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EMERGING SKILLS AS DRIVERS OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

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Abstract. Digital transformation is profoundly redefining organisational models, labour market requirements, and the professional competencies necessary in an economy increasingly driven by technology and innovation. This article explores the role of emerging digital, media, analytical, and creative competencies as key drivers of organisational transformation in the digital economy. Based on an analysis of international literature and empirical data collected from industry representatives, the study highlights the existing gap between employees' actual skills and the expectations of the business environment, emphasising the urgent need to recalibrate education systems and professional training programs. The findings indicate that employers prioritise competencies such as digital marketing, social media management, copywriting, data analysis, and multimedia content production, which are considered essential for enhancing competitiveness and visibility in the digital marketplace. At the same time, the study confirms that the development of digital media skills fosters not only economic performance but also adaptability, creativity, and professional resilience. The article proposes an integrated perspective on the relationship between technology, education, and organisational development, arguing that investment in emerging skills is a strategic condition for innovation, sustainability, and inclusion in the knowledge-based economy. The conclusions provide practical guidance for both academia and industry, emphasising the development of a workforce that can dynamically respond to the demands of digital transformation.

Keywords: *digital communication, media competencies, creativity, digital literacy, innovation, professional development, workforce adaptability.*

JEL code: *J24, M53, M54, O33*

Introduction

The expansion of the digital economy has fundamentally redefined the mechanisms of growth and competitiveness, generating profound transformations in both the structure of organisations and the dynamics of the labour market. In an era characterised by automation, artificial intelligence and globally interconnected processes, emerging skills are becoming the primary driver of adaptability and innovation. Organisations can no longer evolve solely through technological capital, but rather through the ability of employees to integrate digital, analytical, and creative knowledge in a strategic and interdisciplinary manner.

The expansion of the digital economy has led to a profound restructuring of labour market demands, requiring an increasingly pronounced orientation towards training and improving digital skills. The emergence of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, or process automation, has changed not only the nature of economic activities but also the professional profile of employees, who are increasingly required to possess integrated technical, analytical, and creative knowledge [1]. In this new reality, digital media skills that include the effective use of digital platforms, the management of online communication and the creation of relevant content are no longer an optional asset, but a fundamental condition for sustainable integration into the labour market [2]. Adapting to these requirements becomes essential both to increase the productivity and competitiveness of organisations, and to ensure the professional inclusion of individuals in a global economy increasingly based on innovation and technology.

The role of emerging skills in the process of organisational transformation emphasises the interdependence between technology, education and strategic human resource management. Research in the field shows that companies that invest in digital and media skills development achieve a higher level of innovation, resilience and competitiveness in the long term [3], [4].

Literature review

The digitalisation process accelerates the transformation of professional skills, profoundly altering the demands of the labour market. While basic skills, such as digital literacy and the general use of information technologies, remain essential, they are no longer sufficient to ensure performance and competitiveness in today's economic environment. The digital economy increasingly requires advanced and specialised skills to enable the full use of emerging technologies [5], [6], [7]. These include data analysis and interpretation, software development and integration of information systems, cybersecurity, as well as cross-functional areas such as artificial intelligence, digital marketing and multimedia content management [8], [4]. This development underlines the need for a continuous recalibration of vocational training and education systems so that they can dynamically respond to technological transformations and contribute to strengthening competent digital human capital.

At the same time, extensive access to the internet and its development is one of the main factors of contemporary economic development, favoring global integration, innovation and competitiveness [9]. Digital connectivity ensures not only the rapid circulation of information, but also the active participation of economic actors in global markets, e-commerce processes and collaborative innovation ecosystems. At the same time, the positive impact of the Internet on economic growth is closely linked to the level of digital skills held by the population. As economic activities migrate to the online environment, it becomes evident that there is a need to train new economic skills, capable of ensuring the strategic use of digital resources, data analysis and capitalisation, digital marketing, as well as media content management.

Among the most significant challenges associated with the digital transformation process is the widening digital skills gap, which affects both the active workforce and vocational training systems [5]. This deficit is amplified by the resistance to change encountered in many organisations, where adapting to new technologies is perceived as an additional threat or burden, as well as by the high costs of training programs, which limit access to training, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises [10]. Added to this are traditional education systems, which are often insufficiently adapted to the accelerated pace of technological innovation and the real needs of the labour market.

