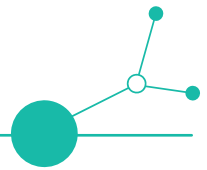


x-Inno Radar survey report

region-specific analysis



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EXPERTS SOFT SKILLS SURVEY - REGION-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS

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Introduction / x-Inno Radar Project

Industrial regions in central Europe are amidst a heavy transformation of their economic and social base. It is especially the non-metropolitan regions who must change profoundly in response to global economic trends, political demands, and structural disadvantages.

The x-Inno Radar project increases their agility and innovativeness by strengthening soft skills. The partners jointly apply a new place-based approach, which centres around transversal skills, maker skills, and pioneer skills. The focus is particularly on non-technical skills (soft skills).

What this document is for

This report analyses survey responses from experts across **8 European countries and min. 8 NUTS2 regions** (Upper Austria in Austria, Veneto in Italy, Zahodna in Slovenija (Western Slovenia), Severozápad in Czechia, Prov. Limburg in Belgium, Východné Slovensko in Slovakia, Śląskie in Poland, and Chemnitz in Germany) **as well as min. 22 NUTS3 regions**. For each region, we summarise how respondents answered each question, highlighting key statistics (averages, distributions) and notable insights. We also include summary tables and comparisons to illustrate cross-country trends.

Important Note

The x-Inno Radar expert survey is an explorative survey with participants mainly from the networks of the respective project partners. The results provide indications as to which issues might be interesting to investigate subsequently. The low number of participants - between 17 and 29 people per country / NUTS2 region - must also be taken into account when assessing the informative value.

In order to categorise the results of the x-Inno Radar expert survey, it is also important to know that the results in the 8 countries are partly attributable to different region sizes, depending on the geographical distribution of the participants.

The NUTS3 region was surveyed as the smallest regional level; in some countries, many participants are assigned to the same NUTS3 region, while in other countries the participants are scattered across several NUTS3 regions.

Some participants only allocated themselves to the country and not to any NUTS 2 or NUTS3 level.

In contrast, the regions described in the web profiles refer to the NUTS2 regional level, which is due to access to comparable data.

Survey Overview

Methodology

The survey (<https://survey.x-inno-radar.eu/>) conducted records the state of soft skills in various European regions, with participants providing information on the following areas:

- Soft skills courses offered or completed
- Assessment of various soft skills from professional experience



- Skills with the greatest need for development
- Challenges for regional economic development
- Organisations offering soft skills development
- Available soft skills development formats
- Regional collaboration on soft skills development

Survey participants:

175 respondents across 8 EU countries

Regional coverage: min. 22 different NUTS3 regions across Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Data collection period: Dec 2024 to 28. Feb 2025

NUTS Region Distribution

Participants of x-Inno Radar experts survey related to NUTS-levels					
Survey from Dec 2024 until 28.Feb. 2025					
NUTS0 ID	Participants NUTS 0	NUTS2 Name	secured Participants NUTS 2	NUTS3 Name	Participants NUTS3
AT	22	Oberösterreich	19	Mühlviertel	1
AT		Oberösterreich		Steyr-Kirchdorf	1
AT		Oberösterreich		Traunviertel	9
AT		Oberösterreich		Innviertel	0
AT		Oberösterreich		Linz-Wels	8
AT			not filled in		3
					22
BE	29	Prov. Limburg (BE)	27	Arr. Hasselt	19
BE		Prov. Limburg (BE)		Arr. Maaseik	4
BE		Prov. Limburg (BE)		Arr. Tongeren	4
			2	not filled in	2
					29
CZ	28	Severozápad	27	Ústecký kraj	
CZ		Severozápad		Karlovarský kraj	27
CZ			not filled in		1
					28
DE	25	Chemnitz	25	Vogtlandkreis	2
DE		Chemnitz		Zwickau	0
DE		Chemnitz		Chemnitz, Kreisfreie Stadt	18
DE		Chemnitz		Erzgebirgskreis	0
DE		Chemnitz		Mittelsachsen	5
					25
IT	19	Veneto	7	Treviso	0
IT		Veneto		Padova	3
IT		Veneto		Rovigo	0
IT		Veneto		Verona	1
IT		Veneto		Vicenza	0
IT		Veneto		Belluno	0
IT		Veneto		Venezia	3
IT		Emilia Romana		1	not filled in
IT			not filled in		11
					19
PL	17	Śląskie	17	Tyski	0
PL		Śląskie		Bytomski	0
PL		Śląskie		Gliwicki	0
PL		Śląskie		Katowicki	1
PL		Śląskie		Sosnowiecki	0
PL		Śląskie		Częstochowski	0
PL		Śląskie		Bielski	15
PL		Śląskie		Rybnicki	1
					17
SI	17	Zahodna Slovenija	17	Goriška	
SI		Zahodna Slovenija		Osrednjeslovenska	
SI		Zahodna Slovenija		Gorenjska	16
SI		Zahodna Slovenija		Obalno-kraška	1
					17
SK	18	Východné Slovensko	17	Košický kraj	16
SK		Východné Slovensko		Prešovský kraj	1
SK			not filled in		1
SK					18

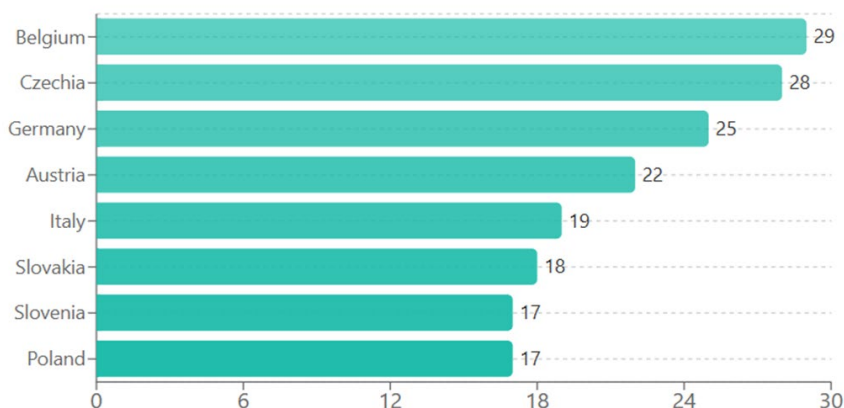


Demographic Distribution

The survey includes 175 participants from 8 European countries:

- Belgium: 29 participants
- Czech Republic: 28 participants
- Germany: 25 participants
- Austria: 22 participants
- Italy: 19 participants
- Slovakia: 18 participants
- Slovenia: 17 participants
- Poland: 17 participants

Number of Survey Responses per Country



Gender distribution:

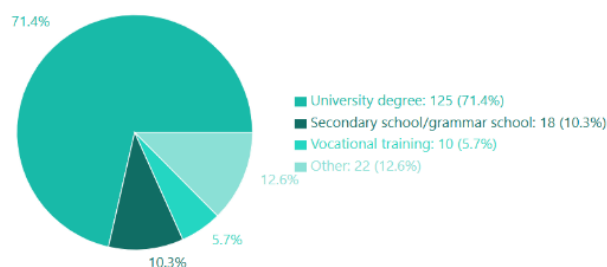
- Female: 120 (68.6%)
- Male: 53 (30.3%)
- Not specified: 2 (1.1%)

Educational level:

- University degree: 125 (71.4%)
- Secondary school/grammar school: 18 (10.3%)
- Vocational training: 10 (5.7%)
- Other: 22 (12.6%)

Educational Level Distribution

Total respondents: 175

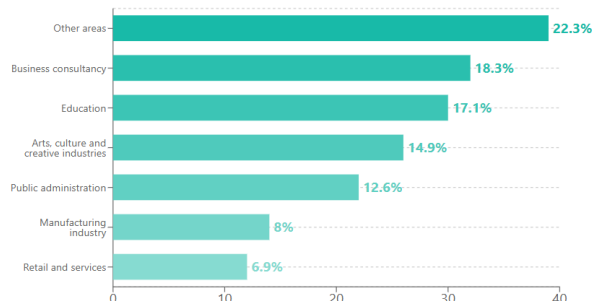


Fields of work:

- Business consultancy: 32 (18.3%)
- Education: 30 (17.1%)
- Arts, culture and creative industries: 26 (14.9%)
- Public administration: 22 (12.6%)
- Manufacturing industry: 14 (8%)
- Retail and services: 12 (6.9%)
- Other areas: 39 (22.3%)

Fields of Work Distribution

Total respondents: 175



The survey covered the following main questions:

1. You indicated that you are already acquainted with soft skills. What soft skills courses have you offered/led (if any)?
What soft skill development course(s) have you completed in the past (if any)?



