Growing

FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AT THE WORKPLACE
For SMEs and adult education providers

SME'S GROWTH AND INNOVATION THROUGH LEARNING AT THE WORKPLACE

Authors

GrowINg - 'SME's Growth and Innovation through Learning at the Workplace | March. 2021

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CVT	Continuing Vocational Training
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
DG EMPL:	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
EntreComp	Entrepreneurship Competence Framework
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations)

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ABSTRACT

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Among the deliverables of the project "*GrowINg – SMEs Growth and Innovation through Learning at the Workplace*" is the **Framework for Learning at the Workplace (D2.2)**, which mostly addresses SMEs and adult education providers. It is structured and based on the comparison between the results of the **GrowINg Research Matrix (D1.2),** which has been created in the previous steps and the **Entrepreneurship Competence Framework.** This framework is developed within WP2 of the project, which entails the definition and description of the methodology for the promotion of adult learning at the workplace, since its promotion at the workplace is one of the strategic topics that will be approached in the GrowINg project.

The GrowINg approach, which will be the basis of the project and all outcomes, is structured and designed by the partnership because it is essential that SMEs integrate practices for the promotion of employees' learning at the workplace to guarantee a continuous career guidance and capacity building of their employees.

Adult learning has been identified as strategic for the European competitiveness, productivity and growth and it has benefits for learners, employers, and community, at different levels. So, through this framework it is important to provide ways to take advantage of opportunities for continuous learning and capacity building in different contexts and guarantee that adults have access to training of quality in line with their needs and expectations.

Moreover, career guidance is a strategic process designed not only to accomplish the demand of lifelong learning, but also to guarantee the awareness of employees and employers related to the skills that need to be acquired, reinforced, and updated. There is a gap in what concerns the provision and support on career guidance in SMEs, and the Framework will try to address this issue. It will highlight the importance of investments needed, to endow SMEs and managers with competences and tools to integrate strategies of career guidance in the human resources management policy.

The Framework for Learning at the Workplace also aims at increasing adult participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning, to acquire work skills for active citizenship or for personal development and fulfilment through various ways and ideas that are offered in its material.

The main target-groups that are concerned and benefited by the framework are the following:

- Managers and/or Human Resources managers,
- Managers of SMEs,
- In-company trainers, consultants, and other professionals,
- Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations,
- VET/Adult Education providers and professionals,
- Policy makers in the field of education, training, and entrepreneurship.

Keywords: framework, workplace, career guidance, adult learning, training.

INTRODUCTION

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The "GrowINg" project

'"'GrowINg – SMEs Growth and Innovation through Learning at the Workplace'"' aims to create and test mainstream innovative solutions for lifelong learning of adults at the workplace, allowing and promoting the assessment and development of employees' entrepreneurial skills through a holistic approach to career guidance strategies in SMEs. Through GrowINg, an experienced partnership, together with stakeholders and end-users, aims to:

● *collect and create in-depth knowledge of SMEs' current landscapes regarding installed policies, strategies and practices in career guidance and adult learning at the workplace and of employers' needs related to the development of transversal competencies and untapped entrepreneurial skills;*

● *develop and test effective methodologies and tools to be easily transferred to the SMEs' human resources policies, strategies and practices, especially those related to career guidance and provision of continuous training to foster employees' skills and meet current and future needs;*

● *support policy making in education and training, highlighting and showcasing the benefits of promoting and supporting adult learning at the workplace at different levels, from individual growth to companies increased competitiveness.*

The project partnership is comprised of 6 organisations coming from 4 European countries:

1. MENTORTEC Serviços de Apoio a Projectos Tecnológicos sa, Portugal (Coordinator)
2. AEP - Associação Empresarial de Portugal, Portugal
3. AKMI - Anonimi Ekpaideftiki Etairia, Greece
4. iED - Institute of Entrepreneurship Development, Greece
5. DOREA Educational Institute, Cyprus
6. CONNECTIS Srl, Italy

For more information about the project and project activities, please visit the 'project's website: **http://growing-project.eu/**

Getting to know the framework

The main outcomes of the **Framework for Learning at the Workplace** and of the **WP2 - Definition and description of the methodology for the promotion of adult learning at the workplace** in general, are the following:

- Career Guidance strategy to integrate in HR management policy of SMEs.
- Recommendations for adult learning at the workplace.
- Tools & practices for the assessment and development of employees' entrepreneurial skills.

The **Framework for Learning at the Workplace** identifies the methodology and introduces the key concepts behind the project and its resources. Three other documents, two produced within the GrowINg project, the **Career Guidance Learning in SMEs** and the **GrowINg Research Matrix**, and another one from the European Commission, the **Final report of the ET2020 Working Group 2016-2018 on Adult Learning – Promoting adult learning in the workplace** were considered as essential for the development of this Framework, allowing its exploitation to other organisations and countries.

The document is to be used by SMEs and adult education providers as an inspiration and guidance to introduce or strengthen the career guidance and learning in SMEs. Thus, the main target groups of this framework are:

- managers and Human Resources managers of SMEs,
- in-company trainers, consultants,
- Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other business associations,
- VET/Adult education providers and professionals,
- Policymakers in the field of education, training, and entrepreneurship.

In detail, this framework will provide guidelines to structure a strategy for Career Guidance in SMEs, integrating practices and/or tools to:

- promote the adequate setting and context for the adult learning at the workplace,
- assure the assessment, development, and consolidation of employees' entrepreneurial skills in SMEs.

The framework will be a document identifying the methodology behind the project and introducing the key-concepts to be considered during its implementation.

The structure of the framework is the following:

- **Abstract**, where the framework's goal, objectives, target groups, and outcomes are described.

- **Introduction**, which includes the aims of the framework and the methodology behind it.

- **Career Guidance in SMEs** – relevance, impact, and practices (how to integrate it in the SMEs).

- **Adult learning at the workplace** – relevance, benefits, and initiatives (guidelines to promote it in SMEs).

- **Employees' entrepreneurial skills** – assessment, development, and consolidation.

This deliverable needs to be used jointly with the "Entrepreneurial Tools for SMEs", allowing SMEs to maximize their benefits and impacts.

CAREER GUIDANCE IN SMEs

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CAREER GUIDANCE IN SMEs

Understanding "Career Guidance"

Starting from scratch, **career guidance** according to Collins's dictionary is defined as "*the advice and information about careers that help individuals, especially young people, decide on a career and also teach them how to pursue their chosen career*".[1] Thus, career guidance is, or at least started as, **directing, and helping people choose their occupation** and the career that would suit them, but now it has been inserted in working environments as well. It is shown that guidance is also used for professional cases and terms, so it can be inferred that career guidance concerns the **directions provided at a workplace and for the working procedures of a field**.

More and more people need guidance throughout their whole professional life, not only to **gain specific knowledge** about their (future) job, but also to **acquire more general knowledge** about professional behaviour, new methodologies, tools, and techniques in their field, and generally to progress and develop their skills professionally, which will have an impact on their personal evolution, too. Career guidance can help individuals make **mature and informed choices for their professional growth,** both before they are occupied in a specific field and a particular working environment and during their career pursuing, usually based on the demand and requirements of the future of work.

Furthermore, the definition of **career guidance** by the OECD refers to "*services intended to assist people at any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and manage their careers*".[2] Career Guidance is not only about making the right choice professionally, but it entails **equipping workers with those necessary and useful competencies to make decisions** about what adults are concerned with in all aspects of life. It needs to be based on adequate and reliable resources, be very well prepared, organised proactively, and conducted by staff and experts that are fully equipped to address both the company's and the employees' needs through career guidance's options they will offer. Even networks and links between companies and local stakeholders with experts might prove useful for external guidance services.[3] It seems that students at universities and new employees are the ones who need career guidance the most because they must study both general and specialised subjects in their field of occupation and work on them to attain the maximum results. In some cases, an expert on career guidance might be needed for the correct consulting and progress of those who have initiated their career and wish to develop as further as possible. However, **today's needs require career guidance through the whole professional development of employees to correspond to the ongoing and advancing needs of the company**.

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[1] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/careers-guidance#:~:text=advice%20and%20information%20about%20careers,Collins%20English%20Dictionary .

[2] OECD (2004:19) Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap. Paris. Available here.

[3] OECD (2010) Learning for jobs: Synthesis Report of the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training. Available here.

Figure 1. Career Guidance aspects
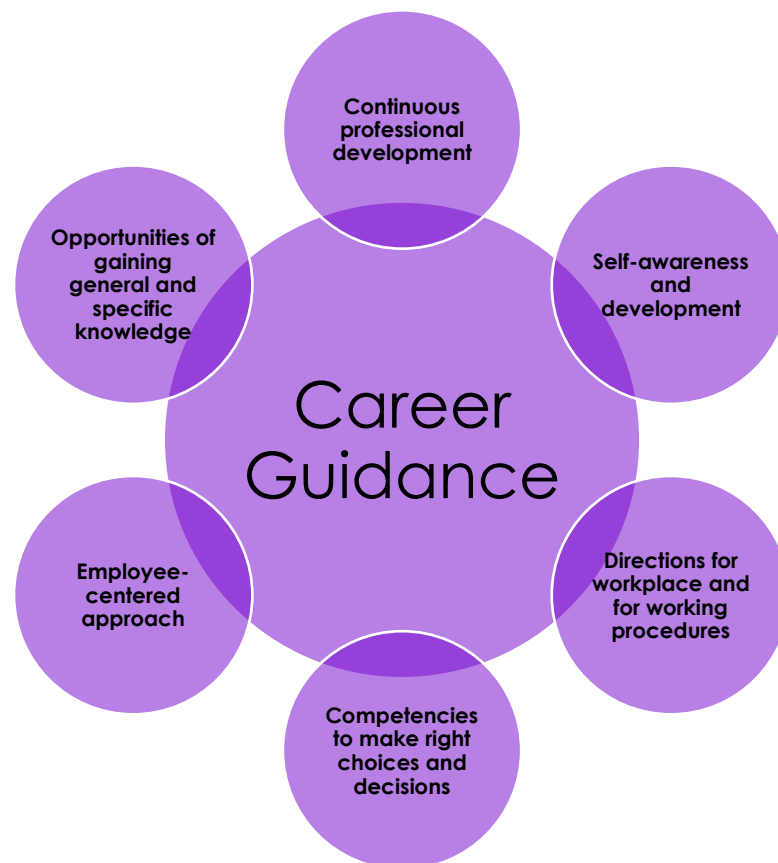
Career Guidance in SMEs: overview

According to "Career Guidance – A Handbook for Policy Makers" by OECD, very few career guidance services are available for employed adults. There is a very limited private market in many countries, and not many options for private career guidance are available. Thus, even if a worker who might not get career guidance from his/her working environment wants to attend any career guidance services, they do not have many alternatives from the private sector.

