



My competence  
for Europe

# User Manual

## What is KOMPASS?

The underlying philosophy of the KOMPASS Method is to present and document the professional skills and intercultural competences acquired within the scope of a work placement abroad in a well-structured manner. In 5 steps, the partners involved in a mobility project (sending organisation, mobility participants and hosting organisation) can align the curricula and learning objectives in a dialogue and visualise the progress of competence gained abroad.

“This is based on the KOMPASS Competence-Chart. With the help of the various “Can Descriptions” allocated to the various fields of operation, competence profiles and their changes can be shown

An E-portfolio is created in the KOMAPSS database for the mobility participants, in which they can describe their learning achievements which are then visualised as progress of competence in the “Competence Radar”.

The additional benefit of the KOMPASS Method is to point out the interaction between the interpersonal, social and intercultural competences acquired abroad and the professional skills, so that it is possible to incorporate learning informal or non-formal achievements into the assessment of the internship abroad.

- **Sending organisations** are provided with a tool to visualise the competence profile of the mobility participants and to align learning objectives and thus to facilitate the selection of the appropriate company for the placement.
  
- **Hosting organisations** are, in good time, provided with information regarding the professional qualifications, language skills, personal and social skills of a mobility participant and his/her expectations to the work placement.
  
- **Mobility participants** can take active part in the alignment of their learning objectives abroad and the visualisation of their achievements and will have a transparent proof of the competence progress made.

## THE KOMPASS-Method

|   | <b>Sending Organisation</b><br>(school, company, agency )  | <b>Mobility Participants</b><br>(apprentices, workers, specialists -in-training)                                | <b>Hosting Organisation</b><br>(companies, schools, agencies )   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>1 Register in KOMPASS Database</b>               | <p>Register in the KOMPASS Database</p> <p>Describe your organisation</p> <p>Describe your mobility project</p> <p>Name the hosting organisations</p>  | <p>Register in the KOMPASS-database</p>   | <p>Register in the KOMPASS-database</p> <p>Describe your organisation</p> <p>Describe the assignment options of interns in your organisation</p> |
| <b>2 Preparing competence profiles</b>              | <p>Create a personal E-portfolio for your mobility participants</p> <p>Ask participant/s to describe the objectives connected with the work placement abroad and to prepare a competence profile</p> | <p>Describe your objectives connected with the work placement abroad</p> <p>Prepare your competence profile</p> |  |
| <b>3 Conclusion of a KOMPASS Learning Agreement</b> | <p>Define and determine the expectations, curricula and learning objectives of the work placement abroad</p>   |   |  |
| <b>4 Description of Learning Achievements</b>       |  | <p>Use the E-portfolio to describe the experience made abroad and assess your competence gain</p>               |  |
| <b>5 Documentation of Learning Achievements</b>     | <p>In the KOMPASS Certificate you and your foreign partner certify the mobility participants' learning achievements and competence progress.</p>   |   |  |

## **Users' Guide**

### **1 Register in KOMPASS Database:**

The KOMPASS Database makes it easy for organisations in charge of a mobility project to coordinate the alignment process regarding the learning objectives and curricula of work placements abroad with their mobility participants and the host organisations.

First of all, have yourself and your organisation registered via one of the named project partners. This is a requirement of data privacy protection law. The use of the database is free of charge.

When you have been provided with your access data, you can log in and will be guided to a website where you can describe your organisation and store a logo and contact details.

In the next step, you enter your mobility projects and give a detailed description of the same. This will later help you to allocate mobility participants to a certain project.

Subsequently, you enter the profiles of the foreign partner organisations involved in your mobility projects and the hosting companies, respectively.

These details will automatically be shown in the printouts for your KOMPASS Learning Agreements and the KOMPASS Certificate.

### **Hands-on recommendations**

All beginnings are difficult – this is very much true of highly complex database systems. Don't give up. Proceed step by step and download the users' guide provided in various languages on the KOMPASS Database homepage.

