



# STEAM BO.SS

boosting soft skills

## Companies Needs

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Sapere utile



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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Company Profile .....	5
Selection and Recruitment Process .....	7
Potential Collaboration.....	9
Conclusion .....	10

## Introduction

In the ever-changing landscape of the labour market, continuously shaken by changes, soft skills have become crucial for professional success. Over the last 25 years there has been a growing recognition of the importance of these skills, acknowledging their pivotal role in adapting to technological changes and work processes. Soft skills refer to interpersonal and intrapersonal attributes that go beyond technical knowledge and define the attitude that a person has and shows when relating to himself, to others and to events in the different contexts of his life, including work. Some of these skills are, for example, effective communication, teamwork, problem solving, creativity and adaptability.

The European project “STEAM Boosting Soft Skills” (approved by the Italian National Agency INAPP, 2023-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000163992) adopts the STEAM approach, an educational methodology that integrates science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics to promote the development of these soft skills, collaborating with local companies to achieve three key objectives:

- Enhancing the soft skills of Vocational Education and Training (VET) students;
- Designing STEAM pilot projects aligned with the needs of the labour market;
- Align VET trainers' skills with European standards.

The entire project is placed within a community framework which intends to pursue, among others, the objectives set by the European Pillar of Social Rights through clear and measurable implementation measures. An example of this is one of the objectives identified during the 2021 Porto Summit, which underscores the necessity for actions and measures that make it possible to include at least 78% of people between 20 and 64 years old in the labour market by 2030.

Promoting the growth of soft skills among VET students aligns with this direction, with the goal of supporting individuals in entering and staying in corporate organizations.

Aligned with the goals of the 2030 Agenda, this initiative aims to strengthen the relationship between companies and the VET system. By fostering dialogue and

collaboration, our aim is to address digital transformation and tailor the VET system to meet the demands of the labour market.

With the goal of collecting the companies' perception of the importance of soft skills for the employees of their organizational realities, a closed-ended questionnaire was administered. This questionnaire aimed to collect responses that offered an overview of the soft skills most sought after and considered crucial to guarantee the development of work teams and the achievement of high levels of efficiency. Data relating to the following aspects were collected, aggregated, and analysed:

- Company profile: industry, size, company structure;
- Selection and recruitment process: steps, importance of previous experience and soft skills in personnel selection;
- Soft skills: evaluation of their importance and priority;
- Potential collaborations: willingness to collaborate in subsequent phases of the project.

## Company Profile

A total of 27 companies were surveyed, based in various regions of the country, with a greater predominance in the Lisbon and Tagus Valley area. The companies in question are from various sectors of activity, namely Technology, Information and Communication, Associations, Hospitality, Health and Hospital Services, Retail, Accounting, Manufacturing, Logistics, Engineering and Accommodation. Most of the participants are micro and small companies (up to 50 employees) (37 per cent are micro and 25.9 per cent are small companies).

the diversity among the participants is remarkable, covering a wide range of sectors and company sizes. From micro-enterprises, with a limited number of employees, to large companies (22.2 per cent of the companies surveyed), leaders in their fields. This diversity adds significant value to the survey, as the results can be more comprehensive and representative of reality. They reflect the perspectives and needs of different professional sectors in relation to employees' behavioural competences. Therefore, the variety of participants guarantees a diversity of approaches and points of view on the importance and integration of soft skills.

This diversity enriches the understanding of soft skills and their application in different professional contexts.

### Type of company

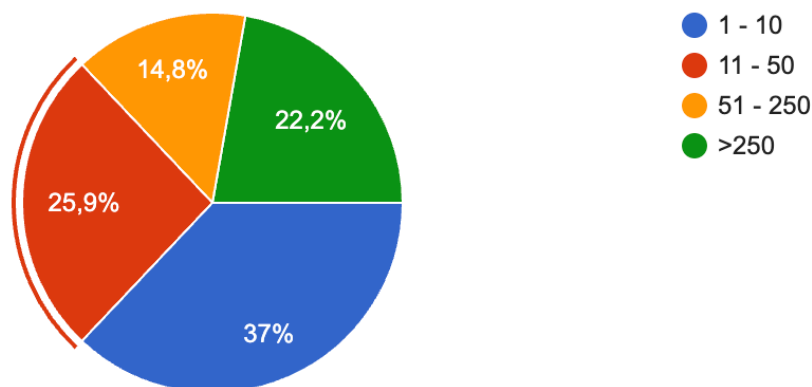
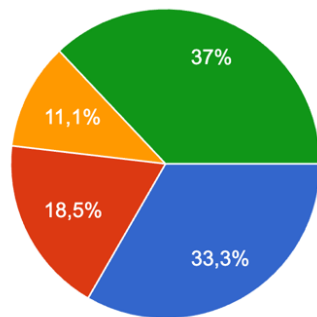


