



Digital International Trainers (DIG.INT)

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Competence Framework

Work package 3

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The Competence Framework

1.1 Introduction to the Competence Framework

The Competence Framework is developed to support the professionalisation process for VET and Technical Higher Education. It is part of the DIGINT Erasmus + Project and has been developed as a collective exercise among project partners, coordinated by CIS and UCLL. The competence areas have been identified through desk research and brainstorming among partners, particularly during the Bucharest partners meeting in May 2023. While its present version already represents a significant development, its validation will require its actual use by different categories of stakeholders, according to the foreseen kinds of use:

1. Identification of actual level of competence and learning needs
2. Reference for Design of learning paths
3. Evaluation/certification of competences developed through formal education or work experience

1.2 Development methodology

Starting phase: objectives and functions of the competence map

In May 2023, CIS and UCLL started the development with a phase of clarification of the conception and the functions of this competence map in VET systems. These competences were organized in different areas, which were identified quite early on in the process. Discussions were interspersed with desk research to substantiate the refinement of the objectives and functions of the competence map at the one hand and the identification and formulation of competencies. Simultaneously this refinement was confronted with the existing ideas of CIS and UCLL about the competence areas, which contributed to the validation and/or changes in these areas. This phase was finalized by a first draft of a competence map to present to the consortium for profound feedback at the Bucharest meeting in June 2023.

The Bucharest feedback

At the Bucharest transnational meeting Karine Hindrix (ULL) introduced the competence map draft created together CIS. This map served as a foundation for the Design Workshop, an important part of this meeting. Consortium partner participants engaged in a collaborative exercise where they were divided into specific target groups such as teachers, organizational leaders, and regional actors. Together, they examined and contemplated the initial draft of the competence map, offering valuable feedback on its structure and identified areas of competence. The feedback received was documented in the following reports: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IqGN-G0QrF7vIhgZSVGDxsa3mijX1Hgo> .

Improvement of the competence map

This elaborate feedback of the consortium partners was taken up to improve the competence map by CIS and UCLL. Valuable and some substantial changes were made where necessary. The feedback provided an important part of the validation of the competence map. The competence areas were quite easily validated. Based on the discussions about Personal Growth, we decided to qualify it as “extra” since it is too generic and not only for internationalised contexts. Furthermore, competences of different areas were adjusted and refined: e.g. networking was further detailed and given a more prominent space as a competence field.

Validation of competence map by stakeholders

Karine Hindrix and Katrien Goossens from UCL, University College of Leuven, presented the Competence Map at the Validation Workshop in San Sebastian in October 2023 for a wider audience of stakeholders. UCLL the participants that a document outlining the description of each competence category and its associated sub-categories is currently in the process of being developed. Moreover, Claudio from CIS specified that the competence map serves three key purposes:

- At the individual level, it helps individuals assess their competences for internationalization and plan future learning paths.
- For VET and HE institutions, it identifies competence gaps and informs training or recruitment efforts.
- Regional development agencies use it to identify strengths and weaknesses, enabling the planning of initiatives to enhance regional internationalization potential.

Subsequently, both project partners and stakeholders engaged in a collaborative exercise where they were divided into specific target groups such as teachers, organizational leaders, and regional actors. Together, they examined and discussed the competence map, providing valuable feedback on its structure and identified areas of competence. No major issues arose, except the need for clarification of each competence to guarantee a uniform understanding of these competences for usage at different levels of VET systems.

