



PhilosophyGyms

Research Report

*Exploring Inner, Philosophical Dimensions in SMEs:
Concepts, Practices and Education Programs*



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Project title:	PhilosophyGyms for Regenerative Futures in SMEs
Acronym:	PhilosophyGyms
Call number:	KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training
Project number:	2024-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000252829
Document title:	PHILOSOPHY GYMS RESEARCH REPORT: CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS FROM DESK RESEARCH & EXPERT MEETINGS & INTERVIEWS <i>Examining Training Concepts, Philosophical Practices and Education Programs in SMEs (WP2)</i>
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Work Package:	WP2: Competence Map "Philosophical Practices"
Date:	April 2025

Project Number: 2024-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000252829



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This report should be cited as:

Ilcheva, D., Balakchieva, T., Wamsler, C., Mitrut, K., Mazurek, A., Gomes, B., & Böhme, J. (2025). Exploring inner, philosophical dimensions in SMEs: Concepts, practices and education programs. Research report for the ERASMUS+ PhilosophyGyms Project. Fachhochschule des Mittelstands. ISBN 978-91-8104-588-8. Available at: <https://www.philosophygyms.eu/>



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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of the Erasmus+ funded project "PhilosophyGyms for Regenerative Futures in SMEs". The project partnership consists of organizations from five EU countries, bringing together a diverse range of expertise in research, business development, education and sustainability. The following institutions form the international consortium: Fachhochschule des Mittelstands - FHM Berlin (Germany) - (Coordinator), Yambol Chamber of Commerce and Industry- YCCI (Bulgaria), PAIZ Konsulting Sp. z o.o. (Poland), Virtual Campus Lda. (Portugal), and Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies - LUCSUS (Sweden).

The main focus of the project is to integrate and institutionalise philosophical approaches in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enhance leadership, resilience and sustainability in the face of today's polycrisis, including climate collapse, mass extinction, a global health crisis and systemic inequality. The PhilosophyGyms project aims to create spaces where professionals can engage in structured dialogue and reflection to develop critical thinking, ethical decision-making and adaptive mindsets, needed to address these challenges. Ultimately, the PhilosophyGyms project aims to increase individual, collective and planetary wellbeing, by empowering SMEs to act with foresight, adapt to change and lead in an era of radical uncertainty.

By developing innovative, philosophical approaches, the project helps SMEs navigate complexity, strengthen moral integrity and collaborate across diverse value systems to support the organisations' sustainability and contribute to large-scale transformations. It also helps to foster resilience through creative problem-solving, builds trust via values-driven leadership and promotes strategic agility by embedding lifelong learning into organizational culture.



The initial phase of the project focused on exploring and identifying the competencies and capacities that support inner transformation for sustainability, particularly through philosophical approaches relevant to SMEs. This included reviewing existing literature and conducting research to uncover concepts and methods that could inform the development of a practical framework for use in the later stages of the project. A key outcome of this phase is the creation of a **Competence Map**, which visually represents the skills and capacities needed to foster such transformation. This map will serve as a foundation for designing targeted training materials that address the specific needs and challenges faced by SMEs.

The analysis conducted lays the groundwork for further outcomes, helping integrate philosophical dimensions of sustainability into SMEs and offering a complementary approach to technological, organizational and political solutions.

Another aim of this initial phase was to raise awareness within SMEs about the gaps in current sustainability approaches, particularly the lack of attention to the inner, philosophical dimension of sustainability and to identify innovative solutions that can mainstream the need for philosophy in sustainability discourse.

The international team undertook several key steps. First, the team conducted desk research and consulted with experts to explore existing concepts, practices, and educational programs that support inner transformation for sustainability within SMEs across the partner countries. This helped build a foundational understanding of what approaches are currently in use and how they are applied in different contexts. Following this, a methodology for interviews was developed, and partners carried out interviews with SMEs in their respective regions to gather deeper insights into local conditions, needs, and perspectives. The insights from both the research and interviews informed the creation of a Competence Map, which highlights the core capacities needed to develop PhilosophyGyms and design relevant training materials.



In sum, this report maps existing philosophical concepts, approaches and training programs that support inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs in the project's five partner countries (Germany, Bulgaria, Sweden, Portugal and Poland) and beyond. It explores how these approaches contribute to professional growth and sustainable business models, while identifying areas where new methods and approaches could be integrated.



2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK OF DESKTOP RESEARCH

To conduct the desk research, a unified methodology was designed and applied to explore key concepts, practices, and educational programs in the field, together with related challenges and gaps. This methodology consisted of a structured research guide with a series of focused questions addressing critical aspects:

- ***Concepts related to Inner Transformation for Sustainability:*** The partners explored what concepts are used by companies, particularly SMEs, in relation to inner transformation for sustainability. This included the assessment of related knowledge and understanding, the words and terminology used and whether certain organisations or initiatives have developed specific definitions for inner, philosophical dimensions and associated transformation processes within companies.
- ***Practices (Methods, Activities or Interventions):*** The partners investigated existing practices, methods, activities and interventions that can support inner transformation for sustainability within SMEs. They sought to identify recognized practices, related methods and the targeted competencies. Additionally, the research explored whether there are differences between SMEs and other organisations.
- ***Educational Programs:*** The partners reviewed existing training programs that support inner transformation for sustainability in SMEs. This included identifying the types of organizations offering such programs, the competencies they target and the training methods they use. The research also looked into how these programs integrate sustainability and inner transformation and whether they are specifically tailored for SMEs.

- **Gaps and Needs:** Finally, the partners explored the challenges, needs and gaps SMEs face when adopting inner transformation practices. This included identifying barriers like budget, time, expertise and cultural norms, as well as understanding the most significant gaps in the offered training programs and the competencies that need further development.

Through this unified methodology, the research aimed to capture a comprehensive view of the current landscape of inner transformation, philosophical concepts, practices and training within SMEs, laying the groundwork for developing so-called PhilosophyGyms and associated training material for SMEs, which is the focus of the following WPs.

3. COUNTRIES COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DESKTOP RESEARCH FROM THE PARTNER COUNTRIES

1. What CONCEPTS related to inner transformation for sustainability are used by companies, and particularly SMEs?

The level of awareness, knowledge and interest in inner, philosophical dimensions of sustainability remains generally low among SMEs, with modest variation across the five researched countries.

Germany and Sweden demonstrate the highest level of engagement in comparison to the other countries. However, even in Germany and Sweden engagement is low. While some SMEs actively incorporate inner transformation into their sustainability practices, it is still in the margins and mostly limited to some social enterprises and start-ups where certain individuals are driving related advancement. In Germany, concepts like *New Work* and *Inner sustainability* signal a growing interest in linking personal development - such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence and values-based leadership - with organizational change and ecological responsibility. Similarly, in Sweden, concepts like sustainable leadership, self-leadership and the Inner Development Goals (IDG) are gaining traction among a small, but growing group of companies, particularly those that are strongly engaged in leadership development or regenerative business practices. Nevertheless, these ideas are far from mainstream and most SMEs are still unfamiliar with the emergent field of inner transformation for sustainability, related concepts, practices and programs. While the foundation is being laid, inner transformation is not yet widely integrated into standard sustainability practices in either country.

In contrast, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal show limited awareness and engagement with inner transformation approaches in SMEs. While certain competencies like emotional intelligence, resilience and well-being are addressed in these countries, the connection to sustainability is generally not made. The focus in these contexts appears

to be more on professional leadership skill development and efficiency rather than deeper self-transformation for sustainability. There is little indication that structured frameworks such as the IDGs or transformative learning theories will be widely adopted in the near future. Accordingly, inner, philosophical dimensions are perceived very differently - while few companies recognize them as an important element of sustainable leadership and required for culture and system transformation (a few in Germany and Sweden), most still treat them as a secondary or implicit factor in professional development (Bulgaria, Poland and Portugal, but also in Germany and Sweden).

There are no explicitly established definitions of inner transformation specific to SMEs in all of the five countries.

While, in Germany and Sweden, a few companies, including SMEs, integrate Inner Development Goals (IDGs), transformative learning and mindfulness-based leadership into their sustainability efforts, these practices are often still pursued with a focus on improving efficiency and companies' own sustainability, rather than embracing inner transformation in a deeper, cultural and systemic sense. The awareness for the need for inner transformation and philosophical approaches in the context of sustainability remains thus largely absent in current business practice, beyond considerations of staff wellbeing and efficiency.

In Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal, inner transformation within SMEs appears to be even less acknowledged and understood, with no clear concepts used in and tailored to companies. While competencies like well-being, resilience and emotional intelligence are addressed, they are not framed as part of sustainability transformation processes.

Formalised, Institutional Engagement with Inner Transformation for Sustainability across Germany, Sweden, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal is limited to few actors.

Across Germany, Sweden, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal, there are no formal governmental initiatives that explicitly aim at linking inner transformation and sustainability within the SME sector. Instead, the concept is primarily explored within

few academic institutions, non-profit organisations and associated networks. In Sweden, for example, the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) emerged as an initiative and has gained increasing traction among progressive organizations, including large- and small-scale enterprises, such as Ikea and Icebug. Academic institutions such as Lund University in Sweden and Leuphana University in Germany have played a key role in promoting related narrative shifts .

The comparison of the five countries - Germany, Sweden, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal - reveals distinct but overlapping foci on competencies that are related to inner transformation.

In Germany, the emphasis is on competencies linked to emotional intelligence and leadership development. In Sweden, there is a similar focus on emotional intelligence, but with a stronger emphasis on resilience, self-leadership and adaptability. Since Covid (around 2020), the mindfulness concept has in this context also received increasing acceptance. Accordingly, existing approaches aim for instance at fostering competencies such as self-awareness, emotional regulation and empathetic leadership, highlighting the importance of personal well-being alongside their societal relevance. In both Germany and Sweden, the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) framework is increasingly used by organisations, including SMEs. It promotes a range of different competencies (23 in total) under the five clusters of being, thinking, relating, collaborating and acting, aiming to equip individuals with the tools necessary for navigating personal growth and contributing to broader societal and environmental shifts.

Poland places particular importance on self-awareness, personal growth and effective communication, with a clear focus on developing emotional regulation, resilience and self-reflection competencies to address both individual and social transformation.

In Bulgaria, the concept of inner transformation seems more aligned with personal development, focusing on mindfulness, self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Here, the competencies addressed are more oriented towards personal growth, resilience and empathy, especially in navigating personal challenges.

Portugal emphasizes competencies related to personal growth, empathy and resilience, especially in the context of leadership, communication and social cohesion. It focuses on competencies like collaboration, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence within both individual and collective transformation.

Overall, while each country addresses competencies related to self-awareness, emotional intelligence and leadership, the emphasis varies in terms of resilience, mindfulness and systems thinking, reflecting both the unique national priorities and common trends in the global discourse on inner transformation.

When comparing the information regarding whether small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the five countries are incorporating inner transformation in their trainings, there are varying levels of documented examples and practices.

In Germany, SMEs are increasingly adopting inner transformation concepts, particularly within sustainability-driven initiatives. There are German SMEs that have integrated emotional intelligence and leadership training focused on personal growth into their employee development programs, yet this doesn't reflect a broader trend of integrating personal and professional development to foster a more sustainable and resilient workforce.

In Sweden, concepts such as self-leadership and resilience are more commonly emphasized among SMEs, especially in relation to staff capacity development. Training initiatives often focus on building self-awareness, emotional flexibility and resilience, emotional intelligence, adaptability and systems thinking, with the aim of enhancing both individual well-being and organizational efficiency. While wider reflections are occasionally incorporated, they are not dominant features.

Poland shows that some SMEs incorporate emotional intelligence, self-awareness and resilience into their training programs, although the practice is also still in its early stages.

In Bulgaria, while SMEs are less documented in incorporating inner transformation into their training, there is a growing interest in personal development programs that focus on mindfulness, emotional intelligence and resilience, especially in the context of leadership development.

Finally, in Portugal, SMEs are increasingly adopting inner transformation principles in their corporate training, with an emphasis on personal growth and resilience, although it is more prevalent in certain sectors, such as technology and innovation.

Overall, while some SMEs in these countries are documenting the incorporation of inner transformation into their training programs, the degree of adoption varies and is overall little, with Germany and Sweden being the most proactive, followed by Portugal, Poland and Bulgaria.

Whether companies are using philosophy as a concept in relation to sustainability connects closely to the previous issue on SMEs incorporating inner transformation in their training. In Germany and Sweden, companies appear to be more likely to integrate philosophical wording and perspectives into their sustainability efforts, but related work is hardly existent.

None of the studies countries makes explicit use of philosophy in business contexts. While competencies like emotional intelligence, resilience and well-being are to some extent addressed, they appear to be framed in a more practical, skills-based manner rather than through a philosophical or existential lens. ***Thus, the connection between inner transformation and philosophy is weak in all contexts, with companies focusing more on personal and professional development rather than deeper ideological or ethical frameworks.***

To sum up, the awareness for inner transformation approaches associated with sustainability is slowly growing, with Nordic and Western European countries leading adoption, while Eastern and Southern Europe lag in formal integration. At the same time, related philosophical dimensions and frameworks are so far hardly explored.

2. What PRACTICES (METHODS, ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS) exist to support inner transformation for sustainability within companies and particularly SMEs?

Inner transformation practices are increasingly recognized as important for sustainability in SMEs across Sweden, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria though their adoption and focus vary.

Sweden demonstrates the most structured and diverse approach, integrating self-reflection, mindfulness, psychological safety and leadership development through frameworks like the IDGs.

German SMEs also emphasize leadership development and mindfulness but place particular importance on values-driven decision-making and systemic approaches like Holacracy and Sociocracy.

Poland, while at an earlier stage, is seeing growing interest in mindfulness workshops, self-reflection and employee well-being programs as key tools for fostering sustainable business cultures.

Bulgaria, in comparison, is still in the nascent phase of adopting inner transformation practices, with limited structured interventions, though there is increasing recognition of the role in organizational change for sustainability.

In Portugal, some SMEs have begun to explore mindfulness, self-reflection and personal well-being as part of their leadership development efforts. While these practices are occasionally linked to sustainability goals, their integration remains limited and largely informal.

While in all five countries there are increasing numbers of organisations that recognise the role of inner transformation for sustainability, Sweden and Germany feature more advanced and systematized methods, while Portugal and Poland are in the early stages of integration, focusing on general leadership and employee well-being programs. Bulgaria remains at the nascent phase, with the fewest comprehensive initiatives in place.

The most commonly used methods for developing competencies related to inner transformation across these countries include leadership development focused on sustainability and employee well-being programs. In Sweden and Germany, more structured and holistic organizational approaches - such as Holacracy, IDGs, mindfulness- and nature-based approaches - are emerging, with Swedish efforts often emphasizing self-leadership and individual and collective resilience for supporting culture and system changes. In contrast, Poland and Portugal primarily focus on individual development through mindfulness and self-reflection workshops. Bulgaria remains at an early stage, with limited established practices for fostering inner transformation in the context of sustainability.

The inner transformation practices, methods, activities and interventions currently employed by SMEs in Sweden, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal reveal strong commonalities, with varying levels of adoption and integration across countries.

A common thread throughout these countries is the increasing use of mindfulness practices to support emotional intelligence, stress management and ethical decision-making.

In Sweden, since Covid mindfulness is increasingly integrated into some leadership development and employee well-being initiatives and it is a popular tool in Poland for emotional regulation and resilience building. Similarly, self-reflection exercises, such as reflection circles in Sweden and self-reflection workshops in Poland, are also used across these countries to foster self-awareness and help individuals connect their personal values with their professional roles. In Sweden, approaches like Reflection Circles are particularly structured to allow employees to explore challenging situations, while in Poland, mindfulness workshops are tailored to SMEs to help employees better align with organizational missions.

Another shared practice is the focus on leadership development. While Sweden emphasizes holistic leadership methods (including regenerative and transformative leadership), Poland also integrates leadership development through mindfulness and emotional intelligence training. In both Bulgaria and Portugal, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of well-being programs that incorporate mental health

support, stress management and resilience-building activities. In Poland, companies like Mindgram provide mental health platforms for employees and in Portugal, Mindfulness Training and employee well-being programs are helping SMEs foster sustainability-focused leadership.

