

Workshop 1

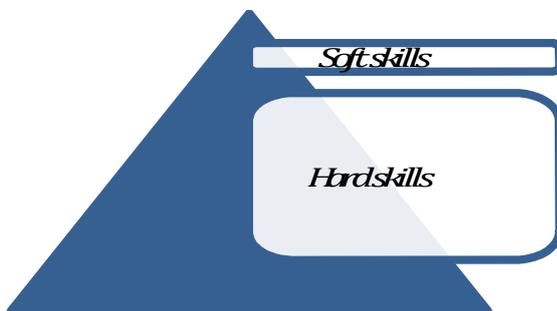
Supporting 'soft skills' development for job seeking/employability for new migrants

The first workshop was set in the old town of Sheffield in the UK on the 4th of December and focused on the importance of 'soft skills' development for the employability of new migrants.

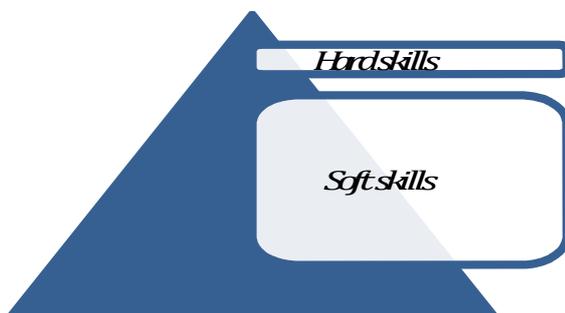
"Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career" – Peggy Klaus¹ (2007)

What exactly are soft skills?

Softs skills are traits and interpersonal skills that describe an individual's behaviour towards events and other individual. Everybody has them at some level. They differ greatly from hard skills:



Hard skills are teachable and easier to quantify. These include something like a degree, a foreign language, and can be easy to prove in your resume and recognised by an employer. They used to be seen as the essential to employability by employers, and soft skills just a plus, but not a necessity.



Much research has been done since then and now they are considered as an asset to hard skills and a significant advantage according to employers. In fact, according to Hodges & Burchell (2003)², eight of the 10 top skills employers search for in an employee, are soft skills. In business roles, the ability and willingness to learn was considered particularly important.

Some might have soft skills that they don't even know they have. Just because they are not used does not mean they do not exist. We just need to learn to access and value them! Through soft skills development programs, participants can be made aware of these skills.

Why is soft skills development important?

There is no doubt that soft skills are important, and not until recently have they become equally as valued as hard skills by employers while searching for a new staff member. Research shows the significance of soft skills on job performance. Therefor developing soft skills is not only valuable for the employers, but for the psychology of the potential employee.

¹Klaus, P. (2007). *The Hard Truth About Soft Skills: Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They'd Learned Sooner*. New-York, US: HarperCollingPublishers.

²Hodges and Burchell. (2003). *Business Graduate Competencies in: Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2003, 4(2), 16-22.

Examples of soft skills:

- *Decision making*
- *Showing commitment*
- *Flexibility*
- *Time management*
- *Team work capacity*
- *Leadership*
- *Problem solving*
- *Risk Management*
- *Creativity*
- *Assertiveness*
- *Self-confidence*
- *Communication skills*
- *Negotiation skills*
- *Intercultural sensitivity*

The training that an employee receives at the workforce or any other employment training services around Europe mainly focuses on assisting people develop their hard skills such as numeracy or CV writing skills. These are still important but don't allow the employee to fully develop their 'emotional intelligence' and personal competencies.

Mentoring Circles™

This is a methodology (developed by Inova Consultancy UK in 2001) which can facilitate soft skills development. It is aimed at increasing and nurturing self-confidence, preventing isolation, connecting people with other peers and could be used in JEM to access the labour market. This seems like the perfect method, but how does it actually work?

They are usually groups of 4 to 5 people meeting with a mentor/facilitator to learn from each other over a set period of 2-3months. Circles usually bring together action learning theory, coaching and mentoring principles to support and build confidence and self-efficacy of learners. The approach is based on the following sources:

- *Performance accomplishments: Helps learners to re-visit past occupational successes, completing self-appraisals and occupational exploration activities.*
- *Vicarious learning: Observing and learning from other learners in the group and learning from the facilitator.*
- *Emotional arousal: Using relaxation training and adaptive self-talks, such as learning to be aware of negative self-talk.*
- *Verbal Persuasion/encouragement: Facilitators provide positive affirmations and encouragement to learners.*

All in all, they can help individuals develop soft skills through a course of personal reflection and self-development. For more information you can visit the Mentoring Circles™ website.

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