Partner Report Template

Partner Organization	Ballymun Job Centre
drafted by	Jennifer Hughes

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1. The Changing Labour Market

1.1   Drawing on recent developments and technological changes to the world of work, can you describe the impact (or potential impact) of these changes?

Note:

In this section we would like to know the impact of the changing labour market in terms of automation, digitalis ion and future opportunities, in your Country and at an EU Level.

1.   Which areas of the labour market are showing the most significant changes in your Country and at EU level?

2.   What predictions are being made on the impact of digitisation/automation?

3.   Which industries are considered high risk (of loss) and how might this impact low skilled workers?

4.   Are there any significant areas of growth in the labour market? Which areas?

5.   Will there be significant disruption in terms of the job roles and tasks performed by individuals? If so, what are they?

This section should be between 1.5 – 2 A4 pages.

- Which areas of the labour market are showing the most significant changes in your Country and at EU level?
- What predictions are being made on the impact of digitisation/automation?

The world of work is changing. Technological change and modernising of the workforce has accelerated in recent years and for those already in the labour market their capacity to adapt will be essential to sustaining their career progression. Automation has the potential to transform future jobs and the structure of the labour force. For job seekers not currently in employment, the development of both technological and soft skills will be crucial to accessing quality work into the future. In particular soft skills, which help people to adapt, will be essential for negotiating the new world of work.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has published 'Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Ireland's Workforce', a study written in 2010 on the impacts of the adoption of digital technologies over the years 2018 to 2023. This comprehensive study provides insights on the impacts that the adoption of digital technologies will have on workers in Ireland by sector, occupation and region, and highlights the opportunities and challenges that this will present. This report finds that a significant shift in the labour market is likely, due to technological changes, stating that 'One in three jobs in Ireland are at high risk (a probability greater than 70%) of being disrupted by the adoption of digital technologies'. The study states that the disruption of digitalisation in the workplace will likely result in a change to job roles and tasks, estimating too, that 'disruption from the adoption of digital technologies over the next five years will lead to a hypothetical loss of 46,000 jobs when compared to growth predictions for jobs without accounting for the adoption of digital technologies'. [1]

In an interesting article in the Irish Times Newspaper written in September 2019, Mark Jordan; Chief Technologist for Skillsnet Ireland describes how already the rise in technology such AI, machine learning, blockchain and advanced cybersecurity, is starting to have an impact on industries in Ireland and how they (skillsnet Ireland) are noticing how companies in Ireland are

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[1] Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), 2018. *Digital Transformation: Assessing the Impact of Digitalisation on Irelands Workforce ,* Ireland: National Skills Council.

starting to prioritise digitalisation transformation initiatives, reporting that 'Ireland has become a really vibrant hub for innovation over the past number of years, where we have essentially become the Silicon Valley of Europe'. [2]

In addition to the above, Cedefop's 2016 skills forecast revealed that jobs largely based on routine tasks are expected to decline, while jobs involving 21st century skills such as advanced literacy, ICT, problem solving and learning skills are projected to be on the rise. The 2018 skills forecast (3) pointed to a reduction in physical work and an increase in intellectual tasks requiring communication and social skills, affirming that projection is especially valid for jobs at the top and the bottom of the skills scale where human qualities can least be replaced by machines. [3]
Figures provided by the CEDEFOP Ireland - Skills Report 2018, shows an expected decline in routine-based, easily automatable occupations such as *numerical and material recording clerks*, *general and keyboard clerks* and *other clerical support workers* are expected to decrease in employment because of advancement in technology also, saying that; 'technological change together with shifting patterns of healthcare provision will, also, change the applications concerning health management, monitoring and sharing medical information, with a negative impact observed in the structure of *health professionals'* occupation'.[4]

Figure 2 Employment growth by broad sector of economic activity, 2011-30
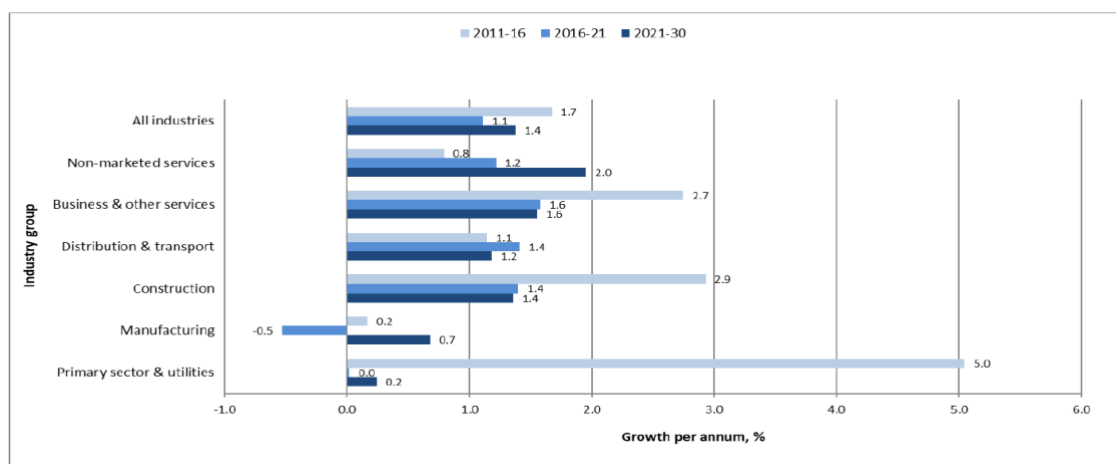
Source: Cedefop (2018 Skills Forecast)

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[2] The Irish Times. (2020). *Firm Warning: Embrace Technology or Fail.* [online] Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/special-reports/future-of-work/firm-warning-embrace-technology-or-fail-1.4008921 [accessed 14 Jan. 2020]

[3] CEDEFOP Briefing Note. (April 2019). *The Skills Employers Want!* [online] Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9137_en.pdf [accessed 20 Jan.2020]

[4] CEDEFOP Briefing Note. (April 2019). *The Skills Employers Want!* [online] Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9137_en.pdf [accessed 20 Jan.2020]

A demand for numerous high-skilled occupations, such as *health professionals and associates*, *legal, social and cultural professionals and associates*, *chief executives, senior officials and legislator* and *teaching professionals*. With figure 4 below showing the total jobs opening for qualification needs, showing that more than half the jobs forecast to be created over the period up to 2030 will require a higher level of qualification. [5]

Figure 4 Share of total job openings by level of qualification, 2016-30
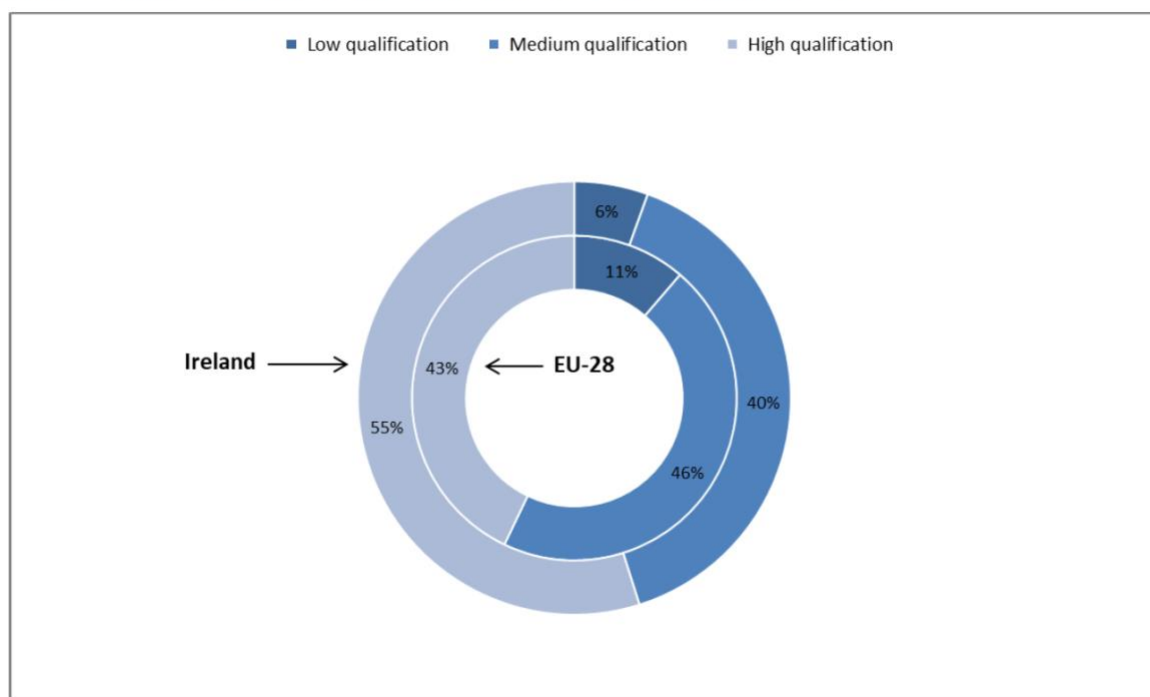
Source: Cedefop (2018 Skills Forecast)

