

## BRAND ME PROJECT

Project Number: 2022-2-PT02-KA220-YOU-000101893



## PR1 – NATIONAL SURVEY REPORT

### INNOVATION EDUCATION LAB



## Content

1. BACKGROUND	3
1.1. BAM PROJECT & INNOVATION EDUCATION LAB	3
1.2. NATIONAL CONTEXT IN ROMANIA	4
2. NATIONAL SURVEY FINDINGS	6
2.1. BUSINESS BACKGROUND	7
2.2. RECRUITMENT BACKGROUND	11
2.3. SKILLS SELECTION	12
2.4. OPEN QUESTIONS	15
3. PARTNER REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	18
4. CONCLUSIONS	19
5. REFERENCES	20



## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1. BAM PROJECT & INNOVATION EDUCATION LAB

Innovation Education Lab (iEL) started at the initiative of dedicated individuals to support the activity of young people, education act, innovation in education and training, encourage volunteering, get involved in local, national and international activities.

Through our work we are aiming at reaching the following outcomes within our programs:

- harnessing societal cohesion and supporting dialogue amongst of various cultural backgrounds of European Continent and beyond
- cultivating the EU common values of inclusion, solidarity, active citizenship,
- supporting local community to reach a higher degree of happiness
- cultivating new skills and abilities among youth, adults, teachers, educators and professionals
- promoting the methodologies and practice of social innovation, social entrepreneurship, sustainability, circular economy for
- providing tools among learners whatever their age, background, race, nationality or religion
- promoting NFE methodology as an inclusive approach to learning
- offering participants and target groups methods, tools for psycho-emotional balance and increased wellbeing

The activities and initiatives undertaken by iEL align closely with the goals and objectives of the BAM project. iEL's focus on empowering young individuals, educators, and professionals through transformative learning experiences and personal growth directly addresses the challenges faced by NEETs in effectively promoting themselves and securing employment. iEL's comprehensive approach, which combines various methodologies and fields of expertise, can contribute valuable insights and resources to the BAM project's efforts.

By actively engaging young people, educators, and stakeholders involved with NEETs, the BAM project can benefit from iEL's expertise and collaborative approach. iEL's existing activities and initiatives can serve as a foundation for developing practical educational resources that specifically target the issues faced by NEETs in the job market. Additionally, iEL's emphasis on personal branding and career guidance aligns with the goals of the BAM project, providing valuable insights and strategies for helping young individuals position themselves effectively and gain employability skills.

Collaboration between iEL and the BAM project consortium can result in a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources. iEL's experience in transformative learning methodologies and personal growth, coupled with the BAM project's specific focus on addressing youth employment challenges among NEETs, can lead to the development of innovative and impactful solutions. Through joint efforts, both iEL and the BAM project can



contribute to empowering young individuals, improving their employability, and ultimately tackling the issue of youth unemployment among NEETs.

The objectives of the national report are correlated with the objectives of the BAM project, emphasising the significance of personal branding in enhancing employability and empowering young job seekers, also addressing the pressing issue of youth unemployment in Romania. By analysing the current situation, the report aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies for reducing youth unemployment and promoting personal branding education in the country.

## 1.2. NATIONAL CONTEXT IN ROMANIA

Youth unemployment continues to be a pressing issue in Romania, posing challenges for young individuals in their quest for employment. However, efforts are being made to address this concern by bridging the skills gap and increasing job prospects. In this context, personal branding has emerged as a crucial tool for young people to enhance their employability and navigate the competitive job environment.

Youth Unemployment Statistics in Romania:

As of September 2021, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INS), the unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 in Romania stood at 17.2%. This figure highlights the specific hurdles faced by young job seekers in the country, especially in the midst of a competitive job market.

In response to the competitiveness of the job environment, personal branding has gained significant traction among young individuals in Romania. Recognizing its potential for differentiation, young professionals are utilising personal branding strategies to stand out in the crowd.

Based on a study conducted by Valoria Business Solutions - consulting, training, and coaching company, to find out how the importance of the personal brand is perceived in the business environment in Romania, it has mentioned that Only 32% of respondents say they have a consistent and proactive approach to building their personal brand. The remaining 68% gather those who have punctual, opportunistic approaches or, on the contrary, do not manage their brand in any way.

Personal branding enables young professionals to communicate their unique value proposition, establish credibility, and showcase their expertise. By curating a strong personal brand, they can differentiate themselves from their competitors and increase their attractiveness to potential employers or clients.

From the same study conducted by Valoria, 56% of respondents prioritise communicating their business experience and relevant skills to build their personal brand, but 54% consider communicating their own values as the most important part of this endeavour. The main 5



major fields, besides the profession, which are chosen to communicate the personal brand are: the social field (52%), education (50%), entrepreneurship (49%), culture (24%) and innovation (22%).

