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Soft skills for governing new threats: training methods for LEAs in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation

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Nota autore

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Abstract

This paper aims to focus on the need to include new skills as soft skills that are useful for Law Enforcement Agencies in prevention and countering multiple forms of violent extremism. The change in the scenario of international threats that has been going on for some years now, makes soft skills an indispensable tool to manage increasingly complex social phenomena such as those of radicalization and extremism expressed in a more or less violent way.
Soft skills are then defined within the broader context of life – long learning education or lifelong learning, which therefore considers these skills to be acquired and improved continuously over the course of their personal and professional lives.

The added value of this proposal lies in wanting to present this approach from a methodological perspective, thus emphasizing the concrete methodological application that the Law Enforcement Agency – responsible for the management of radicalisation and extremism, can develop by taking advantage from its prevention and contrast activities.

**Keywords**

Soft skills, new threats, extremism, radicalisation, LEAs

1. **Introduction**

The past decade has shown core changes in many societies and their way of life throughout the world.

The worldwide scenario is reshaping the perceptions of both current and potential new threats on both a national and individual level: climate change; societal, political and economic instabilities in most parts of the world affecting the life of millions of people; natural crises; violent extremism and terrorist operations.

In particular, the rise of extremism in various forms, whether stemming from religious ideologies or from radical political convictions, has impacted the way risk and risk exposure is perceived as well as how this type of threat is interpreted.

As stated by Europol’s TE-SAT Report (2019):

Escalation of extreme right-wing sentiments across Europe resulted in increase of arrests.[…] In 2018, terrorism continued to constitute a major threat to security in EU Member States. Horrific attacks perpetrated by jihadists like those in Trèbes, Paris, Liège and Strasbourg killed a total of thirteen people and injured many more. In addition, one terrorist attack by a right-wing extremist in Italy and numerous arrests of suspected right-wing terrorists for attack-planning across the European Union (EU) indicate that extremists of diverging orientation increasingly consider violence as a justified means of confrontation.

Violent attitudes are the most important indicators of societal instability and extremist activities.

Furthermore, extremist actions at present seem to be increasingly flexible and less systematic. A crucial role, if we consider for instance the latest far–right attacks in Germany, has been played by low profile perpetrators, giving out weak signals for the general context.

This situation needs to be addressed by governments and law enforcement agencies with two actions, risk assessment and needs assessment, aimed at under-
standing the possible abilities, skills and competences needed to deal with new threats in a changing scenario.

Taking into account this new social and political landscape and its specific characteristics, as well as the threats assessment declared by scientific experts and authorities, soft skills have become the new abilities and competences needed for LEAs to work in this professional environment.

This paper focuses on the theoretical background of soft skills, placing them within the framework of lifelong learning education.

We also provide a focus on tailored methodologies to achieve the implementation of soft skills for LEAs, and a training proposal.

2. Theoretical Background

The concept of soft skills became important between 1968 and 1972, following the implementation by the US Army of the training program CON Reg 350-100-1, which espoused the soft-skill concept for the first time.

In particular, Whitmore\(^1\) cited the CON Reg 350-100-1 definition:

job-related skills involving actions affecting primarily people and paper, e.g., inspecting troops, supervising office personnel, conducting studies, preparing maintenance reports, preparing efficiency reports, designing bridge structures.

Further, this leading definition of the concept of soft skills is similar to that of resilience (Lucini, 2014)\(^2\), in that it acts as an umbrella concept or a buzzword that is multidimensional and context-sensitive.

Soft skills are specific competences that can be taught and learned: a focus on the role of competence for a successful life is supported by the studies developed by McClelland (1973).

[The author] attacks\(^3\) intelligence and aptitude tests (such as IQ and DAT) used to select future students and employees for two reasons:

- because they are class status biased (results are mostly related to elements such as propriety of speech depending by socioeconomic status, not to intelligence). Their use may be ethical for employers, but not in education
- because they predict well only success at school, but not superior job performance or more generic job success (the latter too in part related to socioeconomic status). Superior job performance is related not only to intelligence and

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traditional cognitive elements involving reading, writing and calculating skills, but also to personality variables, such as habits, values, leadership, interpersonal skills.

