

Future Leaders Dialogue

An annual 'barometer' aligning students and industry

Report April 2021 - April 2022



Introduction

Future Leaders Dialogue (FLD) is an annual ‘barometer’ to align students and companies on the skills requirements of young talents and the attractiveness of our industry, to help them in their next recruitment activities.

Launched in April 2021, the initiative is led by a consortium of EILL industry members (AirLiquide, Covestro, Worley, McDermott, Neste) and European Student Organisations (BEST, ESTIEM, EYCN, EYE, EuChems, JEE).

To promote a dialogue between the two, a survey was created to test the views of employees, and a second analogous survey for students. Additionally, the Organising Committee interviewed four members of the EILL's Industrial Advisory Board.

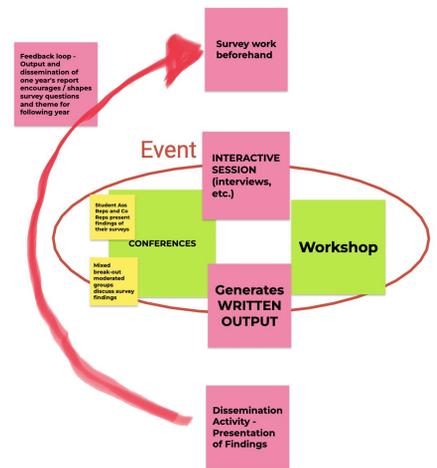
On the 5th April 2022 invited participants came together at the first annual Future Leaders Dialogue Conference to discuss the survey findings and their responses to this.

Two keynote speeches, and a panel discussion with representatives from both industry and students organisations, provided the stimulus for break-out groups to discuss first the skills requirements and then the attractiveness of a career in industry.

In this report you will find a summary of the year's activities:

- **Survey highlights**, which present the key findings from almost 500 responses from both employers and students.
- **IAB Perspectives**, collected during four interviews with senior industry executives, members of the EILL's Industrial Advisory Boards.
- **Conference agenda**, which recapitulates the structure and the various contributions of the event.
- **Speakers' profiles**, presenting the keynote speakers and the industry and students representatives on the discussion panel.
- **Event participants' demographics**, which aggregates information about the participants' profile.

We invite you to share and make use of the information in this document in your next recruitment activities and to continue the dialogue between industry and its potential future leaders.



Steve Price
Executive Director, EILL



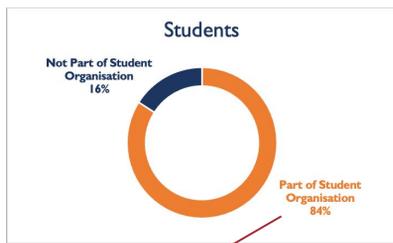
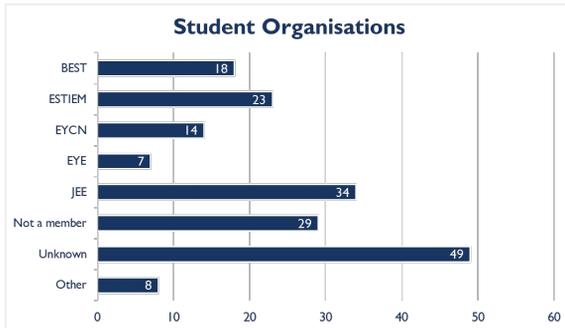
Survey Highlights

Pre-event survey

A pre-event survey, one for students and one for companies, has been circulated since October 2021. During the conference, participants have discussed the key findings of both surveys.

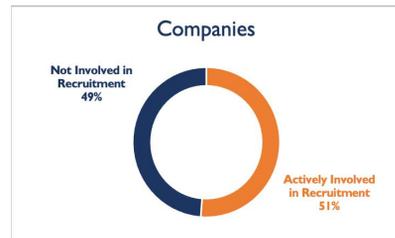
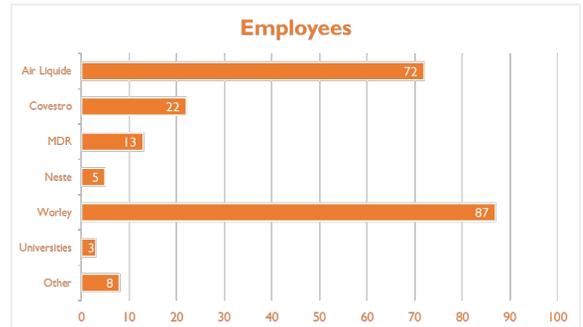
Respondents' Demographics

Students - 182 responses



- 44% of those are in a management position

Employees - 210 responses



- 85% of the employees are from chemical and engineering companies

Skills Required of Recent Graduates

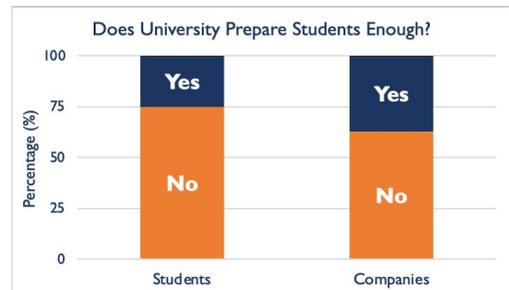
- Students and companies both agreed that **University alone does not sufficiently prepare** students (to be recruited) for industry.