2. How would you rate the presence of the following soft skills based on your professional experience (e.g. providing soft-skill courses, hiring people and similar)?
3. Which soft skills are in the strongest need of development based on your professional experience (e.g. providing soft-skill courses, hiring people etc.)? (Choose up to five skills)
4. Based on my professional experience, people differ greatly in their soft skill capacities. (Choose).
5. In the light of the ongoing digital and green transformation, the demand for soft skill development among the workforce in my work environment is:
6. What outcomes should soft skill development ideally bring into your work environment? Choose up to five entries.
7. From my perspective, the major challenges affecting the economy and development in my region are ... (choose up to three most important ones):
8. In light of these challenges, the demand for soft skill development among the workforce in my region is:
9. Which organisations have a role in providing or assisting soft skill development in your region? Choose up to five most prominent ones. Please write down exact names of key providers of soft skill development in your region. (Answer optional)
10. Which formats for developing soft skills are available in your region? Please name up to three real-life examples. (Optional)
11. How do organisations in the field of soft skill development cooperate within your region? Choose all formats that apply.

1. Upper Austria (NUTS II) / Austria

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): Most Upper Austrian respondents have led soft skills courses in the past. **About 73%** indicated offering or leading at least one soft skills course, while roughly a quarter had not led any. Common courses mentioned include communication workshops and teamwork training sessions.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): Upper Austrian experts generally rate many soft skills as at least “somewhat present” in their environment. The **strongest** perceived soft skills are **communication** and **collaboration** (both with average ratings near “sufficiently present”). Skills like **networking** and **problem solving** are also viewed as fairly present. However, **risk-taking**, **resourcefulness**, and **iterative design thinking** are rated lower - on average between “insufficiently” and “somewhat” present, indicating these are weaker in Upper Austrian workforce.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): The Upper Austrian panel highlights a need to develop **critical thinking**, **communication**, and **intercultural competence** (each chosen by 50% of respondents). **Problem solving** and **sustainability awareness** are also frequently mentioned as in strong need of development. This suggests Upper Austrian experts see a particular gap in higher-order thinking skills and cultural/environmental awareness.

An interesting detail is that “communication” appears in the evaluation both as one of the strongest perceived soft skills and, at the same time, is still listed among the most important soft skills to develop (50% of mentions).

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): All Upper Austrian respondents agree that individuals’ soft skill levels vary greatly - **50% “strongly agree”** and **50% “agree.”** None disagreed. This unanimous agreement underscores recognition that soft skills proficiency is very uneven across people in Upper Austria.



Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): In Upper Austria, a vast majority see rising demand for soft skills in their immediate work environment. **About 90% report that demand is increasing** (32% of them say “substantially” increasing), while only ~9% see it staying the same or decreasing - very few (just ~4.5%) perceive a decrease. This indicates to prioritise soft skill development as key for Upper Austrian workplaces in the environments of the respondents.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): Upper Austrian respondents most hope soft skill initiatives will improve **adaptability to change** (chosen by 16 out of 22). Other top outcomes are a **more attractive work culture** and **better inclusion of diverse workforces** (each cited by 12 respondents). Improved innovation and productivity were mentioned but less frequently. This suggests Upper Austrian experts value culture and adaptability gains from soft skills training.

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): The top economic/development challenges cited in Upper Austria are **keeping up with digitalisation** (mentioned by half of Upper Austrian respondents), followed by **increasing social/economic disparities** and **demographic change** (aging population) as next most common. These issues frame the context in which soft skills are needed - for example, increasing digitalisation might heighten the need for adaptability and lifelong learning. On the other hand, may workers who lose touch with the advancing digitalisation be more at risk of suffering economic disadvantages.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Regarding the broader region, Upper Austrian experts-opinions are a bit more tempered than for workplaces in their own working environment, but the majority still share the same opinion: **~64% say regional demand for soft skills is increasing**, including 32% seeing it “substantially” increasing. Around 23% feel it’s unchanged regionally, and 14% perceive a decrease in regional demand. So, while most see a regional uptick in soft skills importance, a minority sense slower progress or pockets of decline.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): In Upper Austria, the **most frequently cited providers** are **non-profit associations** (picked by 15 respondents), **adult education centres** (14 respondents) and **secondary schools** (12). Other providers mentioned are universities and vocational schools, but less often. This suggests that - related to the responses received - in Upper Austria, NGOs and adult learning institutions play a leading role in soft skills training, alongside some involvement of chambers and formal education. The list of providers cannot be considered complete due to the relatively low number of responses.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Upper Austrian respondents report a rich variety of formats. The most common formats are **seminars** and **workshops** specifically focused on soft skills. Additionally, they note **entrepreneurial support programmes** and **business consultancies** that foster soft skills, as well as community events (e.g. networking events or even hackathons and innovation festivals) and maker-space activities. Overall, Upper Austria appears to have many workshops and informal learning events for soft skills, though one respondent also mentioned **online forums** as a format.

Q11 (Cooperation among providers): The prevailing view in Upper Austria is that cooperation among soft skill providers is **limited**. About two-thirds of Upper Austrian experts say **there is no coordinated regional cooperation**, or they are not aware of any (many explicitly answered “I do not know” or “there is no coordinated cooperation”). The remaining third note some cooperation exists - mainly in forms like **joint regional projects** or **working groups** on soft skills. In sum, collaboration is not widespread, and several experts perceive providers operating in silos.



2. Veneto (NUTS II) / Italy

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): Respondents from the region Veneto are very experienced with soft skills training - **almost all (95%) have led soft skill courses**, with only one person indicating none. They mention delivering courses on communication, leadership, and team building, reflecting high familiarity in this sample.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): In Veneto, soft skills like **communication, problem solving, and collaboration** are rated as quite prevalent (average around “somewhat to sufficiently present”). Experts from Veneto see **communication** as especially strong (approaching “sufficiently present”). Conversely, **improvisation, risk-taking, and iterative design thinking** are among the weakest (averaging closer to “insufficiently present”). This indicates workforces in Veneto are perceived to communicate and solve problems reasonably well but are less inclined to take risks or iterate creatively.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): The most needed soft skills in Veneto centre on critical thinking and strategic capabilities. **Strategic thinking** is the top choice (mentioned by 11 of 19 respondents), followed by **critical thinking** (8 mentions). **Empathy** (7) and **opportunity recognition** (7) also rank high, with **initiative-taking** (6) next. Interestingly, **problem solving** is not in the top five needs here (suggesting it’s already relatively strong, aligning with Q2). Instead, experts of Veneto desire more forward-looking and interpersonal soft skills development (strategy, critical analysis, empathy).

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Experts from Veneto overwhelmingly agree that people differ in soft skill levels: **~90% agree or strongly agree** (with ~37% strongly agreeing). Only one or two respondents were undecided or disagreed. This consensus is similar to Upper Austria’s, underscoring recognition of variable soft skill proficiency.

Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): A majority in Veneto see growing soft skill demand at work, though the sentiment is less uniform than in some countries. **About 63% say demand is increasing** (5% of whom see it “substantially” increasing). However, **21% believe it’s staying the same**, and **16% actually say it’s decreasing** in their work environment. Veneto has the **highest proportion reporting a decrease** in demand among all eight countries.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): The top outcomes experts expect from soft skill development are **increased collaboration** (chosen by 14 respondents) and **better adaptability to change** (14 respondents). Additionally, **improved wellbeing in the workplace** is a key hoped-for result (11 mentions). Experts of Veneto thus link soft skills with fostering teamwork, agility, and employee well-being. Other outcomes like innovation or productivity were mentioned by some, but the focus skews toward human-centric benefits (collaboration, well-being).

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): Respondents identify **social and economic disparities** as the foremost regional challenge (8 mentions). Next is the **mismatch of skills and work requirements** (8 mentions) - highlighting that workers’ skills (including soft skills) often don’t meet job needs. Unlike some others, Venetos top issues were less about demographics or digitalisation and more about social inequality and skills mismatch, indicating that bridging the skills gap and ensuring inclusive growth are prime challenges in Italy.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Regionally, experts of Veneto are relatively cautious. Over half (**58%**) say the regional demand for soft skills is **“the same” (unchanged)** despite current challenges, and the remainder (**42%**) see it increasing.



Not a single respondent indicated a regional decrease - so it's either flat or rising. This suggests that, in Veneto, many feel the urgency for soft skills beyond their workplace has not accelerated dramatically yet even though some do see growing importance region-wide.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): Key organisations for soft skill development in Veneto include **universities** (mentioned by 12 respondents) as the top provider followed by **non-profit associations** (8 mentions). **Secondary schools, adult education centres** and **business consultancies** (each 6) also play a role but were cited less, followed by other public agencies (some respondents specifically noted "other types of public administration"). This implies Veneto relies heavily on formal educational institutions and the non-profit sector for soft skills training, with schools and universities at the forefront.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Available formats in Veneto are dominated by **seminars/workshops and training courses**, both within companies and externally. Respondents also highlighted **entrepreneurial support programmes and consultancies** (mentioned frequently) as a means to develop soft skills. Fewer responses mentioned informal or community formats, though some noted networking events. The focus appears to be on structured training sessions and business-oriented programmes. The result is interesting as the main providers mentioned in the previous question were universities and secondary schools.

Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Cooperation among soft skill providers in Veneto seems limited. Similar to Upper Austria, about **68% say there is no significant cooperation or they are unaware of any**, while ~32% report some collaboration. Those who do see cooperation mention occasional **joint conferences or working groups** on soft skills. However, a number of respondents explicitly answered along the lines of "*I don't know of specific soft skill development organisations or joint initiatives*". This suggests that, in Veneto, soft skill efforts are somewhat fragmented, with few formal networks or partnerships widely recognised.