In the case of existing career guidance opportunities within a company, it usually aims at recruiting new personnel while laying off employees lacking necessary skills, without offering them material and chances for personal and career development. In fact, it is observed that only **a few enterprises provide career development services internally**; mainly larger organisations tend to provide employees with such services. Even in this case, career guidance services are primarily provided to managerial and professional staff, not to the general employees. They mainly focus on career development in the company itself, omitting career opportunities and materials that could be used in other professional environments, too.

However, **all companies, SMEs, large organisations, public institutions ought to realise that employed adults need career guidance for occupational and professional development** both to benefit the company and to be appropriately skilled in case they want to get occupied in other working environments or similar fields in the future, besides the company where they were initially trained. Furthermore, employees also need career guidance to learn how to acquire new skills and switch between positions within the same company. To support

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lifelong learning and active employment policies, more career guidance services need to be available for the employed.[4]

Figure 2. Career Guidance in SMEs

Another reason why career guidance is useful not only for graduates who are preparing to enter the labour market but also for employed adults who are already in it is that it helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, talents, skills, knowledge, qualifications, and abilities. Comprehensive career guidance aims at preparing people to plan and make decisions about work and learning, two interconnected procedures that follow them along their long professional journey, especially in a constantly changing working environment. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it.[5]

Regarding labour market needs, it is often expressed that career guidance is essential for contributing to improve labour market outcomes or labour market efficiency. Career guidance can help to reduce the effects of labour market destabilisation, even reduce unemployment. **There are several labour market objectives that countries indicated as to where career guidance can contribute:**

- *It helps to improve labour mobility, the match between supply and demand - it can be seen as a way of addressing skill shortages.*

- *It supports the notion of a lifelong career, as opposed to a lifelong job and the growing internationalisation of the labour market.*

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[4] http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34060761.pdf

[5] OECD (2004:19) Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap. Paris. Available here

- *It contributes to equity goals, for example, by supporting the disadvantaged or by addressing gender equality.[6]*

Some employers and companies offer **systematic career guidance** to their staff **internally**, although as mentioned earlier this appears more in larger companies and in most cases targeting managerial and professional staff. To broaden the use of career guidance and spread its benefits, in some countries, governments have encouraged such provision in two ways:

(a) by including career guidance as **allowable expenditure against training levies** or

(b) through **voluntary quality-mark schemes**.

Both ways allow SMEs to deal with the expenses and the organisational procedures required for delivering career guidance. However, career guidance services offered by employers in working environments might not be totally impartial since a potential limitation set is that there might be a conflict of interest between employer and employee.[7]

Career Guidance in SMEs: relevance

Nowadays, employed adults need career guidance more than ever. Receiving it within their working environment is a motive to make the best of it and use it appropriately for both companies and employees. Career guidance is a fundamental policy level that can **help workers explore the perplexed and constantly evolving labour market**, especially after the high rates of unemployment in many countries, the global financial crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Through "**on the job advice**", **information** and **training opportunities**, elements that are usually included in career guidance, employees can keep up with the changes in the labour market and the digital transformation.

However, services for adults receive relatively little policy attention and as mentioned above, there are neither many private initiatives available, nor guidelines suggesting ways on delivering them. The report for the 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults (SCGA), an online survey of adults' experience with career guidance, aims at showing the initiatives in the area of career guidance for adults in OECD countries and how these guidance services can be exploited in several terms.[8]

In the last decades, career guidance has gained a lot of ground regarding the capacity of companies to attract and retain new, experienced, and qualified workers. Nowadays, more than ever, human resources are seen as one of the most relevant assets of companies, essential to generate innovation and assure their competitiveness in the global and demanding market. In the past, the definition of strategies for capacity building and career guidance were mainly conducted by the companies and the employers alone, but lately, it has become obvious that employees need to be actively involved in the process, if the companies want to assure that the capacity-building strategies and progression are and will continue being effective. This means that the integration of career guidance strategies in the human resources policies of SMEs is dependent on both organizations and their employees: on one hand, it allows companies to ensure proper management of manpower requirements and capabilities, and on the other hand, employees will have the opportunity to quickly adjust their competencies and performance to their professional or other new opportunities. More specifically, through career guidance strategies, companies will be in a better position to:
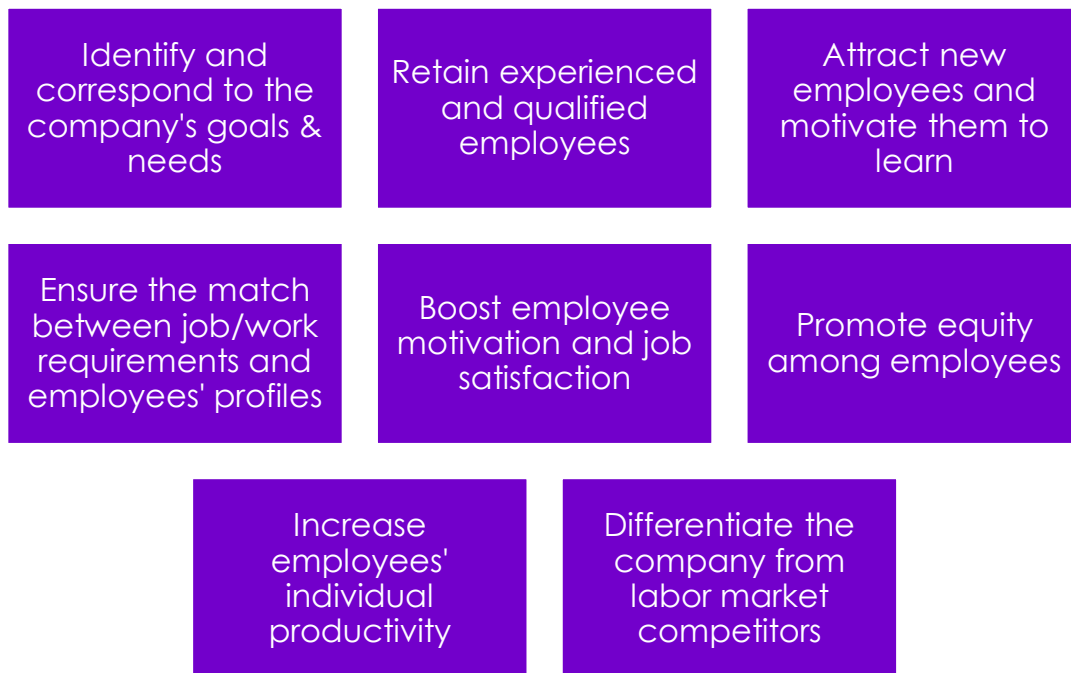
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[6] Idem
[7] Idem
[8] OECD (2021), Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available here.

Figure 3. Relevance of career guidance for companies and employees

Identify and correspond to the company's goals & needs	Retain experienced and qualified employees	Attract new employees and motivate them to learn
Ensure the match between job/work requirements and employees' profiles	Boost employee motivation and job satisfaction	Promote equity among employees
Increase employees' individual productivity	Differentiate the company from labor market competitors	

But the benefits of career guidance are not one-sided, namely only for the organization. The value of learning, especially work-based learning, has been highlighted by professionals in many fields. **Those who learn through career guidance while working have a good chance of enhancing their skills, developing new ones, gaining knowledge, and keeping a positive attitude in terms of learning new things, therefore they are more likely to progress in their careers.** Furthermore, career guidance for mid-career workers plays an important role in successful transitions and transformations, involving upskilling, reskilling, and/or career change. Therefore, most employees were more likely to be active in the labour market for a longer period. Nowadays, **employees are expected to be more self-directed than ever**, due to the complexity appearing to the contemporary labour market, which may result in the development of more confident and independent employees, aware of their skills and able to identify outcomes and goals after receiving the necessary support through career guidance.[9] Some employees are forced by circumstances such as redundancy, illness, or injury to review their career directions. Others might be unhappy in their current jobs due to the intrinsic nature of the work itself. People, and jobs change over time, and what started as a compatible partnership can develop into an ill-suited match of employee and job. Certain employees may never have felt that their job suited them, but circumstances at the time dictated that they take the job. Such employees will, at some stage, benefit from career counselling. More generally, don't we all feel that we would benefit from reviewing our career pathway at some time or other?

