

# SURVEY REPORT

INFORMAL TRANSVERSAL  
SKILLS ASSESSMENT



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## 1. Summary

Project partners of VALITS 2.0 agreed in undertaking a survey to find out which Informal Transversal Skills should be tested in the 'Assessment tool. A sample of 108 persons, from different countries, including HR specialists and professionals employing low skilled workers and disadvantaged groups successfully completed the survey. Data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire, a copy of which is provided in the Appendix. The length of each survey was about 10 minutes. The questionnaire consists of several major parts to assess the following: type and size of the company/institution, nationality, the main group of workers they employ -or recruit- , rating of Informal Transversal Skills and its importance when hiring new employees, the way they identify these skills and the training methods being used, if there is any.

## 2. Background and objectives

The aim of this questionnaire is to verify through professional experience of participants, which transversal skills are required and commonly present in different low-skilled jobs so that we can later assess the correct skill set in the Assessment tool.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Methodology to prepare the questionnaire:

In order to create an effective and structured questionnaire that focus on target groups, there was a need of preselecting a list of Informal Skills and identify which groups of low-skilled occupations are more common in partner countries, and include other relevant questions that provide valuable information for the Assessment tool.

#### a) Methodology for choosing Informal Transversal Skills to be rated in the questionnaire.

To find the correct skills for the target group partners were asked to first identify 20 low skilled jobs in their respective regions, by research, contacting job agencies and other stakeholders. In a next step the partners found these occupations in ESCO and identified the transversal skills listed for these jobs in the ESCO skills lists. The matching resulted on a list of 15 Informal Transversal skills that are important in low-skilled jobs. This list of skills was then included on Q5 of the questionnaire.

#### b) Methodology for choosing the Group of Occupations to be included in the questionnaire.

Partners were asked to identify 20 low skilled jobs in their respective regions, by research, contacting job agencies and other stakeholders. The jobs identified by the consortium were categorized following the ESCO model for grouping occupations in order to find out which sectors would be more relevant for projects outputs. Later on, the 200 jobs identified by the consortium were categorized following the ESCO Subgroups model for occupations. Finally, as

the list of ESCO subgroups was too long and, in some cases unclear, the list was reduced by merging similar groups, renaming these subgroups and include some key jobs in each category to make it more understandable. The results was a list of 16 groups of occupations that are more common in partner countries.

### c) Methodology for choosing other relevant questions.

Other relevant questions were included in the questionnaire, to better understand how important Informal skills are depending on the size of the company, type of company, and nationality, and also to find out the way companies identify and provide training on these informal skills.

## 3.2. Process

Partners presented the questionnaire to HR specialists and employers of low-skilled workers. Participants of the questionnaire were asked to specify the size and type of organisation they were working for, nationality, to rate by importance 15 transversal skills (from low importance=1 to essential=5), the way they identify these skills and the training methods being used, if there was any.

Informal transversal skills are those skills that have been learned often unintentionally and in a daily informal setting (family, leisure, work) and are transferable to a wide range of occupations and sectors.

The results were deep analysed using two software: Excel and SPSS. A statistical toolset was applied (average, standard deviation) in order to see the results from different points of view according to the survey answers (By nationality, by size of the organization, by type of institution or as a whole).

## 3.3. Informal Transversal Skills definition

1. **Adaptability:** Alter one's attitude or behaviour to accommodate modifications in the workplace.
2. **Adhere company standards:** Act and manage according to the organisation's code of conduct.
3. **Can work under pressure:** Handle challenges, disruption and change and recover from set-backs and adversity.
4. **Communication skills:** The set of commonly shared principles in regards with communication such as active listening, establish rapport, adjusting the register, and respecting the intervention of others
5. **Customer service:** Processes and principles related to the customer, client, service user and to personal services; these may include procedures to evaluate customer's or service user's satisfaction.
6. **Interaction skills:** Engage with others face-to-face in a wide range of situations, using strategies appropriate to context and purpose.
7. **Language skills:** Ability to communicate through reading, writing, speaking and listening in the mother tongue and in a foreign language.
8. **Respects privacy:** Work with clients on a confidential basis. Respect your clients' privacy by not disclosing any personal information about them. Also do not disclose personal information about

yourself to the clients. Make sure clear rules are set to maintain confidentiality.

9. **Physical fitness:** Be able to Lift heavy weights and apply ergonomic lifting techniques to avoid damaging the body.

10. **Planning/organization skills:** Employ a set of organisational techniques and procedures which facilitate the achievement of the set goals set such as detailed planning of personnel's schedules. Use these resources efficiently and sustainably and show flexibility when required.

11. **Problem solving:** Solve problems which arise in planning, prioritising, organising, directing/facilitating action and evaluating performance.

12. **Procedural skills:** Adhere to procedures at work in a structured and systematic manner.

13. **Safety and responsibility at work:** Apply principles, policies and institutional regulations aimed at guaranteeing a safe workplace for all employees.

14. **Training skills:** Provide training and orientation to students, customers or new team members, or assign this task to an appropriately experienced team member.

