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Soft Skills Development Needs and Methods in Micro-Companies of ICT Sector

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Abstract

This article calls for the inclusion of soft skills in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) sector's specialists in order to increase the competitiveness of ICT SME's. For a successful activity, ICT specialist needs two categories of skills: hard and soft skills. When talking about hard skills, we refer to direct technical knowledge. On the opposite, soft skills refer to communication, team work, creativity, problem solving and other personal skills. Experts agree that beside hard (technical) skills, soft (also called people-) skills are necessary. The research was based on an analysis of European level documents on skills needs, desk research in partner countries and expert interviews.

In this article, we present the most important soft skills an ICT specialist needs for a successful activity in micro-companies and the most efficient methods to develop them. Based on the needs analyses the major soft skills to develop for the target group (ICT specialist in European SME's) are: Communication, Problem solving, Teamwork, Learning mindset, Creativity, Leadership, Strategic thinking, Customer service, Innovation and Risk management. In order to develop these skills, further researches state that a combination of the following will be the most effective: e-learning platform, face-to-face workshops/ interactions with role play, simulation, mentoring, coaching.

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Keyword:s soft skills, ICT specialist; ICT sector micro-enterprises human resource development , e-learning platform for ICT sector.

1. Introduction

The main aims of the present research and project "Skills+" are to increase the competitiveness of micro-firms in ICT sector by implementing soft skills development programs for their employees and to sustain long-term, sustainable development of them. In order to achieve these objectives we had to establish the list of the most important soft skills for this sector and to identify the methods and tools to develop these skills.

Based on the introductive research we presume that:

Hypothesis 1: communication, innovation, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, leadership, learning mindset, risk management are the most important soft skills to develop in ICT sector's micro-enterprises.

Hypothesis 2: a combination of classical (face-to-face teaching /learning) and online learning fits the best the research target.

Theoretical introduction of the soft skills development in human resource politics

In the context of the rapid economical and social changes and the high intensity development of hi-tech domains and especially ICT field, more and more often business leaders state that managers and employees needs to develop their skills. In human resource management the staff development is considered a continuous process, an organized learning, in order to enable the individual employee to change his professional behaviour (Karoliny & C 2004).

Leonard Nadler offers a similar definition: "human resource development is a series of organized activities, conducted within a specialised time and designed to produce behavioural changes" and identifies the place of the personnel development function in the human resource management activity. (Nadler, 1980)



Fig. 1. The place of development function in human resource management (Nadler. L. 1980 Corporate Human Resource Development. Van Notrand Reinhold Co.)

The present research was inspired by the increase of importance of SME's in information communication technology sector and the difficulties met by these organizations to assure high quality human resource. When discussing gaps in assuring quality human resource we need to separate the following aspects: the quantity (as the number of IT specialist ready to work in this field) and the quality, or the capacity to fulfill special tasks using skills. The concept of quality divides in two major group: hard skills and soft skills. Regarding hard skills, it all starts by earning a solid foundation in mathematics, sciences and engineering. Then special technical skills of computer science subjects: data structures, numerical analysis, data management, network science and programming languages. Experts agree that the majority of specialists that work in the IT domains has well developed hard skills and technical knowledge. However, there are a few key skills gap, among them the soft skills. Experience shows that for real success in this sector too, a proper combination of hard and soft skills is required.

Eisele and Szelei present us a Modular Personal Development System with the following sub domains: basic company knowledge, basic business knowledge, skills development training, basic managerial training, professional study travel, post gradual training, professional conference, leadership training, computer skill training, language skills, professional scholarship, professional training, other training forms. (Eisele E. and Szelei T. , 2001).

Our research focuses on soft skills needs for these micro-enterprises and the methodology and tools of proper development of these skills. Although, this study refers to general aspects and needs of ICT micro-enterprises, we need to make it clear that an optimal development of employees and managers can be implemented only when every companies' special requirements are satisfied. So, every company needs a special tailored development program. (Karoliny & Co. 2004) In this Skills+ project we intend to deliver a general methodology which can be adapted for each enterprise from the target group.

