

MODULE 5 • TRAINER PRESENTATION

Problem Solving

Define it, break it down, ask, decide, learn: practical problem solving for work and daily life in a new country.

About 3 hours

3 units

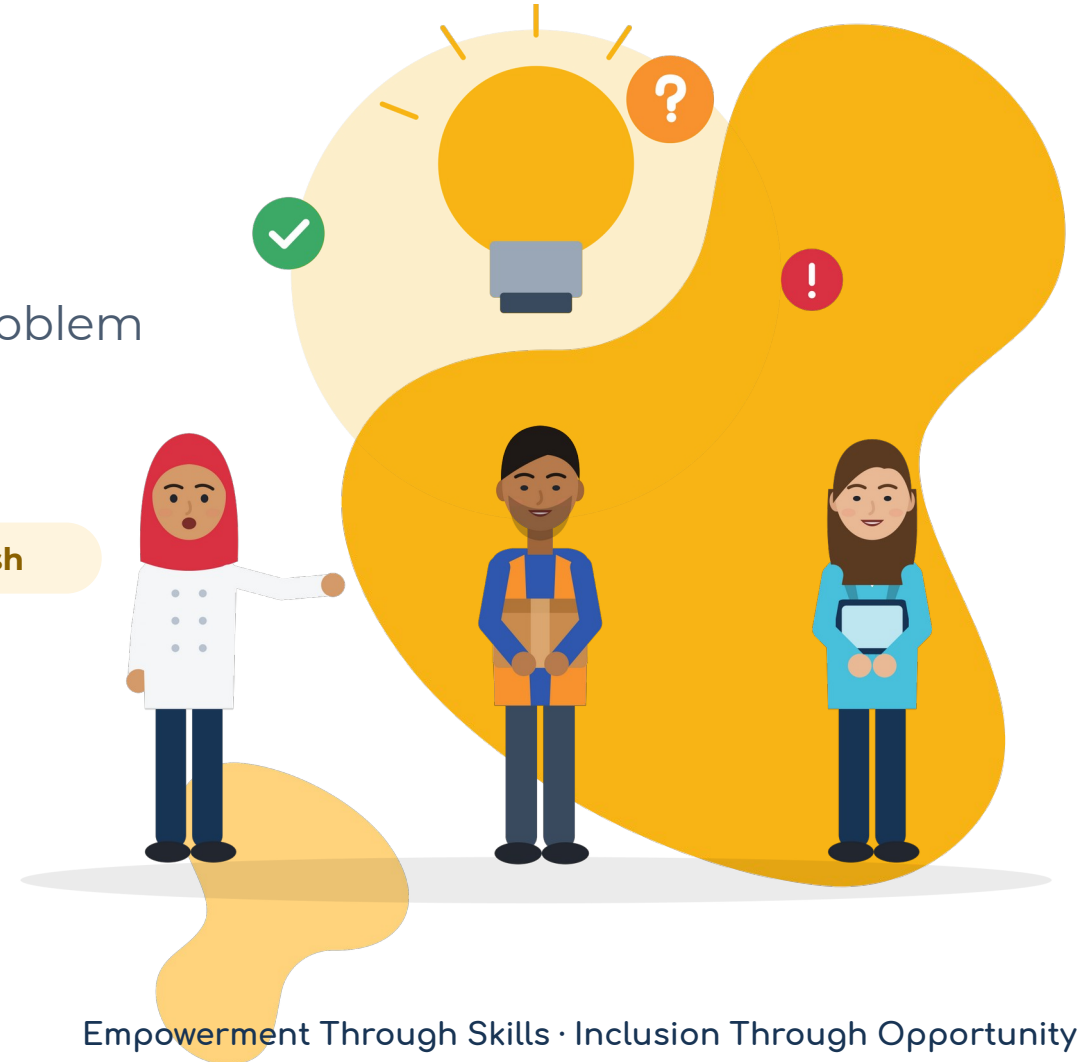
Ages 18-30

B1-B2 English

SMILE

Support Young Migrants Integration in the Labour market
in Europe

Erasmus+ KA220-YOU · 2024-1-TR01-KA220-YOU-000256357



Empowerment Through Skills · Inclusion Through Opportunity

HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

Our agreement for this module



Any English is good English

We listen to ideas, not grammar. Nobody corrects your language here. Mix words from other languages if it helps.



Your story belongs to you

You never have to share your migration story. Our examples use invented characters.



Listen to understand

One voice at a time. Every question is a good question.



“Pass” is always OK

You can skip any activity or question. Take a break when you need one.

MODULE MAP

Three units, from first step to real practice

01

Unit 1: Understanding problem solving

Taking the first step: what problem solving is, the steps, skills, attitudes and myths. Reflection activity.

≈ 50 min

02

Unit 2: Problem solving in the reality of young migrants

Unclear instructions, culture, stress, language, power and rights, information. Case studies.

≈ 50 min

03

Unit 3: Practical strategies and good practices

Define, break down, ask, explore, decide, reflect. Role-play and self-diagnosis.

≈ 70 min

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, you will be able to

- 1 Define problem solving and explain its importance in daily life, education and employment.
- 2 Identify common problems faced by young migrants in work, educational and social settings.
- 3 Explain the key steps involved in effective problem solving.
- 4 Demonstrate problem-solving skills through role-play and group activities.
- 5 Apply constructive and responsible strategies when facing challenges.
- 6 Reflect on your own problem-solving strengths and the areas you need to develop.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Every job needs people who can solve problems

79%



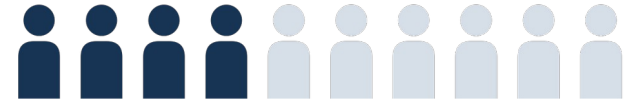
of employees in the EU said problem solving is very important for doing their job, the highest of all skills.

69%



of employers name analytical thinking a core skill. 67% name resilience, flexibility and agility.

44%



of workers' core skills in Türkiye are expected to change by 2030 (EU partner countries 30-39%).

