**JUST Training Fiche: Key competences for the 21st-century workplace**

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| **Title** | Key competences for the 21st-century workplace | |
| **Keywords** | Adaptability; Flexibility; Analytical thinking; Critical thinking, Continuous learning; Soft skills | |
| **Provided by** | Slovak Business Agency | |
| **Language** | English | |
| **Objectives** | The objectives of this module are to **introduce the soft skills that are important for the 21st-century workplace**, explain how to potentially **improve** them and **transmit them into work and life**. | |
| **Learning outcomes** | * Getting familiar with the fundamental concepts presented in this module * Developing one’s soft skills and being able to apply them in the workplace * Understanding the opportunities and challenges offered by the addressed soft skills | |
| **Training Area** | **Business Etiquette** |  |
|  | **Digital Skills** |  |
|  | **Soft Skills** | **X** |
|  | **Smart Working** |  |
| **Content index** | **Key competences for the 21st-century workplace**  **Unit 1: Adaptability skills**  Section 1.1: Adaptability and flexibility  Section 1.2: Workplace adaptability  Section 1.3: Workplace flexibility  Section 1.4: Exercises and practice  **Unit 2: Analytical Thinking**  Section 2.1: The basics  Section 2.2: The art of thinking  Section 2.3: The trap called Belief systems  Section 2.4: Open-mindedness, scepticism in critical thinking  Section 2.5: Dispositions of a critical thinker  Section 2.5: Final thought  **Unit 3: Continuous Learning and Learning Strategies**  Section 3.1: Continuous learning fundamentals  Section 3.2: Unlearning  Section 3.3: Learning strategies | |
| **Training content** | **Key competences for the 21st-century workplace**  We shall develop skills for life and work to be able to adapt the way we work when circumstances change, or we need to switch to a different task quickly. This is a self-management type of skill.  **Unit 1: Adaptability skills**  Unit 1 describes the definition and the meaning of adaptability and flexibility and how it works in the world of work. Learning from the future and focusing on the success of the graduates entering the world of work we will discover why it is important to be adaptable and flexible in the workplace and why to become more adaptable to create a better work life. Adaptability skills can grow through exercise and practice; thus, we identify some examples or good practices to explore how we could approach new opportunities.  Adaptability is the ability to be flexible and adjust to changing factors, conditions or environments. Being adaptable is a highly valued skill in the workplace. Look at insights and thoughts on adaptability and the future of work by leaders from around the world in a [mini-documentary film](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_Mku_lciF0). Some people may find adaptation easy while others might find it more difficult. If you would like to develop this skill within yourself, consider building up your self-confidence, seeing a different perspective, and recognize that failure happens.  Adaptability and flexibility are two very similar terms that differ slightly. You have to be flexible to be adaptable, but if you are flexible that doesn´t necessarily mean you are adaptable. In other words, flexibility is a component of being adaptable. Being flexible in life means that you can change your plans and adapt to new situations easily. Workplace adaptability is the ability to respond effectively to different scenarios and challenges within the workplace. Becoming adaptable at work helps you respond to new situations, new roles, new projects, and new clients. Learning to become more adaptable at work takes time and focus, it is more about the journey than the end result. Learning soft skills like adaptability may not come with an official certification or be as measurable as hard skills, but they can do just as much, if not more, for your success if you are a leader or team member.  Adaptable people develop targeted skill sets, processes, and frameworks that allow them to quickly and efficiently deal with different situations as they arise. Becoming adaptable at work helps you respond to new situations, new roles, new projects, and new clients. As you develop this skill set, you'll be able to face any change that comes your way. The Center for Creative Leadership breaks adaptability skills into 3 categories:   1. cognitive adaptability, 2. emotional adaptability, and 3. personality adaptability.   Workplace flexibility is the ability to evaluate occurrences and adjust to the roles and tasks of the job being offered. Workplace flexibility is a working arrangement whereby an employee has flexibility regarding where he/she wants to work, the time he/she will work, and how he/she will work. Examples which benefit both E-E are work-life balance, boosted productivity and being more responsive to change. Managers and leaders over the world are transitioning from the traditional way of working to new and modern ways. For example work from home options, workplace independence or the option of working arrangement.  Small businesses are inclined to adapting workplace flexibility because they are trying to cut costs when it comes to utilities and rent spending, they have the liberty to do this since their operations are not that large-scale and they have a small number of people to handle.  **Unit 2: Analytical Thinking**  Unit 2 comprehensively covers the basic substances and components of perception, explaining each essential element and providing an instruction manual on how to synthesize empirical experience into wisdom while also guiding the recipient on logical reasoning, overcoming belief systems, and listing 12 personal traits for becoming a sought-after critical thinker.  **The basics**  Data is transformed into information when meaning or relationship is applied, and knowledge is gained by memorizing information; as we gain knowledge and draw connections, we can reach insight, which is the ability to synthesize knowledge for a deep understanding of a problem, and ultimately wisdom, which facilitates informed decision making.  **The art of thinking**  Cognition is the ability to integrate information acquired through perception, experience, and personal characteristics to evaluate and interpret the world, including cognitive processes such as learning, attention, memory, language, reasoning, and decision making; meanwhile, logical thinking involves analyzing a situation or problem using reason and finding potential solutions by gathering information, assessing facts, and working through a set of rules or steps, referred to as an algorithm, to determine the correct solution, making it an essential tool in the workplace.  **The trap called Belief systems**  Belief systems define our personal sense of reality and are based on experience, reason, and previous beliefs, forming a dynamic context that shapes our relative understanding; as beliefs, reason, and experience are based on each other and constantly changing, our understanding is dependent on them.  **Open Mindedness, scepticism in critical thinking**  Open-mindedness entails being open to new evidence, detaching from beliefs, and embracing unbiased thinking; while skepticism involves challenging ideas, withholding judgment until all evidence is gathered, being willing to change positions when evidence is sufficient, and looking at findings from various perspectives, and is healthy as a counterpoint to being too credulous and to avoid poor reasoning, illusions, and deliberate attempts to mislead and deceive; however, skepticism that negates the possibility of knowledge is self-defeating, and a skeptical inquiry should be used to reach informed conclusions and beliefs.  **Dispositions of a critical thinker**  There are 12 personal traits to work on to become a flexible, adaptable, and complex critical thinker, resilient, and sought-after individual, and worker: un-inquisitiveness, self-efficacy, attentiveness, organization, creativity, reflection, open-mindedness, intrinsic goal orientation, perseverance, truth-seeking, scepticism, resourcefulness.  The final thought comes towards the wisdom. What do you think it is?  **Unit 3: Continuous Learning and Learning Strategies**  Unit 3 defines the significance of continuous or lifelong learning concepts through the basic understanding of the learning process itself. Learning material motivates you to become competitive in your career or simply sprout in your personal development as the essence of any progress that leads to change. It highlights the benefits of a skill set that will help you to adapt to the ever-changing environment and provides tips to be followed for the successful approach of continuous learning or even unlearning. Moreover, Unit 3 shows the top learning strategies selected by cognitive psychologists that will help you get the most out of the learning process.  Have you ever come across the terms such as e-learning, learning by doing, visual learning, or any other type of learning? Take a minute a try to explain what learning is according to your opinion.  Learning can be a process, outcome, change of state, acquirement of knowledge, development, contextualisation, experiencing, acquiring the language of different disciplines, both memorisation and understanding, modification of a behavioural tendency by experience, strengthening correct responses, or weakening incorrect responses.  Continuous Learning (also known as lifelong learning):   * Refers to an old concept rises in its popularity since the trend of continuous skill gaps in leading industries and the onset of e-learning; * Represents process, culture, and mindset of learning new knowledge, capabilities and skills requiring dedication and specific methods; * Stands beyond a formal education based on the ongoing, self-motivated, and voluntary pursuit of professional or personal development; * Takes place through both formal and informal approaches; * Is also an evitable approach to future-proof education by upskilling your knowledge before the need arises.   The various forms of continuous learning include mentorship programs; peer discussion groups; certification programs; workshops; relevant online/offline sources i.e., newsletters, research databases or YouTube channels of your interest; team-building sessions; conferences; study programs at your workplace; learning by teaching someone else, etc.  **Unlearning** is a part of continuous learning since it refers to the replacement of familiar and safe thinking and behaviour patterns with new and unknown ones. Even though your skills brought you to your current position they might hold you back from going further or sometimes are the results of a vis major like we experienced during the pandemic such as *always saying yes even your workload rises* or *a significant shift in work or school collaboration during the COVID-19 lockdowns.*  **What are the ways to actively unlearn in your work?**  **Seek out people with different experiences.** Listen to them to find a possible new perspective in your thinking even if you do not necessarily have to agree with them.  **Increase your awareness by testing your own habits**. Using unconscious (automatic) habits may create mental shortcuts. Try to pick up some habits and unlearn them consciously, i.e. if you automatically solve a problem, try to ask someone else for their opinion, or if you habitually arrange meetings, leave it to somebody else.  **Ask yourself propelling questions** that will prevent your existing knowledge from limiting your ability to imagine new possibilities. For example: *In 2030 – What will be the most significant changes in your business field? Which of your strengths you could transfer to any other sector?*  **Learning strategies**  [Spacing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKfCUY_8-z0&ab_channel=Challenge.Innovate.Grow:LearnerCentre) - To strengthen your memory of learning new things, try studying in smaller chunks over time. Even though you’re able to learn all material the night before the exam you’ll probably not remember it in a couple of weeks. Through this method you’ll learn a bit of information, then you’ll forget a bit of it, and finally, you’ll relearn it again. For this strategy, you need to create a studying calendar where you’ll include current and previously learned material.  [Retrieval Practice](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hu-8yPo8Pg&ab_channel=Challenge.Innovate.Grow:LearnerCentre) - Recalling information without supporting materials helps you learn more effectively by changing the way information is stored. Try to retrieve information from your memory instead of tricking yourself into considering you know something by having information in front of you (such as re-reading notes). You might try speaking out, sketching, or writing down the information and then comparing it with the learning materials or checking them with your teacher.  [Interleaving](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtsCD4RQiLU&ab_channel=Challenge.Innovate.Grow:LearnerCentre) - To learn a new skill more effectively and think flexibly you might mix it with other skills rather than practising the one repeatedly.  [Elaboration](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX0rxQ_1K0w&t=6s&ab_channel=DustyColumbia) - This technique follows up the retrieval practice by making connections within the information using open-ended questions (what, how, why) and searching for detailed answers, i.e., in the form of a brief class discussion.  [Concrete Examples](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyEBdF7qDFo&ab_channel=UshaKelleymaharaj) - Imagine concrete examples while you are learning abstract concepts. Try to develop the ideas and verify them in your textbook or with a teacher.  [Dual Coding](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wixEGpznyG8&ab_channel=AshleyKaster) - When studying, pay attention to the text and visuals (graphs, images, diagrams) and try to explain them in your own words.    **Find out more and watch the** [**6-minutes video**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLkC-ODKQSc&ab_channel=TheArtofImprovement) **of Elon Musk’s 2 Rules For Learning Anything Faster, or look at tips for note-taking strategies!** | |
| **Glossary** | **Workplace adaptability:** The ability to respond effectively to different scenarios and challenges within the workplace.  **Workplace flexibility:** The ability to evaluate occurrences and adjust to the roles and tasks of the job being offered. One of the attributes of workplace flexibility is better and more **open communication.**  **Belief system:** The belief system of a person or [society](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/society) is the set of beliefs that they have about what is [right](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/right) and [wrong](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/wrong) and what is [true](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/true) and [false](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/false).  **Critical thinking:** Critical thinking is a kind of thinking in which you question, analyse, interpret, evaluate and make a judgment about what you read, hear, say, or write.  **Unlearning:** Part of continuous learning that refers to the replacement of familiar and safe thinking and behaviour patterns with new and unknown ones. | |
| **Self-evaluation (multiple choice queries and answers)** | 1. What is adaptability?   1. Adaptability is the same as flexibility. 2. **Adaptability is a skill you can use to respond more effectively to the ever-changing world.** 3. Adaptability is something you cannot practice on your own.   2. How are insight and wisdom related?   1. They are not related. 2. **Wisdom is the ability to use insight to facilitate informed decision-making.** 3. Wisdom is a subdivision of insight.   3. What is the essence of cognition?   1. A religious process of re-formation which "aims to recover the original shape of man", oriented at "the image of God" as exemplified by the founders and sacred texts of the religions of the world. 2. **The ability to assimilate and process the information we receive from different sources (perception, experience, beliefs, etc.) and convert them into knowledge.** 3. None of the above mentioned.   4. Why is Logical thinking an essential tool in the workplace?   1. Logical thinking is not an essential tool in the workplace. 2. Because it helps me to organise my workload better and be more empathic among the colleagues. 3. **It helps to analyse problems, brainstorm ideas, and find answers. Employers want employees who can come up with the right solutions that are financially reasonable, probable, and actionable.**   5. Why are belief systems the enemy of scepticism?   1. Belief systems nurture our need for truth-seeking ambitions. 2. **Belief systems utilise the mechanism that we individually “make sense” of the world around us making us more conform to mainstream ideas by following one’s propaganda.** 3. Belief systems are not in conflict with scepticism.   6. Pick the best option of the 12 dispositions of the critical thinker.   1. **Scepticism, open-mindedness, and truth-seeking.** 2. Conformity, laziness, trust worthiness. 3. Close-mindedness, creativity, ambiguity.   7. Which of the following descriptions refers to the spacing learning strategy?   1. Practice various skills rather than one repeatedly to learn more effectively. 2. Sketch, speak out or write down rather than re-read your notes. 3. **Study in smaller chunks over time to remember more and longer.** | |
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| **Resources (videos, reference link)** | * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_Mku_lciF0>  * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dlq7HuUJtQ>  * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXqqruJF9gI> * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJM\_CQN8-ns * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHaQtAXCckg * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbjZEDR5EXI> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46CYtwXH_aE> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9CcdjEqUag> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqRoGpSGFwk&ab_channel=TheArtofImprovement> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKfCUY_8-z0> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hu-8yPo8Pg> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtsCD4RQiLU> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX0rxQ_1K0w> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyEBdF7qDFo> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wixEGpznyG8> * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLkC-ODKQSc> | |