



EUROPEAN KEY COMPETENCES AND LABOUR MARKET

EMPLOYERS' EXPECTATIONS IN FRANCE, ITALY,
POLAND, SPAIN AND THE NETHERLANDS



Introduction



The labour market is well aware of the value and expectations of formal education. The knowledge gathered with degrees is connected to the national and European Qualification Framework. When the experience comes from non- formal education - international volunteering or internship - it is far more difficult to value and capitalize the acquired competencies.

An international mobility experience is the best way to grow personally and professionally. In fact, volunteering or work experience abroad has benefits, as it takes place in a different cultural context, pushing the participants against their boundaries and limits and allowing them to understand how to overcome those obstacles and to empower their abilities.

In order to get a better sense of how the labour market values these skills developed outside of the formal learning environment/during an international mobility, PC Impress project¹ partners (ADICE, CESIE, PRO WORK, STEP, VCC) carried out the survey among 100 employers from 5 countries (France, Spain, Italy, Poland and The Netherlands) from October 2015 to January 2016.

The main aim of the survey was **to understand the expectations and needs of employers in the term of transversal skills for young people who have completed an international mobility.**

The questionnaire was based in 8 European key competences (communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression). Each of the competence categories was further divided into practical examples, which were ranked from most to least important.

The data collected within the conducted survey was compared and analysed to find similarities and differences in the views of different countries. At the end of each competence categories, there are questions for reflection for the future employees to think about their own attitude in work environment.

This study regarding European key competences and the labour market is carried out in the framework of Erasmus+ PC IMPRESS project. Its aim is to promote and capitalize formal and non-formal knowledge and soft & hard skills of people returning from a mobility experience as a way to strengthen their employability.

¹ For further information, visit online platform www.yourcompetences.eu

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Characteristics of study panel



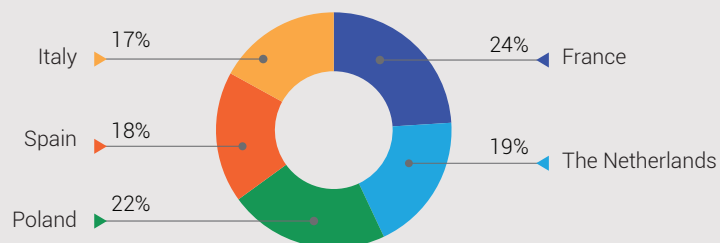
Characteristics of respondents



100 participants from 5 different countries

The number of respondents providing the data was divided amongst the project partner countries as following:

- Italy 17 respondents
- Spain 18 respondents
- Poland 22 respondents
- The Netherlands 19 respondents
- France 24 respondents

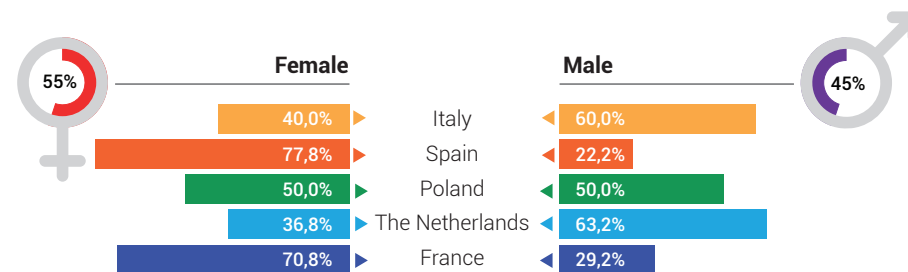


Within the survey conducted in the different partner countries, a number of questions, regarding personal information, were optional, such as (but not limited to) names and email addresses.

To ensure the protection of the respondents' personal data (when they decided to share this information), it has not been included in this labour market needs analysis.

55% of the respondents are female and 45% male

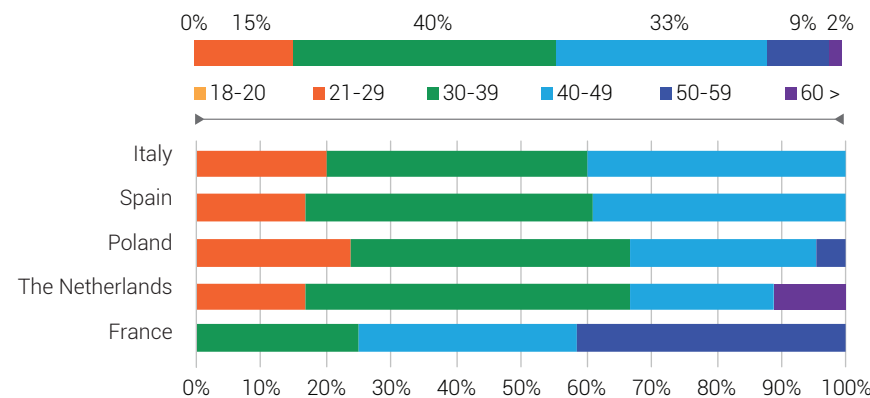
The aim of the project partners was to find a gender-balanced representation of the respondents. When looking at the outcome of the gender, it shows that within all countries it was possible to reach a balanced mix of the respondents' gender. There is just a slight peak in the number of female respondents from Spain and France, and a slight peak in the number of male respondents in Italy and The Netherlands.



These forms are ready to be shared with any hosting organizations, for a job application or during a job interview to illustrate the experience.

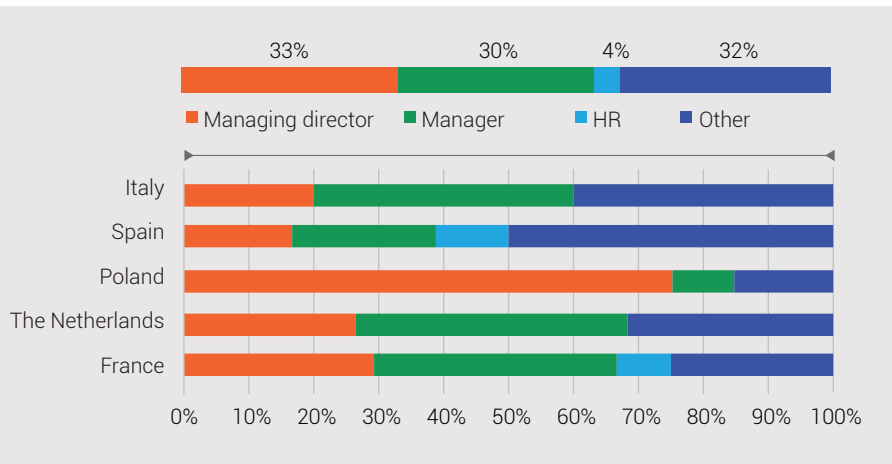
73% of the respondents are between 30 and 49 year old

As different views on the importance of competences can vary greatly amongst different generations, the project partners have aimed to find an age-balanced representation of the respondents. Focusing mainly between the age of 21 and 59, which matches with the age of the majority of the work force. Each of the countries has succeeded to reach this goal.