Question:

Do you think that your university prepares students sufficiently to be recruited?

Answers:

75% and 63% of students and employees say no respectively.



Survey Highlights

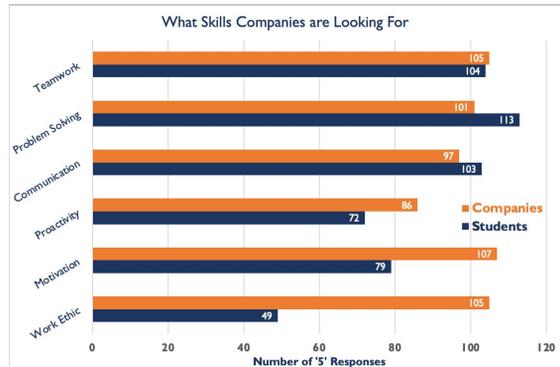
2. Students should look to demonstrate their **soft skills, teamwork, communication, and motivational skills** alongside their technical skills.

Question:

When recruiting talents, how much value do you give to the following skills?
Scale of 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)

Answers:

Motivation obtained the highest (107) rating from employers. The bar chart's top three skills are aligned, the bottom three skills show disparity between companies and students.



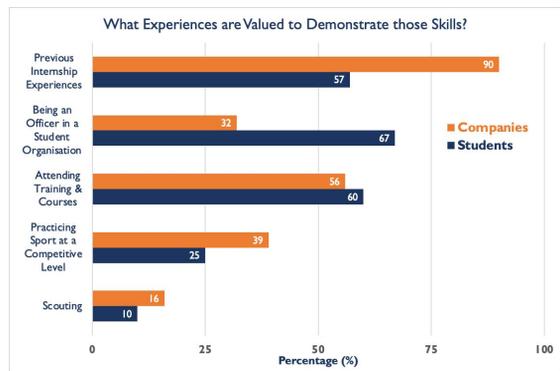
3. The effectiveness of **Student Organisations for developing soft skills in young talent is not yet appreciated by industry.** Companies should understand and value these experiences more.

Question:

Which activities helped students most in developing the previous skills and are companies looking at them? Participants could select multiples of the five options.

Answers:

Students valued their development within Student Organisations the most (67%), whereas companies value it poorly (32%). Internships and courses remain aligned as good experiences.



Example Survey Quote:

—“My experience as president of Junior Enterprise developed my soft skills.”

—“Being in a Student Organisation helped me learn a lot about good communication, problem solving and leadership skills.”

Attractiveness Of Industry

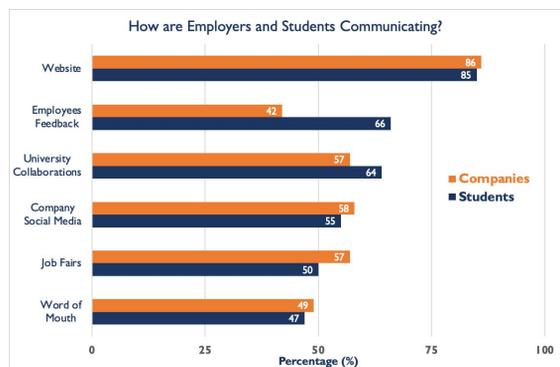
1. There is a **mismatch in communication** between companies and students. Companies should use **‘direct employees feedback’** to promote themselves alongside the already agreed upon mediums (e.g., Websites, Social Media, Uni).

Question:

How do students prefer to get information about a company and how are companies providing information? Participants could select multiples of the six options.

Answers:

Websites remain the strongest medium between companies and students. Direct “Employees Feedback” is a medium not being exploited by companies.



Survey Highlights

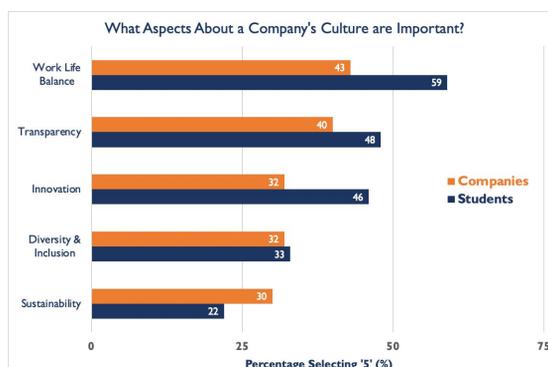
2. **Everyone is more conscious of a flexible and balanced work-life** since the pandemic. Companies should look to reassure recruits that the more flexible work environment will not affect their motivation/work-life balance.

