
-

Knowledge about Career Service Learning

Q8: Knowledge about Career Service Learning

Key insights:

- Awareness of main challenges facing the community (4.10): Reflects the importance of understanding societal needs.
- Understanding transferable skills through career service learning (3.94): Emphasizes skills like teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.
- Understanding the root causes of challenges (4.01): Indicates a deeper need for analytical thinking.



Figure 64: Knowledge about Career Service Learning
Q8: Knowledge about Career Service Learning



Attitudes toward Career Service Learning

Q9: Attitude toward Career Service Learning

Motivations include:

- Willingness to learn new skills outside the comfort zone (4.06): Reflects openness to growth.
- Commitment to actively exploring career opportunities (3.93): Highlights proactive career exploration.
- Belief in the value of practical learning experiences (3.90): Demonstrates the relevance of hands-on experience.

Figure 65: Knowledge about Career Service Learning
Q9: Attitudes toward Career Service Learning



Behavioral Intentions and Actions

Q10: Self-Assessment of Competencies in Community Enterprise Development

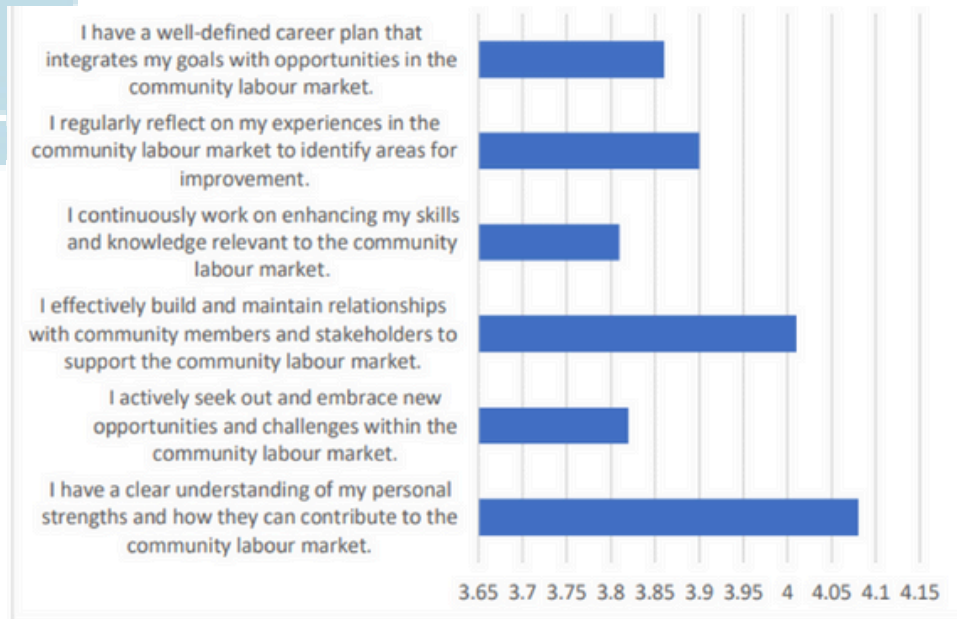
The most notable factors include:

- Clear understanding of personal strengths (4.08): Indicates the value of self-awareness for community impact.
- Continuous skill enhancement relevant to the community labour market (3.90): Reflects the importance of ongoing development.
- Reflection on community experiences for improvement (3.90): Highlights the need for evaluation and growth.