63% of the respondents are managing directors or managers

In order to get multiple points of view from different layers of the respondents' organization, the partners have conducted surveys amongst different positions. A balanced mix of Managing Directors, Managers and other positions has been reached. Significantly, lower views of people working in HR have been collected. This is not considered as a problem as Managing Directors and Managers are believed to be well aware of the HR policies within the organizations.



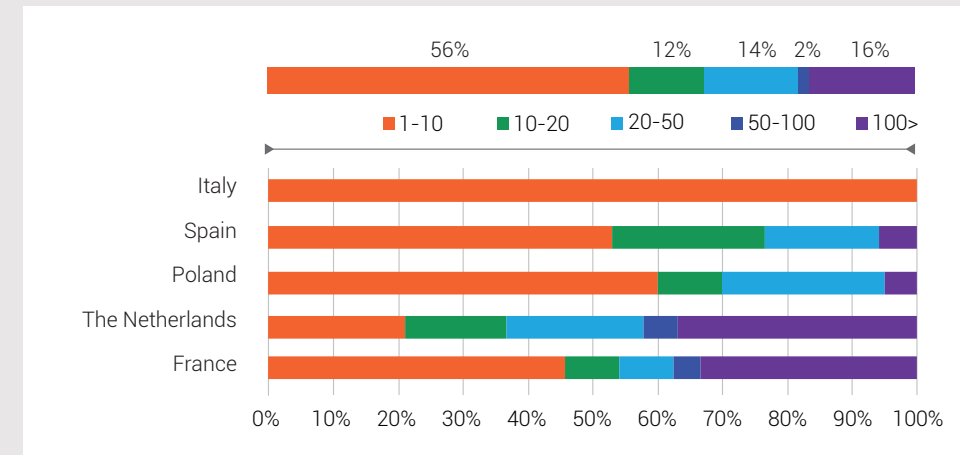
Characteristics of companies



56% of respondents are working in small companies with fewer than 10 employees

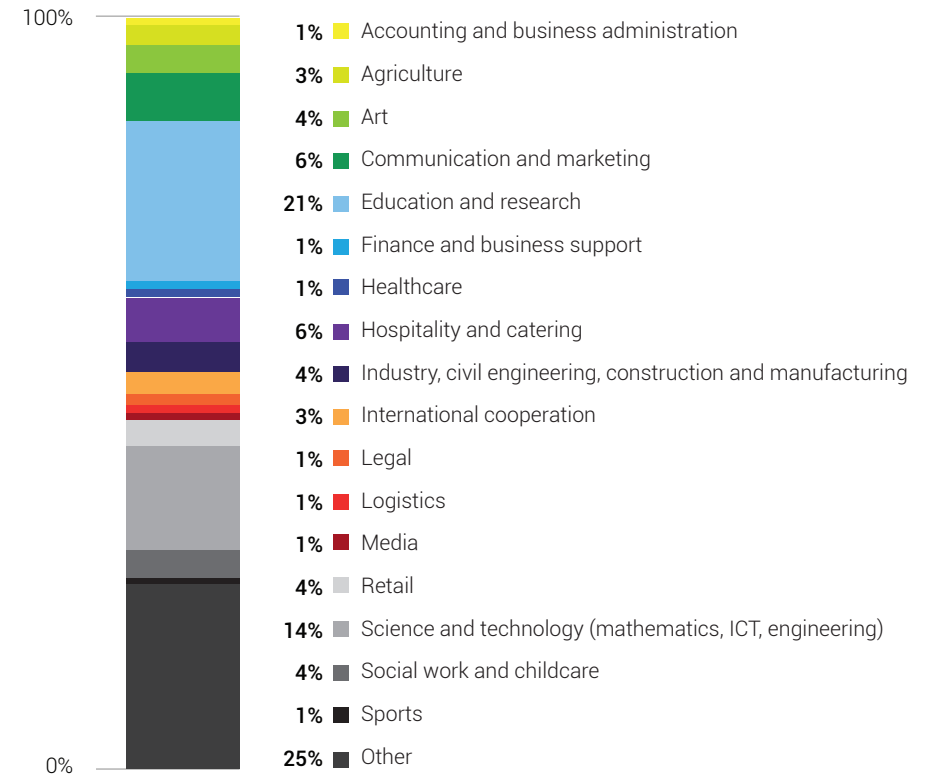
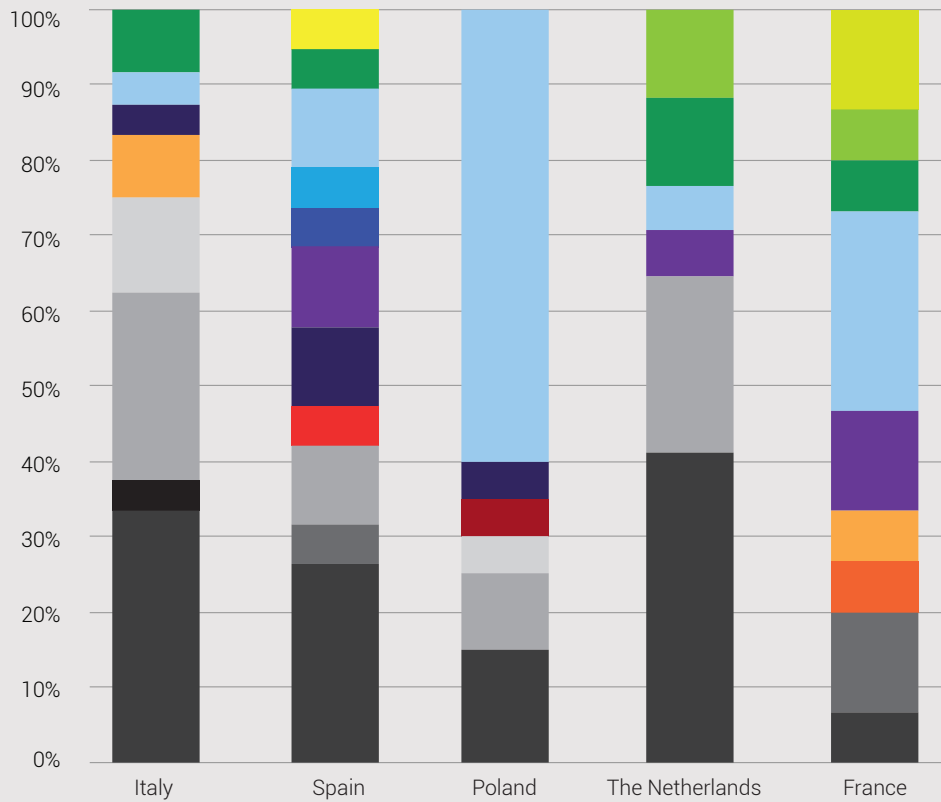
The way specific skills of an individual are valued is expected to differ slightly depending on the size of the organization. Amongst most of the partner countries, it was possible to gather feedback from a wide selection of company sizes, with the exception of Italy, where respondents came only from the category of 1-10 employees.