Career-related continuous learning can be another relevant field, since individual and organisational learning are seen as intertwined. In this way, employees manage to learn as members of organisations, pursue their own career goals, and benefit from engaging in learning activities. This kind of learning is mostly based on activities

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[9] Arulmani, G, Bakshi A. J., Leong F.T.L., Watts A.G. (2014), *"Handbook of Career Development International Perspectives"*

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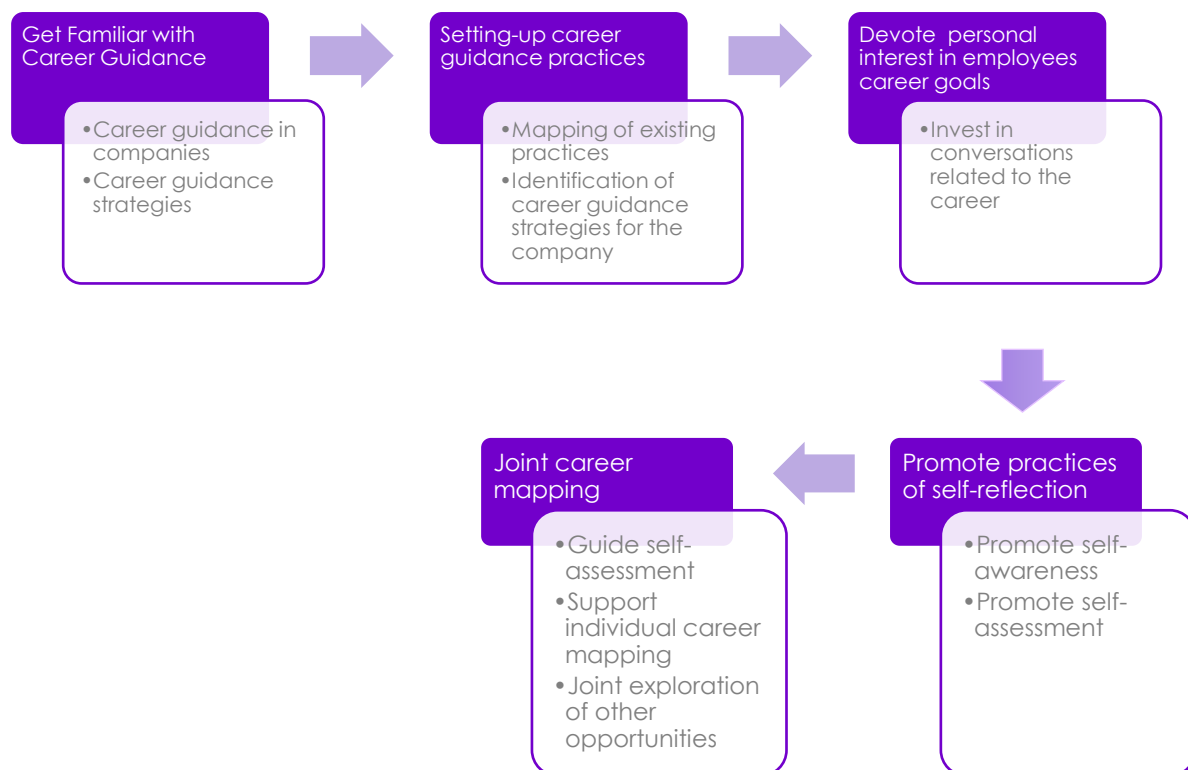
rather than on courses, which must be very well organised, proactive, specialised, and target key points necessary for the learners to become effective in the labour market where mobility is facilitated. [10]

Career Guidance in SMEs: tips on how to start

Training within a business tends to become a prerequisite for the employment of new workers and/or the growth of the existing ones. The necessity of career guidance nowadays has become crucial for skills development and for the progress of the business itself. However, not all companies can offer career guidance opportunities without external help or experts. In this case a training programme must be identified and implemented for the acquisition of knowledge and skills development on behalf of employees.

Many companies already recognise the relevance of providing career guidance to their workers to assure their commitment, alignment, and motivation within the company. In many cases, the challenge is how to integrate strategies for workers' career management in the companies. Through the Growing Framework, you might be able to start your "Career Guidance" journey through defining some steps. To this edge, the following graph, will help you to set some initial goals to get started:

Figure 4. How to start with career guidance

Get Familiar with Career Guidance	Setting-up career guidance practices	Devote personal interest in employees career goals
• Career guidance in companies • Career guidance strategies	• Mapping of existing practices • Identification of career guidance strategies for the company	• Invest in conversations related to the career

Joint career mapping	Promote practices of self-reflection
• Guide self-assessment • Support individual career mapping • Joint exploration of other opportunities	• Promote self-awareness • Promote self-assessment

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[10] Arulmani, G, Bakshi A. J., Leong F.T.L., Watts A.G. (2014), *"Handbook of Career Development International Perspectives"*

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1. **Get Familiar with career guidance**

Career guidance in companies – Every company, enterprise, and generally business or organization ought to schedule activities promoted by the entity to ensure the capacity building, career development and progression of their employees. Both sides (employer – employee) are benefitted when career guidance activities and programmes are conducted within a company. Determining the company's and the employees' strengths, interests, and values through career guidance will aid at matching skills and competences with appropriate career and education options. Also, employees will have the opportunity to have an insight to the world of work and their professional field specifically with the provision of targeted career guidance, thus they will be qualified and prepared for the constantly evolving labor market where new challenges and opportunities always arise. Last but not least, both the personal brand of an employee and the company brand will be enhanced by the career guidance provision options.

Examples of strategies:

- o **Career conversations with employees** - talk with employees about their professional goals and career vision. It boosts employee engagement and retention, fosters self-awareness at the workplace, develops positive relationships within a team.

- o **Career mapping** – it includes self-assessment, by exploring employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as past experiences, accomplishments, and interests. An individualized career map fosters the identification of internal challenges and opportunities that meet the employee's interests and the exploration of other opportunities.

- o **Job redesign/enlargement** – broaden the scope of the job by giving new tasks to employees (according to their skills), increase the responsibility of employees in a certain area/ field (adequate to his/her profile). Keep challenging employees.

- o **Job rotation** – rotate employees between two or more job positions/tasks at regular intervals. This approach will assess (new) employees' skills and abilities in order to place them in the right job position; it will also alleviate the monotony of a repetitive activity and provide them with the opportunity to gain more experience.

- o **Dual career ladders** – it is a professional development strategy that allows employees to advance without having to take on supervisory or management responsibilities and it usually addresses to personnel with extensive technical knowledge and/or education but are not interested in a management or supervisory career path.

- o **Horizontal career paths** - a horizontal shift may appear as a transfer rather than a promotion since a horizontal career is one in which employees move between jobs with identical responsibilities in different fields of expertise, without compensation changing significantly.

- o **Mentoring** - it is a formal or informal and collaborative relationship between a senior and junior employee aiming at the mentee's growth, learning, and career advancement. Usually, the mentor and mentee are both employees in the same company, and the focus is on corporate goals, company culture, career aspirations, professional development guidance, and work-life balance.

- o **Cross-training** - the process of preparing employees to work in several jobs or to perform duties that are outside of their typical responsibilities.

- In-house training programs - internal training, often known as in-house training, can be a sort of career guidance that utilizes a company's own expertise and resources. It is really specialized and aimed towards employees who are relatively new in a company.

- External training programs - experts from outside the organization perform external training. They could be someone with whom your firm already has a relationship – such as a supplier – to provide more details on a product or feature, or an industry expert who can share the newest trends to keep teams ahead of the competition. External events or online training can also be used for this form of training.

- Online Courses – such a course is a set of lessons delivered via a web browser or mobile device that may be viewed at any time and from any location. It is developed as an online learning environment for asynchronous learning.

- Conference/ Seminar attendance - they are professionally organized events in which a sequence of information is delivered and exchanged in single, concurrent, or distinct sessions to the interested parts that participate. Employees should register and attend such events for the purposes of gaining new knowledge and getting acquainted with the latest trends in their field.

- Ensure performance evaluation - a structured and productive system for measuring an employee's work and results based on their job responsibilities. It should be used to determine how much value is added by each employee to a company in terms of increased revenue, compared to overall employee return on investment.

- Support work-life balance - a healthy work environment entails a good work-life balance. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance, a state of equilibrium in which a person prioritizes both his or her professional and personal obligations, reduces stress and prevents workplace burnout.

2. **Setting-up career guidance practices**
- Mapping of existing career guidance practices.
- Identify career guidance strategies suitable to be implemented in the company.
- Interaction with employees, though interviews and/or questionnaires, to identify and record their needs and their strengths and competencies, as well.
- Assess the goals and objectives by both sides (employer – employee), the available tools for career guidance implementation, and the efforts that need to be conducted.
- Generate targeted and specialized activities for stakeholders based on the topics of interest that will emerge from discussions with employees.
- Share the results and estimate the consequences of every decision taken for the career guidance implementation.
- Reevaluate, rethink and redesign if necessary.

3. **Take a personal interest in employee career goals**
The above-mentioned communication with employees and initial implementation attempts should always be defined by employees' interests and goals, for this reason some personal meetings with employees might prove to be very helpful:
- 1st meeting: Storytelling – get to know the employee.
- 2nd meeting: Passions, goals, and dreams – ask for the personal, social and professional goals of the employees and try to identify with them.

o 3rd meeting: Start developing a career development plan of the employee (analysis of the current job, skills gap, future aspirations, training, progression, preferable tasks/position).

4. Promote practices of self-reflection

Self-assessment is a significant tool for improving learning. It encourages learners, namely employees in career guidance, to consider how their own work relates to the learning objectives for concepts and abilities. It encourages metacognition about what is being learnt as well as successful learning techniques. It helps workers to consider how a certain task or course relates to their overall acquisition of knowledge.[11] Employees must be involved in the development, application, and reporting of the scheduled self-assessment processes. The truth is that allowing employees to assess themselves leads to pride in their learning, a sense of ownership over their efforts, and a rise in higher-order thinking capabilities.

❖ **Promote self-awareness**

To launch the self-awareness journey, you must trigger employees with providing reflective questions, such as:

– Am I asking questions while I am learning at work?
– Am I investigating answers to my questions?
– Do I understand the importance of what I am learning?
– Can I communicate different aspects at the professional field?
– Are my communication skills improving?
– What am I trying to achieve?
– What am I doing that is beneficial?
– What am I doing that slows me down?
– What can I do to change?

A **notebook** could be helpful to record the answers to the above questions and keep track of thoughts that pop up as automatic reactions during the career guidance process. Employees will have the chance to track what was occurring during career guidance by noting their emotions to the stimuli. In the same notebook, the employee can make a list of their most important plans and priorities. Writing down personal and professional goals and keeping track of progress is one of the most effective strategies to enhance self-awareness.