#### Impact on Employment Rate:

Personal branding plays a crucial role in influencing the employment rate among young people in Romania. It equips them with the tools and strategies necessary to navigate the competitive job market and secure employment opportunities.

The three most important benefits brought by the personal brand are: the recognition and visibility it brings (for 67% of the respondents), the fact that its development is part of the professional development strategy (for 66% of the respondents), but also the increase in employability on the labour market (for 41% of respondents).

By investing time and effort into personal branding, young professionals can expand their professional networks, tap into hidden job markets, and increase their exposure to potential employment prospects. Engaging with industry peers, attending networking events, and leveraging online platforms are effective means to build valuable connections that can lead to job offers or referrals.

Furthermore, personal branding allows young individuals to effectively showcase their skills and expertise, which is particularly advantageous in a competitive job environment. By sharing valuable content, participating in relevant discussions, and displaying their work through portfolios or personal websites, young professionals can demonstrate their capabilities and differentiate themselves from their peers.

Addressing youth unemployment in Romania necessitates addressing the competitiveness of the job environment, and personal branding plays a vital role in this regard. While the unemployment rate among young people remains a challenge, personal branding empowers them to enhance their employability and succeed in the face of competition. Personal branding not only helps them secure employment but also contributes to the overall growth of the employment rate among young people in Romania.

## 2. NATIONAL SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey was conducted in Romania with the objective of gathering insights into personal branding skills, recruitment practices, and the relevance of various skills in the job market. The survey was conducted as part of the BAM project, which aims to address the challenge of youth employment among NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). The survey was conducted online and targeted a diverse range of participants, including recruiters, HR professionals, and stakeholders.

The survey questionnaire consisted of a series of questions related to personal branding skills, recruitment experiences, and the perceived importance of different skills in the job market. Participants were asked to provide their perspectives, experiences, and recommendations regarding personal branding and recruitment practices.

The survey findings aim to provide valuable insights into the current landscape of personal branding and recruitment in Romania, identifying areas of strength, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. The collected data will inform the development of educational resources, and initiatives within the BAM project.

The link to the BAM PR1 Survey in Romanian: <https://forms.gle/y9bo4n4uYCYaKyUTA> .