15. **Work in a team:** Work confidently within a group with each doing their part in the service of the whole.

## 4. Results of the Skill Assessment

### 4.1. Results by size of the company

Respondents from Micro and Small companies were the most numerous, as they represented 56% of the answers (30 answers each), followed by Medium-sized companies with 20 answers, large companies with 19 answers and Medium-large companies with 9 answers.

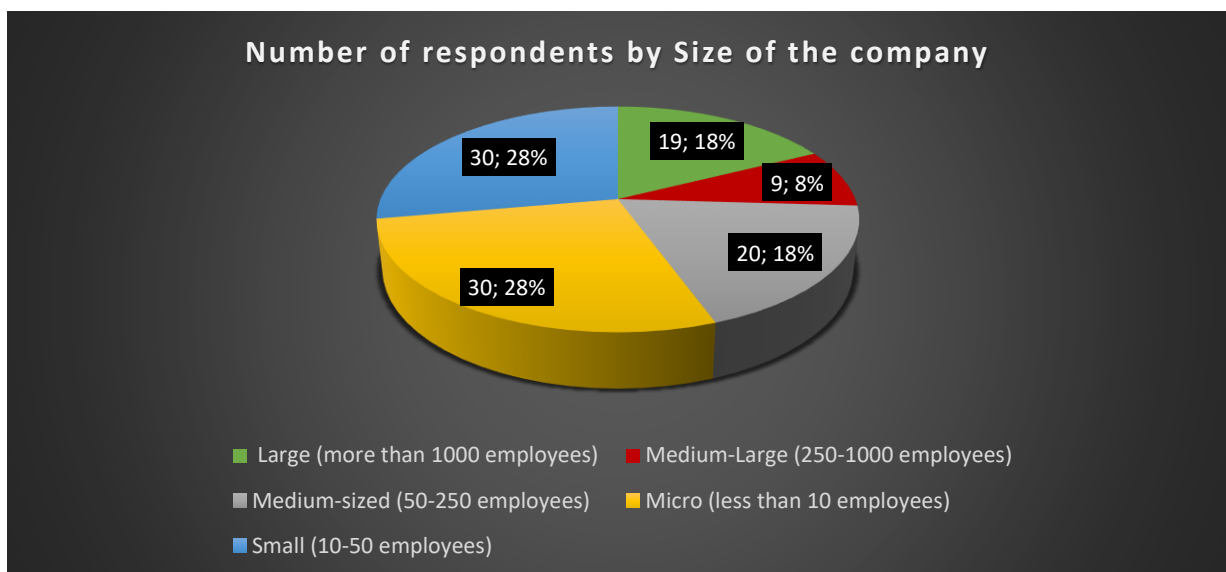


Figure 1. Number of respondents by Size of the company

If results of the skill rating are analysed by size of the company, “Work in a Team” is the most important skills for large and medium-sized companies while “Problem Solving” does the same for Small and Micro companies. “Customer Service” and “Safety and responsibility at work” also occupied the 1<sup>st</sup> place on Micro companies. Finally “Customer Service” and “Communication skills” are the most important skills for Medium-large companies (figure 2)

Alternatively, Physical Fitness was rated below 3 by all companies, being the least important skill overall. A relevant indicator is to analyse the average results by size of the company, where Informal skills seem to be more important in Medium-Large companies (3,9 out of 5), results are not that high on Large and Medium sized companies (3,73). (table 1)

	Large (more than 1000 employees)	Medium-Large (250-1000 employees)	Medium-sized (50-250 employees)	Micro (less than 10 employees)	Small (10-50 employees)	All
Physical Fitness	2,47	2,78	2,70	2,97	2,47	2,68
Training Skills	3,11	3,44	3,25	3,33	3,40	3,31
Language skills	3,42	3,33	3,10	3,33	3,37	3,31
Respects Privacy	3,42	4,11	3,80	4,07	3,67	3,80
Planning/organization skills	3,53	3,78	3,30	3,97	4,13	3,80
Can work under pressure	4,05	3,67	3,95	3,90	3,70	3,86
Interaction skills	3,84	4,00	3,95	3,87	3,87	3,89
Procedural skills	3,89	4,11	3,70	3,97	3,93	3,91
Adaptability	3,95	3,89	4,00	4,00	3,80	3,93
Customer Service	3,68	4,44	3,90	4,20	3,93	4,00
Communication skills	4,11	4,44	3,65	3,93	4,13	4,01
Safety & responsibility at work	3,84	4,22	4,20	4,20	4,00	4,08
Adhere company standards	4,21	4,11	4,30	4,07	4,00	4,12
Problem Solving	4,21	4,00	3,80	4,20	4,30	4,14
Work in a team	4,26	4,22	4,40	4,17	4,23	4,25
Average	3,73	3,9	3,73	3,88	3,8	3,81

Table 1. Rating of Informal Skills by Size of the company (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential). Green: best rated skill by size of company, red: worst rated skill by size of company.