Small businesses can derive considerable benefits from implementing digital technologies, as their flexible structure and rapid decision-making processes allow them to adapt more effectively to changes in the business environment[2]. Thanks to a high degree of operational agility, these facilities can more easily integrate digital tools to optimise production, manage customer relationships, or expand sales through online channels[11]. In addition, digitalisation allows small producers to improve their market visibility, reduce administrative costs and react promptly to demand developments. Therefore, the adoption of digital technologies is not only a tool for modernisation, but a strategic condition for strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of small businesses in an increasingly digitised economic context.

In the context of the accelerated industrial transformation generated by Industry 4.0 technologies, digital media skills become a strategic component of human capital development and organisational competitiveness. They integrate a complex set of skills – from the effective use of digital tools and data analysis, to the creation, management and distribution of multimedia content in virtual environments [11]. The article analyses these skills in correlation with the dynamics of demand in the labour market, highlighting the fact that the adaptation of employees to new technological requirements can no longer be limited to basic digital literacy [12]. It is necessary to train advanced, interdisciplinary skills, such as digital marketing, online communication, visual thinking, multimedia storytelling, and the ethical use of artificial intelligence in content production. Digital media skills are therefore not just technical tools, but key drivers of innovation, inclusion and sustainability in the digital economy, facilitating the transition to flexible, collaborative and knowledge-centric

organisational models. The analysis embedded in the article demonstrates that the development of these skills supports the resilience of the workforce and contributes to achieving the objectives of an economy based on innovation and social responsibility.

Literature and recent studies highlight that the field of modern marketing is profoundly influenced by digitalisation, requiring a complex and interdependent set of digital skills. Among them, the ability to develop and implement digital marketing strategies plays a central role, as it enables the coherent integration of all technological tools to achieve business objectives [13]. Content marketing becomes essential for creating and distributing relevant content that strengthens the relationship between the brand and its consumers. At the same time, search engine optimisation and social media presence management help increase visibility and boost engagement with your target audience.

Digital skills are also essential in the field of logistics, as they allow for the optimisation of supply chains, real-time monitoring of flows of goods and the efficient use of data to reduce costs and increase operational efficiency; the integration of digital technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), data analytics and intelligent tracking systems transforms logistics from a reactive activity into a strategic, predictive and sustainable process [14].

Digital media skills are an essential set of transversal competences that are at the heart of the economic and social transformations analysed in the article, as they condition the way in which individuals and organisations adapt to the new demands of the knowledge- and technology-based economy [3]. In the context of the expansion of digitalisation processes and the shift towards Industry 4.0, these competences are not limited to the use of information technologies, but also include the ability to access, critically interpret, create, and disseminate relevant digital content ethically and responsibly [11]. Digital media skills become a central element of the new economic skills, being fundamental for innovation, effective communication, digital marketing, data management and organisational brand consolidation [15], [16]. The integration and development of these skills in vocational training and reskilling strategies is a strategic condition for creating a workforce capable of fully harnessing the potential of the digital transformation analysed in this study [17].

Mapping employers' expectations for digital and media competencies

The digital transformation of the global economy is fundamentally redefining the production structures, business models and professional skills required in the labour market. In a global context marked by automation, artificial intelligence, and extensive interconnectivity, human capital is becoming the primary driver of economic competitiveness. Organisations can no longer progress only by investing in technology, but by continuously developing employees' digital, managerial and creative skills, which condition their ability to innovate and adapt to change.

International analyses confirm that the digital economy requires a recalibration of skills, directing the demand towards data analysis skills, critical thinking, digital communication and the effective use of technological tools in all sectors of activity. At the same time, the persistent gap between the pace of technological evolution and the adaptation of educational systems accentuates the phenomenon of the "skills gap", which has become a significant barrier in the process of organisational transformation. In this framework, the research presented in this article examines the relationship between digital transformation and the dynamics of professional skills, employing an integrated approach that combines global and European statistical data with the results of applied research at the national level. The study aims to identify trends in the demand for digital skills, employers' perceptions of the current training of the workforce, and priority directions for training and retraining.

Figure 1 shows the strategic links between the five policy objectives of the Cohesion Policy 2021–2027 and the six pillars of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), highlighting the convergence of the European Union's economic, social and territorial development directions, reflecting an integrated European transformation management approach, based on the green and digital transitions, strengthening competitiveness and increasing economic and social resilience.