Interpersonal skills are affected by the characteristics of the environment and social setting where that particular personality develops, becoming the result of the interaction between behaviours and context. This approach is supported by the studies conducted by Mischel (1968; 1973) about the importance of the relationship between individuals and situations.

The role played by context is also essential for the skills model proposed by Boyatzis (2009), as context plays a vital role in the tripartition of the Model For Effective Performance. In particular, the three key elements are: individual skills, job requirements and the working environment.

The most effective and competent result is the Best Fit, which is when there are no discrepancies between what the subject is able to accomplish, what is required by the job and the expectations coming from the work environment.

Because of their context-sensitive nature, soft skills are competences which can be applied to many different settings and aspects of life. Stone and Dillehunt (1978), for instance, focused on Self Science and recognising the crucial role played by emotions as they influence interpersonal relationships.

As we consider the impact of context on the development of soft skills, we can confirm their relevance within both professional and personal domains.

Specifically, soft skills are relevant to all professional activities and social relations and [they] can also be called “applied” skills or “21st-century skills.”

21st Century skills are the following:
1. Critical thinking
2. Creativity
3. Collaboration
4. Communication
5. Information literacy
6. Media literacy
7. Technology literacy
8. Flexibility
9. Leadership
10. Initiative
11. Productivity
12. Social skills

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1 Gewertz, C. (2007), Soft skills in big demand: Interest in teaching students habits of mind for success in life is on the rise, Education Week, 26(40), USA.

2 https://www.aeseducation.com/career-readiness/what-are-21st-century-skills.
The soft skills listed above belong to various frameworks and settings and are focused on three main theoretical and methodological orientations:

1. an implementation of soft skills within a business model
2. the psychological perspective on soft skills
3. the societal aspects of soft skills and sociological perspective

The first approach focuses on skills and competences needed in a common workplace (Robles, 2012; ChangeWorks, 2006).

Specifically, Robles (2012) defined soft skills as follows:

Soft skills are character traits, attitudes, and behaviors—rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Soft skills are the intangible, non-technical, personality-specific skills that determine one's strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator. Soft skills are character traits that enhance a person's interactions, job performance, and career prospects (Parsons, 2008). The greatest feature of soft skills is that the application of these skills is not limited to one's profession. Soft skills are continually developed through practical application during one's approach toward everyday life and the workplace (Arkansas Department of Education, 2007; Magazine, 2003). Unlike hard skills, which are about a person's skill set and ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable (Parsons, 2008).

Furthermore, Robles (2012) proposed a systematization of ten soft skills needed for a general workplace as listed in the table below. These soft skills were found as a result of a study he carried out with business executives (2012).

Figure 1 - Ten soft skills attributes categorized from executive listings

- Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
- Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable
- Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what’s right
- Interpersonal Skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills
- Positive Attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident
- Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised
- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
- Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative
- Work Ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

Source: Robles (2012)⁶

This more general approach is supported by a theoretical perspective provided by many authors, such as Klaus (2010), Maes, Weldy, & Icenogel (1997), Mitchell et al., (2010), Nealy (2005) and Smith (2007): all of them, at different levels, studying the most valuable skills needed to work in various types of workplace.

In consonance with this more general perspective, a relevant study and systematization of soft skills was proposed by Kerr (2019), who listed 10 soft skills into categories and their own sub-categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem solving:</th>
<th>Communication:</th>
<th>Teamwork:</th>
<th>Adaptability:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity:</th>
<th>Work Ethic:</th>
<th>Interpersonal Skills:</th>
<th>Time Management:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Divergent thinking</td>
<td>1. Integrity</td>
<td>1. Empathy</td>
<td>1. Goal setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership:</th>
<th>Attention to detail:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Project Management</td>
<td>1. Critical observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Empathy</td>
<td>2. Listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Selflessness</td>
<td>3. Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agility</td>
<td>4. Scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Listening</td>
<td>5. Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Humility</td>
<td>6. Introspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cultural intelligence</td>
<td>7. Memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Authenticity</td>
<td>8. Acuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Generosity</td>
<td>10. Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ten categories identified by Kerr (2019) allow us to place different types of soft skills within different societal and organisational settings as well as theoretical domains.