Across Sweden, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal, common inner transformation practices such as mindfulness, self-reflection and leadership development are observed in SMEs, with countries differing more in the extent and form of implementation than in the practices themselves. While some emphasis areas can be noted — such as well-being and emotional resilience in Poland and Portugal or psychological safety in Germany — these should be understood as tentative impressions based on the scope of the research, rather than as definitive national distinctions. Bulgaria, for example, shows a growing interest in leadership and personal development initiatives through mindfulness and self-awareness, though these are still emerging. This variety reflects differing levels of integration and maturity, rather than fundamentally distinct approaches to inner transformation for sustainability.

Based on the information provided for Sweden, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal, it appears that ***the inner transformation practices used in SMEs and multinational corporations (MNCs) do exhibit some differences***. SMEs in these countries tend to focus more on individual well-being, emotional resilience and mindfulness practices, which align with their smaller scale and more personalized environments. For example, in Poland and Portugal, mindfulness workshops and employee well-being programs are commonly employed in SMEs to foster emotional intelligence and stress management. In contrast, MNCs may have more resources to implement broader, organizational-wide practices like leadership development programs and psychological safety initiatives, as seen in Germany. While SMEs focus on personal transformation, larger corporations are more likely to (have the money to) adopt structured and systematic interventions aimed at organizational development and sustainable leadership across staff and levels. Therefore, the practices for inner transformation tend to be more personalized and focused on

individual development of high-level leadership staff in SMEs, while MNCs often integrate these practices at a larger, more organizational level.

Overall, the practices within each country are drawing from various disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, leadership and organizational development to drive inner transformation for sustainability.

According to the desk research done in the five countries, there are documented examples of SMEs incorporating inner transformation practices, methods, activities and interventions across the five countries. In Sweden, organizations such as those involved in the "inre omställning" network are utilizing self-reflection practices like reflection circles and mindfulness-based interventions to foster ethical decision-making and emotional resilience, with some companies engaging in nature-based leadership approaches. Poland has seen companies like Netguru, which offers access to Mindgram's services for mental health support and mindfulness training, as well as Benefit Systems, which provides a range of wellness activities, including sports and mental health support. These initiatives aim to boost employee well-being, contributing to overall sustainability goals. In Portugal, companies like Unilabs have integrated mindfulness training and emotional resilience techniques to improve employee well-being and engagement. Finally, in Bulgaria, although there are fewer direct examples, some companies are focusing on leadership development and communication through team-building practices that emphasize emotional intelligence and collaboration. ***These examples across the five countries reflect a growing trend of SMEs integrating inner transformation practices to foster sustainability and build more resilient, conscious workplaces.***



3. What EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS exist to support inner transformation for sustainability in companies and particularly SMEs?

Training programs specifically focused on inner transformation and sustainability do exist in Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Portugal and Sweden, but their scope and focus vary. The focus on inner transformation is more explicit in Sweden, where various programs target personal development for accelerating sustainability outcomes and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal, the focus is primarily on leadership and organizational change for sustainability, with only a secondary emphasis on inner transformation. Across all countries, these programs are typically offered by private companies, often SMEs, academic institutions, NGOs and individual consultants.

In Germany, training programs are primarily offered by private companies and NGOs, focusing on leadership, change management and sustainability, but with a stronger emphasis on organizational transformation rather than personal or inner transformation. In Poland, the concept of inner transformation for sustainability is still emerging, with academic institutions like Kozminski University offering leadership-focused programs and NGOs such as the Responsible Business Forum providing sustainability training, but neither center on inner transformation. Bulgaria has even fewer programs dedicated to inner transformation, with most offerings from NGOs and academic institutions focusing on leadership and organizational change rather than personal development. In Portugal, academic institutions like ISG and the University of Lisbon provide leadership programs that incorporate sustainability and personal development, but the main focus is on business leadership, not inner transformation. In contrast, Sweden stands out with a more prominent integration of inner transformation and sustainability in offered training, which are delivered through SMEs (such as Self-Leaders), and programs by larger organizations like the Stockholm School of Economics (SEE) and The Natural Step Sweden. However, these programs are often still pilot projects or experimental in nature, rather than widespread or mainstream. The increase in trained IDG ambassadors has also led to more relevant training courses offered in Sweden. Despite the growing interest,

current efforts remain limited and are not yet widely adopted within mainstream Swedish business practices, and particularly SMEs.

In the researched five countries, while sustainability is a central theme in many trainings, inner transformation is often addressed separately or as a complementary aspect and most programs are designed for larger organizations or leaders, rather than being specifically tailored to SMEs.

In Germany, ***the link between inner transformation and sustainability*** is often implied but not deeply explored. Programs offered by private companies and NGOs tend to focus more on organizational transformation and sustainability, with leadership and change management being central, rather than personal inner development. Similarly, in Poland, the concept of inner transformation in the context of sustainability is still in its early stages. Academic institutions and NGOs focus on leadership and organizational change, with only a minimal emphasis on personal growth related to sustainability. In Bulgaria, the focus remains primarily on organizational change, with few programs specifically addressing the integration of inner transformation with sustainability. The programs here also target leadership roles, and while they aim to manage sustainability transitions, they do not delve into personal or inner transformation in any significant way. In Portugal, while there is an acknowledgment of personal development alongside sustainability, the programs primarily target leadership skills for business sustainability and do not deeply link inner transformation with sustainability goals. In Sweden, however, there is a more explicit effort to connect inner transformation with sustainability. These programs in Sweden seem to approach inner transformation and sustainability more holistically, though they are still mostly designed for leadership roles rather than being specifically tailored for SMEs.

Across the five researched countries, leadership, change management and sustainability are key competencies targeted in the existing programs. However, the emphasis on personal development competencies such as mindfulness, self-awareness or ethical values is more pronounced in Sweden, where the link between inner transformation and sustainability is clearer. Other countries, such as Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal, focus more on organizational competencies and



leadership skills for sustainability, with less emphasis on inner transformation and personal development.

Sweden stands out by integrating self-awareness, mindfulness and systems thinking into sustainability training, which is also related to the fact that the IDG Initiative has been initiated in Sweden. In addition, the initiative itself and trained IDG ambassadors are increasingly offering courses for private sector companies. It involves efforts to adapt inner transformation concepts and approaches to their particular contexts and needs. In contrast, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria and Portugal primarily target leadership, organizational change and business sustainability, with limited focus on personal transformation. While Poland and Bulgaria emphasize transition management and ethical leadership, Germany and Portugal focus more on strategic leadership and sustainable decision-making.

Across the five countries, ***training methods for SMEs vary, with single workshops, individual mentoring and online courses being the most common formats.*** In Sweden, every year there are more courses offered for private companies, both small- and large scale. They involve the experimentation with new, more holistic methods and tools. Germany and Poland favour leadership programs and change management training, often delivered through seminars and coaching, but these primarily focus on organizational rather than personal transformation. Bulgaria and Portugal emphasize executive education and sustainability training, often through academic institutions and NGOs, but with limited focus on SMEs specifically. While case studies on successful SME training are scarce, Sweden's Self Leaders program and Poland's Leadership Academy for Poland demonstrate long-term engagement and effective models by combining interactive learning with practical applications, making these methods well-suited for SME contexts. At the same time, their link to sustainability is still weak.

SMEs in the five countries prefer interactive and practical training methods that allow for direct application in their business contexts. Practical workshops and experiential learning are generally preferred in Sweden. Related offers are generally small-scale with a limited number of participants, typically involving maximum 30-40

individuals. Exceptions are online offers with up to 100 or more Swedish and international participants. In Germany, Sweden and Poland, peer-to-peer learning and leadership coaching are used, helping SMEs high-level leadership develop competencies through shared experiences and guided mentoring. Portugal and Bulgaria rely more on structured executive programs and academic-led training, which often include blended learning approaches, combining online modules with in-person sessions. While some self-paced learning is available, SMEs generally engage more with interactive formats, such as mentoring, group discussions and applied hands-on courses, which offer immediate relevance to their work.



4. What particular GAPS and NEEDS exist in relation to the previous questions?

SMEs in Bulgaria, Sweden, Poland, Germany and Portugal face significant challenges in adopting or implementing inner transformation and sustainability-focused training programs due to budget constraints, time limitations, lack of expertise and cultural resistance. Across all five countries, SMEs struggle with cultural resistance, limited tailored training and difficulty in integrating inner transformation and particularly philosophical approaches, into their existing business structures, requiring more accessible, practical and sector-specific solutions.

