



NATIONAL e-RETAIL REPORT Poland



[Wpisz tutaj]

Introduction

The e-SELLER project aims to foster the retail sector's digital transformation, focusing on the EU's rural areas, where the retail workforce lacks the needed digital skills and competences to meet the emerging e-retail demands. The project objectives are:

- to equip VET providers/trainers with an effective and attractive education and training program in line with the rural retail workforce's individual needs and expectations, through the use of digital and inclusive educational content
- to prepare and aware the Chambers/Associations staff in order to adjust their policies and approaches with the aim to better support competitiveness and employment at their local and regional level
- to link the rural labor market demands with the VET sector, through synergies and cooperation with partners from other countries
- to increase the knowledge capacity of the participating partner organizations
- to disseminate the project results and activities at local/regional, national, and EU level

The purpose of this report is to identify and confirm the existing digital skills and gaps needed from the workforce to make use of the digital technologies. This will also lay the ground for the development of effective, qualitative, and attractive education and training results.

For this national report were conducted 10 interviews with VET providers/trainers and Chambers/Associations staff and a survey with 81 retail workforce representatives. It took place between 21.12.2022 and 22.02.2023. The interviews were conducted online via the Teams and ZOOM platforms.

According to the interviews, most of the participants were women, six (6) out of ten (10), while four (4) were men. In the age range of 25 to 45 years old were seven (7) participants, while three (3) were included in the age range of 46 to 60. Four (4) out of ten (10) were VET trainers, one (1) was Chamber/Association staff and five (5) others.

According to the survey, most of the participants were women, (58.02%), while (41.98%) were men. In the age range 25 to 45 years old were (45.68%) participants, while (22.22%) were included in the age range of 46 to 60 and (30.86%) in the age below 25 years and (1,23%) over 61 years old.

(35.8%) of the participants live in cities over 100.000 residents and (25.93%) live in cities between 50-100 thousand residents. (22.22%) live in villages and (16.05%) live in cities with up to 50 000 residents.

(16.05%) of the participants were Small and medium-sized entrepreneurs and the (72.84%) were employees. (11.11%) of respondents categorized their current professional status as "Other".

(8.64%) of the participants stated their position as store managers and (9.88%) as customer representatives, while cashiers were (25.93%), advertising managers were (6.17%) and social media managers were (6.17%). (40.74%) of respondents categorized their main job position as "Other" (e.g. student, assistant, specialist, office worker, owner, social research coordinator, social media manager, director, Import-Exports manager, sales director, sales representative, department coordinator, PR and marketing manager, communication manager).

Chapter 1: e-retail technologies and practices

According to the trainers and staff:

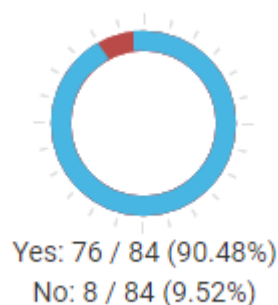
1. Most of the participants were aware not of training contents that deal with e-retail. However, those who were aware of existing training content were citing Polish Agency for Enterprise Development as the main source. Additional answers included:
 - a. InDeed, Erasmus+ e-learning program
 - b. Science and Business Center Zak,
2. Regarding the digital tools considered important to survive in the future retail sector included:
 - a. Live commerce
 - b. Digital Marketing
 - c. Artificial intelligence
3. Regarding the processes they would like to see in e-retail included:
 - a. better automatisation of marketing, without the need to train personnel
 - b. easier customer segmentation for more precise order personalization
 - c. how artificial intelligence (AI) will improve purchasing processes, whether it will also facilitate deliveries, payments, whether it will be a safe solution.
 - d. more interaction between customer and seller - exchange of opinions and experiences
 - e. e-shops or e-spaces where customers will be connected with business or at least it would be easier to find them, especially in agricultural products - to shorten the delivery chain
4. Most of the participants in the question “how they imagine e-Retail to be” answered:
 - a. e-Retail should facilitate for both customer and seller, it should speed up the process and give more possibilities comparing products for example with available market offer
 - b. the retail trade online
 - c. quick, few-minute sale/purchase process based on visual elements.

- d. multi-stage process, very visual, a few steps to finalize the transaction, and of course cashless payments.
 - e. E-commerce could be more adapted to local needs and offer goods from countries of origin.
5. Regarding the question of what they think the retail sector will look like in 5 years, most of the participants stated that the sales coming from online channels and e-retail will increase, with more companies promoting their products over the internet and social media, improved e-commerce capabilities and fewer companies offering only in-person retail. Some respondents mentioned the automatisisation of the more mainstream use of self-service checkout.
6. Participant's main recommendation to the retailers was to follow the competition, especially the one abroad. One person recommended the use of more forms of payment than just cash or card. The main theme was to see what solutions are available and used especially in similar enterprises and wherever it's something worth adapting or not.

According to the survey on each question we gathered the results accordingly:

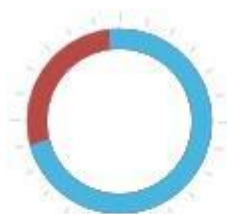
1. Do you know the meaning of "e-retail"?