The second approach emerges from a psychological perspective, where soft skills are associated for the most part to concepts of intelligence.

Specifically, important contributions derive from the psychological perspective: one of them stresses the importance of multiple intelligences (Gardiner, 1983).

The author states that the concept of intelligence can be identified according to the following eight criteria:

1. potential for brain isolation by brain damage
2. place in evolutionary history
3. presence of core operations
4. susceptibility to encoding (symbolic expression)
5. a distinct developmental progression
6. the existence of savants, prodigies and other exceptional people
7. support from experimental psychology
8. support from psychometric findings

In accordance with these criteria, Gardner (1983) selected eight abilities such as:

1. musical-rhythmic,
2. visual-spatial,
3. verbal-linguistic,
4. logical-mathematical,
5. bodily-kinesthetic,
6. interpersonal,
7. intrapersonal,
8. naturalistic

Further, Gardner (2009) suggested including existential and moral intelligences in the previous list, starting from an epistemological perspective of psychology.

Gardner also maintained the need to consider emotions as the core element for additional reflections on the development of soft skills with a psychological approach.

In particular, emotions are the interpretation keys or lenses for interpretation for the application of soft skills in social science domains.

In the framework of psychology, the perspective of emotional and social intelligence offered by Goleman (2000; 2007) emphasises the key role played by emotional competences and interpersonal abilities.

Wheeler (2016) also defines emotional intelligence:
emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, and influence.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence can be identified in light of the definition provided by Goleman in Wheeler (2016):

Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence, breaks down emotional intelligence skills into five basic parts: self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Specifically, emotional intelligence means the ability to be aware of one’s own emotions as well as those of others, so that this knowledge can allow effective and appropriate behaviours in the personal, professional and social sphere, bringing out self-efficacy (Goleman, 2000; 2007).

These competences and skills combined with those arising from the societal domain (such as communication and inter-personal abilities) lead to the identification of social intelligence, where the characteristic element is the emotional synchronicity and its value in inter-personal relationships.

The third theoretical contribution emerges from the sociology of emotions, which is a cross-over and context-sensitive topic because of the emotions’ own quality of being drivers of social interactions.

Sociology of emotions has been recognised as a systematic discipline since 1975, as stated by Iaugulli (2009).\textsuperscript{8}

Particularly, the author (2009) identified three major functions of emotions, which make human interactions possible: promoting interactions, recognizing culture and developing social structures.

The author also focused on the role played by contexts, cultural environments and settings in the development of emotions and emotional intelligence.

This last theoretical orientation lead to the policy framework under which soft skills are placed.

3. Framing Soft Skills: Lifelong Learning Education

As stated in the theoretical explanation above, soft skills have social dimensions and a context-sensitive nature that needs to be understood within


the policy framework of lifelong learning education (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010; Kokkos, 2005; Purdue, 2002).

Furthermore, soft skills can be learnt and taught, making them a key qualification for improving socialisation and its related abilities and competences.

The theoretical background (Rogers, 1999) for this policy orientation can be identified considering two main approaches:

1. the andragogy theory
2. the constructivist orientation

The first one – andragogy – benefits from the studies developed by Knowles (1990), who, as cited in Massinger and Wood (2016), provided the following definition:

The labeling of andragogy and pedagogy has been debated in education for decades. However, two of Knowles [sic] (1990) assumptions may arguably benefit the law enforcement officer’s educational experience (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005; Whitby, 2013).

First, Knowles’ [sic] contends that the adult learner has a different experience in learning. Second he surmises that the adult learner has a different orientation to learning.