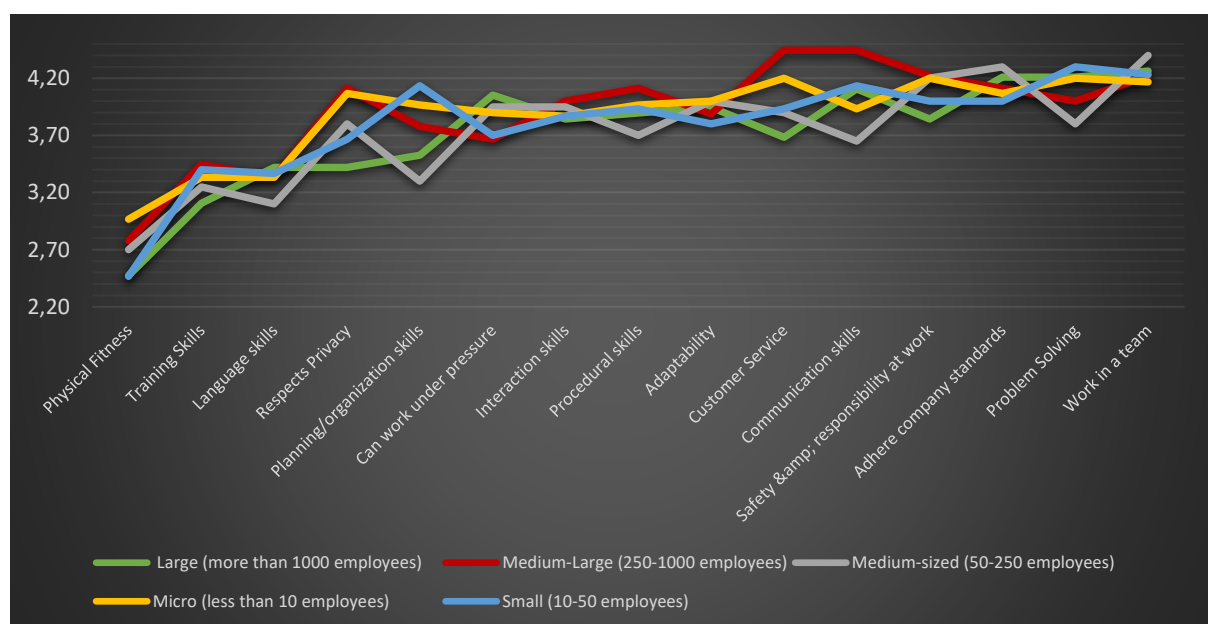


Figure 2. Rating of Informal Skills by Size of the company (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential).

## 4.2. Results by type of the company

Most of the respondents were Private companies (94 out of 108) and only a small percentage -14% - belongs to the public sector (figure 3)

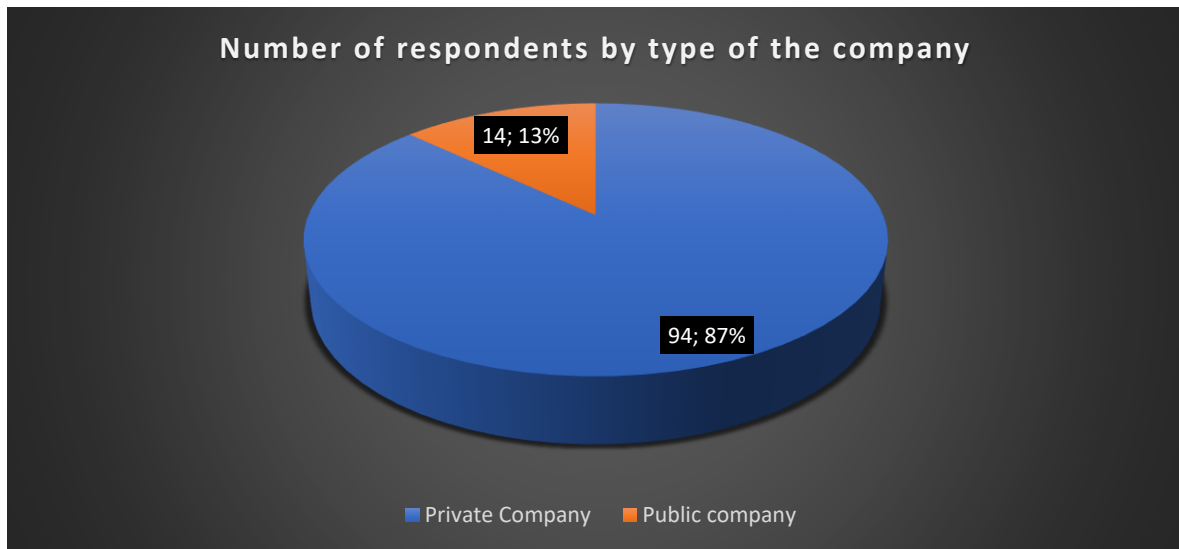


Figure 3. Number of respondents by type of the company

If the results of the skill rating are analysed by type of the company, Informal skills are more relevant in private companies (3,83/5) than in public companies (3,67/5). According to various comments on the questionnaire from HR specialists working for public companies this is due to the difficult test candidates must pass in order to get a job in the public administration, where informal skills play a second role. “Work in a team” is the most important skill for both types of companies and “Problem solving” also occupies the 1<sup>st</sup> place on public companies. “Physical Fitness” was again the least valued skill for both type of companies with an average of 2,68 out of 5. (table 2 and figure 4)

