

**VT_eCOACH - Competences assessment and improvement tool for VET
learners and teachers for new working demands**

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**WP2- Definition and identification of competences linked to new labour
market environments**



**Result Title: Common Framework of Competences Linked to Labour
market: Definition and Identification**

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1. Introduction to the report

“Key competences in the shape of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to each context are fundamental for each individual in a knowledge-based society. They provide added value for the labour market, social cohesion and active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation.”¹

The present report was elaborated in the framework of the VTeCOACH project: *Competences assessment and improvement tool for VET learners and teachers for new working demands*. It gathers the conclusions of 5 National Research Reports elaborated in Spain, Ireland, Poland, Romania and Italy.

The aim of the report is to present an **overview of the new working environments at European level and the competences demand**. In this sense, this report also illustrates the **assessment tools and methodologies** found at national level that can be transferred and exploited at European level.

The document is a ground basis for VET practitioners and other stakeholders dealing with challenges related to the adaptation and updating of VET systems in order to meet the labour market requests.

Throughout this report, the reader will have the change to compile experiences and suggestions in the field of competences demand and new teaching and learning methodologies to develop it.

Finally, the VTeCOACH partnership offers a matrix of competences divided per levels and associated with simple definitions provided by the professionals working in the field of VET and labour counselling.



¹ Key competences for lifelong learning:
http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm

2. Methodological approach

The report **Common Framework of Competences Linked to Labour market: Definition and Identification** was based in the **5 national reports** that are attached to it.

The elaboration of the National Reports (Spain, Ireland, Poland, Romania and Italy) was based on the following methodological tools:

-  Desk Research
-  Questionnaires
-  Interviews
-  Focus Group

A total of 200 participants among VET trainers, labour counsellors and other key actors in the VET system participated in the project research activities and provided comments and suggestions.

The above mentioned research tools were implemented to achieve the following **methodological objectives**:



3. VTeCOACH project at a glance

VTeCOACH project is aimed at developing a professional competences assessment framework addressed to vocational training learners that, based on the philosophy of coaching and a 360° evaluation system, will provide specific action recommendations aimed at improving wicked competences. The project consortium covers the existing gaps on ICT-based methodologies for assessing the so called wicked competences.

During the project lifetime, the following objectives will be achieved:

-  To define a common assessment framework for competences, addressed to vocational training learners.
-  To identify competences' levels on the basis of the European Qualifications Framework, and under the focus of the new demands of labour market.
-  To seize the previous research and development carried out in VETWORKS project.
-  To use 360° assessment methodologies applied to vocational learning.
-  To apply coaching approaches to improve professional competences.
-  To increase vocational training learners employability, and facilitate their personal and professional development.
-  To make VET learners and teachers active agents in the competences assessment and improvement processes.
-  To facilitate assessment mechanisms to promote the recognition of competences and qualifications for VET learners, along with the transparency of the VET systems.
-  To promote VET learners employability and facilitate their access to the new labour environments.

The project directly addresses the recommendations of the European Strategy 2020 regarding the need of ensuring the *“personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens; sustainable economic prosperity and employability”*. In order to achieve these goals, it is **necessary to provide VET learners and teachers with specific tools, adapted to the new labour market requirements and flexible enough to be scalable and updated according to the evolution of the VET systems and markets.**

The project target groups are VET learners and VET teachers. However, **other beneficiaries** will be involved during the execution of the project in order to facilitate its implementation: Entrepreneurial Representatives; VET practitioners and experts; Labour market actors; Labour Guidance Professionals and VET centres.

4. New Working Environments- EU approach

“What will the future workplace look like? Unless you have been on vacation for the past few years, you are probably aware that the workplace as we know it is rapidly changing.”²

This is a key question for the implementation of the VTeCOACH project. **The European labour markets are changing constantly and it affects the workplace and the working environments as they used to be “known”.** The changes can be divided in different categories such as: the effect of unemployment rates, the workers qualifications and competences needs, the companies’ demands, and the diversification and use of technologies, etc.

On the other hand, **a changing labour market that is making disappear the traditional working environments is also an issue for VET providers taking in consideration that learners face added difficulties and barriers to enter de labour market.**

In the scope of the VTeCOACH project we analysed the national contexts of the participating countries and we extracted some conclusions that enable us to understand the state of the art and how the project can meet the identified challenges. To understand the working environments facilitates to provide the tools that VET learners can use to improve their employability.

