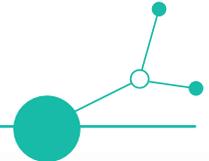


Concepts for regional Soft Skill campaigns

Compendium



Version 1

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A. Regional soft skill campaigns

x-Inno Radar is a collaborative Interreg Central Europe project co-funded by the European Union that aims to foster soft skills in non-metropolitan industrial regions as a way of boosting innovation and supporting the regions in pro-actively shaping the on-going industrial transitions. x-Inno Radar comprises of several core project phases: Screening, Piloting and Strategizing. These phases are closely intertwined. The soft skills regional **screening** outcomes (inc. survey, focus group learnings, meta data analysis) are used as a base for setting up **pilot actions** to test soft skills development strategies, which are in turn used to identify successful practices and main challenges that are used for building new and improving existing **strategic work and documents** (Figure 1).

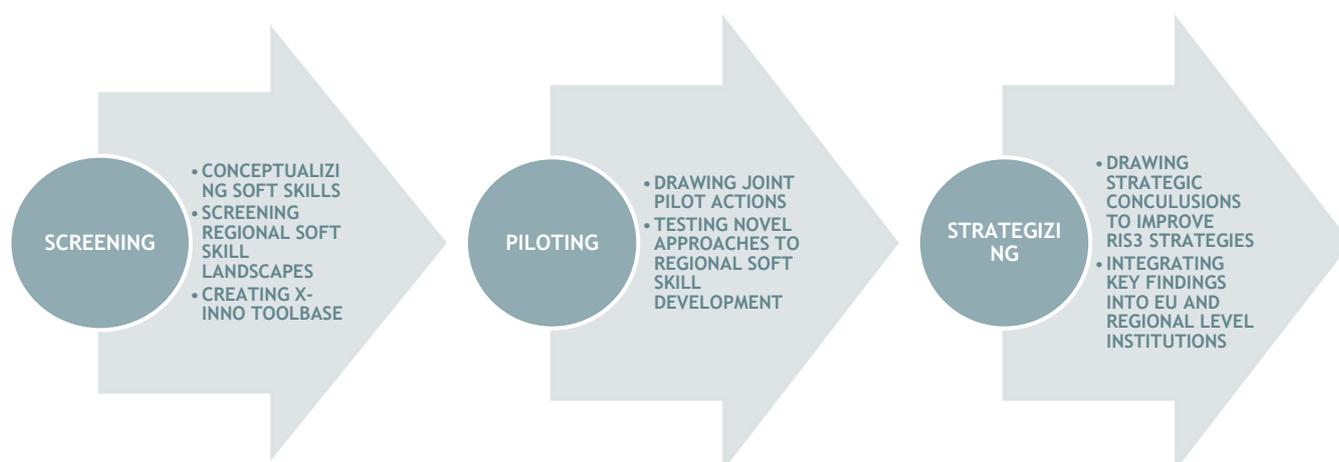


Figure 1. Main phases of the x-Inno Radar project.

In order to tie these processes together, each partner is required to analyse their regional soft skill screening results (1.1.1) and elaborate on these findings, along with regional pilot test ambitions and regional strategic aspirations in a **concept paper for regional soft-skill campaigning (1.1.2)**. More detailed screening results for each region can be found in the Regional Campaign Concepts (in national languages) which are available via partners' regional web-spaces and on x-Inno's Interreg [web-space](#). A comprehensive insight into screening results which was made available for partners after the screening can be found in the Survey Reports written by PP9 partner Otelo eGen (in English). These reports are included as part of the content reporting, and will be made publicly available as part of the x-Inno Tool Base - to be published in the Fall of 2025.

The concept papers, written in national language for better accessibility, represent their regional campaigning material aimed at sparking interest in the topic and raising awareness about the importance of soft skill development, especially in industrial regions undergoing large-scale transformations. These documents are targeting all interested and important regional and



national actors who wish to engage with the topic. Importantly, the concept papers were thoroughly discussed and co-created with the help of the regional Expert Focus Group members. Upon their completion, the concept papers will be presented on partners' regional web portals and the CE project web space. In this report, we created a compendium which gathered English language summaries of each partner's concept paper. This way, we aim to enable clear insight into the completed and ongoing collaborative work of the x-Inno partners in English.