	Private Company	Public company	All
Physical Fitness	2,72	2,36	2,68
Training Skills	3,26	3,64	3,31
Language skills	3,35	3,07	3,31
Respects Privacy	3,81	3,71	3,8
Planning/organization skills	3,83	3,57	3,8
Can work under pressure	3,88	3,71	3,86
Interaction skills	3,9	3,79	3,89
Procedural skills	3,95	3,64	3,91
Adaptability	3,94	3,86	3,93
Customer Service	4,05	3,64	4
Communication skills	4	4,07	4,01
Safety & responsibility at work	4,15	3,64	4,08
Adhere company standards	4,14	4	4,12
Problem Solving	4,14	4,14	4,14
Work in a team	4,27	4,14	4,25
Average	3,83	3,67	3,81

Table 2. Rating of Informal Skills by type of the company (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential). (Green: best rated skill by type of company, red: worst rated skill by type of company).

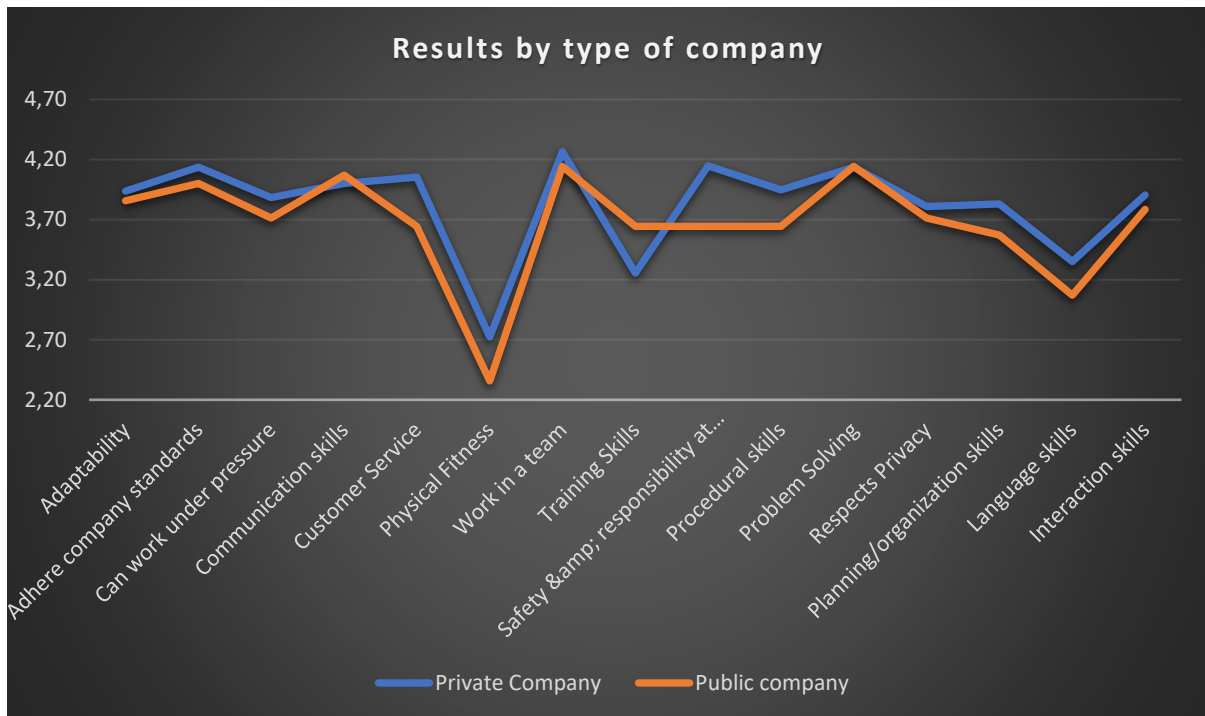


Figure 4. Rating of Informal Skills by type of the company (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential).