Slightly underrepresented are companies between 50-100 employees, which is not considered to be a problem as companies of 20-50 and 100> are well represented.



18 different fields of activities

Within their own network, each of the partners has attempted and achieved to reach respondents in the largest variety of sectors as possible. There is however an underrepresentation of sectors such as "Agriculture", "Accounting and business administration", "Banking and insurance", "Finance and business support", "Healthcare", "Legal", "Literature and languages", "Logistics", "Media", "Science and technology (mathematics, ICT, engineering)", "Social sciences, geography and planning" and "Sports". This underrepresentation appears in almost all of the partner countries and appears to correspond with the type of sectors in which mobility occurs less frequently, so for the purpose of this analysis, this is not considered a problem.



Engagement in international cooperation

49% of companies are involved in international cooperation

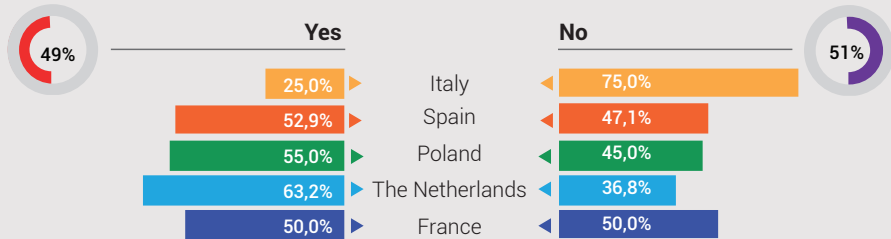
Whether or not a company or organization is involved in international cooperation can affect their view on how they see the additional value of an international experience such as an internship or a mobility.

For instance, companies trading abroad face a wide selection of cultural habits and they need to keep these in mind while doing business.

They will value a category such as "Cultural awareness and expression" differently than an organization that does not face such situations. Each of the partner countries has been able to correctly balance the amount of respondents, which do and do not engage in international cooperation.

With a slight peak in organizations who do not engage in international cooperation in Italy, and a slight peak in organizations who do engage in international cooperation in The Netherlands.

Both slight peaks are considered not high enough to influence general outcomes.



50% of companies have international employees or interns

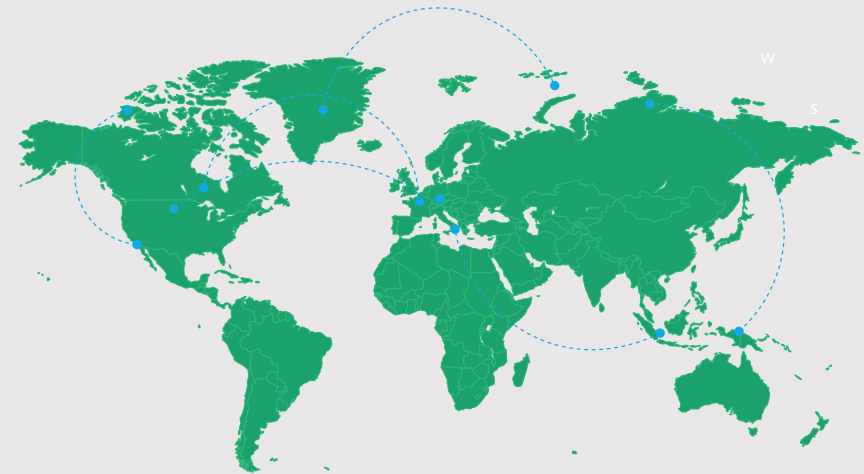
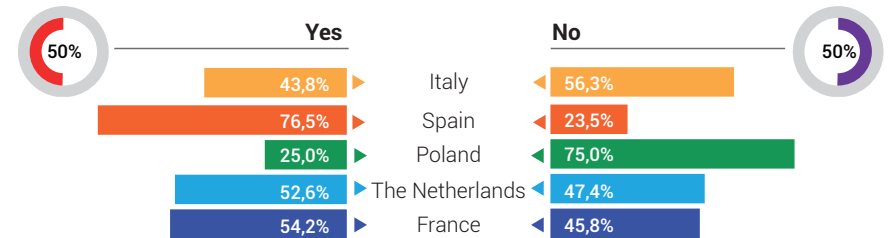
Whether or not a company has international employees, interns or trainees may influence their views on the competences.

Again, the partners have succeeded in finding a well-balanced amount of companies and organizations that do and do not have international employees, interns or trainees.

A peak in organizations, which do have international employees, interns or trainees, was seen amongst the respondents from Spain.

A peak in organizations that do not have international employees, interns or trainees was seen amongst the respondents of Poland.

Which indicate an international work environment likely to be more or less common in the particular countries.