Across all countries, financial and time constraints are a major barrier, often forcing SMEs to prioritize short-term operational needs over long-term sustainability goals. In Bulgaria and Portugal, these constraints are particularly pressing and there is notable scepticism about abstract concepts like mindfulness and mind-training. Existing training programs rarely address inner transformation in ways that are tailored to the SME context. Similarly, Polish SMEs often lack awareness of the relevance of inner transformation for sustainability and most available programs are designed for larger corporations. Limited government support further restricts access. In Sweden, while interest in inner transformation is gradually increasing, it remains a secondary concern for most SMEs. There is also a risk that such practices are framed mainly as tools for improving efficiency and growth, rather than enabling deeper sustainability transformations. Moreover, organisations often lack the knowledge and frameworks needed to embed inner transformation into core business strategies. German SMEs encounter comparable challenges: many focus on regulatory compliance or individual capacity development, while broader cultural, philosophical and organizational transformation remains less common. The efficiency-oriented mindset prevalent in Germany — and indeed across most countries — can make philosophical approaches seem less relevant. Training programs often fail to address the specific realities of SMEs. In Portugal, as in other countries, financial constraints and a lack of SME-specific training continue to limit access to inner transformation initiatives. The absence of clear measurement tools for evaluating training impact also hinders broader adoption.

Cultural attitudes in Poland, Germany, Sweden, Portugal and Bulgaria often inhibit the adoption of inner transformation practices in SMEs. Cultural attitudes toward business efficiency and short-term profitability can make it difficult for SMEs in all five countries to see the direct benefits of inner transformation. In many cases, traditional business norms prioritize short-term profitability and external sustainability measures over personal development. In addition, in Poland and Portugal, there is scepticism toward sustainability practices, with a lack of understanding of their connection to business outcomes as well as to people's inner lives. Similarly, in Germany, SMEs focus more on tangible, external sustainability, often neglecting the internal mindset shifts needed for transformation. Sweden shares a similar challenge, where inner transformation is seen as secondary to more measurable sustainability goals and there is concern about its potential misuse for efficiency rather than true concern for culture and system transformation. In Bulgaria there is considerable cultural resistance to abstract inner concepts like mindfulness, further complicating the integration of inner transformation practices.

In Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Sweden and Portugal, significant gaps exist in current training programs for inner transformation. In all these countries, the most significant barriers to adoption of inner transformation practices among SMEs is the lack of awareness regarding inner-outer transformation processes, cultural resistance to abstract “fluffy” concepts, a focus on immediate financial results and limited access to practical, accessible training tailored to the unique needs and constraints of SMEs. Many programs focus on general leadership or broader sustainability issues but fail to address specific inner transformation practices. In those cases that inner transformation is addressed, related practices, such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence and ethical leadership, are not sufficiently well linked to sustainability, culture and system transformation. In Bulgaria, there is a general lack of tailored training for SMEs and the concept of inner transformation or practical philosophy is hardly known, making it difficult for companies to engage. Germany faces a gap in integrating inner transformation with business performance, while Poland struggles with limited awareness and a lack of tailored, sector-specific programs. Sweden also

lacks accessible programs that link inner transformation directly to tangible sustainability outcomes for SMEs.

There are several competencies that SMEs would particularly need to develop in the context of inner transformation for sustainability. One of the most important competencies seems to be self-awareness, which is highlighted across these countries as necessary for aligning personal and organizational values, as well as fostering a mindset shift towards sustainability. This self-reflection is needed for both leadership and employees to understand the deeper motivations behind their actions and decisions. All five countries face challenges in leadership development and organizational culture, where leaders need to develop better self-awareness, together with increased emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness emotional regulation, resilience and empathy to drive sustainable change. These are key competencies for SMEs to navigate the disruptions of the modern business environment, particularly as they face resource limitations and resistance to change.

However, despite the importance of these competencies, several gaps in current training approaches emerge. In many countries, including Poland and Bulgaria, there is a lack of specific training programs tailored to the unique needs of SMEs. Most existing programs are generalized and not designed to be accessible or relevant for smaller businesses. In addition, programs that support the above-mentioned competencies do not link them adequately with sustainability, culture and system transformation. In Germany and Sweden, while there is a growing recognition of the importance of inner transformation practices, there is still a lack of comprehensive training that links personal development directly to measurable business and sustainability outcomes. Moreover, in Bulgaria and Poland, the cultural resistance to abstract, inner-related concepts like mindfulness and emotional intelligence further limits the adoption of these competencies, indicating that training needs to be reframed to demonstrate tangible, practical benefits for businesses. In most countries, there is also a limited understanding of how inner transformation practices can actually contribute to sustainability and business success, which limits engagement with the concept. In sum, current approaches are often too general or

disconnected from the practical needs of SMEs, *highlighting a need for more tailored knowledge and actionable training programs.*

SMEs from the five researched countries also face several challenges in both finding and accessing relevant training programs, as well as in institutionalizing inner transformation for sustainability. In all countries, SMEs seem to have report budget constraints as a significant barrier, with limited financial resources making it difficult to invest in specialized training programs. In Germany and Sweden, although there is greater recognition of the importance of inner transformation practices, there is still a lack of financial resources that would allow staff from SMEs to access relevant training. Capacity development is generally available for high-level leadership. Similarly, in Portugal and other countries, SMEs face limited availability of training that explicitly connects inner transformation with sustainability, further contributing to low engagement.

4. CONCLUSIONS OF THE DESKTOP RESEARCH

The presented analysis explored existing concepts, practices, programs, challenges and opportunities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in five countries - Bulgaria, Portugal, Poland, Sweden and Germany - regarding inner transformation for sustainability. Through a combination of literature reviews, expert insights and cross-country comparisons, the outcomes indicate common barriers, such as budget constraints, cultural resistance and a lack of tailored training, while also highlighting some key competencies - such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience - necessary for nurturing inner transformation for sustainability. The findings emphasize the need for more accessible, sector-specific and practical training programs that can help SMEs integrate inner transformation approaches into their organizational cultures and business strategies, to support long-term sustainability and transformation.

1) Challenges in Finding or Accessing Relevant Training

Budget Constraints: Across all five countries, SMEs struggle with limited budgets to participate in specialized training programs.

Lack of Tailored Training: Existing training programs are often of general nature, lacking comprehensive integration of inner and outer transformation processes, and are not specifically designed for the unique needs of SMEs. This gap makes it difficult for SMEs to find programs that are practical, accessible and aligned with their business context.

Cultural Resistance: There is a cultural resistance to abstract inner-related concepts like mindfulness and emotional intelligence, particularly in Bulgaria, Poland, Sweden and Portugal. In all countries, inner transformation is often perceived as "soft" or "fluffy" with little direct beneficial outcomes for business, making SMEs hesitant to engage with them.

2) Institutionalizing Inner Transformation:

Resistance to Change: A common challenge in all five countries is the hierarchical structure within many SMEs, which creates barriers to adopting inner transformation practices across the organisations. The need for the leadership itself to engage in the role of mindsets first and embrace more open, reflective practices can be a significant obstacle.

Lack of Awareness and Understanding: SMEs in all countries, and particularly in Poland and Bulgaria, often fail to see the link between inner transformation, sustainability and long-term business success, which limits the integration of such practices into their organizational culture. There is a lack of understanding about how inner transformation can drive sustainability and how both aspects relate to business success or performance.

Limited Integration into Business Practices: In countries like Germany and Sweden, where there is increased knowledge on inner transformation, there is still a gap regarding its integration in organisational mechanisms and structures, and particularly SMEs. While there is growing recognition of these approaches, they are not yet linked directly to measurable impacts such as business resilience, innovation and performance.

Limited Institutionalization Knowledge: There is a lack of knowledge on how the consideration of inner, philosophical dimensions and associated approaches can be systematically institutionalised. Only offering capacity development is not enough. Their consideration requires changes in existing organisational visions, working structures, budget lines, staff management, operational tools and regulations.

3) Existing Gaps in Training Programs:

Generic Content: Many training programs are too broad or focus on self-development or sustainability in general, rather than addressing integrative inner and

outer transformation for sustainability. This makes it difficult for SMEs to find specialized, practical training that addresses their unique needs.

Lack of Practical, Sector-Specific Training: There is a need for more targeted, sector-specific programs that address the particular challenges faced by SMEs in different industries. Tailored programs are essential to make inner transformation practices more relatable and applicable to specific business contexts.

