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SKILLS4WATER



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FINAL PROJECT CONFERENCE REPORT

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Meaning
ACEEU	Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities
CBHE	Capacity Building in Higher Education
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
H2O-People B.V.	Personal development organisation
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IPS	Interpersonal skills
LA	Learning activities
LLL	Lifelong learning
MOOC	Massive online open courses
PES	Personal skills
SG	Serious games
SIS	Situational skills
SOS	Soft skills
UCA	University of Cádiz
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UGAL	“Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati
UNI	University of Niš
VR	Virtual reality
WP	Work Package
WRM	Water Resources Management





Executive Summary

The main objectives of Work Package 5 are to mainstream the results of the Skills4water project and to identify mechanisms to foster the self-sustainability and valorisation of the project's results beyond the funding period. Among the specific objectives, O5.4 aimed at organizing a final project conference to disseminate the project results and engage potential users of the results obtained. The conference targeted young water professionals and students, industry experts and practitioners, academics and researchers, policymakers and regulators, and businesses and investors. The aim of the conference was to collect the participations of experts in the frame of the SKILLS4Water project. These contributions will present diverse views on how to build a more sustainable and resilient water future in Europe.



1. Introduction

The main objectives of Work Package 5 (WP5) are to mainstream the results of the Skills4water project and to identify mechanisms to foster the self-sustainability and valorisation of the project's results beyond the funding period. To achieve these, WP5 includes four specific objectives:

O5.1. To develop and implement a comprehensive outreach and engagement strategy that identifies the needs and preferences of the stakeholders and generate value for the relevant internal and external target groups of the project.

O5.2. To set the communication and dissemination channels, as well as to establish a permanent update on the advancements, developments and results of the project, aiming at leveraging existing communication channels and networks to raise awareness about SKILLS4Water and its objectives.

O5.3. To set a sustainability strategy that collects the vision developed by the partners on how to sustain and expand the impacts of the project after the funding period.

O5.4. To disseminate the project results and engage the potential users of the results of the project in a final project conference to reach young water professionals and students, industry experts and practitioners, academics and researchers, policymakers and regulators, and businesses and investors.

This report presents results from O5.4, in which stakeholders were brought together in a series of activities aimed at socializing the results of the project, and envisioning the future of SKILLS4Water. Results are key for closing the project with a clear view on future developments. With these results, the consortium will be ready for enhancing the collaborations based on the data, views, recommendations and enhanced network developed in WP5.

2. Final conference

The Skills4water final conference was structured in two days. During the first day, June 24, 2025, a partners meeting was held at the premises of the University of Cádiz (UCA) to discuss the project's progress and KPIs. The second day, June 25, 2025, hosted the *1 International Conference on Soft Skills for Water*, organized by UCA with the contribution of all partners.

2.1 Partners meeting

The meeting was structured in two main blocks, namely, the presentation of Work Packages and KPIs and the project's sustainability and future plans.

- *WP1 – Project Management* was presented by UGAL. This included the project's financial status and upcoming deadlines, as well as the objectives and action plans for the project's sustainability.
- *WP2 – Needs Assessment and Framework Development*. UGAL showed a reminder of the WP activities and KPIs, that had been fully accomplished during 2024 following the project's chronogram.
- *WP3 – Institutional Capacity Building for Curriculum Integration and Development*. UCA briefly presented the accomplished tasks and KPIs and mainly focused on the ongoing ones. All tasks are expected to be finalized on time.
- *WP4 – Innovative Training Programme Development and Implementation*. H2O People presented an outline of the WP objectives and KPI's, all of which have been fully accomplished. All tasks have been done, and final reports are ongoing.