As follows we present the main conclusions of the research reports:

Impact of the Economic Crisis

“The financial crisis that hit the global economy since the summer of 2007 is without precedent in post-war economic history. Although its size and extent are exceptional, the crisis has many features in common with similar financial-stress drive recession episodes in the past.”³

The analysis of the impact of the financial crisis in all countries, especial in relation to the labour market, was the first step to define the needs of our target group. The participating countries present very similar situations.

The Polish economy has yet avoided recession related to the global financial crisis, but the economic slowdown is becoming visible. The worsening economic conditions have a clear and direct impact on the situation on the national labour market, presenting unemployment rates, already high in comparison to the general unemployment rate for the European Union.

In the case of Romania, migration for employment became a major trend, especially to Italy and Spain. From a comparative perspective, unemployment and long-term unemployment in

² Source: <http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2011/01/19/what-will-the-future-workplace-look-like/>

³ Source: “Economic Crisis in Europe: Causes, Consequences and Responses”, European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, 2009 (http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication15887_en.pdf)

Romania is below the levels of many European countries. The Romanian economic context includes some specific factors which explain such a positive outcome. On the one hand, Romania has a large share of subsistence employment in agriculture which has represented a buffer for the national labour market. On the other hand, labour migration was boosted by the removal of the Schengen visa in 2001. Thus, migration for employment abroad became a mass phenomenon, especially to Italy and Spain.

Italy distinguishes itself for the low recovery abilities from this recessive phase of its economy, recording a vulnerable and unstable upswing. The current status of the labour market is extremely complex, and it emerges a situation in which young people are the most penalized.

In Ireland the scenario is composed by the following characteristics: more young people are deciding to remain in full time education, older workers are seeking to retire earlier and more people are emigrating. While it is forecast that Ireland could have relatively high labour force and working age population growth over the next ten years due to favourable demographics, labour demand is likely to recover only slowly.

In the case of Spain, the economic crisis supposed a change of mentality (from a period of ten years of economic growth to the austerity measures), the cuts on social measures and the restructuring of the welfare state, and the loss of jobs affecting especially young people. One of the major consequences of the economic crisis in the Spanish context was its effect on the social cohesion of the population, besides a clear change in the migration flows (from an incoming country to an outgoing one).

Labour Market Situation

“Nearly 6 million jobs are missing in the EU to return to the pre-crisis employment situation and in 2013 unemployment continues to deteriorate in a majority of countries with youth and low-skilled workers being worse hit. Atypical forms of employment are on the rise, probably reflecting business uncertainty regarding demand prospects and there are growing risks of social unrest.”⁴

A brief overview of the European labour market presents a devastating situation where unemployment is the most significant characteristic. All social and political actors are concerned with this issue from a European and national point of view and several driven measures have been taken with unsuccessful results.

Poland is a transitional, post-communist economy. The heritage of communist past is still visible at the market level and in the VET system. With the transition to a free-market economy in the 1990s, many of those public companies have been privatized and,

⁴ Source: “Snapshot of the labour market in the European Union – 2013”, International Labour Organization, 2013 (http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/media-centre/issue-briefs/WCMS_209596/lang--nl/index.htm)

consequently, have substantially decreased the employment. Therefore, the demand for typical vocational training has dramatically decreased in the last 20 years. The changes in educational policy in the second half of 1990s included the promotion of general education at the secondary level, with the goal of increasing tertiary education enrolment. With the declining industrial sector, the expectations grew about the possibilities of employment in the services; therefore, a modern Polish economy would need highly-skilled young workers, preferably with the tertiary education.

Starting in 2000, the Romanian economy registered a strong rising trend and witnessed eight consecutive years of economic growth. Despite this period of sustainable economic development, the Romanian economy has not created more jobs and failed to recover massive losses in employment from the early years of transition. Nowadays, Romania continues to register low activity rates, while the crisis affected more the capacity of national economy to produce new jobs. Concluding, few job opportunities and low returns from employment explain the modest level of the activity rate in Romania during the last years. Therefore, recent evolution of the activity rate by gender displays minimum variations of the level of labour force, for both men and women.

Since 2007, the Irish labour market context has changed significantly. Unemployment has risen sharply from 4.5 % in 2007 to 12% by 2009 and has plateaued at 14% in 2013. Young people under 25 years, lower skilled workers and craftpersons have been particularly affected by unemployment.