B. PP2: Creative Region Linz & Upper Austria GmbH

Introduction

Upper Austria's industrial landscape is characterized by a robust network of **globally operating companies** and **efficient small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)**, particularly in the **automotive, metal processing, machinery, plastics, and wood industries**. As the shift towards automation, digitalization, and smart production progresses, the demands on employees are fundamentally changing. While technical skills remain highly valued—especially in mechatronics, CNC technology, robotics, and industrial IT—companies are increasingly prioritizing **soft skills that foster innovation and adaptability** in modern production environments. Key competencies in demand include **teamwork, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and customer understanding**, which are essential for interdisciplinary collaboration, managing complex systems, and facilitating efficient human-machine interaction.

Despite the high quality of technical education provided through dual systems, technical colleges, and universities of applied sciences, the systematic teaching of soft skills still requires enhancement. Younger workers often lack experience in solution-oriented work within diverse teams, while older employees may struggle with adapting to digital transformations. To meet the evolving industrial requirements, a **stronger integration of soft skills into vocational training, adult education, and corporate training** is becoming increasingly important.

Regional Analysis - Background and Soft Skills

Upper Austria is Austria's industrial center, contributing 31.9% to national industrial production. The region excels in precision engineering, automotive manufacturing, and high-tech metal processing. SMEs (around 80%) and international corporations like BMW and Voestalpine drive the region's innovation. However, rising energy costs and a shortage of skilled labor pose significant challenges. Dual education systems aim to attract more apprentices, while automation and robotics are expected to fundamentally change skilled labor by 2040.

The demand for skilled workers is particularly high in technical fields, healthcare, and IT, while low-skilled workers face higher unemployment rates. Numerous initiatives focus on promoting technical education and reducing gender disparities in STEM professions. The industrial sector remains a key economic pillar, with Upper Austria accounting for approximately 22.3% of Austria's industrial production in 2022, especially in metal processing, machinery, chemicals, wood, ceramics, plastics, and steel construction.

The demographic shift is also impactful: the population is expected to grow to 1.616 million by 2040, with the proportion of individuals over 65 increasing to 27.4%. Concurrently, rural areas face challenges from youth outmigration and the departure of young skilled workers, potentially leading to a shortfall of up to 151,000 skilled workers by 2040. This scenario underscores the



growing importance of social and cognitive skills, such as communication, intercultural competence, critical thinking, and adaptability, particularly in automated and diverse work environments.

The education system in Upper Austria—from dual training to technical colleges and universities—continues to adapt to labor market needs. However, regional disparities in access to further education, especially in rural areas, highlight the necessity for integrating soft skills across all educational levels and upskilling programs. With nearly 19% of Upper Austria's population having a migration background, their integration into the labor market requires enhanced language training, intercultural education, and inclusive corporate structures. Targeted soft skills programs for migrants can reduce dropout rates, improve employability, and contribute to social cohesion.

RIS3 Strategy and Soft Skills

The **RIS3 strategy of Upper Austria** integrates both hard and soft skills to ensure that workers and entrepreneurs can thrive in a digitally and sustainably transformed industrial environment. Emphasizing collaboration, adaptability, and entrepreneurial thinking strengthens the region's competitiveness.

Regional Challenges and Needs

The transformation driven by digitalization and automation in Upper Austria's manufacturing and craft sectors is profound. Routine tasks are increasingly performed by machines, shifting human labor towards system monitoring, process optimization, and strategic decision-making. Technical skills in robotics, data analysis, and digital interfaces are essential, but soft skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, adaptability, and customer-oriented problem-solving are crucial for managing complex production environments and meeting individual customer needs.

The recent x-inno survey highlights that **90% of respondents** report an increasing or significantly increasing **demand for soft skills** due to digital and green transformations. Communication, critical thinking, and intercultural competence are identified as urgently needed skills for development. However, areas such as **design thinking, initiative, and risk-taking** are currently underdeveloped, indicating significant potential for growth. The survey also reveals that communication and cooperation skills are the most pronounced soft skills in professional reality.

Key challenges identified include **keeping pace with digitalization**, rising social inequality, and demographic changes. Respondents express a desire for greater adaptability, a more attractive work culture, and better integration of diverse workforces. Currently, non-profit organizations, adult education institutions, and schools primarily contribute to soft skills development. Established formats include seminars and workshops, but alternative offerings such as repair cafés and entrepreneurial programs are gaining traction.