1

Learning
to learn

abc 



Want to learn Acquire new skills



Learning to learn is related to learning, the ability to pursue and organize one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.

KEYWORDS

- Attitude towards learning
- Willingness to learn
- Setting objectives
- Planning activities
- Targeted learning activities
- Reflection on learning outcomes
- Self-assessment

The competences to rank

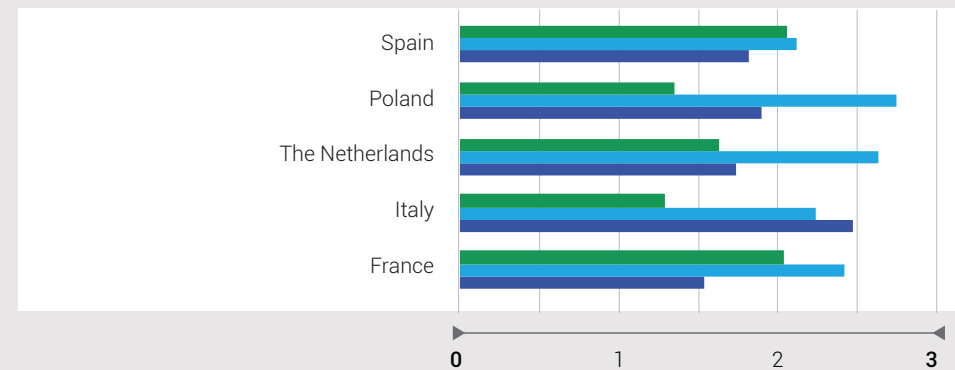
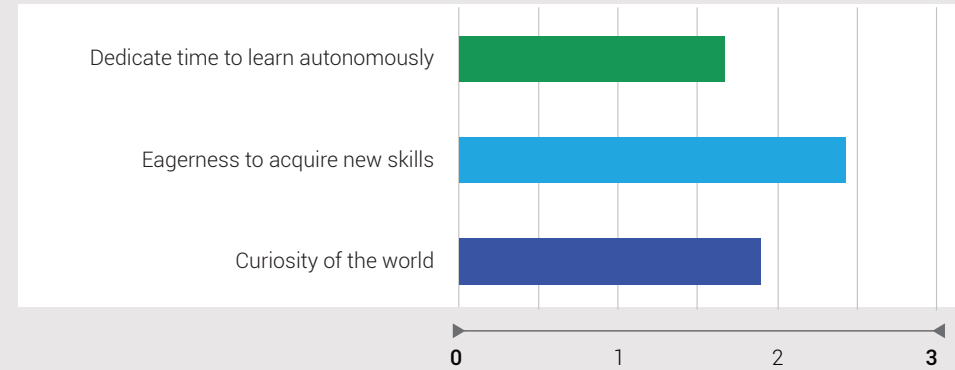
1. Curiosity of the world
2. Eagerness to acquire new skills
3. Dedicate time to learn autonomously

Eagerness to acquire new skills is valued the most important skill by the majority of the respondents (40,5% of respondents).

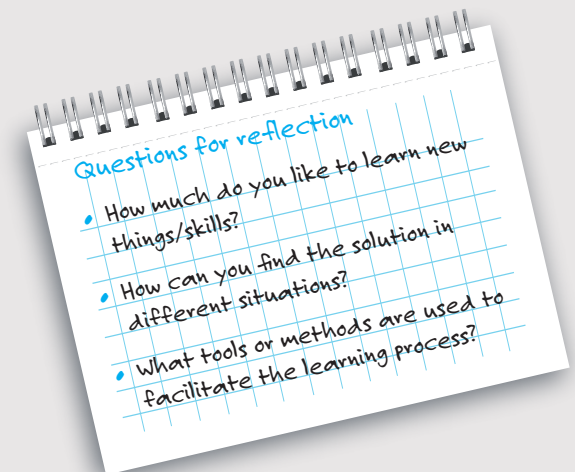
Differences per country



- **FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS AND POLAND**
A significant peak was measured amongst Dutch and Polish respondents and a slight peak amongst the French respondents.
- **ITALY**
Ranks "Curiosity of the world" as most important.
- **SPAIN**
Shows a more moderate view by dividing their appreciation more or less amongst all three of skills.



The respondents expect the employees to have the desire to learn, and to absorb new knowledge. The skills of learning are very important as they allow an individual to acquire new abilities during their entire professional pathway. This outcome can be strongly linked to the fast changing world and to the development of technology.



Perseverance

Focus on objectives



The competences to rank

1. Persevere with learning and to is concentrated on objectives
2. Stick to an agreed planning
3. Confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories

Persevere with learning and is concentrated on objectives is most important in the category by the majority of the respondents (35,1% of respondents) but the two other skills: "Stick to an agreed planning" and "Confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories" scored closely (31,7% and 33,2% of respondents).