In Spain, the National Statistics Institute (INE) reported that the country had 6,202,700 unemployed workers, the first time in history that over 6 million Spanish workers were jobless. Spain's unemployment rate rose 1.14 percentage points, to 27.16 percent, as 237,400 jobs were lost. The above mentioned data reflect the current crisis situation lived in Spain since 2007. During the 90s and the first years of the XXI century, Spain presented a growth around 4% with great levels of jobs creation. The recession period started in 2007 was the consequence of the international crisis, but also caused by the economic development implemented in Spain which weaknesses were being pointed since 2005. One of the major problems of the Spanish growth was related to the creation of unstable employments, including a great number of workers with temporary labour contracts even in positive economic moments.

Open and Close Sectors

In the framework of the VTeCOACH we defined the following categorization of sectors:

- ✚ **CLOSE SECTOR:** Refer to those sectors especially affected by the economic crisis at EU level that present a significant decrease in the number of job opportunities and lose its importance in the national and EU economies. EU experts currently stress the following areas of activities: construction, administration, retail trade.
- ✚ **OPEN SECTOR:** is a sector that is expected to increase its economic growth in the future. In this sense, open sectors can present different characteristics, but have present common factors such as: demand of workers, demand of qualifications and boost of innovations. At EU level, researchers highlighted 3 areas that will represent a key driven in the future of the EU economy: renewable energies, tourism and telecommunications.

During the research phase in the 5 countries, the following sectors were identified:

CLOSE SECTORS	OPEN SECTORS
➤ Retail trade	✓ Financial services
➤ Catering and food production	✓ Sales and marketing services
➤ Skilled positions in construction*	✓ Skilled and semiskilled positions in construction*
➤ Clothing industry	✓ Protection services
➤ Car manufacturing	✓ Financial intermediation and insurance
➤ Semi-skilled positions in economic services *	✓ Culture and recreation activities*
➤ Constructions in wood	✓ Health innovation sector
➤ Furniture/Interior design industry	✓ Manufacturing sector
➤ Electrical and electronic machines and marble, glass, pottery	
➤ Industry and service	



<p>sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Culture and recreation activities➤ Education➤ Public administration and defence➤ Activities of administrative services➤ Professional, scientific and technical activities➤ Real estate activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Green Economy: Agriculture, forestry and fishing✓ Tourism sector✓ International Financing✓ Renewable Energies and Environment✓ ICT✓ Healthcare
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**Please consider that some sectors can be simultaneously open and close sectors. It depends on the country and the specific profiles.*

Youth Unemployment

“The statistics show that unemployment among young people is increasing across Europe, where in several countries it has even reached more than 40%. (...) What can young people do to increase their employability then? How are they going to find a job? How are they going to effectively present themselves in the labour market and succeed? These are just some of the questions which youth and new graduates are looking answers to.”⁵

In Poland, the situation of the labour market for young VET graduates is tougher than it has been 10 years before. As in many other EU member states, the situation of young people on a labour market is a source of a great concern for politicians and economists. The individuals in the age group 18-24 constituted 19.9 percent of the unemployed persons in Poland.

In Romania, while youth and elderly register much lower activity rates, the economic crisis seems to be having a stronger negative impact on labour participation of the latter. Although the poor activity rate of individuals with 15-24 years old is partly explained by their increasing enrolment in schools, youth remains a group experiencing significant difficulties on the labour market which makes them vulnerable to inactivity. Despite the moderate level of total unemployment, youth unemployment has remained generally high. Furthermore, it has registered an increasing trend for the last years, while its growth rate was more important in crisis years. Nowadays, around two thirds of those unemployed aged 15-24 years are, in fact, long-term unemployed.

In Ireland, findings from the research highlighted the critical challenge in creating opportunities for young people under 25 years of age, who have an unemployment rate of 30%, and over half of them are long-term unemployed. Respondents considered that the youth sector represents a significant infrastructure in facilitating transition from VET to employment, enhancing attainment of transferable skills for life and complementing young people’s engagement in education, training and employment. Each year, over 380,000 young people participate in youth work services throughout the country.

In Italy, young people and low qualified workers are hit hardest, therefore the long-period unemployment rate is very high, as well as for men between 25 and 54, while is more stable for women and high-qualified workers.