When combining these two assumptions it can be argued that adults develop a foundation of learning that they seek to use for problem solving purposes that relate to their profession (1990; 2005; 2013). Problem solving is a fundamental tool in a law enforcement officer’s profession.

Knowles stressed the role played by the frame of lifelong learning education and the different ways adults learn:

When combining these two assumptions it can be argued that adults develop a foundation of learning that they seek to use for problem solving purposes that relate to their profession (1990; 2005; 2013). Problem solving is a fundamental tool in a law enforcement officer’s profession.” and “Knowles opined that adult education should be less focused on studying the materials and more focused on problem solving skills (Knowles, Swanson, & Holton, 2005). Knowles [sic] theory of andragogy teaches adults to be self-directed. Instead of focusing on the “how”, which is the traditional paramilitary approach of law enforcement, the theory of andragogy focuses on the “why”. (Vodde, 2009).

The constructivist approach (Hundersmark, 2009) provides efficient methods for LEAs and police officers training to tackle radicalisation and extremist processes, because its methods are specifically tailored for adult learning and its setting as cited in Massinger and Wood (2016):

According to this approach, the student learns primarily through peer collaboration and problem based [sic] instruction. Learning is focused on the
dynamic culture of the classroom so that students become accustomed to collaboration regardless of their cultural differences. This role play and collective problem-solving better prepares the law enforcement student as a cross-cultural leader upon their graduation from the academy. This type of education should continue annually throughout an officer’s career.

The policy orientation combined with a lifelong learning education approach takes advantage from the analysis and developments provided by the “Delors Commission” - UNESCO International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century held in 1996.

The Commission identified four pillars\(^9\) of learning that need to be implemented and maintained throughout life:

1. learning to know (essentially school-based learning);
2. learning to do (learning related to work and vocational skills);
3. learning to be (learning that relates to personal development and creativity);
4. learning to live together (learning that relates to social cohesion and participation in communities) (Delors et al., 1996).

These concepts also require specific attention to the cultural context and the societal and organisational settings where this perspective is to be implemented.

The connection between previous theoretical approaches and policy orientation is the methodological design specifically developed for LEAs and their organisations aimed at tackling radicalization and extremist processes.

Some relevant methodological suggestions are provided within the TIME project partnership (2016)\(^10\), focused on two core elements\(^11\):

1. participatory teaching methods which promote the importance of active participation of trainees in the learning experience
2. learning approach and theories to better understand the framework for development of soft skills, as cited in Robles (2012):

   Boyce, Williams, Kelly, and Yee (2001) use a learning theory framework to support the use of case studies as an instructional method to capture various learning styles and, therefore, develop soft skills.

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\(^9\) A table with these four areas and their sub-categories can be found in Annex A.


4. Developing soft skills: Methods for Training

In the framework of LEAs tackling radicalization and extremist processes, social intelligence (Goleman, 2007) is needed to:

- organize teamwork and the related capacities
- negotiate conflict solutions
- develop fruitful inter-personal relations
- critically analyse social contexts
- implement inter-personal communication (Ceniceros, 2003)

This vision perfectly combines with the need to develop New/Soft Skills for LEAs to tackle radicalisation and violent extremisms.

As previously identified, soft skills are linked to an adaptive and proactive setting (Wheeler, 2016; McDermott, 2012) and can be defined as:

[...] the skills that allow you to use your technical abilities and knowledge effectively in the workplace. They include personal, social, communication, and self-management behaviors. (Wheeler, 2016)

In order to make the application of soft skills and their orientation within LEAs organisations possible, it is worthwhile to consider the contribution by Robles (2012) who distinguishes three essential attributes of soft skills:

1. soft skills are intangible: perception, especially the perception of emotions, plays a crucial role in managing societial relationships and social phenomena such as radicalisation and extremism
2. soft skills are continually developed, which means that soft skills require lifelong learning education
3. soft skills are not applicable to one profession alone, rather they can be applied to a wide range of professions