It is noted through much of the research that automation impacts on the availability of various jobs, along with significant changes to associated skills. The shift from manufacturing to predominantly service driven economies is noted in much of the Country research. One example of stark transformation of customer service provision, seen in areas such as finance, insurance and telecoms, with companies reporting a rethinking of their organisational strategy, while equally assessing the needs and experience of their current and future employees. Findings in a report carried out by Skillsnet and Limerick School of Business shows that, while Cx employee skills themselves have not considerably changed due to digital transformation, yet the level and

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[5] Cedefop Skills Forecast. (2018) [Online] Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/cedefop_skills_forecast_2018_-_ireland.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

frequency at which they must be applied is significantly increased. The study specifically identifies the need for skill dexterity in Cx employees. Dexterity is defined as a sharpness of mind, or skill, in thinking creatively, and understanding and expressing something quickly and easily, moving swiftly and smoothly between tasks. [6]

In addition, while much of the Country research points to a decrease in employment opportunities in certain sectoral areas, it is also noted that increases in low and medium skilled occupations work are likely, particularly employment within the *transport* sector and *non-marketed services* sector such as drivers, and mobile plant operatives and personal care workers.

The age old concern with automation and any technological change is technological unemployment (Keynes 1933) and the adjustment disruptions in the labour market. In the past two decades, Ireland experienced one of most substantial transitional change shifts of middle jobs to higher skilled jobs in the OECD. Where, 15.1 per cent of jobs in manufacturing were lost. During this time, the increase in high skilled jobs was 14.4 per cent, with only 0.7 per cent in low skilled jobs. Ireland has experienced over twice the rate of disparity to that observed in the US. According to the OECD (2018), over the same period, the average decline across OECD countries in traditional middle skilled jobs was 7.6 per cent. In turn, the increase in low skilled jobs was 2.3 per cent and 5.3 per cent in high skilled jobs[7]

SECTORAL & THEMATIC EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

The drivers of change are noted in the National Skills Strategy 2025 as including: demographics, technological advances, urbanisation and climate change, saying that these aspects will alter and shape the environment in which enterprises in Ireland and globally operate.

A number of Government Strategies and individual Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGSFN) sectoral and thematic reports have quantified the specific skills requirements in a number of sectors, such as showing in Figure 3 and Table 3 below. Examples of which include areas such as

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[6] The Future of Work Now: The digital transformation of customer service and the emergence of Ireland's Cx professional . (2019) [Online] Available at: https://www.skillnetireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ICBE-Advanced-Productivity-Report-June-2019-Skillnet-Ireland.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

[7] Automation and Irish towns, Who's at most risk?. (2019) [Online] Available at: https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/projectsandcentres/srerc/SRERCWP2019-1_upload.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

construction, due to: The Government's Construction 2020 strategy forecasts employment growth in the order of 60,000 to 2020, along with a strategy for the International Financial Services to 2020, forecasting growth of 10,000 jobs in that sector. [8]

Figure 3 Projected average annual employment growth for the period 2012-2020 by occupational family - recovery with competitive manufacturing
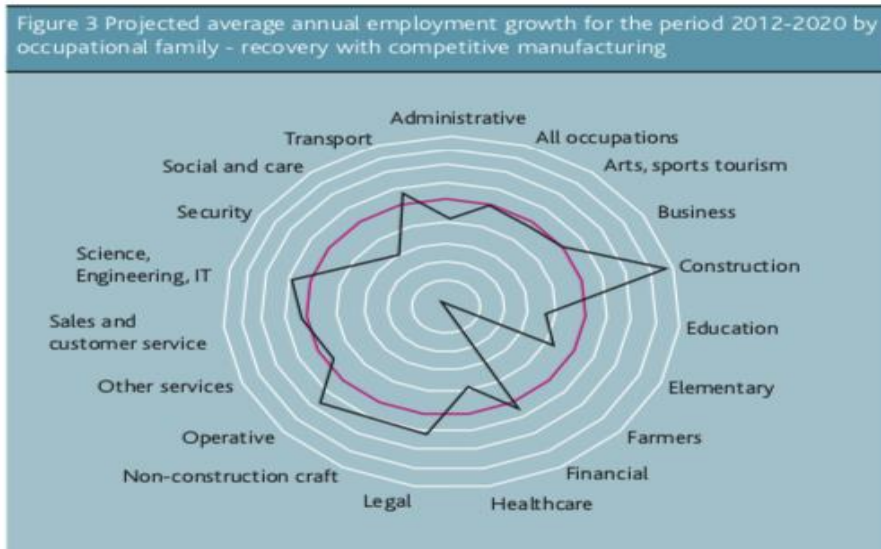
Source: SLMRU, SOLAS

PROJECTED AVERAGE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN %
AVERAGE GROWTH OF 2.2%

Table 3 Growth by occupational family to 2020[36]

Above average employment growth	Average growth	Below average growth
• construction occupations (strong growth from very low base) • operative occupations • science, engineering and IT (STEM) occupations • legal, business and financial (including financial administration) occupations • non-construction craft occupations • transport occupations • sales and customer care occupations	• services, • arts, • sports • tourism occupations	• elementary and administrative occupations

[36] Occupational Employment Projections 2020, SOLAS, January 2014

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[8] Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025. (2019) [Online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

1.2 Drawing on Country and EU research, can you describe what skills will be most needed in the future world of work?

Note:

1. Having identified where job losses are likely to happen, what skills/upskilling will be most needed?

2. What steps are being taken in your Country to address the challenges and skills gap, particularly for low skilled workers and those of low educational attainment and disabilities? *(National and Local initiatives, training etc..)*

3. What recommendations are being made for low skilled workers, in the future labour market in your Country and/or at EU level?

SKILL SETS NEEDS OF THE IRISH ECONOMY

The labour market is constantly evolving, and the concept of a 'job for life' has been replaced with a need for workers and job seekers to manage their own careers and adopt skills as needed within the labour market.

As noted in Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025: The increasingly interdisciplinary nature of the world of work is also resulting in overlaps in the skills required across different sectors and occupations. Over the next ten years, people working in Ireland will need a mix of sectoral, cross-sectoral and transversal skills. They reports that in terms of types of skills, it is clear from the analysis and the submissions received from stakeholders that transversal skills are increasingly important in enabling people to gain and maintain employment and for enterprises. [9]

Transversal skills are described by in the National Skills strategy as being relevant to a broad range of occupations and sectors and are often referred to as generic, core, basic or soft skills and are named as *the cornerstone for an individual's personal development.*

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[9] Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025. (2019) [Online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

Transversal skills are described as the building blocks for the development of the "hard", "vocational" or "technical" skills required to succeed in the labour market.

The transversal skills as identified by enterprise include:

- **Creativity**
- **innovation and entrepreneurship**
- **critical & analytical thinking**
- **team work**
- **communication and business acumen.** [10]

Future Jobs Ireland publication on 2017, also notes that transversal skills such as communication skills, organisational skills and self-motivation, along with core competencies such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills, will be critical across all job sectors. They note too that skills such as advanced cognitive skills, logic, social and emotional skills, will be of particular importance and skills which will be needed in order to adapt and respond to technological change. [11]

In fact, some experts suggest that the 'successful implementation of digital technologies will hinge on the workforce's 'soft skills' (EGFSN, 2018).This implies that employees will increasingly be required to possess these soft skills to ensure that their organisations will not be left behind in the adoption of technology.

UNESCO define transversal skills as:

"Those (skills) typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge but as skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings. These include critical and innovative thinking; Inter-personal skills (e.g. presentation and communication skills, organisational skills, teamwork, etc.); Intra-personal skills (e.g. self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, etc.); Global citizenship (e.g. tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, etc.); and Media and

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[10] Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025. (2019) [Online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

[11] Future Jobs Ireland 2019. (2019) [Online] Available at: https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Future-Jobs-Ireland-2019.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

information literacy such as the ability to locate and access information, as well as to analyse and evaluate media content". [12]

In addition the above, Cross-sectoral skills are noted as of growing importance with the new labour market and enabling mobility across sectors and the ability to do so, may well increase employment sustainability . Transferable skills which can be used in a number of sectors and occupation are fundamental to maintaining employment status with the EGFSN naming the key cross sectoral skills as:

ICT Skills - core technology skills e.g. software developers, cloud, security, networking and infrastructure and a combination of these technical skills with business/analytic/foreign language skills as the skills requirements become more complex.