Best Practices and Pilot Projects

Several innovative initiatives are underway to enhance soft skills in Upper Austria:

Creative Maker Safari: This project connects traditional craftsmanship with high-tech research, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among artisans, technologists, and researchers.



Youth Entrepreneurship Week: Targeting youth aged 14-18, this program empowers participants to develop their ideas into actionable projects, enhancing their creativity, teamwork, and communication skills through hands-on experiences.

Cross-Innovation: A flagship event aims to bridge the gap between creative and industrial sectors by showcasing collaborative projects and fostering networking opportunities in bring the value of creativity on the stage.

Connecting the soft skill provider dots: aims to map, visualize and connect to obvious and hidden soft skill providers in the region to join forces.

Strategic Recommendations

To effectively promote soft skills, it is essential to:

- Integrate Soft Skills as Strategic Goals: Recognize soft skills as vital for innovation and social transformation.
- Create a Coordinated Soft Skills Network: Connect educational actors across sectors to share best practices and foster synergies.
- Embed Soft Skills Across Educational Levels: Ensure systematic integration of soft skills in schools, vocational training, and adult education.
- Support Bottom-Up Initiatives: Encourage local projects that contribute to soft skills development and integrate them into strategic communication.

C.PP3: The Regional Chamber of Commerce of the Karlovy Vary Region

The Karlovy Vary Region, the smallest administrative unit in the Czech Republic, is undergoing profound socioeconomic transformation. As a non-metropolitan industrial region with historically low innovation capacity and a steadily declining population, it faces several structural challenges. These include limited access to higher education and research and development infrastructure, a traditionally low-skilled workforce, and a heavy dependence on low value-added industries such as mining and heavy chemicals.

The European x-Inno Radar project addresses these issues by promoting the development and integration of soft skills—such as creativity, communication, adaptability, collaboration, and entrepreneurial thinking—into the regional innovation ecosystem. These cross-cutting competencies are increasingly important in helping industrial regions adapt to global economic changes, digitalization, and environmental requirements. The project recognizes soft skills as essential for building resilience, supporting innovation, and improving social cohesion.

In the Karlovy Vary Region, the demand for soft skills is constantly growing. Employers are no longer looking only for technical proficiency, but also for interpersonal, problem-solving, and creative skills. This trend is supported by regional strategies such as the Regional Innovation Strategy (RIS3) and long-term education plans. These documents give high priority to soft skills and propose practical measures across education systems and business sectors.

The x-Inno screening carried out in early 2025 provides a clear picture of the regional soft skills landscape. According to the survey, **cooperation, communication and empathy are**



among the most present competencies in the Karlovy Vary workforce, while risk-taking, opportunity recognition and design thinking are significantly underdeveloped. Experts also highlighted brain drain, insufficient adaptability to change and demographic challenges such as an ageing population as key issues for the region. These findings confirm the urgent need for targeted measures to strengthen creativity, entrepreneurial thinking and resilience within the regional innovation ecosystem.

Some good practices and relevant activities supporting soft skills are also emerging in the region. These include polytechnic clubs for children in companies, teambuilding and community events for employees, EasyLab educational workshops, the Rozjed' byznys (Start a Business) program for beginning entrepreneurs, and speed dating events connecting creative people with companies. Projects to support entrepreneurial women (Entrepreneurs Without Borders) and management meetings (Inspiration Days) are also being developed, enabling the sharing of good practices.

Despite progress, however, significant shortcomings remain and there is still a low level of cooperation between stakeholders. Brain drain, an aging population, and slow institutional adaptation further complicate transformation efforts. To address these challenges, pilot actions under x-Inno Radar will include:

- Strengthening regional education and entrepreneurial training in soft skills,
- Supporting creative industries and communities of creators,
- Supporting interdisciplinary innovation formats,
- Organizing regional events to connect small producers with larger companies and the public,
- Launching an annual student entrepreneurship competition to develop full-cycle business ideas in collaboration with local companies.

The experience of the Karlovy Vary Region is a valuable model for other industrial regions in Europe, showing how soft skills can act as a lever for economic recovery and social resilience.

D.PP4: Padova Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture

The economic structure of the Veneto region

Veneto Region, in North-East Italy, has 4.8 million inhabitants, a per capita GDP of € 39.600, an unemployment rate of 4,3% and 425.000 businesses and companies, mostly SMEs.

It's the first touristic region of Italy, with destinations known all over the world, like the cities of Venice, Verona, Padova and Vicenza, the Dolomites and the Garda Sea, the Adriatic riviera.