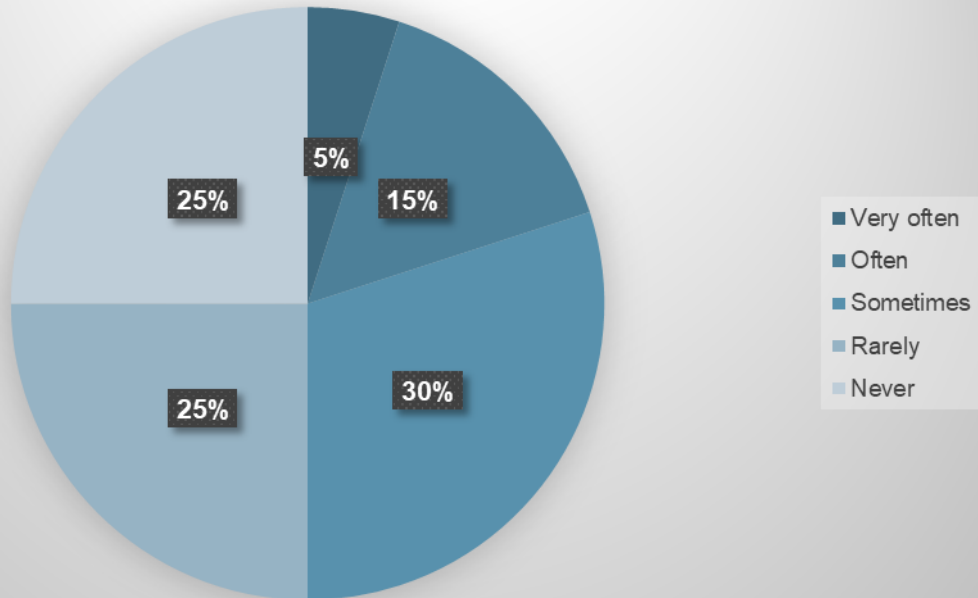


## 2.1. BUSINESS BACKGROUND



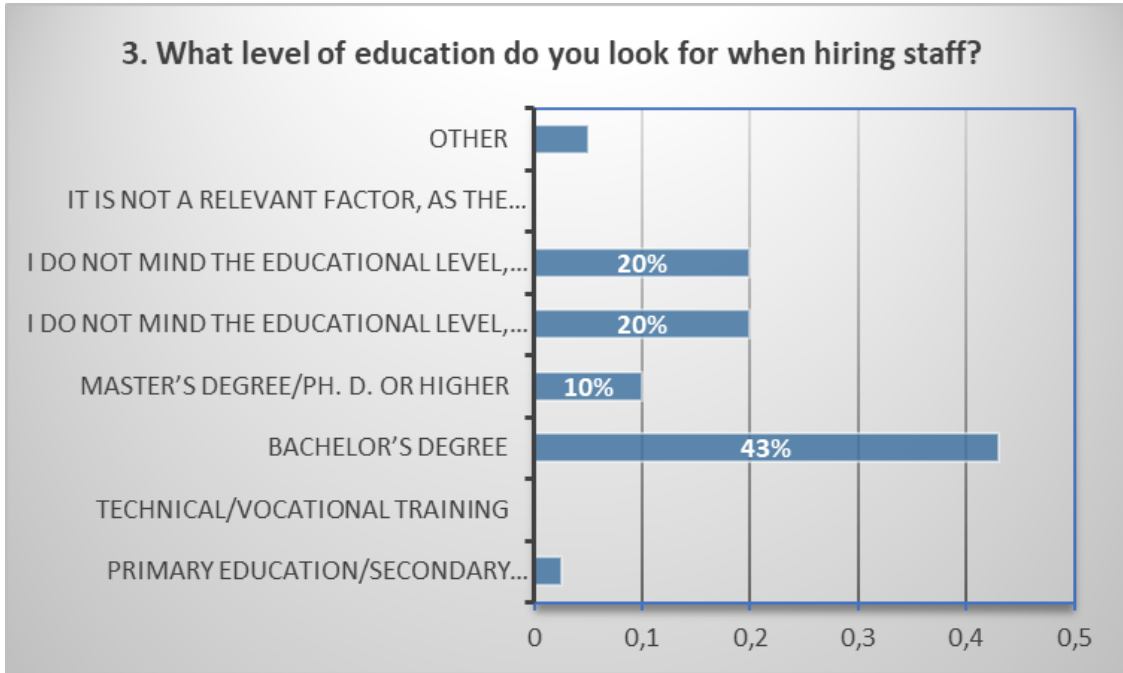
The graph clearly depicts the distribution of participants in the survey, with 80% belonging to the human resources or recruitment team, while the remaining 20% representing other roles. This data highlights the significant representation of HR professionals within the surveyed population, providing valuable insights from their perspective on the subject matter.