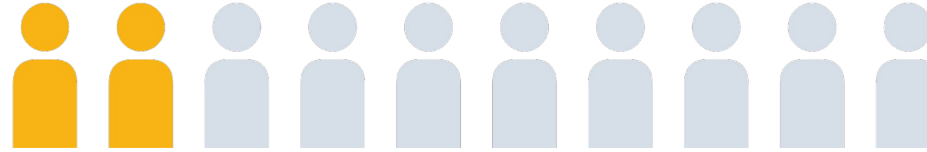
Jobs keep changing. People who can define a problem, ask and try again keep up.

Source: Cedefop, *European Skills and Jobs Survey 2014* (publ. 2015), pp. 70-71 · World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2025*, pp. 34-35

WHY THIS MATTERS

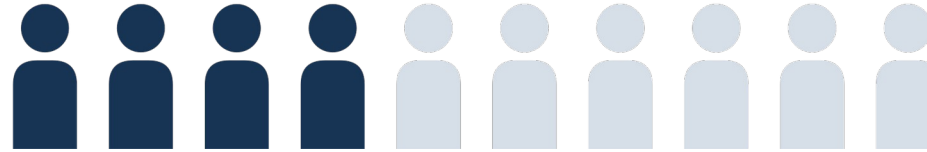
You already solve problems every day

1 in 5



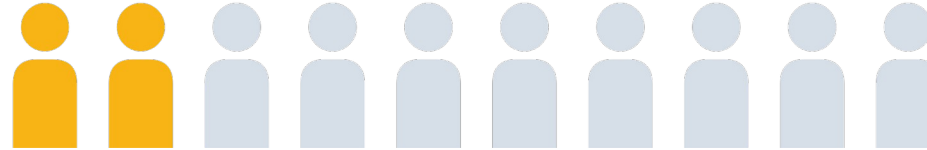
young people born outside the EU (15-29) is not in a job, education or training (18.5%). For young people born in the country: 1 in 10 (10.1%).

4 in 10



university graduates from outside the EU work in jobs below their education level. For nationals: 2 in 10 (41.4% vs 20.0%).

2×



Non-EU employees are twice as likely to have a temporary contract as nationals (22.1% vs 10.7%).

New country, new jobs, new rules: problem solving is a survival skill you already use every day.

01

UNIT 1 · ≈ 50 min

Understanding problem solving

Taking the first step: problem solving is a process, not a single action.

Definition

Steps

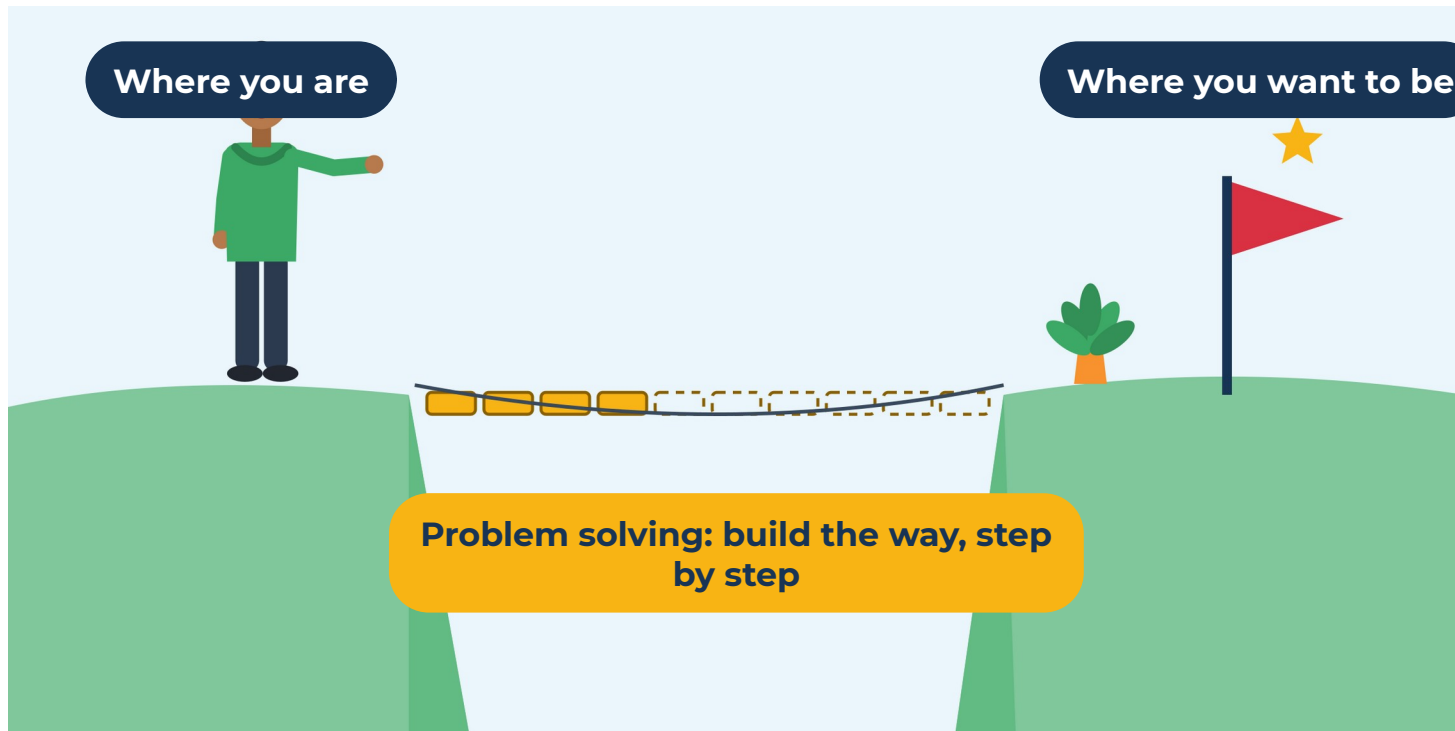
Skills and attitudes

Myths



DEFINITION

What is problem solving?

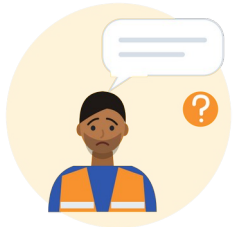


In short

- **A problem** is a gap between where you are and where you want to be, when the way is not clear yet.
- **Problem solving** means: understand it, find information and help, try, check.
- **It is learnable.** It gets better with practice, like cooking or driving.