Figure 1. Number of company employees

About the organisational structure of the companies, we concluded that most of the companies surveyed use the "team-based" model, with 37%, i.e. different teams carry out specialised tasks, with the power to make decisions in line with the company's general objectives. However, this is followed by a "hierarchical" model with 33.3%, still used, as we know, in many companies, where the hierarchy is organised from top to bottom, with well-established chains of command, where one level answers directly to the next. It is also true that the least used model is the "horizontal or flat" model, with only 11.1%.

### 5. Qual é a estrutura organizacional predominante na sua entidade?

27 respostas



- Hierárquica - A hierarquia está organizada de cima para baixo, com cadeias de comando bem estabelecidas...
- Funcional - Organizado com base em competências e funções específicas, com os cargos de maior responsabilidade...
- Horizontal ou plana - Estrutura organizacional com níveis de gestão...
- Baseado em equipas - Diferentes equipas executam tarefas especializadas...

Figure 2. Organisational structure of companies

## Selection and Recruitment Process

Regarding the selection and recruitment process, companies were asked which stages are involved in this process. We concluded that, in general, most companies only carry out two selection processes, the most used of which are CV analysis and interviews. All the companies surveyed have an interview phase (100%) and, in general, practically all of them analyse CVs (92.6%).

In the process of recruiting new employees, there is a common trend observed in the companies analysed, showing an almost unanimous preference for traditional methods. CV analysis (92.6%) and personal interviews (100%) are widely adopted practices, indicating the prevalence of these approaches in many organisations.

In addition to the conventional methods mentioned above, medium, and large companies often employ other techniques, such as specific tests (18.5 per cent).

6. Que etapas estão envolvidas no processo de seleção e recrutamento na sua entidade?

27 respostas

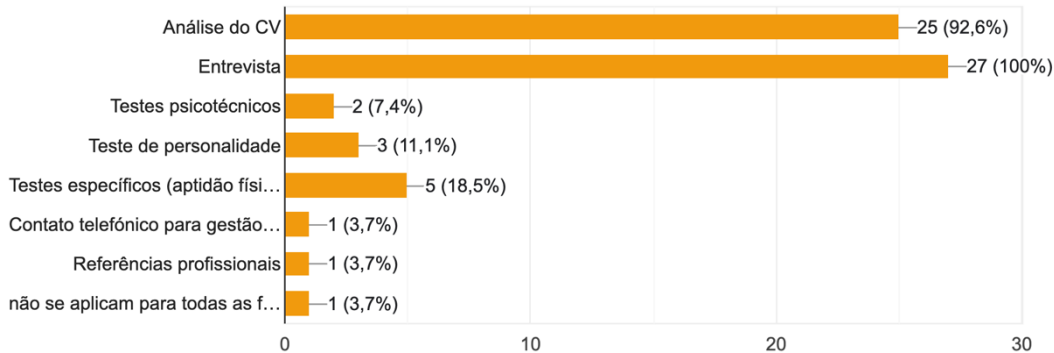


Figure 3 - Selection and Recruitment Process

### Soft Skills Importance

In today's business world, soft skills, also known as interpersonal or behavioural skills, play a crucial role in an organisation's success.

In an increasingly interconnected and team-orientated work environment, soft skills are fundamental to promoting effective communication and productive collaboration between team members.

That said, in the companies surveyed, the most valued soft skills are the following (on a scale of 1 for not very relevant and 4 for very relevant):

- **Proactivity** - This was the most valued soft skill, with an average score of **3.93**.
- **Problem-solving** - With an average score of **3.78**.
- **Empathy** - Valued with an average score of **3.74**.
- **Assertive Communication** - Valued with an average score of **3.70**.
- **Emotional Intelligence** - With an average score of **3.63**.
- **Conflict Management and Flexibility** - Both ranked last by companies, with an average score of **3.56**.