Data Analytics - Deep analytical talent, Big Data-savvy roles, Supporting technology.

Foreign Language and Cultural Awareness - languages in demand are: German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and the Nordic languages. Industry engagement advises on the growing need also for Mandarin.

Business Skills - Sales and Marketing – required in addition to technical skills, as roles may involve dealing with customers, technical sales and product development

Engineering - Mechanical, Electrical / Electronic, Industrial / Manufacturing – production, process quality, validation, product design/development [13]

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[12] UNESCO Skills Glossary. [Online] Available at: https://unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=TVETipedia+glossary+A-Z&id=422 [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

[13] Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025 [Online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

Strategic Reponse to Changing the World of Work

Ireland skills strategy, shown below, aims to prioritise progress by providing a strategic framework, with additional actions, in the follow important areas:

1. 1 Education and training providers will place a stronger focus on providing skills development opportunities that are relevant to the needs of learners, society and the economy

2. 2 Employers will participate actively in the development of skills and make effective use of skills in their organisations to improve productivity and competitiveness

3. 3 The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of education and training will be continually enhanced and evaluated

4. 4 People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong learning

5. 5 There will be a specific focus on active inclusion to support participation in education and training and the labour market

6. 6 We will support an increase in the supply of skills to the labour market

The actions as listed, will be underpinned by national and international research, evaluation and benchmarking, and will be supported by an enhanced national and regional skills architecture

SOLAS is the state agency in Ireland which is tasked with building a Further Education and Training (FET) sector to fuel Ireland's future. Working with other VET partners, Solas, via its two research units, seeks to anticipate and effectively respond to future training needs in businesses and industries across the Country. Solas offers traineeships, apprenticeships, eCollege and skills to advance employees.

The European Union (EU) has set a target of 15% for adult participation in learning activities to be reached by 2020. In addition, one of the targets set out in the National Skills Strategy is to increase to 10% the number of persons aged 25-64 engaged in lifelong learning by 2020 and to 15% by 2025.

Summary

Significant changes are happening in the world of work in an EU context and also in Ireland due to technological changes. It is apparent that changes in the labour market will impact both on job seekers and on those currently in employment due to digitalisation of tasks and systems. There are substantial implication for low skilled job seekers due to the shown changes in areas such as manufacturing and lower skilled administration positions. Adjustments to how we think about the world of work and associated tasks, may be a challenge but will need to be encouraged and supported via EU and National recommendations. SOLAS has indicated that, for example, despite the exporting sector's demand for mid-level skills, there is insufficient recognition of the potential of FET to meet this demand. Similarly, within the large domestic sector, employers' awareness of their skills needs and of the opportunities offered by FET are limited114. The development of the Regional Skills fora will be key to enhancing employer understanding of the opportunities available across the full spectrum of skills development. In addition, given the progress made in reconfiguring the FET sector in recent years and the development of new Apprenticeships and Traineeships, it is now timely for the State and employers to promote the essential skills attained from FET as a route to skilled employment and not just as a stepping stone to higher education. This strategy includes an ambitious target to support the delivery of 50,000 apprenticeship and traineeship places up to 2020. Progress will be reviewed in 2020 with a view to setting new ambitious targets for the period to 2025. There will need to be strong employer commitment to achieve these targets. These new apprenticeships and traineeships will provide a significant

opportunity to showcase the potential of vocational education. The role of the higher education sector in undergraduate formation and researcher development will continue strongly throughout the lifetime of this Strategy, in keeping with projections for growing enterprise requirements for highly skilled people. The National Strategy for Higher Education will underpin the development of the 2017-16 System Performance Framework[14].

Technical skills coupled with higher levels of soft skills will be in demand and vital to acquire and maintain employment. As noted, advanced cognitive skills and flexibility within particular roles and occupations could ensure more sustainable employment options for individuals. Active inclusion of those deemed long term unemployed and of lower education and skills is imperative and will require adjustment within Guidance service and VET delivery

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[14] Irelands National Skills Strategy 2025 [Online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/pub_national_skills_strategy_2025.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

Theoretical Approach

2.1   Identify and explore relevant theories and research evidence which can be used to inform project and tool development

Note:

Review of formal and non-formal Learning

1.   Please provide an up to date definition of formal and non-formal learning

In recent years the concepts of informal and non-formal learning have grown in importance and research is becoming more commonplace. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is a centrepiece of lifelong learning and addresses the importance of making visible and putting value on learning which is taking place outside formal activities. It is important too, to highlight that Informal learning, non-formal learning and formal education are not mutually exclusive phenomenon, as much informal learning can take place within the education system itself. Lifelong learning and recognition of the skills derived from engagement in activities both in a formal settings such as, employment and training, and in non-formal settings such as experienced during home life and engagement in leisure, are of particular importance to those disadvantaged in the labour market.

In order to correctly define the characteristics of informal and nonformal learning we first provide a suitable and usable definition. An up to date and comprehensive definition of informal and non-formal learning is provided in the European Guidelines for validating informal and nonformal learning, highlighting the importance of the learner outcomes, while additionally noting the importance of the validation process to ensure trust, stating that:

Validation is, first, about making visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals. This learning frequently takes place outside formal education and training – at home, in the workplace or through leisure time-activities – and is frequently overlooked and ignored. Validation is, second, about attributing value to the learning of individuals, irrespective of the context in which this learning took place. Going through validation helps a learner to 'exchange' the outcomes non-formal and informal learning for future learning or employment opportunities. The process must

generate trust, notably by demonstrating that requirements of reliability, validity and quality assurance have been met. These elements of visibility and value will always have to be taken into account when designing validation arrangements, although in different ways and combinations. (CEDEFOP, 2015)

2. What are the characteristics of formal and non-formal learning?

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) provides definitions and characteristics of formal, informal and non-formal education and lifelong learning in the paragraphs below, also providing the characterstics of same:

Formal Education covers the regular education and training system where courses are of a predetermined purpose and format provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions normally constitute a continuous ladder of educations structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and learning support normally intended to lead to a qualification recognised by national authorities qualifying for a specific education/programme).

Non-formal Education refers to all organised learning activities outside regular or formal education. The learner normally has to register for each learning activity. Non-formal education includes participating in a course or a seminar to acquire/improve skills, knowledge and competence; courses can be aimed at improving job-related knowledge or enhancing skills for social and personal purposes both courses leading to certificates and courses not leading to certificates, grinds, piano lessons, night classes, art courses, letter writing, using the internet, courses in Tai Chi, driving lessons, etc.

Informal Learning includes learning that is not organised or structured in terms of purpose, time or instruction (e.g. language skills acquired during a stay abroad, IT skills acquired at work, skills acquired through sports, reading a professional magazine etc.)

Lifelong learning as defined by Eurostat includes 'all purposeful learning activity, whether formal, non-formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence'. [15]

> 3. Are you aware of any methods and/or tools for testing/validating formal and non-formal learning, if so, what are they? Why do you like them? How do they relate to FYC client group?

Formal learning within Ireland is provided by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) state agency which was established by the Quality Assurance and Qualifications (Education and Training) in 2012. In addition to below, QQI are the awarding body in Ireland responsible for the validation of education and training and further training Ireland, including the education and training board (ETB).