Differences per country



• FRANCE AND POLAND

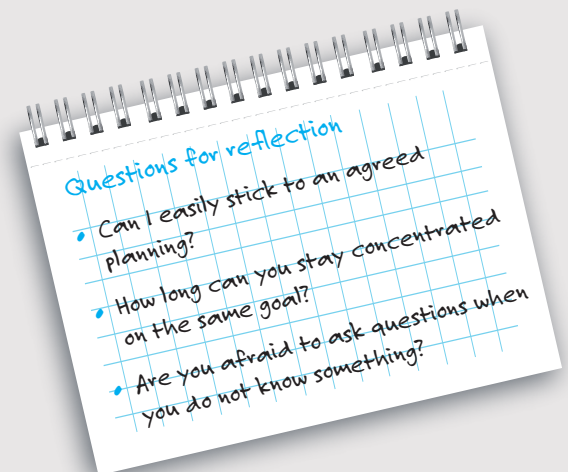
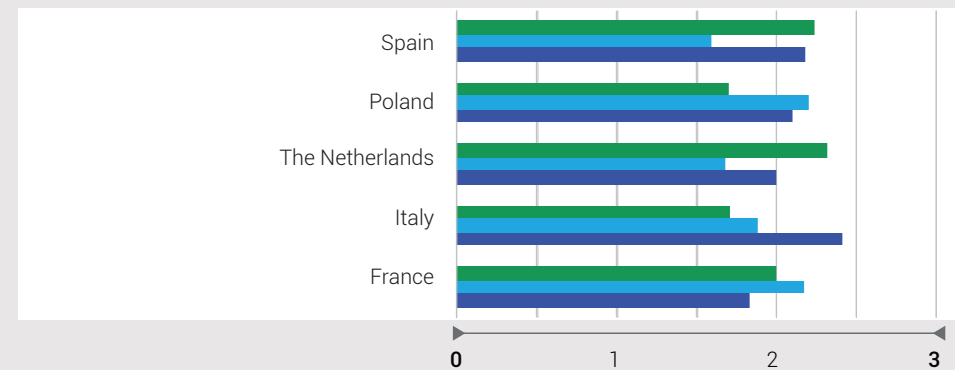
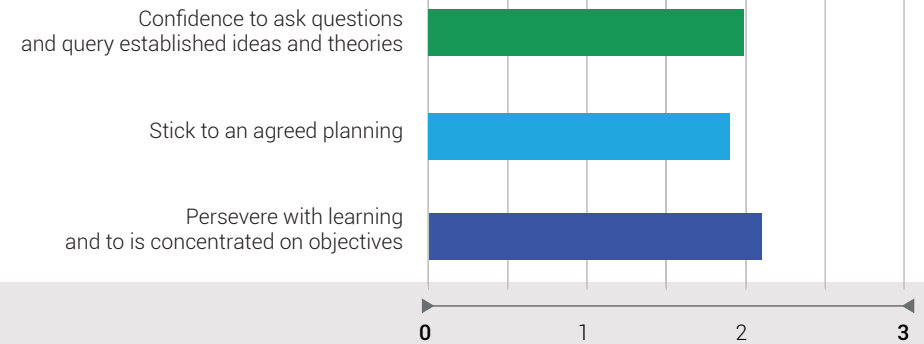
Divided their appreciation between "Stick to an agreed planning" and "Persevere with learning and is concentrated on objectives".



• ITALY

"Confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories" scored especially high amongst the Italian respondents.

The employers expect the employees to be thorough and concentrated on objectives, to respect the planning and to challenge established ideas.



Difficulties

Know problem solving independently

The competences to rank

1. Refer to someone when facing difficulties
2. Know problem solving
3. Look for new solutions to difficulties, which cannot be solved through the usual procedures
4. Cope with pressure and assist in eliminating the stress of others

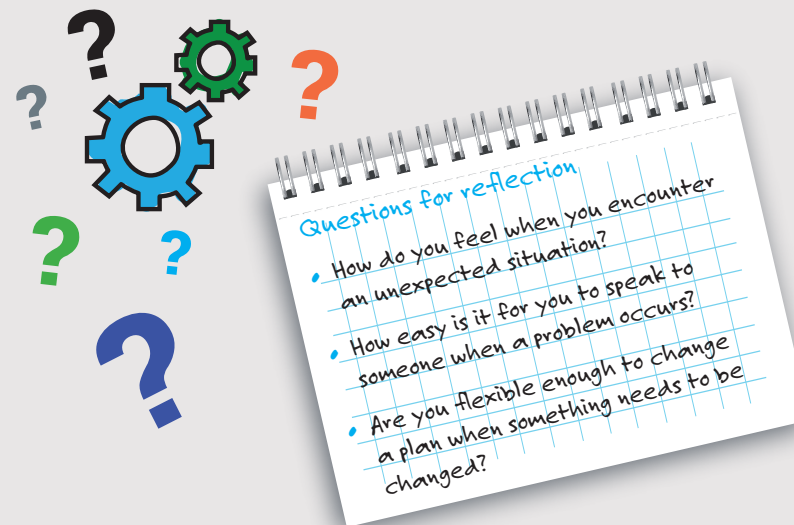
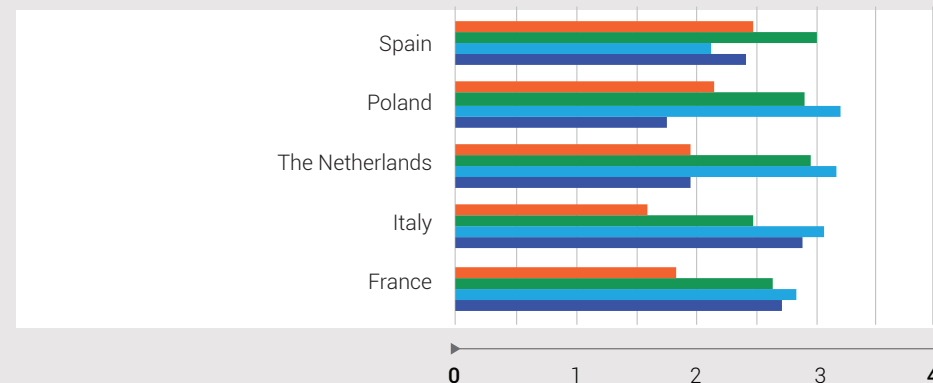
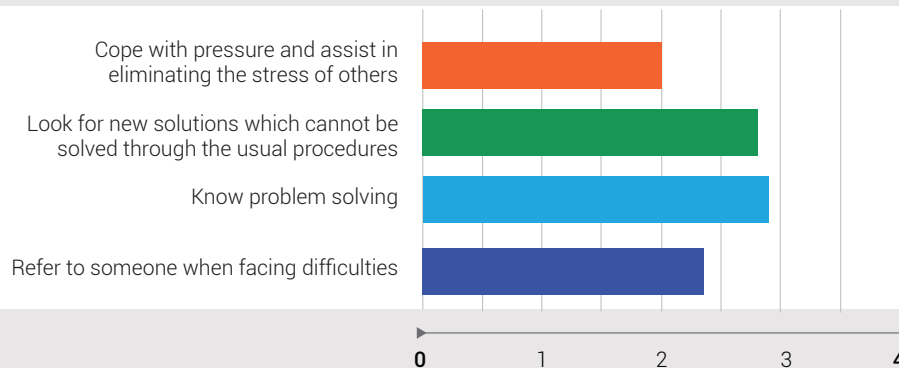
Know problem solving independently is rated as the most important skill by four out of five countries (28,7% of respondents). However, the competence "Look for new solutions to difficulties which cannot be solved through the usual procedure" score is very close (27,9% of respondents) to the previous competence.