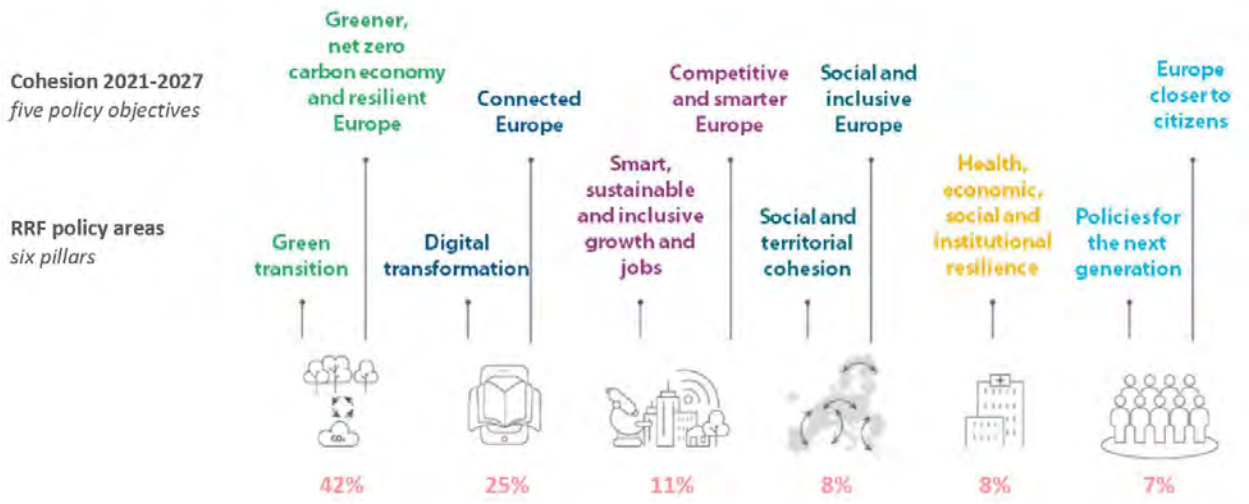


Figure 1. Cohesion policy objectives and RRF pillars

Source: [18], p.17

While all goals and pillars are essential components of sustainable development, the figure highlights the growing importance of digital transformation as a cross-cutting element that can accelerate progress in all other areas. With a 25% share in the RRF, the Digital Transformation pillar directly correlates with the Connected Europe policy objective, while simultaneously influencing economic competitiveness, energy efficiency, and social cohesion. In the context of the contemporary European economy, digital transformation is no longer perceived only as a technological process, but as a strategic dimension of business management, essential for increasing productivity, innovating business models and expanding access to global markets.

In the view of the business environment, this pillar represents the key to organisational modernisation and adaptation of economic models to the requirements of the digital age. The digitisation of processes, automation, the use of artificial intelligence and big data analysis allow not only the efficiency of value chains, but also better integration between the public and private sectors. In this way, digital transformation becomes a bridge between economic objectives, such as competitiveness and innovation, and social objectives, including the creation of high-skilled jobs and the improvement of citizens' quality of life.

The other areas in the figure – the green transition (42%), innovative and inclusive growth (11%), social and territorial cohesion (8%), economic and institutional resilience (8%) and policies for the next generation (7%) – are complementary pillars. However, each of them depends to a significant extent on the progress of digitalisation. Thus, the European governance model oriented towards digitalisation as a factor of systemic transformation, highlights digital transformation as the engine of economic convergence and organisational resilience, providing the business environment with the necessary tools for innovation, competitiveness and adaptation to new economic realities. In the management vision, it is no longer just a technological component, but an integrated business development strategy that reconfigures the way companies operate, customer relationships, the structure of value chains, and the ability to react to global changes.

Figure 2 highlights the main obstacles perceived by employers in the process of organisational transformation, based on a survey on expectations for the period 2025–2030. The data reflect not only technical or structural difficulties, but also systemic challenges related to human resource management, organisational culture, and change support infrastructure. The most important obstacle, reported by 63% of employers, is the skills gap in the labour market. This finding confirms the existence of a gap between the demand and supply of skills, suggesting that the digital transformation process is not limited by technology, but rather by a lack of human capital ready to manage it. From a managerial perspective, this gap implies the need for a coherent training and retraining policy, oriented towards digital, analytical and adaptive leadership skills.