3. Zahodna Slovenija (NUTS II) / Slovenia

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): The majority of Zahodna Slovenija experts have experience leading soft skill courses (approximately 15 out of 17 respondents). Only a couple have not. Courses in communication, leadership, and teamwork were commonly referenced, indicating solid engagement with soft skills training in Zahodna Slovenia's sample.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): Zahodna Slovenian respondents rate **learning agility/lifelong learning** and **communication** as the most present soft skills (averages around "somewhat present" leaning toward "sufficiently"). **Networking** also scored relatively well. On the low end, Zahodna Slovenians see **empathy, critical thinking**, and especially **iterative design thinking** as lacking (averages just above "insufficiently present" for the latter). The pattern suggests Zahodna Slovenia's workforce is viewed as adaptable and communicative, but possibly less strong in critical analysis and empathic or creative design approaches.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): **Communication** and **problem solving** top Zahodna Slovenia's "most needed" list (chosen by 11 and 10 respondents, respectively). **Critical thinking** is also highly needed (8 mentions). Beyond these, **collaboration** and **empathy** (6 each) appear as important gaps. It's notable that Zahodna Slovenians highlight communication as already present (Q2) and as needing further development (Q3), implying these are priority skills to cultivate even if they exist to some degree.

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Similar to others, Zahodna Slovenian experts mostly agree that people's soft skills vary. **About 83% agree (35% strongly)**, though a small fraction



(roughly 18% combined) expressed disagreement or were undecided. A couple of Zahodna Slovenian respondents thus diverged, but overall consensus is that soft skill capacities differ greatly among individuals.

Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): Zahodna Slovenia stands out as more moderate in perceived workplace demand changes. Only ~47% see increasing demand for soft skills in their work environment (12% of total say it's "substantially increasing"). Meanwhile, nearly half (47%) believe demand is stable ("unchanged"), and a small portion (6%) even see it decreasing. This "flat" outlook is the strongest among the different regions: Zahodna Slovenia has the **highest share reporting no change**. It suggests that in many Zahodna Slovenian workplaces, soft skills demand hasn't notably shifted yet, possibly indicating a lag in the digital/green transformation impact or already steady focus.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): Zahodna Slovenian respondents most want soft skill development to improve **workplace wellbeing** (10 mentions) and **adaptability to change** (9 mentions). **Increased collaboration** is also a desired outcome (8 mentions). These priorities are similar to Veneto and Prov. Limburg, emphasising human-centric benefits like well-being and teamwork. Zahodna Slovenians did not emphasise innovation or productivity as top outcomes as much as some others, focusing instead on the work culture and resilience aspects of soft skills.

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): Mismatch of skills and job requirements is the top regional challenge in Zahodna Slovenia (noted by 8 respondents), closely followed by **inadequate adaptation to changes** (6) and **demographic change** (6). This indicates concerns that the workforce's skills (potentially including soft skills) aren't keeping pace with what the economy needs, alongside the pressures of an aging population and general change. Unlike some countries, issues like digitalisation or funding didn't top the list here; the emphasis is on adaptability and alignment of skills with evolving needs.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): In line with Q5, Zahodna Slovenians are cautious about regional soft skills demand: **only ~29% combined see an increase** (24% "increasing" + 5% "substantially increasing"), while **53% say it's the same** and about **23% total see a decrease** (17.6% decreasing, and one respondent ~6% saying "substantially decreasing"). Zahodna Slovenia is the only country where a notable chunk perceives a **substantial decline** regionally. This regional outlook (largest share seeing decline among all regions) could reflect specific local economic situation or a workforce already broadly trained in soft skills or a sense that soft skills are not yet recognised in the region as critical to addressing challenges.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): Key organisations for soft skills in Zahodna Slovenia differ a bit from others. The most-cited are **business consultancies** (mentioned by 9 respondents) - indicating private consulting/training firms have a big role. Also noted are **community centres** (6) and **Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Handcraft** (each by 3 respondents). Fewer Slovenians mentioned universities or schools compared to regions in other countries; instead, they pointed to less formal or private-sector actors. This suggests Zahodna Slovenia's soft skill ecosystem relies considerably on consultancy services and community initiatives, possibly due to fewer academic or large institutional programmes in this space.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Zahodna Slovenians report a mix of available formats, with common mentions of **workshops and seminars** similar to other countries. Many also highlighted **entrepreneurial support initiatives and business consulting programmes** as venues for soft skill development (aligning with Q9's emphasis on consultancies). **Networking events** were frequently noted as well. Some unique mentions included project-based learning approaches (indicated by a local term) and discussion forums. Overall, Zahodna Slovenia seems to leverage



both formal workshops and interactive group formats (like forums, networking events) for soft skills.

Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Cooperation in Zahodna Slovenia appears moderately positive. About 59% of respondents see some form of cooperation among providers - one of the higher rates - often citing **joint conferences, working groups, and regional projects** focused on soft skills. For example, several noted that organisations team up for **soft skills conferences and collaborative projects** in the region. Still, 41% did not know of any cooperation or felt it was lacking. One respondent commented cooperation exists but “poorly”. In summary, Zahodna Slovenia has a number of collaborative efforts (more so than the German and Italian Regions), but it’s not universal.

4. Severozápad (NUTS II) / Czechia

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): Severozápad respondents have a mix of backgrounds: around 18 of 28 have led soft skill courses, while about 10 (~36%) have not – a relatively higher non-participation rate compared to other regions like Veneto in Italy or Prov. Limburg in Belgium. Those who have led courses mention areas like leadership and problem-solving workshops.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): In Severozápad, **collaboration, communication, and empathy** are rated as the most present soft skills in the workforce (with collaboration and communication both averaging just under “sufficiently present”). Empathy is also relatively high compared to other regions` ratings. **Risk-taking** and **opportunity recognition** are rated low (average “insufficiently present”), and **iterative design thinking** is the lowest (a common theme across all participating regions). The Severozápad profile suggests strength in teamwork and interpersonal understanding, but a shortfall in risk-taking and entrepreneurial thinking.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): **Critical thinking** is clearly the top needed skill in Severozápad - **18 out of 28** respondents chose it. Next are **communication** (13) and **strategic thinking** (12), followed closely by **problem solving** and **lifelong learning (learning agility)** (each 11). This indicates Severozápad experts see a strong need to bolster higher-order thinking and strategy skills, even more than basic collaboration (which is already seen as present per Q2). Interestingly, nearly half of the experts see communication most needed, which - per Q2- they already rated as present, averaging under “sufficiently present”. This may indicate that for the respondents evaluate communication as key skill to develop or train further regional needed soft skills. The result of Q3 may also indicate that through further strengthening communication and through already present empathy it’s possible to focusing effort on cognitive skills.

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Experts of Severozápad largely agree that soft skills differ among people: about **93% agree/strongly agree** (with roughly 68% “agree” and 25% “strongly agree”). Only one respondent disagreed and one was undecided. The sentiment is nearly unanimous that variability in soft skills is significant in their experience.

Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): A solid majority of respondents of Severozápad see rising demand at work for soft skills: **~57% total report increasing demand** (4% “substantially increasing”, 53% “increasing”). About **29% feel it’s unchanged** and **14% see a decrease**. So, while more than half of Severozápad experts work see the demand in soft skill needs trending upward, there is a notable minority (around one in seven) observing a decline - perhaps in specific industries or because a lot has already been done for soft skills development in the environment of these experts or due to focus shifting elsewhere.



Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): Severozápad respondents place **“better adaptability to change”** at the top of desired outcomes from soft skill development (21 mentions, which is three-quarters of respondents). Two other outcomes tie for second: **“more attractive work culture”** and **“improved workplace wellbeing”** (15 mentions each). They clearly hope soft skills training will make organisations more flexible, improve the work environment and culture, which could help retain respectively attract talented new employees. **Increased innovation** or **productivity** were only mentioned by some, indicating a tilt toward workforce-centric improvements. Although these improvements could in turn boost innovation and productivity.

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): Most important regional challenges for experts from Severozápad are **brain drain** (cited by 15 respondents) and **inadequate adaptation to changes** (11 mentions). **Demographic change** (aging, 9 mentions) is also a key concern. These suggest a region grappling with young talent leaving, an aging population, and perhaps institutions struggling to keep up with change - all of which can amplify the need for soft skills (e.g., to adapt and to make the region attractive for talent). Notably, **“outmigration”** is a top challenge in Severozápad as well as in Východné Slovensko (Slovakia) - also demographic change is rated similar there.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Regionally, Severozápad experts are split: **50% see increasing demand** for soft skills in the region (46% increasing + a few saying substantial increasing), **25% say it’s stable**, and **25% see it decreasing**. This is a relatively balanced three-way split. It indicates that in Severozápad the perception of the demand for soft skills is inconsistent. The reasons for this could be manifold and would require further research.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): The **Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Handcraft** is an especially prominent provider in Severozápad - nearly every respondent (26 out of 28) mentioned it, suggesting a strong institutional role. Other significant providers are **secondary schools** and **adult education centres** (11 mentions each). Also named were **universities** and **non-profits**, but less often. The dominance of the chamber in responses implies that in Severozápad, business chambers are key organisers or supporters of soft skill training (perhaps via seminars for companies, apprenticeships, etc.), more so than in other countries.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Severozápad respondents report many **seminars/workshops** and formal training events available. They also frequently mentioned **study tours** (8 mentions) - indicating exchange visits or learning tours are used as a format. **Discussion forums** and community learning events were noted by some. Like others, Severozápad has entrepreneurial support schemes in place. Overall, the formats seem to include traditional workshops and some innovative approaches like study tours, but perhaps fewer hackathon-style events (only one mention of an “event” in responses).

Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Cooperation in Severozápad is moderate. Roughly **46% of respondents note some cooperation** (vs 54% not seeing any). Those who see cooperation describe **joint soft skill conferences, working groups, and regional projects** as common formats for collaboration among organisations. This means that about half the Severozápad experts are aware of networks where educational institutions, companies, and agencies coordinate on soft skill initiatives. The other half, however, either don’t know of these or believe they don’t exist, pointing to partial connectivity. Severozápad’s cooperation level appears similar to Východné Slovensko’s and a bit higher than Upper Austria’s/Veneto’s.



5. Prov. Limburg (NUTS II) / Belgium

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): Experts from the Prov. Limburg are highly engaged in soft skills training - **26 out of 29** have facilitated soft skill courses. Only a few have not. Their experience covers a wide range, from corporate training sessions to educational workshops on soft skills.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): In Prov. Limburg, **problem solving, communication, and collaboration** are rated as very well-established soft skills (each with an average around “sufficiently present” - in fact, problem solving and communication both tied at the top with the highest average ratings ~3.14 on a 0-4 scale). This suggests Prov. Limburg respondents feel the workforce generally has a solid base in these areas. On the weaker side, **sustainability awareness** and **risk-taking** are among the lower rated (around “somewhat present”), and **iterative design thinking** is the lowest (averaging just below “somewhat present”). Thus, Prov. Limburg workers are seen as strong communicators and problem solvers, but perhaps less inclined towards risk-taking and integrating sustainability mindsets or iterative design processes in work.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): **Communication, strategic and critical thinking** are top development priorities in Prov. Limburg (each cited by 10 respondents). **Adaptability** follows (9 mentions each), then **intercultural competence, sustainability awareness and collaboration** (each 8). There’s a clear emphasis on cognitive and interpersonal skills. Notably, “Adaptability” appears as a key need, aligning with future challenges, and even though the experts rate collaboration highly present (Q2), they still include it in needed skills, also communication appears in Q2 and Q3 - possibly to maintain strengths or improve it further. The spread of needed skills is fairly even, suggesting a broad push to elevate multiple soft skills rather than one glaring gap.

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Prov. Limburg respondents strongly agree on soft skill variability: about **55% agree and 34% strongly agree** that people differ greatly in soft skills. A small minority (around 3% strongly disagree, with the rest undecided) dissent. The vast majority clearly recognise differences in soft skill levels among individuals.

Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): Prov. Limburg mirrors Upper Austria in seeing surging soft skill demand at work. **Over 86% report increasing demand** (24% substantially increasing + 62% increasing), one of the highest consensuses. Only ~10% say it’s the same, and ~3% (essentially one person) see a decrease. Prov. Limburg’s workplaces thus broadly experience growing needs for soft skills amid digital/green transformations, with an almost negligible sense of decline or stagnation.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): The Prov. Limburg group most wants **improved workplace wellbeing** (22 out of 29) as an outcome of soft skill development, closely followed by **better adaptability to change** (21 mentions). **Increased collaboration** is also highly desired (17 mentions) - no wonder it was also ranked in Q3. These results are very much in line with Zahodna Slovenija and Veneto, highlighting a focus on employee well-being, adaptability, and teamwork. In fact, Prov. Limburg has the highest count for wellbeing, indicating a strong belief that soft skills (like communication, empathy, etc.) will lead to a healthier, more positive work environment. Adaptability being equally high shows the priority given to resilience in face of change.

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): Respondents of Prov. Limburg point to a few key challenges: **Mismatch of skills and work requirements** is top (15 mentions), indicating concern about skills gaps. Also high is **increasing diversity of workforce and residents** (13 mentions) - suggesting managing diversity is a significant challenge in Prov. Limburg. **Keeping up with digitalisation** (13 mentions) is equally prominent. This mix of challenges (skills



mismatch, diversity, digitalisation) underscores why soft skills are needed - e.g., to retrain/upskill workers, to integrate diverse teams, and to adapt to technological change. Notably, Prov. Limburg uniquely highlighted diversity as a top challenge, more so than other countries.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Also in the context of regional challenges, the experts of Prov. Limburg see high demand of soft skill among workforce: **about 79% see increasing demand** for soft skills in their region (28% substantially, 51% increasing), with only ~10% for “same” and ~10% for “decreasing.” This means the vast majority of experts observe that given their region’s challenges, soft skill development is gaining importance at a regional level. The expert’s regional perspective aligns closely with their work environment perspective, showing consistency in the perceived trend of rising demand.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): The soft skill development landscape in Prov. Limburg is anchored by **secondary schools** and **adult education centres** (each mentioned by 21 respondents). **Universities** are a close second (19 mentions). This indicates a strong role of the formal education system (secondary and tertiary) and continuing education centres in providing soft skills training. Non-formal providers like **non-profit associations** and **private consultancies** also exist but were mentioned less frequently. The high mentions for schools and adult education suggest Prov. Limburg perhaps integrates soft skills into curricula and offers many continuing education-programmes for skills like languages, communication, etc., relative to regions in other countries.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Prov. Limburg respondents describe a wide array of formats: plenty of **seminars/workshops**, as expected, but also **entrepreneurial support programmes and business consultancies** (which was strongly indicated by the presence of words like “support” and “consult” in many responses). They also mention **networking events** and even **maker-fairs** (a few noted maker events or hackathon-like competitions). This implies Prov. Limburg not only has classroom-style training but also experiential and community learning formats (e.g., innovation events, contests, etc.) available for soft skill development.

Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Cooperation in Prov. Limburg is comparatively robust. **Around 59% of Belgian respondents indicate some cooperative activities**, such as **joint soft skill working groups, regional projects, or conferences**. About 41% did not know of any cooperation (or said none). This suggests Prov. Limburg has multiple collaborative platforms where different organisations (schools, companies, government, NGOs) come together on soft skill initiatives - perhaps reflecting Prov. Limburg’s multi-stakeholder approach in education and workforce development. It’s one of the higher cooperation awareness levels, second only to Śląskie in Poland in this survey.

6. Východné Slovensko (NUTS II) / Slovakia

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): In Východné Slovensko, about 13 of 18 respondents have led soft skill courses (~72%). The remainder have not. Those with experience mentioned conducting training in communication and problem-solving skills within companies or educational settings.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): Východné Slovensko respondents rate **collaboration** and **networking** as their workforce’s strongest soft skills (averages around “somewhat to sufficiently present”). **Creativity** is also relatively high. On the lower end, **self-regulation** and **iterative design thinking** are rated weak (both averaging around “insufficiently to somewhat present”), as **risk-taking** is (the lowest at ~1.61 on the 0-4 scale). Thus, Východné Slovensko’s profile shows good teamwork and networking abilities among workforce but limited risk-taking and personal self-management/initiative.



Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): **Critical thinking** is the most cited need in Východné Slovensko (14 mentions). Both **problem solving** and **strategic thinking** are next (11 each). Also notable is **communication** (7), and **Innovativeness** and **Creativity** (equally 6) as top needs. Similar to Severozápad in Czechia, critical thinking emerges as a priority gap. It's worth noting that although collaboration was strong in Q2, communication still appears in needed skills (indicating room for improvement). The inclusion of creativity suggests a desire to boost innovative capacity or improve problem solving.

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Východné Slovensko's experts agree on soft skill variability, though with slightly more reservations than some other regions: **~83% agree** (56% agree, 28% strongly agree), 11% undecided, and one respondent (5.6%) strongly disagrees. So, while most align with the view of large differences in soft skills person to person, Východné Slovensko had one of the rare dissenting voices and a few neutrals.

Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): About **77.8% of respondents see increasing demand** for soft skills in their work environment (17% "substantially increasing", 61% "increasing"). Around 17% say it's the same, and just ~5.6% see a decrease. This indicates a broad recognition of growing soft skill needs in Východné Slovensko's workplaces, almost as high as Upper Austria and Prov. Limburg. Only one respondent noted a decrease. Východné Slovensko is clearly experiencing an upward trend in soft skills emphasis at work, likely tied to modernisation and transformation pressures.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): Východné Slovensko's respondents most often expect soft skill development to yield a **higher degree of innovation** and **better adaptability to change** (each outcome mentioned by 11 respondents). Also high is **increased collaboration** (10 mentions). These top outcomes show a balance: innovation (a business outcome) and adaptability/collaboration (workforce and process outcomes) are equally desired. Východné Slovensko uniquely put "higher innovation" at the top (whereas other regions leaned towards well-being or culture), hinting that Východné Slovensko's experts link soft skills strongly with boosting creativity and new ideas in their organisations. Notable is the desire for increased collaboration as this soft skill was also selected as one of the most present soft skills in the region (Q2).