Question:

Which aspects of a company's culture are most important to students and which aspects are employees presenting to attract them?
Scale of 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)

Answers:

59% of students put '5' for Work-life balance, whereas only 43% of employees did; the largest difference between answers. Surprisingly only 22% of students put '5' for sustainability, rses remain aligned as good experiences.



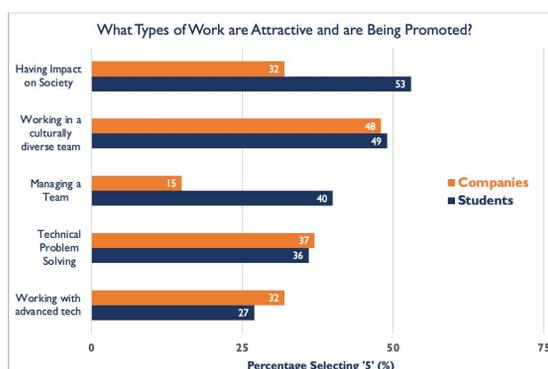
3. Students are **attracted to working in (culturally) diverse teams** and companies are promoting this well. However, there is a large mismatch where companies **should promote how the position has an impact on**

Question:

Which types of work do students find most attractive and which types of work are companies presenting?
Scale of 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)

Answers:

Students find working in culturally diverse teams attractive, and companies are presenting this. 53% of students want to know if the position has an impact on society, whereas only 32% of employees present this.



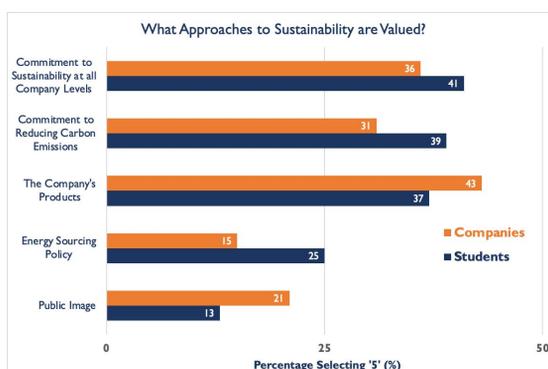
4. Both students and companies are **conscious of greenwashing**. Students really care about the emissions and energy policies associated with a company and its products. However, companies know more about and choose to promote their sustainable product itself rather than where it's come from.

Question:

Which aspects of a company's approach to sustainability do students look for when choosing a company versus what aspects companies are promoting?
Scale of 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest)

Answers:

Public image received the lowest ratings of 13% and 21% for students and companies respectively. Large discrepancy between students caring about energy sourcing (25%)* and companies promoting it (15%).



IAB Perspectives

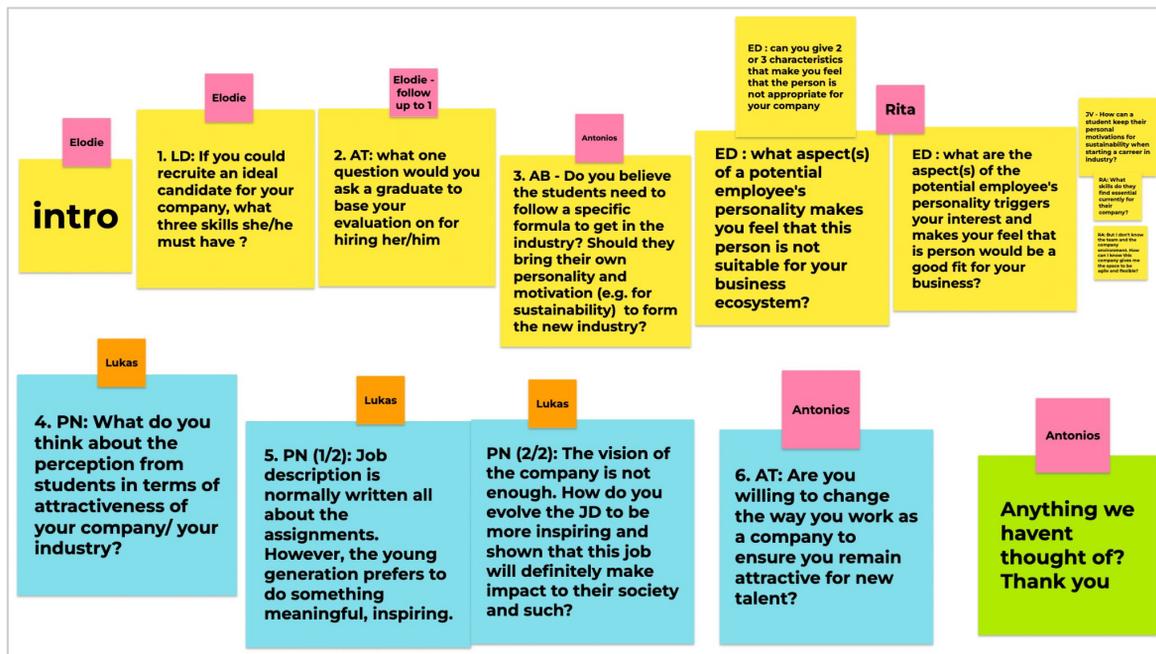
In preparation of the conference, the FLD Organising Committee interviewed four members of the EIL's Industrial Advisory Board.