The more often you use the system, the easier it will be. Enter test data for several projects or a test group of mobility participants as soon as possible. Repeating these entries makes you more and more familiar with the database. Since all entries are stored, they will be available for later use and procedures are accelerated.

Transmit to your partners the relevant link to the KOMPASS Database asking them to complete any entries relating to their organisation.

## **2** Preparing competence profiles

The KOMPASS Method aims at actively involving the mobility participants in the definition of curricula and learning objectives in connection with their work placements abroad.

Ask the applicants or participants to prepare an individual competence profile in the KOMPASS Database and to give details regarding their motivation and objectives of their projected stay abroad.

For this purpose, you create a website in the KOMPASS Database for each applicant or participant, which they will have to design individually in the form of an E-portfolio. These details will be completed by a competence profile. Via two emails and an attached link sent by you, the mobility participants will get access to a list of „Can Descriptions“ with the help of which they can assess their skills in the various competence fields.

Subsequently, the findings of this self-assessment are visualised in the form of two „Competence Radars“. In line with the information provided on the portfolio site you and the hosting partner will, in due time, be provided with an overview of the individual objectives of the work placement abroad; this will facilitate the agreement of learning objectives and the selection of the appropriate company for the placement.

It is above all for „pool projects“ where participants are selected all over Germany and in which the applicants are not known before, that the KOMPASS Method has a clear advantage over the previous methods.

### **Hands-on recommendations**

The additional benefit of the KOMPASS Method is the active involvement of the mobility participants into the preparatory process of their work placement. They can keep track of the enhancement of the respective participant portfolio and find out in what way the participants assess their skills in various fields.

Share information in the form of dialogues: send the invitation to generate the E-portfolio and to assess the individual competence profiles in separate emails and give positive feedback. This adds to mutual trust.

To facilitate the email communication, we have stored a number of standard texts in the KOMPASS Database.

In the event a participant does not make any entries in the KOMPASS Database for a longer period, offer help: sometimes the description of one's own motivation for the work placement abroad or the preparing of a competence profile is difficult for the applicants. It is true that the KOMPASS Method is to promote the location- and time-independent alignment of curricula and learning objectives among the partners, but it cannot take the place of real dialogue situation.

### **3 Conclusion of a KOMPASS Learning Agreement**

The KOMPASS Database provides you with a form with the help of which you prepare a learning agreement, which, apart from the description of the intended curricula and learning objectives of the work placement, also contains the participant's individual competence profile.

The advantage of this method is that the form of the two previously described "Competence Radars" allows the intended competence development to be visualised to all parties involved so that, in the course of the work placement abroad and for later documentation of the respective learning achievements, reference can be made accordingly.

The template created in the KOMPASS Database is converted into a pdf file which can be printed or sent to the international partner via email for signature; it can be attached to the Leonardo-da-Vinci- Work Placement Agreement as an addendum containing details of the competence-related learning objectives.

#### **Hands-on recommendations**

Create a standard learning agreement template for your mobility project.

With reference to the competence fields in the KOMPASS Competence Chart, describe the learning objectives you pursue with your mobility project. If need be, refer to the wording of the "Can Descriptions"

Use the matrix of the KOMPASS Competence Chart to allocate your learning objective wording. As this matrix is available in seven European languages, the partners can read them, too. This facilitates the alignment of the learning objectives for your project with your international partners.

Complete the standard template by the information provided by your mobility participants in their E-portfolio in their competence profiles. As a rule, these descriptions contain very specific information about the learning objectives pursued in the work placement abroad. These learning objective wordings can be aligned and completed in the scope of the selection interview.

## 4 Description of Learning Achievements

In their E-portfolios, mobility participants describe their experience and learning progress made abroad. In addition, they update their competence profiles to visualise their competence progress.

For this purpose and prior to the end of the work placement abroad, please send two emails to your mobility participants asking them to prepare new competence profiles. Via a link sent to them they will again get access to a list of „Can Descriptions” with the help of which they can assess their skills in the various competence fields.