(90.12%) participants know the meaning of "e-retail":



2. Are you using digital tools in your retail business?

Most of participants (69.14%) using digital tools in their daily work:



Yes: 56 / 81 (69.14%)

No: 25 / 81 (30.86%)

3. If yes, which digital tools do you already use in your professional life?

- E-catalogues, online sales, e-payments
- AdWords, SEO, social media
- Tools for communication and budgeting software, email, whatsapp, optima, office 365
- Website, social media, OBS Studio, Symfonia, Google Analytics, Doodle, Instagram
- Digital marketing tools, cashless payments
- FB Marketplace
- E-mail, Teams, computer graphic programs, outlook, social media, website, Zoom, mobile applications

4. Indicate the level of knowledge for the following digital technologies usage in the retail sector:

	Not at all aware	Slightly aware	Somewhat aware	Moderately aware	Extremely aware
Digital Marketing	10/81 (12.3%)	11/81 (13.6%)	38/81 (46.9%)	14/81 (17.3%)	8/81 (9.9%)
Live commerce	18/81 (22.2%)	16/81 (19.8%)	32/81 (39.5%)	11/81 (13.6%)	4/81 (4.9%)
Augmented Reality (AR)	24/81 (29.6%)	21/81 (25.9%)	26/81 (32.1%)	9/81 (11.1%)	1/81 (1.2%)
Virtual Reality (VR)	20/81 (24.7%)	24/81 (29.6%)	25/81 (30.9%)	8/81 (9.9%)	4/81 (4.9%)
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	15/81 (18.5%)	23/81 (28.4%)	28/81 (34.6%)	13/81 (16%)	2/81 (2.5%)
3D product models	12/81 (14.8%)	27/81 (33.3%)	30/81 (37%)	10/81 (12.3%)	2/81 (2.5%)

5. How often do you use the following digital technologies in your professional life?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very Often	Everyday
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Digital Marketing	13/81 (16%)	16/81 (19.8%)	26/81 (32.1%)	19/81 (23.5%)	7/81 (8.6%)
Live commerce	36/81 (44.4%)	18/81 (22.2%)	15/81 (18.5%)	7/81 (8.6%)	5/81 (6.2%)
Augmented Reality (AR)	53/81 (65.4%)	17/81 (21%)	7/81 (8.6%)	3/81 (3.7%)	1/81 (1.2%)
Virtual Reality (VR)	53/81 (65.4%)	17/81 (21%)	8/81 (9.9%)	2/81 (2.5%)	1/81 (1.2%)
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	49/81 (60.5%)	16/81 (19.8%)	12/81 (14.8%)	4/81 (4.9%)	0/81 (0%)
3D product models	48/81 (59.3%)	18/81 (22.2%)	15/81 (18.5%)	0/81 (0%)	0/81 (0%)

6. If applicable, provide an example of the use of the abovementioned technologies in the retail settings:

- Sale of services
- Sales based on live streaming
- Product visualization, virtual dressing rooms, AdWords
- Presentation of products in 3D/360 degrees
- Online shopping, e-shop
- Website optimization, E-commerce, Video marketing
- 3D printing, touch/digital screens, VR
- Sales via social media

7. Please indicate the level of importance of the following technologies to be visible in the retail sector

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Live Commerce	4/81 (4.9%)	16/81 (19.8%)	24/81 (29.6%)	27/81 (33.3%)	10/81 (12.3%)
Digital Marketing	2/81 (2.5%)	11/81 (13.6%)	17/81 (21%)	31/81 (38.3%)	20/81 (24.7%)
Augmented Reality (AR)	9/81 (11.1%)	18/81 (22.2%)	30/81 (37%)	17/81 (21%)	7/81 (8.6%)
Virtual Reality (VR)	8/81 (9.9%)	19/81 (23.5%)	31/81 (38.3%)	16/81 (19.8%)	7/81 (8.6%)
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	7/81 (6.8%)	22/81 (27.2%)	25/81 (30.9%)	21/81 (25.9%)	6/81 (7.4%)
3D product models	7/81 (8.6%)	24/81 (29.6%)	23/81 (28.4%)	20/81 (24.7%)	7/81 (8.6%)

8. What steps do you think that need to be taken to stimulate or accelerate the digital transformation of the retail sector?

The answers included:

- Disseminate knowledge about the method of implementation, related costs and possible profits
- Provide free training for employees, but also educate customers
- Public support
- Training and public campaigns
- Stimulate consumer interest by promoting these solutions to consumers, which will increase demand
- Create free tools
- A wider promotion is needed, but also co-financing of training and solutions
- Education, training, raising awareness
- Educate, facilitate access - reduce costs
- Implementation support, new tools
- Share know-how
- Teach, show that it pays off, show how to implement
- Share trial versions
- Incubators - testing for free at work
- Move direct sales to the Internet

Chapter 2: e-retail soft skills

According to the interviewers:

1. The most important soft skills for retail are:
 - a. communication
 - b. interpersonal skills
 - c. the kindness of the message, the heartfelt message that captures;
 - d. persuasive abilities

2. In the question of which soft skills are becoming more important for the digital transformation, answers included:
 - a. flexibility
 - b. adaptability
 - c. resistance to stress
 - d. analytical and critical thinking