QQI are responsible for:

- Developing of awards and standards
- Validating Education and Training programmes
- Reviewing providers of education and training
- Maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)
- Authorising the use of the International Education Mark
- Developing Quality Assurance
- Facilitating Qualifications Recognition

QQI are responsible for maintaining the ten-level National Framework of Qualifications. The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a 10-level, single national entity through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other. It describes qualifications in the Irish education and training system and sets out what each qualification says about what

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[15] Lifelong Learning among Adults in Ireland 2015 [Online] Available at: https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Bodies-and-Committees/egfsn/Lifelong%20Learning%20Amongst%20Adults%20in%20Ireland%20Quarter%204%202014.pdf [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

learners know, understand and are able to do. It also sets out qualifications pathways from one NFQ level to the next.
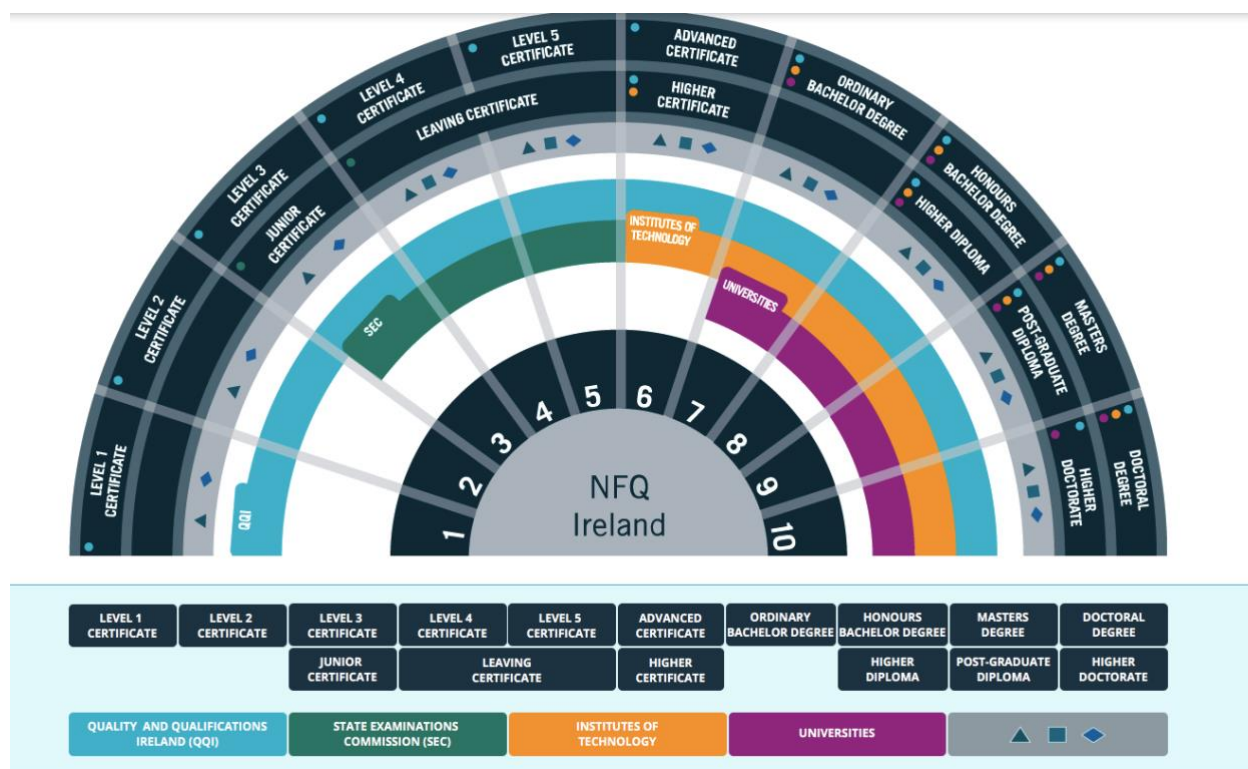
The QQI framework supports the movement of learners from one level to the next, with third level institutions providing a variety of RPL options to facilitate learner access.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) is a process whereby evidence of learning that has taken place prior to enrolment on a programme of study is explored, recognised and given value in the context of a destination award. In Ireland, validation of non-formal and informal learning is referred to as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It encompasses all forms of prior learning and is provided in the context of specified destination awards from Level 1 to 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) based on learning outcomes.

RPL provides access to formal education and can be used for the award of credit, to gain exemptions within a programme and support access to the labour market. It is a process which brings value to all learning and provides a space for validation within an awards framework.

CEDEFOP European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning states that "The main enabler is a clear, comprehensive framework for validation that explicitly includes a way of monitoring the process. The system for monitoring VNFIL needs to be an integral part of the quality assurance system, under a systematic application of the quality circle (plan, do check, change)..." [16]

Common stages of an RPL process are shown in the table below:

Tabel 2: Common stages in RPL processes	
Identify/document	Identify and record what someone knows and can do. This may be achieved with support.
Assess	Establish what someone knows or can do. This is a measurement stage
Validate	Establish what someone knows or can do to satisfy certain requirements (points of reference, standards). A level of performance is set and requires the involvement of a third party.
Certify	Stating that what someone knows or can do satisfies certain requirements, and the award of a document to testify this. (Necessitates the involvement of an accredited authority to certify performance and level.)

(Adapted from Expert Group on Future Skill Needs, 2011, p. 18; Werquin, 2010)

In the 2011 report produced by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs the potential of RPL in VET provision was emphasised. The first recommendation of the report was aimed at NFQ levels 1-3 and those with no formal qualifications. The report called on the Department of Education and Skills to provide for an assessment of core skills for all adults. This would target the most vulnerable in terms of accessing and retaining employment and would position RPL as a critical tool within FET. Such an assessment would bring visibility to prior learning and would enhance employability and encourage more participation in FET.

An interesting suggestion made in the above report was that, "The Department of Social Protection could refer individuals for assessment, or consider integrating RPL assessment tools

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[16] CEDEFOP European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal; Monitoring the Use of Validation- Thematic Report 2016 [Online] Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3073 [accessed 01 Feb.2020]

into its referrals work". This also emphasised the key role envisaged for RPL in terms of supporting individuals and enhancing mobility.

The life-long, life-broad, equitable and community-wide approach to education

Several tools have also been developed at European level to assist countries to implement national validation systems for non-formal and informal learning. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, published the European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning in 2009. One of which is the concept of life-long, life-broad, equitable and community-wide approach to education, as noted in a report by CEDEFOP in 2019 exploring a holistic approaches to lifelong learning. The reports notes that, there has been a wide consensus of research and practice communities that building bridges between formal, nonformal and informal education is a requisite for this kind of (community) approach - with a balanced emphasis on academic achievements, skills and competences, and social-emotional development, education for future jobs, citizenship education and well-being, with policy also following this lead. There is an increasing recognition at EU Policy level of the importance of combining services for marginalised groups in a community-based location as one-stops hop multidisciplinary teams (Eurochild 2011; Frazer 2017; Downes 2011a; European Commission TWG 2013, European Commission WG 2015). Such a model allows for a more flexible, accessible model which aims to engage socio-economically excluded groups. A range of examples of community based lifelong learning centres exists across Europe and can combine non-formal with formal education options (Downes 2011) [17].

This community approach to lifelong learning is interesting and has been tested in various Countries across the EU in the form of a 'one-stop-shop' who work not just with individuals such as early school leavers, but also their families members stating that, "The unique potential of each individual can be nurtured within a specific community context where the life of each

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[17] CEDEFOP Implementing a holistic approach to lifelong learning: Community Lifelong Learning Centres as a gateway to multidisciplinary support teams 2019 [Online] Available at https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2226_en.pdf. [accessed 01 Feb. 2020]

member can unfold with purpose, meaning and direction". Moving towards a more integrated approach such as this, requires good communication among supporting services and a history of shared initiavies and successes.

2. Identifying and Measuring Soft skills for the Future Labour Market

3.1   Review of theories which underpin INFORM and identifying and measuring soft skills

Note:

Thinking about the current theories which underpin the INFORM tool, please identify relevant and up to date research in these common areas.

Explore and document the process of recognising worker oriented skills. For example: as identified in O*NET, worker characteristics, requirement and experience requirements. Soft, digital and cognitive skills recognition

1. Reviewing the theories which underpin the INFORM tool, do you think that they are still relevant? If so, why? If not, please provide up to date literature and research. *(for example does 'hardiness', described as inner strength that allows people to overcome stressful events (Kobasa 1979), need to be replaced with a more current theory such as resilience?)*

2. What existing tools and methods are present to identify, measure and/or recognise soft and cognitive skills (worker orientated skills) both nationally and in an EU context? (Technology, Initiatives, EU projects etc..)

This section should be between one and half to two pages of A4.

Please summarize your findings here…

As part of the research piece and to reassess the theories which underpinned the INFORM tool, we make only two comment on the theories which expand the theory of EI and also provide a

helpful distinction between hardiness and resilience. In the case of theories without comment, we believe that these are relevant and transferrable to FYC tool development.

INFORM: Emotional Intelligence - Refers to a competence to identify and express emotions, understand them, assimilate them in thought, and regulate both positive and negative emotions in the self and in others (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2004).

