

Introducing HISS

Help to Improve Soft Skills (HISS) is a project funded by the Leonardo da Vinci European Union Programme.

The project will encourage local businesses, schools, colleges, and recruitment organisations, to apply a toolbox of Soft Skills and methodologies into their professional development programmes.

Soft Skills are a cluster of personality traits and interpersonal abilities (communication and language skills) which are increasingly recognised as yielding a significant return on investment for businesses and individuals. In many industries these soft skills often contribute more to a successful career than technical competencies, and are sought out by employers.

The Toolbox will be aligned with the needs of the labour market and focus on self development and self marketing communication which are attractive to employers. The aim is to communicate clearly and openly with the employees and balance the objectives of their company with the individual needs of the employees.

The partners involved in HISS include Centro Tecnológico do Calçado de Portugal, Zulu AB, JONAC NV, PASCH Verein für Jugend, Beruf und Arbeit, GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Euro-Lingva Foundation, Ngage Solutions Ltd, VDAB, Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding.



Graduates testing the 'Screening & Selection of Personnel' tool developed by GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap. This round of testing was carried out by JONAC NV.

The **HISS** team works with partners across all six countries during the project to test refine and develop best practice which will be translated into the Toolbox of Soft Skills.

An online tool will be created for use by educational, training, employment and placement organisations to encourage a consistent approach to:

- Screening and selection of personnel
- Motivation and workplace learning
- Mentoring

HISS Timeline

Who tests the tools?



The HISS Partnership during the second workgroup meeting in Oxford, UK.

11/11/09 Project Meeting Belgium

The first meeting of all the partners took place in Brussels in November 2009, and was principally held to discuss the first phase of the project, which was about how to identify the levels of soft skills in candidates at interviews for new job roles. A method of doing this had already been created by one of the Belgian partners, and it was agreed that each of the partners would “test” the methodology with their respective clients and stakeholders.

4/3/10 Project Meeting Oxford

The HISS partners came together for two sunny days in Oxford at the beginning of March for the team's second project. The meeting allowed the partners to report their findings from the first phase of testing, and review the tools available for phase 2. This second phase of testing focuses on Motivation and Workplace Learning.

12/10/10 Project Meeting Stockholm

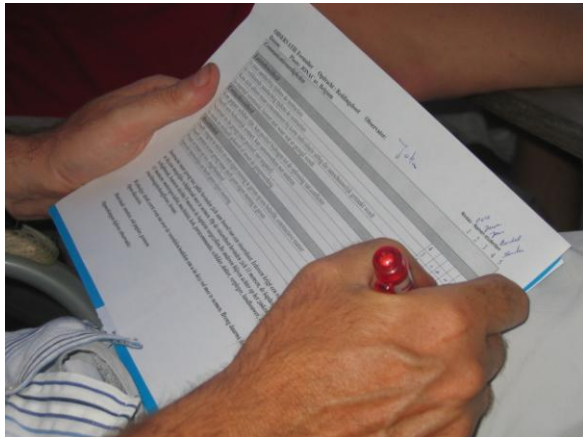
Swedish Partner Zulu hosted the third project meeting in Stockholm 12th-13th October 2010. The purpose of this meeting was to review the findings of the Motivation tools and introduce the materials for the final section of the e-Toolbox- Mentoring. With 12 months of activity under their belts, the partners are starting to refine the tools to fit their particular requirements.



Austrian Students preparing work placements during their qualification courses in PASCH using the practical training manual from VDAB.

The partners involved in the project represent a variety of sectors for example students, young job seekers, unemployed, employed persons and also employers. Testing has been approached with each organisation's target audience in mind. For example ngage solutions and PASCH work with employers and felt the existing tool might not be appropriate for the businesses they represent. To solve this problem a questionnaire was developed and sent to employers to find out if a scorecard which rated a candidate's level of soft skills would be useful. An example of this survey will be available on-line soon.

Screening of Soft Skills Case Study



Example of JONAC NV testing the tools from the 'Screening & Selection of Personnel' work package. The tools were developed by GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.

Screening of non-vocational skills

Developed By: GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.