3. Almost all the participants stated that digitalization changes soft skills to a high extent.

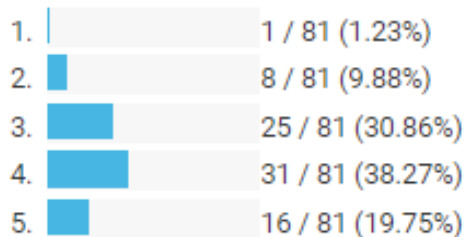
4. Almost all the participants stated that a company can improve the soft skills of its employees, with:
 - a. training
 - b. job-shadowing
 - c. mentoring
 - d. on-sight training

5. In the question “which soft skills are taught in vocational training and how” trainers answered:
 - a. teamwork
 - b. communication with the use of digital tools
 - c. negotiations

- d. communication with client
 - e. time management
6. In the question “which soft skills should be taught in vocational training, but are missing so far” included:
- a. time management
 - b. work management
 - c. career planning
 - d. analysis of competition
 - e. market research
7. Regarding the question “to what extent is it important to continuously improve the soft skills of employees” 9 of the participants stated that it is very important and 1 that it is moderate.
8. Most of the participants stated that ideally, they adapt to changes through:
- a. Be inquisitive and focus on self-education.
 - b. Through practice, good observation and listening to others, who show by their example how to adapt to changes.
 - c. using new skills in everyday life
 - d. self-motivation

According to the survey on each question we gathered the results accordingly:

1. How do you rate your adaptability to changing work situations?



1. Very low, 2. Low, 3. Moderate, 4. Good, 5. Very Good

2. Please, indicate the level of importance of the following soft skills in the retail sector:

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Time Management	1/81 (1.2%)	1/81 (1.2%)	7/81 (8.6%)	35/81 (43.2%)	37/81 (45.7%)
Stress Management	0/81 (0%)	3/81 (3.7%)	8/81 (9.9%)	36/81 (44.4%)	34/81 (42%)
Emotional (self - regulation)	1/81 (1.2%)	3/81 (3.7%)	5/81 (6.2%)	30/81 (37%)	42/81 (51.9%)
Communication	0/81 (0%)	1/81 (1.2%)	5/81 (6.2%)	23/81 (28.4%)	52/81 (64.2%)
Problem-solving	0/81 (0%)	0/81 (0%)	11/81 (13.6%)	28/81 (34.6%)	42/81 (51.9%)
Leadership	0/81 (0%)	5/81 (6.2%)	22/81 (27.2%)	35/81 (43.2%)	19/81 (23.5%)
Flexibility	0/81 (0%)	1/81 (1.2%)	13/81 (16%)	35/81 (43.2%)	32/81 (39.5%)
Multi-tasking	1/81 (1.2%)	2/81 (2.5%)	11/81 (13.6%)	33/81 (40.7%)	34/81 (42%)

3. To what extent do you acquire the following soft skills?

	Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	Sufficiently	To a Great Extent
Time Management	0/81 (0%)	1/81 (1.2%)	12/81 (14.8%)	45/81 (55.6%)	23/81 (28.4%)
Stress Management	0/81 (3.7%)	3/81 (3.7%)	19/81 (23.5%)	44/81 (54.3%)	15/81 (18.5%)
Emotional (self - regulation)	0/81 (0%)	2/81 (2.5%)	20/81 (24.7%)	38/81 (46.9%)	21/81 (5.9%)
Communication	0/81 (0%)	3/81 (3.7%)	9/81 (11.1%)	38/81 (46.9%)	31/81 (38.3%)
Problem-solving	0/81 (0%)	2/81 (2.5%)	15/81 (18.5%)	38/81 (46.9%)	26/81 (32.1%)
Leadership	2/81 (2.5%)	7/81 (8.6%)	26/81 (32.1%)	29/81 (35.8%)	17/81 (21%)
Flexibility	0/81 (0%)	6/81 (7.4%)	17/81 (21%)	38/81 (46.9%)	20/81 (24.7%)
Multi-tasking	1/81 (1.2%)	1/81 (1.2%)	21/81 (25.9%)	31/81 (38.3%)	27/81 (33.3%)

4. If applicable, provide an example of how you practice those skills in your professional life.

Answers of the participants included:

- Everyday, in the implementation and management of projects, conferences, business meetings
- Organization of events
- Setting various deadlines, communication with clients
- Well-developed time management skills have an effect on the efficiency and quality of my work

- Support for other departments, staff training, getting involved in new initiatives that increase the margin
- Thanks to my communicativeness and high language culture, I have good relations with clients
- Team, customer and sales management
- In scheduling terms and working with the team and clients
- Planning and implementation
- During interviews with the respondents
- Negotiations with the client
- Building a relationship with the client
- Thanks to them I am effective, I achieve good results. I perform my professional duties better
- Communication skills facilitate contact with the store's customer
- In establishing business relationships and executing contracts
- Organization of events, sale of services for business
- Solving problems
- Efficiently conducting conversations with clients, especially in situations that are not schematic; quick adaptation to the situation
- Contact with the client, presenting services/products, planning work, settling the cash register
- On sale
- I can work on many projects at the same time without compromising their quality

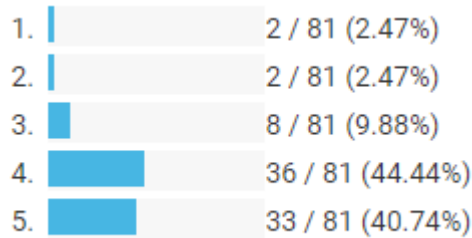
5. In your opinion, which soft skills are becoming more important for the digital transformation?