**2. To what extent does your organisation usually recruit staff not in Employment, Education or Training?**

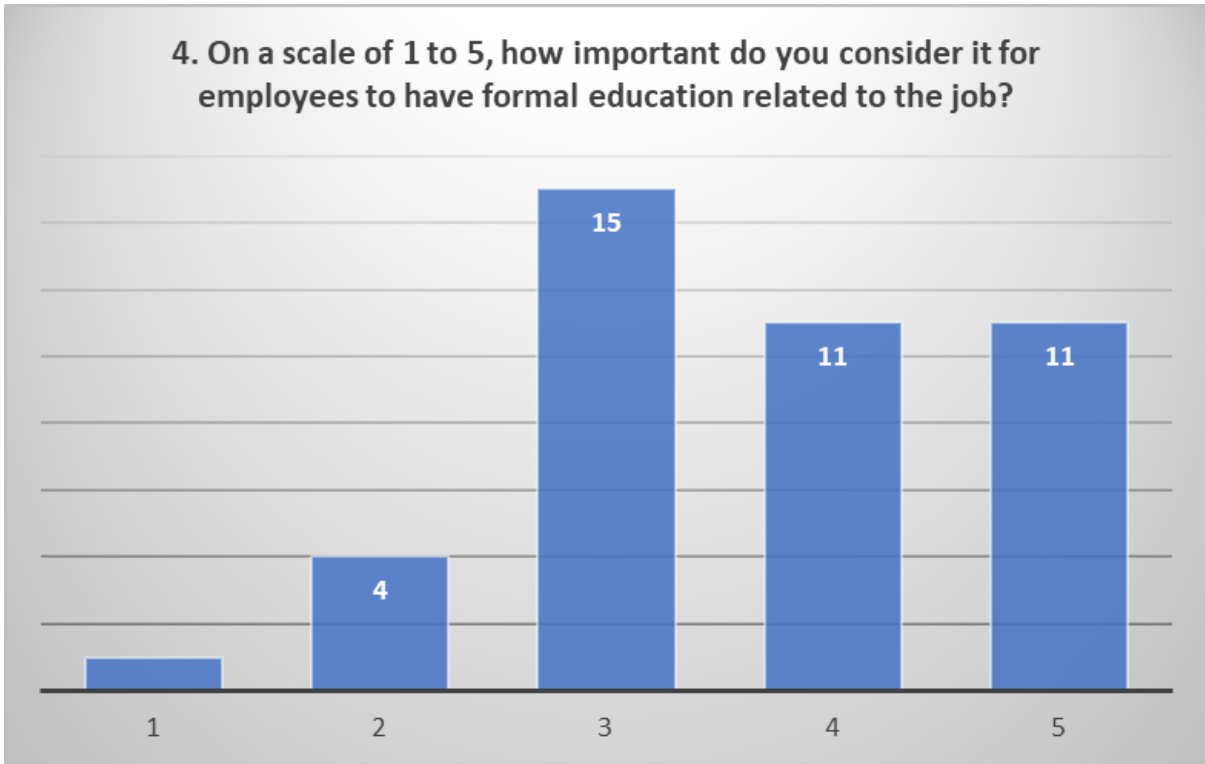


The graph provides insightful information regarding the recruitment practices of organisations in relation to individuals who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). According to the data, 25% of the surveyed organisations reported never recruiting NEET individuals, indicating a significant portion that currently overlooks this potential talent pool. Another 25% stated that they rarely engage in NEET recruitment, suggesting limited efforts in addressing this issue. However, the graph also highlights that 15% of the organisations sometimes recruit NEET individuals, demonstrating a moderate level of engagement in providing opportunities for this group. Notably, a smaller percentage of organisations (5%) reported often recruiting NEET individuals, reflecting a proactive approach in integrating them into the workforce. These findings emphasise the need for increased awareness and proactive measures to bridge the gap and support NEET individuals in accessing employment and training opportunities.



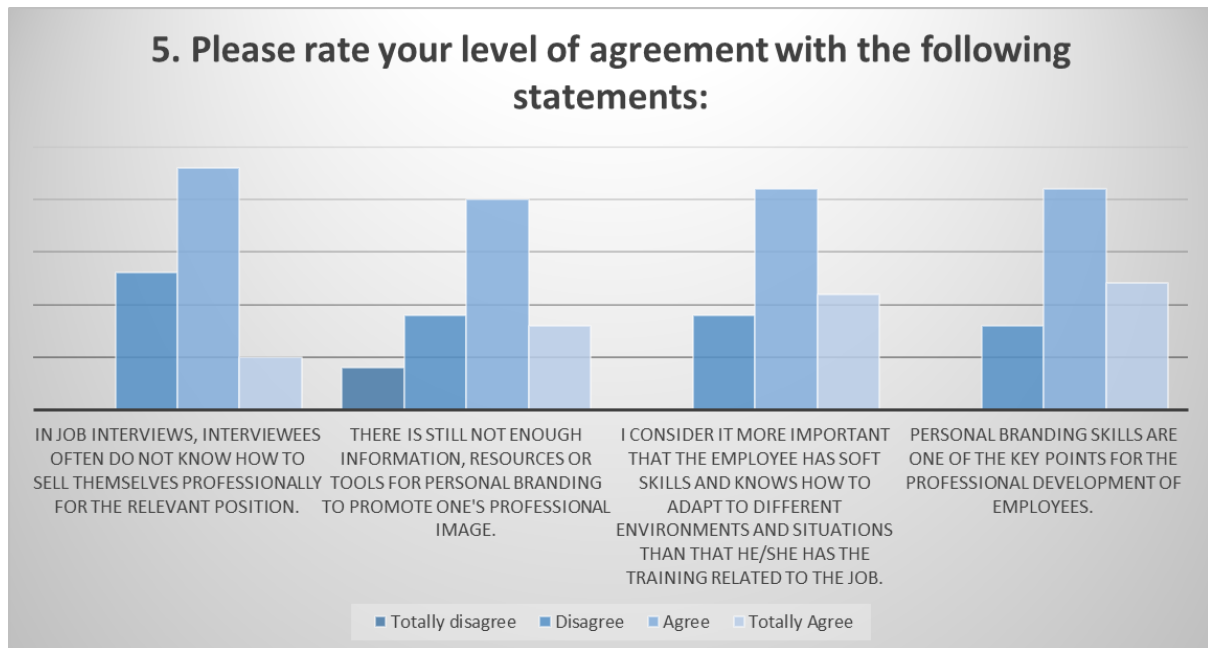


The graph provides an insightful breakdown of the level of education organisations prioritise when hiring staff. According to the data, 10% of the surveyed organisations specifically seek candidates with master's degrees, Ph.D.s, or higher qualifications, highlighting the importance they place on advanced academic credentials. Additionally, 43% of the organisations prioritise candidates with a bachelor's degree, indicating the significance of undergraduate education in their hiring criteria. Interestingly, 20% of the organisations stated that they do not consider the level of education as long as the candidates are qualified for the job, emphasising their focus on practical skills and experience rather than formal education. Equally, another 20% of organisations expressed a willingness to hire candidates regardless of their educational background as long as they demonstrate a willingness and enthusiasm to learn. These findings shed light on the diverse perspectives organisations have regarding the value they place on educational qualifications and their openness to alternative indicators of candidate suitability.