Comment: The above definition is still very relevant. An additional element is added to Emotional intelligence as has been defined, by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, stating "the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different emotions and label them appropriately, and to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior". This definition was later broken down and refined into four proposed abilities: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions. These abilities are distinct yet related[18]. Emotional intelligence also reflects abilities to join intelligence, empathy and emotions to enhance thought and understanding of interpersonal dynamics[19].

The above definition is particularly relevant to the changing work of work and offers further insight into the transversal skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, as was projected as necessary due to technological advances in the workplace.

INFORM: Hardiness – Refers to the inner strength that allows people to overcome stressful events. In other words they rise to the challenge of the event and deal with them as opposed to becoming stressed and experiencing negative feelings and the negative physical symptoms synonymous with the state of stress (Kobasa 1979).

Comment: While considering hardiness as used in the INFORM tool, we also looked at the concept of resilience to make some worthwhile comparisons, noting that much of the literature distinguishes between hardiness and resilience as ; resilience is conceptualized as an outcome

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[18] *Colman, Andrew (2008). A Dictionary of Psychology (3 ed.). Oxford University Press*
[19] *Mayer, John D (2008). Available at: https:"Human Abilities: Emotional Intelligence". Annual Review of Psychology.* [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

that involves two parts: 1) an experience of significant adversity (adversity can be operationalized many different ways), and 2) a positive outcome despite the adversity (e.g., avoidance of psychological disorder, positive competence in various life tasks). Many different factors contribute to resilience, including both environmental and individual factors, while hardiness is seen as one's potential individual factor that may promote resilience as an outcome; people vary in terms of how much they can cope with adversity, and hardiness taps that ability. So, hardiness is a much narrower construct involving an individual difference that may promote resilience as an outcome.

Experiential Learning - the learning we acquire through experience. It is a proactive, hands on type of learning. This type of learning is inherently social and cannot be acquired from textbooks. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle gave the impetus to the recognition of prior learning movement and is very relevant to the identification of informal learning

Tacit Knowledge – Tacit knowledge is the knowledge that people have that cannot be readily or easily written down, usually because it is based in skills. It is silent knowledge that emerges only when a person is doing something that requires such knowledge or when they are reminded of it. This covers knowledge that people have, such as attention, recognition, retrieval of information, perception, and motor control. Michael Polanyi (1967)

Competency - A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual which is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job or in an individual's life (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). There exists what are referred to as key competences and they are said to be a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The European Union has defined eight key competencies

Social Learning Theory - Socialisation is necessary to ensure that societies can function as they do. The individual meets a cultural world, which he or she has to be socialised into, that is to say, learn to adapt and internalise. People learn from each other through observing, imitating and modelling the behaviour of others they come into contact with (Bandura 1977)

Positive Psychology - Is the science of optimal human functioning (Linley 2006). it "seeks to understand and build the strengths and virtues that enable individual and communities to thrive" (Linley 2006). It is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful lives…to do their best.

Feed Forward – Is a feedback technique grounded in positive psychology. Feed-forward approaches objectives by focusing on what works well and builds on positive history to produce

positive ideas and actions for the future. It avoids problem focused because paying attention to problems tends to emphasize and amplify. It asks positive and provocative questions to stimulate change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Client Centred Therapy - In the therapeutic setting Carl Rogers believed if you create a certain environment through the use of unconditional positive regard, respect & empathy, paraphrasing and summarising; self-understanding and positive change can come about for the client. *"Everyone has within them the capacity for self-understanding & positive change. These resources can be tapped into if a favourable/facilitative environment is created" (Carl Rogers 1959)*

Are there any relevant soft skills frameworks which you find useful and applicable to the target group? If so, why?

The Youthreach Soft Skills framework is the culmination of many years of work by

practitioners working directly in, or providing support services to, centres for education and training delivering the Youthreach programme to early school leavers in Ireland. The framework centres on the wellbeing of the students, often working with challenging young adults in the exploration and identification of their competencies and transferrable skills[20].. While the framework was developed with young people at the centre, elements such as *self-regulation and the ability to solve practical (everyday) problems*, might be worth considering within the context of the FYC project target group.

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[20] Youthreach Soft Skills Framework (2020). [Online] Available at: http://www.cefa.ie/uploads/1/5/8/8/15883224/youthreach_soft_skills_document_23_nov_11.pdf. [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

Framework with sample of soft skills

Competencies	Skills	
Development of **Confidence** through an AWARENESS and ACCEPTANCE of the SELF Emotional competence Sense of identity Sense of purpose	**1A Life** Can look after self in practical ways e.g. self-presentation, sexual health Can make decisions and plans to benefit self and advance life goals Can place value on own achievements Can weigh up risks and decide how to act accordingly Can solve a range of practical problems	**1B Self-regulation** Can recognise emotions Can express emotions appropriately Can acknowledge own needs Can recognise personal triggers Can cope with adverse circumstances Can manage anxiety and try out new experiences Can handle criticism
Development of **Responsibility** through an AWARENESS and CONSIDERATION of OTHERS Social sensitivity Sense of connected-ness and capacity for empathy	**2A Self-Regulation** Can manage emotions e.g. anger, jealousy, exuberance in consideration of others Can restrain impulsivity Can take responsibility for own actions Can keep own word Can be punctual and reliable Can exercise self-control in relation to drink and drugs Can put in effort and motivate self	**2B Social** Can manage personal interactions with others e.g. can give and receive apologies Can ask for help Can de-centre and observe others' experience Can take care of others Can empathise with others Can listen Can communicate effectively in social situations Can be assertive without being aggressive Can manage and resolve conflicts
Development of **Power** through KNOWLEDGE and APPRECIATION of the WORLD Rational awareness Ability to decentre Curiosity Civic Values	**3A Social** Can work cooperatively with others Can deal effectively with people in formal and semi-formal situations Can understand where others are coming from and take account of this Can observe social rules and niceties	**3B Life** Can understand the structures, practices and rules that apply in the wider world Can locate self within the wider world Can access information and use it Can employ learning strategies Can think about and evaluate social and political matters or events

CareersPortal.ie was developed by Durrow Communications Ltd as a direct response to a report generated by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) in 2007, which recommended that Ireland develop a central career guidance portal. Careers portal website was set up in…and provides career information resources to those needing or providing career guidance. The website provides *Self-Assessment Tools* which enable a user to find out how their interests, personality, skills etc. can tie-in with various different courses and careers[21].

An element of the careers portal career advice tool, offers users an opportunity to read and reflect on four areas of skills relevant to job seekers and to the workplace. These skills are: ***career skills, people skills, tasks skills and personal skills***. Each heading is explained well and provides a list of sample skills relevant to each as seen below:

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[21] About Careers Portal [Online] Available at: https://careersportal.ie/about.php. [accessed 30 Jan.2020]

Career Skills: proved via an interactive video found here: https://careersportal.ie/careerskills/index.php?parent=50&ed_sub_cat_id=208&menu_parent_id

People-Skills

Examples of People Skills:

Sensitivity to others	Shows ability to maintain a deep interest in the concerns and feeling of others. Inclined to find ways to help people.
Insight into others	Shows an understanding of what makes people do what they do, and tolerance of the actions of others. Good at reading the moods of others.
Openness to others	Is open to, and communicates with people at all levels. Inclined to share personal experiences and trust people.
Respect	Shows consideration for the feelings, needs, thoughts, wishes and preferences of others (including other cultures and races).
Speaking / Presenting	Presents information clearly and confidently to other individuals or groups. Maintains good eye contact and keeps the attention of an audience or individual.
Active listening	Pays full attention to what other people are saying, takes time to understand the points being made, asks questions as needed, and does not interrupt inappropriately.
Conversation	Speaks clearly and listens attentively. Attends to other people, not to themselves. Seeks clarification where necessary and attends to body language appropriately.
Persuasion	Shows ability to influence peoples beliefs and actions. Shows ability to win people's cooperation and support for ideas or activities.
Team membership	Works easily with groups of people and shows loyalty and commitment to the teams' objectives. Attends to each member's views equally.
Team participation	Openly expresses views and opinions within a group. Shows willingness to take on tasks and responsibilities as appropriate to one's experience.
Leadership	Shows the ability to communicate a vision or goal to others and lead them towards achieving it. Pushes for action and results, and wins the support and help of others.