- Ability to learn quickly and cope with stress
- Time management
- Multitasking
- Communication skills
- Openness, ease of adapting to changes, flexibility
- Continuous training as well as analytical and research capabilities to track competitors' movements
- Responsiveness. Adaptability. Verbal and non-verbal communication
- Stress management and flexibility
- Controlling emotions
- Discovering new content and possibilities and implementing them
- Flexibility
- Communication skills

- Multitasking
- Problem solving
- Openness and willingness to learn
- Ease of adapting to changes, willingness to learn, openness, determination
- Versatility and courage
- Quick adaptation to changes, openness to new solutions, curiosity, continuous development, creativity
- Fast learning while unlearning old patterns

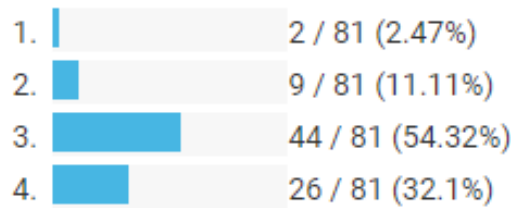


6. In your opinion, how important is the separation of your professional and private life?



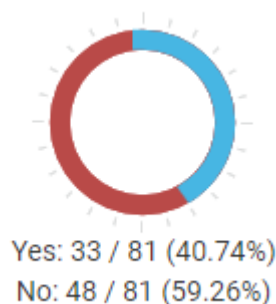
1. Not Important, 2. Slightly Important, 3. Somewhat Important, 4. Important, 5. Very Important

7. To what extent can you separate your professional and private life?



1. None, 2. Low, 3. Moderate, 4. High

8. Do you believe that digitalisation negatively affects your work-life balance?



9. If yes, please justify your answer through an example

Some of the participants who answered “yes” in the above question stated:

- Digitalization makes it impossible to draw a clear line between professional and private life. I can connect to my work email or social media via a private phone and receive notifications at any time, also in my free time. Conscientiousness and reliability do not allow me to ignore them.
- Increased time spent in front of phone screens
- This affects the unequal balance between personal and business life.
- Because we spend too much time in front of screens.
- The border is blurred, more and more people work from home, in the evening
- At any hour and even on Sunday, we can get an email, a business call
- We blur the boundaries of work and rest, especially in remote work
- We have access to working life even at home
- It is available all the time
- It is impossible to draw a border, these spheres blur thanks to technology and digital tools - they are "beyond time and space"
- People can't talk. They are addicted to the phone
- Social media makes it impossible to separate these spheres - we live with a smartphone in our hand

Chapter 3: e-retail challenges

According to the interviews:

1. In the question “What steps are being taken to stimulate or accelerate the digital transformation of the retail sector” the participants stated though:
 - a. pandemic was main accelerator
 - b. e-personalisation
 - c. payment automatisation
 - d. creation of new technologies
 - e. investments
 - f. subsidies for business

2. Almost all interviewers stated that reaching customers using digital tools is just as easy compared to traditional ways..

3. About the opportunities for digital marketing the participants answered:
 - a. customer can see the offer without leaving home
 - b. better targeting of customers
 - c. personalisation of orders
 - d. easier ways of promoting your products
 - e. more and easier access to information

4. All the participants agreed that their everyday working life will change because of digitalization.

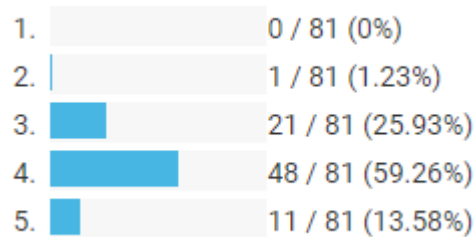
5. And in continuing to the previous question they also stated that digitalisation has already changed their daily work routine to a great extent.

6. All trainers stated that have encountered digital challenges among which included:
 - a. internet access or high-speed internet access was the main challenge
 - b. high differences in knowledge, difficulties in adapting to all participants
 - c. problems in medium, it's not always easy to show the right solution as it would be in face-to-face class
 - d. with the number of digital tools, not everyone knows all the tools

7. All the participants stated that digital tools could support them (also agreed that already are supported and are part of their work) in their everyday work by:
 - a. having e-commerce platforms
 - b. communication
 - c. possibility of online training

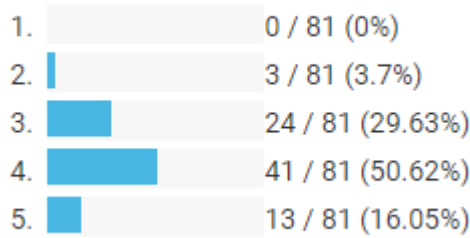
According to the survey on each question we gathered the results accordingly:

1. How well do you rate your handling of work processes



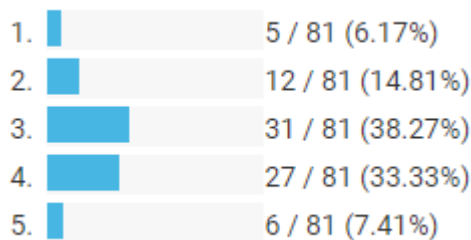
1. Poor, 2. Not good, 3. Moderate, 4. Good, 5. Excellent