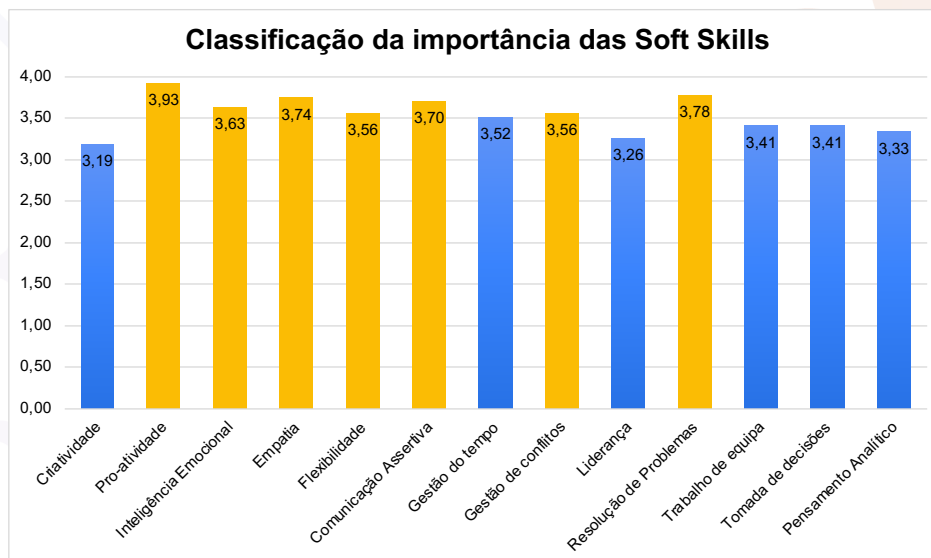


Figure 4- Classify the following soft skills according to their importance, from 1 (not very relevant) to 4 (very relevant).

Overall, it is also important to note that soft skills such as creativity and leadership are not as relevant to companies when it comes to the selection and recruitment process. However, time management and teamwork also stand out as valued soft skills.

## Potential Collaboration

Bearing in mind that one of the primary objectives of "STEAM Boosting Soft Skills" is to strengthen the links between companies and the vocational education system, with the aim of mitigating the discrepancy between the skills acquired by students on leaving training and the skills actually required by the labour market, companies were asked if they would be interested in collaborating with us in subsequent phases of the project.

Of the 27 companies surveyed, only 12 (44.4 per cent) expressed a willingness to collaborate in subsequent phases of the project, 9 (33.3 per cent) said they might collaborate, but 6 (22.2 per cent) were not willing to contribute any further.

10. Uma vez que este projeto visa reforçar a relação entre as necessidades das empresas e o sistema de EFP, a sua colaboração será essencial...emos contar com o envolvimento da sua empresa?  
27 respostas

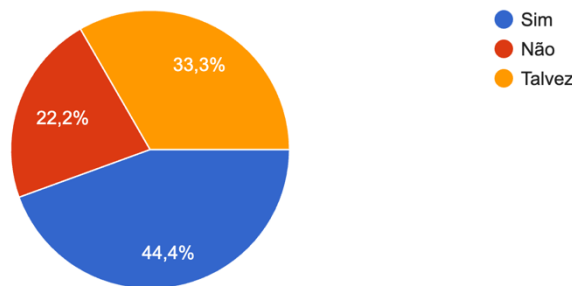


Figure 5. Possible collaboration between companies

## Conclusion

From the results of the questionnaire, it is possible to understand that in the most varied sectors of activity, namely Technology, Information and Communication, Associations, Hospitality, Health and Hospital Services, Retail, Accounting, Manufacturing, Logistics, Engineering and Accommodation, soft skills are always valued in the recruitment and selection process.

While we understand a little more about how companies work and how they think about and carry out their recruitment and selection processes, we have concluded that, in general, all companies value some soft skills as fundamental in their day-to-day work, and it can be said that behavioural skills are of fundamental importance to a company's success.

As one of the main objectives of the project was to promote interdisciplinary learning, problem-solving, creativity and critical thinking by collaborating with local companies, we concluded that we can indeed strengthen the relationship between companies and the VET system, and that it is really necessary to promote dialogue and collaboration in order to adapt the VET system to meet the demands of the labour market.



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