4) Competencies Needed for Inner Transformation:

Self-Awareness, Emotional Intelligence and Resilience: Across all countries, self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience are mentioned as key competencies that SMEs need to develop to support sustainability. These competencies are said to be essential for fostering better leadership, aligning personal and organizational values and creating a more sustainable business culture.

Leadership Development: In many cases, SMEs report a need for improved self-leadership to improve emotional regulation, empathy and decision-making capabilities to successfully drive sustainability initiatives.

Resistance to Change: There is also a need to develop competencies related to overcoming resistance to change, which is a significant barrier to adopting inner transformation practices in SMEs.

5) Key Recommendations for Training Approaches:

Tailored Programs: Developing training programs specifically designed for SMEs is crucial. These programs should address inner transformation in a way that connects with the business needs and challenges of SMEs, focusing on practical, sector-specific applications and providing integrative examples that link inner and outer dimensions of transformation.

Clear Connections to Business Outcomes: To increase the uptake of inner transformation approaches, it is necessary to clearly demonstrate the tangible

benefits for business outcomes, such as staff wellbeing, reduced staff turnover, resilience, innovation and long-term sustainability of organisations.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the need for more accessible, tailored and practical training programs that address the specific needs of SMEs in the five countries. The integration of inner transformation approaches with business outcomes is essential for fostering long-term sustainability and helping SMEs navigate the challenges of a changing business environment. This includes however also challenging current efficiency and growth paradigms and other narratives on which basis SMEs operate today.

*For detailed insights and country-specific findings, please refer to the individual desktop country reports presented in **Annex 2**.*



5. RESEARCH FRAME OF THE CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

This section presents the findings from a series of qualitative interviews conducted with representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Sweden, as part of the project implementation. The interviews form a core component of the project's research efforts to better understand how the consideration of inner, philosophical dimensions can support sustainability within organizational contexts.

The overarching goal of the interviews was

- ✓ to deepen the outcomes of the above-presented desk research
- ✓ to identify competence gaps related to inner transformation and sustainability within SMEs and
- ✓ to gather deep, context-specific insights into the current state of inner transformation approaches to accelerate sustainability and the perceived needs for further development.

By engaging directly with SME leaders, managers and employees, the interviews aimed to uncover both the opportunities and challenges organizations face when attempting to integrate inner transformation approaches into their everyday operations. Related conversations provided a glimpse into how SMEs perceive the relevance of such approaches in enhancing individual and collective well-being and resilience, navigating complex sustainability challenges and supporting culture and system transformation.

In addition to deepening the outcomes of the desk research, the interviews also served as an early dialogue with potential beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project.

The semi-structured interview format allowed for flexibility while ensuring coherence across countries. Each interview covered a core set of open-ended questions focused on key themes:

- ✓ The inner skills and capacities professionals in SMEs need to navigate sustainability challenges;
- ✓ Whether these competencies are currently developed within the organization and why;
- ✓ The concepts related to inner transformation that are currently in use;
- ✓ The practices, methods, tools or interventions supporting inner transformation for sustainability;
- ✓ Related educational and training programs available within or outside the company;
- ✓ The gaps and needs perceived in relation to existing competencies and support structures;
- ✓ Additional training or tools that could help address these needs effectively; and
- ✓ Suggestions for how the identified key competencies could be systematically integrated and institutionalized into existing organizational structures.

In total, 50 interviews were conducted - 10 in each country. Each interview was summarized in an abstract written in English, capturing the most important insights, patterns and notable quotes (see Annex 1). These abstracts serve both as individual case reflections and as building blocks for the broader cross-country analysis presented in this report.

A full collection of the 50 interview abstracts is provided in **Annex 1**, allowing for greater transparency and offering detailed, country-specific viewpoints that complement the main analysis presented in this summary report.

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS FROM THE PARTNER COUNTRIES

BULGARIA

The interviews with ten Bulgarian SMEs show that most companies see inner skills - like adaptability, responsibility, empathy and ethical decision-making - as important for dealing with sustainability challenges. However, awareness of the topic is still quite low, and these skills are usually developed through daily experience, not through planned training. Most companies do not have formal tools or programs to support inner transformation and existing training usually focuses on technical or job-related tasks. Still, many of the businesses said they are open to learning more and improving in this area. They expressed interest in simple, practical training - ideally in Bulgarian - that connects personal growth with sustainability goals. To make this part of everyday work, ideas like stronger leadership involvement, regular team discussions and adding these values into daily routines were often mentioned by the interviewees.

GERMANY

The ten interviews with German SMEs show a shared recognition of the need for inner development to support sustainability in business. Common themes included the importance of self-awareness, emotional intelligence and systems thinking. Many companies also emphasized the value of reflection, deep listening and personal responsibility as foundations for meaningful change. There is a strong interest in holistic and regenerative approaches to support the mentioned capacities, with several organizations using or exploring tools like Theory U, Holacracy, the Inner Development Goals, and mindfulness practices. Leadership development and decentralization of management are also frequently mentioned as ways to empower individuals and foster cultural shifts. Despite differences in sector and size, most interviewees see the need to create space for personal growth, inner clarity and values-based decision-making within their organisations. At the same time, SMEs

acknowledge the challenges of integrating these ideas into daily operations, but are generally open to experimenting with new frameworks that align personal transformation with broader sustainability goals.

SWEDEN

The interviews conducted in Sweden showed that there is an increasing recognition of the value of inner development and the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), particularly in relation to fostering organizational resilience and sustainability leadership. Common themes include the importance of self-awareness, reflective practices, systems thinking, collaboration, and aligning personal values with organizational missions. At the same time, all 23 IDGs are considered as relevant. While there is enthusiasm for the potential of these capacities, their development is often hampered by financial and time constraints, a focus on productivity, and a lack of integrated frameworks that span both individual and organizational levels. Many SMEs rely on one-off workshops, coaching, peer learning, and digital tools for capacity development, but these efforts are frequently fragmented and not institutionalized. Initiatives like Icebug's structured integration of the IDG into their operations and new organisations and programs like Shift10 or IDGLabs offer more comprehensive approaches, but they are not yet widespread. A key-shared insight is the need for a cultural and normative shift where inner development is seen not as an extra cost but as a strategic investment. Despite the challenges, there is a growing movement among some Swedish SMEs toward embedding inner growth into their core practices, supported by external partnerships, learning networks, communities of practice (e.g., IDG hubs) and emerging change models. At the same time, scientific-based knowledge on what inner dimensions of sustainability entail, and how inner and outer transformation are intertwined is still very limited.

POLAND

The interviews with ten Polish SMEs revealed that most companies recognize the importance of inner skills like emotional intelligence, stress management, ethical decision-making and resilience for addressing sustainability challenges. However,

while there was a general awareness of these skills, they were typically developed through on-the-job experiences rather than structured training programs. Few companies applied formal tools or offered programs aimed at fostering inner transformation for sustainability, and existing training is often focused on technical or operational aspects of the businesses. Despite these challenges, many businesses expressed a willingness to improve and integrate the above-mentioned skills into their operations. There was a clear interest in practical, accessible training programs that focus on combining personal development with sustainability goals. To embed these skills into everyday business practices, many SMEs suggested that incorporating them into regular team discussions, leadership involvement, and daily routines would be most beneficial for accelerating sustainable transformation.

PORTUGAL

Across the ten Portuguese companies interviewed, there was a widespread recognition of the importance of human-centred skills - such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, resilience, critical thinking and empathetic communication - for ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience. However, these competencies were often underdeveloped or inconsistently integrated into daily operations. Many companies were said to face cultural resistance to change, with traditional mindsets and operational pressures hindering deeper transformation. Formal training is frequently seen as overly technical, academic or inaccessible, particularly for SMEs, solo entrepreneurs and family-run businesses. Despite these challenges, all companies expressed a desire for more practical, flexible and emotionally engaging learning approaches - such as short, tailored training sessions, self-directed development and internal practices like open dialogue and reflection. This signals a growing shift toward holistic, values-driven growth models that align personal development with organisational sustainability.



6. CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Across the 50 SMEs interviewed in Bulgaria, Germany, Sweden, Poland and Portugal, clear commonalities emerged in how companies perceive and engage with inner development for sustainability within their respective companies. Despite differences in sector and scale, there is a widespread recognition that human-centred skills - such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, ethical decision-making, systems thinking are essential for navigating complex sustainability challenges. These competencies are increasingly viewed not just as personal assets but also as strategic drivers of collaboration, innovation and long-term business resilience.