2. Do you often face challenges in your professional life?



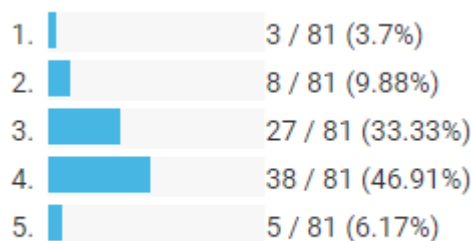
1. Never, 2. Rarely, 3. Occasionally, 4. Frequently, 5. Very frequently

3. To what extent do digital tools pose challenges for you in a professional setting?



1. Not at All, 2. Very Little, 3. Somewhat, 4. Frequently, 5. To a Great Extent

4. To what extent has digitalization changed your work routine?



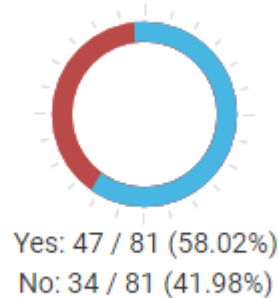
1. Not at All, 2. Very Little, 3. Somewhat, 4. Frequently, 5. To a Great Extent

5. If relevant, provide an example of a digital challenge you encounter in your everyday working life.

Some of the participants who answered “to a great extent” in the above question stated:

- Effective communication with colleagues
- New apps that make your work in Social Media easier
- You have to keep up, it takes a lot of time
- Online sale
- Presentation of products in the e-catalogue, including photos
- Acquiring new digital skills, including social media
- Transfer of traditional sales to the network
- Communication of various entities in the supply chain
- Customer behavior analysis
- New programs, technological progress
- Making quick decisions in the execution of the order and sending photos and e-mail
- SEO strategies, Google Ads, Live commerce - learning and implementation
- QR code scanning
- new spaces of project communication, constant changes of settings on social media
- New programs for financial settlements
- New software
- Store your documents digitally instead of paper
- Using AI in graphic work
- New software, applications, tools, more competition
- Change of software, change of communicator
- Keeping up with the changing area of digital marketing
- E-mail management

6. Do you think that your everyday working life will further change as a result of digitalization?



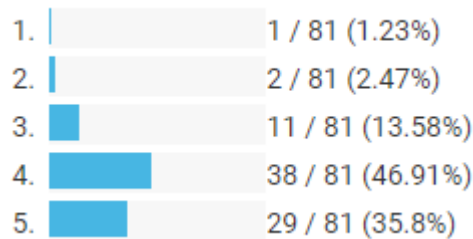
7. If yes, how?

As most of the participants answered “yes” in the above question they also stated:

- The way of communication will change
- It makes your work easier if you are well acquainted with technological innovations
- It's getting harder to be competitive
- New technologies open up new opportunities for the market, but no one can predict what consequences it will have for the employee. Expectations regarding qualifications will probably constantly increase, but I am afraid that this will not have an effect on earnings and thus the sense of security will be disturbed (keeping a job, stable financial situation)
- More time spent on the phone or doing more work remotely
- More online orders than in traditional stores
- Fewer stationary stores
- More remote work
- There will be more technological solutions
- It will make work easier, sales will increase, but I will also be sitting at the computer/phone more
- It shortens the time of access to information thanks to online training
- I still do not take advantage of many opportunities that digitization offers and I "stay" behind
- Digitalization affects every aspect of life, not just professional
- The form of communication, priorities and the way of performing tasks will change
- You will have to learn new things, acquire new skills
- The form of using services, choosing products, planning and implementing tasks (including private plans) will change

- Maybe there will be no need to hire people in the store anymore because everything will move online
- Everything will move online, almost every profession

8. How easy is it to reach customers by digital tools in comparison to reaching customers in a traditional way?



1. Much more difficult, 2. More difficult, 3. Same, 4. Easier, 5. Much easier

Chapter 4: e-retail work experience and work-based learning opportunities

According to the interviews:

1. The participants stated that new trainees already have digital skills, but in a medium to a good level and mostly on communication (e-mail etc.) and social media.
2. In the question “which digital competencies do they consider important/indispensable for a business to survive in the future retail sector” participants included their answers:
 - a. use of social media
 - b. basic computer skills

- c. know how to research online
 - d. they are more fluent in digital tools
 - e. online communication
3. Regarding the digital challenges in vocational training and how they are being handled, most of the interviewers answered:
- a. access to the internet;
 - b. access and availability of equipment
 - c. difficulties in predicting what new digital solutions will be predominant on the market
 - d. accessibility of digital tools for training
 - e. safety in networks
4. Most of the participants were not aware in which retail/commercial fields are further digital training courses offered, while a few answers included:
- a. social media marketing
 - b. e-commerce
 - c. logistics
 - d. digital marketing
5. In question “where do you perceive deficiency in VET related to digitalization in the retail sector and where is there potential for improvement” the interviewers stated:
- a. management of online platforms
 - b. practical implementation
 - c. more investment in training centre infrastructure

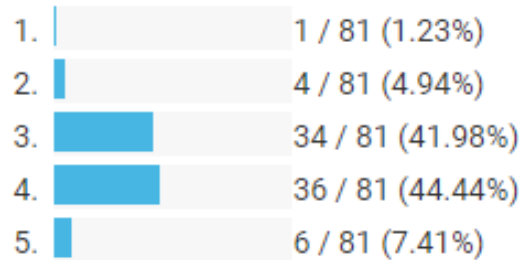
While improvements in the development of digital innovation in retail is suggested.