The graph illustrates the perceptions of individuals regarding the importance of formal education related to the job on a scale of 1 to 5. It is noteworthy that a minority of respondents (represented by 1) rated formal education as least important, while a larger portion (represented by 4) rated it as moderately important. The majority of participants (represented by 3) expressed a neutral stance towards the importance of formal education. Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents (represented by 11 each) rated formal education as highly important (5) or very important (4), indicating a recognition of the value and relevance of educational qualifications in job-related contexts.

## 2.2. RECRUITMENT BACKGROUND



The graph provides insights into the level of agreement among participants regarding several statements. Firstly, regarding the statement "In job interviews, interviewees often do not know how to sell themselves professionally for the relevant position," 13 individuals expressed disagreement, while 23 agreed and 5 fully agreed with the statement.

Secondly, in relation to the statement "There is still not enough information, resources, or tools for personal branding to promote one's professional image," 20 participants agreed, 9 disagreed, 4 strongly disagreed, and 8 fully agreed with the statement.

Thirdly, concerning the statement "I consider it more important that the employee has soft skills and knows how to adapt to different environments and situations than that he/she has the training related to the job," 21 individuals agreed, 9 disagreed, and 11 fully agreed with the statement.

Lastly, regarding the statement "Personal branding skills are one of the key points for the professional development of employees," 8 participants disagreed, 21 agreed, and 12 fully agreed with the statement.

These responses demonstrate varying perspectives among participants on the topics of self-presentation in job interviews, the availability of resources for personal branding, the importance of soft skills, and the significance of personal branding for professional development.

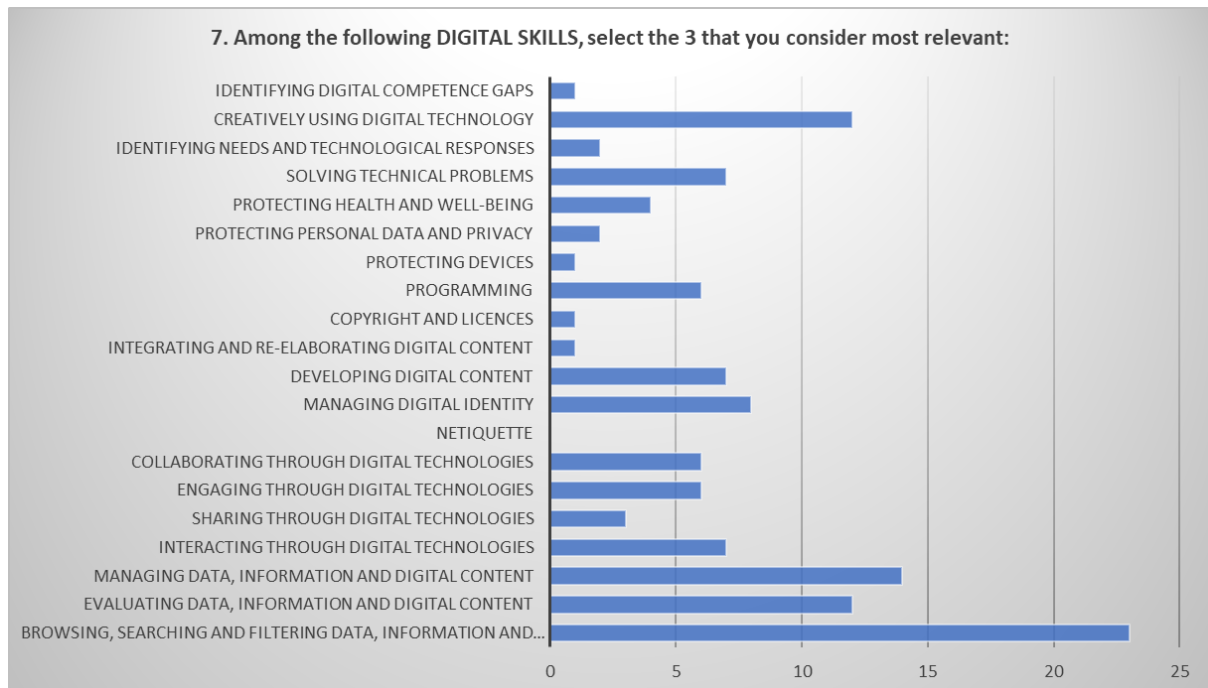
## 2.3. SKILLS SELECTION



The graph demonstrates the participants' perceptions of the most relevant personal branding skills. The majority, 70.7% of respondents, considered collaboration and relationship management as one of the most important skills for personal branding. Networking, analytical thinking, and communication & writing skills were also highly regarded, with 68.3% recognizing their significance in personal branding. Planning career and personal branding were rated as very important skills by 53.7% of participants. Creative storytelling & execution received recognition from 48.8% of respondents. Other skills mentioned include technical skills (31.7%), branding/marketing strategies & types and branding and social media (29.3%), brand management & positioning (26.8%), and personal brand monitoring and evaluation (22%). However, skills such as copywriting, competitive analysis, market research, and marketing campaigns were rated below 20% in terms of relevance. These findings highlight the importance of collaboration, networking, analytical thinking, and effective communication in building a personal brand. Additionally, planning, creativity, and an understanding of branding strategies and social media play crucial roles in personal branding endeavours.