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): **Outmigration of qualified workforce** is the dominant challenge for Východné Slovensko (15 mentions, similar to Severozápad in Czechia). **Demographic change** is also significant (8 mentions). **Skills mismatch** (7) comes third. This aligns closely with Severozápad's concerns - brain drain and likely aging are critical in Východné Slovensko, which in turn intensifies the need for strategies (like soft skills training) to retain talent and adapt to a shrinking labour pool. Digitalisation or funding issues were not as frequently cited here.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Regionally, half of Východné Slovensko's respondents (50%) see growing demand for soft skills, while the rest are split: ~28% say it's the same, ~11% see a decrease, and ~6% report a "substantial" decrease (one person) and another ~6% a "substantial" increase (one person). Combining, about **56%** register increase (including that one substantial), and **44%** no increase (stable or decrease). This indicates a mild majority in Východné Slovensko feel their region is waking up to soft skills needs, but a considerable minority do not see such progress (some even see regression). It's a more mixed regional outlook compared to the near consensus on workplace demand.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): In Východné Slovensko, **universities** are the top mentioned soft skill providers (9 respondents). **Adult education centres** and **non-profit organisations** are next (8 each). Also, secondary and vocational schools were noted by a few. This



suggests a blend of academic and professional bodies driving soft skill development in Východné Slovensko. The presence of the chamber (similar to Severozápad) shows industry bodies are active. Universities being number one indicates strong involvement of higher education in continuing education or training programmes for soft skills.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Východné Slovensko's respondents primarily mention traditional **workshops and seminars** as available formats, much like other regions of the survey. Some also noted **study tours** and **discussion forums** in the region. Entrepreneurial and consulting programmes are present but not as prominently cited as in Zahodna Slovenia or Prov. Limburg. The data suggests Východné Slovensko's soft skill development formats may be somewhat conventional (classroom-style or peer learning forums) with fewer novel events referenced.

Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Exactly half of Východné Slovensko's respondents see cooperation among soft skill organisations (50% yes, 50% no). Those who do, mention similar formats to other participating regions: **joint conferences, collaborative projects**, and networks between training providers. The other half either aren't aware of any collaboration or believe none exists. This 50/50 split places Východné Slovensko in the middle of the pack for regional cooperation - better than the very low-cooperation regions, but still with significant fragmentation. There's room to improve coordination so that more experts become aware of collaborative efforts.

7. Śląskie (NUTS II) / Poland

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): Śląskie's experts are somewhat split in experience - about 12 of 17 have led soft skill courses (~71%), while 5 have not. This is comparable to Východné Slovensko/Upper Austria. Those who have led courses discussed training sessions on communication, conflict resolution, and leadership in Śląskie's organisations.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): In Śląskie, **creativity** is rated highest (averaging ~2.88, the highest among Polish responses on the 0-4 presence scale). **Lifelong learning (learning agility), communication, adaptability** and **resourcefulness** are also relatively high (each ~2.53). This suggests Śląskie's respondents see a decent presence of creative and adaptive qualities in their workforce. **Sustainability awareness** and **self-regulation** are rated lowest (~1.82 and 1.76 respectively), and **iterative design thinking** as well (~1.71). Hence, Śląskie's workers are perceived as creative and able to adjust, but weaker in self-management and integrating sustainability or iterative approaches.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): Śląskie's priorities for improvement are fairly evenly distributed among key skills: **Problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration**, and **sustainability awareness** were each chosen by 7 respondents (out of 17). All five are essentially tied as top needs. This indicates a broad set of soft skills need attention in Śląskie rather than one standing out. Collaboration and communication appear (despite being moderately present already), and notably **sustainability awareness** is highlighted here - aligning with it being rated low in presence (Q2) and reflecting Śląskie's recognition of sustainability as a growing necessary competency.

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Śląskie's experts, like others, strongly concur that soft skills vary per individual. **100% of respondents agree** that people differ greatly in their soft skill capacities ("**agree**" 59% or "**strongly agree**" 41%). Śląskie is one of the few regions with unanimous agreement (no disagree or undecided responses at all).



Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): Śląskie's respondents are among the one who observe a rising workplace demand. **About 82% see increasing demand** (12% substantially + 70.6% increasing) and the remaining ~18% say demand is the same - importantly, **none reported a decrease** in their work environment. This makes Śląskie one of the regions (along with Prov. Limburg) where **no one saw a decline** in soft skill demand at work. The data implies workplaces in Śląskie are rapidly increasing their focus on soft skills, likely as they undergo regional challenges.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): Top outcomes expected in Śląskie from soft skill programmes are **improved workplace wellbeing** (12 mentions) and **better adaptability to change** (10 mentions). **Higher productivity** is also in the top three (9 mentions), which is a bit different from many other regions - Śląskie's experts do emphasise productivity gains more than most. This suggests that, while Śląskie's respondents care about employee well-being and adaptability (like others), they also explicitly link soft skills to tangible performance improvements (productivity). Collaboration and innovation outcomes were mentioned slightly less often in Śląskie relative to these.

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): **Demographic change** is the number one challenge in Śląskie (10 mentions), reflecting concerns about aging and workforce renewal. Next are **inadequate adaptation to changes** (8) and **transformation of economic sectors** (8). These point to the economy needing to adjust to new industries and changes (and perhaps not doing so fast enough). Skills mismatch, interestingly, is slightly less highlighted here than elsewhere. The focus in Śląskie seems to be on macro-level shifts - aging population and entire sectors transforming (which could be due to technological or climate transitions) - which again underscores the need for adaptability and upskilling (hence their soft skill focusses on adaptability and learning agility - Q2).

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Śląskie is the most bullish on regional soft skill demand: an impressive **94% of Śląskie's respondents say the regional demand is increasing** (17.6% substantially + 76.5% increasing). Only one person (~6%) said it's the same, and none said it's decreasing regionally. Śląskie in fact has the **highest regional increase perception** among all regions. This means Śląskie's experts widely agree that in light of their region's challenges (demographics, economic transformation), soft skill development is becoming significantly more sought-after at a regional scale. There's a strong momentum in Śląskie towards recognising soft skills as crucial for regional development and workforce preparedness.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): Top providers in Śląskie include **non-profit associations** (9 mentions) and **universities** (8 mentions), as well as **business consultancies** (8 mentions). This indicates a mix: NGOs and educational institutions, plus private consultancies are all key players in soft skills training. It's interesting that Śląskie's profile shows consultancies on par with universities, suggesting that companies or external experts are frequently engaged for soft skill training. Fewer mentions were made of chambers or schools relative to other regions. This may imply that in Śląskie, soft skills development has a strong non-governmental and private training market component.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Respondents of Śląskie cite **workshops/seminars** as common, and like others, note **entrepreneurial support programmes** and **business consulting** involvement (as seen in Q9). A few unique mentions include **online** formats (one respondent explicitly said "online") and **networking events** ("wydarzenia lokalne z networkingiem" was noted by one, meaning local events with networking). This suggests Śląskie employs both traditional training and some modern formats (online learning, networking mixers) to develop soft skills. Maker events or hackathons didn't feature much in responses (perhaps less prevalent).



Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Śląskie has the **highest reported cooperation level** among these regions. About **65% of Śląskie's respondents said organisations cooperate** in soft skill development (with only 35% seeing none/not aware). They frequently described **joint soft skills conferences and joint regional projects** as collaboration formats, and some mentioned **working groups, web campaigns, and shared databases** of providers. This indicates an active network in Śląskie: organisations coordinate through events, projects, and information-sharing to promote soft skills. Compared to other countries, Śląskie's ecosystem seems more interconnected, which could facilitate faster scaling of soft skill initiatives regionally.

8. Chemnitz (NUTS II) / Germany

Q1 (Soft skill courses offered, led): Respondents of the two NUTS II Regions Chemnitz (Ch & L) were split: only about 12 of 25 (48%) had led soft skill courses - the **lowest proportion among the eight countries**. The other half had not offered any such courses, suggesting the German expert sample included more who know soft skills conceptually or from hiring perspectives rather than as trainers. Those who had taught courses mentioned leadership and communication trainings.

Q2 (Presence of various soft skills): In Ch & L, **problem solving** stands out as extremely well-present (average rating **3,32** the highest single-skill rating recorded in any regions responses). Ch & L also rate **learning agility/lifelong learning** and **resourcefulness** quite high (~2.96 and 2.92 respectively). It appears Ch & L respondents feel the workforce excels in problem-solving and is good at continuously learning and being resourceful/adaptable. On the weaker end, **risk-taking** and **self-regulation** are low (~2.08 and 2.36, which are around "somewhat present"), and **Iterative design thinking** is lowest (~2.04). Interestingly, even Ch & L's "low" scores are around 2 (neutral "somewhat present"), which are higher than many other regions lows. This suggests Ch & L respondents perceive a generally higher baseline of soft skills, with the main gap in willingness to take risks and perhaps emotional self-management.

