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2017

Field research for V-TOURS

Business Culture
Soft Skills
Education
Work
Employability
Dialogue

V-Tours
VISIT YOUR FUTURE

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Marta Tybura

Anthea Consulting srl.

01/01/2017



Field research for V-TOURS

Short description

Research has been carried out regarding to the procedures and tools described in O1 Methodological Handbook for V-TOURS project. Data collection has been conducted by keeping contact with enterprises (direct interviews), for understand they needs and agree on common interests **related to transitions from education to work** in order to improve the **Education – 2 – Employment** process.

The objectives of the research:

- To define core subject and topics that the project should address regarding perceived skills mismatch between the company needs and the newly graduates education students.
- To define and draft methods and formats for involvement and cooperation with enterprises for promoting business culture in higher education students, and make it sustainable for all players involved.

How research has been implemented

Three-level process:

- Face-to-face interviews with enterprises;
- Analysis of data collected;
- Consensus building event.

Who participated in the research

We conducted 19 interviews with HR specialists, mainly HR Directors and recruiters representing small, medium and big companies from such sectors as: transport (railways, airlines), manufacturing (automotive), ICT and services (banking, marketing, training and education).

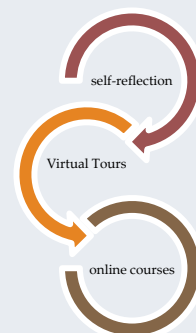
Collecting evidence form companies allowed to gather useful insights from the labour market needs.

Collecting evidence from entrepreneurs



Topics of the field research:

- Perceived **skills mismatch** between the company's needs and the skills of newly graduates;
- **Business Culture Skills** definition and needs;
- Possible **cooperation ways** between university and enterprises.

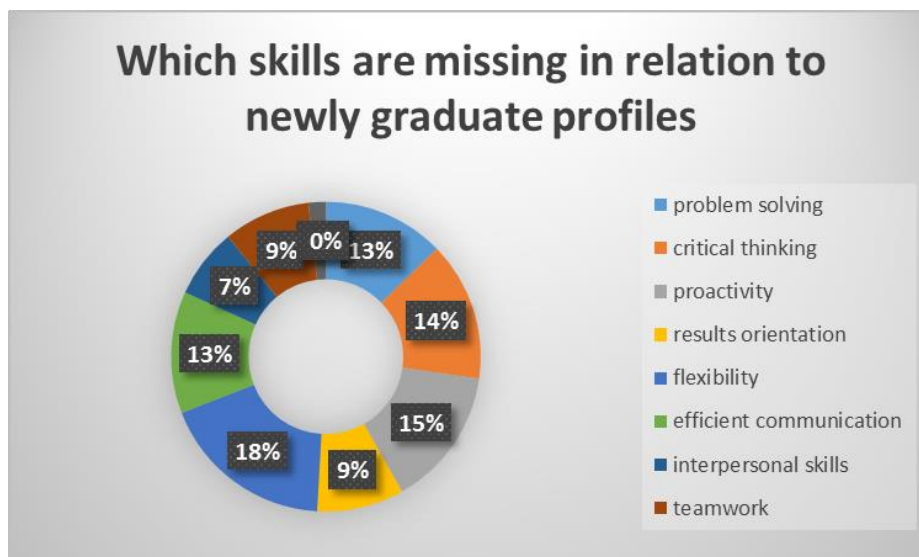




I. Skills mismatch



According to the investigation, collected data confirms that nearly half of managers complain about the gap between required characteristics for open job positions and competences of candidates. All of interviewees agree that one the biggest mismatch factor in relation to students/newly graduates is the lack of soft skills.



According to the survey results the newly graduates are lacking of such skills like: flexibility, proactivity, critical thinking, problem solving and efficient communication.



1. Could you please valutate the following soft skills in relation to newly graduate profiles (1 - less important, 5 very important)