The presentation of the Skills+ project

The present research is part of an Erasmus + project, developed by an international team, the "Skills+ Consortium", with members from 5 countries. Identification number of the project is KA2 project2015-1-RO01-KA202-015182. Partner organizations of SKILLS+ Consortium: SPECTRUM (former Soros) Educational Center Foundation, Miercurea-Ciuc, Romania; FUNDACIÓN TECNOLOGÍA SOCIAL, Spain; X-PANEL Ltd (X-Panel), Cyprus; Stichting Business Development Friesland, Netherlands; ECWT Forening, Norway;

The main objective of the SKILLS+ Project is to increase competitiveness of microenterprises in ICT sector, through the development of soft skills and to support sustainable increase for them. "The SKILLS+ project reflects the need to train employers and employees of micro-enterprises in ICT sector to compete effectively through increased and new soft skills. The project's main target group is the managers, the first few employees (mostly IT specialist) of micro-sized ICT enterprises, and the (former) sole trader becoming a small entrepreneur.

The main questions before launching this project was to establish the list of the soft skills considered to be the most important for ICT sectors, especially for micro-firms and to identify the methods and tools how the soft skills development program can be delivered in a time, energy and cost effective manner.

The analyses of ICT sector and its human resource development needs

ICT is one of the fastest growing sector at European level, and especially in Romania. For many talented young specialists this is the field, where they obtain professional and financial success without emigrating. Practically they can work from their home (town), where life costs are lower, for international level incomes. This working style can be implemented at personal or at SME's level. Many research subject of the present work use this working concept.

Over 99% of firms in ICT field are SME's (small and medium sized enterprises), of which about 90% are micro-sized companies, fewer than 10 employees (ec.europa.eu/eurostat). Within small and micro sized ICT firms in Europe there had been little effort on soft skills development. Of all enterprises, small-micro sized firms invest the least resources in lifelong learning. The lack of specially developed learning materials combined with high cost causes low usage. All these affect the competitiveness of these firms. OER(Open Educational Resources) are among the possible solutions to these problems and the key to obtain a sustainable development of micro-enterprises from ICT sector. So, their development is an issue with a larger interest. " Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others"(https://creativecommons.org/about/program-areas/education-oer/).

IT and other technical knowledge and skills are no longer enough. The market, the increasing competition demands also business skills, including soft skills. The (former) sole trader who launches a small business needs new skills to deal with customers and with employees. The specialists need to become more business oriented, entrepreneurial, creative, innovative and customer oriented in order to create higher value added for their company. The need to develop these soft skills is transnational, and the demand for training will continue to grow.

After defining the list of skills needed (that we should develop), we have to define how to develop. New social, economical situation demands new methodology, new tools. Siemens (2014) states, that after behaviourism,

constructivism, the "connectivism" is a new concept of learning for the digital era. Learning is no more an individual process, we live, we live social life and also we learn as parts of different groups. When talking about online learning groups we have to mention the different and changing tools used: formal (dedicated e-learning platforms, open and bought educational resources) and informal (learning trough Skype, Facebook groups, different chat platforms, e-mail, the combination of these or others etc.)

The project's objective is that after an in-depth market audit, a needs analyses focusing on the actual demand of SME's for ICT sector to develop proper methods and tools to deliver soft skills development. The main tool that the Consortium proposes is the <https://skillsplusproject.eu/en/learning/your-learning-space> (by the writing of this article in testing stage, soon to be released for general use) e-learning platform. The SKILLS+ **e-learning platform** will include different types of learning resources and tools - the more "traditional" reading resources will be completed with tutorial videos, supported by real-life, decision making scenario exercises. The concept is that learners will read, watch, explore and practice new skills in their own physical, professional and social environment.