PROBLEM SOLVING IN DAILY LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT

Small problems, big problems



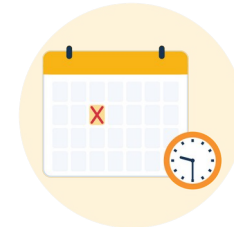
An instruction you did not understand

The shift leader spoke fast. You nodded. Now you are not sure what to do.



A payslip that looks wrong

You worked 152 hours this month. The payslip says 128.



Two things at the same time

The new shift plan clashes with your language course.



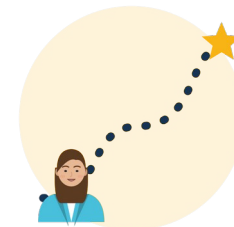
A letter you cannot read

An official letter arrives in a language you only half understand. It has a deadline.



Something you cannot control

A transport strike on your second day at work.



The big navigation problem

How do I move from my first job to a job that uses my skills?

D'ZURILLA AND NEZU: ATTITUDE

First gate: how you look at the problem

Negative orientation



- “This is a disaster. Nothing can be done.”
- You feel threatened and freeze.
- The letter stays in the drawer.

Positive orientation



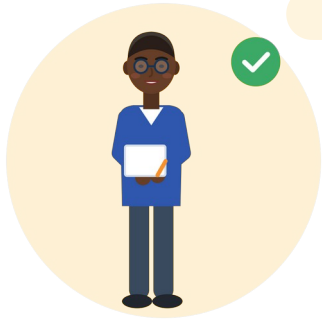
- “This is a problem with a deadline. I can take it step by step.”
- You feel challenged, not beaten.
- Step 1: find out what the letter asks. Step 2: who can read it with me today?

Same letter, same person. The attitude decides what happens next.

Source: D'Zurilla & Nezu, social problem-solving model (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 2010; Bell & D'Zurilla, 2009)

D'ZURILLA AND NEZU: STYLE

Second gate: three ways people react



helpful

Planned (rational)

Define the problem, think of options, decide, try, check. Slower at first, safer in the end.



risky

Fast without thinking

Act at once, sign at once, reply angrily. Often regretted later.



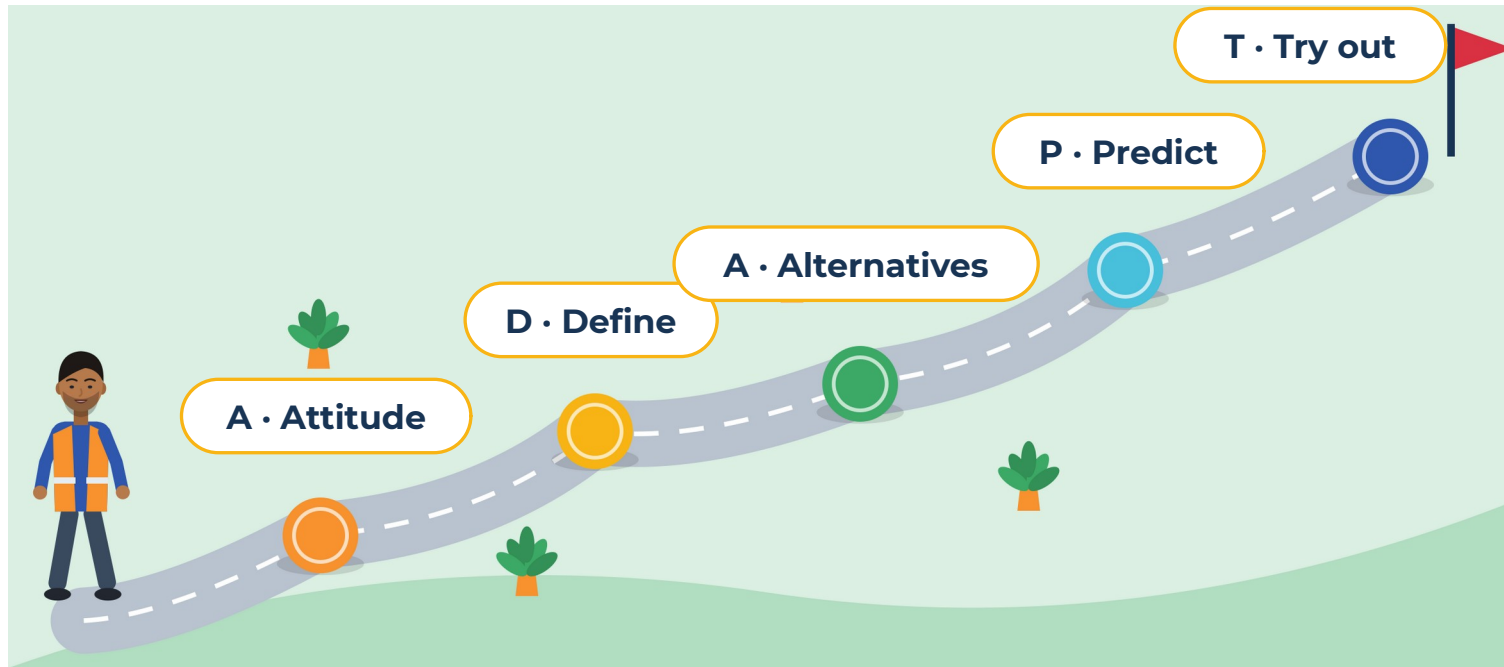
risky

Waiting or avoiding

Hope the problem goes away, or give it to someone else. Deadlines pass.

STEPS IN THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

ADAPT: five steps for everyday problems



On the road

- **Attitude:** this is normal, it can be solved.
- **Define:** what exactly, what do I want?
- **Alternatives:** three options, no judging yet.
- **Predict:** what can happen? Choose, plan.
- **Try out:** do it, check, adjust.

Example: the shift plan clashes with my Tuesday class. Swap, ask for a fixed day off, or move course?

Source: Based on Nezu, Nezu & D'Zurilla (2007), *Solving Life's Problems: A 5-step guide* (ADAPT used as a teaching mnemonic)

SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

What good problem solvers use



Analysis

Look closely: what happened, when, who is involved, what is in my control?



Decision-making

Compare options with clear reasons, not only feelings.