Differences per country



- **POLAND AND THE NETHERLANDS**
Gave the highest score to this sub-criterion.
- **ITALY**
Has rated "Refer to someone when facing difficulties" most important.
- **SPAIN**
Valued the competence "Look for new solutions to difficulties which cannot be solved through the usual procedure" as the most important skill when talking about the difficulties in a workplace.

The employers have an expectation about managing difficulties. First, they expect the employee to know how to find solutions independently and on the other hand, they expect them to provide innovative solutions. The employers want employees that are able to respond to unforeseen situations with innovative solutions in their work environment.



2

Social
and civic competences



Tolerance and flexibility

Adapt easily, balance different views



Social competences refer to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competences and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. They are linked to personal and social well being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competences and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights) equip individuals to engage in an active and democratic participation.

KEYWORDS

Understand Communicate in different environments Tolerance

Express and understand different viewpoints Solidarity and interest in solving problems

The competences to rank

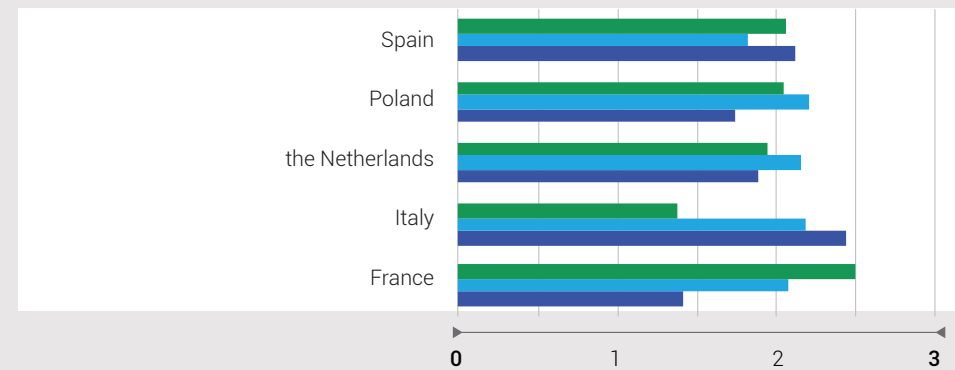
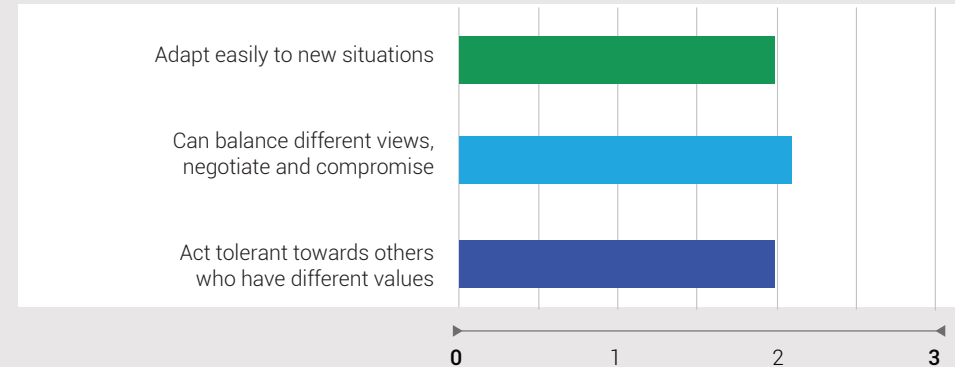
1. Act tolerant towards others who have different values
2. Can balance different views, negotiate and compromise
3. Adapt easily to new situations

Can balance different views, negotiate and compromise is rated as the most important competence (34,5% of respondents). Nevertheless, the scores are very close for all three competences in general.

Differences per country



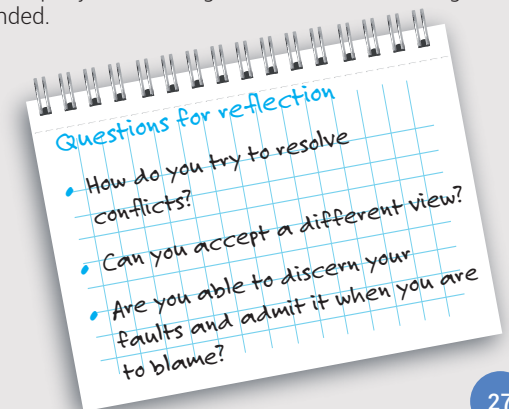
- **FRANCE**
Ranked "Adapt easily to new situation " as the most important competence.
- **THE NETHERLANDS AND POLAND**
Gave the highest score to "Act tolerant towards others who have different values".



- **SPAIN AND ITALY**
have highly valued "Act tolerant towards others who have different values" competence

This competence is related to professional behaviour and teamwork. The employees have to communicate and cooperate within the company with colleagues and clients, knowing how to negotiate and compromise is demanded.

These 3 competences are connected to each other: if people are tolerant towards each other, they can easily balance different views and adapt to new situations.



Self-control

Be resilient in stressful situations

The competences to rank

1. Have motivation to put even more effort in activities
2. Be resistant in stressful situations
3. Can control emotions and keep a professional attitude in mind when disagreeing on the work floor