### 4.3. Results by country

Professionals from a total of eight countries took part in the survey (Figure 5). The country with more participants was Austria with a total amount of 23, followed by Spain (22), Poland (20), Denmark (20), and Portugal (20). The number of participants of the other countries was not significant compared to those previously listed, however they were considered in the results. These are: United Kingdom (1), Czech Republic (1) and Qatar (1)

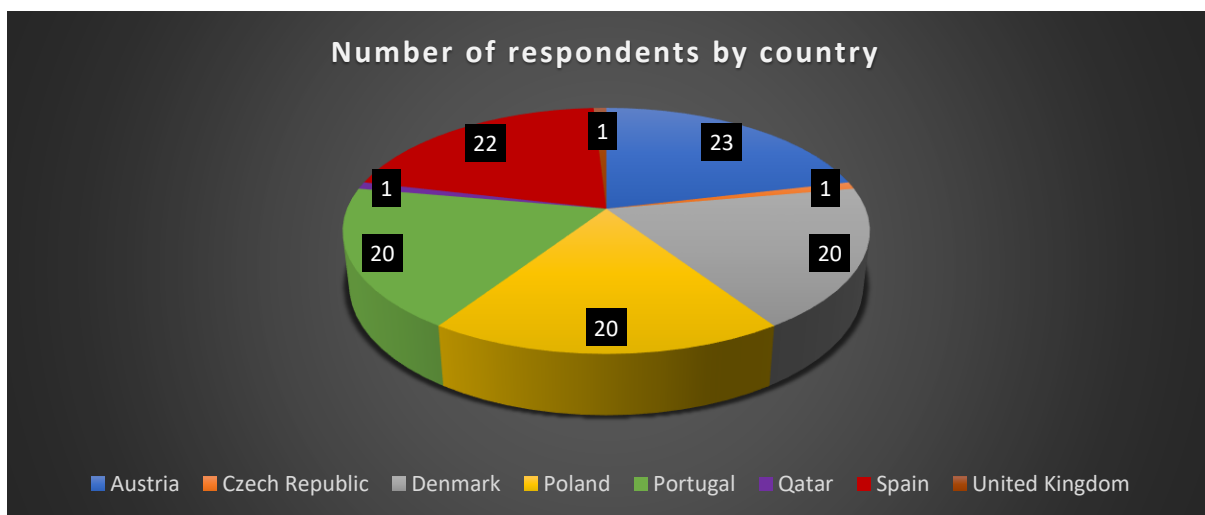


Figure 5. Number of respondents by country

When analysing the results by countries, some similarities between regions can be found. “Work in a Team” appears in the top 1 and 2 of Spain, Portugal, Denmark and Poland while “Adhere Company Standards” ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in Denmark and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Austria and Portugal (table 3)

	Austria	Spain	Denmark	Poland	Portugal	United Kingdom	Qatar	Czech Republic	All
Physical Fitness	2,74	2,68	2,10	3,15	2,65	2,00	4,00	3,00	2,68
Training Skills	3,48	3,27	3,25	3,70	2,85	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,31
Language skills	3,39	3,36	2,90	3,40	3,45	2,00	5,00	4,00	3,31
Respects Privacy	3,57	4,27	3,65	3,80	3,75	5,00	2,00	3,00	3,80
Planning/organization skills	3,57	4,00	3,35	4,35	3,65	4,00	5,00	4,00	3,80
Can work under pressure	4,00	3,64	3,65	4,20	3,85	4,00	4,00	3,00	3,86
Interaction skills	3,83	4,05	3,85	3,70	4,10	4,00	3,00	3,00	3,89
Procedural skills	3,65	4,41	3,60	3,85	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,91
Adaptability	3,74	4,23	3,60	3,85	4,25	4,00	4,00	3,00	3,93
Customer Service	4,48	4,27	3,40	3,95	3,95	3,00	3,00	3,00	4,00
Communication skills	4,09	3,86	3,75	4,45	3,85	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,01
Safety & responsibility at work	4,52	4,23	3,20	4,35	3,95	5,00	5,00	4,00	4,08
Adhere company standards	4,26	4,05	3,95	4,05	4,20	4,00	5,00	5,00	4,12
Problem Solving	4,04	4,27	3,85	4,35	4,15	5,00	3,00	5,00	4,14
Work in a team	4,22	4,55	3,85	4,40	4,30	3,00	4,00	4,00	4,25
Average	3,84	3,94	3,46	3,97	3,8	3,8	3,87	3,67	3,81

Table 3. Rating of Informal Skills by Country (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential). (Green: best rated skill by country, red: worst rated skill by country).

On the other hand, “Physical Fitness”, “Training Skills” and “Language Skills” were the least valued in all countries. For Spanish and Portuguese, ‘Work in a Team’ is the most important skill, while for Danish is to “Adhere Company Standards”. Austria rated 1st ‘Safety and Responsibility at work’ while Polish professionals opted for ‘Communication Skills’. This indicator is useful to understand the job requirements, of informal skills, in each country (figure 6 shows the results for all skills per country). Another useful indicator is to analyse the average of each country. If the result is bigger than 4, informal skills should be considered as ‘High Priority’ when applying for a job in that country. The results are as follows: Austria (3,84), Spain (3,94), Denmark (3,46), Poland (3,97) and Portugal (3,8). No country obtained a result above 4, however Poland and Spain were only 0,03 and 0,06 points away from it.