I. Simo, PhD. students from The "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu observed that the "current student generation is interested in achieving the information in a different way. The books and notes are not primary in their interests, and characteristics of Z generation are present: they live in a symbiosis with the digital universe, they like **studying in the virtual environment**, they grow along with the online world and are willing to build a life correlated to it. They very well know where and how to find the information, wish to be active part of it, to be on Youtube and video blogs. They spend over three hours per day on the computer, developed **short term attention**, they **rather scan than read**, do not wish to read but **interact on social networks**. They do not do sport activities but enjoy video games, they are not obedient but ambitious and at the same time independent and pragmatic." Simo (2017).

All these convinced us, about the opportunity of another innovative concept to be employed is the so-called "**thin slicing**" (SKILLS+ Report, 2016). As the primary target is the community of ICT specialist, having very busy schedules and also short attention spans, bite-size learning focuses on one narrow theoretical knowledge, one behaviour change, one narrow concept and one slim goal at a time. Thin slicing is about single learning concept and, with limited information, delivering a powerful impact. We discuss here about "knowledge pills" which can "be taken" in a short period of 20-45 minutes, if learning alone using the online platform.

Existing studies affirm the importance of mobile devices (and different other gadgets interconnected) in e-learning. Jonson (2013) explained that "it is demonstrated that the impact and usage of OER will grow in the immediate future". The report also shows that using ICT and OER has to become of mass usage, the mobile technology will be present in the learning activity as much in the classroom as outside of it.

The SKILLS+ learning program will thus be composed of small e-learning "snacks" or "knowledge pills" that demonstrate in an interactive way, how specific soft skills work in different situations. Then the learning experience will be integrated into the **blended learning** concept (for example workshops, trainings, coaching supported by internal and external education experts), providing multiple paths for learners to develop the soft skills defined in needs analyses stage. As Honey and Mumford stated, every individual has special learning style, and thus special teaching approach. The four main categories of learning styles are: the activist, the reflector, theorist and the pragmatist (P. Honey, A. Mumford, 2000)

The Skills+ Project defined its major objectives: drawing an in-depth diagnosis of the issues faced by micro-enterprises from ICT sector and the defining the soft skills most needed by the mentioned firms in Europe, primarily in the partner countries. And because new materials for developing the mentioned skills could be very expensive, we had to identify and exchange the existing best practices and creative methodologies for the development of soft skills in micro-enterprises. As Ally and Samaka (2013) stated "the education is very expensive for many countries in the world, the only solution being the inclusion of open educational resources (OER) or of open education (OE) in the educational systems curriculum".

We consider that ICT sector should not only be the target of this project's research, but also a catalyst for other sectors. According to Duşe and Duşe in their study "În întâmpinarea profesorilor: proiectul EU-StORE" (Greetings for the teachers) the necessity that educational systems from Europe should bring the learning experiences closer to the requests on the labour market. Also, they affirm that ICT sector's contribution should be more accentuated, in the technical education as well. Open Educational Resources should be among the most important tools.

The current stage of the project - After almost two years soft skills needs analysis is perfected; learning tools are almost ready, online platform is now in internal testing stage. General implementing, dissemination, training follows.

2. Research Methodology

The aims of needs analysis: to define the list of the most important soft skills to develop for managers and employees of the micro-companies in the ICT sector; to define the methodology and tools how the SKILLS+ Development Program should be delivered.

Primary target (beneficiary): managers and employees of micro-firms in ICT sector. We consider it important to explain why we focused on SME's and especially micro-firms and why not big firms. Big IT companies have their own human resource policies, tailored on their specific strategies and adapted on special market niches. An extra argument is the special budget they can invest in this field: analyzing special needs, create and implement training programs. SME's are not capable to invest large amounts in human resource development.

Target includes the above mentioned firms (and their managers and employees) from partner regions. In the case of some partner countries, the analysis focused on smaller regions: Harghita county (Ro), Madrid region (ES), Oslo region (No) and Friesland province (H). Cyprus being a small country is considered as one region. We met important differences between the partner regions - urban agglomeration, capital regions such as Madrid or Oslo. They have a major socio-economic influence in their countries and Europe. On the other hand, we find the rural Harghita county, the island of Cyprus with traditional strong service sectors affected by crisis, and Friesland with research and development developed less than Dutch average but strong in water technologies, health.