Provide **psychometric tests**, evaluation questionnaires and other similar tools with which **self-awareness** can be strengthened. In such tests, there are no correct or incorrect replies. Instead, they are meant to encourage people to contemplate a set of features or attributes that best characterize them in comparison to others. In this way, employees will have tangible methods to explore themselves and discover new characteristics of them that will support them through career guidance.

Provide **feedback** on a regular basis and encourage employees to discuss with their trusted people inside and outside the working environment. Formal feedback processes and mechanisms at workplace in combination with informal discussions for individual feedback to every employee can only add up to employees' better response to career guidance and professional progress. Also, trusted people in one's environment, like family and friends, can work as reflections of behaviors and they can offer direct and strict feedback on multiple levels which can in turn be used at work.

❖ **Promote self-assessment**

Reflection on past events and the way someone handled them enhances the process of learning and especially the exploration of personal traits and behaviors to evaluate them and adopt the best possible options. This is

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[11] 2017 ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition. (2017). Self-Assessment to Improve Learning and Evaluation. Available here.

especially helpful for self-assessment at work if it takes place frequently in real-time because it leads to better decisions. Encourage employees to take time before taking any decisions and weigh all their available options and possibilities. Through this simple technique, employees will proceed to a kind of self-assessment since they are required to go through all their alternatives and ways of action. Moreover, try to convince your employees to assess themselves as they evaluate their peers. Observing yourself in the same way you observe people and events around you - with perspective and distance – helps you to be impartial and lenient enough with your self-assessment.
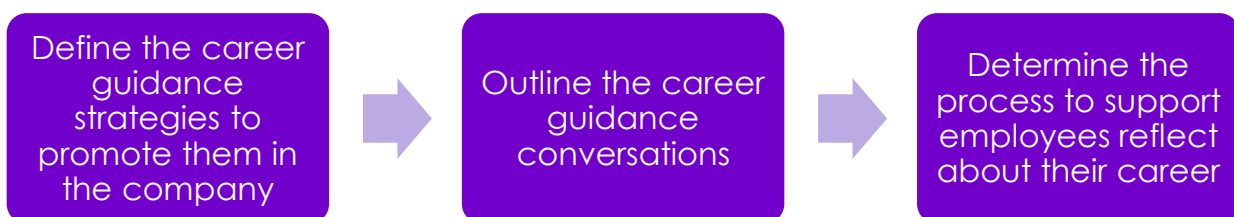
More tips to enhance your self-assessment:

✓ Pay attention to what bothers and what intrigues you.

✓ Meditate on your mind.

✓ Identify your emotional strengths and weaknesses.

✓ Draw a timeline of your life.

✓ Ask for feedback.

✓ Compile new experiences.

✓ Learn a new skill.

✓ Identify cognitive distortions.

✓ Spend time to clarify your values and your limits.

5. **Joint career mapping includes:**

- Guidance during self-assessment - explore employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies, as well as past experiences, accomplishments, and interests,

- Support individual career mapping - identification of internal challenges and opportunities that meet the employee's interests,

- Joint exploration of other opportunities - explore other job opportunities or positions within the organization itself or other working environments.

Having the following scheme as a starting point, you can start designing the career guidance strategy of your company by:

Define the career guidance strategies to promote them in the company	→	Outline the career guidance conversations	→	Determine the process to support employees reflect about their career

Furthermore, throughout the process of a career guidance programme development, there are certain factors to be taken into consideration. The **place** where the programme takes place, the **duration**, the **programme provider**, the **type** of guidance and the **flexibility** every type offers. Before any career guidance programme starts, career guidance **agreements** between the training provider and the training receiver must be signed to ensure the commitments of each party and the content of the programme. Moreover, career guidance **delivery methods** must be decided.

Place

Based on the business location, many types of career guidance programmes can take place. Especially, due to the Covid-19 situation and the restrictions that have emerged, many organisations have turned to other options of career guidance to ensure that employees will continue learning even under such circumstances. For example, distant learning has gained a lot of ground with more and more seminars, workshops, and trainings to be developed so that they will be friendly for online conduct.

Duration

The duration of career guidance activities is mainly based on the needs of the company. If there is immediate necessity to cover any training needs in an organisation, the response must be direct, and for this reason, external specialists are usually preferred, especially if there is no trained staff for such tasks and activities within the organisation. External trainers' experience and expertise are required to correspond to the organisation's needs quickly by setting up the specific career guidance programme. In this case, the training is usually short-term as it targets specific needs and/or gaps that need to be addressed immediately.

Career guidance provider

Trainers, educators, facilitators, mentors, and coaches are some specialists that offer career guidance programmes to enterprises. These specialists can be part of a company's personnel or act as external partners, **with payment or other agreements.** Nowadays, many professionals from several fields can be employed as trainers and guides, mainly in their profession, after being qualified through education or training, too. Many companies try to integrate employees with such education and/or certification in their operations because they **can save much money from paying external career guidance services**. Furthermore, an internal trainer might prove to be more useful in an organisation because he/she will be more aware of its needs and goals.

Not all SMEs, due to their size and financial limitations, can afford to have such specialists employed in their organisation, thus they are most likely to hire external training providers. Therefore, the selection of a suitable career guidance provider is of paramount importance.

Financing career guidance programmes

A crucial matter in many organisations that want to include career guidance for their employees is the financial resources that are needed for this. Another very important task on behalf of the training provider or the business owner is the use of possible funding sources to ensure the accomplishment of career guidance. Public organisations, public subsidies, European funding, reimbursements, vouchers, special tax collection institutions for training and career guidance programmes in SMEs, tax reduction, apprenticeship programs, specialised programs that cover the wages and/or additional costs of trainees or at least a part of them are some bodies and initiatives that are aimed at financing or co-financing in several forms and fields. Even public employment and type of training can be offered as solutions in the absence of financial resources. The financing options should be based on a total-needs assessment because it might be the case that some cheaper solutions can be more appropriate and/or effective rather than expensive packages of career guidance.

Types of career guidance

Some methods that are widely used in working environments are the following:

Table 1.Types of career guidance methods and tools

Career guidance methods			
Distance learning	Blended learning	Traditional learning	Non formal learning
On-the-job learning	Informal learning	Job-rotation	Self-learning at the workplace
Common apprenticeship	On-the-job learning	Job shadowing	Instructor-led training
Coaching or mentoring	eLearning	Hands-on training	Action learning
Career guidance tools			
Lectures	Group discussion and activities	Role-playing	Management-specific activities
Case studies	Communities of practice		

Selecting the Right Programme

So far, we have highlighted some necessary factors for the design and the implementation of an effective career guidance programme: business needs, training provider, goals of the business and its departments. How do we reach the outcome of the career guidance? The following questions are helpful both for internal career guidance provision and for the communication of the business' needs in case of external career guidance planning:

- What is/are the goal(s) of the career guidance programme?
- Which is the target group?
- What are the learning needs and business background?
- What is your career guidance options?
- Do you have time, financial, quality restrictions and requirements?[12]

It is important that the selected training and capacity building program is aligned with the answers you give to these questions.

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[12] https://www.lessonly.com/training-methods/

Take into consideration...

➢ **Qualitative and quantitative information** about the offered career guidance and learning opportunities which should be accessible to learners. If career guidance receivers are aware of this, it will be easier to work towards the desirable outcomes and goals to be accomplished, along with solutions for organisational problems and barriers that might occur. This will also reinforce teamwork, which is vital for the effectiveness of career guidance.

➢ Career guidance programmes and activities should reflect the **actual needs and practical preconditions** at the enterprise level, where they should be embedded and rooted from the very beginning.

➢ **Networking** is an important contributor to career guidance. Direct links, cluster activities, and channels to the business, by consulting, coaching and/or local networking can add up to career guidance policies and outcomes and engage businesses more effectively in ongoing training and competence development.

➢ **Key actors representing SMEs** and other kinds of businesses, such as the chamber of crafts and/or commerce, employers', and trade union federations, should be brought together to develop partnerships that will enhance and promote career guidance options and abilities.

➢ **Simplicity, flexibility, and adaptability** are the characteristics that should prevail when organising a career guidance activity or programme because too complicated solutions are challenging to implement.

➢ **Monitoring and evaluation** of the quality and procedures are fundamental to check career guidance effectiveness and whether the goals set are accomplished.

➢ Actions that **raise awareness** and upgrade the perception of career guidance are more efficient and sustainable if they take place and are supported **at local, regional, and national levels.**

➢ **Peer reviews, benchmarking tools, permanent watch, accreditation of prior experiential learning, collective actions** can also be exploited for the best possible career guidance outcome.

Several activities and initiatives can be proposed to engage workers in the different phases of definition and development of career management in the company and some are introduced below.

"What is guidance for you?" – It is a simple and direct activity that will engage all the interested parties and offer information regarding career guidance and it is an open discussion that can start with the simple question mentioned above. The participants can answer based on their professional experience and any working environments they have been in or have heard of. If participants find it challenging to provide answers and ideas immediately, you can give them feedback examples with categories of fields where guidance activities can be met, such as the following:

Table 2. Sample topics for guidance activities

Information	Assessment	Advice
Counselling	Placement	Referral
Advocacy	Feedback	Follow-up

To **receive** even more **feedback**, you can also offer some examples for each category, such as:

➢ Assessment of an individual's educational needs.

➢ Placement (e.g., experience in companies or courses).

➢ Feedback to learning providers (for example, on the kinds of learning opportunity needed but not currently available).

➢ Follow-up to discover the effects of guidance.

The same open discussion can be carried out by targeting at **brainstorming for career guidance topics** which will indicate the company's and employees' needs, such as:

➢ Vocational training.

➢ General adult education.

➢ Leisure activities & links with work.

➢ Personal & workplace development.

➢ Accreditation of prior learning.

➢ Job-rotation.

➢ Job-application & self-presentation.