Between 2008 and 2012, the overall number of jobs in Spain has dropped by 2.9 million. This process has affected mostly young people (16-29), accounting for a decline of 1.9 million jobs, which represents 66.7% of the total. The main consequence of this process has been a drastic reduction in the number of young people in work and a huge increase in unemployment rates, particularly in those aged 16–24, amongst whom the figure for those out of work reached 52% by 2012.

⁵ Source: AEGEE project (<http://www.projects.aegee.org>)

Transition from VET to Labour Market

“The issue of transitions from education/schooling into the labour market and employment has been a focus of policy concern across the OECD for at least the last 30 years. (...)even if the recession had never occurred, there would still be major problems with designing and managing transitions from education into the labour market.”⁶

The main goal of the VTeCOACH project is to offer a framework of competences development that boosts the employability of young graduates. On one hand it is necessary to know the current situation and demands of the labour market in order to develop the needed competences, and on the other hand it is necessary to understand the barriers and obstacles faced by young graduates to make the transition VET-working world. This is a transversal issue that despite of the economic crisis needs to be addressed in a multidisciplinary approach.

In collaboration with VET trainers and labour counselling professionals, the VTeCOACH partnership identified the following barriers and obstacles for the transition process:

- ✚ Mismatch between the supply and demand: the educational offer of the most VET institutions reflects the old structure of the centrally-planned economy.
- ✚ Lack of proper coordination between the VET sector, public administration and the employers. Especially the employers complain that the schools are unable to adjust their educational offer to their specific needs.
- ✚ Rapid changes on a labour market, which make the planning of the educational offer extremely difficult. It is hard to predict what will be the demand for workers within the next 5 years, and the training period in most VET institutions last 3 or 4 years.
- ✚ Lack of proper teaching tools disponible to VET teachers: many schools have poor training facilities and have difficulties in finding partners (employers) to place their students for the internship.
- ✚ Difficulties to offer high quality education due to lack of proper funding, which results in inadequate training facilities (machines, labs etc.) and lack of motivation from the part of the learners.
- ✚ Lack of job opportunities, especially in small towns and rural areas: increasing unemployment rate among youth in the crisis years and experiences of graduates

⁶ Source: Youth Transitions, the Labour Market and Entry into Employment: Some Reflections and Questions , SKOPE Research Paper No. 108 May 2012 , Cardiff University (<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/researchcentres/skope/publications/researchpapers/WP108.pdf>)

clearly show that they are “outsiders” who struggle to access/get in the labour market in very unfavorable conditions, namely with very few job openings. Therefore, many VET leavers decide to migrate for employment abroad or in the large urban areas where there are more employment opportunities.

- ✚ Poor development of the career counseling services, both in and out of schools.
- ✚ Poor performance of the public employment services, low participation of graduates to active labour market programs: programs developed by the public employment agencies have low funds and, subsequently, low rate of participation. In fact, high share of unemployed graduates don't register themselves to the public employment agencies due to the lack of information.
- ✚ Poor equipment of VET graduates with competences needed on the labour market: generally, VET graduates lack important competences that are required at the workplace, including capacity to put into practice the acquired knowledge, to work with advanced technologies, to find solutions to specific problems, attitudes and work-related values.
- ✚ Lack of information on the job searching methods, professional profiles and employment opportunities: when leaving VET, most graduates have no knowledge on the job searching techniques and make use mostly of their personal relations - friends, relatives and acquaintances - for finding out information on jobs.
- ✚ Reluctance of employers to hire young graduates with no working experience.
- ✚ Discouragement, lack of self-confidence: many VET graduates who don't find a job after graduation lose their self-confidence and become discouraged.
- ✚ Lack of income supports and modern job placement and orientation services that could facilitate a faster transition to the labour market also permitting, to schools and universities, a continuous re-planning, an educational offer adaptation and a permanent link with their environment.

In all countries it was possible to identify the implementation of public and private programs and initiatives to raise awareness and create collaboration bridges between the different actors in order to address this issue. The success levels of these programs is however still very limited.