Reflection

Look back: what worked, what will I do differently?



Patience

Some problems need several small steps and some days.



Responsibility

Own your part, without carrying the parts that are not yours.



Openness to learning

Mistakes are information. Ask, try, improve.

Source: SMILE curriculum, Unit 1 key topics · EU Key Competences: "a problem-solving attitude supports both the learning process and the individual's ability to handle obstacles and change" (Council Recommendation 2018/C 189/01)

PROBLEM SOLVING AS A LEARNABLE SKILL

Charge your “I can do this” battery



- **Do it:** small successes. Start with a problem you can solve this week.
- **See it:** people like you solving similar problems.
- **Hear it:** “You can handle this”, from people you trust.
- **Feel it:** calm body, clearer head before big decisions.

Source: Bandura (1997), *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, ch. 3: four sources of self-efficacy

MYTH OR FACT?

Common misunderstandings about problem solving

✗ **“Problem solving is a talent. You have it or you don't.”**

✓ It can be learned. Structured training worked in 31 studies with 2,895 people (Malouff et al., 2007).

✗ **“Asking for help means I failed.”**

✓ Finding social and digital resources is part of the OECD definition of problem solving.

✗ **“A good problem solver decides fast.”**

✓ Acting fast without thinking is one of the two unhelpful styles. Define first, then decide.

✗ **“If I ignore it, it will go away.”**

✓ Many problems have deadlines. In Germany a dismissal can only be challenged in court within 3 weeks.

✗ **“Stress makes me sharper.”**

✓ Acute stress weakens working memory and flexible thinking (meta-analysis, Shields et al., 2016). Pause first.

Source: Malouff, Thorsteinsson & Schutte (2007) · OECD (2024) p. 39 · Bell & D'Zurilla (2009) · Faire Integration flyer (2020) · Shields, Sazma & Yonelinas (2016)

ACTIVITY

A recent problem and how I reacted



TIME
15 min



GROUP
Individual, then pairs



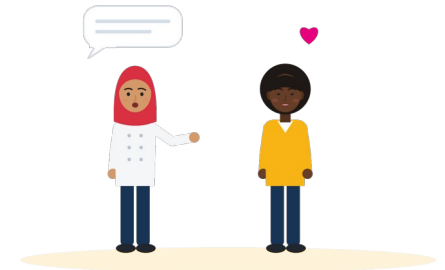
MATERIALS
Worksheet with four boxes,
pens



GOAL
Notice your own style without
judging it

STEPS

1. Choose a recent, everyday problem: a form, a misunderstanding, a late bus. Not a painful one.
2. Write or draw in four boxes: What happened? What did I feel? What did I do? What happened next? Any language is fine.
3. Tick your style: "I planned", "I acted fast without thinking" or "I waited or avoided".
4. In pairs, share only what you want. Partner asks: "What would you try next time?"



DEBRIEF

- Which step was hardest: understanding the problem, finding options or deciding?
- Who did you ask for help? What stopped you from asking?
- What did you already do well?

02

UNIT 2 · ≈ 50 min

Problem solving in the reality of young migrants

How migration experiences shape problems, and the strategies people use to solve them.

Instructions

Culture

Stress

Language, power, information



THE STARTING LINE IS NOT EQUAL

More new jobs, more new rules

2×

Non-EU employees are twice as likely to have a temporary contract (22.1% vs 10.7%). Every new job brings new routines and new jargon.

1st

Lack of host-country language skills is the most common specific obstacle to a suitable job for people born abroad.

73%



of experts in 21 EU countries name “the worker does not know the language” as a top-3 risk factor for labour exploitation.

Many problems at work start with information and language, not with the person.

ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO

The machine stopped

**Yusuf, 19**

Packaging plant near Duisburg, agency contract, week 2

Logistics

Germany

Unclear instruction

The shift leader explains a new setting quickly, with a word Yusuf does not know. He nods. Twenty minutes later the machine stops and the line waits.

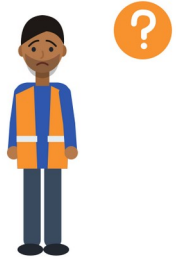
**DISCUSS**

1. What exactly is the problem? Say it in one sentence.
2. What could Yusuf say in the first minute after the machine stops?
3. What could he do next time when he does not understand?

Grounded in: EU-OSHA, OSHwiki "Migrant workers" (failure to understand safety instructions); non-EU temporary contracts 22.1% vs 10.7% (Eurostat 2025).

TOOL: 5 WHYS

Find a cause you can fix, not a person to blame



Why did it stop? It was overloaded.

Why? I put two boxes on at once.

Why? I thought he said “two”.

Why? Fast speech, a new word.

Fixable:
communication

Use it well

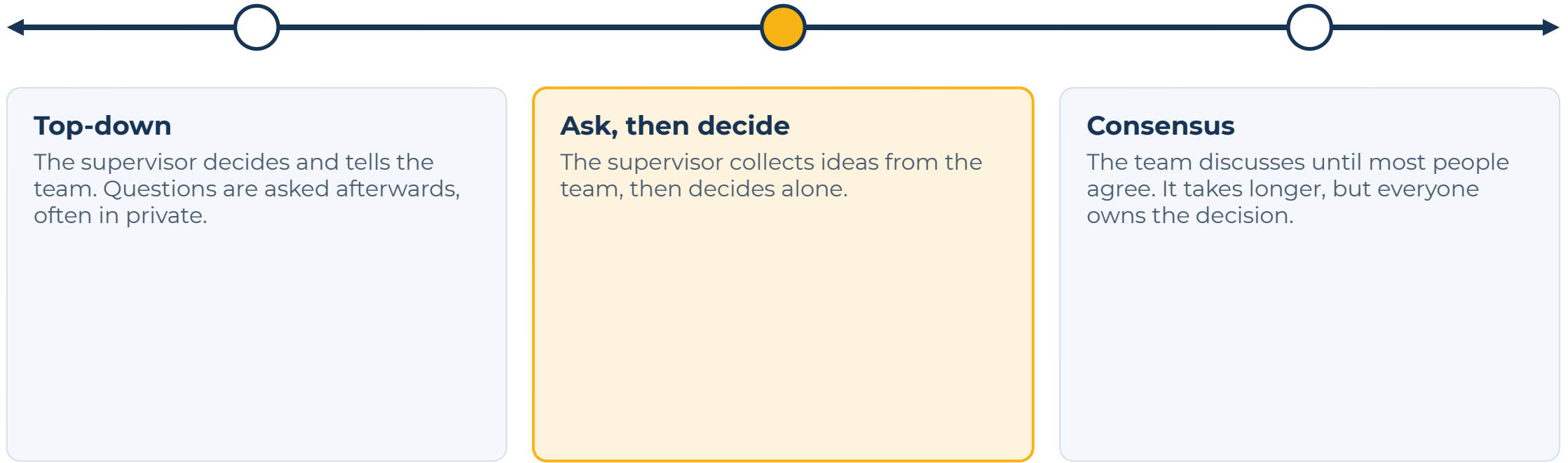
- **Next time:** “Can you show me once?”
- **Second path:** why was there no written instruction?
- **Warning:** one path only. Problems often have more causes. Never use it to blame a person.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN APPROACHING PROBLEMS