In line with this perspective, Roufa (2019) points out that the soft skills necessary in a LEA organisation are as follows:

1. Empathy
2. Compassion
3. Nonverbal Communication
4. Active Listening
5. Adaptability
6. Building Trust
7. Critical Thinking and Observation
8. Conflict Resolution
9. Work-Life Balance
Looking at the training (Khalid et al., 2014; Ellis et al, 2014; Gewertz, 2007) and practical application (Gibb, 2013) of this approach, Pittaro (2018) explains that:

Soft skills are proving to be the difference between positive and negative encounters, especially when empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution are embraced. Soft skills are not intended to replace or mitigate the value of hard skills, but rather to enhance and improve the quality and performance of our job responsibilities and duties. They provide the balance that we want to see in our criminal justice professionals.

An example of potential training model and methods for LEAs is the experiment by Chattopadhyay et al. (2012; 2014) with the Rajastan Police.

The model focuses on the importance of stress management, conflict management and situational awareness. The results are bivalent: on the one hand their interventions were efficient and had good feedback, on the other two interventions failed due to the lack of active engagement from local communities.

Methodologically speaking, LEAs training in soft skills to improve their competences and abilities in tackling radicalization and extremism phenomena can benefit from the work proposed by Breci (1994), which stresses the potential of soft skills in terms of improving social and inter-personal interactions. Citing Massinger and Wood (2016):

Law enforcements’ interactions with the community illustrate the need for interpersonal skills training in academies and professional development opportunities. Training police officers to have strong interpersonal communication skills can assist in managing their own emotions as well as handling those encounters with the general public exhibiting anger and hostility. Effective communication skills will enable law enforcement to develop a solid rapport with the community. Police academies need an effective structure for teaching essential interpersonal skills (McDermott & Hulse, 2012).

From an operative and methodological perspective soft skills can be strengthened, according to Robles (2012):

Soft skills can be included into the curriculum easily by spreading the content throughout the semester (Evenson, 1999):

1. Introduce students to basic people skills so they understand how to get along with people.
2. Segue to teaching essential customer service skills.
3. Foster student understanding by facilitating a problem-solving discussion based on real-life situations.
4. Have students demonstrate the people skills they have learned using role-play exercises in a mock business setting.
These methodological recommendations need to be combined with 10 methodological design suggestions to develop training activities with LEAs:

Table 1 - Methodological Design Suggestions

10 Methodological Design Suggestions for training activities implementing soft skills

1. Knowledge of the soft skills that need to be implemented and/or strengthened. This is worthwhile according to the principles emerged in the previous analysis of the need for knowledge-based activities
2. Knowledge of the organisations and their functions, roles and activities where the soft skills need to be implemented
3. Clearly state the goal and objectives of the implementation activities
4. Give time framing to develop the required activities
5. Previous understanding of target audience and trainee’s profiles and attitudes
6. Give specific points to be addressed
7. Use various learning methods
8. Stress the attention to interaction and group dynamics
9. Provide a tool to report the activities, allowing for a potential assessment
10 Compare the method with similar experiences that have taken place in different organisational settings

The criteria to develop efficient and productive methodological designs are:

1. the purpose of the activity
2. the setting (especially relational milieu)
3. available time
4. preferred method according to goal, trainee profile and contents
5. trainee profile and their role within their organisation and institution
6. resources
7. logistics

Training methods to implement soft skills for LEAs needs to consider the following core values, which are important to include in the design of training activities for LEAs:
- comfortable setting
- collaboration
- respect
- openness
- active participation

Methods for adult learning experiences can vary depending on the goals, participant characteristics and whether the training activities are aimed at different stages of radicalization and violent extremism management, such as detection, prevention or countering.
Specifically, TIME project partnership (2016) puts forward three main methods as follow:

a) *methods of presentation* (fast and comprehensive provision of information – difficulty to bring into action critical thinking of learners and relevance of teaching objects with other content or knowledge – danger for passive learners),

b) *instruction methods* (the trainer organizes learning providing activity guided towards achieving a set of prescribed objectives – cultivation of reflection and critical thinking),

c) *discovery methods* (helping learners to follow a process of intellectual and mental exploration – security – practical training – transfer of learning – not promoting communication and social relations).