Career Guidance in SMEs: the relevance of settling occupational skill profiles

For the company to know what they need to provide exactly to its employees and for employees who are about to receive career guidance, setting goals is essential and the goals should be based on both sides' needs, taking into consideration the occupational profiles that will be involved in the career guidance services. These occupational profiles and job descriptions should be available to employees, since they include roles that the employees will have in the company and generally in their career. The organisation offering career guidance services should also consider the occupational profiles they employ in their environment. Thus, the goals set should be very specialised to deliver the best possible outcomes.

An **Occupational Skill Profile (OSP)** includes all the important characteristics required for a given profession. Some of these are the level of education and training required, the field of education and training, and other primary and supplementary requirements, such as knowledge, skills, competencies, interests, and values that need to be assured for the profile to be complete. OSPs can be developed and used for analysing, projecting, and predicting skill needs, defining, and measuring education/skills connections among different countries, sectors, or occupations, and for comparing and evaluating differences among European countries. **To be effective**, OSPs need to abide by specific requirements, which are based on the unique characteristics of each occasion:

> a) they are developed in such a way that occupational classification allows identification of distinct and of adequate occupation-specific features, but still they can be transferred and used in other classification levels and systems, if required;
>
> b) their characteristics are not only of quantity, but they are often measured based on statistics and data, and as a result, allowing identification of changes is possible;
>
> c) at some degree, they are consistent with other relevant concepts, classifications and instruments used in Europe, such as the European qualifications framework.[13]

Another valuable tool for decoding professions is **ESCO** **(European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations)** which compiles the "translation" of digital labour market policies by the Commission at a European level. "*It is meant to be a reference language for employment and education, to create a shared understanding about skills, learning and occupations across borders and languages. It helps to connect people with jobs, education with employment and to analyse information on skills demand*".[14] By providing descriptions of 2.942 occupations and 13.485 skills linked to these occupations, translated into 27 languages, ESCO can be used as a tool that presents, identifies and categorises professional occupations and skills relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. Electronic systems that allow different online platforms to use ESCO recognise the before-mentioned concepts and relationships among them for services that, for example, can bring closer job seekers to jobs based on their skills, or suggest training to people who want to reskill or upskill etc. The main aim of ESCO is to support job mobility across Europe and offer a "common language" on occupations and skills that can be used by different stakeholders on employment and training topics. It is a European Commission project, run by Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion (DG EMPL). It is available in an online portal and can be consulted for free.[15]

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[13] CEDEFOP. (2013). Quantifying skill needs in Europe - Occupational skills profiles: methodology and application (Research Paper No 30). Available here.

[14] Know more about ESCO here.

[15] Idem

ADULT LEARNING AT THE WORKPLACE

Growing

ADULT LEARNING AT THE WORKPLACE

Types and principles of the adult learning at the workplace

Lifelong learning, as a concept introduced in the European Union Memorandum of Lifelong learning (2000)[16], is the **constant improvement of individuals, which allows them to adapt to modern labour market changes,** i.e., both when searching for a job and increasing qualification in the present job. In addition, lifelong learning motivates people to take part in social activity, thus, developing new competencies.

Adult learning can take place at, or prepare people for, the workplace. However, the skills and competencies employees acquire may not necessarily be those needed for work. According to the European Commission (Final report of the ET 2020 Working Group 2016 – 2018 on Adult Learning "Promoting adult learning in the workplace"), adult learning for the workplace is when adults obtain the skills and competencies needed to successfully obtain and keep jobs and progress in their professional careers.

The workplace, in this sense, can also function as the "outreach strategy" by which specific groups of adults are approached with learning programmes. Adult learning in the workplace can be:

> **Formal:** It occurs in an organised and structured environment and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time, or resources) and leads to a formal qualification (or part-qualification). This kind of learning might take place within a VET/apprenticeship-type program (including at higher levels) or in short-cycle higher education programs.

> **Non-formal:** It occurs in an organised and structured environment and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time, or resources) but does not lead to a formal qualification. This kind of learning might, for instance, be employer-based training or courses, self-study, or job-shadowing.

> **Informal:** It results from daily activities at the workplace which are not specially organised or structured, it does not lead to a formal qualification. This kind of learning might include peer learning, exchanges with colleagues, or learning by doing.

Adult Learning Theory provides fundamental principles to increase employee's training effectiveness. By understanding these principles of adult learning, offered by Malcolm Knowles, the father of Adult Learning in "Andragogy: Adult Learning Theory in Perspective" (1978), a workplace training programme can enhance the learning experience and maximise its effectiveness:

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16 16 European Communities. (2000). Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. Available here..

Figure 5. Adult Learning Theory principles

Self-direction

- Involvement in training planning and evaluation.
- Instructor-led way of learning → Self-directed way of learning.

Experience

- Experience provides the basis for learning activities.
- Accumulated experiences → Resources for learning.

Readiness

- Immediate application of acquired knowledge.
- Direct relevance and impact of learning on professional and personal life.

Orientation

- Need for immediate application of learning while progressing.
- Subject-centered orientation of learning → Problem-centered orientation of learning.
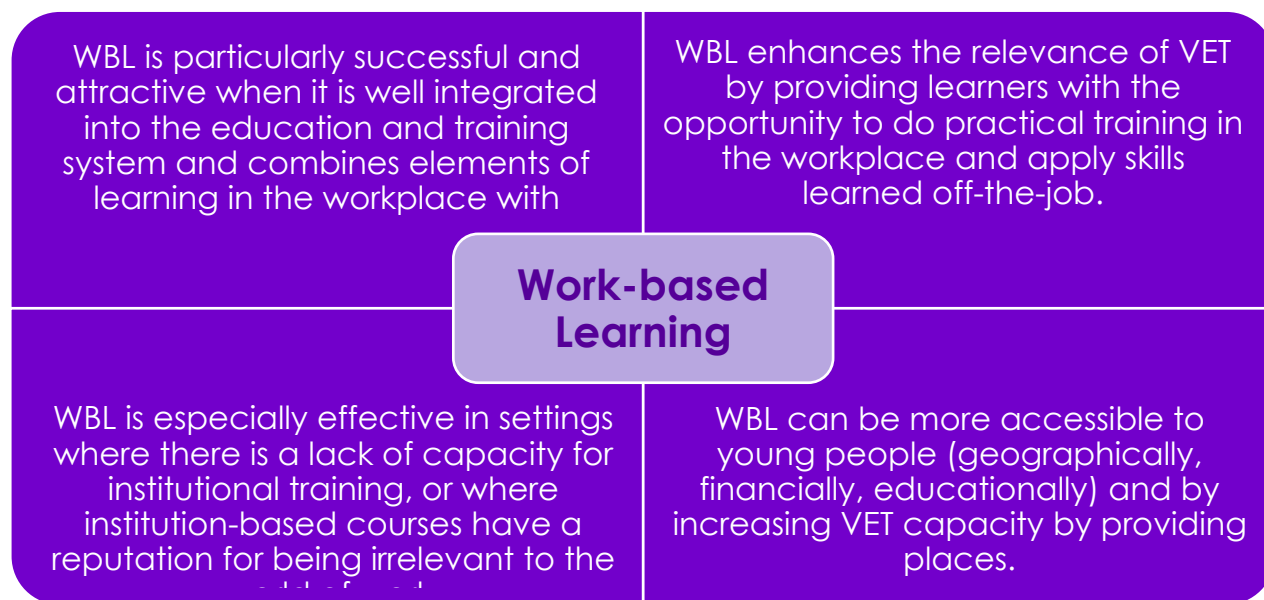
Motivation

- Extrinsic motivation → Intrinsic motivation.
- Extrinsic motivation: doing something to earn a reward.
- Intrinsic motivation: doing something for personal fulfilment.

E-learning and blended learning can suit in various working environments to meet their needs and contribute to development of both general and specific skills. *On-the-job training* can be offered with the use of several tools that have emerged due to distance learning demand. However, the **value of traditional training should not be neglected**, instead, there should be efforts to include it in any available way or format. Internal resources and procedures, virtual learning environments, trainers in and out of the business can be exploited to build and execute customised training programs. SMEs can be very effective and innovative learning environments for interaction between trainers and learners because they can serve as classrooms for practice where theoretical knowledge can also be offered.

Work-based learning is an alternative way of receiving education and training in the workplace where learners can get practical knowledge and skills.

Figure 6. WBL Practical Training

WBL is particularly successful and attractive when it is well integrated into the education and training system and combines elements of learning in the workplace with

WBL enhances the relevance of VET by providing learners with the opportunity to do practical training in the workplace and apply skills learned off-the-job.

Work-based Learning

WBL is especially effective in settings where there is a lack of capacity for institutional training, or where institution-based courses have a reputation for being irrelevant to the

WBL can be more accessible to young people (geographically, financially, educationally) and by increasing VET capacity by providing places.

Work-based learning includes both initial and ongoing learning, it can take place in a real-world environment, it provides learners with the required skills for the job(s) they intend to do, and with the desirable knowledge for many fields. The relationship between employer and learner should be direct and strong as in this case, the employer is usually regarded as the mentor/educator in the learning process.

Table 3. Advantages & disadvantages of Work-based Learning Models[17]

	Model of WBL		
	Model 1 Formal WBL	Model 2 Non-formal WBL	Model 3 Informal WBL
Advantages			
Social and physical protection for learners	√		
Highly regarded by the public and learners	√		
Lead to nationally recognised and sector-recognised certificates	√		
Closely aligned to labour market needs including technical and soft skills.	√	√	
Another option in current training provision		√	√
Reaches unserved areas and learners		√	
Responds to labour market needs	√	√	√
Cost-effective		√	√
Connected with employment more for young people.			√
Disadvantages			
Maybe inflexible and bureaucratic	√		
Lacks nationally recognised certification		√	√
Restricts mobility		√	√
Quality, reliability, and consistency of training are uncertain		√	√
Unregulated and potentially exploitative			√
Narrow skill sets from untrained masters			√

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[17] Development Asia. (2018). Work-Based Learning for Skills development. Available here.