How are decisions made in this workplace?

The boss decides

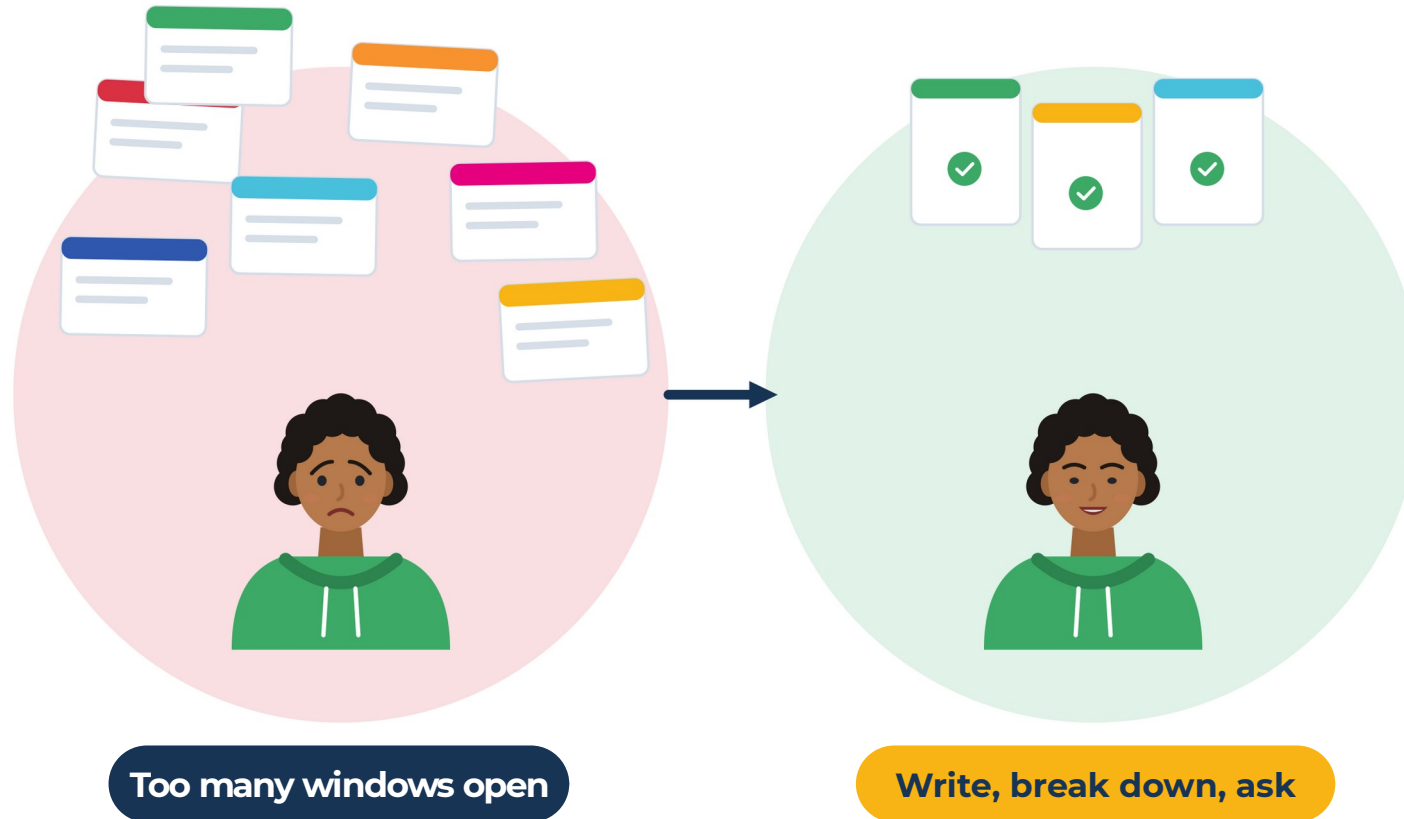
The team decides together



Source: Meyer (2014), "Navigating the cultural minefield", Harvard Business Review (Deciding scale, used for self-placement) · Hofstede (2011) on not confusing country averages with individuals

EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Stress fills your head. Make space before you decide.



- **Stress changes thinking:** memory and flexible thinking get weaker.
- **Worries take up space:** money, papers, family abroad.
- **Big papers, never on a bad day:** take it home, read it, ask.

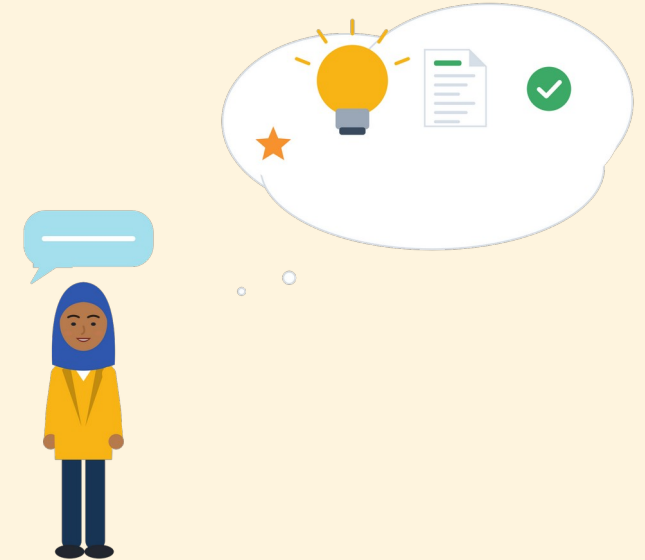
Source: Shields, Sazma & Yonelinas (2016), meta-analysis · Starcke & Brand (2016), $d = .17$ · Mani et al. (2013) "scarcity" idea, contested (O'Donnell et al., 2021)



LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

Weak language is not weak problem solving.