The regional economy is a dynamic and diversified system, centered on key sectors such as industry, trade, tourism and agriculture. The socio-economic context of the Veneto Region is characterized by a strong industrial base, a dynamic labour market and a growing focus on innovation and skills development.

Investing in research, sustainability, digitalization and support for SMEs is essential to ensure sustainable and competitive economic development, but it is also necessary to invest in the promotion of transversal skills, i.e. those non-technical abilities that can be applied in various work contexts and that can play a crucial role in improving the competitiveness of Veneto companies.



Veneto region is historically recognized for its high manufacturing capacity in machinery, glass and furniture, machinery, biomedical products, food processing, and many other sectors, characterized by the presence of several industrial districts. As we can notice from the ratio between business and inhabitants, SMEs represent more than 90% of active companies and employ over 77% of workers, confirming the central role of local entrepreneurial realities.

Regional analysis and soft skills

A central aspect of the Regional Innovation Smart Specialization Strategy (RIS3) concerns the gap between the skills required by the market and those currently offered by the training system. Companies highlight a lack of transversal skills - such as problem solving, autonomy, teamwork, flexibility and communication skills - essential to face the challenges of a rapidly evolving market. To fill this gap, the Veneto Region has promoted several initiatives with the following goals:

- Strengthen technical and transversal training. Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) represent a fundamental tool for providing specialized training courses that integrate technical skills with soft skills.
- Strengthen collaboration between universities, businesses and research centers.
- Promote continuous training. In response to technological and market transformations, refresher programs are activated to ensure a constant renewal of human capital skills.

Education and innovation

Veneto region faces significant challenges in education and innovation that impact the development of soft skills.

- Education and skills levels: Recent assessments have highlighted concerns about student skills in Veneto, with data suggesting a decline in key skills essential for workforce readiness.
- Regional innovation performance: the Regional Innovation Scoreboard classifies Veneto as a “Moderate Innovator +,” reflecting a strong foundation for innovation.
- Veneto ranks among the top 40 European regions for the share of SMEs engaged in internal innovation processes, highlighting a strong entrepreneurial spirit.
- Implications for the development of soft skills. The observed educational shortcomings and modest investments in innovation suggest potential gaps in soft skills. Addressing these issues is crucial to improve the region’s competitiveness and foster a more resilient workforce.

Labour Market and Skills Development

The Veneto labor market is characterized by a high employment rate, but also presents structural critical issues, such as the mismatch between supply and demand of skills, also due to the change in employment sectors. Veneto economy was traditionally based on manufacturing, but is experiencing an increase in the weight of industries based on knowledge and advanced services, several surveys show an increasing “ Skills shortage”: the demand for digital and technical skills is growing, but the education and training systems are struggling to keep up with the needs of the labor market. In this framework on one hand are increasingly important the vocational training initiatives: programs such as the Higher Technical Institutes (ITS) and vocational training centers are active, offering highly specialized courses to reduce the skills gap, on the other hand soft skills play a fundamental role in the development strategy of Veneto.

In RIS3, they are not always directly named as "soft skills" but are indicated as "future skills" or "transversal skills".



To overcome the critical issues in the skills system, the regional government and several public and private actors, like Chambers of Commerce, Universities and Training Centres, Business Support organizations and companies, non-profit organizations are working to promote:

- Integration of soft skills in educational programs (schools and universities).
- Collaborations with companies to offer internships and practical training.
- Workshops and seminars aimed at developing transversal skills such as communication, creativity and leadership.

X-Inno Radar Soft Skill Screening

The survey conducted as part of the X-Inno Radar project highlighted several key areas for soft skill development. Specifically, the soft skills requiring greater development are **strategic thinking, critical thinking, empathy and cooperation, and opportunity recognition and initiative-taking.**

Additionally, the survey highlighted that the primary challenges facing the area are increasing social inequalities, skills mismatch, inadequate adaptation, demographic change and keeping up with digitalization. The X-Inno Radar survey indicated that **universities, non-profit associations, secondary schools, adult education centers and business consultancies are the main providers of soft skills development courses and initiatives in our area.**

Padova Chamber of Commerce and X Inno Radar European Project

Padova Chamber of Commerce is partner of the European project x-Inno Radar. This innovative project, financed by the Interreg Central Europe Cooperation Programme, addresses these issues by promoting the development and integration of soft skills - such as creativity, communication, adaptability, collaboration, and entrepreneurial thinking - into the regional innovation ecosystem. These transversal competences are increasingly critical in helping industrial regions adapt to global economic shifts, digitalisation, and environmental demands.

x-Inno Radar is tuned with the major EU policy frameworks, including the European Skills Agenda and EU Industrial Strategy, and recognizes soft skills as essential for building resilience, at personal and at social level, for supporting innovation patterns in the regional development, and also for improving social cohesion and a development in line with the Global Sustainable Development Goals.