2.2 International Conference on Soft Skills for Water

The final conference (<https://skills4water.eu/news/event-international-conference-on-skills4water/>) aimed at bringing together more than 30 stakeholders among young water professionals and students, industry experts and practitioners, academics and researchers, policymakers and regulators, businesses and investors together with the consortium partners. For this purpose, several activities were carried out (<https://skills4water.eu/news/programme-skills4water-final-conference-i-international-conference-on-soft-skills-for-water/>). Full details can be seen in the **Conference Proceedings** (published with ISBN number 978-84-09-74936-2):

- The **opening session** was performed by the General Director for International Degrees and

Lifelong Learning (Vice-Rectorate of Degrees and Quality, UCA). Her talk addressed the importance of soft skills within the marine and aquatic sciences research and education and how the University of Cádiz is incorporating them as part of its lifelong learning strategy. Among others, the strategy includes the creation of microcredentials on communication and career success or the incorporation of soft skills training within the UCA's doctorate programs. The main challenge highlighted was to ensure a continuous alignment between training programs and industry needs due to the fast evolving marine and aquatic sectors. The debate that followed was focused on how the Skills4water project development and sustainability plan can indeed contribute to the UCA's objectives for the future.

- The next talk, led by the **Skills4water project's** leaders, UGAL, presented the project to the audience. This included the **aim, objectives, key activities, and main results and achievements**.
- The project's introduction was followed by the **keynote presentation "Needs for soft skills"**, by Naomi Timmer (H2O People), who explained what soft skills are, the Skills4water approach on soft skills training or how soft skills form the foundation of our society, our work, our environment, and our human potential (more details in the Conference Proceedings).
- The following activity consisted of a **consortium round table** in which the Skills4water achievements were deliberated by the project's partners (more details in the Conference Proceedings).
- The main part of the conference was dedicated to the **participants' presentations**, chaired by the organizing partner, UCA. A total of six doctoral students participated, four of them from the UCA, one from the University of Açores (Portugal) and one from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Barcelona, Spain). Following the presentations guidelines (<https://skills4water.eu/uncategorized/final-conference-project-guidelines/>), the students presented the most essential soft skills for their career success and advancement and the way they actively developed or implemented new soft skills throughout their career. All the presentations induced long debates with the public, jointly reflecting on which soft skills are key for students entering the professional world nowadays and in the coming years.
- The unexpected engagement of the public (mostly professors and doctorate students, but also some non-academic professionals) during and after the students' presentations led to the shortening of the **Workshop on Networking: "The Skill on**

Connection". The workshop was run by H2O People, who offered all the stakeholders present in the conference. A hand-on experience on developing skills on *networking*, which is considered one of the most essential soft skills for water professionals (more details in the Conference Proceedings).

- The afternoon sessions commenced with a **stakeholder round table** dedicated to debate on soft skills importance and implementation. It was moderated by H2O People and included four speakers: a representative of the Faculty of Marine and Environmental Sciences Dean's Office (UCA), a professor and a student from the same faculty, and a representative from the non-academic water sector (more details in the **Conference Proceedings**).
- Finally, the **conference closing ceremony** included the delivery of awards to the most outstanding presentations given by students. The awards were granted by the UCA through another project ("Aplicación práctica de los resultados obtenidos en el proyecto SEA-EU DOC") that also participated in the Skills4water final conference.

3. Discussion and conclusions

The partners' meeting was open to the public and it managed to attract the presence of 14 stakeholders, mostly among UCA professors interested in the Skills4water project. The *International Conference on Soft Skills for Water*, however, attracted a large number (35) of stakeholders, including UCA professors and doctorate students, a doctorate student from the University of Açores (Portugal), a doctorate student from the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Barcelona, Spain), researchers from other universities (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), research centers (Spanish Institute of Oceanography – IEO-CSIC, Aquaculture Technology Centre – CTAQUA) and policymakers (Demarcation of State Coasts in the Basque Country – Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge).

The debates carried out during and after the students' presentations, during the Workshop on Networking and after the round table indicated that all the sectors present during the conference (academic, research, policymakers) are aware of the importance of soft skills training to ensure the career success of young water professionals. Furthermore, there was a consensus on the need to continuously align the training programs with the evolving industry needs.



Finally, the debates highlighted that the Skills4water project development and sustainability plan is aligned with the UCA's aims and objectives to integrate soft skills training within the curricula as part of the continuous education, therefore presenting a great opportunity to sustain the project by contributing to the UCA's own objectives.