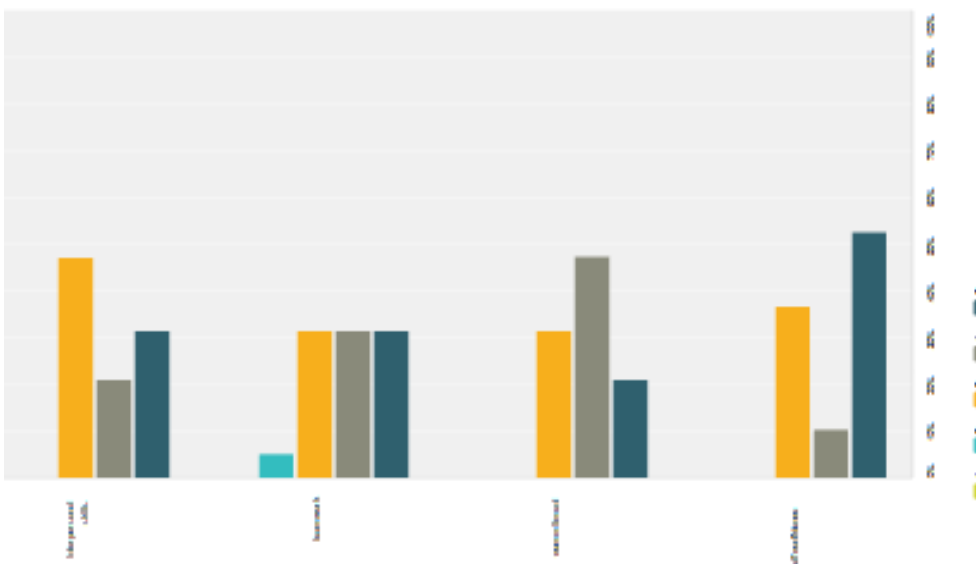
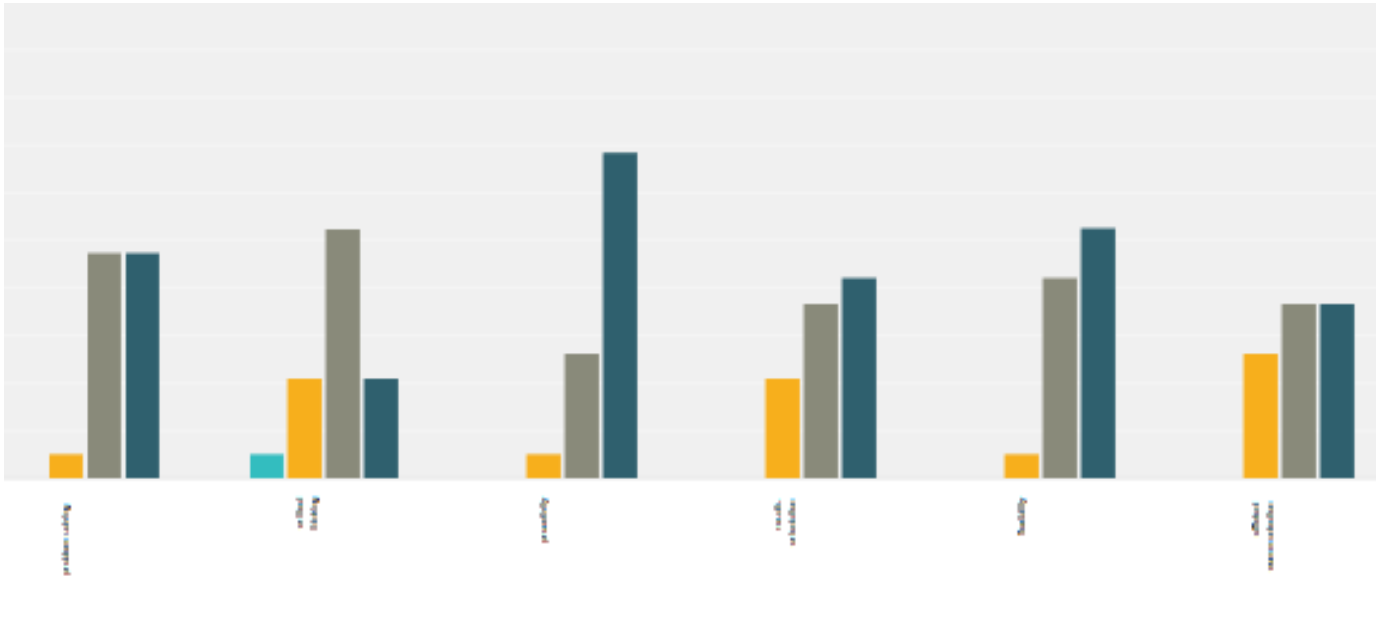
	1	2	3	4	5
problem solving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
critical thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
proactivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
results orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
flexibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
efficient communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
interpersonal skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	1	2	3	4	5	Totale rispondenti
problem solving	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,26% 1	47,37% 9	47,37% 9	19
critical thinking	0,00% 0	5,26% 1	21,05% 4	52,63% 10	21,05% 4	19
proactivity	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,26% 1	26,32% 5	68,42% 13	19
results orientation	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	21,05% 4	36,84% 7	42,11% 8	19
flexibility	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	5,26% 1	42,11% 8	52,63% 10	19
efficient communication	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	26,32% 5	36,84% 7	36,84% 7	19
interpersonal skills	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	47,37% 9	21,05% 4	31,58% 6	19
teamwork	0,00% 0	5,26% 1	31,58% 6	31,58% 6	31,58% 6	19
commitment	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	31,58% 6	47,37% 9	21,05% 4	19
self-confidence	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	36,84% 7	10,53% 2	52,63% 10	19