Secondary target (beneficiary): associations (organizations) that represent ICT companies, VET (vocational, education, training) organizations providing training to the professionals of ICT sector, students - future managers and employees of ICT companies. At a larger level (without forgetting the limitations of this research) it can be extended to other technical domains or occupations, such as design engineers, architects, etc.

Methodological Approach

Starting from the objectives of the project, we focused on two major (the **needs** for soft skills and **the methodology and tools to develop skills**) and a few other auxiliary aspects (economical, business, ICT, human resource policy trends etc.). All research stage (as well as learning material development) was managed by the Consortium, meaning that representatives of the partners' management had periodical face-to-face / online meetings.

The **needs analysis** was realized in three stages:

- secondary source research, analysis of the EU-level documents, eventual existing research reports related to soft skills needs in the technical fields, with focus on ICT sector;

- desk research in partner countries / partner regions (national sources learning methods, media, tools used by the target groups in the mentioned regions, existing soft skills development tools,);

- primary source research, field work - expert interviews in partner countries (ICT sector's trends in every region, human resource issues, policies, evaluation of existing skills and gaps by regions, learning habits, requirements, suggestions).

Common approach

In order to obtain generally available data, common approach from partner regions was required. Further desk research using a common approach in all partner countries has been proposed, so that the findings are comparable. Project partners have previously established contacts with research target - partners: ICT firms; vocational, education and training organizations; ICT associations; networks or clusters; business support organizations; policy makers and other **relevant stakeholders** in their regions/ countries. This allowed to select the experts for the interview part of the needs analysis. The experts may come from any of the stakeholders listed above, however in the case that the expert comes from the academic or policy making organization, they should demonstrate their knowledge of the ICT business world as well. Expert interviews in every partner region are to be performed in order to support and/ or refine the findings of the desk research. (Skills+ Report, 2016)

Three tools are developed as part of the Methodological Approach. These are the "DeskResearch Template", "SKILLS+ Interview Guidelines" and the "Regional Report Template".

In order to refine the findings and to detail the specific request of this sector primary research (**expert interviews**) was also included in research methodology. The SKILLS+ fieldwork consisted of interviews with selected experts of the ICT sector in partner regions. The experts could come from any of the stakeholders (ICT companies, education and training organizations, ICT associations, networks or clusters, business support organizations, policy makers, etc.). In total, 18 experts were interviewed in partner regions in March-April 2016. The expert profiles: most of them are owners/ CEOs/experts of small ICT companies, two come from business support organizations and one -from a VET organization. The analysis of responses is presented below.

Interview guidelines (Skills+ Report, 2016) - The interviewer shall introduce the SKILLS+ project and the objectives of the interview. The interview is planned as a face-to-face interaction and is expected to last around 20 minutes. Several questions are suggested below, however other questions may be added to clarify the findings of the desk research: trends, HR gaps, soft skills needed, development methods, requirements regarding e-learning space.

Regional report template contains: profile of the region, introduction, region/country and its main characteristics, overall situation and trends in the ICT sector; the soft skills most needed by micro-companies in ICT sector in the region; preferred learning methods/ media/ tools; existing soft skills development programs for micro-companies in ICT; field work: experts profile, analysis of responses. Conclusions.

3. Results

In this chapter we will present the: the most important trends of the ICT sector and the role of micro-companies; the situation and challenges in talent supply for micro-companies in ICTs; soft skills in the micro-companies in the ICT sector - experts view; the main non-IT skills demanded in the ICT; best methods to deliver soft skills development - teaching / learning methods for developing soft skills; existing soft skills development tools / methodologies; main characteristics demanded of online tools in soft skills development.

Trends of the ICT sector and the role of micro-companies The analysis focused on smaller regions of each country as presented. In this way, we must affirm that one of the limitations of this research is that it can not be statistically expanded to an European level, even if we have found many similitude among the regions, especially on soft skills need. But as follows, there are a lot of different trends by regions.