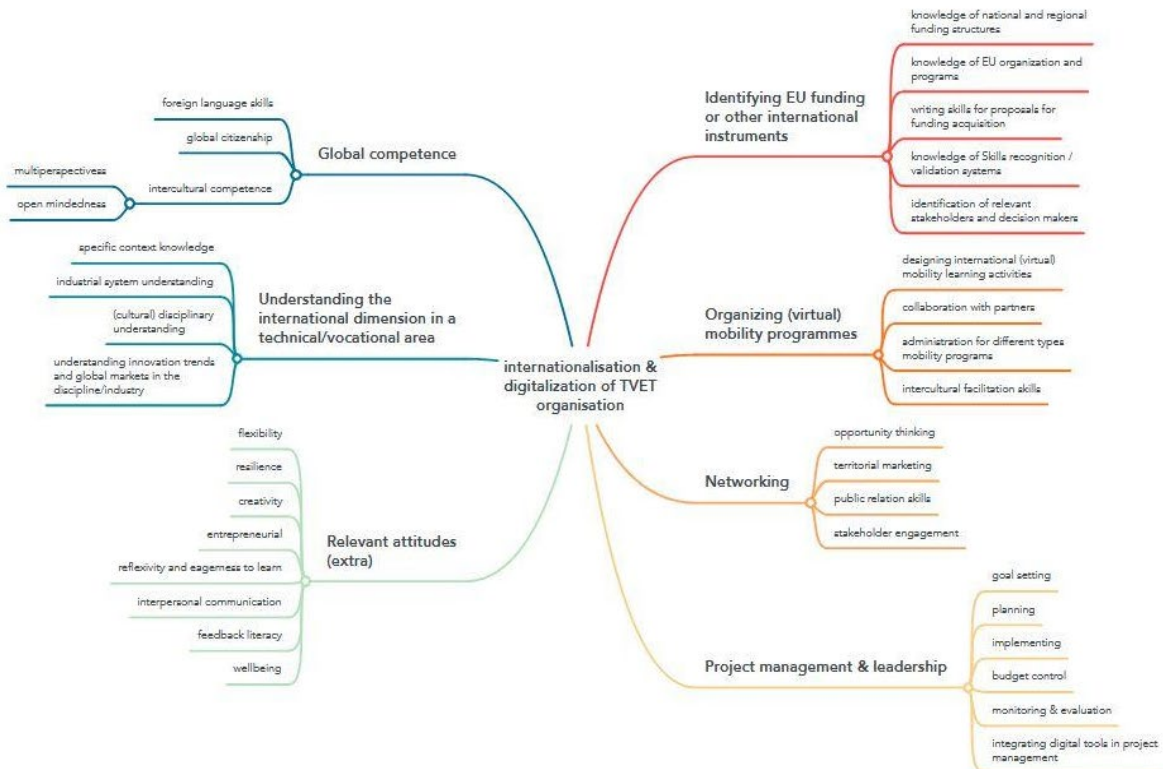
Finalization of the Competence map

In the last phase of the development of the competence map, each competence was described to reassure users at all levels of VET systems understood what the competence meant and, hence, in the same way. In this last phase more desk research was done to substantiate these descriptions.

Katrien Goossens and Karine Hindrix from UCLL presented the final version of the Competence Framework document, emphasizing its potential use for the design of the learning paths at the Leuven transnational meeting in December 2023.

1.3 The Competence Map and its possible use at the individual, organisational and regional levels

After several intermediate steps, the following graph has been elaborated to represent those competences and competence areas that, in partners' view, are relevant for the internationalisation process. Some areas are very specific, others belong to what is generally called "transversal competences" that are required in a multitude of jobs, but they are also relevant to the project purpose. More than on the choice of the areas, in this phase the Competence Framework has to be validated on its scenarios of use (see below).



The competence map is intended to be used at three different levels:

1. For any individual, to check the coverage and level of proficiency on the competences that are relevant for internationalisation, to identify learning needs and plan future learning paths, to obtain recognition and certification of competences already available;
2. For VET and HE Institutions/organisations, to check the overall availability -among all staff- of relevant competences, identify competence gaps and plan future training or recruitment initiatives to fill the relevant gaps
3. For Regional development agencies, to identify strengths and weaknesses, in terms of competence gaps, of the regional VET/THE system, and to plan regional programmes and initiatives to strengthen the international attractiveness and internationalisation potential of the regional VET/THE system.