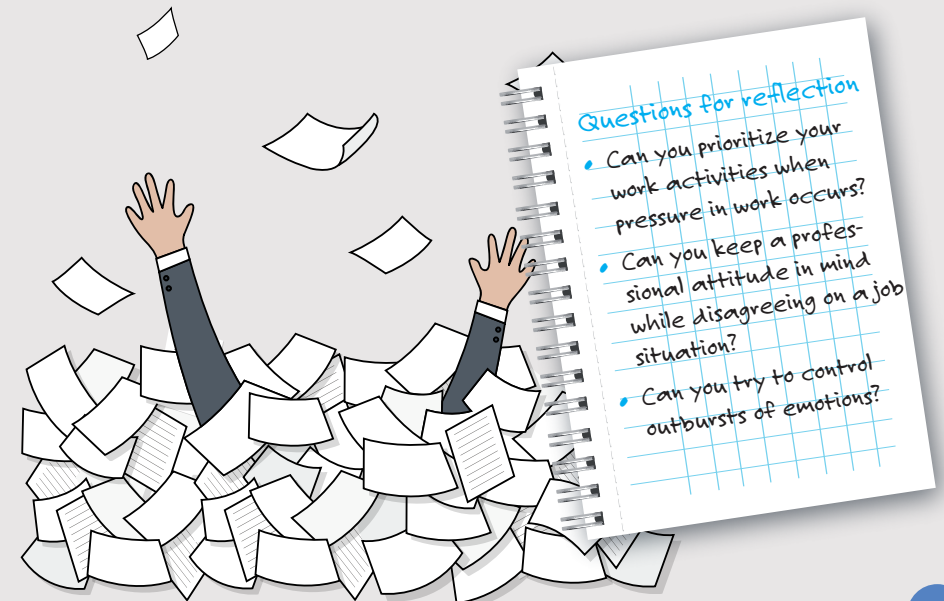
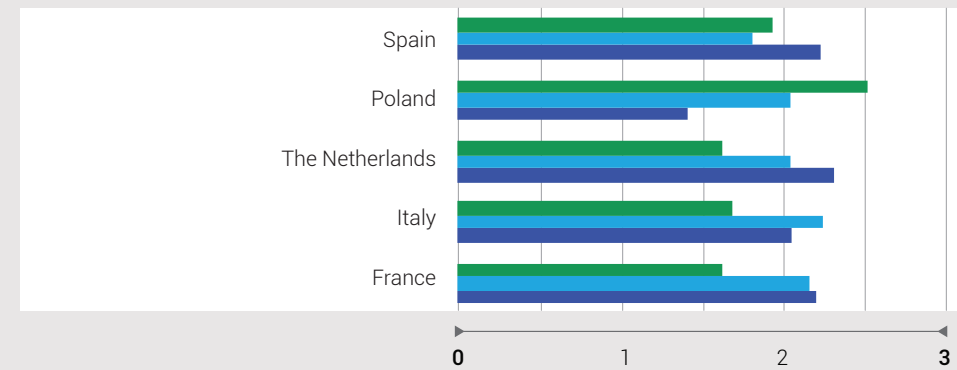
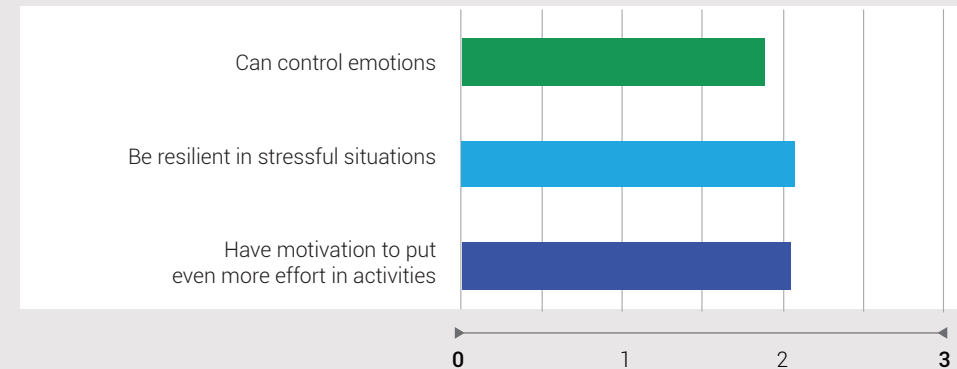
"Be resilient in stressful situations" is ranked as the most important skill (34,5% of all respondents) followed closely by "Have motivation to put even more effort in activities" (34,1% of respondents) and "Can control emotions" (31,4% of respondents).

Differences per country



- **POLAND**
Gave especially high scores to "Can control emotions"
- **ITALY**
Rated "Be resistant in stressful situations" to be the most important sub-criterion.
- **SPAIN, FRANCE AND THE NETHERLANDS**
Ranked "Have motivation to put even more effort in activities" to be most important.

When talking about self-control, the employers have a variety of expectations. They expect the employees to be be resilient in stressful situations and to be motivated in their activities. It is not expected from employees to be carried away by their emotions when the situation is stressful but to know how to react professionally.



Professional behaviour - Respect the rules and values of organisations

The competences to rank

1. Apply correct personal hygiene and dress appropriately
2. Demonstrate awareness of the organisations mission and values
3. Show respect for agreed common rules of the organisation, within the premises and when representing the organisation
4. Show proper work attitude
5. Can deal with criticism
6. Use proper language to adjust to different target audiences

Demonstrate awareness of the organisations mission and values is ranked the most important professional behaviour skill by four countries (20,2% of respondents), with the exception of the French respondents. This competence scored closely to the competence "Show respect to agreed common rules of the organisation" (19,7% of respondents). Followed by the competences "Show proper in work attitude" (17,8% of respondents) and "Can deal with criticisms" (15,2% of respondents).

Differences per country



- **FRANCE**
Ranked "Show respect to agreed common rules of the organisation" the highest.