The team developed a series of questions about the two main topics of the initiative: skills required of young talents and the attractiveness of industry.

IAB Members joined the team in the EIL Tardis in one of their scheduled lunchtime meetings.

The interviews were conducted by several team members, both students and company representatives in a relaxed and friendly environment, and all IAB interviewees said how much they had enjoyed the interviews.

As Frédéric Despréaux said at the end of his interview "We should have done this earlier!"



Frank Hollander

Commercial Director, Bio Energy Netherlands

“ We are looking for enthusiastic people, proactive people, and flexible people. You look a lot at the personal skills and a lot less at the technical, I would say because that is a given at their level of education.

You bring your own unique self, and with certain companies you'll find there is a click and with other companies you'll find 'ok there is no match here'.

I think companies could do maybe a better job of showing you how your job links to that ultimate goal, the need to change the planet or to change our activities towards sustaining the planet. That's in the forefront of most young people's mind and the companies just have to change.



IAB Perspectives



Frédéric Despréaux

Vice President, Cluster Northern Europe & CIS countries, Air Liquide

“ It is about a lot of interpersonal skills. It is about being a team player, and being able to interface with different teams.

Knowledge is not power. If you believe that you know some things that the others don't know, and you keep it only for yourself, you completely got it wrong.

If you want to change the world, what is the one thing you want to do?

Joining the industry is a wealth of opportunities.



Jelle Nederstigt

President Europe, Middle East & Africa, Worley

“ For really specific functions in the department we will ask for the right education, but for the people who will become the leaders of the company, we look more at soft skills because these are less easy to learn.

We want especially our younger generation really to speak up and help with smart solutions to our industry's and our organisation's problems.

Apart from our people we are nothing, so we do realize that it is extremely important to be an attractive employer.



Michael B. Friede

Chief Commercial Officer - Performance Coatings & Member of the Executive Committee, AkzoNobel

“ We will always heavily look for learning agility. As learning agility is one of the best predictors for future leadership growth: how agile are you in taking on new challenges, how open are you to open your mind to learn new things, to train yourself.

People who understand the value of cognitive diversity will also be allowing, and actually valuing and supporting a lot of diverse backgrounds to be entering their company.

It would be better if we explained more clearly what type of global reach you can have very quickly in an industrial company; what type of impact you can have on the largest challenges that face the planet every single day. We need the brightest chemists and engineers to solve the climate crisis.



Agenda

The 5th of April marked the end of the first year of the Future Leaders Dialogue initiative, with an online and interactive conference. Participants join from all over Europe representing both Student Organisations and the industrial companies and employers.

The following agenda recapitulates the structure and the various contributions to the event.

CEST (Brussels Time)	
14.00	Opening Remarks Frank Hollander , Chairman of the conference Steve Price , Executive Director, EIL
14.25	Industrial Input #1 - Skills required of young talents Adrian Löffler , Digital Product Manager, Covestro
14.50	Industrial Input #2 - Skills required of young talents Sara Asselberghs , Department Head CSA-HVAC-mechanical PDS, Worley
15.15	Breakout discussion
15.45	Plenary feedback
16.00	Panel Discussion - Attractiveness of the industry Hanno Bruemmer , SVP Managing Director Covestro GmbH, Head of Supply Chain & Logistics EMLA, Covestro Peter Craeghs , Food & Pharma Market Unit Director, Cluster Northern Europe & CIS countries, Air Liquide Rimma Dzhusupova , Department manager Electrical & ICSS, McDermott Johannes Spaas , President 2020-2021, BEST Maria Serodio , VP of Education 2020-2021, ESTIEM
16.40	Breakout discussion
17.10	Plenary feedback
17.20	Closing Remarks Frank Hollander , Chairman of the conference
17.30	Open Networking



Speakers

Chairman



Frank Hollander

Commercial Director, Bio Energy Netherlands

After a 25-year career in major multinational engineering companies, Frank is currently consulting with young companies in the renewables sector.