In the following pages each competence area is presented and articulated into individual competences.

2. Competences Areas

2.1 Project Management & Leadership

Project Management & Leadership is a critical competence that plays a pivotal role in the successful process of internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers. This competence combines the skills, knowledge, and qualities necessary for guiding and overseeing projects, particularly those focused on international exchange and expansion in order to enhance the international dimension of VET institutions. This competence encompasses various sub-

competences, such as goal setting, planning, implementing, budget control, monitoring and evaluating, and the use of digital tools, which enable individuals, particularly organisational leaders, to effectively lead and supervise internationalisation initiatives within the VET sector. Through the integration of these skills and knowledge, professionals can navigate the complexities of global expansion while remaining aligned with their institutions' mission and vision.

2.1.1 Goal setting

One's capability to define clear and achievable objectives in alignment with the internationalisation strategy of VET providers. This requires the ability to identify and set goals that can be quantified, measured, and completed within defined timeframes.¹

2.1.2 Planning

One is able to create comprehensive project plans that outline objectives, tasks, timelines, resource allocation, stakeholders and roles, and risk assessments. One is able to meet deadlines and efficiently allocate resources, and to ensure that projects remain on course and within defined parameters.²

2.1.3 Implementing

One possesses the capability of efficiently implementing project plans by coordinating activities, allocating responsibilities, and ensuring that internationalisation initiatives are carried out according to the established strategy.

2.1.4 Budget control

One manages project budgets effectively and ensures financial resources are allocated wisely to support internationalisation initiatives. This includes cost estimation, expenditure monitoring, and financial reporting.

2.1.5 Monitoring & evaluation

One is able to continuously assess and measure the progress of internationalisation projects to help identify areas for improvement and ensure alignment with strategic objectives. One is able to

¹ Jaimovich, D. (2022), The 5 Phases of Project Management. [The 5 Phases of Project Management \(invgate.com\)](https://www.invgate.com)

² TestGorill, How to assess project manager skills and competencies. [How to assess project management soft skills - TG \(testgorilla.com\)](https://www.testgorilla.com)

ensure that project progress is communicated to all stakeholders and that any possible risks are promptly identified and dealt with.³

2.1.6 Integrating digital tools in project management

One uses digital tools and technologies to enhance project management processes including software for scheduling, communication, collaboration, and data analysis, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of internationalisation projects. One is able to use project management tools such as Microsoft Project, Asana, Trello, or Jira, enabling real-time collaboration among teams, where tasks can be assigned, and progress can be tracked.

2.2 Identifying EU Funding or Other International Instruments

The acquisition of expertise in recognizing EU funding or other international instruments is a multifaceted process that involves a comprehensive understanding of the intricate landscape of funding opportunities available for various projects and initiatives. This competence requires individuals or organisations to stay updated on the evolving policies and programs within the European Union and other international bodies, as well as the ability to navigate complex bureaucratic procedures. Competent individuals must excel at conducting research, analysing eligibility criteria, and strategically aligning project goals with the right funding sources. Developing this competence often involves writing skills for proposals, an extensive knowledge of skills recognition and validation systems, networking with relevant stakeholders and decision makers, and engaging in continuous learning to keep up with the dynamic nature of international funding opportunities.

2.2.1 Knowledge of national and regional funding structures

One understands national and regional funding structures for recognizing the diverse financial resources available at different geographic levels. One is able to identify and take advantage of the specific grants, subsidies, and support mechanisms provided by governments and local authorities, which can complement or reinforce international funding efforts.

2.2.2 Knowledge of EU organisation and programmes

One knows EU organisations and programs for navigating the complex world of European funding. This includes an awareness of the European Commission, its various directorates, and an understanding of EU programs such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, Interreg Europe, LIFE etc. and the Cohesion Policy. One is able to align projects with EU priorities and access relevant funding opportunities.