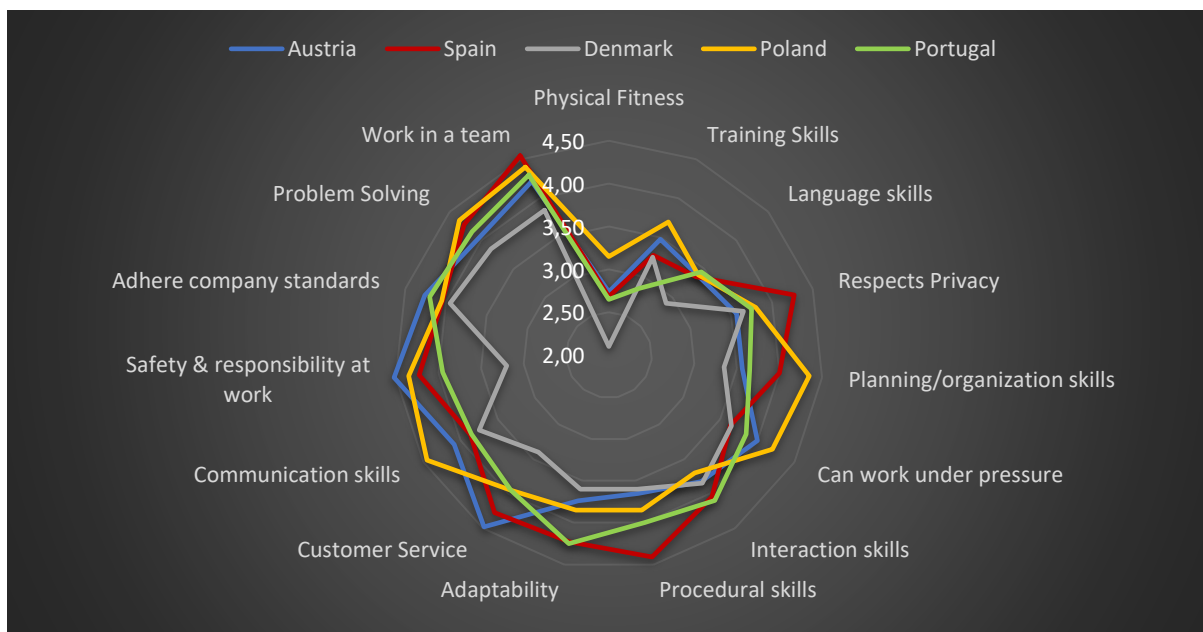


Figure 6. Rating of Informal Skills by Country (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential).

#### 4.4. Results by professional sector

Hostelry workers was the most numerous groups of respondents -18- (please note the respondents were the employers or recruiters of these professionals), followed by Business and administration associate professionals (13) and Science and engineering associates (11). Clerical support workers and Sales workers completed the top 5 with 9 respondents each.

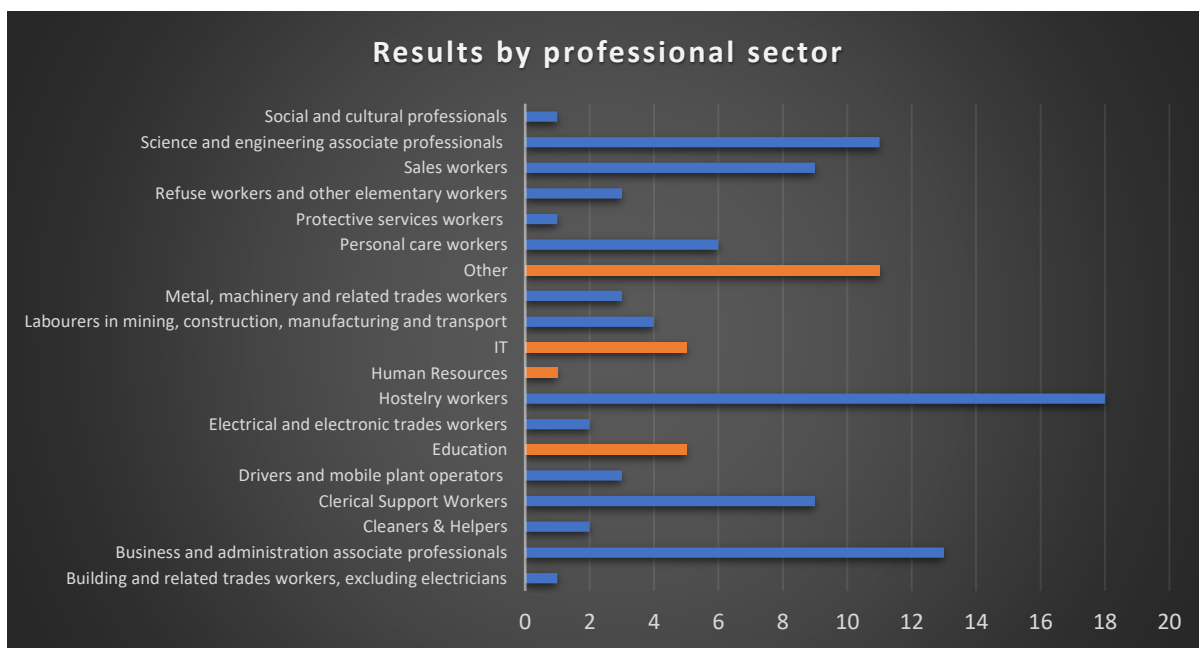


Figure 7. Number of respondents by group of workers (blue: Groups of workers included in the questionnaire (ESCO names); Orange (Groups of workers created post-questionnaire because of its importance or times repeated). The “Other” group includes professionals from different sectors i.e. NGOs, hairdressers, or consultants).