SKILLS MOSTLY REQUIRED BY EMPLOYERS

1. problem solving 2. critical thinking 3. Pro-activity 4. results orientation 5. flexibility 6. efficient communication 7. interpersonal skills 8. teamwork 9. commitment 10. Self-confidence



Skills mostly required by employers are: **pro-activity, flexibility, problem solving and self-confidence.** Regarding graduates profiles we observe differences in relation to subject studied, e.g. science and engineering graduates are much more self-confident and have much higher expectations in relation to the first workplace than graduates in humanities. They show less flexibility regarding employer's requests.



II. Business Culture Skills

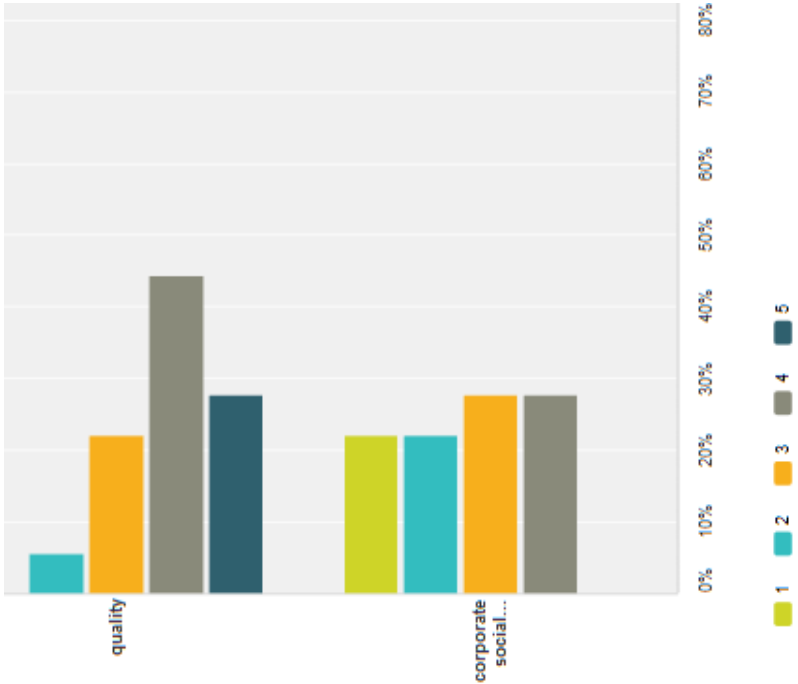
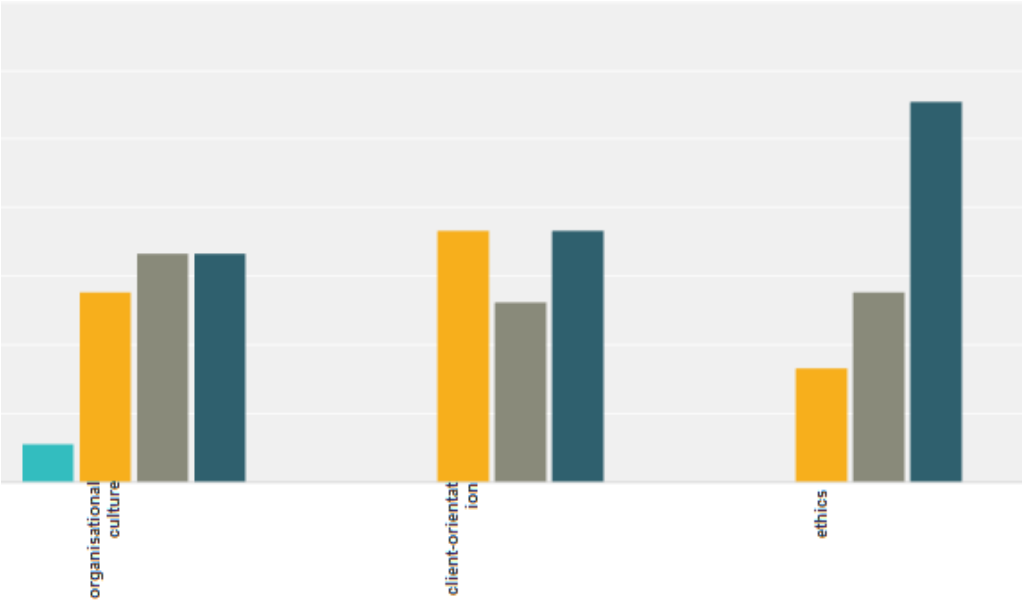
1. Do you believe that business culture skills are important for the company's working environment?(1-less important, 5- very important)