Figure 66: Self-Assessment of Competencies in Community Enterprise Development

Q10: Self-Assessment of Competencies in Community Enterprise Development



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

Labor Market Trends and Challenges

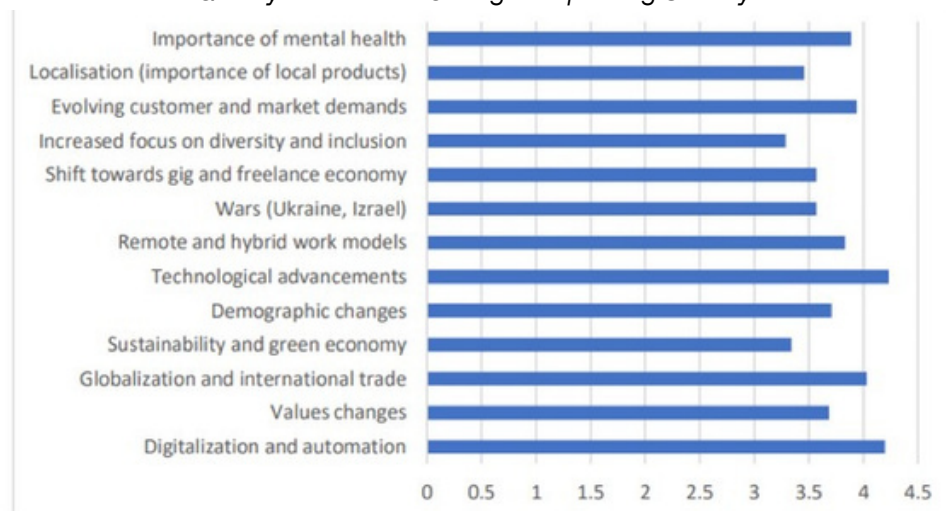
Q1: Key Trends and Changes Impacting Society

The following trends indicate their significant impact:

- Digitalization and automation (4.20): A transformative force reshaping industries and societal operations.
- Technological advancements (4.23): Highlights the essential role of innovation in driving progress and competitiveness.
- Globalization and international trade (4.03): Reflects the continued significance of international collaboration and market integration.
- Evolving customer and market demands (3.94): Demonstrates the importance of adapting to rapidly changing consumer preferences.
- Importance of mental health (3.89): Highlights the growing recognition of mental well-being in both personal and professional contexts.

Figure 67: Key Trends and Changes Impacting Society

Q1: Key Trends and Changes Impacting Society



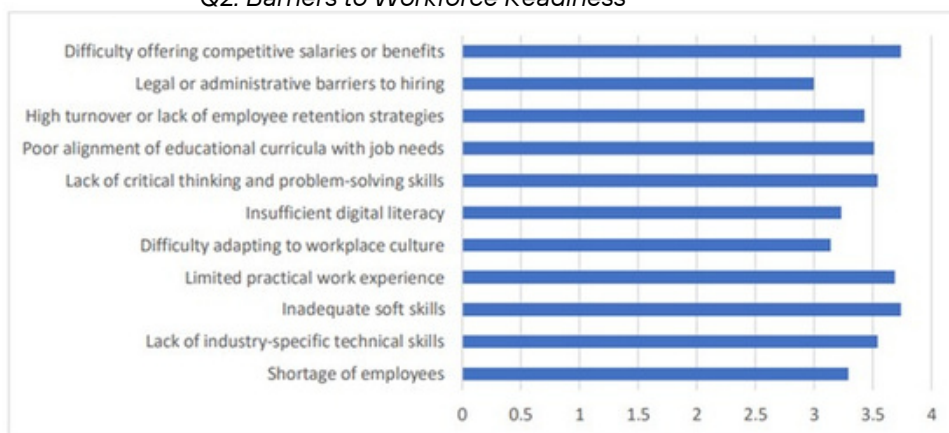
Q2: Barriers to Workforce Readiness

The challenges that require attention include:

- Inadequate soft skills (3.74): Highlights the need for improving interpersonal abilities and emotional intelligence.
- Difficulty offering competitive salaries or benefits (3.74): Indicates economic constraints affecting workforce retention and recruitment.