Based on the findings of the first and second competence assessment, you generate two individual “Competence Radars” in the KOMPASS Database, which, by two parallel horizontal lines, visualises the fields in which the participant sees his/her individual competence progress.

Together with the entries in their E-portfolios, the participants can so describe their own perception of the experience and learning achievements made abroad.

### **Hands-on recommendations**

Whenever possible, incorporate the use of the KOMPASS E-portfolio into the tutorial guidance of your mobility project.

Make sure that your mobility participants in the host country have unlimited access to the Internet so that they can work with their portfolios.

Please also advise your international partner organisations as to the various possibilities to use the database with the help of the information provided in various languages

Support the use of the E-portfolio with regular email communication and inform about the various applications

Motivate your mobility participants to use their E-portfolios as a diary while they are abroad in order to let their friends and relatives know about the progress and outstanding events.

## **5 Documentation of learning Achievements:**

With two “Competence Radars” and the descriptions in the E-portfolio, the KOMPASS Certificate describes the learning achievements and competence progress made during the work placement abroad. This self-assessment of the participants is completed by supporting certifications by both the sending and the hosting organisation.

This step of the KOMPASS Method aims at actively involving the mobility participants into the reflection and wording of their learning achievements.

Subsequently, the KOMPASS Certificate is attached to the EuropassMobility to make the individual learning process transparent and to show the competence progress in a comprehensible manner.

### **Hands-on recommendations :**

Prepare a template of the KOMPASS Certificate for your mobility project. You can adapt it individually.

Send this template to your mobility participants while they are still abroad pointing out that with the description of learning achievements in their E-portfolio they can actively contribute to the documentation in the KOMPASS Certificate.

If need be, offer help regarding the wording of the learning achievements.

The KOMPASS “Competence Chart “ can help you with the competence-related wording and allocation of the learning achievements. As this matrix is available in seven European languages, your partners can also read to which competence fields the learning achievements described in the KOMPASS Certificate refers to.

If possible, establish a relationship of the description of learning achievements and the previously agreed learning objectives and try to describe the learning achievements in all four competence fields of the KOMPASS Competence Chart in order to document the value and sustainability of the work placement abroad in the professional, interpersonal and intercultural respect.

## **KOMPASS: Conceptual Background**

### **Why competence-related proof of learning achievements?**

Our world is getting more and more versatile. In the past few years, the new media have massively accelerated the pace of communication and global information sharing. So, people are faced with complex challenges. In many fields of work and life, people have to be able to adapt to changing circumstances.

The ability to assess different situations and adapt one's actions accordingly is referred to as competence. It is the interaction of one's knowledge and skills, and, at the same time, the preservation of one's values and attitudes in such a way that challenges, assigned tasks and raised problems can be dealt with and solved independently and successfully.

The competence-related proof of learning achievements makes it easier to assess how well young people and adults are trained to face to challenges of society and work.

### **What competence conception does KOMPASS follow?**

Work placements abroad offer a good learning arena to apply the knowledge, experience and skills gained in the home country in a totally different sociocultural environment. Accordingly, it is the objective of the KOMPASS Method to elucidate the interaction of professional and intercultural competences acquired during a work placement abroad.

Therefore, KOMPASS defines competence as the ability to communicate in a different sociocultural environment, to be able to familiarise with the environment and to act goal-oriented in order to successfully handle assigned professional tasks or everyday situations..

This conception is based on the content of of the competence definition of the DeSeCoStudy of OECD, which classifies key competence inn three interacting areas:

- a) Capability to use media, resources or tools ( e.g. IT or languages) effectively, to adapt them individually to use them interactively;
- b) Capability to interact with people from various cultures and to integrate within socially heterogeneous groups
- c) Capability to accept responsibility to shape their lives and act autonomously within complex contexts.

The KOMPASS-Competence Cart follows this competence conception and defines „Can Descriptions“ for international mobility projects, which gradually describe the capability to communicate in a foreign language, the application of professional skills and the orientation and integration in a totally different cultural environment.