Padova Chamber of Commerce is going to involve companies, SMEs, workers, students, local authorities in the implementation of four transnational pilot actions:

- “Strengthening transversal soft skills and cross-sectoral inspiration in industrial regions”
- “Integrating maker skills in innovation ecosystem in industrial regions”
- “Reviving industrial society’s pioneer skills as basis for transformation”
- “Improving skill capacities in industrial regions through territorial cooperation”

These actions, conceived and implemented with a constant coordination at national level, with our Associated Partners and regional stakeholders, and international level, with the x-Inno Radar partnership, will provide tools and test possible solution to foster the regional development, based on the skills, especially soft skills.

E. PP5: Creative Industry Košice, n. o.

The Košice region demonstrates strong potential in the areas of industry, innovation and culture. However, analysis conducted through the regional RIS3 strategy, a **questionnaire survey and expert focus**



groups, carried out in the context of the x-Inno Radar project, has revealed several key challenges. These include the fast-changing environment driven by green and digital transitions, low levels of innovation across sectors, a persistent brain drain as young talent leaves for better opportunities, misalignment between education and labour market needs (especially in technical and business skills), and insufficient collaboration between universities and businesses, which limits knowledge transfer and innovation capacity.

These systemic issues also highlight the need to address social cohesion through inclusive education initiatives that support integration policies. In response, the **development of soft skills has been identified as a critical success factor for boosting innovation readiness, enhancing regional resilience and supporting sustainable growth.** To respond to these regional challenges, CIKE is leading targeted pilot actions in the Košice region as part of the x-Inno Radar project, aimed at strengthening soft skills as a foundation for critical thinking, innovation, collaboration, resilience, cross-sectoral cooperation, community engagement, and future-oriented thinking.

The first pilot focuses on building transversal soft skills (such as cooperation, communication, and strategic thinking) among those who act as the first point of contact for innovation actors in the region. The training will follow a cascading model, ensuring that the skills are further disseminated within participating organizations.

The second pilot, Pioneer Spirit, introduces an experimental "Pioneer Lab" designed to engage the general public in creative problem-solving activities that cultivate entrepreneurial thinking and promote key soft skills such as adaptability, collaboration, and open-mindedness. It emphasizes a hands-on approach through a makers event, encouraging individuals to tap into their creativity and reimagine local skills for future challenges.

A third pilot aims to address the urban-rural divide in access to knowledge and training by promoting territorial cooperation. It will build a regional network to support skills development and activate the return of regional talents through mentoring and ambassador programs.

All pilot actions are strategically embedded within the regional innovation agenda and align with the Košice region's RIS3 strategy. CIKE actively collaborates with the regional authority and the Innovation Centre of the Košice Region (ICKK), ensuring that project outcomes feed into ongoing regional policy processes. The results will also be shared with the recently established EIT Culture & Creativity KIC, of which CIKE is a founding partner, creating an opportunity for international exchange and policy learning around future skills and cultural innovation.



F. PP6: BSC, Business support centre, ltd., Kranj

The Gorenjska region is undergoing a strategic shift from a traditionally industrial economy towards a more digital, service-oriented, and innovation-driven future. Anchored in strong manufacturing and tourism sectors, the region faces pressing challenges such as an ageing workforce, skill mismatches, and fragmented learning ecosystems. To respond to these transitions, the x-Inno Radar initiative mobilises regional actors to develop, align, and promote soft skills—especially transversal, entrepreneurial, and maker competencies—as key levers for regional resilience and transformation.

This concept presents why soft skills matter for Gorenjska, where the main challenges lie, and how we are addressing them through concrete pilot actions that connect people, skills, and regional development. It is co-created with regional stakeholders, aligned with the Regional Development Programme 2021-2027, and reinforces the implementation of Slovenia's Strategy of Sustainable Smart Specialisation (S5).