Q3 (Soft skills most needed - up to 5): **Strategic thinking** is the top needed skill in Ch & L (11 mentions). **Critical thinking** and **communication** follow (9 each). Also notable are **self-regulation** and **intercultural competence** (8 each) in the top five. Ch & L's list includes *Self-regulation* - which aligns with it being rated relatively low in presence (Q2), indicating an identified gap in personal discipline, stress management or similar. The emphasis on strategic and critical thinking reflects a push for forward-looking, analytical capabilities to complement their strong problem-solving. Intercultural competence featuring in Ch & L's needs (and not in many other regions top lists except Upper Austria) may reflect Ch & L's diverse work environments and the need to work effectively across cultures.

Q4 (Differences in soft skills capacities?): Ch & L's experts almost unanimously agree on variability of soft skills: **96% agree** (52% agree, 44% strongly agree) and ~4% undecided - none disagree. This is in line with the broad consensus seen elsewhere that soft skills differ widely between individuals.

Q5 (Demand for soft skill development among workforce of experts work environment): Ch & L shows a strong trend of rising soft skill demand at work, at least at experts work environment: **~80% increasing** (32% substantially + 48% increasing). About 16% say it's unchanged and only 4% (one person) see a decrease. This is very much in line with the general pattern (similar to Śląskie or Východné Slovensko). It confirms that in Ch & L's workplaces, the push for soft skills is underway due to transformations, and any opposing view is rare.

Q6 (Desired outcomes of soft skill development in experts work environment - up to 5): Ch & L's respondents most frequently expect **improved workplace wellbeing** (14 mentions) and **better**



adaptability to change (13 mentions) from soft skill development. Uniquely, “**more sustainable products and processes**” appears in Ch & L’s top three outcomes (12 mentions) - this was not top three in other regions. It suggests Ch & L’s experts tie soft skills (like creativity, critical thinking, collaboration) to achieving sustainability goals in their organisations. This aligns with Ch & L’s strong focus on the green transformation; soft skills are seen as enablers for sustainability and innovation. Collaboration and innovation outcomes were also cited, but the prominence of sustainability is a distinctive aspect of the responses from Ch & L’s experts.

Q7 (Major regional challenges / business & development - up to 3): Demographic change is by far the dominant challenge in Ch & L (17 mentions, which is two-thirds of their respondents). This likely refers to an aging workforce and low birth rates, creating skill shortages. Following that, **keeping up with digitalisation** (11) and **outmigration of qualified workforce** (8) are significant. While Germany is a large economy, specific regions might suffer brain drain, hence outmigration being noted. The heavy focus on demographics and digitalisation in challenges explains why lifelong learning (to retrain older workers) and adaptability are emphasised in soft skills. Other issues like disparities or funding were not top in Ch & L’s list.

Q8 (Demand for soft skills among workforce in context of regional challenges): Ch & L’s regional demand outlook is very strong: **76% see an increase** (40% substantially + 36% increasing). About 12% say it’s the same, and 12% see a decrease regionally. So roughly 3 in 4 Ch & L’s respondents believe their region is increasingly valuing soft skill development - only a small minority dissent. This is consistent with the challenges identified: as regions face digital and demographic challenges, most experts perceive a rising recognition that soft skills are crucial to address these, at a regional policy/economic level.

Q9 (Key providers of soft skills development - up to 5): Universities and secondary schools are the top soft skill providers in Ch & L (16 mentions each). **Non-profit associations** also play a big role (12 mentions). Further, **adult education centres** and **vocational schools** were mentioned, but interestingly, **chambers** or **industry groups** did not feature as strongly as in some central/eastern regions. This suggests Ch & L relies a lot on its formal education system and nonprofit organisations (perhaps “Volkshochschulen”/adult evening schools, etc.) for soft skills training. The private sector training companies are present but might be fragmented; instead, established institutions carry much of the load in providing soft skill development opportunities.

Q10 (Available soft skill development formats): Ch & L’s respondents mentioned the usual **workshops/seminars**, but a standout in Ch & L is the prevalence of **maker-fairs** and **similar maker-space events** (several respondents referenced “maker” activities - which was by far the highest in our text analysis of the survey for Ch & L’s). This indicates a vibrant culture of hackathons, innovation labs, and practical creativity events as formats for soft skill (and technical skill) development. Ch & L also has entrepreneurial programmes and likely strong industry-led training. So, beyond classical training courses, Ch & L seems to utilize hands-on communal events (e.g., maker fairs, hackathons) to build teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving soft skills.

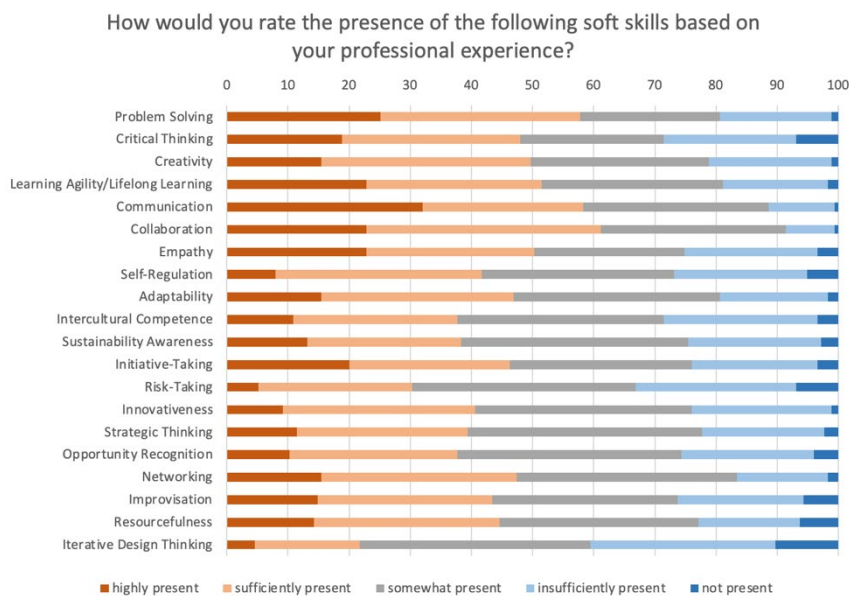
Q11 (Cooperation among providers): Ch & L’s respondents report **the lowest level of perceived cooperation** among soft skill providers. **Only 12%** noted any cooperation, while **88% said there is none or they are not aware of any**. Many Ch & L’s experts explicitly responded that they don’t know of specific soft skill organisations or that such collaboration isn’t necessary or doesn’t exist. This could be because Ch & L’s efforts are more institutionalized within each organisation (schools, companies doing their own programmes) rather than cross-organisation networks dedicated to soft skills. It may also reflect regional segmentation. In any case, the **lack of coordinated cooperation is a clear theme** in Ch & L’s responses, in contrast to Śląskie or Prov. Limburg.



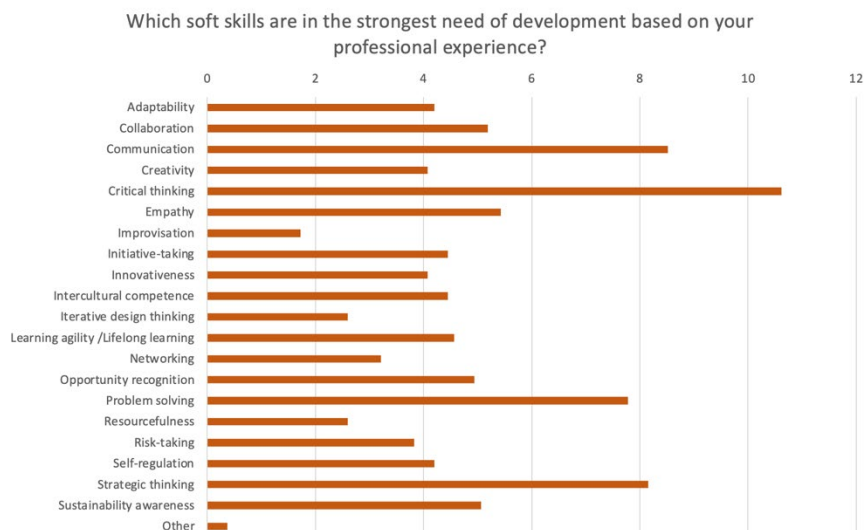
9. Cross-Country Comparisons and Trends

While the above sections detailed each region, some broader trends emerge:

Soft skill presence (Q2): Across regions, **communication** and **collaboration** tend to be rated among the most present soft skills, whereas **iterative design thinking** and **risk-taking** are consistently among the least present. This suggests that while teamwork and communication are common strengths or already in focus for longer time more complex creative processes and risk-embracing attitudes are underdeveloped in many regions. For example, all region’s respondents put “iterative design thinking” at or near the bottom of current presence, indicating a general gap in that innovative mindset.



