

# The Importance of Green Soft Skills for Tomorrow's Careers

The global job market has been suffering a profound transformation driven by increasing concerns related to climate change and environmental sustainability. This shift in paradigm has led companies to not simply focus on the environmental impact of their activities but also to value a set of behavioural skills in their employees, known as green soft skills. These skills, encompassing capabilities like critical and systems thinking, collaboration, effective communication, and environmental awareness, are essential for addressing the challenges posed by the current global objective to transition towards a more sustainable economy.

Moreover, soft skills are important for any company, regardless of their specific focus on green initiatives. Effective communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities are universally beneficial, helping organisations to thrive in any context. However, green soft skills are especially crucial for professionals in industries such as hospitality, construction, manufacturing, transportation, energy and agriculture where environmental impacts are significant.

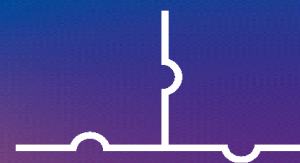
It's important to remember that any organisation, company, or similar organisation must incorporate these competencies to ensure sustainable practices. By promoting green soft skills in their daily operations, businesses can effectively contribute to the green transition, fostering a culture of sustainability that benefits both the organisations and the broader community. This article explores the importance of these skills in the job market, current trends, and the benefits of possessing green soft skills for both companies and employees.

## What are Green Soft Skills?

Green soft skills are defined as a subset of interpersonal and behavioural competencies specially focused on practices and behaviours that promote sustainability and environmental protection.

Green soft skills include:

- **Environmental awareness:** The ability to understand the impact of personal and societal activities on the environment and act accordingly to minimise those impacts.
- **Systems thinking:** The ability to see the big picture and understand how different parts of a system relate to one another is essential for tackling complex issues like climate change.
- **Collaboration:** The ability to cooperate among individuals and organisations to reduce the negative environmental impact and be more eco-friendly.
- **Creative problem solving:** The ability to innovate and use creativity to find out-of-the-box solutions for a myriad of problems touching the natural environment.
- **Sustainable leadership:** The ability to inspire and mobilise teams and organisations toward greener and more sustainable practices.



## The Demand for Green Soft Skills in the Job Market

Since its adoption by UN members in 2015, the Agenda 2030, with its [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), is significantly growing the demand for green soft skills in the job market as governments, industries and organisations align with worldwide sustainability objectives. As society works to meet global targets, there is an increasing need for employees and employers who not only possess technical expertise but also the behavioural competencies necessary to drive and support these changes. Green soft skills, as defined previously, are essential for developing innovative solutions, facilitating teamwork, and leading sustainability initiatives.

A [2018 report by the International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#) suggests that investments in green economy policies could create around 18 million jobs throughout the global economy by 2030. However, to ensure that these positions are filled effectively, green soft skills will become invaluable. In sectors such as renewable energy, waste management, sustainable agriculture and green construction, professionals with the ability to innovate and collaborate in sustainable ways are already considered valuable. Additionally, the vast majority of traditional industry sectors are undergoing necessary adaptation in order to keep up with new frameworks, economic models and legislation (such as the [GreenComp](#), the [European GreenDeal](#), [European Climate Law](#) and others). Economic results and sustainable development are every so often seen as conflicting notions. Still, [several studies](#) have concluded that sustainability innovations have a positive effect on firm competitiveness and that the sustainability shift comes with a set of business opportunities that are so large and so many that they outweigh the potential costs.

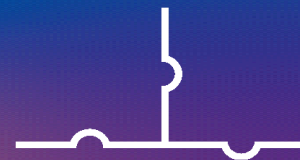
In this context, a lack of behavioural competencies related to sustainability is a significant barrier for potential employees and the competitiveness and growth of many companies. For instance, in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) field, consider a tech company developing new energy-efficient technologies. If the engineers lack collaboration and effective communication skills, they might struggle to work together effectively or engage with stakeholders. This can lead to delays in project completion and a failure to align the technology with user needs, ultimately hindering the company's ability to innovate and compete in a market increasingly driven by sustainability.

## Benefits for Companies and Individuals

Developing and valuing green soft skills offers benefits for the environment, as well as for both companies and individuals.

For companies, employees with these competencies have a greater capacity to innovate and propose solutions to environmental challenges and other complex issues, making them more competitive in a global market that increasingly values sustainability. Additionally, companies with a strong culture of sustainability tend to attract qualified talent that aligns with their values. Furthermore, companies with employees who are conscious of environmental issues find it easier to navigate environmental management procedures, making them more efficient and environmentally friendly.

For workers, possessing green soft skills offers a competitive advantage in a constantly evolving job market. In its [Global Green Skills Report 2023](#), LinkedIn studied the trends related to "green talent" - the share of workers who hold a green job or list at least one green skill on their LinkedIn profile. The collected data revealed that "green talent" is steadily increasing in all 48 countries studied, with demand for people with these skills being almost twice as high as the current supply!



The study also shows that only one-eighth of workers have green skills, meaning that we are still far from the green skills penetration that is needed to achieve the goal of transitioning to a green economy and workforce.

Professionals who demonstrate environmental awareness, critical thinking, and collaborative ability will be more sought after and valued by organisations that prioritise sustainability. Furthermore, developing these skills allows workers to adapt more easily to the demands of a market moving toward a green economy.

## The Need for Training and Education

For green soft skills to be widely adopted, a joint effort between Higher Education Institutions, companies and educational policymakers. It is with this in mind that the SOFTEN project was created and is currently being implemented in 6 European countries. It aims to integrate green soft skills into STEM education across Europe through training educators, promoting innovative teaching methodologies, addressing the skills gap in STEM graduates and aligning their capabilities with the needs of the green labour market.

The SOFTEN project addresses the challenge of outdated, mono-disciplinary STEM curricula by pushing for the development of interdisciplinary, green-focused education with the mission of preparing, training and inspiring students and STEM educators to develop the green soft skills necessary for a future workforce aligned with climate-neutral and sustainable practices.

## Conclusion

The adoption of green soft skills is crucial for the future of the global workforce and the success of companies and employees in an increasingly sustainability-driven world. As industries evolve to meet environmental challenges and adhere to international frameworks and guidelines, employees with these competencies will play a vital role in driving the green transition. Companies that value and cultivate green soft skills will gain a competitive advantage, leading innovation efforts and attracting top talent aligned with their sustainability goals.

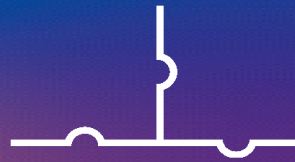
The current skills gap underscores the importance of education and training initiatives, such as the SOFTEN project, which aims to integrate these competencies into STEM education. The project's strategy revolves around enhancing STEM education by empowering providers through a "Green Mentors Training Academy" to integrate green soft skills into teaching. Using a "train the trainer" model, the project upgrades technical curricula, equipping STEM educators to address graduates' green soft skills gaps, meeting the demands of the climate-conscious labour market.

By preparing future professionals with the soft skills necessary to navigate the challenges of a green economy, initiatives like the SOFTEN project ensure that the workforce of tomorrow is equipped to support the global shift towards sustainability, directly contributing to the fulfilment of the Agenda 2030, especially Goals 4 (Quality Education), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reducing Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

To know more about the SOFTEN project, access our website (<https://softenproject.eu/>)

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## Consortium:

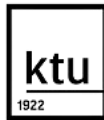


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