However, across all countries, these inner skills are often underdeveloped and inconsistently supported. Most SMEs rely on informal learning - gained through daily on-the-job experience rather than structured training. Formal programs, where they exist, tend to focus on technical or operational skills, overlooking the emotional, reflective and ethical aspects of people's work and their influence on sustainability, culture and system transformation. Even in Germany and Sweden, where awareness is higher and frameworks like the Inner Development Goals or Theory U are explored, implementation remains fragmented and often limited by knowledge on inner-outer transformation processes, time constraints and productivity pressures.

One common challenge across all countries is that even though leaders understand the importance of inner skills, these skills are not regularly used or built into everyday work. Even simple methods like check-ins, team reflections, or using feedback to grow are not yet part of the daily routine in most companies.

Many companies say they need easy-to-access training that makes sense for their local context - especially short, hands-on sessions in their own language that connect personal growth with sustainability. They often suggest using things like peer

learning, coaching and regular team conversations about individual, cultural and organisational values as part of everyday work.

Despite the mentioned challenges, more and more companies are open to, and asking for simple, practical ways to support personal growth at work and better understanding how personal, collective and planetary wellbeing are interconnected. Across all five countries, many interviewees said they want learning methods that are easy to understand and use in daily routines. Ideas include bringing personal development topics into team meetings, creating space for open conversations and feedback and offering short training sessions in local languages. Ideas that relate to a more systematic integration of the consideration of inner, philosophical dimensions into companies are hardly mentioned. Companies also see the value in connecting people's personal values with the company's goals and building work environments that support well-being, teamwork and shared responsibility.

The interviews confirmed again the clear trend: inner development is increasingly seen not as an optional but as a vital part of building truly sustainable businesses. While many companies are still in the early stages, there's a growing belief that real, lasting sustainability begins with people - their mindset, values and everyday skills. Ideas beyond capacity development and creating spaces for reflection are however rare. There is a clear lack of knowledge as to how a more systematic integration of the consideration of inner, philosophical dimensions into companies could look like, which would require the modification of all kinds of operational and management approaches. To move this forward, small businesses need more opportunities, tailored training and practical tools to learn and share related experiences.

8. PHILOSOPHYGYMS COMPETENCE MAP

The research done within the project revealed that while there is growing interest in connecting personal development with sustainability, businesses face several key barriers that limit deeper integration. These challenges can be grouped into three categories: ***conceptual, structural, and practical***. Each reflects a different layer of difficulty - from mindset and awareness to the absence of supportive systems, to everyday operational limitations. Addressing these barriers is essential for enabling inner development to become a meaningful part of sustainable business practices.

CONCEPTUAL BARRIERS

These barriers refer to lack of understanding or awareness about the connection between personal growth and business sustainability. They often arise from the mindset, values and beliefs held by individuals or organizations. So the conceptual barriers here show that many SMEs do not fully recognize or appreciate the link between inner transformation (such as personal development) and long-term sustainability goals, either in their business practices or overall objectives. This lack of recognition hinders the integration of these practices into their strategies.

- Low awareness of the link between personal growth and company sustainability
- Inner transformations viewed as abstract or non-essential in many business cultures.
- Inner transformations applied for productivity gains in SMEs rather than its sustainability .

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

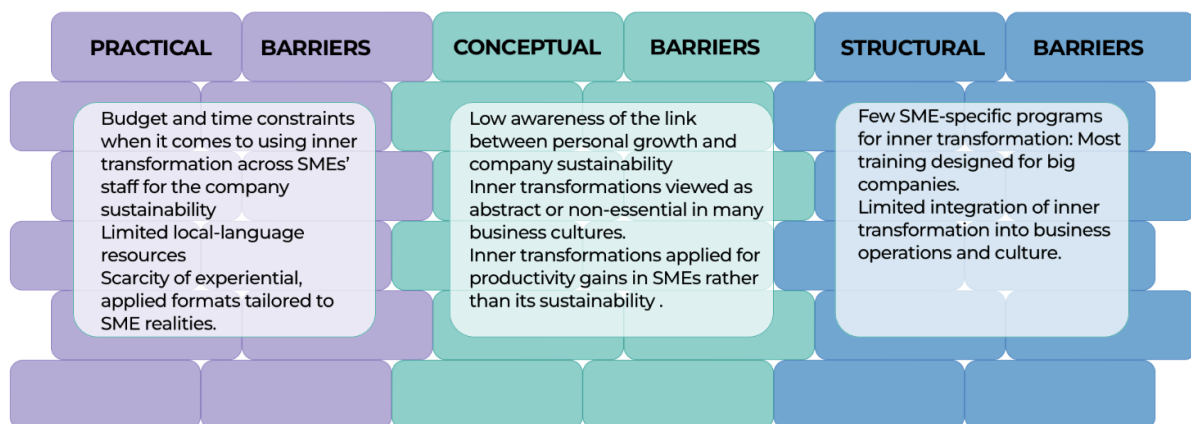
These barriers refer to the absence of formal systems or support structures within SMEs that are necessary to consistently integrate inner transformation practices into their business operations, culture and leadership. Even if SMEs recognize the value of personal growth for sustainability, they may struggle to embed these practices in a structured and ongoing way due to a lack of infrastructure or organizational support.

- Few SME-specific programs for inner transformation: Most training designed for big companies.
- Limited integration of inner transformation into business operations and culture.

PRACTICAL BARRIERS

These barriers represent real-world challenges that hinder SMEs from implementing inner transformation practices. These obstacles include limited time, budget constraints and a lack of necessary tools or resources, making it difficult for SMEs to integrate inner transformation into their daily operations and routines.

- Budget and time constraints when it comes to using inner transformation across SMEs' staff for the company sustainability
- Limited local-language resources
- Scarcity of experiential, applied formats tailored to SME realities.



Key Skills Needed by SMEs for Inner Growth and Sustainability

The findings presented herein are derived from a combination of qualitative interviews and the desk research. This research has identified a broad spectrum of inner skills as pertinent to supporting sustainability endeavors. These identified competencies are consequently instrumental in supporting both individual personal development and the effective implementation of sustainable business practices. It is important to emphasize that the presented skills are not intended to constitute a

comprehensive or definitive catalogue. Rather, they are illustrative, selected to demonstrate the wide range of possible competencies that emerged from our data collection.

It is important to acknowledge that while the identified skills were consistently linked to sustainability contexts within our research, their inherent utility is not confined to this domain. These competencies possess a broader applicability and, critically, are not intrinsically limited to positive or ethical applications. Indeed, like many tools, they can be employed independently of sustainability objectives and are susceptible to misuse or superficial application. Mindfulness, for instance, serves as a pertinent example. It is frequently promoted or adopted primarily as a technique to enhance productivity, potentially overshadowing or neglecting its deeper potential as a reflective practice aimed at fostering a more comprehensive understanding of one's intricate relationship with oneself and the wider world.

Following their identification, these skills were subsequently grouped into thematic clusters. These clusters are conceptualized as an approximate heuristic - a practical framework designed to aid understanding and organization rather than represent rigidly defined, mutually exclusive categories. We are fully cognizant that many individual skills could justifiably be assigned to multiple cluster categories. This inherent overlap is not a limitation but rather reflects the interconnected and multifaceted nature of inner competencies. The clusters, therefore, serve as a practical organizational tool to navigate the diverse landscape of skills, rather than as definitive silos. Their primary utility lies in providing a structured lens through which to examine these competencies, while acknowledging that their synergistic effects and true developmental power often arise from the interplay and integration of skills across these nominal categorical groupings.

For Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), these varied skills represent essential building blocks for those aiming to intentionally integrate inner development in the context of sustainability into their organizational culture. Therefore, this framework is presented as a starting point, designed to enhance

understanding and encourage the conscious nurturing of diverse inner competencies that can ultimately drive meaningful and sustainable change within companies.

Emotional Skills: The ability to perceive, control and evaluate emotions in oneself and others, facilitating interpersonal relationships and personal decision making.

- *Self-awareness:* The ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior.
- *Reflection:* The process of introspection and contemplation on past experiences or actions to gain insights and improve future behavior.
- *Active Listening:* Fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what the other person is saying.
- *Perspective Taking:* The ability to understand a situation or concept from an alternative point of view or to empathize with another person's experience.
- *Ethical Decision Making:* The process of evaluating and choosing among alternatives in a manner consistent with ethical principles.
- *Emotional Regulation:* The ability to manage and respond to emotions in a healthy way, maintaining control over emotional responses.