³ EvalCommunity, Monitoring and Evaluation Skills. [Monitoring and Evaluation Skills - EvalCommunity](#)

2.2.3 Writing skills for proposals for funding acquisition

One is able to elaborate clear, persuasive, and well-structured proposals that convey the project's objectives, impact, and feasibility. One is capable of building a compelling argument to potential funders and improving the prospects of success in competitive grant procedures.

2.2.4 Knowledge of Skills recognition / validation systems

One understands skills recognition and validation systems, especially in the context of employment and education. One is aware of mechanisms that assess and validate individuals' skills and qualifications, facilitating mobility and employability.

2.2.5 Identification of relevant stakeholders and decision-makers

One is able to identify and actively involve essential stakeholders and decision-makers is pivotal for successful fundraising initiatives. One is able to network and collaborate with these stakeholders, which can significantly impact funding opportunities and project success.

2.3 Organising (Virtual) Mobility Programmes

2.3.1 Designing international (virtual) mobility learning activities⁴

Create a classroom environment that values diversity and global engagement. Based on knowledge of the qualification structure of their own training and the international and intercultural dimensions of the professional field and society, teachers can determine relevant goals, formulate learning outcomes, choose activities and create assignments. They take the situation of the company/organisation/institution into account.

Virtual: the teachers take into account the group composition and the social-emotional capabilities of participants in the group and the digital options in the country of destination and their own knowledge and skills of available tools.

2.3.2 Collaboration with partners

In work-related settings, one is able to easily connect with colleagues, clients and stakeholders from other (foreign) institutions, companies and organisations.

⁴ Source: Ambagts, M., Hoeberigs, B., Maljers, D. and Staman, Bart-Jan. (2022). MBO Docentcompetenties. Internationalisering in de praktijk. ROC van Twente. Online: <https://www.rocvantwente.nl/over-ons/internationalisering.html> (1 september 2023)

One is able to communicate in a clear way, fulfil tasks in time and assume context sensitive roles in a team.

2.3.3 Administration for different types of mobility programmes

One knows the features and conditions of the mobility programmes in which one's institution is involved and takes ownership in the organisation and administration of these mobility programmes. One knows where to acquire information for questions of participants or administration and teaching staff. One arranges documents and manages procedures conscientiously.

2.3.4 Intercultural facilitation skills⁵

Teachers can anticipate the most important cultural differences and similarities between participants from their own and partner institutions. Teachers take these perspectives into account in their pedagogical-didactic choices. They take into account the technical obstacles on both sides of the collaboration.

Teachers can respond to the situation of the company/organisation/institution abroad (possibly remote guidance).

Virtual: teachers can create a safe learning environment online and initiate communication between participants, taking into account the different perspectives, values and norms.

2.4 Networking

Networking competence, especially in an international context, is a fundamental skill that encompasses the ability to establish connections and nurture relationships, in order to help develop and improve personal skills, staying informed about current industry trends, and gaining access to valuable opportunities. Competent networkers skilled in opportunity thinking, territorial marketing, public relations, and stakeholder engagement. They take advantage of opportunities, effectively promote in specific markets, maintain strong relationships, and engage with relevant stakeholders to achieve success. Moreover, networking competence goes beyond just making connections; it involves the capacity to leverage those connections for mutual benefit, fostering a sense of reciprocity and trust.⁶

2.4.1 Opportunity thinking

One is able to identify and capitalise on opportunities in a cross-cultural and international context. One has a proactive mindset that enables individuals to recognize and capitalise on favourable prospects, whether in business, career advancement, or personal development.