In second place, with 46%, is organisational culture and resistance to change, a classic barrier in the change management literature. This result shows that, regardless of the technological level reached, fundamental transformation cannot take place without a change in mentality, values and behaviours. In many organisations, the lack of a culture of learning and innovation hinders the ability to adapt, resulting in structural inertia that slows down the processes of digitisation and managerial modernisation.

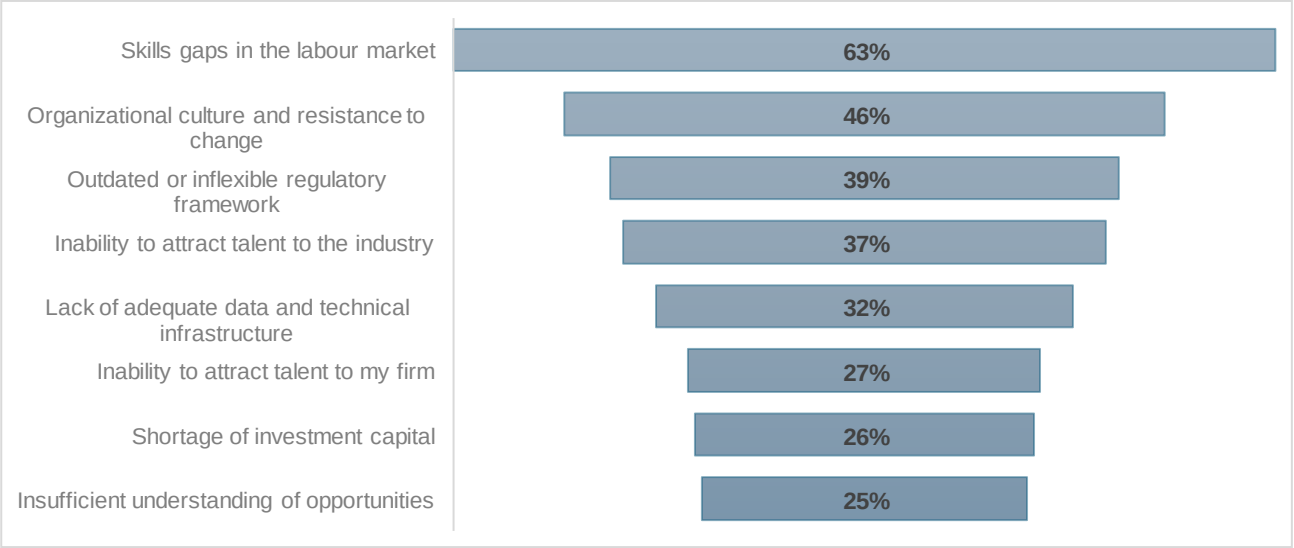


Figure 2. Key barriers to organizational transformation in the digital era

Source: elaborated by authors based on the data presented in [19], p.49

Another significant factor, mentioned by 39% of respondents, is the outdated or inflexible regulatory framework. This reveals the institutional dimension of the transformation, showing that public policies and regulations can be barriers if they do not evolve at the same pace as technological innovations. The lack of legal flexibility limits the implementation of modern working models, such as hybrid work, the digital economy, and public-private partnerships for innovation.

Another critical aspect, mentioned by 37% of employers, is the difficulty of attracting talent to the industry, which is complemented by 27% stating that they are unable to attract talent to their own firm. This dual perspective highlights a structural issue in the attractiveness of traditional economic sectors, which struggle to compete with digital industries in terms of organisational culture, development opportunities, and leadership style.

A quarter of employers cite a lack of adequate technical and data infrastructure (32%), a shortfall in investment capital (26%) and insufficient understanding of opportunities (25%). These barriers highlight the fact that organisational transformation is not just a problem of managerial will, but one of resources – both material and cognitive. In the absence of investment in digital infrastructure and a data-driven strategic vision, innovation processes remain fragmented and reactive.

In conclusion, the figure clearly shows that the management of organisational transformation between 2025 and 2030 will depend primarily on the ability of leaders to manage human capital, organisational culture, and the institutional ecosystem of change. The major challenge is not only the implementation of emerging technologies, but their integration into a coherent strategy of skills development and cultural adaptation, capable of transforming organisational rigidity into agility and sustainable innovation.