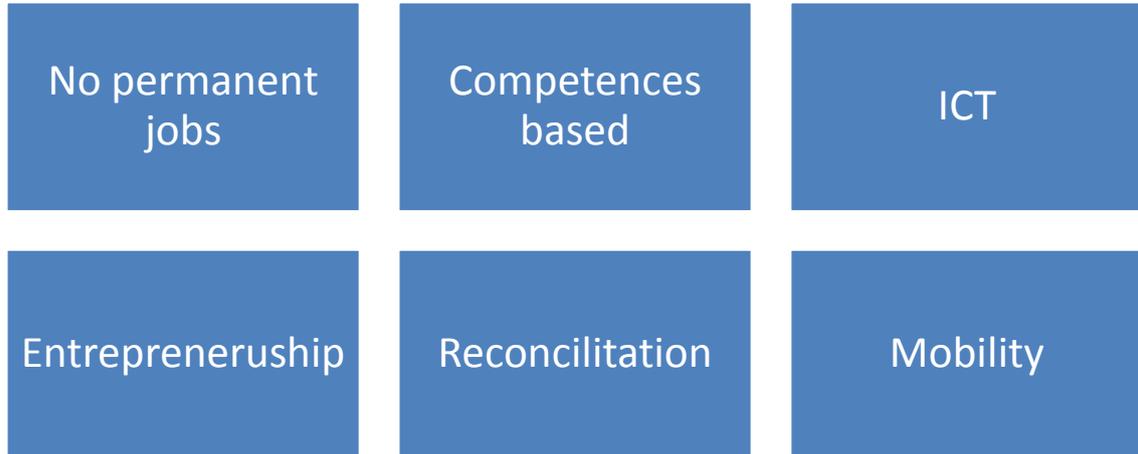
New Working Environments

“Work environment,” as a conceptual framework for reforming working life, may not be readily transferable from the tangible conditions of the industrial context in which it was conceived to the more flexible conditions of modern labour. Since the flexible conditions of work generally presuppose an increased responsibility and some sort of personal commitment on the part of the worker, isolating the environmental conditions from the personal abilities of the worker is becoming more difficult. As a consequence, only to a limited extent can the problems of modern labour be interpreted as work environment issues and subjected to work environment measures. With the propagation of flexible working conditions, work environment institutions and their reform ambitions will be passed by. And work environment reforms, rather than being a practical task of coordinating different protective measures at workplaces, will be reduced to an argument within the ideologically motivated rejection of an increasingly polarized labour market.”⁷

What do we mean by new working environments? What are the key elements to understand the jobs of the future and the workplaces? From the VTeCOACH project we propose some conclusions and proposals to be considered.

- ✚ No permanent jobs- The concept of “lifetime job disappears”: Is it an opportunity or a threat?
- ✚ Internal and External mobility of Workers due to imbalances in the demand of profiles and the internationalization of companies.
- ✚ The impact of ICT in working styles: teleworking.
- ✚ Entrepreneurship and Creation of Self-Employment: The future will be full of “own bosses”?
- ✚ Reconciliation between professional and personal life.
- ✚ Competences based on working environments: Interpersonal and Intrapersonal skills.

⁷ Source: “The future of work environment reforms: does the concept of work environment apply within the new economy?” (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12641266>)



5. Wicked Competences: Identification and Definition

As mentioned in previous chapters, the main aim of this document is to define and identify a framework of competences to be evaluated and developed among the VET learners and teachers. We highlight the importance on focus on transversal competences that need to be assessed and developed through innovative learning methodologies.

Before presenting the selection of competences we would like to clarify some of the definitions we use to define the competences we will exploit within the VTeCOACH project:

THE EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR KEY COMPETENCES

It is a reference document that identifies and defines the key abilities and knowledge that everyone needs in order to achieve employment, personal fulfillment, social inclusion and active citizenship in today's rapidly-changing world. Competences are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. The document defines 8 key competences equally important:

- 1) Communication in the mother tongue;
- 2) Communication in foreign languages;
- 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- 4) Digital competence;
- 5) Learning to learn;
- 6) Social and civic competences;
- 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- 8) Cultural awareness and expression.

For more information regarding this document, please access:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf

WICKED COMPETENCES

“Wicked” competences are ones that are hard to define and that cause assessors lots of problems. (...) these competences are often soft skills and other complex achievements that graduate employers say they value. (...)The term ‘wicked’ competences is inspired by the idea

that there are ‘wicked’ problems (...). These are the problems that can occupy unlimited time, arouse passions and which are ultimately beyond consensual resolution”.⁸

We can define wicked competences as those **“transversal” competences associated with behaviours and attitudes that increase the employability of VET learners in the transition to the labour market.**

To know more about wicked competences please refer to the report “The assessment of ‘wicked’ competences: a report to the Practice-based Professional Learning Centre for excellence in teaching and learning in the Open University” by Peter Knight and Anna Page.