6. All participants agreed that digitalization has changed to a high extent the everyday working life in the retail sector.

7. Almost all participants stated that “social marketing”, “operation of e-shop” and “contactless/automated payments” are the most developing fields in the retail sector in the last 5 years.

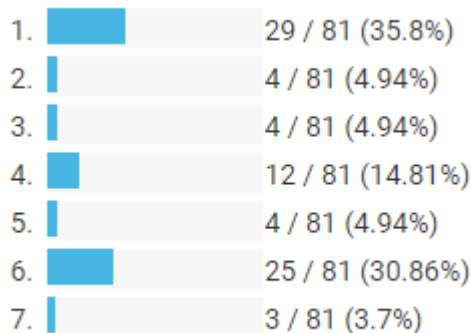
According to the survey on each question we gathered the results accordingly:

1. How do you rate your digital skills?



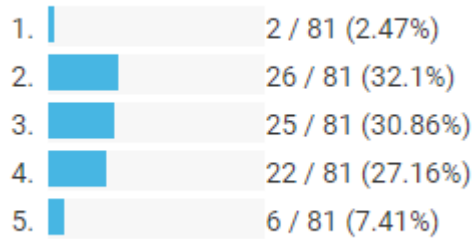
1. Poor, 2. Not good, 3. Moderate, 4. Good, 5. Excellent

2. How did you acquire your digital skills so far?



1. Self-learning (internet tutorials, handbooks...), 2. Training e-courses/ MOOCS, 3. Formal education, 4. Videos and video tutorials, 5. Case studies and scenario based learning, 6. Work-based learning, 7. Other

3. How familiar are you with digital content for your training?



1. Not at all familiar, 2. Slightly familiar, 3. Somewhat familiar, 4. Moderately familiar, 5. Extremely familiar

4. How often do you attend digital training courses offered?

Never	24 / 81 (29.63%)
Rarely	29 / 81 (35.8%)
Occasionally	21 / 81 (25.93%)
Frequently	4 / 81 (4.94%)
Very frequently	3 / 81 (3.7%)

5. If applicable, in which fields?

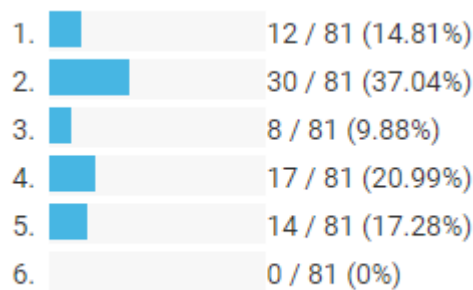
Some of the participants who answered “is applicable” in the above question stated into the following fields:

- E-commerce, internal communication in the company
- Mograms needed in marketing
- Office
- Management
- Automation in agriculture
- digital marketing
- Advertising on the Internet, setting up websites and online stores
- Digitization competences for SMEs
- E-marketing
- digital marketing
- google ads
- Computer graphics, internet marketing
- AI
- Facebook ads, editing texts online
- Coding

6. Would you like to train your digital skills for e-retail in the future?

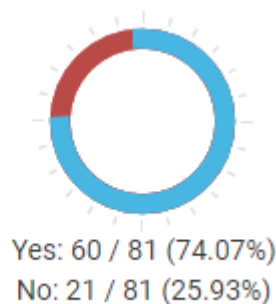
Definitely Not	2/81 (2.5%)
Probably Not	4/81 (4.9%)
Possibly	24/81 (29.6%)
Very Probably	25/81 (30.9%)
Definitely Yes	26/81 (32.1%)

7. In your opinion, which of the following is the most suitable way for enhancing your e-retail skills?

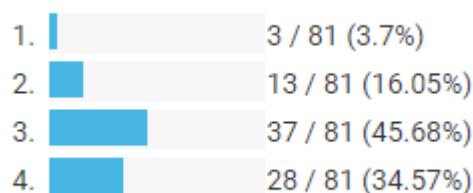


1. Self-learning (internet tutorials, handbooks...), 2. Training e-courses/ MOOCS, 3. Formal education, 4. Videos and video tutorials, 5. Case studies and scenario based learning, 6. Work-based learning, 7. Other

8. Do you perceive VET as an important tool to keep up with the digitalisation of the retail sector?



9. How do you rate your contribution to the success of the company?



1. None, 2. Low, 3. Moderate, 4. High

10. If relevant, provide an example of contribution to the success of the company. The respondents replied:

- Successfully completed projects
- Building a positive image of the company outside
- I achieve good sales results
- Import/export development
- Increasing sales and building a team
- Launching a new brand on the market
- Start and development by acquiring new customers, implementing innovations
- Building a stable, independent team
- I built the company from scratch and I'm still on the market
- I created the company myself. Despite many crises, it still works and brings profits
- Successfully fulfilling all duties, carrying out all projects with financial success