Passionate about developing talent, Frank is an EIL alumni and has been on its Industrial Advisory Board for five years.

Keynote Speeches



Adrian Löffler

Digital Product Manager, Covestro

Adrian Loeffler started his career as engineering manager in the automotive industry. He joined Covestro in 2017 as an IT manager.

In his current role as Digital Product Manager, he's responsible for innovative Digital Solutions at Covestro.

He participated in the EIL's Masterclass Programme, and in its Ent-Ex young leaders programme in 2019.



Sara Asselberghs

Department Head CSA-HVAC-mechanical PDS, Worley

Sara Asselberghs is a civil engineer with over 15 years of experience in engineering for chemical projects in Worley. After working in several roles leading multicultural and multi-location teams, she was responsible for several technical departments and evolved into a real people manager. In her current role as resourcing coordinator Sara is responsible for providing resources for the Belgian organization. Sara aims to be part of the solution on the sustainability challenges by unlocking the potential of both people and teams in our industries as a leader, coach, mentor and champion of a learning culture.

She participated in the EIL Masterclass Programme in 2019.



Speakers

Panel Discussion



Hanno Brümmer

SVP Managing Director Covestro GmbH, Head of Supply Chain & Logistics EMLA, Covestro

Hanno Brümmer has worked for over 13 year in Bayer MaterialScience, where he covered different roles before becoming SVP, Business Unit Polyurethanes. Since 2015 he has been in senior roles in Covestro, based in their headquarters in Leverkusen. He has been a member of the EIL's Industrial Advisory Board since 2018.



Peter Craeghs

Food & Pharma Market Unit Director, Cluster Northern Europe & CIS Countries, Air Liquide

Peter has worked in Air Liquide for 12 years. He started as Network Coordination Engineer, until his current role as Food & Pharma Market Unit Director in Antwerp. He participated in the EIL Masterclass Programme in 2014.



Rimma Dzhusupova

Department Manager Electrical & ICSS, McDermott

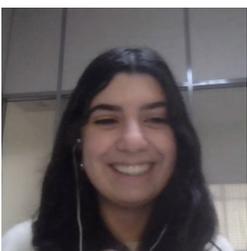
Rimma has worked in McDermott for almost 10 years. She started as an engineer in the Electrical department in the The Hague office, a leading engineering office and knowledge center of McDermott. In her current role since 2018, alongside her primary duties, she leads the Artificial Intelligence engineering team within McDermott EMEA region. She participated in the EIL Masterclass Programme in 2019.



Johannes Spaas

President 2020-2021, Board of European Students of Technology

Johannes has just concluded a Master of Science degree in Engineering Physics at Ghent University. After being President of the BEST local group in Ghent, he was President of BEST at a European level until June 2021. He is also Green Officer for Green Office Gent, a project in which 11 university commissions were supported in the integration of sustainability in their decision-making processes. Johannes is still involved in BEST as a Soft Skills Trainer.



Maria Seródio

VP of Education 2020-2021, ESTIEM

Maria joined ESTIEM in 2018 as Local Responsible of the Local Group of Porto, until becoming Vice President of Education at a European level in 2020. She has a Master of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Management from the University of Porto. She is currently working as Consultant for Kaizen Institute Western Europe.



Breakout Discussion

During the breakout sessions, participants discussed the two main themes of the conference, skills required of young talents and the attractiveness of industry.