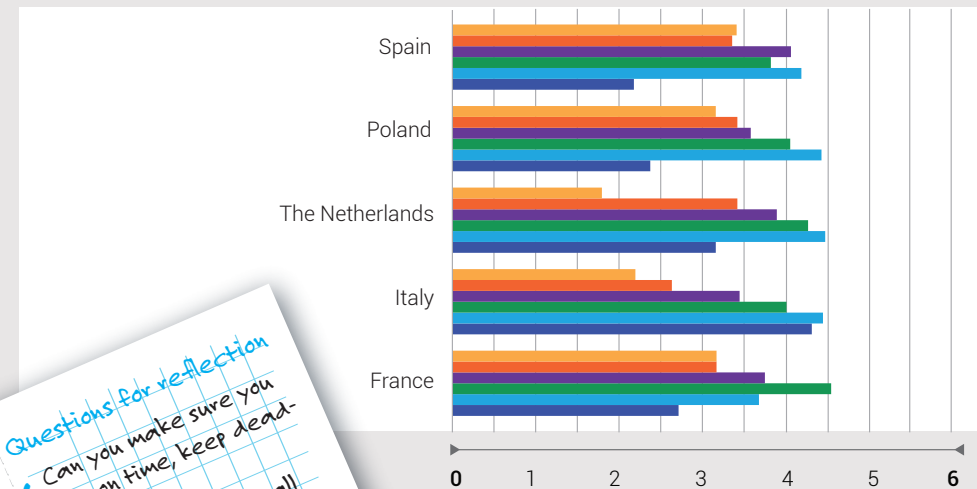
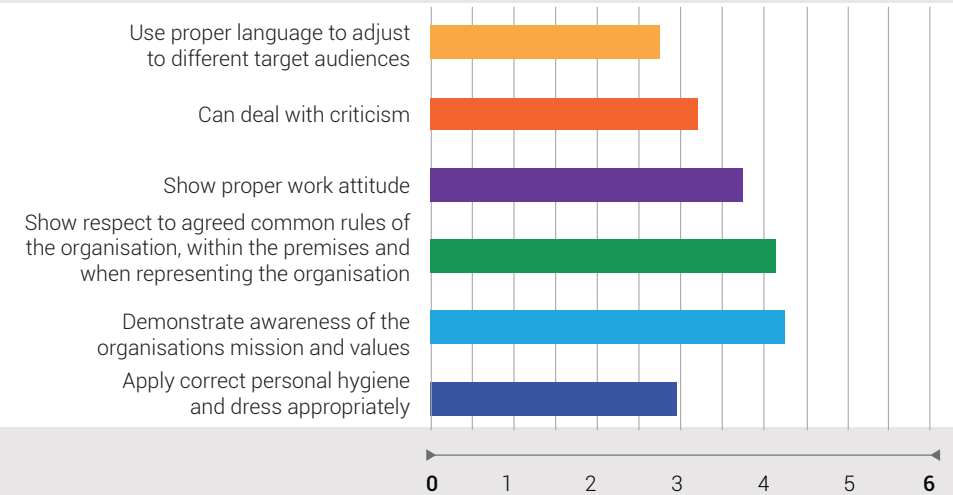


- **THE NETHERLANDS AND POLAND**
Rated both "Demonstrate awareness of the organisations values" and "Show respect" highly.



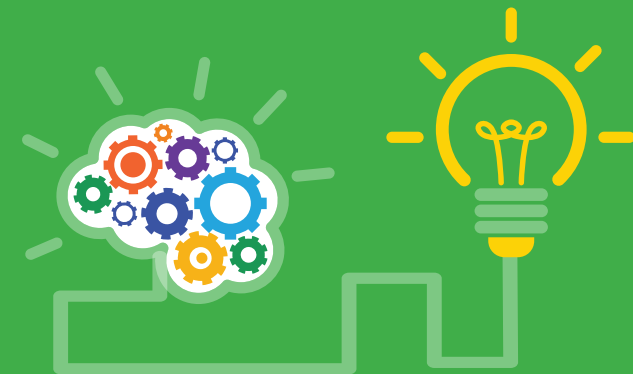
- **ITALY AND SPAIN**
Ranked "Demonstrate awareness of the organisations values" to be the most important competence.

Employers from four out of five countries (with the exception of France) find the feeling of becoming part of an organisation most important. The respondents expect that employees know their organisations values and rules and respect these.



3

Sense of initiative
and entrepreneurship



Project management

Turn ideas to action



Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship is the ability to turn ideas into actions. It involves creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The individual is aware of the context of his/her work and is able to seize opportunities that arise.

KEYWORDS

- Ability to plan
- Organise
- Manage
- Lead
- Delegate
- Analyse weaknesses and strengths of a project
- Evaluate
- Attitude towards both individual and group work

The competences to rank

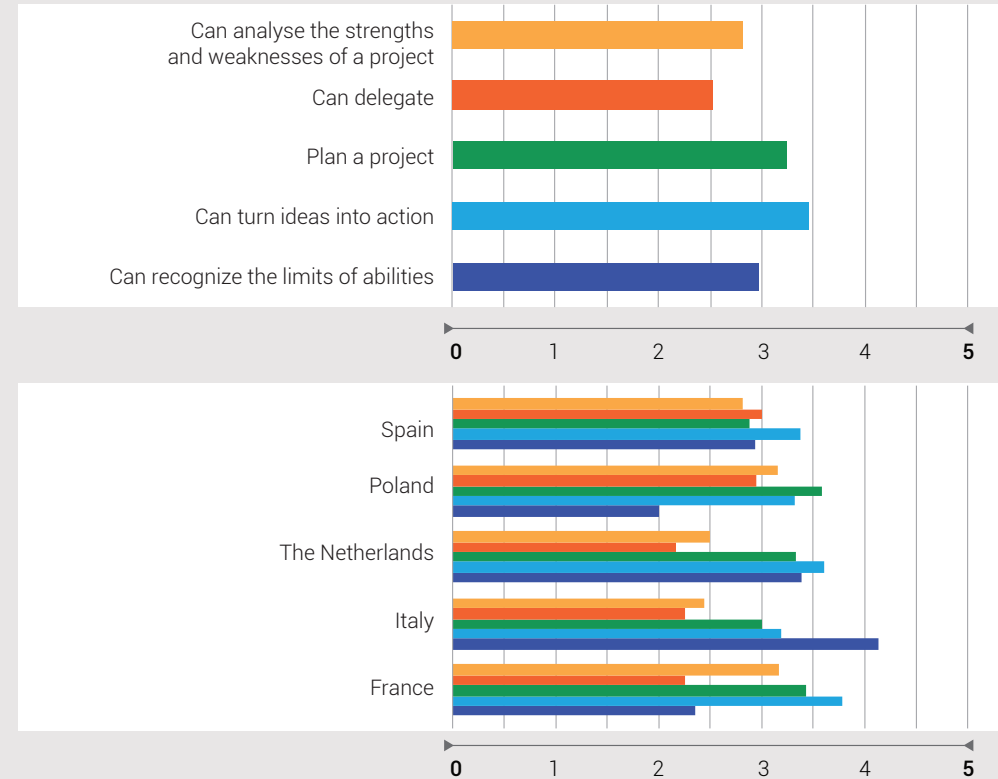
1. Can recognize the limits of abilities
2. Can turn ideas into action
3. