



**Enhance Soft Skills to Nurture
Competitiveness and Employability**

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ESSENCE IO4:
SOFT SKILLS MANIFESTO
TO INCREASE STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPOWERMENT
IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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We, the partners of the ESSENCE project call for action among all relevant stakeholders including policy makers, higher education institutions and all other providers of higher and lifelong learning education in the European Union.

- Following the results and the potential achieved during the project implementation in terms of identifying relevant intervention areas and developing trainings in the field of soft skills through collaboration between higher education providers, business sector and non-governmental organisations.
- Aware of the forecasts of desired competences in disruptive environments of digital and green transition.
- Aware of the present and forecasted skills gaps in European Union and across the world as contained in 2020 World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report.
- Aware of the emerging relevance of soft skills in business as identified by ESSENCE employer surveys across several EU member states and lack of desired skills among first time job-seekers in surveyed countries.
- Aware of the high unemployment rates among young European people.
- Aware of absence of systematic approach to the development of soft skills during higher education in many European Union member states.
- Aware of limited attention and resources being allocated to the issue of soft skills development at the policy level.
- Having identified prevalent approaches and challenges in soft skills development of students in higher education institutions.
- Having identified most relevant constraints to efforts of business sector to develop soft skills of their employees.
- Based on literature review, in-depth analysis of national strategies, development paths and activities done by universities.



We hereby call for an alliance among all relevant stakeholders including:

- Policy makers in areas of primary, secondary and higher education and lifelong learning,
- Providers of primary, secondary and higher education and lifelong learning,
- Business associations and entities,
- Non-governmental organisations interested in soft skills development,
- All other interested stakeholders and individuals,

through a collaboration that will lead to:

- Acknowledgment of need for rapid intervention in area of soft skills development in order to increase labour market chances of prospective job seekers,
- Alignment of European and national initiatives in area of soft skills development,
- Strengthening of bonds between businesses, education providers and policy makers with the aim of developing teaching-learning communities, systematically approaching the soft skills development, support to the policy makers in the elaboration of the initiatives and identification of needs and challenges,
- Development and application of joint projects that would support creation and implementation of trainings for the purpose of soft skills development,
- Building common research and monitoring initiatives for the purpose of enhancing youth (and particularly student) employability,
- Creation of courses designed to improve teaching methods in the area of soft skills,
- Integration of soft skills trainings in curricula of existing educational programmes,
- Development and application of tools for assessment and development of soft skills,
- Motivating students to develop life-long learning strategies, stress management and digitalization skills along with traditional skills,



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- Developing micro-courses and micro qualifications aimed at increasing soft skills valued in the market,
- Identifying the most effective ways of investing in trainings in line with competence needs.

All stakeholders from the European Union as well as from other parts of the world are welcomed to join this manifesto and contribute to the development of a shared agenda capable of aligning objectives and strategies to develop the skills of young people and increase their employability.

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