Most needed skills (Q3): There is a strong consensus on needing better **critical thinking** - it ranked in the top two needed skills in nearly every region (especially high in Severozápad (Czechia), Východné Slovensko (Slovakia), Chemnitz (Germany), etc.). **Strategic thinking** and **communication** are also frequently cited needs across multiple regions. Interestingly, even where communication is considered a relative strength (like Prov. Limburg), it still appears as a development priority, implying no region considers itself perfect in that area. Meanwhile, some regions showed unique needs: e.g., Upper Austria and Chemnitz highlighted **intercultural competence**, and Śląskie’s (Poland) uniquely emphasised **sustainability awareness** as a needed soft skill.





Perceived demand trends (Q5 vs Q8): Obviously in all regions, more respondents report **increasing demand for soft skills** than those seeing no change or decrease. However, the **intensity varies**: Western regions like **Prov. Limburg, Upper Austria, Chemnitz** (and Śląskie - in the east of Poland) have very high proportions (~80-90% or more) seeing rising demand in their work environment, whereas **Zahodna Slovenia** is an outlier with less than half seeing an increase (many saying it's stable). The table below summarises the percentage of respondents who perceive "increasing demand" for soft skills, both in their immediate work environment and in their broader region:

Region	Work Environment: % Seeing Increase	Region: % Seeing Increase
Upper Austria	90.9%	63.6%
Prov. Limburg	86.2%	79.3%
Severozápad	57.1%	50.0%
Chemnitz	80.0%	76.0%
Veneto	63.2%	42.1%
Śląskie	82.4%	94.1%
Východné Slovensko	77.8%	55.6%
Zahodna Slovenia	47.1%	23.5%

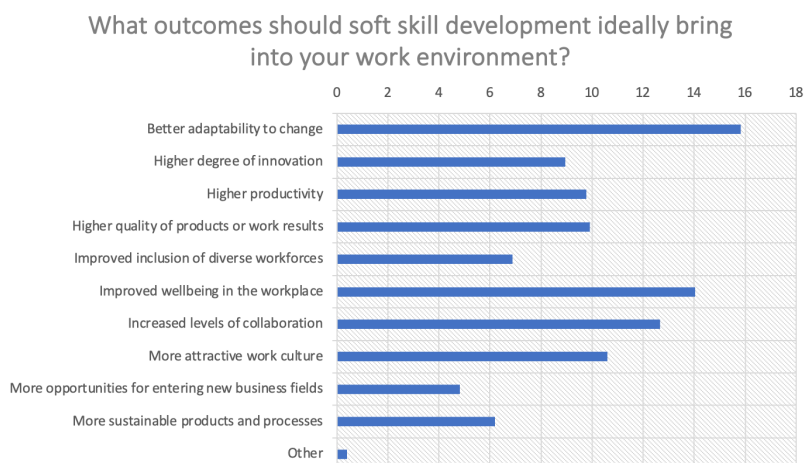
Table: Percentage of respondents perceiving an increasing demand for soft skill development in their work environment (Q5) and region (Q8).

We see that **Śląskie in Poland** and **Prov. Limburg in Belgium** stand out with near-unanimous agreement on rising demand, with Śląskie notably feeling a stronger increase regionally than even at the workplace level (94,1% inc. vs 82,4% inc.). **Zahodna Slovenia** consistently has the lowest percentages, indicating many in Zahodna Slovenia feel soft skill demand has not picked up steam, especially regionally (only 23.5% see an increase in the region). **Veneto in Italy** also shows a significant drop from work (63,2%) to region (42,1%), also **Upper Austria** (work: 90,9%, region: 63,6%) and **Východné Slovensko** (work: 77,8%, region: 55,6%) - maybe implying that while individual organisations in this regions might be pushing soft skills, the broader regional institutions might not yet be (enough) on board - especially in Veneto, with second low percentage increasing demand in region (Q8). Most other regions have a more aligned work vs region perspective, usually within 10-15 percentage points of each other. This could suggest that the regions like those of Poland, Belgium and Germany the emphasis on soft skills is part of both company strategy and regional policy, whereas in regions like those in Italy or Slovenia, it may be more isolated to specific organisations.

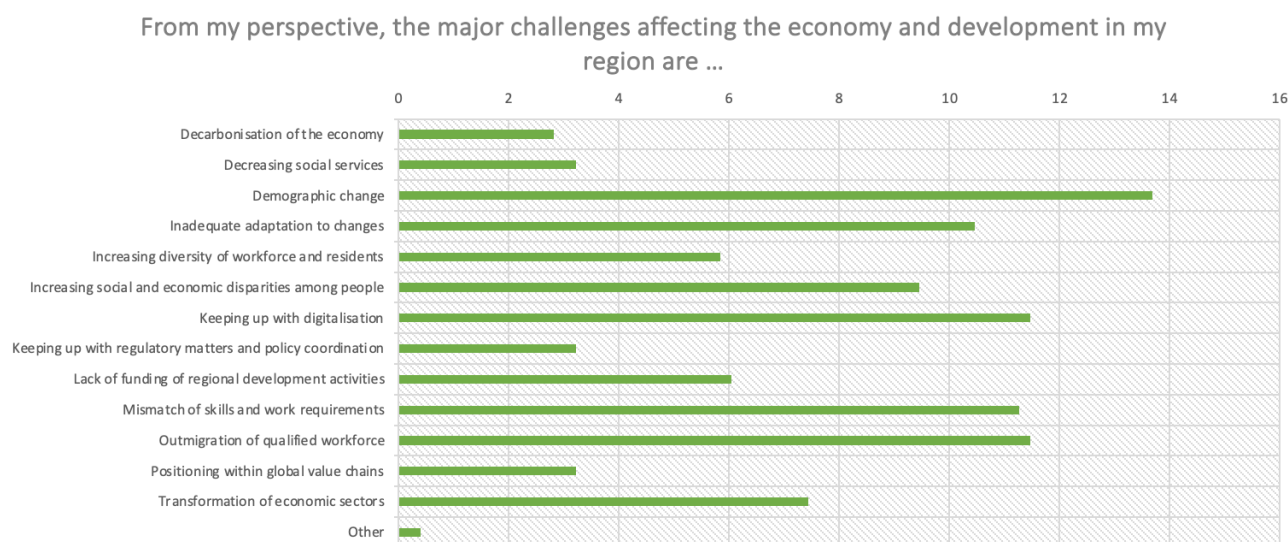
Desired outcomes of soft skill programmes (Q6): A common desired outcome across almost all participating regions is "**better adaptability to change.**" This was top-ranked in Upper Austria, Veneto, Zahodna Slovenia, Severozápad, Prov. Limburg, Východné Slovensko, and also high in others - indicating that building a workforce resilient and flexible in the face of change is a universal goal in the context of digital and green transformations. Additionally, "**improving the work culture**" and "**well-being**" (e.g., "more attractive work culture", "improved wellbeing in the workplace") appears in many regions, top outcomes, especially in Veneto, Zahodna Slovenia, Prov. Limburg, Chemnitz and Upper Austria. The importance of **collaboration** as an outcome is also widespread. However, some differences are notable: Východné Slovensko uniquely put **innovation** at the top, and Chemnitz uniquely highlighted "**sustainability outcomes**" as a key



goal, reflecting slight shifts in priorities related to local context (Východné Slovensko aiming for economic innovation boost, Chemnitz linking soft skills to sustainable practices).



Major challenges (Q7): There are clear regional patterns in perceived challenges:



Demographic change (aging population) is a top three challenge in six of the eight countries (all but Veneto and Prov. Limburg), and #1 in Śląskie, Chemnitz, and tied in Zahodna Slovenia. This sets the backdrop of why lifelong learning and adaptability are so emphasised.

Skills mismatch (the gap between workforce skills and job needs) is highlighted in many, especially Prov. Limburg, Veneto, Zahodna Slovenia, and Východné Slovensko, showing a recognition that education/training (including soft skills) need to catch up with labour market needs.

Outmigration of talent is a pressing concern in Severozápad and Východné Slovensko (and noted in Chemnitz), aligning with those countries reporting many young skilled people leaving - soft skills development could be part of making regions more attractive to talent.

Digitalisation is explicitly top-tier in Upper Austria, Prov. Limburg and Chemnitz - these advanced economies focus on keeping up with tech changes.

