



STEAM BO.SS

boosting soft skills

Evaluation with Companies

National Report | March 2026



Sapere utile



UNIMORE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA



Saaremaa
Gümnaasium



EDUGEP



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Table of Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	COMPANY PROFILE.....	4
3.	SOFT SKILLS AND LABOUR MARKET NEEDS	5
4.	ROLE OF VET-COMPANY SYNERGY IN SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	6
5.	KEY AREAS AND TIMING OF COLLABORATION.....	8
6.	PERCEIVED IMPACT OF COLLABORATION	9
7.	POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION.....	10
8.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	11
9.	APPENDIX.....	12

1. Introduction

This national report presents an analysis of the feedback gathered through the STEAM BO.SS company survey. The survey aimed to collect insights from companies regarding their collaboration with VET institutions, as well as the role of soft skills in the development pathways of young people. In particular, it sought to assess companies' levels of satisfaction with students trained by VET providers and to understand how useful these collaborations are in meeting labour market needs.

The report explores how businesses value soft skills, such as teamwork and problem-solving, in enhancing the employability of young professionals. It also examines which forms of cooperation are considered most effective, including internships, mentoring initiatives, and the co-design of educational programmes.

Additionally, the survey contributes to evaluating the impact of the STEAM BO.SS project by analysing whether these partnerships have helped to reduce the gap between educational outcomes and market requirements. The insights collected aim to support the improvement of future collaboration strategies, fostering both student development and organisational competitiveness.

2. Company Profile

The survey collected responses from five diverse Portuguese organizations representing a broad range of sectors:

- Ai9.PT: Education.
- Golfitoc, Lda.: Financial Services.
- Businessland: Education.
- Procheck Productions: Technology, Information and Media.
- Monte do Giestal: Accommodation.

Monte do Giestal participated occasionally in the project and has no previous experience in collaboration with VET schools or centres. However, the company has expressed interest in developing such partnerships in the future. **Procheck Productions** was also occasionally involved in the project and reports occasional collaboration with VET institutions. Similarly, **Businessland** participated occasionally in the project and has not yet collaborated with VET schools or centres, although it has shown interest in establishing such cooperation. **Golfitoc** demonstrated occasional participation in the project and occasional involvement with VET institutions. Finally, **Ai9.PT** participated occasionally in the project but stands out for its regular collaboration with VET schools and training centres.

3. Soft skills and Labour Market Needs

The results show that Portuguese companies consider soft skills to be highly decisive for employability. Most respondents (four out of five companies) rated their importance as **4 (very decisive)** on a 4-point scale, while one company rated them as **3**, confirming a strong overall recognition of their relevance in the labour market.

When identifying the most critical soft skills within their specific professional contexts, the following were highlighted:

1. **Proactivity:** Identified by all five companies, making it the most valued soft skill across sectors.
2. **Empathy:** Mentioned by three companies as an important skill in workplace interactions.
3. **Creativity:** Highlighted by two companies as relevant for problem-solving and innovation.
4. **Time Management:** Also selected by two companies, reflecting the importance of organisation and efficiency.
5. **Problem Solving:** Identified by one company as a key competence.
6. **Decision Making:** Mentioned by one company as an important skill in professional contexts.

These results suggest that Portuguese companies place particular emphasis on proactive behaviour, alongside interpersonal and organisational skills, as essential factors for employability and workplace effectiveness.

4. Role of VET-Company synergy in soft skills development

The results indicate a strong consensus among Portuguese companies regarding the importance of collaboration between VET institutions and businesses for the effective development of soft skills in future workers. On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), two companies rated this statement as **4**, while the remaining three companies rated it as **3**. These findings demonstrate a generally positive perception of the role of cooperation between education and industry, highlighting its relevance in supporting the development of essential soft skills and improving the preparedness of young people for the labour market.

In addition, all participating companies (5 out of 5) agreed that the development of soft skills should result from a **balanced combination of school-based education and corporate training**. None of the respondents considered that soft skills should be developed exclusively within either educational institutions or the workplace. This unanimous response highlights the importance of integrating both learning environments, reinforcing the need for strong collaboration between VET providers and companies to ensure a more comprehensive and effective development of soft skills.

Furthermore, companies were asked to what extent ongoing collaboration between VET institutions and businesses can contribute to several key outcomes. The results show a consistently positive perception across all dimensions. Regarding the **alignment between training and market needs**, three companies rated this impact as **4 (Very much)**, while two rated it as **3**, indicating strong agreement on its relevance. Similarly, the **development of relevant soft skills** and the **greater employability of young people** were highly valued, with four companies assigning a score of **4** and one company a score of **3** in both cases.

In terms of the **reduction of the mismatch between talent supply and demand**, responses were slightly more varied, with one company rating it as **2**, two companies as **3**, and two companies as **4**, suggesting that while the impact is recognised, it may be

perceived as more complex or dependent on additional factors. Finally, the **strengthening of companies' competitiveness** was also positively evaluated, with two companies rating it as **4** and three as **3**.