Figure 68: Barriers to Workforce Readiness

Q2: Barriers to Workforce Readiness



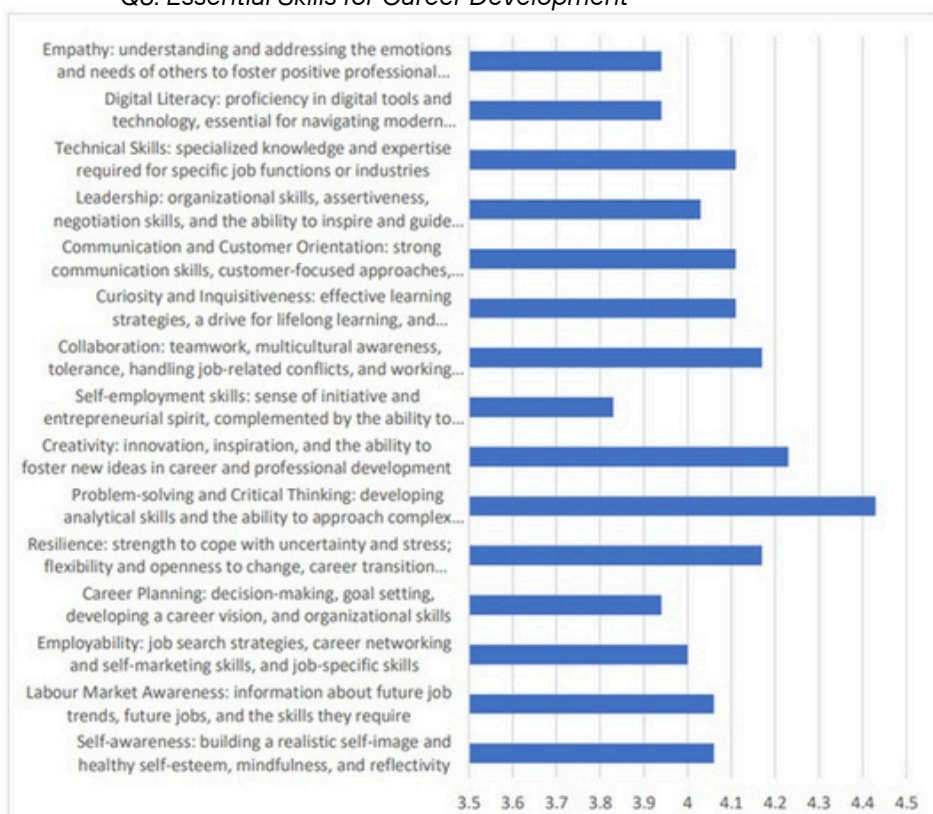
Q3: Essential Skills for Career Development

Skills that highlight their importance for career readiness:

- Resilience (4.17): Essential for managing uncertainty and adapting to challenges in dynamic environments.
- Problem-solving and critical thinking (4.43): Reflects the growing demand for analytical and innovative approaches to challenges.
- Collaboration (4.17): Emphasizes the importance of teamwork and cultural awareness in professional settings.
- Digital literacy (4.11): Demonstrates the necessity of technology proficiency in modern workplaces.
- Communication and customer orientation (4.11): Highlights strong interpersonal and client-focused skills.
- Leadership (4.11): Underlines the importance of inspiring and guiding teams effectively.

Figure 69: Essential Skills for Career Development

Q3: Essential Skills for Career Development



Impact of Trends on Competencies and Skill Gaps

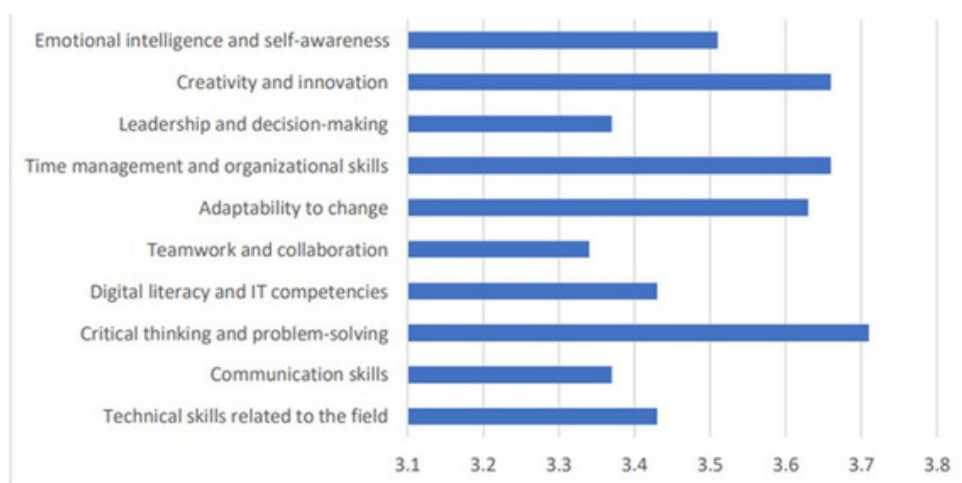
Q4: Support Services for Workforce Development

Support initiatives include:

- Recruitment of professionals with pre-existing skills (3.71): Highlights the need for organizations to prioritize hiring experienced talent.

Figure 70: Support Services for Workforce Development

Q4: Support Services for Workforce Development



Q5: Opportunities for Practical Learning

Key learning opportunities include:

- Apprenticeships or internship programs (4.06): Essential for bridging the gap between education and real-world applications.
- Upskilling or reskilling initiatives (4.06): Reflects the need for continuous learning to meet evolving job demands.
- Utilizing e-learning platforms and online courses (4.11): Highlights the increasing role of digital learning tools in skill development.

Figure 71: Opportunities for Practical Learning

Q5: Opportunities for Practical Learning



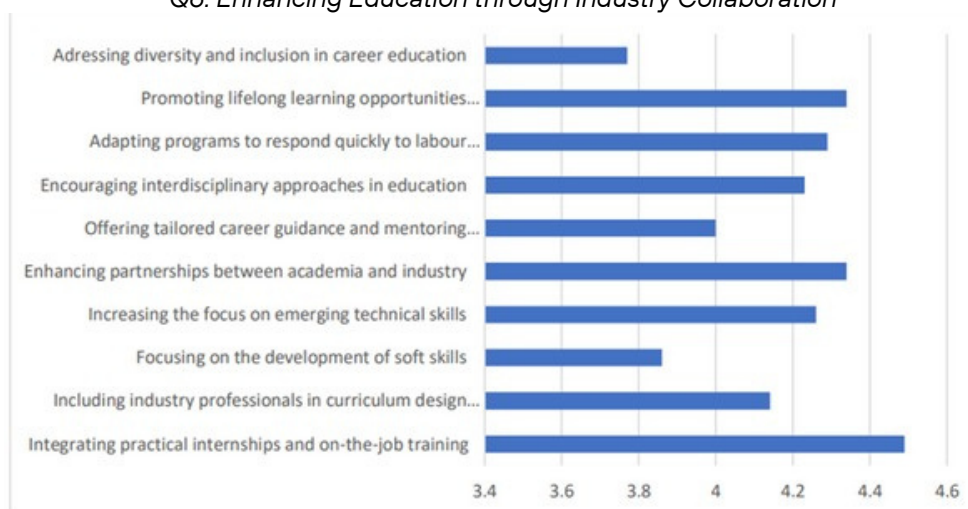
Social Phenomena and Career Education

Q6: Enhancing Education through Industry Collaboration

The survey identifies impactful strategies:

- Integrating practical internships and on-the-job training (4.49): The most effective approach to experiential learning.
- Including industry professionals in curriculum design (4.34): Ensures academic programs are aligned with industry needs.
- Focusing on emerging technical skills (4.26): Highlights the importance of preparing students for cutting-edge technologies.
- Promoting lifelong learning opportunities (4.34): Reflects the need for ongoing skill development through upskilling and reskilling.