NEW SKILLS FOR NEW JOBS

On the 16th December 2008 the European Commission presented **proposals for better job matching and more effective ways to analyse and predict which skills will be needed in tomorrow's labour market.** New Skills for New Jobs proposes a series of actions to match skills with vacancies, to organise skills assessments on a permanent basis, to pool the efforts of Member States and other international organisations, and to develop better information on future needs.

For more information regarding this document please access:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/com868_en.pdf

The VteCOACH map of competences is divided in 3 blocks. Each of them includes different sub-levels or sub-skills, besides recommendations for its training and assessment



⁸ Source: Knight, Peter and Page, Anna, *The assessment of ‘wicked’ competences: a report to the Practice-based Professional Learning Centre for excellence in teaching and learning in the Open University*, January 2007



COMPETENCE CATEGORY	TEAM WORK
Sub-Competences Associated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Communication  Interculturality abilities  Self-management,  Conflict resolution  Ethical principles  Time management  Leadership  Decision making
Definition	<p>Teamwork means working cooperatively and collaboratively with others to achieve collective goals.</p> <p>Team work competence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Work within the dynamics of a group. ✓ Show commitment to the team's purpose and goals. ✓ Accept and provide feedback in a constructive and considerate way. ✓ Share information and encourage others to do the same. ✓ Support and motivate the group to perform at its best. ✓ Recognize the role of conflict when appropriate. ✓ Build professional relationships. ✓ Show accountability to the team' and follow through on commitments. ✓ Work effectively with different personalities across a variety of social and professional situations. ✓ Consider diverse, cross-cultural perspectives and working styles.
Importance of the Competence for learners and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The cooperation with others is a vital need to develop a professional career. ✓ Highly individualistic positions are rare within the labour market: people always end up contacting other people. ✓ Sense of solidarity and commitment with other colleagues and the company makes the workers more effectively, so team work can help to develop those skills.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Innovation improvements by exchanging ideas and knowledge.✓ Boosting communication with peers, managers and clients.
Assessment	<p>Proposal of indicators to assess this competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Oral assessments and ongoing review.✓ Examining the manner in which new approaches are taken✓ Innovative practice being evidenced with regard to communication of a core message.✓ Taking decisions in group.✓ Planning common actions.✓ Being adaptable and flexible in interpersonal relationship.✓ Ability to deliver in-time and quality outputs while working in a team.✓ Ability to interact efficiently with his/her co-workers.✓ Managing engagements.✓ Fulfil deadlines and expectations.



COMPETENCE CATEGORY	CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE THINKING
Sub-Competences Associated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Adaptability  Reaction to change  Thinking outside the box  Flexibility  Spirit of initiative  Elasticity
Brief Definition	<p>Creativity is the competence to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that can be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others.</p> <p>A creative person is able to generate new ideas and concepts, or make connections between ideas where none previously existed.</p> <p>Innovative thinking is the practical application of the creativity that can be used for daily problem solving. It is a way of looking at problems or situations from a fresh perspective that suggests unorthodox solutions (which may look unsettling at first).</p>
Importance of the Competence for learners and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Employers need workers that can adapt themselves to different situations and environments. ✓ During the last years we attended to a real modification of work and of the worker role within a company. Employers ask a high ability to adapt to role and task changes. ✓ Employers, more and more, will need employees able to do their tasks but, more, to go beyond it developing solutions or searching for innovative and creative ways to manage a project. ✓ Today, companies work with a reduced production time. Consequently, the time to solve problematic situations is really limited. To answer to this situation employee need to be able to develop a structured reasoning aimed to solve complex situations. ✓ The creativity of the staff is vital in order to companies' survival. ✓ The knowledge-based, modern economy requires workers to be



	<p>constantly “on the move”: they must be able to identify new possibilities and seize the chance of further development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Elasticity of employees is vital as the company needs sometimes to react really quickly to the changing demand of the customers.✓ In the modern economy it is almost impossible to hold the same job and same set of working assignments from the graduation till the retirement.✓ The employee cannot remain passive and perform only the tasks he/she has been told to do. He or she must be open-minded, must ask questions, sometimes even question the orders of the superior (in order to specify them and making them more precise). The employee is expected to come up with the new ideas, methods of problem-solving✓ One should be able to adapt quickly to the new position; conservatism and passiveness is bad.
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>Proposal of indicators to assess this competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Managing projects in a proactive way.✓ Being able to plan the activities.✓ Having incisive representation and negotiation skills.✓ Having individual work abilities and teamwork skill.✓ Adapting efficiently to new situations or to different teams and individuals.✓ Understanding and appreciate different or opposite points of view.✓ Accepting changes on tasks or work organisation.