Task Skills

Examples of Task Skills:

Planning / Organising	Creates clear goals, identifies and finds the resources (e.g. time, people, materials) needed to achieve them, and schedules tasks so that work is completed on time.
Time management	Takes the time to organise events and tasks carefully so as to use time efficiently. Uses a diary/planner to ensure tasks are undertaken
Practical skills	Uses equipment, tools or technology effectively. Easily follows instructions and shows willingness to use whatever tools or technology is required.
Computer skills	Confidently uses a computer to write documents, browse the internet or use email programs. Can save files, locate them efficiently and print them.
Problem solving	Shows interest in finding the cause of problems, looks for and chooses effective solutions and takes the necessary action to resolve them.
Business awareness	Shows understanding of the main business activities of the company/organisation. Has a good sense of the business opportunities available, and the primary competitors.
Customer focus	Shows understanding and concern for customers' needs, is helpful and friendly to them, and deals effectively with any questions or complaints they may have.

Personal Skills

Examples of Personal Skills:

Learning skills	Seeks and willingly takes opportunities to learn. Shows interest in personal learning and development. Looks for feedback to improve understanding.
Adaptability	Adapts easily to new challenges and shows openness to new ways of doing things. Effective at changing plans or actions to deal with changing situations.
Goal setting	Shows the ability to make a decision about what is wanted, and determine when it is to be achieved. Stays committed to the goal, and deals with setbacks realistically.
Initiative	Demonstrates ability to take the initiative in a situation. Shows inclination to find opportunities to make decisions or influence events.
Independence	Able to perform tasks effectively with minimum help or approval, or without direct supervision.
Motivation	Shows the drive to succeed and excel at tasks. Shows confidence in abilities and expects to succeed at all tasks agreed on.
Dependability	Is reliable, responsible and dependable in fulfilling duties. Carefully checks work to ensure all details have been considered.
Professionalism	Remains calm and self-controlled under stressful situations. Works to deliver the best interests of the organisation at all times, and maintains appropriate dress code.

Careers portal is an accessible and user-friendly website which provides very useful information (such as the above examples) with easy to use assessments, and insightful explanations which assist the user in getting to know themselves and identifying provided to jobs seekers and changers which support career reflection and development. The above sample themes and skills seem relevant and useful for the FYC target group and be worth exploring further for FYC tool development.

The European Digital Competence Framework, also known as DigComp, offers a tool to improve citizen's digital competence. The Digital Competence Framework can help with self-evaluation, setting learning goals, identifying training opportunities and facilitating job search. Using five areas, the online tool can assist jobseekers to self-evaluate their digital competence and describe and include it in their Curriculum Vitale (CV) and it can be used to plan and design education and training offers. The tool has five competencies levels, with an additional eight proficiency levels[22].

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[22] DigComp 2.1 The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (2017). [Online] Available at:
https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC106281/web-digcomp2.1pdf_(online).pdf

DigComp 2.0 (year 2016)		DigComp 2.1 (year 2017)	
Competence areas (dimension 1)	Competences (dimension 2)	Proficiency levels (dimension 3)	Examples of use (dimension 5)
1. Information and data literacy	1.1 Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content 1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content 1.3 Managing data, information and digital content	Eight proficiency levels for each of the 21 competences	Examples of use of the eight proficiency levels applied to learning and employment scenario in the 21 competences
2. Communication and collaboration	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity		
3. Digital content creation	3.1 Developing digital content 3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content 3.3 Copyright and licences 3.4 Programming		
4. Safety	4.1 Protecting devices 4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy 4.3 Protecting health and well-being 4.4 Protecting the environment		
5. Problem solving	5.1 Solving technical problems 5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies 5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps		

4. Summary of Desk Research

<u>*Note:*</u>

Please summarize your desk research here, making reference and connections to automation in the workplace and the changes required to the previous INFORM tool

This section should be between one and one and half 4. Pages of A4.

Please summarize your findings here…

It is clear that technological change within the workplace is a large driving force within the labour market which is igniting significant changes to how we work, the skills required in the workplace and the challenges which face job seekers and those already in the workplace. The identification and further development of soft skills, ICT skills and transversal skills seem of high importance, with much of the research highlighting the need for flexibility and cross sectoral skills. The ability to adapt and remain open to learning new skills and new ways of performing tasks will be inevitable for job seekers, job changers and those already in employment. Skills such as creativity, problem solving and cognitive flexibility, will play a bigger part in the recruitment and retention of employees within specific sectors, along with a capacity to change and adapt to new and challenging situations.

This desk research piece has been interesting and productive in terms of exploring and thinking through the process of the FYC tool development. The concept of identifying and highlighting informal and non-formal learning is one which is essential for the FYC client group and more so in terms of the changes within the world of work. The current theories which underpin INFORM are still relevant and useful and will be valuable in framing the FYC tool and while it was difficult to source relevant skills frameworks, we do however favour further exploration within the partnership of some the concepts within the above provided samples and that from other partner Countries. The concepts of measuring **confidence** and **in particular, self-regulation of emotions**, could be very relevant to the nature of the FYC target group. The ease of use of the careers portal website (as noted above), may be something which the partnership could review, along with a number of skills as identified within the 'career skills' section.

5.   Qualitative inquiry in the partner countries

5.1   Please summarise how you implemented the interviews and focus groups and give us feedback of the people involved.

Participatory appraisal is defined as a family of approaches and methods which enable communities to share, develop and analyse their own knowledge of life and conditions (Chambers 1996). By empowering local people to conduct their own modes of investigation, communities can plan and act (Chambers 1992) on their own outcomes, developing more community based solutions (Sellers 1996).

Ballymun Job Centre took a participatory appraisal approach to their focus groups aiming to ensure optimal interaction and the generating of ideas, thoughts and opinions of participants. This was reflected in our groups by asking key questions pertaining to future development of the FYC tool and by using cooperative group strategies such as small group brainstorming, think-pair-share exercises and group problem solving activities. Materials such as a presentation, flipcharts, sticky post-its and printable versions of the questions asked, were used to meet a variety of learning styles and modes of interaction.

- The service user focus group was conducted on the 24th of January 2020 from 10am until 11.30am and comprised of seven long term unemployed individuals who are service users of the Ballymun Job Centre. They were identified and referred by BJC Guidance Practitioners.
- The Practitioner Focus Group was held on the 27th of January 2020 from 9.30am to 12.30pm and was attended by thirteen practitioners from across the Country and services such as a representative from the National Centre for Guidance and Education, and Local Employment Services from around Dublin and surrounding areas.
- Employers were contacted via email and phone calls. Three employers responded. Of the three, two employers were interviewed via phone calls, one employer was sent the form via email and responded in the same way.

Service User Focus Group

Ballymun Job Centre held their young person's focus group on the 24th of January 2020 from 10am-11.30am. The focus group was facilitated by one experienced guidance practitioners and one European project worker, both with additional skills in facilitation of groups. The group consisted of seven long term unemployed people with varying degrees of education, training and previous work experience. Participants signed into the workshop and permission was given to the facilitators to take photographic evidence through-out the workshop.

Areas explored:

- Experiences of the technological changes in the labour market.
- Experience and opinion of, similar online tools
- Informal and non-formal learning in everyday tasks
- Exploration of 'soft skills' as relevant to the workplace

After a brief introduction to the focus group, and in order to help the client group to identify with technological changes in the workplace, we first explored their experiences of technological changes in their personal and everyday lives giving 'prompting examples' such as ordering a meal in fast-food restaurants, ordering taxi's via an app, online banking. Immediately our client group began to make connections to the changes that are happening all around them and we had a lively discussion of the positive and negative impact that technological changes has made in their everyday lives. The participants soon made the connection to how increased communication has dramatically changed their lives naming 'instant connections' and that people are more accessible. They identified how technological changes have cut costs for consumers for example, when making travel arrangements and via faster productivity.

We then moved onto a discussion on the area of work that have been impacted by technological changes and we also explored client experiences of applying for jobs and the requirements as requested by employers, in particular sectors. Participants named the below areas as impacted by technological changes:

- **Warehousing**
- **Retail**

- **Construction**
- **Manufacturing**
- **Mechanic; cars going electric**
- **Delivery driver jobs/talk of drones**
- **Manned information desks gone and replaced by online/ audio information (customer service)**
- **Paying bills**
- **Risk of post offices closing**
- **Revenue is all online**
- **Travel on the bus, more people using leap cards/no more bus conductors**
- **Music; people downloading from different online sites as opposed to purchasing from the artist**

The participants noticed too, that some older industries at risk of going or have gone for example: department stores have closed or downsized due to online shopping.