The 6 most voted personal branding skills in Romania are:

- Collaboration and relationship management
- Networking
- Analytical thinking
- Communication & writing skills
- Planning career and personal branding
- Creative storytelling & execution

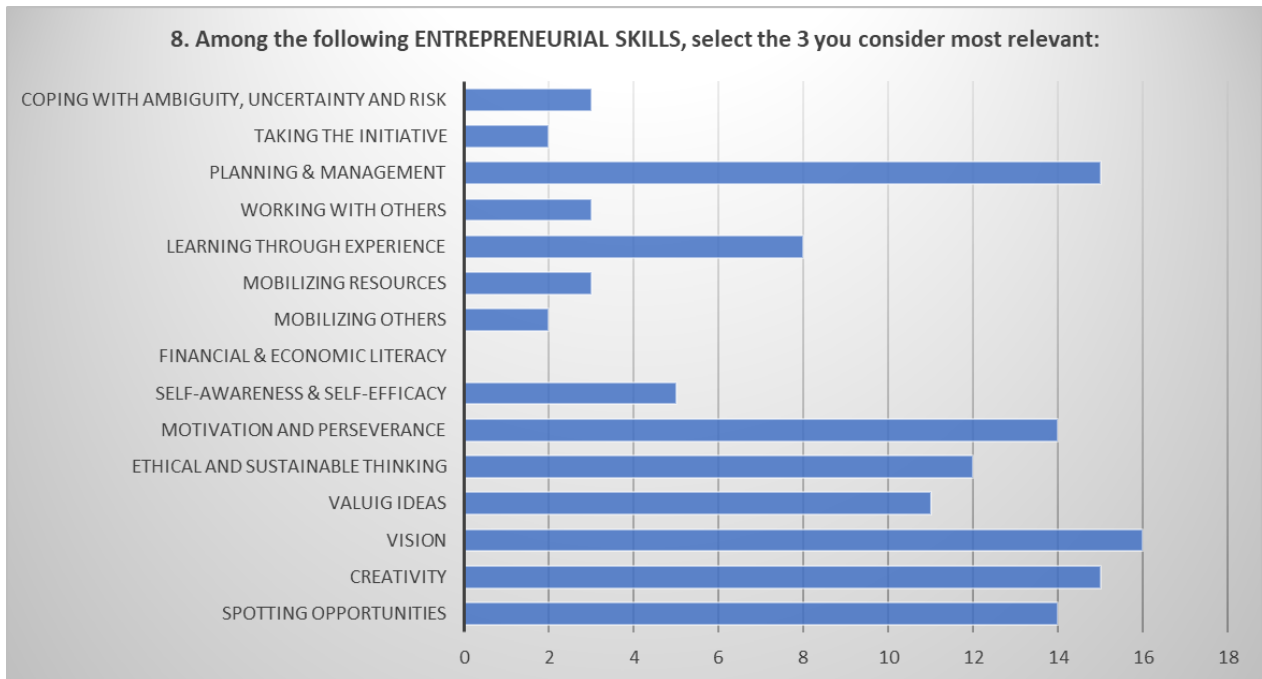


The graph showcases the participants' perceptions of the most relevant digital skills. The majority, 56.1% of respondents, considered browsing, searching, and filtering data, information, and digital content as essential digital skills. Additionally, 34.1% highlighted the importance of managing data, information, and digital content. Another significant portion, 29.3%, emphasised the value of evaluating data, information, and digital content, along with creative usage of digital technology. Other noteworthy skills mentioned include managing digital identity (19.5%), interacting through digital technologies (17.1%), developing digital content, and solving technical problems. However, skills such as engaging and collaborating through digital technologies and programming were rated below 15% in terms of relevance. These findings underscore the importance of digital skills related to data management, evaluation, and creative use, while also highlighting the need for further development in areas like digital collaboration and programming.

Overall, the insights from the graph emphasise the necessity for individuals to acquire and continually enhance a diverse set of digital skills to thrive in an increasingly digitised world.