11. What added value do you derive from your job?

- Learning new skills - practice
- Satisfaction
- I develop communication and interpersonal/social competences
- I'm meeting new people
- Comfort due to the ease of performing tasks and the location of the company
- People
- networking
- Self-realization, self-education

- Work is very important to me. Thanks to my work, I fulfill myself as an enterprising, effective, independent woman
- Discounts on selected assortment
- Satisfaction from working with people
- Travels
- Motivation to learn new
- Confidence, experience, communication skills
- Motivation to expand my knowledge about the world
- Sense of security

12. Why did you choose a career in retail?

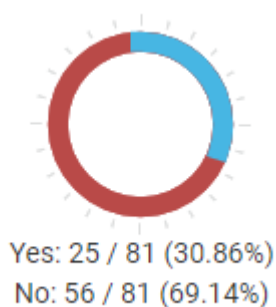
- family tradition
- Due to the completed studies, thanks to which I acquired the skills necessary in the work of a sales representative
- Interests
- I grabbed the bargains
- I like challenges
- Such was the possibility
- He easily connects with people
- Recommended
- Family business
- Due to lack of work experience
- Completed studies in this profession
- According to my education and ambitions
- Due to many years of experience
- Coincidence, soft skills, parents' profession
- I've always been interested in marketing, and it's a good sector to pursue my passions
- Because I believe that trade will always be important and there will always be work in it
- It offers the most jobs and development opportunities

13. What is your biggest concern about this job?

- Changing customer behavior
- Inflation
- One day we will be replaced by artificial intelligence, mobile applications and chatbots
- High competition
- Economic instability
- No customers
- Customer dissatisfaction and demands

- AI replacement
- Losing my job
- No stability
- Rising prices, fewer and fewer customers
- Uncertainty of the future - too much competition
- Geopolitical situation
- No professional development opportunities
- No time for private life
- Low salaries
- Economic crisis and lack of jobs
- High fees
- Fast changes, job instability
- The development of technology will exclude the human factor

14. Have you established networks with other rural businesses in your sector?



15. How are you networked with other companies in country areas from your sector?

- Organizing jointly, e.g. conferences
- Mutual sale and purchase of products
- Delivering the product to the customer in the shortest possible time
- Exchange of contacts
- Meetings
- Exchange of experience or completing orders to meet customer demand
- Sharing posts
- Training, workshops
- These are my suppliers
- I sell them services
- They are my suppliers
- These are my friends from whom I buy goods for the store
- Online/offline, cooperation agreements
- Implementing joint promotional campaigns

Conclusions

Chapter 1

Trainers and Staff

Concluding “Chapter 1: e-retail technologies and practices” and according to the trainers and staff, most of the participants stated that the sales coming from online channels and e-retail will increase, with more companies promoting their products over the internet and social media, improved e-commerce capabilities and fewer companies offering only in-person retail.

Regarding the digital tools considered important to survive in the future retail sector, the most important findings were, live commerce, digital marketing, artificial intelligence (AI) and 3D product models,

While their preference of the processes they would like to see in e-retail included, better customer services and updated websites, more offers to “capture” customer interest, to enable small, local businesses to take a competitive position in the marketplace through e-commerce, to provide incentives to build more e-shops and enriched content and search techniques on all sites.

Regarding the future of the e-retail sector, key findings were online stores will replace stationery stores, or they will only serve as pick-up points. E-retail will also be overall more automated. Participants noticed that we might see a shortening of the delivery chain, from wholesaler - intermediary - seller, to retail coming from the wholesaler point, making products cheaper for the consumer.

Retail workforce representatives

According to the retail workforce representatives, 90.12% was aware of the “e-retail” and 69.14% is already using digital tools, like AdWords, SEO, Google Analytics, digital marketing tools, social media, mobile applications.

Regarding the level of knowledge only 9.9% was extremely aware of digital marketing and 4.9% of “live commerce”, while 29.6% was not aware at all of the “augmented reality (AR)” and 18.5% of “artificial intelligence (AI)”.

23.5% use “digital marketing” very often but 44.4% never use “live commerce”. They also have never used AR - 65.4%, VR - 65.4%, AI - 60.5% and 3D product models - 59.3%.

According to their opinion 24.7% think that “Digital marketing” is *very important* and **38.3% important** of the technologies to be visible in the retail sector, while “augmented reality” with 11.1% the less important digital tool.

Finally, the steps they think needed to be taken to stimulate or accelerate the digital transformation of the retail sector are, (1) disseminate knowledge about the method of implementation, related costs and possible profits, (2) by providing free training for employees, but also educate customers, (3) public support, (4) training and public campaigns, (5) create free tools, share trial versions, (6) share know-how, (7) Incubators - testing for free at work.

Chapter 2

Trainers and Staff

Concluding “Chapter 2: e-retail soft skills” according to the trainers and staff, most of the participants stated that the most important soft skills for retail are acceptance of change and customer shift to online shopping, emotional intelligence, communication skills for better customer service, conflict management – the ability to resolve any customer dissatisfaction/complaints, flexibility and organizational skills. While adapting to new technologies, time management, flexibility and communication skills are included in the soft skills which are becoming more important for digital transformation.

Almost all the participants stated that digitalization changes soft skills to a high extent.