All participants agreed that applying for a job is now a less a personal process with access to employers made harder by the use of jobs websites and questionnaires, preliminary to obtaining an interview. Participants spoke of the challenges when trying to secure an interview with an employer which is often hampered by the level of qualifications which are requested for what the participants viewed as, general type positions. For example, one participant had many years' experience in a warehouse position but is now struggling to obtain employment as he reports that employers are requesting higher levels of ICT skills. This idea was expanded on by another participant who explained how in-house training in companies, now often use a blended or online approach and that there is a need for ICT skills too, to upskill. All participants were in agreement on the advertised roles which they have observed, stating that some advertised positions are very difficult to define in terms of a specific role and/or occupation, as employers are now looking for more ,'rounded experience', 'a person who can do everything'. This particular element is reported as causing frustration and insecurity when job seeking. In addition, it was noted by the majority, that employers are now seeking higher qualifications for lower paying jobs, with one person saying that he observed a job by barista company who wanted staff to have level 6/7 (QQI) customer service.

Some additional impacts named by the participants are listed below:

- It is harder to gain work experience.
- Employers monitoring the workplace through the use of cctv in a negative way towards staff

Following on from this, we then engaged the participants in an exercise on how they spend their time, asking them to list their 'everyday tasks', which we then crossed referenced with soft skills as identified by the group. This list of common everyday tasks are below.

Personal Care: washing, showering, make-up hair

Transport: organising and using leap-cards, timing buses and trains, orientation

Communication: calling friends and family via mobile phone apps. Texting, messaging via social media, SKYPE

Computer Use: Playing games, online gaming, video games, x-box, play station

House Keeping: Cleaning, washing, cooking, shopping

Parental Duties

List of Soft Skills as identified by participants in everyday tasks

- Communication skills
- Time Keeping
- Problem Solving
- Using one's own initiative
- Leadership Skills
- Organisational Skills
- Understanding emotions and managing stress
- Multi-Tasking

Participants expressed their appreciation for the FYC group and felt that the tool will be of value, particularly for those that do not recognise their own skills due to challenges such as low self-confidence. They also found it very helpful to receive information about the changing world of work, and expressed interest in being contacted for FYC tool testing in the future.

PRACTITIONER FOCUS GROUP

The practitioner focus group was held in the member's room of Dublin City Council in Dublin, on Friday the 27th of January 2020 from 9.30am to 12.30pm. It was facilitated by the FYC project manager, the Ballymun Job Centre project administrator and the former project manager of the previous INFORM EU project. As mentioned above, the facilitation style of the focus group used a participatory appraisal approach and involved presentations and information provision, open discussions, small group brainstorming and think-pair-share exercises. The focus group was attended by thirteen practitioners from various guidance services from around the Country.

The focus group began with an overview of the FYC Project, outlining the project objectives and intellectual outputs. Initial Country research, outlining technological changes in the workplace was presented, along with a number of declining areas and occupations. There was discussion among practitioners thereafter and time was given for them to discuss the areas of the labour market, which they have noticed most change in. Practitioners spoke of the struggle which clients are experiencing in gaining work experience and many agreed that Community Employment Scheme (a National initiative tasked to provide on the job work experience to long term unemployed), is now seek higher levels of training and experience, almost defeating the purpose of the scheme and again reducing the opportunity to gain valuable work experience for those who are out of the labour force for longer periods of time. One practitioner stated that:

"CE and Tus schemes which were supposed to be meaningful (to lower skilled job seekers) are now a tick the box exercise with a lack of training and lack of gaining relevant experience and preparing clients for a job".

Practitioners also noted a decline in manufacturing jobs, for example, packaging and manual labour and when available, these occupations are requesting IT skills and/or a higher level of qualifications. In addition, practitioners spoke of areas such as the financial and insurance industries and how they now seek 3rd level education in ICT and how in their experience, office and administration roles, such as a standard role within a hospital, now require additional skills such as knowing how to run a social media page and payroll again, making it more difficult for lower skilled individuals to gain experience and employment. Other noted areas of change are listed below:

- Construction; machines have replaced people, for example, diggers

- The use of a diagnostic machine as opposed to a mechanic/Electric Cars
- Courses now available online which takes away from some course providers
- Presentations now being delivered digitally/ online which can lead to less networking opportunities
- Retail
- Delivery

Practitioner discussed the impact of these changes on their client group stating that, job seekers who might have previously been confident in their occupation and who had years of experience in same, are now feeling demoralised and useless. For those already in workplace and who are experiencing changes to their role and/or the tasks involved in their role, are feeling less confident often leading to frustration and fear of losing their jobs. Practitioners noted the need to offer employees and job seekers to the opportunity to update their skills as relevant to changing world of work, with one practitioner providing an example of a fifty year old client who on the one hand feels too young to retire, and other hand is too fearful and tired to learn new and challenging skills.

Practitioners where then asked to identify soft skills which cannot be replaced by automation.

See below table:

Communication	Adaptability	Awareness of others
Confidence	Flexibility	Time Management
Problem Solving	Reliability	Human Interaction
Teamwork	Good work ethic	Literacy Skills/Punctuation
Creativity	Good attitude	Coping Skills
Resilience	Social Skills	Decision Making
Awareness of others	Emotional Intelligence	Common Sense
Time Management	Coping Skills	Commitment
Human Interaction	Decision Making	Interpretation
Literacy Skills/Punctuation	Empathy	Listening Skills
Personal Touch	Initiative	Critical Thinking
Language Skills		

Interestingly, when practitioners where asked what skills they see in their client group, they listed many of the above soft skills as the competencies which most stand out for them.

Practitioners where then asked for their opinion on the skills which employers are seeking from job seekers and named three soft skills: **Reliability, Adaptability** and a **Multi-tasker**. Additionally, practitioners expressed similar experiences to that of the service users - Recruitment process is continuously changing and employers do seem open to the employees need for training. Employers are looking for an 'all-rounder', while job descriptions are becoming more broad.

When practitioners where asked what the tool they would look like/ The tools you currently like to use they listed the below:

- NLP Training
- Advantage Thinking
- Motivational Interviewing
- Easy and clear language and literacy
- Cantrills ladder
- BJC registration form
- Career Portal – Nice questionnaires, user friendly, quick
- Readiness Ruler
- Wheel of Change
- Encouraging positive thinking; asking the client to ask three people that they are close with to list three qualities about the client
- Mind mapping
- Asking; Did you do something yesterday that you hadn't done before
- Tool would need to be adaptable to ensure that changing profiles are catered for

In addition, when asked as to how the FYC tool could help practitioners in their work, practitioners stated that the tool would help in reassuring clients that work is better than the welfare and the tool would put value on going to work. They also thought that it might be helpful in supporting employers to recognise that they cannot expect one person to do everything.

EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

Employers were contacted via email and phone calls. Three employers responded. Of the three, two employers were interviewed via phone calls, one employer was sent the form via email and responded in the same way.

They were asked a number of questions related to technological changes to the workplace and how they are currently experiencing changes in their sector of the labour market.

Firstly they were asked to comment on a broad question regarding the changes as experienced within their own company.

One employer, who works in the ICT sector stated that the company he works for, which currently employs 63,000 employees, (many of whom are in the low to medium salary range), reports that the adoption of RPA (Robotic Process Automation) is impacting significantly of task/repetitive roles. These roles include entry finance, administration roles and procurement. Technology which facilitates automation, will replace process and work flow that can be sequenced. He believes that large sections of public service roles, particularly local government roles and central government roles such as administration, will be replaced. This along with outsourcing and the simplification of BPO roles, may result in a large reduction of employment opportunities in these occupations.

Another employer notes positives changes within his company in particular when recruiting new staff stating that, newer employees tend present with advanced competency in technology and can therefore adjust to their systems quickly with very little need for training. This employer reports that there is a rise in people lacking social skills stating *“we also find people joining the workforce from education are now really lacking in social skills so what they are gaining in online competency they suffer in real life practices in my opinion“.* He comments too on the streamlining of advancements and how this has huge benefit to their everyday procedures allowing them to streamline a lot of processes from, previously person managed procedures, to easy and trustworthy online management systems such as, pay roll.

In addition, one employer makes significant comments in relation to low skilled factory jobs believing that these roles have been considerably reduced due to basic assembly and packing being the first to be replaced. In his industry, more skilled and complex fabrication or soldering are slower to be replaced but as machines become more accurate and cheaper, he believes that these roles will also be replaced too. He reports that staff have either been let go or have been retrained and moved to other available roles if they have the capacity or want to do so. In some cases he notes that the changes in role created overwhelming challenges for some employees, in which case, his company they have been let them go with an agreed compensation package.