COMPETENCE CATEGORY	LEARNING TO LEARN
<p>Sub-Competences Associated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Problem solving  Self-actualization  Update of competences  Work under pressure  Decision-make  Self-development
<p>Brief Definition</p>	<p>Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organise one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training.</p> <p>It includes the ability to realise your potential capacities by becoming involved in meaningful pursuits and demonstrating a commitment to long-term goals, persistently trying to improve results.</p>
<p>Importance of the Competence for learners and employers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence. ✓ If someone is strong in this area then it will lead to a sense of fulfilment in their workplace and their self-worth and confidence levels will not be measured by materialistic measures alone. ✓ It is one of the 8 key competences of the lifelong framework. ✓ Employers need workers able to continuously process information and adapt to the new tasks they need to perform. ✓ It increases the chances of training and learning in other skills and competences.



Assessment

Proposal of indicators to assess this competence:

- ✓ Identifying the final aims.
- ✓ Analysing the situations.
- ✓ Planning solutions.
- ✓ Carrying out plans.
- ✓ Evaluating of results.
- ✓ Importance of setting action-orientated goals.
- ✓ Tracking self confidence levels in relation to completion of the set goals.
- ✓ Allowing the setting of personalised aims with potential for self-evaluation.

6. Competences assessment at EU level: methodologies and tools

“Competence-based assessment is a form of assessment that is derived from a specification of a set of outcomes; that so clearly states both the outcomes-general and specific-that assessors, students and interested third parties can all make reasonably objective judgements with respect to student achievement or non-achievement of these outcomes; and that certifies student progress on the basis of demonstrated achievement of these outcomes. Assessments are not tied to time served in formal educational settings”⁹

Assessment is a key part of the learning process and plays a major in the development of competences. Both employers and trainers recognize the need to implement effective assessment methodologies that enable to identify the performance of the workers/learners and provide them with the specific tools to improve and progress.

When talking about competences assessment, especially “soft skills” or “wicked competences”, there are several challenges that must be taken into consideration:

- ✚ Availability of appropriate assessment methodologies and guidelines.
- ✚ Validity and reliability of any potential assessments used.
- ✚ Tutors trained and skilled to assess non-formal learning outcomes and competences.
- ✚ Adequate time or significance being attributed to these skills by department and faculty managers.
- ✚ Lack of space within the official VET systems to evaluate this type of skills.
- ✚ Difficulties to find best practices and inspirational examples from other sectors that can be transferred into the VET system.

During the research phase to identify good practices in the framework of competences assessment, it was hard to specifically find examples that could be considered as best practices. Trainers have implemented few innovative methodologies and the results achieved in most of the cases are not relevant. On the other hand, the assessment of wicked competences has not been the major focus.

Among the best practices selected during the research phase in Spain, Italy, Poland, Ireland and Romania, the following methodologies for the competences assessment were identified:

- ✚ Group dynamics
- ✚ Discussion groups
- ✚ Portfolios
- ✚ Learning diaries

⁹ Source: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/resources/heca/heca_cl25.pdf

- ✚ Self-assessment
- ✚ External assessment
- ✚ Quantitative assessment

In all countries we found a low level of awareness regarding the use of 360° assessment methodology and coaching paradigms which are the major focus of our project. Nevertheless, the common reflections consider the union of these two methods as a reinforcement of their potential benefits, reducing the possibility of negative results. It is also worth of mention that the coaching practices are better known by counsellors, human resources managers and practitioners facilitating personal development than the VET professionals.

However, it was possible to identify some positive characteristics of a 360° methodology:

- ✚ The person can choose to whom make the questionnaire, this way the results are accepted easier.
- ✚ A well-rounded feedback that provides different points of view.
- ✚ Permitting people to be honest, because the assessment is anonymous and people feel free to express personal opinions and worries.
- ✚ Reducing discrimination risks, because the feedback comes from a number of individuals in various functions and roles.
- ✚ Individual education processes.
- ✚ Better development of competences needed in the current economic environment that are characterised by significant changes and uncertainties.