When analysing the results by professional sector, some skills highlight from the rest:

- “Adhere company Standards” is the most important Informal skill for Hostelry workers, sales workers, Metal machinery workers, cleaners & helpers and building related professionals.
- “Work in a team” is also the most important for Hostelry workers, drivers, and mobile plant operators, building and related professionals.
- “Safety and responsibility at work” is the most rated skill for hostelry workers, drivers and mobile plant operators, metal machinery workers, cleaners & helpers, electrical & electronic professionals, building related professionals and protective services professionals.
- “Problem solving” is the most relevant Informal skill for Science and engineering associates, Clerical support workers, Personal care workers, IT professionals, building related professionals and Social and cultural professionals.

On the other hand, “Physical Fitness” is once again the least rated skill, followed not so far by “Language skills” and “Training skills”.

	Adaptability	Adhere company standards	Can work under pressure	Communication skills	Customer Service	Physical Fitness	Work in a team	Training Skills	Safety & responsibility at work	Procedural skills	Problem Solving	Respects Privacy	Planning/organization skills	Language skills	Interaction skills	Average
Hostelry workers	3,83	4,22	3,83	3,94	4,17	2,72	4,22	3,44	4,22	3,78	3,83	3,89	3,50	3,44	3,83	3,79
Business and admin. associates	3,92	4,31	4,15	4,31	4,00	3,00	4,15	3,85	4,31	3,85	4,08	3,92	4,38	3,54	3,77	3,97
Science and engineering associates	3,91	3,91	3,73	3,91	3,73	2,55	4,36	2,91	4,00	3,82	4,55	3,27	3,91	3,36	3,91	3,72
Other	4,27	4,18	3,00	4,00	4,36	2,27	4,36	3,18	4,18	3,64	4,00	3,91	3,64	3,27	3,91	3,74
Clerical Support	4,00	3,67	3,78	4,33	4,11	1,89	4,33	2,44	3,22	4,11	4,33	3,33	3,89	3,56	4,11	3,67
Sales workers	3,89	4,44	4,33	4,33	4,67	3,11	4,33	3,11	4,11	4,33	4,22	3,89	4,00	3,56	3,89	4,01
Personal care workers	4,17	3,50	4,17	4,17	3,00	2,50	4,17	3,67	3,67	3,17	4,33	3,83	3,83	3,00	3,67	3,66
Education	3,80	4,00	4,00	4,60	3,40	1,80	4,40	4,80	3,20	3,20	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,60	4,60	3,83
IT	3,80	3,80	4,00	4,00	3,80	1,40	4,00	3,40	3,60	4,60	4,60	3,80	4,00	3,40	3,40	3,71
Labourers in mining...	4,50	4,00	3,25	2,75	2,75	3,75	4,25	2,75	4,25	4,25	3,75	3,25	3,50	2,75	4,00	3,58
Drivers and mobile plant operators	5,00	4,67	4,67	4,67	4,67	3,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,33	4,33	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,42
Metal, machinery ...	3,33	4,33	4,00	3,33	3,67	3,67	4,00	3,33	4,33	3,33	4,00	3,00	3,00	2,67	4,00	3,60
Refuse workers	3,67	4,33	3,00	2,33	3,33	3,67	4,00	2,67	4,67	5,00	4,00	4,00	3,67	2,33	4,00	3,64
Cleaners & Helpers	4,00	5,00	4,50	2,50	4,50	3,50	3,50	3,00	5,00	4,50	3,50	4,50	3,00	2,50	3,00	3,77
Electrical and electronic	3,00	4,00	3,50	4,50	5,00	3,50	4,50	2,50	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,50	3,50	4,50	3,93
Human Resources	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	2,00	5,00	3,73
Building and related trades	4,00	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,60
Protective services	3,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	3,00	5,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	2,00	2,00	3,00	3,67
Social and cultural professionals	1,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	1,00	3,00	2,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	3,00	2,00	3,00	3,40
All	3,93	4,12	3,86	4,01	4,00	2,68	4,25	3,31	4,08	3,91	4,14	3,80	3,80	3,31	3,89	3,81

Table 4. Rating of Informal Skills by professional sector (where 1=Not important and 5=Essential) (Green: best rated skill by sector, red: worst rated skill by sector).

#### 4.5. Other skills to be considered

Participants were asked to mention relevant skills that were not listed in the questionnaire, the results were as follows: Appearance (4), Commitment (1), Emotional Intelligence (1), Flexibility of working hours (1), Hospitality (1), Humour (3), Responsibility (1), to be Strict (1), Good energy (1), Time management (1), To work independently (1), Tolerance (1).