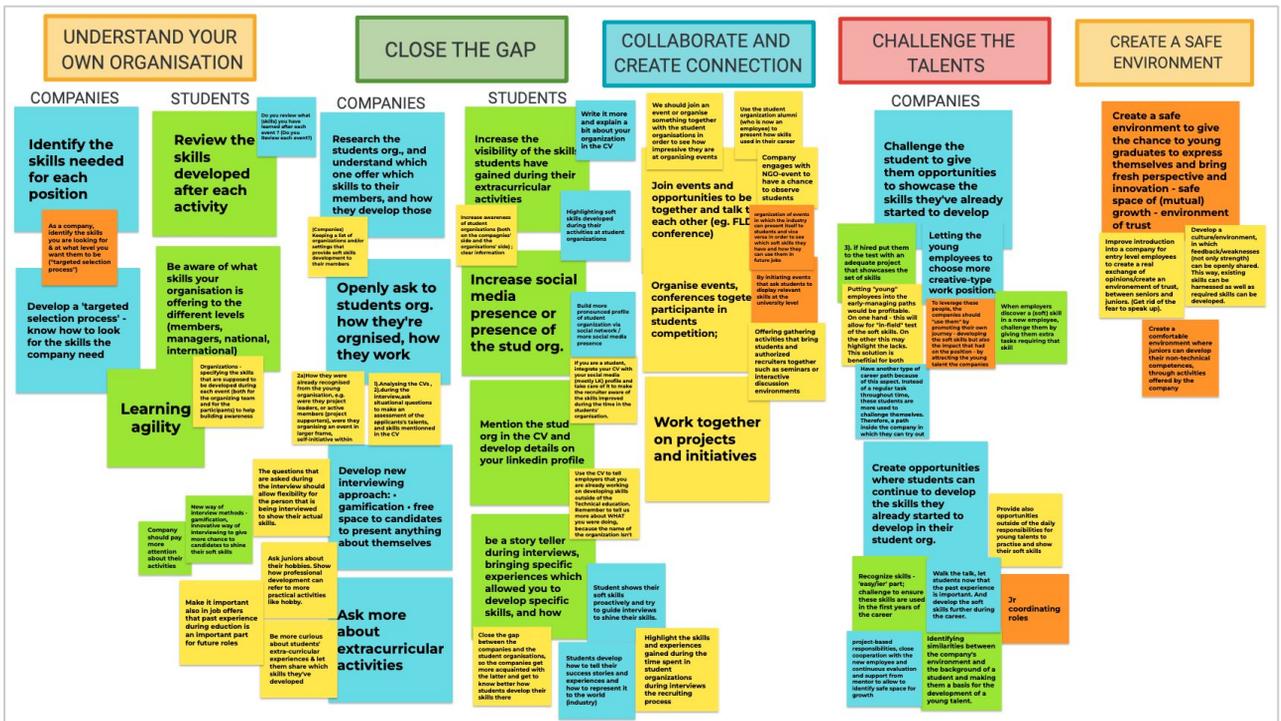
To help focus the group's discussions, each speaker input was preceded by a 'Yellow Car Question' in order to heighten the observations while listening to the presentation and to more easily spot the highlights.

The following messages are things that our participants said during the breakout discussions. In some cases these repeat what was heard in the keynote speeches and panel discussion in order to reinforce the point.

Breakout Discussion I



Early career experiences help people develop the soft skills needed for more senior positions. How can companies recognise (and make best use of) students whose extra-curricular experiences have already helped them develop these skills?



The awareness in companies of Student Organisations and what they do is pretty limited. The different roles and responsibilities of the officers at different levels in these organisations, and the different skills required and developed at these different levels in Student Organisations is not widely known.

Students were surprised to hear the soft skills described by invited young professionals (Sara Asselbergs, Adrian Löffler) and how these had been developed in the early stages of their careers. Students recognised that they may have already developed some of these skills alongside their studies whilst being officers, in their Students Organisations.



Breakout Discussion

Students must be able to describe the skills they have and what activities they have done where they have developed and demonstrated these. Student Organisations should prepare a framework which describes typical activities at different levels of their organisation and which skills can be developed in their execution.

Companies must increase their awareness of Student Organisations. They should make more widely known in their company (amongst department managers and not just recruiters) that Student Organisations Officers may have developed some fairly advanced leadership skills.

What students should do:

Students should review throughout their Student Organisations activities (and Internships) and they should keep a log of skills learned and activities they did which helped them to learn. These reviews should build into a story book of case studies to be used during interviews to help them to be a good story-teller.

What companies should do:

Company programmes to 'get to know' students should segment students (Future Leaders vs Future Experts) and should look for different soft / leadership skills in each segment. Companies should recognise the highly developed soft / leadership skills of Officers in Student Organisations and seek to attract these for their Future Leaders segment.

What companies should do having recruited Future Leaders:

New recruits with already highly developed soft skills should be provided with supplementary, parallel activities alongside their 'day job' in order to exercise/demonstrate these skills. Such activities should give them additional assignment- or project-based responsibility in order to satisfy their desire to 'manage' whilst still in a functional role with no management responsibility.

Examples might be to help organise company-wide graduate onboarding or graduate development programmes, involvement in employer branding campaigns and recruitment activities.

Companies should create a 'safe environment', low-risk opportunities to challenge their young talents to develop their non-technical skills, where the talents can feel safe to bring fresh innovative pe

Review the skills developed after each activity

Do you review what skills you have learned after each event? (Do you review each event?)

Student Organisations - specifying the skills that are expected to be developed during each event both for the organising team and for the participants to help building awareness

Be aware of what skills your organisation is offering to the different levels (members, managers, national, international)

Research the students org, and understand which one offer which skills to their members, and how they develop those

How they were already recognised from the young organisation, via what they project leaders or active members (project supporters), were they organising an event in large scale self-initiative within

(Company) Keeping a list of organizations and/or settings that provide soft skills development to their members

Be more curious about students' extra-curricular experiences & let them share which skills they've developed

Provide also opportunities outside of the daily responsibilities for young talents to practice and show their soft skills

Challenge the student to give them opportunities to showcase the skills they've already started to develop

To leverage these people, the companies should 'use them' by promoting their own journey - developing the soft skills but also the impact that had on the position - by attracting the young talents to the companies

When employees discover a (soft) skill in a new employee, challenge them by giving them extra tasks requiring that skill

Create opportunities where students can continue to develop the skills they already started to develop in their student org.