Impact of adult learning in the workplace: individuals and companies

Generally, education and training that are offered to any kind of business should be delivered in a way that suits their working environment, operations, and preferred learning methods, always aiming at the 'business' growth, especially for SMEs who have been mostly affected by the pandemic. **SMEs and their employees tend to opt for activity-based learning, as opposed to knowledge-based learning**. It is crucial that managers, directors, business owners choose the training that is linked with the business' goals, it corresponds to the size of the SME, and serves the company's and the employees' needs.

Even though there are plenty of training opportunities offered and sponsored by European or national bodies, only a small percentage of managers and owners of SMEs are aware of them. The vast majority of SMEs in European countries do not use distance (asynchronous) learning for training. Distance-learning is designed to be flexible and user-friendly, maximising the availability of material. In the case of asynchronous learning, there is also online asynchronous support which gives the learner time to process and respond. Learning and receiving training using the computer while at home or work is another convenient feature of distance learning. On the other hand, the **lack of exposure and interaction with the tutor and peers might be considered as a disadvantage of online learning.**[18]

E-learning, distance learning, computer-based learning are only some of the terms used to describe or just spread knowledge transfer through the internet, usually remotely. Learners use web technologies and networks for education and training in a synchronous or asynchronous way, to reach instructional content, learning experiences, skills development, and information, anytime, anywhere, providing learners with a personalised, interactive, actual experience.

Studying and analysing adult learning in the workplace can generally enhance individuals' personal development and potentially provide them with benefits across several dimensions, such as **economic, well-being, social**, **innovation, motivation**.

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[18] Allan, J.; O'Dwyer, M.; Lawless, N. and Ryan, E. (2001). Face-to-face or distance training? Two different approaches to motivate SMEs to learn - an update. Industry and Higher Education, 15(2), pp. 135–141. (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239455297_Face-to-face_or_distance_training_Two_different_approaches_to_motivate_SMEs_to_learn)

Figure 7. Benefits of Adult Learning

Benefits of Adult Learning				
Economic Some benefits: - potential increase in wages. - improved employability. Enabling workers to better acquire knowledge by linking (old and new) learned concepts to practical applications contributes to them addressing the deficiencies in their skills, knowledge and experiences that can be of economic value to organisations.	**Well-being** - Better physical & mental health. -Improvement of people's perception of their own health. - Increase in life satisfaction. - Stimulation of self-confidence. - Opportunities for employees to serve as trainers and mentors, and being recognised as responsible, experienced employees. - Breaks the monotony of work. -Different attitude towards the employer. - Reduces the likelihood of people smoking and	**Social** - Improved disposition to voluntary and community activities. - Increased engagement with the community, political participation and civic activity. - Development of basic work habits and occupational identity.	**Innovation** - Address the problem of inadequate skills. -Increased skills and competencies. - Increased innovation performance. -Advanced economic competitiveness with other firms.	**Motivation** - Sense of loyalty and commitment to the company. - Higher rate of staff retention. - Serves as an indicator in the recruitment process. - Shows employees' availability, readiness and matching with the company.

Promoting learning at the workplace

7 tips/strategies for managers to implement learning at the workplace programmes in their own organisations:

1. Consider implementing a Learning Management System (LMS)

For learning at the workplace to be successful it is important to be able to understand your employees' individual needs as well as measure their progress. Using a learning management system allows organisations to do just that. LMS helps HR managers and other responsible personnel to identify the skills gaps, personalise learning paths and deliver the best training programmes to their employees as well as allocate sufficient resources for learning. The learning management systems are most effective when used for e-learning or blended learning.

2. Develop Learning Paths for Each Employee

Each employee is unique and has different learning needs. Developing customized learning paths for each employee has several benefits. Having clear development goals and plans allows employees to focus on their professional development and future career opportunities. HR managers and other responsible personnel can incorporate learning needs assessments in the annual review process and then use regular meetings to set objectives and evaluate progress.

3. Use data for better decision-making

When building the learning programme, it is crucial to use the data available. The data available within the company can help to identify the knowledge gaps, what areas of the business they are affecting and effective specific learning interventions and programmes. By using available data, you can set clear performance metrics, goals and customise your learning programme to make it most effective.

4. Think about the overall process not separate events

According to Forbes, one-day training seminars are rarely effective for several reasons - people forget what they learn or do not get to apply what they learned in practise, the management does not allocate time to revisit the techniques and think about how to use them strategically. Thus, instead of investing resources in one-day training events, look at other ways of learning that may be more suitable for your employees, such as mentorship and coaching methods for long-term sustainable results.

5. Involve your employees in decision making process

To develop and implement the effective learning programme that would meet the needs of employees, it is important to have their opinions incorporated into the process. It can be done by simply asking your employees what they want to learn through interviews or surveys. Employees often know better what skills they are lacking and what they need to improve their performance, thus, their feedback and suggestions can help businesses invest in the right areas for further development. Make sure that employees know that they can approach you about their desired areas of learning and their ideas about training and development at work. The culture of openness is the key to build such good communication. However, you must not forget that effective learning programmes should balance the employees needs with the organisation's needs and plans.

6. Recognise employees' achievements

In addition to transmitting feedback, it is very important to regularly recognize and value the achievements of employees. Communicating this recognition and valuing these achievements to employees on a regular basis, both in terms of performance and in terms of acquisition/development of skills, contributes to their motivation, the achievement of goals and the overall growth of the company.

7. Foster a culture of learning at the workplace

Cultivating a culture of continuous learning in the workplace has become an important part of every business looking for sustainable development of all their operations. Present the opportunity to undertake training at work and upskilling as a reward itself, rather than a job requirement. Emphasize on the inherent value of learning and growth. Also, instead of emphasising training programmes as compulsory for employees, present them as rewards for top performers. Free training programmes at work can offer new work opportunities for the staff, so it should not be difficult to offer learning and development opportunities as a reward rather than an obligatory activity.

Other learning practices:

➢ **Mentoring and Support**

Mentoring and Support initiatives could be very positive ways of learning in the workplace. It is actually a learning method that connects mentees and mentors on a meaningful mentoring journey. Mentees are usually junior and entry level colleagues, while mentors should be senior and well experienced employees. Mentees should feel comfortable to ask questions and be guided by their mentor. Both sides should be in constant communication, share duties and responsibilities, discuss, and elaborate on new ideas.

➢ **Internal workshops and peer-learning**

Employers should train their team either by organizing short workshops by themselves or by assigning their employees to train each other. Since each person is different from each other, colleagues have different strengths and they can have a specialized knowledge in a different field area (depending on educational background, working experience, transversal skills, etc.). Thus, organizing an internal workshop at least once or twice per month could be very useful for the SME and the human resources. It can also increase employee expectations and job satisfaction. When organising an internal workshop, either by yourselves or by assigning it to another employee, do not forget to:

- Provide models, templates, instructions
- Receive and develop Feedback
- Ensure direct communication and internal meetings.
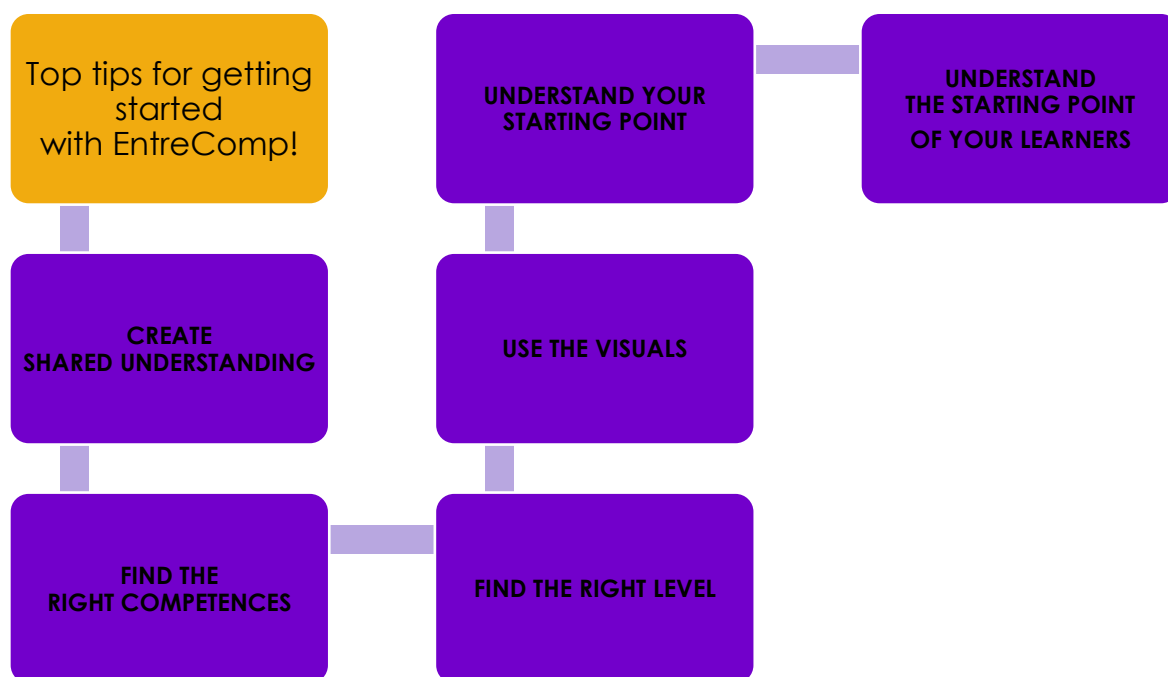
EMPLOYEES' ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Growing

EMPLOYEES' ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

Entrepreneurial concept and skills in GrowINg project

Entrepreneurship, as a competence, is defined as the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas to create value for others. The value created can be social, cultural, or financial. Entrepreneurship is a competence for life. Being creative or thinking about how to do things in new ways is equally relevant to progressing your career or coming up with new business ideas. Taking the initiative, mobilising others, and getting them on board with your idea are useful skills when fundraising for your local sports team or establishing a new social enterprise. Understanding how to put a plan into action and use finances wisely are relevant for both your own life and business planning in a small or medium-sized company (SME).