Furthermore, training methods that are useful in developing and implementing soft skills for LEAs can be recognized within the methodological framework developed for adult learning by TIME project partnership (2016):

1. *Enriched presentation* in accordance with the following suggestions by TIME project partnership (2016):

   - Excellent preparation and knowledge of the subject on behalf of the trainer
   - Presentation objectives to be announced at the beginning and be related to the learners’ needs
   - Starting pleasantly surprising students in a way that attracts their attention
   - Brevity
   - Clearly speaking with definite messages, using carefully non-verbal communication and the technique of diaphragmatic breathing
   - Use of humor and a lot of examples
   - Use of supportive audiovisual material
   - Observe and actively analyze nonverbal communication of learners (if they are interested, if they are watching etc.)
   - Showing confidence and interest in the subject
   - Avoiding jargon and having suitable appearance according to the group of trainees
   - Maintaining eye contact with the group of trainees
   - Asking feedback from trainees

   This technique is especially useful for enhancing an equal knowledge-based approach to the same topic.

2. *Questions & answers – discussion*: as per TIME project partnership (2016), this technique enables debates and discussions on specific topics.

   The main advantage is the collaboration among participants, while the disadvantages are the need for all participants to have previous knowledge of the topics they are discussing.
3. **Brainstorming**: as stated in TIME project partnership (2016).

   It is a highly participatory technique, promoting the involvement of learners in the learning process, helping the development of intimacy, cooperation, and contributing to the improvement of the learning climate. Among its advantages are also: the exploitation of the experience and creativity of learners, the development of free expression, critical thinking and cooperation, as well as the examination of issues from new perspectives leading to the transformation of certain stereotypical beliefs. Disadvantages of this technique are that some learners may not participate and the whole activity can be turned to become a show of imagination rather than a creative expression.

4. **Working in groups**: as stated in TIME project partnership (2016).

   In this technique learners are divided into subgroups (3-5 persons) in order to do some exercise or discuss a topic. Each subgroup announces its findings to the plenary and the trainer coordinates a discussion among subgroups. The implementation of this technique concludes with the trainer's synthesis, comments and connection with training objectives. This technique is the most mature way to develop self-awareness, critical thinking and an effective approach to an object.”

   Adding to the working group method, it is worthwhile to mention the World Cafe Method[^1], which draws on seven integrated design principles:

   1) Set the Context
   2) Create Hospitable Space
   3) Explore Questions that Matter
   4) Encourage Everyone’s Contribution
   5) Connect Diverse Perspectives
   6) Listen together for Patterns and Insights
   7) Share Collective Discoveries

   All working group methods and techniques need an analysis of the purpose, participants profile and resources.

5. **Case studies**: as stated in TIME project partnership (2016). For case studies to be successful:

   - The scenario should be realistic, preferably real and serve educational goals
   - Information or data must be clear, sufficient, comprehensive and in logical order
   - The case should be complex requiring extensive study and effort
   - Unnecessary data or data that might create confusion should be avoided

[^1]: [http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method](http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method)
The scenario should raise debates or disagreements when it is being analyzed at the plenary.

- Enough time for study and discussion should be provided.

One particular example of participatory case study is the visual elicitation method\(^\text{13}\), as it brings out two competences: self-awareness and situational awareness. This method can be implemented both directly – participants take a picture or make a short movie or other related visual outputs – or indirectly – participants are solicited to debate and discuss starting from visual materials.