⁵ Source: Ambagts, M., Hoeberigs, B., Maljers, D. and Staman, Bart-Jan. (2022). MBO Docentcompetenties. Internationalisering in de praktijk. ROC van Twente. Online: <https://www.rocvantwente.nl/over-ons/internationalisering.html> (1 september 2023)

⁶ ScreenSkills, Networking Competencies. [networking-competencies.pdf \(screenskills.com\)](https://www.screenskills.com/networking-competencies.pdf)

2.4.2 Territorial marketing

One is able to effectively promote products, services, or ideas within specific regions or markets. It encompasses strategies tailored to the unique characteristics and preferences of a particular geographic area, ensuring successful outreach and engagement with the target audience.⁷

2.4.3 Public relation skills

One is able to build and maintain positive and influential relationships with individuals, organisations, or the public at large. One is able to effectively communicate, manage reputation, and to navigate and manage interactions within the public sphere.⁸

2.4.4 Stakeholder engagement

One actively and effectively involves and collaborates with relevant stakeholders to achieve common goals or objectives. One has the ability to identify, communicate with, and manage various stakeholders to ensure their interests are considered and integrated into decision-making processes and projects.⁹

2.5 Understanding the International Dimension in a Technical/Vocational Area

2.5.1 Specific context knowledge

One shows developed knowledge of the professional activities, themes and methods of his discipline in other cultural and / or national contexts.

2.5.2 Industrial system understanding

One has insight in a range of industrial tools, techniques and models that are internationally recognized. One is well-informed about innovative industrial systems that conquer the global market.

2.5.3 (Cultural) disciplinary understanding

⁷ MySmartJourney (2022), Territorial Marketing Definition. [What Exactly Is Territorial Marketing? \(mysmartjourney.com\)](https://mysmartjourney.com)

⁸ Indeed Editorial Team (2023), 5 Essential Public Relations Skills and How To Improve Them. [5 Essential Public Relations Skills and How To Improve Them | Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com)

⁹ APM - Association for Project Management, Competence 13: Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Management. [Competence 13 | APM Competence Framework](https://www.apm.org.uk)

One gives examples of the fact that his disciplinary domain is culturally determined or asks questions to understand actions and approaches in the discipline in another context.

2.5.4 Understanding innovation trends and global markets in the discipline/industry

One shows knowledge of relevant international intergovernmental and professional organisations within the field.¹⁰

2.6 Global Competence

Global competence can be defined as “the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” (OECD, 2018).

2.6.1 Foreign language skills¹¹

Writing a text in another language. The student is able to express himself in writing in at least one language other than the mother tongue, in such a way that he is able to produce a clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to his field of study.

Speaking a foreign language: The student is able to express himself verbally in at least one language other than the mother tongue, in such a way that he presents detailed descriptions in work related contexts, on a wide range of topics, and he is capable of participating in a fluent and spontaneous conversation with native speakers.

Being able to understand oral texts in a foreign language: The student is able to understand more complex argumentations and lectures related to his field of study, spoken in at least one language other than the mother tongue, and he is able to replicate the main train of thought.

Being able to understand a written text in a foreign language: The student understands texts written in at least one other language other than the mother tongue and related to his field of study, and he is able to replicate the most important trains of thought.

2.6.2 Global citizenship

¹⁰ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

¹¹ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be, based upon CEFR (Common European Framework of References for languages)

One reflects on personal values, identifies and explains how values vary among people and over time, while critically evaluating how they align with sustainability values. One supports equity and justice for current and future generations and learns from previous generations for sustainability.¹² One explains ways that the world is interconnected. One explains global conditions and current events.¹³ One engages with social and political issues on a global level. One is critical of one's own social position and the position of others, globally.¹⁴ One develops and expresses an informed opinion about international social and / or political issues.¹⁵

2.6.3 Intercultural competence

“The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006). “Intercultural competence is the proper and effective interaction management between people, who, to some extent, represent the different or divergent affective, cognitive or behavioural orientations of the world.” (Spitzberg, 1989).

One postpones judgement based upon awareness of one's own stereotypical thinking and biases. One asks (respectful/neutral) questions to fellow students or colleagues or stakeholders in order to understand behaviour and actions before explaining based upon cultural ideas.