While Gorenjska benefits from dynamic local actors and project-driven activity, soft skills development remains decentralised, short-term, and inconsistently embedded into formal education and workforce systems. Tourism and some industrial SMEs exhibit practical soft skills application (e.g. communication, teamwork), yet systemic structures—like dual education, apprenticeships, and coordinated employer engagement—are underdeveloped.

Screening results reinforce this picture. According to expert input, **critical thinking (53%), communication (47%), and intercultural competence (47%)** are the most urgently needed soft skills. Despite being commonly used in practice, **29% of surveyed individuals still wish to improve communication, and 24% problem-solving**, suggesting persistent gaps in proficiency. **65% of experts** observe rising demand for soft skills in their work environments, and **82% agree** that individual capacities vary significantly indicating a lack of equal access and systemic delivery.

Insights from the broader public (simple survey) show that:

- **72%** rely on communication,
- **62%** on teamwork,
- **77%** on problem-solving in their daily work.

Yet, **29%** still wish to improve communication, and **24%** problem-solving, underlining ongoing needs even for widely applied competencies.

Key gaps include:

- **Lack of systemic integration of soft skills** in formal education and training, especially in vocational pathways, where transversal competencies are not consistently embedded.
- **Limited opportunities for practical, hands-on experience** among youth due to the absence of dual systems and weak links between schools and employers.



- **Fragmented and project-dependent initiatives**, which lack long-term continuity, coordination, and strategic alignment at the regional level.
- **Insufficient recognition of the value of soft skills** by employers and institutions, particularly in traditional industrial sectors.
- **Limited accessibility of soft skills development formats** for underrepresented groups, such as older adults, the long-term unemployed, and youth in peripheral areas.

To address these challenges and test innovative models, Gorenjska is implementing three pilot actions under x-Inno Radar:

1. Pupils for Pioneers

An open call for school-aged youth to propose and implement community-focused micro-projects, supported by training, mentorship, and micro-grants. The initiative fosters self-initiative, civic engagement, and entrepreneurial spirit among primary and secondary school students, while promoting real-world problem solving and project planning.

2. Society Seedbed - Friday Skillscapes

A series of three public interventions, held during the summer event Kr petek je, transforming the city square into an open, participatory space for soft skill activation. Citizens of all ages will engage in informal workshops and creative formats promoting empathy, communication, initiative, and collaboration. Feedback and impressions will be collected and shared across partner regions.

3. Expats for Home

In collaboration with EURES Gorenjska and the VTIS association, this pilot maps and engages Slovenians with international experience. Through flexible formats (e.g. lectures, mentoring, online storytelling), the pilot brings globally developed soft skills back to the region and promotes long-term collaboration between expats and local institutions. At least five engagement activities will be carried out.

All activities are aligned with the priorities of the Gorenjska Regional Development Programme 2021-2027 and the S5 strategy, particularly in promoting entrepreneurship, digitalisation, and territorial cohesion. BSC Kranj, together with development agencies RA SORA and RAGOR, ensures strategic coordination and facilitates connections across education, public administration, and the business sector.

Through x-Inno Radar, Gorenjska not only strengthens its internal capacities but also contributes to transnational exchange, testing and scaling up regional models for soft skill development. This supports broader objectives of building a resilient, future-ready regional ecosystem capable of navigating industrial transition with inclusion, creativity, and confidence.

G.PP7: Regional Development Agency in Bielsko-Biała

Empowering Transformation Through Creativity, Collaboration, and Innovation



Silesia is a region in transition. Once defined by coal and heavy industry, it's now writing a new chapter—one fueled by green energy, digital transformation, and bold innovation. But as the economy evolves, it's clear that technology alone won't carry the region forward. The heart of this transformation lies in something less tangible but deeply powerful: **soft skills**.

In today's complex world, the ability to communicate effectively, adapt to change, think creatively, and solve problems is as critical as any technical skill. For Silesia to become a resilient, future-ready region, these competencies must be woven into the fabric of its workforce and communities. National and regional strategies like RIS3, KSRR 2030, Śląskie 2030, and Polska 2050 all recognize this, calling for a renewed focus on transversal competences to fuel innovation.

And the demand is clear—**94% of experts confirm that soft skills are increasingly crucial**, especially among leaders and change-makers. Yet, challenges remain. Despite a reputation for creativity and adaptability, the region struggles with self-regulation, emotional awareness, ecological thinking, and strategic communication.