The 3 most voted digital skills in Romania are:

- Browsing, searching, and filtering data, information, and digital content
- Managing data, information, and digital content
- Evaluating data, information, and digital content



The graph illustrates the participants' perceptions of the most relevant entrepreneurial skills. The majority, comprising 39% of respondents, considered vision as a crucial skill for entrepreneurship. Additionally, 36.6% of participants recognized the importance of creativity, along with skills in planning and management. A significant proportion, 34.1%, highlighted the significance of identifying opportunities, coupled with motivation and perseverance. Furthermore, 29.3% of respondents emphasised the importance of ethical and sustainable thinking in entrepreneurship. Other relevant skills mentioned include valuing of ideas, as indicated by 26.8% of participants, and learning through experience, which 19.5% found to be significant in the entrepreneurial context. Skills like self-awareness and self-efficacy, mobilising resources and others, working with others were rated under 15%.

These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial skills, emphasising the importance of vision, creativity, opportunity identification, ethical thinking, and continuous learning for success in entrepreneurship.

The most voted entrepreneurial skills in Romania are:

- Creativity
- Vision
- Planning and management

## 2.4. OPEN QUESTIONS

9. *Would you like to share any recommendations or experiences you have had when recruiting staff regarding personal branding?*

- One experience that I think most people in HR experience quite often is the relationship between domain knowledge and salary requirements of the people interviewing. There are many who underestimate their domain knowledge and there are many who overestimate their professional knowledge. It's good to know where you stand in the market, and many don't know how to do real research to answer the question about salary expectations.
- Although I believe there are many learning palettes when it comes to personal branding, the vast majority treat the subject superficially.
- I rarely see people in interviews who know how and what to sell. For me, and because the specifics of the job allow it, the most effective way is to compare hypothetical questions and then put the person in the context described to see how they actually act.
- Create a well-structured, clear CV with a description that contains interests in terms of a specific career start
- Inclusion of extracurricular activities (volunteering, internship, etc.) in the CV
- Expressing a desire to learn and develop
- Displaying a positive and confident attitude
- One very important aspect seemed to me to be the confidence the candidates presented: how confident they are in their own strengths and their ability to convey a can-do attitude.
- It would be important to inspire/motivate people to develop their personal brand through personal example. This is our footprint or even our calling card.
- Very few candidates know what personal branding is and how to sell themselves in an interview.
- I would add that there are still few professionals on LinkedIn, the main network that companies in Romania use for recruitment.
- I've never questioned the man having a personal brand. I am usually impressed if the man has a portfolio or a well-structured CV. But that's on specialist jobs.
- Investing in building your personal brand
- What matters is what you know how to do.
- Most of the time, attitude beats knowledge
- CVs that are too thick and technical, without personality, leaving no room to get to know the person as a person and not as a professional.
- Work culture is lacking in many candidates, especially young people.
- On the use of the flaw "I'm a perfectionist" in the construction of the personal brand in the interview.
- Encouraging authenticity and sincerity, since none of the parties involved would benefit from a personal branding that does not really coincide with the applicant's values and characteristics, but only with the job requirements.

- Candidates who do not add personal information to their CV, such as contact details. It does not add the responsibilities for each position, as well as the duration, company and location.
- An experience that I think most people in the field of human resources live quite often, is the ratio between the knowledge of the field and the salary requirements of the people participating in the interview. There are many who underestimate the training in the field of activity and there are many who overestimate their professional training. It's good to know where you stand on the market, and many don't know how to do real research to answer the question about salary claims.

Based on input from the respondents of this survey, the following are some insights that provide an overview of the observations and experiences shared.

- Many job seekers underestimate or overestimate their domain knowledge and its alignment with salary expectations.
- Personal branding is often treated superficially, missing out on opportunities to showcase unique value propositions.
- Candidates in interviews often struggle to effectively sell themselves and their abilities.
- A well-structured and clear CV with relevant information is crucial for making a positive impression.
- Confidence, attitude, and personal branding are important factors in job interviews.
- LinkedIn is a key platform for professional networking and recruitment in Romania.
- Balancing technical knowledge, attitude, and work culture is important in candidate evaluation.
- Authenticity and alignment with values are vital in personal branding efforts.
- Comprehensive and personalised CVs allow employers to get to know candidates on a personal level.
- Thorough research on salary expectations is essential for effective negotiation.

10. *Would you add any skills to the above lists? If so, please specify:*

- Knowing values and promoting them
- Networking networking networking
- General intelligence - much better to have an employee who knows how to link knowledge from several areas than a hyper-specialised employee, which leads to rigid thinking and errors of judgement
- Nothing significant, seems like the lists covered the subject pretty well.
- It is very important that the person applying for a job is open to learning new things and has the patience to learn new skills and competences.
- It's pretty comprehensive
- there's already too much to understand and prioritise.
- Communication
- Adaptability, patience, teamwork
- critical thinking.



The following provide additional insights and perspectives on the mentioned skills, emphasising their relevance and significance in the context of personal branding and employability.