The latest European company survey in spring 2013 (ECS-2013), found that four out of 10(39%) firms in the EU had difficulties finding staff with the right skills. Hiring difficulties, particularly when related to shortages of staff in high-skill jobs, are a constraint on firm productivity and the adoption of innovative technologies and forms of work. (CEDEFOP, 2015). According to the flash Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2010), about 89% of European employers who recruited higher education graduates in the past five years were satisfied with the skills of their new recruits: they agreed that these graduates had the hard skills required to work in their company. These employers were *mostly dissatisfied with the foreign language skills as well as the soft* of the graduates hired. Concerns are often expressed in employer surveys about the inability of businesses to find workers with the right set of soft skills.

In 2015, Manpower Group surveyed more than 41,700 hiring managers in 42 countries to identify the proportion of employers having difficulty filling positions, which jobs are difficult to fill, and why. More than one in five hiring managers (22%) say that lack of experience is behind talent shortages and 17% report a lack of workplace competencies. (ManPower 2015 Talent Shortage Survey).

Talent supply for micro-companies in ICTs Do micro-companies in the ICT sector of partner regions have difficulties recruiting staff? It seems that the less developed/ rural regions may be facing some difficulties in filling in vacancies, while elsewhere there is a big supply of IT graduates/ staff. Here the issue is the ability of micro-companies to create new jobs and manage growth.

Soft skills in the micro-companies in the ICT sector - experts view The current level of soft skills in the micro-companies in the ICT sector in their region is evaluated as average by the Harghita and Cypriot experts. A better level of soft skills in Madrid area would be desirable. In Oslo region, the level of soft skills is seen as relatively good, and much better than it used to be. The new generation of IT workers has stronger communication skills. However, some people in ICT sector (e.g. programmers) can be peculiar in their ways. Their "language" can be very technical, and it can often be challenging for many to translate this into a more customary language. The

current level of soft skills in the ICT sector varies in Friesland. The companies more related to marketing, e.g. social media experts have good communication, team and other social skills. However, the companies that are involved in the ‘hard side’ of ICT tend to have less developed soft skills. Automation companies, technical developers etc. have difficulties in communicating to customers which often causes friction and even losing of the contract.

The main non-IT skills demanded in the ICT sector include:

- business (soft) skills (creativity, innovation, customer service, sales),project management, communication and
- foreign language skills. (CEDEFOP, EU Skills Panorama Analytical Highlight, 2012)

Confirmation of Hypothesis 1:

According to the experts, the soft skills needed in the ICT sector of most partner regions are:

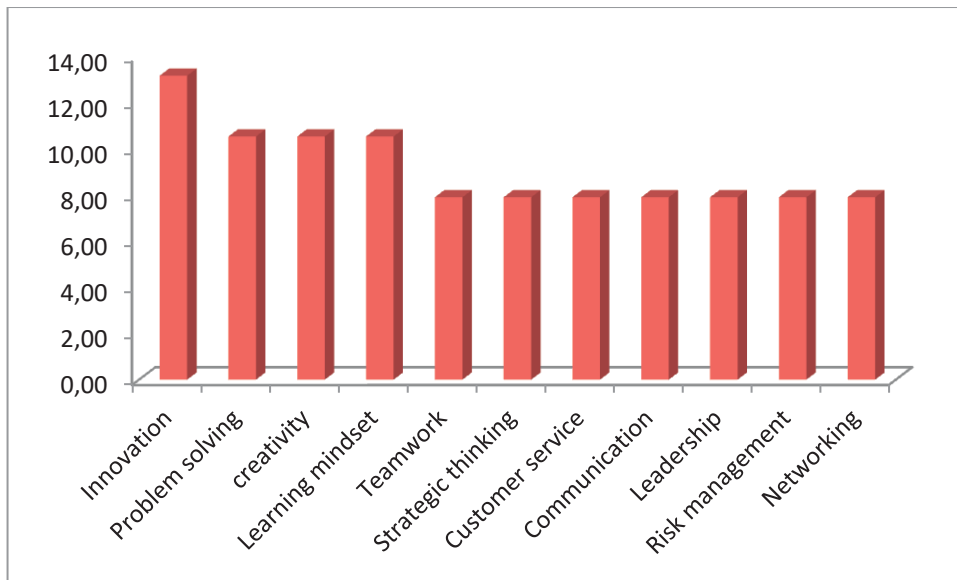


Fig.2 Soft skills needs in ICT sectors micro-companies in partner regions by %
How to deliver soft skills development? - teaching / learning methods for developing soft skills.

Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

Confirmation of Hypothesis 2:

The Skills+ experts from all partner regions agreed that for ICT specialists **e-learning resources** would be the most suitable soft skills development tool, and in most cases it is advisable **to combine e-learning with face-to-face interaction**. There are some differences in the suggested forms of interaction and the importance of e-learning vs. workshop/ consultation. The Norwegian experts consider group training/workshops to be the most valuable; inter-personal relations in the learning process are important in particular in learning soft skills. In their opinion, e-learning resources would be a good supplement to inter-personal trainings, especially when it comes to content that is possible to practice online, e.g. risk management. (Skills+ Regional Report Norway 2016)

E-learning and individual consultation would be preferred by the Dutch experts. They have also suggested that because the project deals with micro enterprise from the ICT sector, special importance should be given to developing training materials that are high-end and meet today’s technical requirements. People in general, and especially people that are active in the IT industry, know what applications, software and latest technical possibilities are available and therefore expect training materials to meet these requirements. (Skills+ Regional Report Netherlands 2016)

Existing soft skills development tools / methodologies

The partners have also attempted to detect any existing soft skills development programs for micro-companies in ICT sector, and the research shows that such training opportunities are very limited. In Romania, no online courses specifically dedicated for IT micro-companies were found but there are a few other training opportunities that can be accessed by IT micro-companies. Some of them are funded from the ESF and have limited accessibility, only for specific target group or specific geographic area, or only for the project period, depending on the project. In Cyprus, there was one recent (classroom-based) pilot free of charge 100-hour program for improvement of skills of unemployed ICT graduates that included 25-hour program on development of employability skills. There were many MOOCs online aimed to entrepreneurs but according to the partners' knowledge at the moment there is no free platform oriented to soft skills development in the sector in Spain.

In Oslo region, there is a range of training courses and skills development programs for IT professionals that are relevant for the target group; however, most of these are not for free. The CaMEO platform www.eplatform.c-ameo.eu was created in another EU project and is an open source platform with e-Learning materials in skills development and skills benchmarking in the IT sector (Cioca et al., 2013). The e-learning platform can be used to benchmark ICT skills against the European Qualifications Framework, while it also offers an e-learning course to improve skills and employability. One of the modules focuses on soft skills in particular (Draghici et al., 2014; Ivascu et al., 2014).

In the past years, BDF (Friesland- member of Skills+ project) developed several training materials that develop soft skills competences of entrepreneurs, employees and workers:

- <http://ent-teach.eu/> - 7 units on various aspects of entrepreneurship and business start-up supported by practical learning activities, videos, case studies and self-assessment questions to be used in and outside the class room. Some learning activities are focused on the development of soft skills: <http://entteach.jimdo.com/app/download/8504266094/Competences+Description+EN.pdf?t=1381997323>
- www.supreme-mentoring.eu - includes a manual on how to run the SupremeMentor Program

It seems that **blended learning** (online learning combined with some kind of direct interaction - workshops, mentoring and/ or coaching) is preferred in most regions. In Friesland, small companies prefer online materials in order to learn in their own time, at their own pace; in Oslo region classes/ courses/ workshops are more popular but e-learning is also becoming more widespread.

This confirms the Hypothesis 2.