Figure 72: Enhancing Education through Industry Collaboration
Q6: Enhancing Education through Industry Collaboration



Specific examples of collaboration between stakeholders and academic institutions:

- Creative 4al centre collaborate with the researchers from the faculty in order to offer specialized trainings for the students and pupils
- different types of conferences
- Effective communication of my organization and academic institutions is necessary, therefore, it is an integral part of day-to-day functioning of my organization. IT is a consequence of the
- EIC Women Leadership program was great for me.
- Mentoring students
- My university collaborated with many firms; therefore, many employers came to give us a speech, go through a presentation etc.
- Trainings, professional development, seminars, internships in renowned companies
- Seminars in colleges which my employee held
- Test
- there are many examples of cooperation such as student internships but also solving case studies for certain business problems for companies
- Yes. We use some results of academic institutions in our practices
-



Improving Youth Employability

Q7: Strategies to Improve Workforce Readiness

Key recommendations include:

- Providing structured internships and practical work experiences (4.46): Bridges the gap between academic learning and professional application.
- Enhancing partnerships between academia and industry (4.37): Facilitates alignment of curricula with market demands.
- Creating industry-aligned curricula in academic institutions (4.20): Ensures that students graduate with relevant, job-ready skills.
- Supporting continuous upskilling and reskilling programs for youth (4.26): Addresses the need for lifelong learning and adaptability.

Figure 73: Strategies to Improve Workforce Readiness

Q7: Strategies to Improve Workforce Readiness



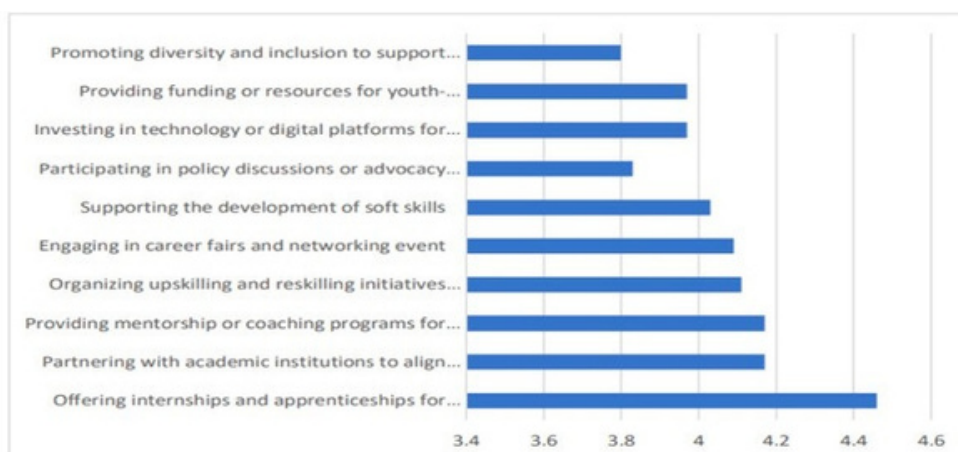
Q8: Supporting Youth Career Development

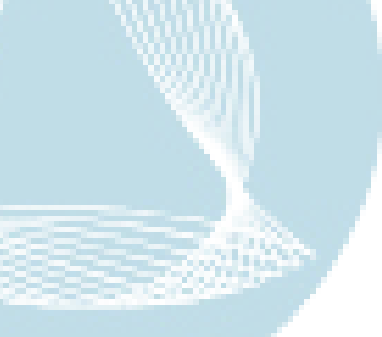
Highlighted approaches include:

- Offering internships and apprenticeships (4.46): Critical for providing real-world exposure and practical experience.
- Partnering with academic institutions to align educational programs (4.17): Strengthens the connection between education and workforce needs.
- Organizing upskilling and reskilling initiatives (4.11): Helps young professionals remain competitive in evolving industries.

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Comparative analysis – introduction of main findings and recommendations

Local Challenges and Opportunities

The region faces a range of challenges stemming from rapid technological advancements, globalization, and changes in the labour market. The key challenge is adapting the education system to meet the needs of modern industries, requiring greater integration of digital tools, innovative methodologies, and practical knowledge. The high youth unemployment rate highlights the need for more effective professional training programs and the development of skills that align with the demands of the local labour market. However, there are also significant opportunities for growth and development. Regional companies are showing an increasing demand for a skilled workforce, creating opportunities for educational institutions to enhance collaboration with the business sector. The implementation of digital technologies and platforms enables more efficient training and better access to educational resources. Additionally, young people in the region demonstrate a high level of interest in acquiring practical skills, further motivating the development of new programs aimed at increasing employability.