- Knowing and promoting values: Recognizing and aligning with personal and organisational values can contribute to a strong personal brand and cultural fit within a company.
- Networking: Emphasising the importance of networking highlights the value of building professional relationships and connections for career opportunities and growth.
- General intelligence: Acknowledging the benefits of a broad knowledge base and the ability to connect information from various areas can lead to more flexible thinking and better decision-making.
- Openness to learning: Highlighting the importance of being open to learning new skills and competencies emphasises the adaptability and growth mindset sought after by employers.
- Comprehensive and prioritised lists: Recognizing that the provided lists already cover the subject well indicates satisfaction with the range of skills mentioned.
- Communication: Strong communication skills are essential for effective collaboration, conveying ideas, and building relationships in the workplace.
- Adaptability, patience, teamwork: These skills reflect the importance of being flexible, resilient, and collaborative in navigating work environments and achieving collective goals.
- Critical thinking: The ability to think critically and analyse situations can contribute to problem-solving, innovation, and informed decision-making.

*11. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make?*

- Congratulations and good luck.
- It would be helpful for me to understand the motivation behind this form. How does it help or influence the fact that I filled it in. What is personal branding? What will be done with the information provided.
- How much time should a young person/professional invest in personal branding vs. professional development/research?

### 3. PARTNER REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of our key best practices is the integration of personal branding education into our training programs. We recognize the importance of personal branding in helping individuals stand out in the competitive job market. Through workshops, coaching sessions, and practical exercises, we guide participants in understanding their unique strengths, values, and aspirations, and how to effectively communicate and market themselves to potential employers.

Based on our experience, we offer the following recommendations for individuals seeking to enhance their employability:

**Invest in self-reflection:** Take the time to understand your strengths, passions, and career goals. This self-awareness will help you craft a compelling personal brand that aligns with your aspirations.

**Develop a strong online presence:** In today's digital age, having a professional online presence is crucial. Build a well-crafted LinkedIn profile and engage in relevant industry discussions. Showcase your skills, projects, and achievements through a portfolio or personal website.

**Network strategically:** Actively seek out networking opportunities and build connections with professionals in your field of interest. Attend industry events, join professional associations, and utilise online platforms to expand your network and gain valuable insights.

**Continuously update your skills:** Keep up with industry trends and advancements by pursuing continuous learning. Take advantage of online courses, workshops, and certifications to acquire new skills and stay relevant in the job market.

**Seek mentorship and guidance:** Find mentors who can provide guidance and support throughout your professional journey. Their insights and advice can be invaluable in shaping your career path and personal branding strategy.

At iEL, we are dedicated to empowering individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their chosen fields. By incorporating personal branding education, promoting continuous learning, and providing mentorship opportunities, we aim to equip individuals with the tools they need to thrive in the job market.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the survey results, several key insights regarding personal branding and recruitment practices have emerged. The most chosen skills in transversal, digital, and entrepreneurial domains highlight the importance of collaboration, relationship management, networking, communication, creativity, and adaptability. These skills are essential for individuals seeking to enhance their personal brand and stand out in the competitive job market.

The main 12 skills that were mentioned in the survey as the most important ones while entering labour market are:

- Creativity
- Vision
- Planning and management
- Browsing, searching, and filtering data, information, and digital content
- Managing data, information, and digital content
- Evaluating data, information, and digital content
- Collaboration and relationship management
- Networking
- Analytical thinking
- Communication & writing skills
- Planning career and personal branding
- Creative storytelling & execution

Furthermore, the experiences and recommendations shared by participants shed light on various aspects of personal branding and recruitment. It is evident that many candidates lack a deep understanding of personal branding and struggle to effectively sell themselves during job interviews. Encouraging authenticity, highlighting values, and showcasing a positive and confident attitude are crucial for building a strong personal brand.

Additionally, the importance of continuous learning and professional development cannot be overstated. While formal education related to the job is valued, soft skills, adaptability, and general intelligence are equally vital. Employers recognize the significance of individuals who can integrate knowledge from multiple areas and demonstrate critical thinking.

Moreover, participants highlighted the need for well-structured and clear CVs that reflect both professional qualifications and personal interests. Including extracurricular activities, expressing a desire to learn and develop, and demonstrating work culture are key elements in creating a compelling personal brand.

Furthermore, it is essential for individuals to invest in building their personal brand through various means, including leveraging digital platforms like LinkedIn. The survey indicated a shortage of professionals on LinkedIn, which is a primary recruitment network in Romania.

In conclusion, personal branding plays a crucial role in career development and employability. The most chosen skills identified in the survey, along with the shared experiences and recommendations, provide valuable insights for individuals and organisations seeking to enhance personal branding efforts and improve recruitment practices. By focusing on collaboration, communication, creativity, adaptability, and continuous learning, individuals can effectively position themselves in the job market and seize opportunities for professional growth and success.

## 5. REFERENCES

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