The interviewed target groups also highlighted some barriers and obstacles that need to be taken into consideration to apply a 360° evaluation methodology:

- ✚ Wrong results' interpretation.
- ✚ Exceptional expectations for the process (the feedback received is only a starting point).
- ✚ People receiving feedback have no one to ask for clarification or more information about the different comments.
- ✚ More time consuming as against traditional assessment and counselling techniques.
- ✚ Difficulties for the learners and trainers to assess their peers.
- ✚ Difficulties to assure the effectiveness and objectiveness of the evaluation.
- ✚ Need to adapt the evaluation tools to the emotional and intellectual level of the target group.

When asked about the use and implementation of coaching methodologies for the assessment and improvement of competences, we received the following positive feedback:

- ✚ Growth of emotional competence in teachers, students and their families.
- ✚ Increase of motivation and self-confidence.
- ✚ Support teachers' empowerment.
- ✚ Improvement of the participants' motivation by defining personal pathways.
- ✚ Individualized training focuses that combines the participation of all actors.

On the other hand some barriers and obstacles were highlighted:

- ✚ The coach shares his/her opinion too early.
- ✚ The coach has a tendency to prescribe simplistic solutions to complex issues.
- ✚ The coaching became a "therapy" in which the coachee is addicted.
- ✚ Need of specific training before its implementation.
- ✚ Difficulties to implement an online coaching process.
- ✚ Difficulties associated to the business approach of the coaching.

7. Relevant conclusions for VTeCOACH project

The present document focuses on the different factors related to the wicked competences assessment in VET systems. During its elaboration, the partnership analysed the different VET and labour market contexts at European level. The following conclusions were extracted:

- ✚ **Need for a revision and reform of the European VET systems including:**
 - Improve of the cooperation between national and regional authorities, employers' associations and representatives and the VET actors.
 - More elastic approach in the educational offer, which takes into the consideration the local demand for vocational skills.
 - More emphasis on “wicked” competences learning and teaching.
 - Introduction of innovations that enable a more individualized training offer that meets the specific learning needs of different learners.

- ✚ **Vulnerability of the project target group in relation to employment and job opportunities.** The current labour market presents some sectors that are still offering job opportunities, but traditional sectors are facing a severe crisis. The quick changes in the labour market also brought difficulties for the adequacy of the training provided to the employers requests for competences and qualifications.

- ✚ **Tackle youth unemployment is becoming a major concern of national States and European authorities.** The measures took so far were not effective and the results are far away from the expectations generated.

- ✚ **The labour market scenario in all European countries is similar:** returning to employment growth, achieving significant recovery in our labour market participation rates and equipping people for the jobs of tomorrow.

- ✚ **There are upskilling requirements at occupational levels across all sectors.** The harnessing of technical and soft skills are recognised as key drivers of future competitiveness. Better qualified people evidently have a better chance of securing/holding on to employment and once in a job they may be more innovative and change the nature of their job and contribute to increased business.

- ✚ **The integration of such competence development frameworks into the meta-level programmes is not a key priority.**

- ✚ The competences to be assessed and “coached” in the framework of the project were divided in 3 blocks: **TEAM WORK; CREATIVITY AND INNOVATIVE THINKING and LEARNING TO LEARN.**

- ✚ **Lack of use and implementation of specific evaluation and assessment methodologies that facilitate the development and improvement of wicked competences.** The selected good practices in the 5 countries indicate that a successful VET process needs to be more orientated toward the development of wicked competences and toward equipping the VET learners with capacity to respond and adapt to changing and challenging labour environments.
- ✚ **Lack of awareness and use of 360° evaluation methodologies and coaching paradigms** in VET associated with some barriers and obstacles to implement them in an effective way.

In this sense, the project partners consider that there is a specific space and interest for the implementation of the VTeCOACH project. VET professionals, educational stakeholders, and labour market actors recognize the need to assess and develop wicked competences as a great part of the VET learners' preparation and education in order to better access the labour market. On the other hand, trainers and other VET practitioners need to also develop "soft skills" in order to better manage the quality of the provided education.

The VTeCOACH project also presents an added value by providing different tools and resources to the target group in order to practical apply the feedback received during the evaluation process. In this sense, we would say that the VTeCOACH project is divided in two complementary phases:

1st phase: application of a 360° evaluation methodology that involves learners and teachers in the process of competences assessment.

2nd phase: use of coaching resources to establish training pathways to improve or apply the feedback received from the evaluation process.

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Project Promoter



Project Coordinator



Project Partners