Main characteristics demanded of online tools in soft skills development

Any online tools to be developed should be (Skills+ Report on Soft Skills Development Needs in Micro-Companies of ICT sector, 2016; Cioca et al., 2011):

- mobile device compatible, mobile apps,
- interactive, flexible -adaptive learning - teaching methods according to individual learning styles,
- self-explanatory,
- in different formats (video, text, etc.), downloadable materials (for offline learning),
- easy to be learnt in "thin slices", short, clear, accessible, responsive, subtitled, easy to understand contents,
- focused on the achievement of performance goals and,
- tailored to learning and studying at the students own time and pace, •accessibility, usability
- intuitive, easy to use and responsive user interface, •interactive, with gamification elements,
- organized in a clear way, easy ways of searching,
- meaningful content, practical, easy to understand material,
- short and effective. Must be attractive and engaging so that it is "easy to sit down and work with",
- possibility of interrupting and continuation from the same place, possibility of self-checking,
- it should draw entrepreneurs attention to already existing online tools,
- there should be some challenges in the program,
- available in native languages,

- provide options for co-working, and a network for common learning, should have the possibility of participating in live workshops. As soft skills are often abstract subjects, there is usually a need to have discussions, e.g. to pause a presentation and talk together along the way,
- library with a range of possibilities: e.g. interactive exercises (texts/videoclips/Q&As etc.); cases in which groups can explore different issues and situations– discuss – and later on be presented with explanations to various scenarios,
- possibility to be in contact with the person holding the course, to ask questions,
- possibility to follow-up on the course participants, show the progression/give feedback,
- courses should last over a longer period. Soft skills take time to learn and internalize,
- teach the market value of things: learn how to question your own ideas, e.g. determine whether an idea you have is sensible to carry out. Measuring if what you are about to do is worthwhile doing (risks, cost-benefit analyses etc).

Based on these findings the SKILLS+ Consortium developed (now in testing stage) an e-learning platform, which can be checked on the following link <https://skillsplusproject.eu/en/learning/your-learning-space>.

4. Conclusions

At the beginning of the 21st century ICT is one of the most important and fastest growing sectors at international level, including partner regions. The vast majority of companies of ICT sector are micro-enterprises, which face different challenges including strong (even global) competition, difficulties in financing and lack of skillful (hard and of soft skills) personnel in some regions. In order to maintain market positions they need to develop their soft skills, beside the technical knowledge (hard skills).

Based on the analysis of European level documents, followed by local researches by partners, analysis of secondary sources (national/ regional reports, studies, etc.) and fieldwork showed that there is a wide range of soft skills that the employers and staff of ICT micro-companies should possess in order to be successful. The researches revealed a large list of soft skills that are useful and needed in any ICT micro-enterprises; but there are some differences in partner regions in prioritizing all the different skills.

The findings of analyzing secondary sources, refined by expert interviews showed that the most important **soft skills to be developed** in the ICT micro-companies in partner regions are: communication, problem solving, teamwork, learning mindset, creativity, leadership, strategic thinking, customer service, innovation, and risk management.

E-learning is considered a suitable **soft skills development tool**; it is advisable to combine it with face-to-face interaction, e.g. workshops and/ or individual consultation. The SKILLS+ e-learning space should be: mobile device compatible, accessible, usable, responsive, attractive, engaging, interactive, self-explanatory, in different formats (video, text, etc.), short and clear, focussed on the achievement of performance goals, motivating and showing the progress of the learner, tailored to learning and studying at the students own time and pace (soft skills take time to learn), provide options for co-working, networking and common learning.

As we mentioned in the Introduction, the Skills+ Project's main target are specialist from ICT micro-enterprises, special importance should be given to developing training materials that meet today's technical and working (and life-) style requirements. Special tailored (for the mentioned target) soft skills development opportunities, especially open educational resources are very limited at the moment. The good news is that the understanding of the importance of soft skills is growing. We are convinced that soft skills development methodology and tools offered by the Skills+ project will be considered a real help by the target of the project, the ICT specialists from micro-enterprises.

A further research could be the possibility of implementing or adapting the findings, including the e-learning platform, in other technical areas, or implementing in high-school or university education, especially ICT and engineering.

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