People with a language barrier “would be able to show higher levels of proficiency if they were assessed in a different language” (OECD).



POWER DYNAMICS, AUTHORITY AND RIGHTS AWARENESS

Is this normal here, or is it a problem?

Feels “normal”, is a problem



- Cash, no payslip.
- Ten hours, no break.
- No contract after weeks.
- A fee to get a job.
- “Sign this now, today.”

What protects you



- Core labour rights apply to all workers, also without papers.
- EU: main job information in writing within 7 days.
- Your own records: hours, messages, rotas.
- Advice before you sign.

Step 1 of every model is to notice the problem. Knowing the local rules helps you notice it.

SOCIAL ISOLATION, SUPPORT NETWORKS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

When information is hard to find, check it twice

- **Information precarity:** unstable, untranslated or even dangerous information, and support networks lost when people move.
- **Official websites** are often only in the national language.
- **Social media brings jobs and scams:** criminal networks recruit online with promises of better jobs.
- **Save these:** Integreat app (DE) · Jugendmigrationsdienste 12-27 (DE) · YİMER 157 and ALO 170 (TR) · EURES advisers (EU).



ILLUSTRATIVE SCENARIO

A dream job on social media

**Ali, 19**

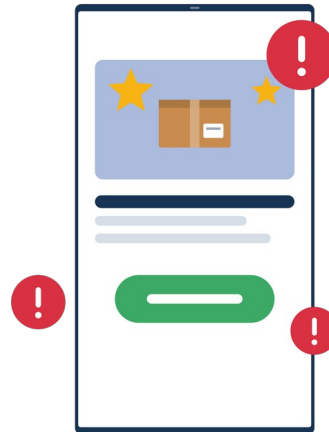
Looking for work in Thessaloniki

Online job ad

Greece

Digital safety

A video ad: “Warehouse job in the Netherlands, 3,000 euro a month, free housing, visa guaranteed. Send a passport photo and a 250 euro fee by WhatsApp today.”

**DISCUSS**

1. Which details are warning signs?
2. Which three questions should Ali ask before anything else?
3. Who could check this offer for him?

Grounded in: EURES (2023), “Never submit financial information via online forms during the recruitment process”; Europol EU-SOCTA 2025, p. 48.

DOCUMENTED CASES: FAIRE INTEGRATION, GERMANY

Real cases: asking for advice changed the outcome

Hessen, 2025



Unpaid wages

No wages, no payslips for 2.5 months. After a written demand: 5,250 euro gross paid, without court.

2025



A contract checked in time

Unclear hours, unclear night pay and a placement fee found. The person did not sign.

Rheinland-Pfalz, 2025



Messages as evidence

No written contract: chat messages and delivery notes with his name served as evidence in court.

ACTIVITY

Case studies: what makes it harder, what helps?

 **TIME**
20 min

 **GROUP**
Groups of 3-4

 **MATERIALS**
Case cards (real and invented), flipchart, sticky notes

 **GOAL**
Separate problems caused by the person from problems caused by the situation

STEPS

1. Each group gets one case card. Real cases and invented ones are marked as such.
2. Answer: What exactly is the problem? Which factor makes it harder: language, information, power, stress, culture or isolation?
3. What helped, or what could help? Who could they ask?
4. Draw a quick fishbone on the flipchart and present it in 2 minutes.



DEBRIEF

- Which problems were caused by the person, and which by the situation?
- Which resource surprised you?

03

UNIT 3 · ≈ 70 min

Practical strategies and good practices

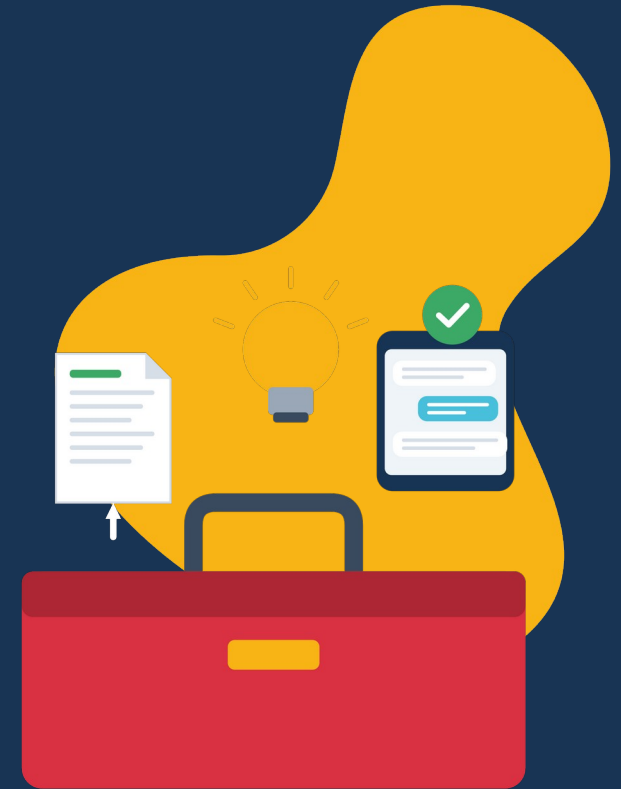
Time to take the field: practise the steps with tools you can use tomorrow.

Define

Break down

Ask

Decide and reflect



YOUR TOOLBOX

Six strategies, six tools



Define the problem clearly

Tool: one sentence with facts, dates, numbers.



Break it into small steps

Tool: problem list and the first small step.



Ask for help and information

Tool: phrases for checking, reporting and asking.