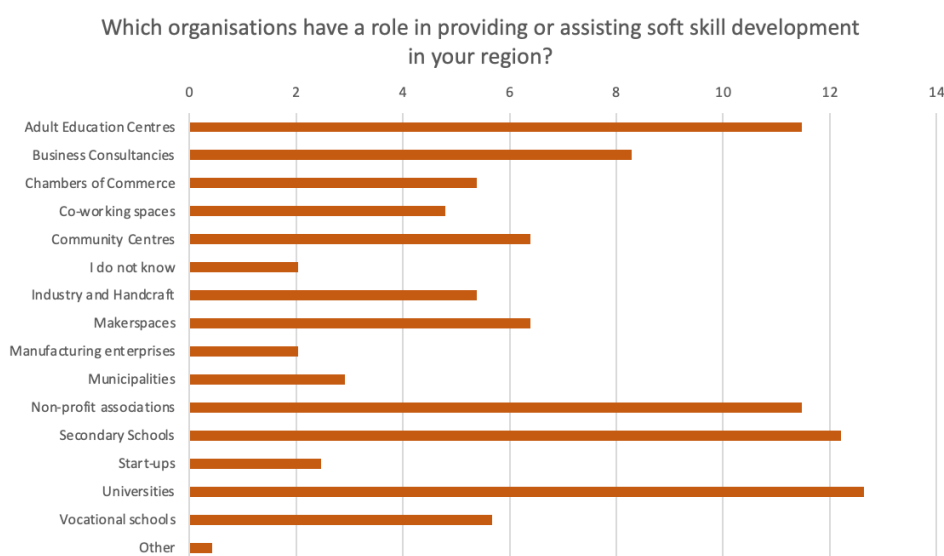
Social disparities came up in Upper Austria and Veneto, and **diversity** in Prov. Limburg, indicating that in some regions, social cohesion issues intertwine with economic development.

These differing priorities mean the urgency and angle of soft skills initiatives might differ, e.g., in a region worried about brain drain, soft skills might be developed to increase local opportunities

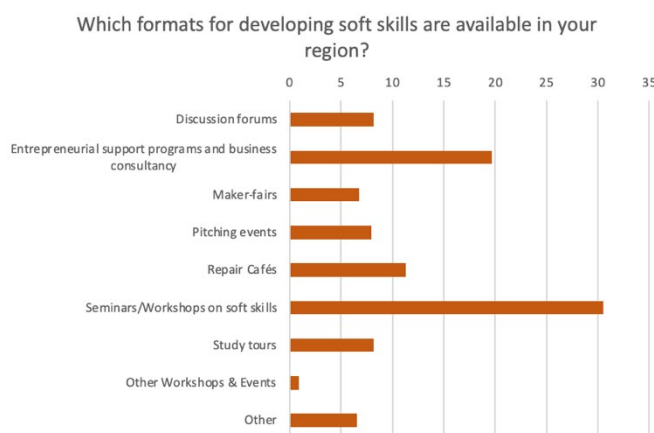


and entrepreneurship; in one focusing on digitalisation, soft skills like critical thinking and creativity complement technical upskilling.

Key Providers (Q9): Education systems and nonprofits are crucial providers in most countries. **Universities** were top 3 in Veneto, Prov. Limburg, Východné Slovensko, Śląskie, Chemnitz. **Adult education centres** are notably important in Upper Austria, Prov. Limburg, Východné Slovensko, Chemnitz (reflecting perhaps strong lifelong learning infrastructure). **Chambers of commerce** play a major role particularly in Severozápad (almost all respondents) and also in Upper Austria, Východné Slovensko, Zahodna Slovenia - more so than in Veneto or Chemnitz. **Non-profit associations** are significant in Upper Austria, Śląskie and Chemnitz. **Business consultancies** appear prominently in Zahodna Slovenia and Śląskie. This mix implies that effective soft skill development often involves multi-sector collaboration (public education, private sector, civil society), but each region has one or two leading sectors. For example, Severozápad leverages industry associations heavily, whereas Prov. Limburg leans on formal education and adult learning centres.



Formats (Q10): Traditional instructor-led **seminars and workshops** are universally available and form the backbone of soft skill development in all regions. Beyond that, many regions share formats:



Entrepreneurial support programmes and consultancies (mentioned in at least half the regions) - pointing to mentorship, coaching, and business incubation contexts for soft skills (like pitching, networking).



Networking events (explicitly noted in Zahodna Slovenia, Śląskie, Upper Austria, etc.) - informal events to practice communication and networking.

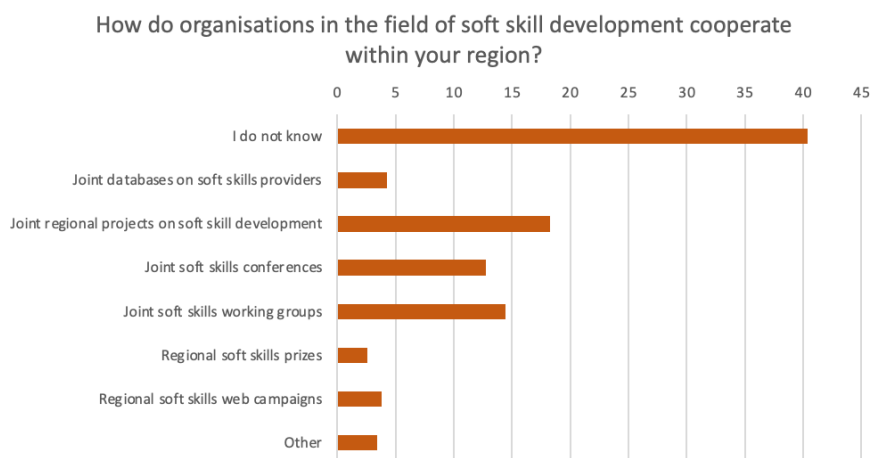
Innovation events like **hackathons, maker fairs, pitching contests** (especially noted in Chemnitz, also Upper Austria and Prov. Limburg) - these are creative ways to build teamwork, problem-solving, and innovation soft skills.

Online forums/courses got surprisingly few mentions (only explicitly in Śląskie and Upper Austria), suggesting most regions still rely on face-to-face or blended formats for soft skills, possibly because such skills benefit from interpersonal interaction.

Study visits/tours (Severozápad, Východné Slovensko) - learning from other regions or companies is another format to gain soft skills insight (like adaptability, cultural competence).

Overall, the presence of diverse formats indicates that soft skill development is not confined to classroom settings; experiential learning is valued. However, awareness of these formats can vary by region - e.g., Chemnitz respondents clearly highlighted maker/hackathon culture, whereas Veneto respondents focused more on courses and workshops.

Cooperation Among Providers (Q11): There is a **wide disparity** in how well organisations coordinate regionally on soft skills:



Region	Country	% Respondents Aware of Cooperation	% Seeing No/Don't Know Cooperation
Śląskie	Poland	65%	35%
Prov. Limburg	Belgium	59%	41%
Zahodna Slovenia	Slovenia	59%	41%
Severozápad	Czechia	46%	54%
Východné Slovensko	Slovakia	50%	50%
Upper Austria	Austria	32%	68%
Veneto	Italy	32%	68%
Chemnitz	Germany	12%	88%

Table: Proportion of respondents who reported that soft skill development organisations in their region cooperate (through networks, joint projects, etc.) versus those who reported no known cooperation.



Śląskie leads in perceived collaboration - nearly two-thirds of experts there witness cooperative efforts (joint conferences, projects, campaigns, etc.), which aligns with Śląskie's very active network approach mentioned earlier. **Prov. Limburg** and **Zahodna Slovenia** also have a majority seeing cooperation, indicating relatively well-developed networks or multi-organisation partnerships in those regions. **Východné Slovensko** and **Severozápad** hover around half-half, suggesting partial networks (some clusters of cooperation exist, but not everywhere). In contrast, **Upper Austria** and **Veneto** have only about one-third seeing any cooperation and two-thirds seeing none - implying fairly siloed operations in soft skill training (each institution doing its own thing). **Chemnitz** has the lowest cooperation awareness: only 12% (just 3 out of 25 respondents) noted any collaborative format, while 88% did not. This starkly low figure for Chemnitz highlights an opportunity: better networking and knowledge-sharing between the many actors (schools, firms, chambers, etc.) could improve efficiency and reach of soft skill programmes. It's important to note that "no cooperation" could sometimes mean respondents simply aren't aware of existing networks - but either way, it signals that if cooperation exists, it's not broadly visible to experts in those regions.

General Observations: Despite regional differences, a **unifying theme** is that **soft skills are widely recognised as increasingly important** in the context of technological change, new economic challenges, and societal shifts. All regions indicate rising demand in workplaces, and most also at the regional level. **Adaptability, critical thinking, and communication** emerge as critical soft skills for the future across the board. Additionally, the data reveals that while **educational institutions** are central to soft skills development, leveraging **informal and private sector methods** (events, consultancies, NGOs) and improving **coordination among these actors** can greatly enhance the soft skills ecosystem.

In **conclusion**, this survey provides a detailed snapshot of eight regions: each with its own strengths (e.g., Chemnitz problem-solving, Prov. Limburg teamwork) and gaps (e.g., risk-taking, design thinking everywhere), but all sharing the conviction that soft skills need to be developed further to meet future challenges. By examining each regions responses in detail and then comparing across them, we can tailor soft skill development initiatives to local needs while also fostering exchange of best practices between regions (for instance, Śląskie's collaborative approach or Prov. Limburg's integration of soft skills in formal education could be models for others). The insights and tables above can help policymakers and educators focus efforts where it matters most, ensuring that the workforce across European regions is equipped with the soft skills necessary for resilient and inclusive growth in the years ahead.

Otelo eGen, 2025-03-12, Martin & Hannelore Hollinetz