	1	2	3	4	5
organisational culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
client-orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ethics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
corporate social responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

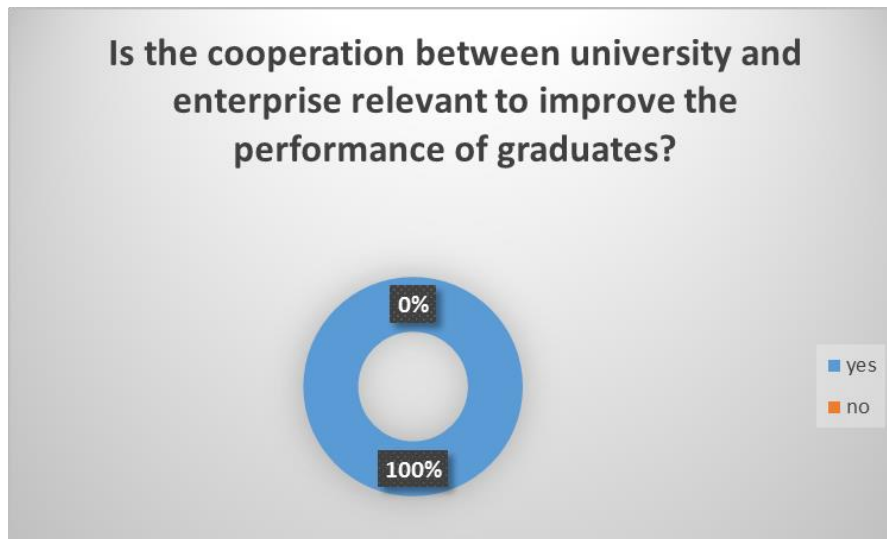
	1	2	3	4	5	Totale rispondenti
organisational culture	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	27,78% 5	33,33% 6	33,33% 6	18
client-orientation	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	36,84% 7	26,32% 5	36,84% 7	19
ethics	0,00% 0	0,00% 0	16,67% 3	27,78% 5	55,56% 10	18
quality	0,00% 0	5,56% 1	22,22% 4	44,44% 8	27,78% 5	18
corporate social responsibility	22,22% 4	22,22% 4	27,78% 5	27,78% 5	0,00% 0	18

Regarding business culture skills, ethics is considered the most important, with an exception in marketing where quality is located on the first place. All interviewees placed corporate social responsibility on the last place explaining that it's a kind of attitude that students develop and mature during their working life. All interviewees appreciate candidates' knowledge/ familiarity with business sector they are interested to work for.

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III. Cooperation methods



Which forms of cooperation you have implemented in your company, if any?

- Placements, Internships for students, e.g. project implemented by the Airport of Bologna called Airport Angels (information service for passengers), which allows 40 students each year to gain their first professional experience;
- Active involvement and collaboration with universities in execution of Master Programs, e.g. Italian railways with Sapienza University of Rome are implementing Master Program in infrastructure and railway systems;
- Open Day in the company;
- Cooperation with university students during their final thesis preparation.

Is there any form of cooperation between HEIs and enterprises that you believe could work and has not been exploited yet?

Most of interviewees didn't detect any new possible cooperation forms, but some of them indicated what could be improved in already existing cooperation forms:

- Relation between guidance and employer branding;
- Internships for students should be more focused on tasks strictly connected with professions inside the company;
- Employers complained about trainees selection results made by Career Centers. They wish to have more influence to choose the best candidate for internship in their company;
- Case competitions sponsored by companies and addressed to university students who have to tackle a problem, develop solutions and present their rationale. As participants students face



real-life, time-sensitive scenario requiring apart professional background also transversal skills. In this way the company can have the possibility to offer his internships for the best students/graduates (e.g. Project for Deutsche Bank - students with the knowledge of Java programming are fixing a coffee machine, the winner join DB Technology Center Graduate Program, http://makeloveagency.ru/en/coffee_digital_activation).

General comments/ Interesting Observations

During interviews, some of employers notice that is not only the responsibility of universities to provide soft skills for students. All informal activities or training a person does outside university courses: internships, study abroad, volunteer, civil / social service, for example scouting is considered by many employers an asset because it helps to develop and practice transversal skills like problem solving, team working. The role of university should be to open minds and indicate the variety of ways students have to acquire skills matching them with market needs, course of studies and personal talents.

Employers underline the importance of transforming the university education more business-oriented, based on practical experiences, enhancing the number of internships, project work in the company, aimed at facilitating their insertion in working environments.