EntreComp is identified as the competencies' framework that makes someone entrepreneurial. These competencies can then be used to support entrepreneurial learning in different settings – this may include civil society, companies, education, youth work, communities, start-ups, and individuals. The EntreComp wheel offers an overview of the different yet interconnected competencies. These competencies are designed to support the entrepreneurial skills and attitudes that the work involves. Furthermore, they can be used as a guide when designing a new activity and/or a model for you to use or adapt to learning and assessment.

Figure 8. Tips to approach EntreComp

Assessment and promotion of entrepreneurial skills in companies

Examples of assessment tools or projects

Considering the benefits mentioned above and the varied training needs identified in every SME, businesses can decide the kind of skills they must develop among staff and focus on the type of training they should choose.

Usually, the skills requiring development and training are divided into interpersonal and technical skills. In these terms, the stakeholders should look for **training needs such as teamwork, respect to others, coaching skills, facilitation of meetings, leadership, effective communication, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, stress management, anger management, value-added activities, regulatory training, management, computers and technologies, time management, job orientation, health and safety at work, continuous improvement, performance, and quality management.**

In the D2.1-GrowINg Research Matrix, the results from the Final report were analysed and compared with the EntreComp, and the elements of the framework needed for the design of the GrowINg approach have been identified. The matrix categorised the inputs of the research as **NEEDS**, **SKILLS** and **EDUCATION & TRAINING PROVISION**. In this section, our aim is to present and promote the entrepreneurial SKILLS needed for every SME and by every employee:

Figure 9. Entrepreneurial skills for SMEs and employees

In order employees to be able to evaluate their skills and competencies, several tools have been developed to serve this aim. Below, you may explore some examples:

1. **E-Scan, entrepreneurial mindset development:**
   The main aim of E-Scan is to reveal the strongest entrepreneurial skills of people taking the test and help develop their profile online with the related Entrepreneur Platform. Many business coaches, financial

advisors, business developers, and career counsellors nowadays use E-Scan as a starting point for further mindset development. It's a tool, that will help you grow personally and professionally.

2.   **ENTRECOMP4ALL**:

This tool provides a Skills Framework Analysis to help any entrepreneur/employee/employer identify the most important skills they need based on the EntreComp framework. This tool intends to promote entrepreneurship as a key competence that can boost competitiveness and growth, through an innovative pedagogy and assessment and recommendation approach, based on Open Educational Resources. The tool was developed as part of a project that aims to:

- Build entrepreneurial skills in a structured and measurable way that is based on EntreComp.
- Have an online tool that will be adjusted using the latest findings / results of the ecosystem created around EntreComp.
- Create an ecosystem of stakeholders that help users of the tool to create their own path in building their competences.

3.   **ECO-SystemApp**:

The general objective of ECO-SystemApp is fostering an entrepreneurial environment that will boost the ecosystems knowledge based on entrepreneurial learning and experience. This project is a set of open-source training modules for teachers in formal and informal education to learn how to use entrepreneurship education in their classroom and beyond. These modules can be used in different ways and contexts and can be complemented with other features such as:

- A peer-to-peer learning guide.
- An open online course.
- An open online course handbook.
- A service structure kit for a virtual exchange programme between entrepreneurship educators and entrepreneurs.
- A repository of educational resources.

4.   **ECI project - EnterComp Implementation**:

ECI is a project concerning the implementation of EntreComp in VET systems. Its objective is operationalizing the EntreComp Framework by developing implementation tools and training content for the European VET systems to adopt EntreComp in operational environments and ignite entrepreneurship. Therefore, ECI is going to develop a model to implement the entrepreneurship competence framework in VET environments, both formally and non-formally. In this activity, partners will cross-reference the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework with ESCO (the classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupation) and EQF (European Qualifications Framework).

5. **Intrapreneur Nation**

   An intrapreneurial community that aims at making all companies as entrepreneurial as start-ups. The site makes available free tools to promote/support intrapreneurial work. Alongside, with their tools, they have proceeded to the development of a Framework of intrapreneurial skills.

6. **CoPIE: Community of Practice on Inclusive Entrepreneurship:**

   The Community of Practice on Inclusive Entrepreneurship (COPIE) is a learning network of ESF Managing Authorities and Implementing Bodies at national and regional level in Europe. The COPIE partners share a common concern to widen entrepreneurship and make support systems work better across diverse populations. With the right conditions and policies, the members of COPIE believe entrepreneurship have the potential to unleash the creativity and energy of millions of people in Europe.

7. **Brighter Future, from José Neves Foundation**

   It is an instrument for students, workers, educational institutions, and other institutions to map the correspondence between courses/trainings, competencies, and jobs, considering the Portuguese labour market.

8. **ROI Assessment tool**

   Return on investment (ROI) is a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of an investment or compare the efficiency of several different investments. ROI tries to directly measure the amount of return on a particular investment, relative to the investment's cost. To calculate ROI, the benefit (or return) of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment. The result is expressed as a percentage or a ratio.[19] The fact that ROI is mostly presented as a percentage aids at easily comparing it with returns from other investments, allowing someone to measure a variety of types of investments against one another. In other words, **Return on Investment (ROI) is a key performance indicator (KPI) often used by businesses to determine profitability of an expenditure.**

   The calculation itself is not overly difficult, and it is simple to use for a wide variety of applications. If the return on investment (ROI) is positive, the investment is generally worthwhile. Investors should also avoid negative ROIs, which indicate a net loss. What constitutes a "healthy" ROI will be determined by factors such as the investor's risk tolerance and the time it takes for the investment to pay off. If everything else is equal, risk-averse investors would likely tolerate lower returns in exchange for taking less risk. Similarly, investments that take longer to pay off would typically need a higher return on investment to be appealing to investors. When calculating ROI, it is important to take into consideration other factors that may be less obvious such as time, hidden costs and fees, and even emotional factors.

   On-the-job learning and training might not seem very relevant to the calculation of ROI but the time and effort spent on this procedure have an impact on investment returns. They are considered to be the "hidden costs" of an investment and not only the direct cost and amount of money spent should be calculated when delivering a ROI. Is a new employee and his/her training increasing or decreasing a business's profitability? Tracking the return on investment of new employees will help businesses better understand who to hire (or fire) and how to train them.

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[19] https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/returnoninvestment.asp

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Every training has a learning component. Acquiring new knowledge and skills is necessary to change behaviour in order a participant to apply what they have learned. Learning measurement takes place during the training scheme through a variety of techniques and documentation. Organizations invest a lot in training and performance improvement initiatives, yet there is still limited evidence as to what is gained through those initiatives. **Measuring application and implementation provides evidence that the learning is transferring to the workplace.** Success in application and implementation is measured after participants have applied the knowledge and skills on a routine basis. Improvement in productivity, quality, cost, and time is critical in any organization. Other measures of success such as *customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and innovation* are also important in achieving organizational goals.

The ultimate measure of the financial success of a program, process, or initiative is ROI. ROI compares the monetary benefits to the costs of the program. To calculate ROI, six steps of cost-benefit analysis are taken:

➢ **Step 1:** Identify the improvements in impact measures.
➢ **Step 2:** Isolate the amount of improvement to the program.
➢ **Step 3:** Convert the improvements to monetary value.
➢ **Step 4:** Tabulate the fully loaded costs of the program.
➢ **Step 5:** Identify the intangible benefits linked to the program.
➢ **Step 6:** Compare the monetary benefits to the cost in an ROI calculation.

The GrowINg perspective

Once having the methodology for the promotion of adult learning at the workplace (WP2), partners will work on the design of WP3 – Structure and development of the "Entrepreneurial Tools for SMEs", which will be the next deliverable of the project containing:

➢ D3.1. Online entrepreneurial skills assessment tool.
➢ D3.2. Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled employees.

In this Working Package, partners will structure two supports, allowing SMEs to assess and promote employees' entrepreneurial skills at the workplace, elaborated in WP2, having as a starting point the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework. The main goals of this deliverable are:

● Providing tools to support SMEs in the assessment, development, and consolidation of employees' entrepreneurial skills.
● Structuring and publishing guidelines and activities, to be implemented in the company, fostering the continuous update of employees' entrepreneurial skills, integrated in a strategy of career guidance.

To structure and develop "Entrepreneurial Tools for SMEs" in terms of WP3, the structure and the content of the tool and handbook will be defined in advance. The implementation strategy will include roles and responsibilities of every partner to define their contribution. After the online entrepreneurial skills assessment tool (D3.1.) is developed, activities and initiatives for the D3.2-Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled workers ought to be identified and prepared. The contributions by all partners for the Handbook will support the implementation of the ITT-Internal Testing of the Tools, in which D3.2-Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled workers will be discussed between partners. From this testing, the guidance and support to professionals of SMEs will be developed regarding the implementation of the tools in their companies.
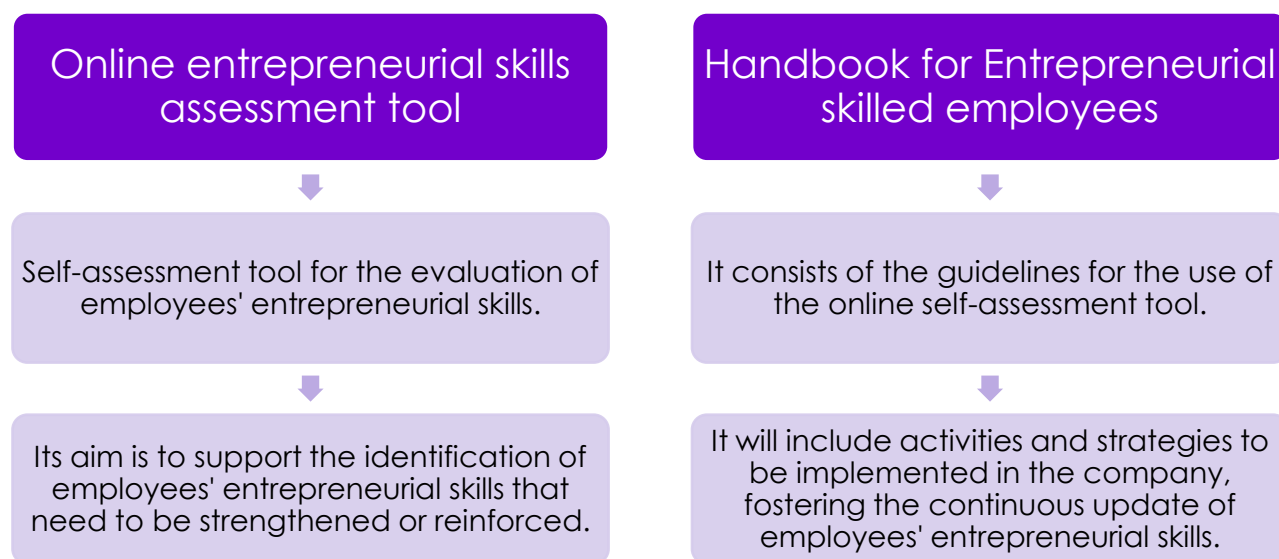
The main target-groups of this deliverable are:

● Managers and/or Human Resources Managers of SMEs.
● In-company trainers, consultants, and other professionals.
● Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations.
● VET/Adult Education providers and professionals.
● Policy makers in the field of education, training, and entrepreneurship.