Have another type of career path because of this aspect. Instead of a regular task throughout time, these students are more used to challenge themselves. Therefore, a path inside the company in which they can try out

Develop a culture/environment, in which feedback/weaknesses (not only strength) can be openly shared. This way, existing skills can be harnessed as well as required skills can be developed.

Create a safe environment to give the chance to young graduates to express themselves and bring fresh perspective and innovation - safe space of (mutual) growth - environment of trust

Improve introduction into a company for entry level employees to create a real exchange of opinions/create an environment of trust, between seniors and juniors. (Get rid of the fear to speak up).



Breakout Discussion

What will I learn / how will I develop myself?

Students do not have a clear image of potential career paths in industrial companies.

Their primary focus is to understand whether, in their first job, they will have the possibility to continue to develop themselves. If they have been an officer in their Student Organisation, they will be particularly interested in using, and further developing, the leadership skills they have already demonstrated in these organisations.

Companies which are able to describe a structured career path, and not just "a job", often showcase the different career opportunities in different departments of their organisation. It should be recognised that this might be the first time that the student has considered themselves in a career beyond the entry-level jobs described in their initial searches.

Presenting opportunities for personal development, particularly of soft skills, is essential to attract 'future leaders' (less so for 'future experts').

Students, and new recruits, will react badly to being told that they must wait 10 or more years in a department role before they get a chance to use their managerial skills. It is important to demonstrate the opportunities to develop such skills in entry-level roles as well as in roles of increasing scope and responsibility.



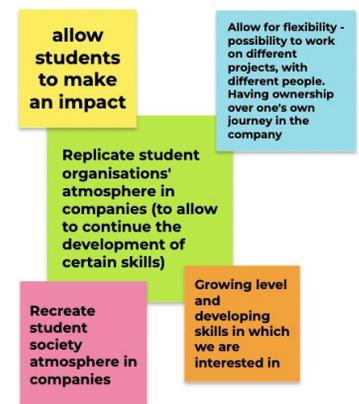
Will I be able to 'manage' (use the skills I already have) right away?

Students who have been part of a Student Organisation, particularly those who have reached a national or international responsible level, want the opportunity to demonstrate, and further develop, their management and leadership skills. They want the opportunity to manage people quickly, though not necessarily in a 'formal' management role. The opportunity to be responsible for small teams or task forces for a specific project (e.g. organising a job fair at their former university) alongside their primary role can satisfy this need.

Paradoxically, in a new working environment with new colleagues, students may have a fear of being seen to fail, whilst at the same time describing a need to feel challenged on a daily basis with new activities (which allow them to continue the development of their soft skills).

One solution proposed was to recreate the atmosphere of a Student Organisation in some of their work teams.

Again, development projects such as putting recent recruits in charge of graduate on-boarding, early development programmes, or involving them in recruitment are all 'low risk' areas where young talents can deliver as well as develop.



Breakout Discussion

Will the entry-level job be 'interesting' enough? (Flexibility, Salary, Colleagues, Environment, Company culture, etc.)

As most recruitment offers recognise, students are attracted by, and expect, variety in their early entry-level positions. This is usually provided by some combination of job rotation possibilities between businesses, departments, and units, internal assignments and secondments.

Students also want the opportunity to manage people quickly, as discussed above.

Students seek flexibility and diversity, not only on their daily assignments and projects, but also in work location (office or home-office based) and working hours. The most recent recruits are entering a post-pandemic world of work where 'normal' working patterns have yet to be re-established, and the impacts of various hybrid models have yet to be fully evaluated. Many seek to enter the workplace with established commitments to other 'extracurricular activities', for which time must be found.

Many students, particularly former Officers of Student Organisations will probably have experienced a diverse, international environment, and may not want to give this up.

The company culture, perceived through external communications and then reinforced through the interview process, is often the only indicator of the (office) environment in which a new recruit will work, but there will be some scepticism of how representative this really is. Companies should make every effort to clearly portray both the culture expected throughout the company and the 'atmosphere' new recruits can expect in their daily workplace. They should let real examples reinforce the corporate message. Employee feedback is perceived as a more trustful source than a corporate video. Companies should be open about whether, and how often, they survey employees for their feedback on workplace conditions.

All these messages are more likely to be believed by a student if communicated by a trustful employee.