Figure 3 illustrates, in a complex and strategic manner, the direction of evolution of the skills considered essential by employers in the period 2025–2030. The diagram analyses, on the one hand, the share of skills that are already core in the professional activity, and on the other hand, the expectations regarding their increasing importance in the future. Thus, the figure provides an integrated picture of how career development management needs to adapt to rapid changes in the technological, economic and social environment.

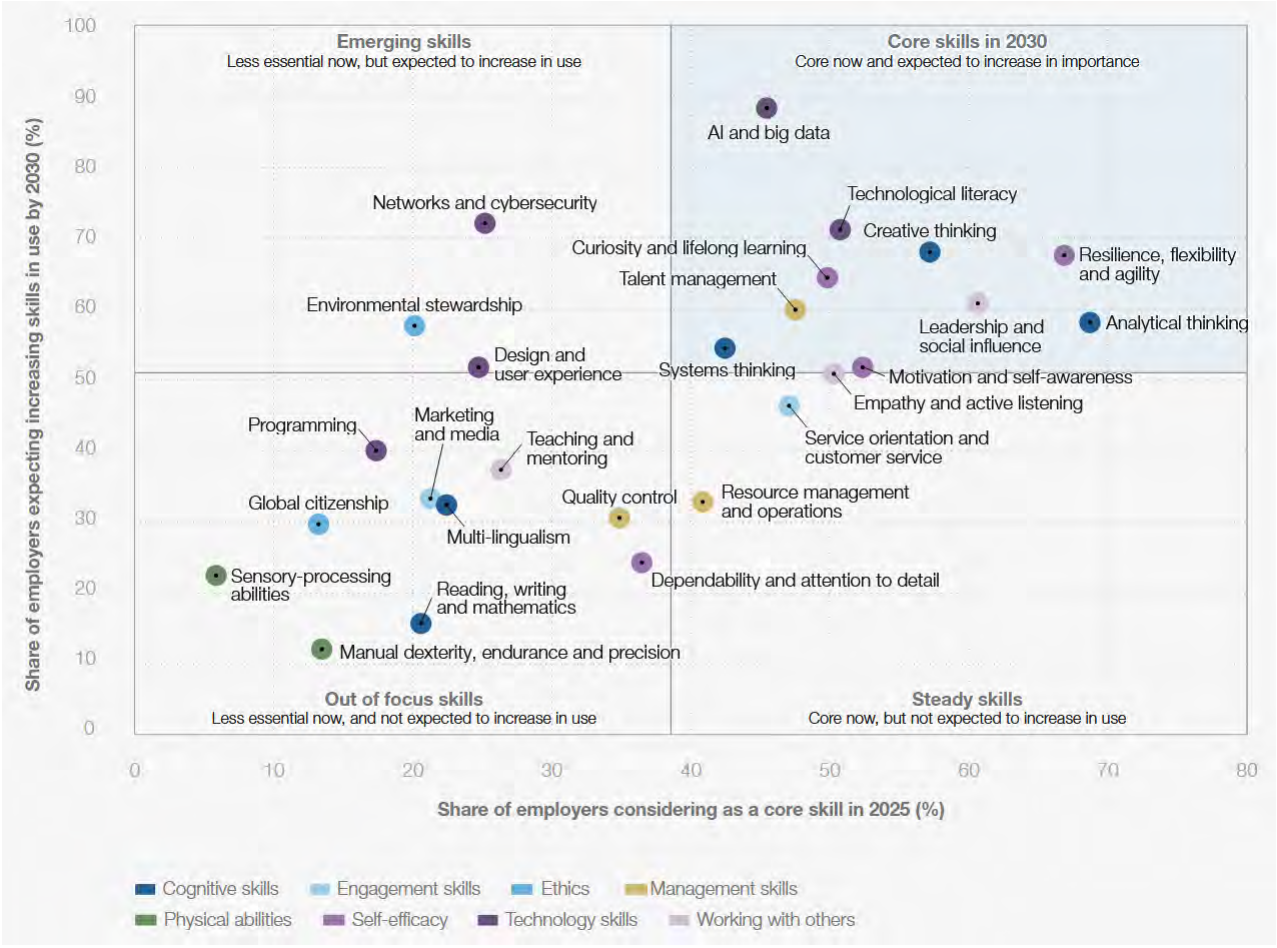


Figure 3. Mapping of core and emerging skills towards 2030

Source: [19], p.41

In the upper right area are concentrated the skills that will constitute the professional core of 2030 – a mix of cognitive, digital, and social skills that define the profile of the future employee. Among them, analytical thinking, resilience, flexibility, agility, technological literacy, as well as creative thinking and social influence, stand out. Most employers already value these skills and will become pillars of performance management and organisational competitiveness. In a managerial context, this means that the training and development of human resources can no longer be treated as simple training activities, but as strategic processes integrated into institutional planning. The ability to analyse data, use artificial intelligence tools, and manifest critical and creative thinking becomes a sine qua non for the survival and success of organisations.

At the same time, the figure highlights the emergence of a new set of skills that, although less essential at present, will become of significant importance by 2030. This includes areas such as cybersecurity, systems thinking, environmental stewardship, curiosity and continuous learning. These competencies reflect the profound shift in the career management paradigm – from a static, stability-oriented approach to a dynamic one focused on adaptability, sustainability and lifelong learning. From a managerial perspective, this area signals the need to design interdisciplinary training programs that develop not only technical skills, but also transversal skills such as strategic thinking, collaboration and environmental awareness.

At the same time, the figure also highlights a set of stable skills, such as attention to detail, reliability, customer orientation or resource management. They remain important, but will not see a significant increase in relevance, suggesting that their role is to support the organisational infrastructure, without representing a competitive advantage. Managerially speaking, these competencies must be maintained through quality assurance and standardisation processes, but strategic investments must be directed towards innovative and digital transformation areas.

On the other hand, skills associated with repetitive or physical activities – such as manual dexterity, sensory skills or basic reading and writing skills – are classified as "out of focus", signalling the risk of obsolescence in an automated world. This finding has significant implications for career management, as it requires a rethinking of professional retraining and continuous training policies for segments of the population affected by digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