Interpersonal Skills: The ability to understand, communicate with, and work well with others, often involving strong empathy and social skills.

- *Care:* The demonstration of compassion, empathy, and concern for others' well-being and happiness.

- *Collaboration*: Working collectively with others to achieve a common goal, leveraging diverse skills and perspectives.
- *Responsibility*: The state or fact of being accountable for one's actions or obligations, often emphasizing reliability and trustworthiness.
- *Empathy*: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others, creating emotional connection and understanding.
- *Conflict Resolution*: The process of resolving a dispute or a conflict by meeting the needs of all parties involved to some extent.
- *Communication*: The ability to express one's needs and concerns non-violently

Intrapersonal Skills: The capacity for self-reflection and understanding one's own emotions, motivations, and inner states.

- *Self-leadership*: The practice of intentionally influencing one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve personal and professional goals.
- *Mindfulness*: The quality of being fully present and engaged in the moment, aware of thoughts and feelings without distraction or judgment.
- *Adaptability*: The ability to adjust to new situations and changes, maintaining effectiveness in a dynamic environment.
- *Resilience*: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or setbacks, demonstrating mental toughness.
- *Intuitive Intelligence*: The ability to understand something instinctively, using gut feelings or hunches.

Cognitive Skills: The mental ability to think rationally, solve problems, and understand complex ideas, often associated with logical reasoning and critical thinking.

- *Systems Thinking:* Understanding complex systems' interrelationships and patterns rather than focusing on individual components.
- *Creativity:* The ability to generate novel and valuable ideas, approaches, or solutions.
- *Critical Thinking:* The ability to analyze information objectively and make a reasoned judgment based on logical evaluation.
- *Understanding of Deep Ecology:* Recognizing the intrinsic value of all living beings and ecosystems, advocating for a holistic and interconnected approach to environmental protection and sustainability.

Contextual Skills: The ability to understand, diagnose, and respond to the complexities and nuances of a specific situation or environment.

- *Perspective Taking:* (Repeat from above) Understanding a concept from another's point of view or empathizing with their experience.
- *Ethical Decision Making:* (Repeat from above) Choosing among alternatives in a manner consistent with ethical principles.
- *Understanding Relationality:* The ability to comprehend and analyze the interdependencies and interactions within global networks and ecosystems.
- *Being Able to Anticipate Consequences:* The skill of predicting the potential impacts and outcomes of actions or decisions.

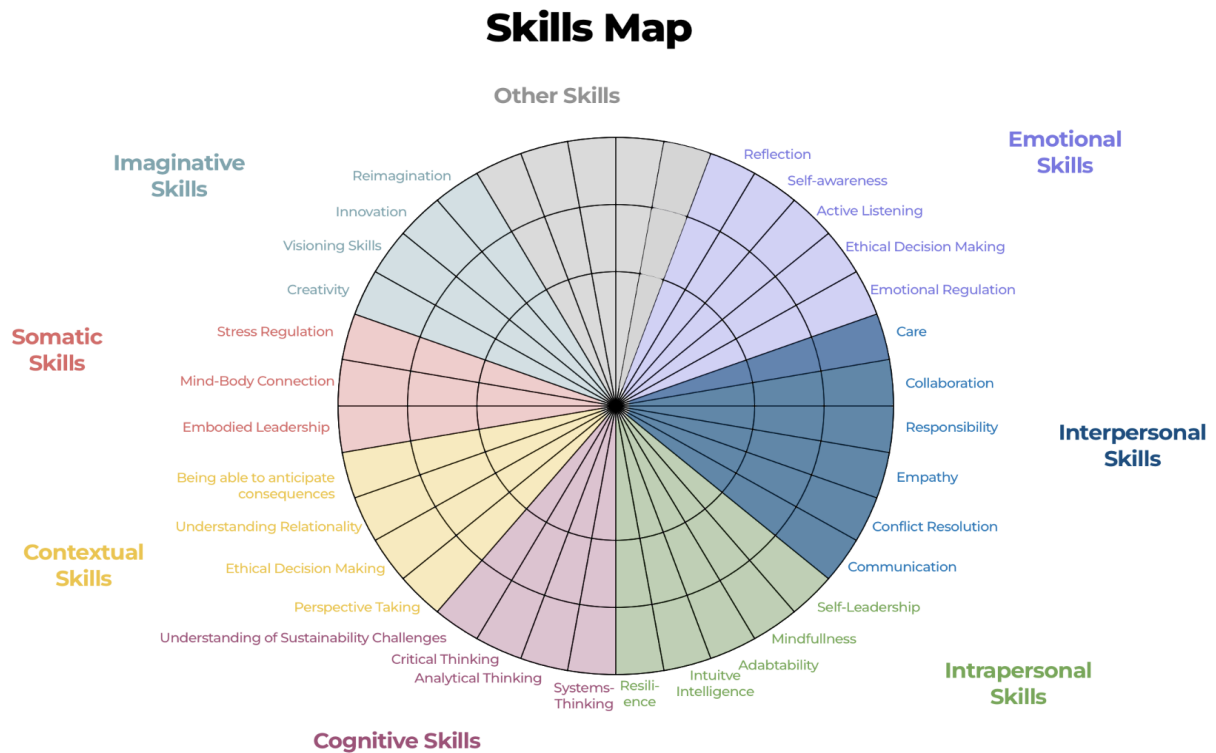
Somatic Skills: The ability to perceive, interpret, and use bodily awareness and sensations in reasoning and understanding.

- *Embodied Leadership:* Modeling what's preached.
- *Mind-Body Connection:* The relationship between mental processes and physical states, emphasizing the influence of one on the other.
- *Stress Regulation:* Ability to deal with stress levels to maintain well-being and performance.

Imaginative Skills: The ability to form new ideas, images, or concepts that are not physically present to the senses.

- *Creativity:* (Repeat from above) Generating novel and valuable ideas, approaches, or solutions.
- *Visioning Skills:* The capability to envision and articulate future possibilities and scenarios, motivating progress towards goals.
- *Innovation:* The practical implementation of ideas that result in new products, services, or practices, enhancing value and efficiency.
- *Reimagination:* The ability to think something very different from how it was before

The following map illustrates this variety of skills. The grey area has been intentionally left blank to emphasize that this map does not aim to provide an exhaustive overview of all possible skills. Instead, it serves as a foundational framework, offering a solid basis for our further work.



During this analytical process, it became apparent that attempting an exhaustive enumeration of every discrete skill identified was less critical than recognizing a unifying theme. We observed that a significant portion of these diverse competencies, regardless of their specific manifestation or area of application, ultimately point towards a common, underlying inquiry: How can organizations flourish in the face of the many pressing risks of our times? This realization suggests that while the expressions of these skills are manifold, their fundamental purpose often converges on enhancing this core question. Therefore, the focus shifts from cataloguing an endless list of specific skills to understanding and fostering this underlying question.

Apart from the skills though, we also identified a wide variety of practices - especially within the interviews. The following presents a collection of these practices that emerged from the research done within the project, reflecting how SMEs currently engage with or could potentially support inner development in the context of sustainability. Each practice is briefly described and categorized by the dominant skill it is most likely to develop. While many of these practices can influence multiple areas

of personal and organizational growth, the classifications provided aim to highlight the primary skills supported. Rather than offering a definitive mapping, this overview serves as a practical guide to understanding the kinds of tools and approaches that can foster relevant inner capacities across various dimensions - ranging from interpersonal and cognitive to imaginative and somatic skills.