2.6.4 Multiperspective approach

One approaches and understands a situation, an issue or a problem from multiple cultural perspectives. One is open to alternative ideas and opinions, will examine them and consider the value of the alternatives.¹⁶

2.6.5 Open mindedness

One is open to alternative ideas and opinions, will examine them and considers the value of the alternatives¹⁷. One puts effort into understanding the motivations and feelings of others by dialoguing.

2.7 Relevant Attitudes (extra)

¹² Source: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc83061d-74ec-11ec-9136-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹³ Source: https://www.nafsa.org/sites/https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bc83061d-74ec-11ec-9136-01aa75ed71a1/language-undefined/files/ektron/files/underscore/2016colloquia/2016_teachered_GCTC.pdf

¹⁴ Nuffic, <https://www.nuffic.nl/sites/default/files/2020-08/rapport-internationale-competenties.pdf>

¹⁵ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

¹⁶ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

¹⁷ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

2.7.1 Flexibility

If necessary, one changes one's planning; one responds to unexpected events in a constructive way.¹⁸

2.7.2 Resilience

In stressful work-related situations, one shows coping skills to either maintain his professional performance, or to seek appropriate support. One dares to take responsibility. One addresses the challenges at work or internship, and this behaviour is based on a realistic understanding of one's own skills and competences.¹⁹

2.7.3 Creativity

One comes up with creative and innovative ideas and solutions to problems he encounters at work or internship.²⁰

2.7.4 Entrepreneurship

One takes initiative and turns ideas into actions. One sees opportunities and is able to take the steps needed to accomplish specific goals or projects.

2.7.5 Reflexivity and eagerness to learn

One questions actions based upon outcomes, inquiries alternatives and defines actual changes to improve one's approach. On a deeper level, one questions one's assumptions and beliefs. This way, one recognizes areas where one needs to learn and grow. One makes adjustments accordingly and pursues self-improvement or and is eager to improve himself, the project and the organisation.

2.7.6 Interpersonal communication

One examines the specific features of his own communication style, allows for a remedial approach if necessary and explores the communication style of the other.²¹

2.7.7 Feedback literacy

¹⁸ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

¹⁹ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

²⁰ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

²¹ Source: www.internationalecompetenties.be

One accepts feedback without defensiveness or resistance. This involves having a positive attitude towards feedback and recognizing it as a valuable source of information. One understands the feedback provided: to decipher the message, identify specific areas for improvement or recognition, and grasp the context in which the feedback was given and ask for further clarification if needed. One assesses the validity and relevance of the feedback, considering the credibility of the source, and discerning whether the feedback aligns with one's goals and values.²²

3. Self-Assessment

A first level of self-assessment (or self-positioning) without any form of certification, will be proposed for any individual who desires to check if her/his profile is suitable to support internationalisation processes. Its Proposed structure is as follows:

1. An identification section with a few questions (age, years of experience, years in organisation, role, education, level, languages);
2. How would you define your level of performance in each of the following competences?
 - a. Not competent at all
 - b. I know something, but I never practised
 - c. I had the opportunity to practise, but it is not part of my core competences
 - d. I have a good level of competence
 - e. I have a very good level of competence, I could train other people
3. Which of the previous competences do you actually use in your current job?
4. Which percentage of your working time is actually spent in activities directly related to international development and collaboration?
 - a. Less than 25%
 - b. Between 25% and 50%
 - c. More than 50%

²² Source: <https://chat.openai.com/>

- d. I am full-time on international activities
- 5. Which competences would you be interested to develop more?

4. Conclusions

The peasant document is proposed to partners and stakeholders for validation of its present content and discussion about the proposed scenarios of use. Once feedback is collected, the following actions will be undertaken:

1. To propose a self-assessment questionnaire to the staff of project partners and other relevant organisations;
2. To propose an organisational exercise of needs identification to feed the development of experimental training paths;
3. To develop six pilot training paths at the three levels of use;
4. To reflect on evaluation and certification options to be associated with the competence models.