Considering the rapid rates of development and change in skills required to ensure employee performance, career development management becomes an anticipatory process, based on the analysis of emerging skills and the ongoing adaptation of human capital to change. The future of work will not only depend on technical expertise, but also on individuals' ability to learn, think critically, collaborate, and lead in volatile contexts. That is why managers will apply transformative leadership, capable of balancing technological innovation with sustainable human development.

As mentioned in research in the field, there is a significant gap between industry requirements and the actual level of professional skills, especially in the sphere of strategic use and integration of digital tools into economic processes. In a context marked by the accelerated advancement of Industry 4.0 technologies, organisations face significant difficulties in finding specialists capable of efficiently managing large volumes of data, evaluating digital performance, and rapidly adopting new technological solutions[20]. The lack of these skills limits the innovation potential and decreases competitiveness in global markets[13]. In this sense, digital media skills become essential not only for effective communication and promotion in the online environment, but also for the strategic analysis of organisational performance, digital content management and the development of a culture of continuous learning

In order to identify employers' perceptions of the digital skills needed in the contemporary professional environment, within the Erasmus+ MEDIA project – "Strengthening the Quality of Online Education in HEIs in Moldova and Armenia" (Grant Agreement No. 101082889) – a study was carried out based on the application of a questionnaire addressed to companies from various economic sectors of the Republic of Moldova. The purpose of the research was to examine the current level of digitalisation in the business environment, as well as to identify those digital and media skills perceived as essential for employees in the context of the accelerated transformation of economic and communication processes. Through the data collection tool, respondents provided detailed information on the use of digital technologies, online communication platforms and promotional tools in the digital environment, along with the assessment of the level of preparation of employees in relation to current market requirements. In particular, the questionnaire covered dimensions such as digital marketing, management of communication on social networks, the ability to create and write online content, as well as the technical skills necessary for producing photo-video materials for organisational promotion.

To characterise the profile of the organisations participating in the study, Figure 4 illustrates the structure of companies by employee number, providing a clearer understanding of the size of the companies involved in the survey and their representativeness in the national economy.