No.	Tool/ Practice	Short Explanation	Dominant Skill
COGNITIVE SKILLS			
1	SMILE_PH Method	Semi-structured philosophical interviews about the sense of self, sense of the body, sense of purpose, sense of belonging, philosophical sense	Cognitive
2	Actor Analysis	Identifying and understanding different stakeholders involved in a situation, including their interests and potential influence.	Cognitive
3	Impact Workshops	Sessions focused on evaluating the effects of actions or initiatives to ensure alignment with intended outcomes.	Cognitive
4	Performance Evaluation Process	A systematic approach to assess employee performance, providing feedback and aligning development with organizational goals.	Cognitive
5	Task Rotation	A practice that involves employees working in different roles or tasks to gain broader skills and perspectives.	Cognitive
6	Hands-on Workshops on Sustainable	Practical sessions that teach sustainable practices in production and supply chain management.	Cognitive

	Production and Supply Chains		
7	Tools to Measure Sustainability Impact	Instruments or methodologies that assess the environmental and social effects of actions or policies.	Cognitive
8	Online Courses and Networking Platforms	Digital learning environments and communities for sharing knowledge and experiences related to specific topics.	Cognitive
9	Case Studies on Sustainability	Detailed examples of sustainability practices and outcomes used for learning and inspiration.	Cognitive
10	Digital Coaching Platforms	Online tools providing guidance and feedback, often replacing traditional HR functions.	Cognitive
11	Impact Workshops (Impact Canvas)	Workshops using structured frameworks like the Impact Canvas to guide strategic reflection and collaboration.	Cognitive
12	Whole Brain Thinking	The Whole Brain Thinking methodology, developed by Ned Herrmann, is based on the concept that individuals have different thinking preferences and that leveraging these preferences can lead to better problem-solving, decision-making, and communication.	Cognitive
CONTEXTUAL			
1	Spiral Dynamics	A model of the evolutionary development of individual and societal values through a series of stages or levels of consciousness.	Contextual

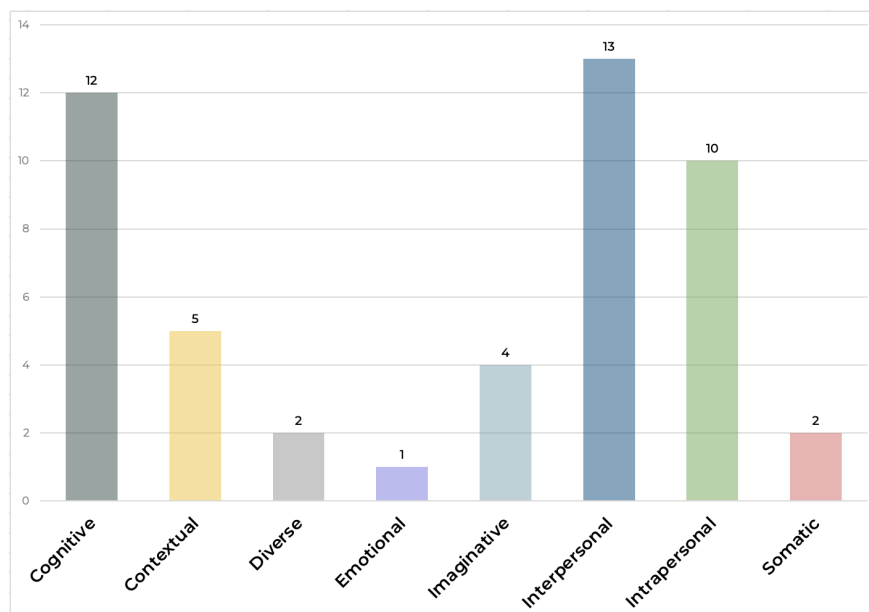
2	Warm Data	Dialogue practice to complement cold/hard data for richer understanding	Contextual
3	Bio-Leadership	leadership practices that draw inspiration from natural systems, but specifics are unclear	Contextual
4	Ecological Inquiry	A method of exploring questions and actions from an ecological perspective, emphasizing interconnectedness and sustainability.	Contextual
5	LIEPT Model (Lund Innovation Ecosystem Portfolio Tracking)	A tool used to support strategic reflection and collaborative innovation efforts.	Contextual
DIVERSE			
1	Stella Approach	The Stellar Approach is a set of tools helping organizations to embed sustainable and regenerative practices into their daily operations	Diverse
2	IDG Toolbox	General set of tools associated with the Inner Development Goals, but specifics aren't clear	Diverse
EMOTIONAL			
1	Emotional Intelligence Development Programs	Training sessions aimed at improving the ability to understand and manage emotions.	Emotional

IMAGINATIVE			
1	Theory U	A change management method that guides individuals and organizations through a process of co-sensing, co-presencing, and co-creating to bring about deep innovation and systemic change.	Imaginative
2	Backcasting	A planning method that starts with defining a desirable future and then works backward to identify steps needed to achieve it.	Imaginative
3	Visioning	The process of imagining and planning for a desired future outcome, often used in strategic planning and personal development.	Imaginative
4	Scenario Planning	Creating detailed and plausible scenarios to explore potential futures and prepare strategic responses.	Imaginative
INTERPERSONAL			
1	Circleway Method	A group dialogue process where participants take turns speaking around a central theme until all perspectives are shared.	Interpersonal
2	Liberating Structures	A set of simple interaction designs that enable groups to work together effectively by distributing control and fostering creativity.	Interpersonal
3	Role-playing	An activity where participants assume roles to explore different scenarios or perspectives, often to enhance empathy or conflict resolution skills.	Interpersonal

4	Nonviolent Communication	A communication method that emphasizes empathy, understanding, and connection over conflict and confrontation.	Interpersonal
5	Regular and Open Dialogue	Continuous, transparent communication within an organization to foster understanding and collaboration.	Interpersonal
6	Dialogue and Peer Exchange	Conversations and interactions among peers to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas.	Interpersonal
7	Team Discussions Facilitation	Guiding team conversations to enhance participation and outcomes.	Interpersonal
8	Workshops on Communication, Collaboration, and Psychological Safety	Training designed to enhance teamwork, effective communication, and a safe environment for expressing ideas.	Interpersonal
9	Team Development Efforts and Learning Loops	Ongoing activities focused on improving team dynamics and incorporating feedback into continuous improvement.	Interpersonal
10	Peer Learning Structures	Frameworks that encourage learning and knowledge exchange among colleagues on an equal basis.	Interpersonal
11	Meetings with Meaning	Structured gatherings designed to address complex issues collaboratively, focusing on connection, exploration, and resolution.	Interpersonal
12	Volunteer Work Days	Opportunities provided by employers for employees to engage in voluntary community service.	Interpersonal

13	Group Coaching	Collaborative coaching sessions where individuals share challenges and receive feedback in a group setting.	Interpersonal
INTRAPERSONAL			
1	Mindfulness Centering	A practice of focusing attention on the present moment nonjudgmentally, often to enhance clarity and reduce stress during discussions.	Intrapersonal
2	Reflection Periods	Designated times for individuals or groups to consciously think about and learn from their experiences.	Intrapersonal
3	Coaching on IDG Skills	Personalized guidance to develop Inner Development Goals, such as ethical leadership or long-term thinking.	Intrapersonal
4	Stress Management Techniques	Strategies and practices used to reduce stress and improve well-being.	Intrapersonal
5	Individual Coaching	One-on-one mentoring to support personal and professional development.	Intrapersonal
6	Reflection on a Weekly or Monthly Basis	Routine practices of introspection to learn from past actions and plan future activities.	Intrapersonal
7	IDG Practices and Initiatives	Activities focused on developing Inner Development Goals, fostering personal and organizational growth.	Intrapersonal

8	Mandatory Mindfulness Programs	Required training sessions for employees to practice mindfulness, often to enhance focus and reduce workplace stress.	Intrapersonal
9	Smooth Mornings with Voluntary Meditation	Initiatives offering morning meditation to improve focus and well-being.	Intrapersonal
10	ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) Tools	Psychological interventions that use acceptance and mindfulness strategies alongside commitment and behavior-change strategies to increase psychological flexibility.	Intrapersonal
SOMATIC			
1	Yoga Classes at Work	Sessions offered in the workplace to promote physical health and mental well-being.	Somatic
2	Walk and Talk Meetings	A meeting format where discussions take place while walking, often to stimulate creativity and reduce stress.	Somatic



A total of 49 practices were identified. The diagram below illustrates the frequency with which each skill type was supported by these practices. Interpersonal skills emerged most frequently, appearing 13 times, suggesting a strong emphasis on fostering effective communication and collaboration. Cognitive skills were the next most common, with 12 instances, indicating a significant focus on mental processes such as reasoning and problem-solving. Intrapersonal skills followed with 10 mentions, reflecting practices aimed at self-awareness and self-regulation. Contextual skills appeared 5 times, underscoring the importance of situational awareness and understanding broader systems. Imaginative skills were identified in 4 practices, highlighting support for creativity and innovation. Diverse and somatic skills each appeared twice, while emotional skills were noted only once, suggesting these areas received comparatively less emphasis.

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Co-funded by
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