## How can the „KOMPASS-competence chart be interpreted?

The „KOMPASS-competence chart is divided into 4 competence fields which reflect different areas of action of a work placement abroad:

| Language Competence   |          |           | Professional skills   |                |                      |
|---|----------|-----------|---|----------------|----------------------|
| Ability to communicate with and understand people in the host country |          |           | Ability to interactively apply work procedures, methods, machines and tools in a different cultural environment |                |                      |
| Listening   | Speaking | Dialogues | Competence in the field of mathematics/science  | Media literacy | technical competence |

| Social skills   |                           |                            | Personal skills  |                                |   |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Ability to familiarise with and communicate in a different cultural environment |                           |                            | Ability to shape the personal living environment in a different cultural environment |                                |   |
| Ability to integrate  | Ability to work in a team | Ability to judge and shape | Problem-solving capacity   | Initiative / Planning capacity | Self-assessment Perception by third parties |

To facilitate the differentiation of capacities, the KOMPASS Competence Chart includes 6 horizontal levels. They are based on the levels laid down in [the European Qualification Framework \(EQF\)](#) and reflect in an ascending order the ability to solve tasks and problems in an autonomous, , goal-oriented and responsible manner:

| EQF-Competence definition   | KOMPASS-Level | Target group   |
|---|---------------|--|
| Working or learning with direct guidance within a pre-structured context  | <b>1</b>      | People in initial vocational training (IVT)                                  |
| Working or learning under guidance involving a certain level of autonomy  | <b>2</b>      | People in initial vocational training (IVT)                                  |
| Responsible for the completion of assigned work or learning tasks. Ability to adapt one's behaviour to the respective circumstances.  | <b>3</b>      | People in initial vocational training (IVT)<br>People on labour market (PLM) |
| Acting autonomously within the action parameters of work and learning contexts, which, as a rule, are known, but could be subject to change. Supervising routine work of others, assuming a certain responsibility for the assessment and improvement of work or learning activities. | <b>4</b>      | People on labour market (PLM)  |
| Guiding and supervising in work and learning contexts with unforeseen changes; verification and development of one's own performance and that of third parties.   | <b>5</b>      | Expert and teaching staff in vocational education and training (VET-pro)     |
| Leading of complex technical or professional activities or projects and assumption of responsibility to make decisions in unforeseeable work or learning contexts. Assumption of responsibility for the occupational development of individuals or groups of people.                  | <b>6</b>      | Expert and teaching staff in vocational education and training (VET-pro)     |

In total, the “KOMPASS-Competence Chart“ has 72 „Can Descriptions“ as identifiers of competences.

Deliberately, their depiction is very general so that they can be applied to as many work areas and types of mobility projects as possible.

However, it is possible to vary the number of “Can Descriptions” within the scope of competence descriptions or to adapt them to the specific occupations to align the information about the mobility participants’ competence profiles to occupational requirements and objectives of a mobility project or training

In spite of the reference to the “Key Competences for lifelong Learning“ and the levels of the „European Qualification Framework“, the KOMPASS Competence Chart does not aim at constituting a generally accepted definition basis. The system mainly provides a frame of reference with learning achievements being allocated to competences and being visualised in a comprehensible way. This is mainly done to show the interaction of individually acquired, intercultural competences to be used at work and the gain of professional skills acquired abroad.

The additional benefit of the KOMPASS Competence Chart is that with the help of the Can Descriptions, it is possible to word learning objectives in relation to competences, which makes it easier to determine the competence fields to be focused on, to make respective competence gains transparent and to document them.

When determining learning objectives and curricula of a mobility project, the sending and hosting organisations will have to arrange whether the learning achievements made abroad can be approved with regard to the qualification.

## How to read a “Competence-Radar“?

Prior to and at the end of a work placement abroad, the mobility participants give – within the scope of a competence description - a self-assessment of their skills and the development of their personal competence profiles. This competence profile is shown in the KOMPASS Database in the form of two “Competence Radars” each comprising six competence categories.