Competency Gaps

There is a noticeable gap between the skills taught in educational institutions and those required in the modern labour market. Key gaps identified in the research include a lack of digital literacy, underdeveloped communication and interpersonal skills, and limited readiness for innovation and entrepreneurship. Many students possess theoretical knowledge but lack practical application, reducing their competitiveness in the job market. Furthermore, there is a recognized need to strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are essential competencies for working in dynamic and technologically advanced sectors. Additionally, there is a shortage of competencies in emotional intelligence and resilience, which are crucial for effectively managing stress and teamwork in modern work environments. These gaps highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to education, combining theoretical knowledge, practical experience, and the development of soft skills.



Key competencies	Stakeholders	Students
Self-awareness	4.06	4.36
Career planning	3.94	3.98
Problem-solving and critical thinking	4.43	3.99
Collaboration	3.34	3.97
Leadership	3.37	4.03
Digital literacy	3.37	3.83
Communication and customer orientation	4.11	4.03
Mental health awareness	3.89	3.94
Practical work experience	4.46	3.81

Guidelines for action

- Collaboration with Local NGOs and Industry To establish long-term partnerships with local businesses, municipalities, and non-profits to enable students to contribute to projects that have social impact while gaining practical experience. Enhancing Leadership and Teamwork Skills to introduce extracurricular programs, debate clubs, and case study competitions that encourage critical thinking, leadership, and teamwork. Student-Led Initiatives To support student-led initiatives that encourage civic participation and problem-solving at the local level, such as hackathons, innovation challenges, or volunteer mentorship programs. Internship & Apprenticeship Programs To strengthen collaboration with local businesses to create structured internship programs, allowing students to gain work experience in relevant industries. Soft Skills Development To offer dedicated workshops on critical competencies such as problem-solving, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and effective communication to bridge the skills gap. Strengthening University-Industry Collaboration To foster partnerships with local SMEs, startups, and multinational companies to facilitate guest lectures, industry visits, and project-based learning.
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Next planned activities

- The next steps in improving career opportunities for students at the University Educons will focus on creating a comprehensive support system that bridges the gap between academic learning and professional success. One of the key initiatives will be the expanding internship programs which is critical step in strengthening career prospects. Formalized partnerships with companies in project management, IT, and consulting industries will ensure students gain practical experience through structured, credit-bearing internships. Additionally, career fairs will be organized, giving companies a platform to present job opportunities and engage with students directly.
- To enhance industry exposure, an industry-led lecture series will be introduced, bringing in business leaders, project managers, and successful entrepreneurs to share insights on market trends and professional growth. This initiative will provide students with firsthand knowledge of industry demands and expectations, preparing them for real-world challenges.
- Project-based learning will also be further integrated into the curriculum, with students engaging in real-world problem-solving through collaboration with local businesses and organizations. Capstone projects will be developed to encourage teamwork and practical application of knowledge, helping students gain a deeper understanding of project management in real business environments.
- In addition to hands-on learning, certification and training programs will be introduced to equip students with recognized credentials in project management methodologies such as IPMA and Agile. Bootcamps focused on digital tools and technologies relevant to project management will also be organized to enhance students' technical skills.
- Strengthening alumni engagement will play a vital role in career development, with an alumni network being established to provide mentorship and guidance for current students. Networking events will be hosted, creating opportunities for graduates to share experiences and offer career advice, further solidifying connections between academia and industry.
- Finally, fostering entrepreneurship will be a significant focus through the introduction of a student entrepreneurship program. This initiative will support students in developing entrepreneurial skills by offering access to startup incubator programs within the Faculty. Recognizing the importance of structured support for young innovators, the Faculty has applied for the creation of an Innovation Incubator through the program of the Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Technological Development. This incubator will serve as a dedicated space for students to develop their business ideas, access mentorship, and collaborate with industry experts. Additionally, students with innovative concepts will be provided with seed funding and guidance, helping them transform their ideas into viable business ventures and positioning them as future leaders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