Developed For: Young people

Tool used by: JONAC NV

Summary of tool: Screening tool to analyse the level of soft-skills

"The process of testing the tools helped me become more aware of the importance of being confident in my decisions and expressing clearly what I want to say"

Tool tested by: JONAC NV

Tool tested on: Bachelor Students

Expectations of the testing: That the tools would make the students more aware of their own soft skills.

Findings from the testing: The tools were too basic for Bachelor students and they would benefit from more complex and challenging exercises.

Next steps: JONAC NV has made recommendations on the exercises that are suitable for this target group, and also suggested that the number of observers involved in the testing process is reduced.

Motivation Case Study



Manager testing the Motivation Tool developed by JONAC NV.

“Motivation for Competence Development Tool” FACTFILE

Developed By: JONAC NV

Developed For: *Employees & Managers*

Tool used by: *Zulu*

Summary of tool: *This resource provides organisations with a step-by-step plan to improve workplace performance, including a self-analysis tool, which considers the perspective of both the individual employee and that of the organisation.*

“This would be useful for my personnel” Manager of Swedish micro business.

Tool tested by: *Zulu*

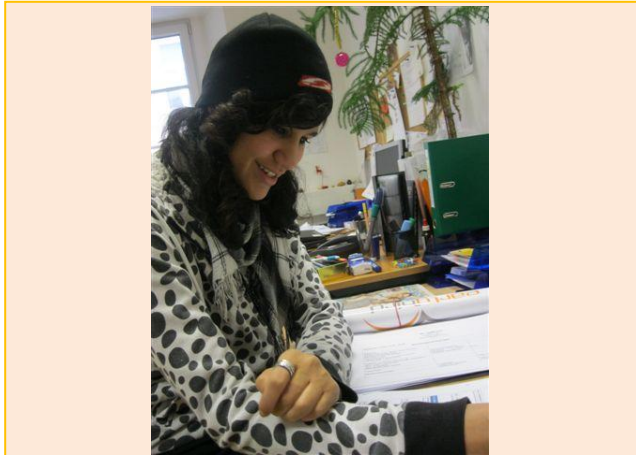
Tool tested on: Managers and employees of micro-businesses (those with <5 employees)

Expectations of the testing: That the tool would educate the target group in the importance of improving workplace performance and self-analysis.

Findings from the testing: The participants reported that day-to-day pressures mean that self-development and improving workplace performance is often neglected. This is even more striking in very small companies. The tool allowed the participants to assess their strengths and weaknesses in this area and remember that it is important to make time for self analysis. It was also suggested that the tool would be valuable for individuals thinking of starting a business.

Next steps: The tools have been translated into business English

Mentoring Case Study



Austrian Student preparing for a work placement in the training centre, PASCH. The practical training manual was developed by VDAB.

Mentoring 'Practical Handout' FACTFILE

Developed By: VDAB

Developed For: Jobseekers

Tool used by: PASCH

Summary of tool: Workbook which gives the trainee & trainer the opportunity to reflect on soft skills at the beginning and end of their training, keep a log-book and evaluate their development at the end of the training period.

"In my opinion, I improved my competence in some soft skills during the practical training. I probably wouldn't have been aware of it without having used the practical training handout." Elmedina, 17

"I didn't understand everything at the beginning when my trainers introduced the practical training hand out. But they explained it to me, and I even did the diary part every evening. This was a reflection on the day which I found interesting." Besarta, 16

Tool tested by: PASCH

Tool tested on: 7 students seeking jobs

Expectations of the testing: That the tool would help to prepare students for a work-placement in a company, raise awareness of the soft-skills expected of them in the work environment, and encourage self-reflection about their own soft-skills and how they can be applied at work.

Findings from the testing: The tool allowed the trainee and mentor to assess levels of soft-skills at the beginning of the placement, and measure any progress after the training. Daily entries into the log book required the students to motivate themselves and reflect on progress made throughout the day. The tool allowed the mentor to be involved in the learning process of the trainee without having to spend too much time filling out reports and evaluation documents. **Next steps:** Create practical handouts for the 20 most often chosen professions and review the feedback section of the manager/mentor's role in the process