According to the x-inno screening results, self-regulation (2.76/5), sustainability awareness (2.82/5), and iterative design thinking (2.71/5) scored lowest among key competences in the region. At the same time, **creativity and adaptability were ranked as major strengths**, showing the potential to build upon existing capacities.

Experts unanimously agree—100% of respondents—that **soft skills vary significantly among individuals, with leadership competences being the most critical to organizational success**. The most urgent development priorities identified include problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and sustainable thinking. These findings directly link to Silesia's broader transformation challenges, from industrial restructuring to demographic shifts, highlighting the importance of equipping both workers and communities with future-ready skills.

Employers are also increasingly aware of these trends. Nearly all surveyed stakeholders noted that demand for soft skills is rising across sectors, and 94% indicated that this demand will only continue to grow. This reflects a clear consensus that technical know-how alone cannot sustain competitiveness; interpersonal and adaptive capacities must be integrated into professional and educational systems alike.

To tackle these gaps head-on, the **x-Inno Radar campaign** is introducing a series of dynamic pilot actions designed to build capacity through creativity, community, and courage.

1. Creative Trainings for Innovation

Imagine a room where storytelling meets strategy, where culinary arts become lessons in empathy, and where collaborative art projects spark new ways of thinking. That's the idea behind these hands-on workshops tailored for HR leaders, educators, and innovation professionals. Participants not only develop their own soft skills—they also gain tools to train others, spreading the impact across their organizations.

2. Boots for Roots: From Passion to Enterprise

What if the next wave of entrepreneurs wasn't in boardrooms, but in backyards and basements? This pilot celebrates grassroots talent, helping aspiring creatives transform their passions into real ventures. Through mapping local makers, offering practical workshops, and supporting them



with FabLab vouchers, this initiative culminates in a vibrant Maker Fair—a celebration of what’s possible when passion meets opportunity.

3. Pioneer Spirit “Seedbed” Labs

Innovation needs a safe place to grow. These pop-up labs provide exactly that—temporary spaces where anyone, regardless of background, can test ideas, take risks, and collaborate on solving local challenges. It’s not just about startups; it’s about building confidence, fostering teamwork, and nurturing sustainable thinking at the community level.

Through these pilots and practices, x-Inno Radar isn’t just supporting individual growth—it’s reinforcing Silesia’s entire innovation ecosystem. The campaign aligns closely with strategic visions for Poland’s future, championing lifelong learning, social capital, and adaptability as pillars of regional development.

Because in a world where change is the only constant, **soft skills are the strongest tools we have.**

H. PP8: Stebo Competence Centre Community Development

Limburg, a rural province in eastern Flanders, Belgium, has undergone several waves of industrial transformation—from coal mining and automotive manufacturing to emerging sectors like cleantech and circular economy. Historically strong in technical and industrial skills, Limburg now faces the challenge of evolving into a resilient, knowledge-based region.

Despite the growth of institutions like UHasselt and PXL, higher education attainment lags behind other Flemish regions. Many companies report skill mismatches, especially in technical fields, ICT, and healthcare. There is an urgent need for transversal and soft skills—such as communication, adaptability, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurial thinking—to navigate digital and green transitions.

Key gaps identified through focus groups and surveys include:

- Lack of intuitive decision-making and adaptability
- Weak intergenerational collaboration and emotional intelligence
- Limited pioneering spirit and information processing capabilities
- Rising demand for soft skills due to digitalisation and diversity pressures

Quantitative data confirms these findings: **52% of respondents see skill mismatch as the top regional challenge, while 86% note a growing need for soft skills.** The region already offers diverse training models—ranging from formal education and coaching to workplace-based and digital learning—but strategic coordination is needed.

Overview of the Three Pilot Actions

Cross-Innovation (Focus: Transversal Soft Skills)



Objective: Stimulate interaction between technical and creative professionals to promote creativity, communication, collaboration, and self-reflection in innovation-driven contexts.

Approach: Co-creation in Living Labs, cross-sector workshops, inclusive innovation in social enterprises, and hands-on prototyping.

Example: “Cross-Innovation Days” bring together actors from sectors like glass (e.g. Ciner Glas, GlazenHuis) and cycling/mobility (e.g. Ridley, Bike Valley) to co-develop new solutions.

Partners: Regional SMEs, educational institutions (e.g. PXL, LUCA), and international partners from Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Level Integration (Focus: Maker Skills)

Objective: Unlock informal innovation capacities from makers, repairers, and circular thinkers, and connect them with formal R&D and innovation infrastructure.