#### 4.6. General results analysis

When analysing the general results, we decided to rank each skill according to what professionals considered as High Priority and Essential (HP&E). In addition, an average and a standard deviation of all ratings was calculated to give us a general view of users opinion. The results were as follow:

	Standard Deviation	Average	HP&E
Work in a team	0,81	4,25	92
Problem Solving	0,77	4,14	87
Adhere company standards	0,67	4,12	90
Safety & responsibility at work	0,89	4,08	83
Communication skills	0,92	4,01	75
Customer Service	0,97	4	77
Adaptability	0,82	3,93	79
Procedural skills	0,86	3,91	75
Interaction skills	0,77	3,89	74
Can work under pressure	0,99	3,86	73
Planning/organization skills	0,9	3,8	63
Respects Privacy	1,02	3,8	71
Training Skills	0,97	3,31	45
Language skills	1,03	3,31	47
Physical Fitness	1,09	2,68	25

Table 5. General Results: SD, Average and VI&E

Standard Deviation: the standard deviation is a measure of the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of values. A low standard deviation indicates that the values tend to be close to the mean (also called the expected value) of the set, while a high standard deviation indicates that the values are spread out over a wider range. Results show that “Physical Fitness”, “Language Skills” and “Respects Privacy” are above 1 and should not be selected.

Average and VI&E: The results of the Average (Figure 8) and the number of times each skill was considered as “High priority” or “Essential”, remark the excluded skills on the Standard Deviation as they also occupy the last 3 positions, and also excludes “Planning/organization skills and “Respects privacy” as they obtain lower results than the rest of skills (both obtained an average of 3,8 and received 63 and 71 “HP&E” considerations respectively).



Figure 8. Average results

## 5. Results of the Assessment and training methods

### 5.1. Assessment & Identification methods of Informal Skills

Participants were asked to mention which method is being used in their companies to identify or assess informal skills during the selection process, the results were as follows (table 6):

Identification method	# Answers
Situational questions	52
Behavioural questions	23
Reading body language	21
Tech-based assessments	5
	1
Theoretical test and practical test	
All impressions that are collected during the application process.	1
Engagement and motivation	1
It is very difficult to assess this type of skills in an interview.	1
Personal assessment	1
Skill and assessment during interview	1

Table 6. Identification/Assessment Methods for Informal Skills

### 5.2. Training methods

Respondents were also asked to specify whether they offer training for these skills, and if so, which training methods do they provide. 58 respondents answered NO, whilst the rest (50) answered YES and the training methods are as follows:

Briefings	1	Formal internal and externally provided programmes	1
classroom and distance training	2	Mentoring, supervision, courses in relational competences	1
Co-teaching and team building	1	Onsite training	7
Coaching	2	Own academy with 3 modules of 2 days each, which only deal with soft skills and contain many role plays!	1
Company training courses	2	Peer-to-peer training	2
Courses, development conversations and feedback	4	Problem solving scenarios	1
Customer service course	1	Seminars	2
Diverse	1	Supervision and group feedback	1
E-learning (LinkedIn Learning and Core Learning Sessions)	5	Team building / meetings to share experiences, problems and solutions/ shared design of regulations and conduct manual.	1
Expository	2	Team sessions	1
External trainings	2	Teamwork / Leadership / Time Management	1
Turim Academy: HCCP, Service techniques, etc. Face-to-face training	1	Training, on the job training	2

Table 7. Training methods

## 6. Conclusions

- Informal Transversal Skills are more valued in Medium-Large companies (250-1000 employees) than in the rest of companies.
- These skills are also more important in private companies than in public organizations due to the difficult test candidates must pass in order to get a job in the public administration, where informal skills play a second role.
- In the participating countries, informal skills are more relevant in Poland, where they obtained 3,97 points, almost reaching the “High priority” consideration, whilst in Denmark they only got an average rating of 3,46 not far from being considered as “Low priority”.
- By sector, “Building and related trades workers” is the group of occupations or sector that requires more informal skills, however due to the number of respondents (1), this statement could not be precise, hence, the second group of workers with a better rating is “Sales Workers” with 9 respondents, meaning informal skills are considered as “high priority” in this sector.
- In the general analysis, “Planning/organization skills”, “Respects Privacy”, “Training Skills”, “Language Skills” and “Physical fitness” obtain the worst results. These scheme is being followed in the four previous sections (type of the company, size of the company, nationality and sector), hence, there is no need to change any skill and the final skill set to be included in the Assessment tool is as follows:

1	<b>Adaptability</b>
2	<b>Adhere company standards</b>
3	<b>Can work under pressure</b>
4	<b>Communication skills</b>
5	<b>Customer Service</b>
6	<b>Interaction skills</b>
7	<b>Problem Solving</b>
8	<b>Procedural skills</b>
9	<b>Safety &amp; responsibility at work</b>
10	<b>Work in a team</b>

Further conclusions:

- Assessment/identification methods: Situational questions are the most used to assess and identify Informal Skills.
- Training Methods: Onsite training and E-learning are the most used training methods provided by companies.