Explore possible solutions

Tool: fishbone of causes, at least three options.



Make responsible decisions

Tool: decision matrix with your own criteria.



Reflect and learn

Tool: six reflection questions after each try.

DEFINE THE PROBLEM CLEARLY

From a cloud of worry to one clear sentence

INSTEAD OF

"Everything is going wrong at work."

"My boss hates me."

"The office never helps."

"I will never find a job here."

TRY

"I was late three times this week because the 6:20 bus is often full."

"My supervisor gave me the late shift five times in a row. I want to understand why."

"My payslip shows 128 hours, my notes show 152. The office is open only during my shift."

"I need one employer to see my skills. My diploma is not recognised yet."

BREAK PROBLEMS INTO SMALLER STEPS

Too many problems? Make a list, pick one, take one step

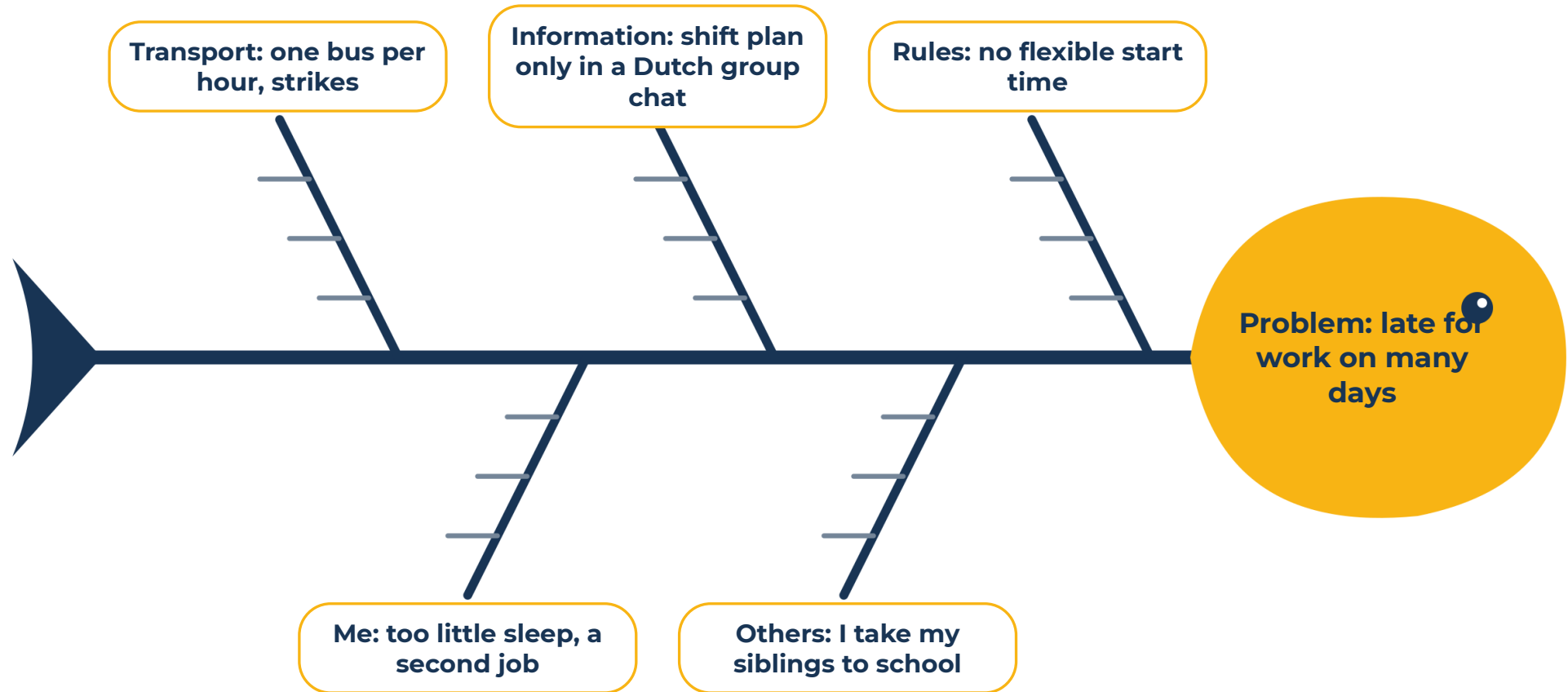
My problems	Important ?	Can I influence it?	First small step
The landlord wants a work contract before giving me the room	Yes	Partly	Ask my future employer for a letter confirming the start date
No work contract yet (job starts in 3 weeks)	Yes	Partly	Ask HR: "Could I have the contract before day one?"
My family needs money this month	Yes	A little	Check when my first salary arrives; talk to my family about the date
B1 language exam in March	Yes	Yes	Book two hours of practice per week now

Only problems with two “yes” or “partly” answers go to the next step. Solve the smallest piece first.

Source: Logic adapted from WHO (2018), Problem Management Plus, “Managing problems” strategy · example based on an invented scenario

EXPLORE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

Fishbone: problems usually have more than one cause



Source: Ishikawa (1986), Guide to Quality Control · categories adapted for everyday problems

ASK FOR HELP AND INFORMATION

Phrases for checking, reporting and asking

Checking an instruction

"Sorry, can I check that I understood? First I do this, and then that?"

"Could you show me once, please? Then I will do it myself."

"What does this word mean here?"

Reporting a problem

"I need to report a problem: the machine stopped at 10:15 after I pressed the green button."

"I am not sure what went wrong, so I stopped."

"Can someone check it with me before I continue?"

Asking for help

"Can I ask you something? I don't know who is responsible for this."

"Where can I find information about this?"

"Could you write that down for me, please?"

MAKE RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS

Decision matrix: make your reasons visible

Option	Income now (×3)	Contract and legal security (×3)	Learning, qualification (×2)	Fits my language course (×1)	Total
A • Cash job in a kitchen, start tomorrow	5 → 15	1 → 3	1 → 2	2 → 2	22
B • Apprenticeship, starts in September	2 → 6	5 → 15	5 → 10	4 → 4	35
C • Agency warehouse job with contract	4 → 12	4 → 12	2 → 4	3 → 3	31

The number does not decide for you. It shows that “income now” is only one of your reasons.