As part of the GrowINg approach, the following will be the two main entrepreneurial tools that will be designed to support SMEs in the assessment, development, and consolidation of employees' entrepreneurial skills:

Figure 10. Identification of the entrepreneurial tools to be designed within GrowINg project and their main goals

Online entrepreneurial skills assessment tool	Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled employees
Self-assessment tool for the evaluation of employees' entrepreneurial skills.	It consists of the guidelines for the use of the online self-assessment tool.
Its aim is to support the identification of employees' entrepreneurial skills that need to be strengthened or reinforced.	It will include activities and strategies to be implemented in the company, fostering the continuous update of employees' entrepreneurial skills.

> **D3.1. Online entrepreneurial skills assessment tool**

Employees of SMEs will use this tool to evaluate their entrepreneurial skills and recognise which ones need to be strengthened or reinforced. Partners and target audiences will evaluate the method, and their input will be crucial in determining its usefulness and adequacy. During and after the project, an enhanced version of this deliverable will be disseminated among target groups and potential users.

It will include a testing session, training courses, meetings, all developed and conducted by staff members of the partnership, managers, and human resources managers, working groups and experts.

> **D3.2. Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled employees**

It will include an internal testing session, training courses, meetings, all developed and conducted by staff members of the partnership, managers, and human resources managers, working groups and experts.

Managers and human resource managers of SMEs will be able to identify and incorporate strategies for employee career guidance, including incorporating adult learning practices into the workplace and strengthening employees' entrepreneurship skills, with the help of this handbook. This outcome would be crucial for the spread of GrowINg and the participation of target groups in the activities.

Another aspect that can and should be investigated in terms of useful tools and users' approach is the **application of digital technologies and multimedia**. They can be exploited as tools and include techniques widely used nowadays even in aspects of our everyday life, so businesses, organisations and adult learning can be benefited by digital materials. Moreover, pedagogically driven activities enhanced by engaging and interactive games or game characteristics would increase motivation, engagement and participation of employees within a learning situation, as is career guidance and adult learning, in general.

It can also provide valuable linkages and steps to improve employees' learning and awareness on learning choices and career decisions. The use of these tools has the potential to take knowledge acquisition and training beyond the limitations of a "classroom" and provide an insight into career decisions and their consequences. It

might seem a little premature to evaluate the efficiency of such tools considering the long-term nature of their impact and wide range of factors influencing individual choices, which are crucial for the correct development of career guidance within a company. For example, in the case of the game MeTycoon, the number of videos viewed and positive responses from players validate the approach taken and create a path for promising future work, indicating how resources, such as pedagogical games, can be better refined, blended and delivered.[20]

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[20] Dunwell, I., Lameras, P., Freitas, S., Petridis, P., Hendrix, M., and Arnab, S. (2013), "MeTycoon: A Game-Based Approach to Career Guidance", London UK
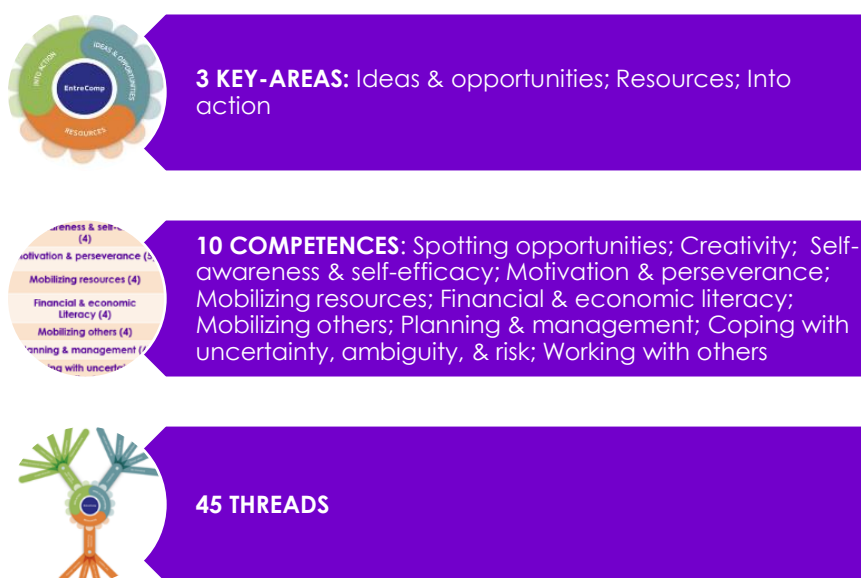
Online entrepreneurial skills assessment tool

The online tool will be freely available to everyone in English, Portuguese, and Greek. It aims at:

a) triggering employees' self-reflection,

b) identifying entrepreneurial skills to be developed/strengthened and

c) defining activities through which this can be accomplished.

The tool can be used to assess competences before, during or at the end of a learning experience, settle goals, monitor the learning progress, or certify competences.

This instrument is structured based on EntreComp - The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework and integrates the following characteristics of this framework:

Figure 11. Structure of EntreComp

3 KEY-AREAS: Ideas & opportunities; Resources; Into action

10 COMPETENCES: Spotting opportunities; Creativity; Self-awareness & self-efficacy; Motivation & perseverance; Mobilizing resources; Financial & economic literacy; Mobilizing others; Planning & management; Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity, & risk; Working with others

45 THREADS

[21]

With this tool, employees will be able to assess their level of progress in the 10 competences identified above. The result will be available immediately after answering the questionnaire and some suggestions for improvement will be provided. This information can be used to set learning goals, spot learning opportunities, and offer learning paths in accordance with employees' needs.
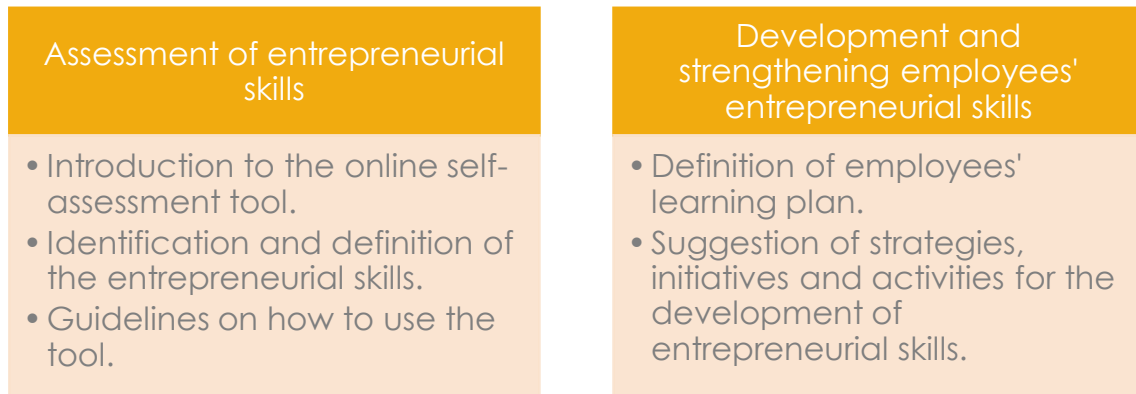
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[21] Identify, create and seize opportunities; Focus on challenges; Uncover needs; Analyse the context; Be curious and open; Develop ideas; Define problems; Design value; Be innovative; Follow your aspirations; Identify your strengths and weaknesses; Believe in your ability; Shape your future; Stay driven; Be determined; Focus on what keeps you motivated; Be resilient; Don't give up; Manage resources (material and non-material); Use resources responsibly; Make the most of your time; Get support; Understand economic and financial concepts; Budget; Find funding; Understand taxation; Inspire and get inspired; Persuade; Communicate effectively; Use media effectively; Define goals; Plan and organise; Develop sustainable business plans; Define priorities; Monitor your progress; Be flexible and adapt to changes; Cope with uncertain-ty and ambiguity; Calculate risk; Manage risk; Accept diversity (people's differences); Develop emotional intelligence; Listen actively; Team up; Work together; Expand your network.

Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled employees

This handbook will provide the necessary information to guide companies in the assessment, development, and consolidation of employees' entrepreneurial skills. This handbook will be structured in two main chapters:

Figure 12. Brief presentation of the structure and content of the handbook

Assessment of entrepreneurial skills	Development and strengthening employees' entrepreneurial skills
• Introduction to the online self-assessment tool. • Identification and definition of the entrepreneurial skills. • Guidelines on how to use the tool.	• Definition of employees' learning plan. • Suggestion of strategies, initiatives and activities for the development of entrepreneurial skills.

The handbook, jointly with the online self-assessment tool, will be designed for the above target groups:

- Managers and/or Human Resources Managers of SMEs;
- In-company trainers, consultants and other professionals;
- Chambers of Commerce and Business Associations;
- VET/Adult Education providers and professionals;
- Policy makers in the field of education, training, and entrepreneurship.

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