Overall, these results reinforce the perception that sustained collaboration between VET providers and companies plays a significant role in improving training relevance, supporting employability, and contributing to organisational development.

5. Key areas and timing of collaboration

When asked about the types of collaboration that have the greatest real impact, Portuguese companies highlighted several practical and experience-based approaches. **Mentoring and coaching of young people** emerged as the most consistently valued form of collaboration, being mentioned by all five companies. This was followed by **internships and work-based learning**, identified by four companies, reinforcing the importance of direct exposure to real work environments.

Additionally, **practical projects based on real business challenges** were selected by three companies, indicating a strong interest in learning experiences that closely reflect workplace realities. The **co-creation of training content or activities** was also mentioned by two companies, suggesting a growing recognition of the need for closer alignment between educational programmes and industry requirements.

Overall, the results highlight a clear preference for hands-on, collaborative approaches that actively involve companies in the learning process and support the development of both technical and soft skills in real-world contexts.

When asked at what stage collaboration between schools and companies should begin, the majority of respondents (three out of five companies) indicated that cooperation should take place **throughout the training programme**, combining learning with practical work experience. One company highlighted the importance of collaboration **during initial training**, while another suggested that it should occur **after the completion of training**. Overall, the results suggest a clear preference for early and continuous collaboration, allowing students to progressively develop skills in real working environments.

6. Perceived impact of collaboration

The **impact of involvement in the STEAM BO.SS project** is reflected in the overall satisfaction levels reported by participating companies. The results indicate a generally positive level of satisfaction regarding their collaboration experience within the project. On a scale from 1 (Very dissatisfied) to 4 (Very satisfied), one company rated its experience as **4**, while the remaining four companies rated it as **3**. These findings suggest that participating companies are overall satisfied with the collaboration, highlighting a positive perception of the project's activities and their relevance in strengthening cooperation between businesses and the VET system.

Additionally, the results show that collaboration within initiatives such as the STEAM BO.SS project contributed to a better understanding of the dynamics of VET schools among participating companies. On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), two companies rated this statement as **4**, while the remaining three companies rated it as **3**. This indicates a generally positive perception, suggesting that engagement in the project helped companies gain clearer insights into how VET institutions operate and how they prepare students for the labour market.

Moreover, most companies reported that their participation in school-company collaboration initiatives contributed to the development of soft skills among the young people involved. Four out of five companies answered **"Yes"**, indicating a clear perception of positive impact in this area. Only one company stated that it **"cannot say"**, suggesting either limited involvement or insufficient evidence to assess the impact. Overall, these results reinforce the view that collaboration between companies and VET institutions plays an important role in fostering the development of essential soft skills in young people.

7. Potential for future collaboration

The **potential for future collaboration between companies and VET institutions** is clearly reflected in the responses collected. The majority of companies (four out of five) expressed a willingness to collaborate with VET schools in the future, while one company indicated a more cautious position by selecting “**maybe**”. This overall positive outlook highlights a strong interest in strengthening partnerships and continuing engagement with the VET system.

Regarding the most appropriate forms of collaboration, companies showed a clear preference for practical and experience-based approaches. **Participation in practical activities or real business challenges** was the most frequently selected option, mentioned by all five companies. This was followed by **internships and work-based learning**, identified by four companies, reinforcing the importance of real work experience.

Additionally, **co-creation of training activities** was highlighted by two companies, indicating interest in contributing to the design of educational content. Finally, one company mentioned **sharing sessions or professional testimonials**, reflecting the value of direct knowledge transfer and real-life experience in the learning process.

Overall, these results demonstrate a strong willingness among companies to engage in future collaboration, particularly through practical, hands-on initiatives that support the development of relevant skills and closer alignment between education and labour market needs.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this national report highlight the strong recognition among Portuguese companies of the importance of soft skills in enhancing employability and supporting young people's professional development. Skills such as proactivity, empathy, creativity, and time management were identified as particularly relevant across different business contexts, reinforcing their central role in today's labour market.

The results also demonstrate a clear consensus regarding the importance of collaboration between VET institutions and companies. Most respondents emphasised that the development of soft skills should result from a balanced combination of school-based education and workplace experience, underlining the need for integrated learning approaches.

Furthermore, companies expressed positive perceptions of ongoing collaboration, recognising its contribution to improving the alignment between training and market needs, enhancing employability, and supporting the development of relevant competences. Although some variation was observed in areas such as reducing the mismatch between talent supply and demand, the overall results confirm the value of sustained cooperation between education and industry.

Participation in the STEAM BO.SS project was generally evaluated positively, with companies reporting satisfactory experiences and improved understanding of VET systems. Most respondents also acknowledged the positive impact of collaboration initiatives on the development of young people's soft skills.

Finally, the strong willingness of companies to engage in future collaboration highlights the potential for strengthening partnerships, particularly through practical, experience-based approaches such as internships, real business challenges, and mentoring activities.

9. Appendix

- Survey questionnaire
- Detailed tables and charts
- Open-ended responses (Question 17)



THE BOOST THAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE



Sapere utile



UNIMORE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA



Saaremaa
Gümnaasium



EDUGEP



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.