Almost all the participants stated that a company can improve the soft skills of its employees, with continuous training, seminars, and training programmes while empathy, active listening and communication skills are the ones which are missing in vocational training. While almost all participants agreed that training should be organised by a company, sometimes when training is fully funded by a company there might be a lack of active participation, a solution to that would be for an employee to partially fund this training, even if in a small fraction.

Regarding the question “to what extent is it important to continuously improve the soft skills of employees” all of the were very positive that it is very important, and they stated that encouragement and reward, adaptation to change, continuous training and development of digital skills are the key aspects to adaptation to changes.

Retail workforce representatives

According to the retail workforce representatives, 38.27% rated “good” and 19.75% “very good” their adaptability to changing work situations, pointing: **communication (64.2%), problem solving (51.9%) and stress management (51.9%) as the most important soft skills in the retail sector**, following by multi-tasking (42%) and flexibility (39.5%).

The surveyed acquired sufficiently soft skills such as: time management - 55.6% and stress management - 54.3%. They practice those skills by implementation and management of projects, organization of events, communication and negotiations with clients, staff training, getting involved in new initiatives. Well-developed time and stress management skills have an effect on the efficiency and quality of work, achieving good results and performing professional duties better.

Ability to learn quickly and cope with stress, time management, multitasking, communication skills, openness, flexibility, quick adaptation to changes, openness to new solutions, curiosity, continuous development, creativity are the soft skills which are important for the digital transformation.

According to 40.74% of the participants, **it is very important to separate the professional and private life**, while 70 out of 81 manage to separate their professional and private life (32.1% - in high extent, 54.32% - in moderate extent).

Almost half of the participants (40.74%) believe that digitalization negatively affects their work-life balance.

Chapter 3

Trainers and Staff

Concluding “Chapter 3: e-retail challenges” according to the trainers and staff, most of the participants stated that the main reason for digitalisation was the COVID-19 pandemic. However, continuing the trend, currently, the main steps that stimulate or accelerate the digital transformation of the retail sector are “training in digital technologies with state subsidies”, “funding for e-shop creation”, “outside investment in digital transformation” and “global digitalisation”.

Almost all interviewers stated that reaching customers with digital tools is the same as reaching them in the traditional way. They pointed out that while reaching customers is done equally right now, they already see a trend towards digital tools. They have also agreed that their everyday work life will change because of digitalization, while digitalization has already changed their daily work routine to a great extent.

All the participants stated that digital tools can support them (also agreed that already are supported and are part of their work) in their everyday work by increasing their efficiency, improving their organization, and helping them with online courses (whenever attending them or conducting) and online communication with clients.

Retail workforce representatives

50.62% and 16.05% of the participants stated that often and very often respectively face challenges in their professional life, with 33.33% to state that frequently digital tools pose challenges to them in a professional setting. 46.91% stated the digitalization changed their work routine in great extent.

Most of them (58.02%) also think that everyday working life will further the changes as a result of digitalization. The possible causes are:

changes in the way of communication, fewer stationary stores, more remote work, more technological solutions, the priorities and the way of performing tasks will change. New technologies open up new opportunities for the market, but no one can predict what consequences it will have for the employee. Expectations regarding qualifications will probably constantly increase, but this will not have an effect on earnings and thus the sense of security will be disturbed (keeping a job, stable financial situation).

Chapter 4

Trainers and Staff

Concluding “Chapter 4: e-retail work experience and work-based learning opportunities” according to the trainers and staff, most of the participants stated that new trainees already have digital skills, but in a medium to a good level and mostly on communication (e-mail etc.) and social media, while the most important digital competencies they consider for a business to survive in the future retail sector participants included answers like excellent computer skills, internet use, electronic mail, database management, digital marketing and asynchronous learning, collection and data analysis.

According to the interviewers, the digital challenges in vocational training are the “lack of access to internet and equipment”, and “lack of availability of digital tools for classes/training”. Participants pointed out that trainers and participants will have different levels and knowledge of digital tools - even the basic ones - which can cause problems, especially in online courses. Trainers also pointed out that it’s hard to predict when new technological solutions will be available and what market preferences and trends will be, making it hard to adjust training content.

Most of the participants were not aware of which retail/commercial fields are further digital training courses offered, while a few answers included social media marketing, e-commerce and e-marketing.

All participants agreed that digitalization has changed to a high extent of everyday working life in the retail sector.

Almost all participants stated that “social marketing” and “operation of e-shop” is the one the most developing field in the retail sector in the last 5 years.

Retail workforce representatives

According to the retail workforce representatives 44.44% rate themselves “good” in digital skills, while just (7.41%) with excellent rate.

The gained digital skills were gained mostly (35.8%) through self-learning and (30.86%) stated through work-based learning.

30.86% of the participants are quite familiar with the digital content for their training and 25.93% attend digital training courses offered occasionally in fields like e-commerce, internal communication in the company, digital marketing, digitalization competences for SMEs, e-marketing, google ads, computer graphics, AI, Facebook ads, coding.

30.9% and 32.1% stated that are keen and very keen respectively to enhance their digital skills for e-retail in the future, while in question “which are most suitable ways for enhancing them” 37.04% responded is by training e-courses/ MOOCS and 20.99% by videos tutorials.

74.07% of the participants stated that VET is an important tool to keep up with the digitalisation of the retail sector.