Approach: Hands-on labs, repair cafés, community mapping, and maker-R&D safaris to bridge gaps and make hidden talents visible.

Example: The “Makers Safari” (Feb-March 2026) will tour Limburg’s innovation spaces—from high-tech labs to artisanal workshops—to foster interaction between students, technicians, and entrepreneurs.

Partners: DISKKO (Bewel), Corda Campus, POM Limburg, Bokrijk (Vaklab), Flanders DC, Embuild, Droneport, among others.

Territorial Cooperation (Focus: General Soft Skills)

Objective: Strengthen regional collaboration around skill development to attract talent, prevent brain drain, and build Limburg’s innovation identity.

Approach: Develop regional soft skill networks, promote visibility of providers, and co-create new cooperation formats.

Example: “Connecting the Dots” - an online platform and speed networking event to map and connect soft skill providers in Limburg.

Partners: Local governments, SMEs, start-ups, education providers, and European collaborators from Padua, Linz, and Chemnitz.

Strategic Aspirations

The overarching goal of x-Inno Radar in Limburg is to create a future-oriented innovation culture where technical know-how is complemented by strong soft skills. With a strong STEM infrastructure and a deep-rooted maker tradition, Limburg is well-positioned to evolve into a more resilient and inclusive industrial region.

Key aspirations include:

- Embedding soft skills into education, business, and regional development policies
- Fostering cross-sectoral collaboration between technical and creative fields
- Making maker and repair skills visible and valued in formal innovation systems
- Building networks that align talent, training, and innovation infrastructures across sectors and borders

x-Inno Radar acts as a strategic lever to position Limburg as a frontrunner in soft skill-driven innovation—regionally embedded, socially inclusive, and globally connected.



I. PP10: Association of Cultural and Creative Industries Chemnitz and Region (Creative Chemnitz)

Chemnitz region is not necessarily lacking soft skills, but it faces clear structural challenges where soft skills are underdeveloped, under-recognised, or unevenly distributed across sectors. As a traditionally industry-heavy region, Chemnitz has historically emphasised technical and vocational expertise – a strength that now needs to be complemented by soft skills such as creativity, collaboration, intercultural competence, and entrepreneurial thinking.

The industrial transformation, demographic changes, and social polarisation (especially between urban and rural areas) **further highlight the need to develop soft skills that support adaptability, innovation, and inclusive community building.**

The x-Inno Radar expert survey examined soft skills development across eight European regions, highlighting both regional strengths and shared challenges. In Chemnitz, **problem-solving, agility, and implementation were seen as strong, while emotional regulation and risk-taking showed gaps.** Experts noted rising demand for soft skills amid demographic and digital change, with limited provider cooperation. Findings serve as a strategic basis for pilot actions promoting regional resilience and innovation through soft skills.

Soft skills are a strategic necessity for Chemnitz at this turning point, as the region is:

- Undergoing economic and technological transformation, shifting toward smart and sustainable industry.
- Facing outmigration of young, skilled people, especially those with creative or social innovation potential.
- Preparing for Chemnitz2025 - European Capital of Culture, which brings both visibility and pressure to strengthen societal cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and innovation capacity.

Soft skills are essential for:

- Fostering collaboration between companies, education, civil society, and administration.
- Driving entrepreneurship and social innovation, especially in times of automation and structural change.
- Strengthening resilience and trust, particularly in post-industrial and rural communities that may feel left behind.

Soft skills are also key to achieving the goals of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) and broader regional development strategies tied to cohesion, sustainability, and innovation.

Makerspaces and FabLabs are natural incubators for soft-skill development:

- They foster hands-on learning, problem-solving, and experiential collaboration, helping people of all backgrounds to develop transversal skills in a low-threshold environment.
- They serve as inclusive innovation spaces, often bridging gaps between tech, craft, art, and community – exactly the cross-sectoral approach needed in the Chemnitz region.



- They are uniquely positioned to connect generations, integrate migrants, and support lifelong learning.
- They enable a maker mindset - curiosity, initiative, creativity, teamwork - which is essential for entrepreneurial and civic engagement.

In the context of x-Inno Radar, makerspaces and FabLabs can increasingly be expanded into regional soft-skill infrastructures – places where local talent is empowered, where traditional industry meets new ideas and future employees, and where innovation is rooted in trust, participation, and making together.