He states too, that entry level jobs require have an increased skill base and this has led to the need for retraining and upskilling of numerous staff with the company which he works for. He notes, that for the younger workforce is does not pose too much of a problem however, for the older generation of workers this is presenting as more problematic as they find it harder to get to grips with some of the more basic ICT skills which comes more naturally to the younger generation.

Finally, for the remaining employer and similar to the above feedback, he reports that within his sector, they have seen a drop in the need for technician roles due to the outsourcing of smaller components during the manufacturing process. These components are being manufactured in automated processes in a lot of cases allowing for a quicker turn around with more consistent results and standards. In fact, the company has recently downsized their manufacturing facility while increasing their customer service and product service and support teams. The manufacturing side of the business has been moved to their larger US factory, while the customer support jobs have remained here in Ireland.

When employers where asked about growth in their sector due to technology one employer commented, that due to the increase in the demand for online trading, their businesses has grown from a predominantly physical rostrum auction business to a well-established and ever growing online auction department which run weekly online auctions and now employ almost 50 people across our group dedicated solely to online auctions. Another employer states that growth in mentoring and people HR roles are set to increase significantly, along with predictive analytics, business intelligent skills, robot and automation mechanics and technicians and is of the opinion that training applications such as Microsoft flow and UiPATH, will be as important as Microsoft packages such as word and excel.

Significantly, one employer comments on the changing nature of the skills required in his company since changing to a service and support based facility rather than manufacturing facility, noting that the company are now seeking staff who not only have a technical background, but who are also computer literate and who are effective communicators. He notes that while this sounds reasonable and straight forward, it is in no always the case, commenting that they have found it hard to find candidates with all three skills. When recruiting he reports that those who are effective communicators seemingly, too had trouble with the technical side of the role, and

vice versa; those who are good on the technical side of the job, are not so great at communicating in a sales/service role.

When asked which employee skills are currently important to employers, they responded with the below:

Employer	Important Employee Skills
Employer One	• Agile Solutions Methodologies • Ability to logically sequence information • Computational thinking • Team Leadership • Planning • Mentoring
Employer Two	• Advanced ICT Skills • Problem solving Skills • Mechanical and Technical Skills • Effective Communication Skills • Efficient Use of Time • Time Keeping and Reliability
Employer Three	• Higher Levels of Education and ICT Skills

6. The Changing World of Work, Stakeholder Experiences

6.1 Please describe your stakeholder experiences of automation in the workplace. Include Practitioner, Employer and Service User Feedback (Capturing any useful text/literature/initiatives)

Note:

> *What changes are your stakeholders experiencing? What concerns do they have? How are they currently addressing these concerns?*

See below - final conclusion

7. Identifying and Measuring Soft skills for the Future Labour Market

7.1   Please provide us with examples of effective tools and methods used to capture *formal and non-formal learning*

Note:

Examples collected through discussions with the participants of the Interviews/focus groups…how practitioners currently identify/test etc.

Please provide us with max. 5 examples. If you have more examples choose the ones which are most relevant to our project.

Name of tool or method	Short description (2-5 sentences max)	Link to source	Why this method is relevant (3-6 sentences)
AS ABOVE			

7.2   Please provide us with examples of effective tools and methods used to *identify/measure soft skills*

Note:

Examples collected through discussions with the participants of the Interviews/focus groups… how practitioners currently identify/test etc.

Please provide us with max. 5 examples. If you have more examples choose the ones which are most relevant to our project.

Name of tool or method	Short description (2-5 sentences max)	Link to source	Why this method isrelevant (3-6 sentences)
AS ABOVE			

7.3   Please provide us a list of *informal or non-formal activities* as identified by your stakeholders

Guidance practitioner

Online shopping	Paying bills
Child rearing	Downloading music
Shopping	Online Banking
The use everyday IT such as: self-service checkouts booking flights revenue booking a taxi general communication	Organising travel arrangements
Organising leisure activities	Signing up and using services such as electric bikes and car hire
Cleaning and organising the home	Decorating

Employers

1.) **AS ABOVE**	
2.)	
3.)	

Service Users

Gaming	Using their phones: whatsapp groups, setting alarms and reminders
Applying for jobs online	Using Social media
Organising Children's activities	Self Service checkouts
Shopping online	Communicating with family in another Country via SKYPE
Watching movies online, subscribing, setting up payments, using the interface	Online training
Using Card Machines	Using Leap Cards and Travelling on the bus and trains
Keeping appointments and organising their schedule	Caring for family members
Engagement in training activities	Cooking for family
Reading the news on their phones	

7.4   Please provide us with a list of *soft skills* used in informal and non-formal activities, as identified by your stakeholders

Guidance practitioner

2.) LISTED ABOVE	
2.)	
3.)	

Employers

LISTED ABOVE	
2.)	
3.)	

Service Users

1.) LISTED ABOVE	
2.)	
3.)	

8.   Main Findings and Conclusions

8. 1 Please describe your main findings and implications after the finalization of the interviews/focus groups.

> *Note:*
>
> *In this final section we ask you to summarize your main findings and implications for the project.*
>
> *What are the main findings? What are the main implications? Do you have solutions to propose?*
>
> *Please feel free to provide us here with information which wasn't queried so far, but what you think is relevant for the further project development.*
>
> *This section should be between one and two pages of A4.*

Please summarize your findings here…

- This piece of research has highlighted a number of key themes across all area of the research as carried out in the area of automation and digitalisation of the workplace. The focus groups in particular, have highlighted the reality of the changing world of work and reflects much of the finding of the desk research for example; the reduction in lower skilled positions due an increased demand for

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higher levels of skills and education, as was also noted by all three groups interviewed.

- Both the service users and the practitioners interviewed, spoke at length about the nature of automation in areas such as; customer service provision, manufacturing and warehousing and in how job applications require a higher levels of skill and experience, as was previously requested.

- In the case of our service users, many described their difficulty in obtaining lower skilled employment stating that many jobs criteria include, requests for higher levels of 3rd level qualifications and specific IT packages and skills. One such area of particular interest is the area of warehousing and general operative positions, which previously offered lower skilled workers the opportunity to gain valuable employment experience, but which now require additional skills and knowledge such as, IT and clerical skills.

- Service users state too, that they find it hard to gain work experience reporting that employers are requesting an assortment of skills for just one position; a general 'all-rounder' as opposed to specific requirements. This is confirmed when reading the employer responses, who are seeking individuals that are flexible in their work approach and who have high levels if ICT skills and as importantly named by one employers: high levels of social skills.

- Similarly, practitioners in the focus group expressed a level of frustration at the increasing demand for qualifications, experience and skills, as requested by employers and more notably in the case of national employment schemes such a Community Employment Schemes and TUS, whose aim is to provide work experience for lower skilled individuals, reporting that this is compounding the challenges for lower skilled job seekers in obtaining employment within the mainstream labour market.

- Employers report a number of very significant and real changes within the workplace with some useful projections of changes to come such as, the need for higher levels transversal skills and educational attainment.

- It seems apparent that automation in the workplace will impact significantly on those with lower educational attainment, those with less work experience such as young people and those of an older generation may find it more challenging to

embrace new ways of carrying out tasks and moving from practical occupations to more ICT based roles.

- Guidance practitioners in the focus group report the importance in identifying and valuing informal and non-formal learning and particular, in the context of FYC tool development which will afford the opportunity to identify and measure skills which are transferrable to workplace. Practitioners spoke at length of skills gained in everyday activities such as; rearing a family, caring for a relative, and of for younger job seekers who means of communication is now centred around the use of technology.

- When practitioner were asked to describe how they currently help their client group to identify skills gained during everyday activities, *the majority report that this done in a conversational way,* most likely during an explorative phase in the guidance process. This again confirms the need for a tool which is accurate and measurable and importantly and one which also makes relevant career suggestions based on the 'new world of work'.

- All practitioners are in agreement that the use of valid tool to help further identify transferrable skills would bring further value to practitioner guidance delivery, and additional insight and confidence to their job seeking client group, who often are unable to recognise their own skills and attributes.

- The need for transversal skills in the workplace has been confirmed via the desk research and in particular via the employer interviews however, it looks to be higher than basic level transversal skills which are and will be in demand. This is something which the partnership should consider and seek ways to integrate further training and education options, via the FYC tool. This might be a consideration for the practitioner training in IO4.

- The concept of measuring **confidence and in particular, self-regulation of emotions**, could be very relevant to the nature of the FYC target group.