In line with the KOMPASS Competence Chart, the competence description includes 4 fields: language skills, professional skills, interpersonal and personal skills. On a scale (0-6), the participants can assess the degree of their individual „Can Descriptions“:

| Assessment | Knowledge                                    | Experience |
|------------|--|------------|
| 0          | I don't know, I have never tried             |            |
| 1          | Trained in it, but have never tried          |            |
| 2          | I have done this before, a little experience |            |
| 3          | Trained in it, but only little experience    |            |
| 4          | Quite good at it, some experience            |            |
| 5          | Good at it, experienced                      |            |
| 6          | Specialising in it, in-depth experience      |            |

The KOMPASS Database refers to these assessments to establish a mean value for each competence category which, in the respective Competence Radar is shown as a line. Thus, the Competence Radars give a first overview of the fields of strengths and weaknesses as described by the mobility participants. However, they do not reflect the actual competence

level: some mobility participants tend to underrate their own skills. Others overrate them in order not to put their opportunities regarding a work placement at risk.

Therefore, the self-assessment should be specified, completed or, if need be, corrected within the scope of the counselling or selection interview. Since the KOMPASS Method is designed to visualise competence gains, the competence profile prepared prior to the stay abroad should be as realistic as possible; if the initial assessment is too high, the competence gains can hardly be made visible.

The assessment of Can Descriptions within the scope of the second competence description made at the end of the stay abroad, should – because of the experience made abroad – lead to better results. In the Competence Radar the results are shown as a second line which, ideally, should be above the first line, so that the individual competence gain for each competence category is visible. As, however, this does not allow any conclusion to the context in which the competence gains were achieved, they should be specified in the description of the learning achievements in the E-portfolio.

The allocation of learning achievements to the levels of the KOMPASS Competence Chart depends on the format of the competence description:

A selection from all Can Descriptions in the KOMPASS Competence Chart allows an assessment of the competence levels of applicants whose initial levels or work experience are not precisely known. Based on the results established with the help of the competence description, the learning objectives can then be discussed for each level and the subsequent competence description can be specified.

A target-group- or occupation-related specialisation of the competence description (lowering of levels, completion by Can Descriptions relating to the occupational field) facilitates the allocation of results to the levels laid down in the Competence Chart.

Whether mobility participants have the competence levels that are required for a qualification-related assessment of their learning achievements will have to be agreed by the participants, the sending and hosting organisations in an in-depth dialogue.

## **How are the learning achievements assessed in relation to the competences?**

There can be various approaches to cope with situations successfully, this is also true of task-and problem -solving. Therefore it is difficult to use the standard terms „correct“ or „wrong“ to determine whether the result meets the expectations. In fact, the assessment as to whether the chosen approach has led to the desired result in an efficient way, depends on the perception of the parties involved.

Within the scope of a mobility project, the completion of and coping with everyday situations abroad can be assessed as special achievement by the mobility participants, whereas the representatives of the sending or hosting organisations may consider this a matter of course. On the other hand, it may happen that mobility participants assess their work achievements made during the work placement as poor, whereas the hosting companies consider them very satisfactory.

Consequently, there must be a dialogue to assess competence-related learning achievements to align the participants' self-assessment and third-party evaluation. The learners have to assess themselves in which fields they have acquired additional skills which is then certified by the teaching staff with their own assessment of the achievements.

Therefore, the mobility participants are expected to show personal responsibility to design and assess the learning process. The E-portfolio of the KOMPASS Method serves this purpose. It provides the mobility participants with a platform to record and present learning achievements that allow reference to their learning progress and the achievement of agreed learning objectives. The teaching staff should therefore aim at motivating the mobility

participants to describe their learning achievements in a most detailed and comprehensive way.

The information provided in the E–portfolio, in turn, is the basis of the assessment of learning achievements in a dialogue. The previously agreed learning objectives constitute the assessment standards. In the assessment interview , it can be jointly agreed in how far the described learning achievements comply with the expectations and in which fields competence gains can be established.

This positive and reassuring assessment method allows to document learning progress in individual competence areas if the respective mobility participants were not able to achieve all learning objectives during the work placement.