Companies should find the right medium to reach students and trigger their interest. They should communicate about what matters to their generation; not only the social/environment impact perspective, but also information to help them understand what it is really like to work in their company.

Companies should also engage their own young employees to provide testimonials for potential recruits (eg. "a day in the life of..."). In addition to HR presenting at job fairs with 'standard' or 'advertisement style' messages, companies should also present young people who are actually involved in entry-level roles, who have real stories to tell on their daily job in that specific function. (This is also a 'development opportunity' for new recruits to get involved in producing or presenting these 'case studies' as in 'What companies should do for Future Leaders' in the first breakout discussion.)

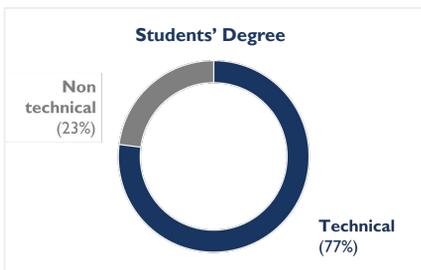
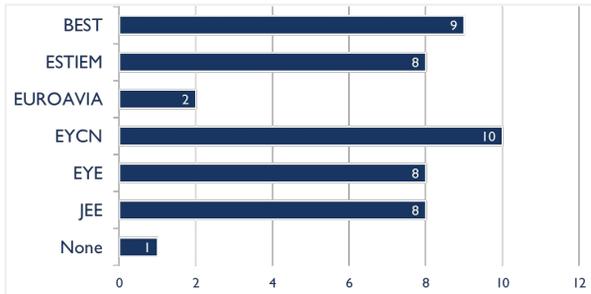
Other similar opportunities of presenting how it is to work in a company can be found in joint activities with employers and Student Organisations. Working closely together (eg. organising events, creating new initiatives, providing internship opportunities, etc.) is the best way to know each other and walk in each other's shoes.



Event's Participants

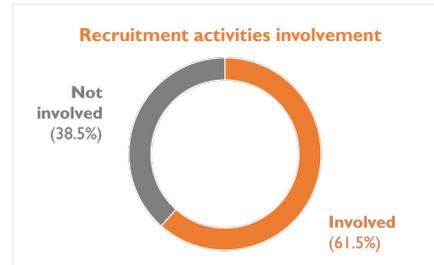
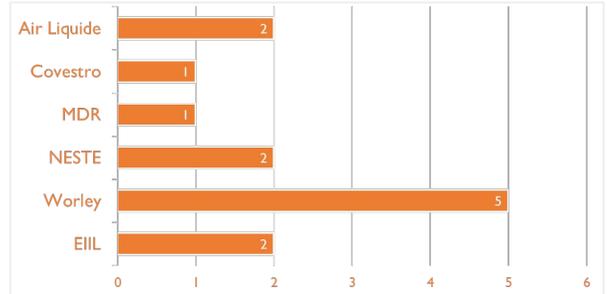
Participant's Demographics

Students - 39



- 77% of students have a technical degree.

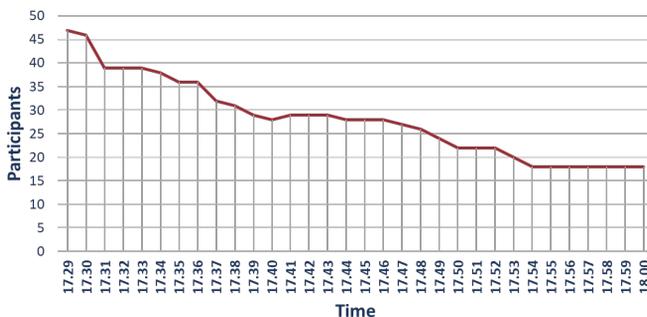
Employees - 13



- 61.5% of employees are actively involved in recruitment activities in their companies.

Open Networking - Drop-off rate

At the end of the conference participants were invited to stay for a 30-minute open networking session to continue the discussions started during breakout sessions, and to share views with new network contacts. In contrast to previous invitations at online conferences where a single screen / grid view may inhibit conversation, this conference's proximity-based video-conferencing platform allowed break-outs into small groups and one-to-one discussions. As a consequence, almost half of the participants stayed for more than half of the allowed networking time.





Thank you

to the Future Leaders Dialogue Organising Committee for their contribution:

Elodie Dejean, AirLiquide

Phenwisa Niyamakom, Covestro

Alexis Torreele, Worley

Michael Berkenbosch, McDermott

Marco Lodder, Neste

Antonis Bikas, BEST

Liva Dzene, EYCN

Lukas Lehmann, EYE

Joana Vaz, ESTIEM

Rita Antunes, JEE





Helping our members attract, retain and develop
their next generation leaders.

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