According to the data presented in Figure 2, the survey participants represent companies of varying sizes, which provides a complex picture of the economic environment in the Republic of Moldova. The largest share is held by micro-enterprises, which have 1–9 employees, constituting 41.82% of the total respondents. This is followed by small enterprises (10–49 employees), which account for 34.55%, and medium-sized enterprises (50–249 employees), with a share of 16.36%. Only 7.27% of the participating companies can be classified as large enterprises, with over 249 employees. This structure highlights the predominance of micro and small enterprises in the surveyed sample, reflecting the specificity of the national economy, where these types of companies play a significant role in employment and in the dynamics of the private sector. Thus, the analysis of the survey results provides a relevant perspective on the need for digital skills development, mainly among small and medium-sized enterprises, which constitute the core of the Moldovan business environment.

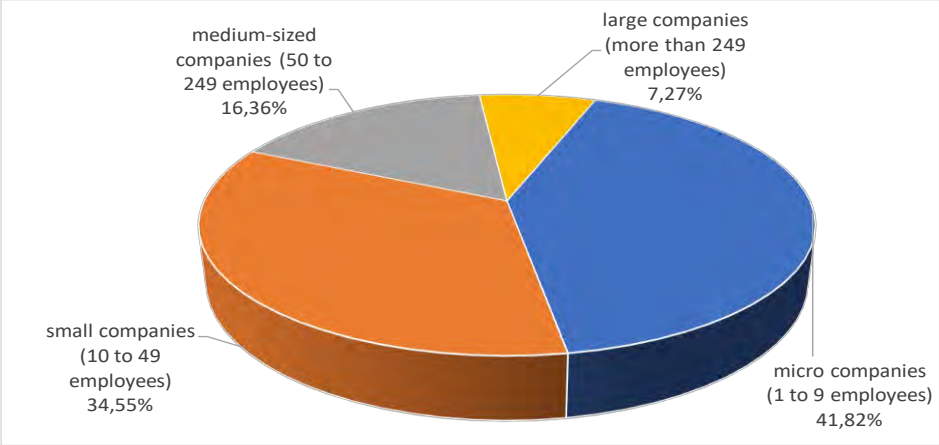


Figure 4. Structure of companies by number of employees working in the company

Source: results of the survey conducted among companies within the framework of the Erasmus+ project No. 101082889 MEDIA – "Strengthening the Quality of Online Education in HEIs in Moldova and Armenia"

To capture employers' perception of the current level of employees' digital skills, Figure 5 shows the distribution of companies according to the rating given.

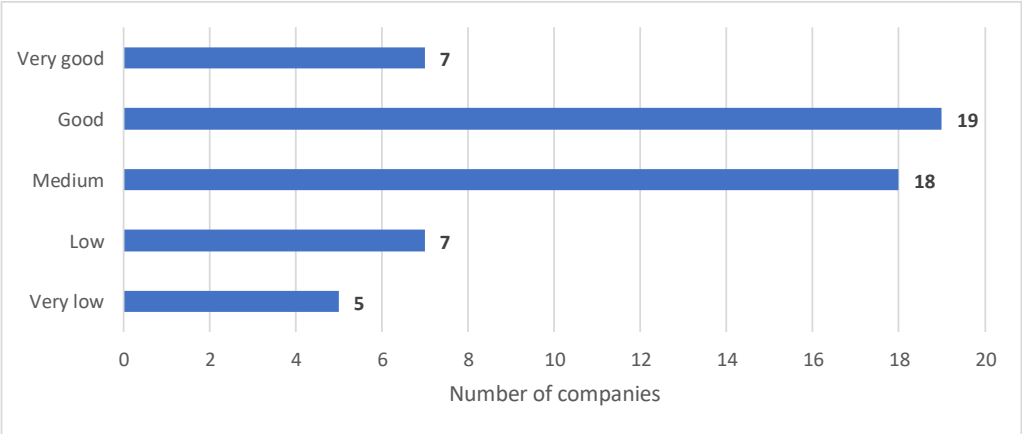


Figure 5. Employers' assessment of employees' digital competencies

Source: results of the survey conducted among companies within the framework of the Erasmus+ project No. 101082889 MEDIA – "Strengthening the Quality of Online Education in HEIs in Moldova and Armenia"

The results of the questionnaire conducted within the MEDIA project, which was carried out among employers in various sectors of the Republic of Moldova's industry, highlight a growing concern about the level of digital skills held by employees. The distribution shows that most companies rate employees' digital skills at a medium (18 companies; 32.1%) or good (19 companies; 33.9%) level, indicating a functional skills base but still insufficient for advanced performance and digital scaling. The share of those who rate skills as very good is modest (7 companies; 12.5%), suggesting that top expertise is scarce and usually concentrated in organisations with consolidated digital practices. At the same time, a relevant segment reports low (7 companies; 12.5%) and very low (5 companies; 8.9%) levels, which together represent 21.4% of the sample and mark areas of operational risk in core digital activities.