Source: Weighted decision matrix (after Pugh, 1991, Total Design) · scores in this example are invented

EXPLORE OPTIONS BEFORE YOU GIVE UP

Two appointments at the same time



Daniel Hello, this is Daniel Haile. Thank you for inviting me to an interview on Thursday at 10:30.

Recruiter You're welcome. Is the time okay for you?



Daniel I have my B1 language exam at the same time. Would it be possible to come on another day, or a bit later?

Recruiter We could do Friday at 9:00, or Thursday afternoon online.



Daniel Friday at 9:00 is perfect. Could you send me the address by email, please?

 Invented scenario. First check if the conflict is real: can one appointment move? A polite request to reschedule is normal.

REFLECT ON RESULTS AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

After every try: six questions



- **What happened?:** Describe it like a camera, without judging.
- **What did I feel?:** Shame, anger, relief: feelings are information.
- **What went well or badly?:** Name at least one good thing.
- **Why?:** Which causes were mine, which were the situation?
- **What did I learn?:** One sentence.
- **What will I do next time?:** One concrete sentence I will say or do.

Source: Gibbs (1988), *Learning by Doing* · Kolb (1984), *experiential learning cycle*

ACTIVITY

Role-play: solve it in three minutes

 **TIME**
35 min

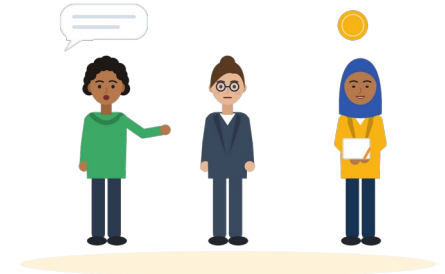
 **GROUP**
Trios: person with the problem, other side, observer

 **MATERIALS**
Scenario cards, ADAPT card, observer checklist

 **GOAL**
Practise defining, asking, proposing options and agreeing a next step

STEPS

1. Each round: 3 min preparation with the ADAPT card, 2 min role-play, 2 min feedback.
2. Three rounds. Roles rotate so everyone plays the person with the problem once.
3. Observer checks: Did they define the problem clearly? Ask questions? Propose options? Agree a next step?
4. Pause and rewind are allowed. The other side is firm but never abusive.
5. Whole group: one volunteer replays a better version.



DEBRIEF

- What worked? What will you say next time?
- Feedback rule: one thing that worked + one thing to try.

MONEY, HOURS, CONTRACTS AND FAIRNESS

Phrases for the difficult conversations



Payslip and hours

"I think there is a mistake on my payslip. I worked 38 hours, but it says 32. Could you check it with me?"

"I wrote down my hours every day. Here is my list."



Contracts

"Before I start, could I have the contract in writing, please?"

"I would like to read it at home first. Can I give it back tomorrow?"

"I'd like to ask for advice before I sign this."



Speaking up calmly

"I prepared the tables, and I'd like my part to be visible."

"I don't agree, but I'd like to understand your reason."

"Can we write down what we agreed?"

BE FAIR TO YOURSELF

Skills open doors, but they are not the whole story

What this skill can change



- Notice problems early and describe them clearly.
- Ask, check and keep evidence: hours, messages, letters.
- Compare options and make informed choices, step by step.
- Find the right help point faster.

What it cannot fix alone



- Identical CV, different name: 55 of 100 got a positive answer with a Dutch name, 40 of 100 with a Turkish name.
- Recognition of diplomas, residence permits and the right to work depend on laws and offices, not on you.
- Discrimination is not your fault. It can be reported to an equality body, a union or an NGO.

Train your skills AND know your rights. Both are part of a fair start.

Source: Thijssen et al., 2021, JEMS (correspondence test, NL, applicants aged 23-25)

WHERE TO GET HELP

Official help points in the SMILE countries

	Country	Jobs and training	Diplomas and recognition	Unfair or unsafe work
	Türkiye	İŞKUR (iskur.gov.tr), Public Education Centres	YÖK denklik, MEB e-Denklik	Ministry of Labour (csgb.gov.tr), YİMER 157 helpline
	Greece	DYPA (dypa.gov.gr)	DOATAP (doatap.gr)	Labour Inspectorate, phone 1555
	Italy	Centri per l'Impiego, SIISL	CIMEA (free for protection holders)	Ispettorato Nazionale del Lavoro
	Germany	Agentur für Arbeit, Jobcenter, Jugendmigrationsdienste (12-27)	Anerkennung in Deutschland, IQ Netzwerk	Faire Integration (free, multilingual)
	Netherlands	UWV, werk.nl, your municipality	IDW (idw.nl)	Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, Juridisch Loket

Save the number or website of one help point in your phone today.

Source: Official websites, checked 1 October 2026 (SMILE research note, labour market)

SELF-CHECK

Self-diagnosis: how do I solve problems? (1/2)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
When a problem appears, I believe I can find a way to deal with it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I see problems as a normal part of life in a new country or job.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I describe the problem to myself in one clear sentence before I act.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think of more than one possible solution.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Before deciding, I think about what could happen with each option.	☐	☐	☐	☐
After I try a solution, I check if it worked and what I learned.	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I do not understand an instruction, I ask.	☐	☐	☐	☐

SELF-CHECK

Self-diagnosis: how do I solve problems? (2/2)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always
When I am very stressed, I take a moment to calm down before I decide.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know at least one place or person I can contact about work rights.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can name one problem I solved well in the past.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I act quickly without thinking, and later I regret it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I sign or agree to things I do not fully understand.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I wait and hope that the problem will go away.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I let other people solve my problems for me.	☐	☐	☐	☐

REFLECTION

One problem, one step, this week

Which problem will I work on this week?

What is my first small step, and when?

What is my one clear problem sentence?

Who can I ask if I get stuck?



Write it on a card and keep it in your phone case or wallet.



KEY MESSAGES

Notice it. Define it. Ask. Try. Learn.

Problem solving is a process you can learn. Asking for help is part of the skill. Some problems are bigger than one person: then rights, advice and support networks are your tools.



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Thank you

Questions, ideas, stories: the floor is yours.

KEEP LEARNING

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MODULE

5 • Problem Solving

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SKILLS = Opportunity

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