6. **Role playing:** as stated in TIME project partnership (2016):

   Role playing provides learners with the opportunity to act and experience real situations in a protected learning environment in which testing, mistakes and practice are permitted. Through feedback from trainees and the trainer it is possible for learners to improve and develop desired behaviors. […]

   Role playing is implemented in the following stages: a) scenario creation from the instructor, b) preparation of the trainee group, c) selection of “actors”, d) preparation of “actors”, e) preparation of observers, f) role playing g) derolling, h) discussion and comments in plenary.

7. **Interviewing specialists:** as stated in TIME project partnership (2016):

   Its implementation is divided into three stages: preparation, implementation and finally interpretation and composition. In this way: a) trainees actively participate in forming the content of education and the acquisition of specific knowledge, b) they cover directly their individual or group training needs, c) their self-directed learning skills grow, d) they develop analytical and critical thinking e) they develop active listening and observation skills.

   These training and technical methods are useful and effective for implementing soft skills in LEA staff in multiple areas: personal, professional, organizational, institutional.

   In particular, soft skills are essential for LEAs, which aim to prevent and counter radicalisation and all forms of violent extremism.

   Specifically, soft skills allow LEAs to:

8. manage one’s own prejudices and stereotypes as communities with other cultures may be involved in radicalisation and extremism

9. implement professional resilience (Lucini, 2014) as a specific skill and expertise and as a social skill – proactive

10. exercise social intelligence to organize groups, such as team building activities – social intelligence

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\(^{13}\) http://www.resilienceresearch.org/resources/tools/visual-elicitation-methods.
11. exercise digital awareness or understand the digital environment and its characteristics
12. exercise specific knowledge-base
13. exercise situational awareness

Therefore, systematising the knowledge and methodologies to increase the soft skills of LEAs in relation to social phenomena such as radicalisation and violent extremism is a continuous research and training orientation.

5. Conclusion

The concept of soft skills has received criticism mainly from a theoretical perspective. In particular, Godin (2017) suggests talking about Vocational Skills, instead of “hard skills”, because they are dependent on individual study activities and therefore influenced by the dynamics of learning, and replace “soft skills” with Real Skills, because the latter represent the professional needs of the current world market.

Despite the criticisms that emerged from a theoretical perspective, the methodological proposal through the practical implementation of the ten suggestions listed above is aimed at supporting the educational importance of the concept of soft skills, within LEAs and their Organizations.

As anticipated this is essential to better respond to the needs of the continuously and rapidly changing global environment and the specific characteristics of social phenomena such as radicalisation and violent extremism.

Implementing soft skills for LEAs, and using the most efficient training methods, is essential for LEAs to tackle radicalisation and extremism processes, especially for the following needs:

- to strengthen collaboration and inter-agency approaches, especially between agencies based in different countries
- to increase awareness of the diverse functions and roles played by the same officer or when this is not happening within other agencies and international organisations
- to enhance professional, cultural and inter-personal resilience (Lucini, 2014; 2017)
- to increase cultural knowledge of societal groups or communities that are potentially involved in radicalisation and extremism phenomena
- to increase situational awareness in order to better understand the context-sensitive nature of the phenomena being addressed
- to increase organisational, legal, and inter-agency activities and social milieu where the main working activities take place
Finally, what was studied and analysed in this context therefore merits further investigation and research following the methodological and training guidelines indicated.

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Annex A – Four-dimensional framework for lifelong learning in Europe and socioeconomic outcomes of learning

La Rivista semestrale *Sicurezza, Terrorismo e Società* intende la *Sicurezza* come una condizione che risulta dallo stabilizzarsi e dal mantenersi di misure proattive capaci di promuovere il benessere e la qualità della vita dei cittadini e la vitalità democratica delle istituzioni; affronta il fenomeno del *Terrorismo* come un processo complesso, di lungo periodo, che affonda le sue radici nelle dimensioni culturale, religiosa, politica ed economica che caratterizzano i sistemi sociali; propone alla *Società* – quella degli studiosi e degli operatori e quella ampia di cittadini e istituzioni – strumenti di comprensione, analisi e scenari di tali fenomeni e indirizzi di gestione delle crisi.

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