A considerable number of employers have mentioned difficulties related to the lack of a solid practical foundation and the shortage of application skills in specific digital marketing tools. This lack directly affects the ability of companies to expand their online presence and capitalise on the opportunities of e-commerce. Therefore, employers emphasise the importance of training digital marketing skills, as they contribute to expanding the market, increasing online sales and strengthening brand visibility.

Correlated with the structure of the questionnaire that evaluated digital marketing, social media management, copywriting, SEO/analytical skills, as well as photo-video production and

multimedia editing skills, the distribution suggests the clear need for targeted development on the complete digital content chain:

- for digital marketing: transforming visibility into online sales through strategies, funnels, and continuous optimisations;
- for social media marketing: moving from generic use to strategic communication with potential customers (content, campaigns, metrics, quick responses);
- for copywriting: increasing the quality and accuracy of messages (commercial texts, product descriptions, micro-copy for conversion);
- for photo & video production: the constant generation of professional visual content that supports brand identity and campaign performance.

In practical terms, the results indicate that organisations have a critical mass of "medium-good" skills that can be accelerated through short, practical and certified programs, oriented on measurable results (qualified traffic, engagement, conversions). The curricular and continuous training interventions aligned with the questionnaire modules (SMM, SEO/analytics, content & copy, multimedia production) are empirically justified by this distribution and are essential for the transition from a functional level to an advanced/"very good" level on an organisational scale.

The questionnaire data demonstrate that, from the perspective of employers, the shortcomings of employees' digital skills are a significant obstacle to the development of companies' competitiveness. The training of digital media skills, ranging from digital marketing and social media management to copywriting and photo-video production, is perceived as a strategic necessity to ensure the effective transition to the digital economy and to strengthen the relationship between the academic and economic environments in the Republic of Moldova.

The analysis highlights that the transition to the digital economy requires a profound redefinition of the skills required in the labour market. Employers' responses demonstrate that the current level of digital skills, although increasing, still does not fully meet the performance requirements imposed by new business models based on technology, online communication and continuous innovation. The results obtained confirm the existence of a gap between the available skills and the expectations of the business environment, especially in areas such as digital marketing, social media management, data analysis, multimedia content creation and professional copywriting. Employers are emphasising the need for integrated training that combines technical skills with analytical and creative skills, increasingly turning to professional profiles capable of managing complex digital ecosystems. Digital and media skills are no longer just a set of operational tools, but are becoming a strategic element of organisational competitiveness and adaptation to change.

Conclusions and future research directions

The results of the research confirm that digital transformation is not just a technological change, but a complex process of reconfiguring organisational models and professional skills. Emerging skills, including digital, analytical, media, and critical thinking skills, are becoming the primary factors determining an organisation's ability to innovate, adapt to rapid change, and maintain a competitive advantage in a globalised economic environment. The study highlighted that the success of the digitalisation process depends not only on the degree of adoption of advanced technologies but also on strategic investment in the development of human capital through continuous training, reskilling, and the creation of an organisational culture oriented towards learning and innovation.

The analysis of international data and national results indicates that the digital skills gap remains one of the most significant challenges of the digital age, accentuated by the rapid pace of technological change and the insufficient adaptation of education systems. At the same time, digital media skills, including those from digital marketing, data analysis, SEO, and online communication, as well as the production of multimedia content, acquire strategic relevance for organisational performance, as they connect the technological dimension with the creative and relational aspects of economic activities. The integration of these skills contributes not only to increasing internal efficiency but also to strengthening the visibility and sustainability of brands in digital markets. Strengthening emerging skills is a strategic priority for both academia and business, serving as a catalyst for innovation, competitiveness, and inclusion in the global digital economy.

Future research directions should focus on analysing how emerging skills influence organisational resilience, innovation capacity and productivity in different economic sectors. It is necessary to develop predictive models of the future skills' evolution, which correlate labour market demand with technological transformations. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the impact of digital training programs on individual and organisational performance.

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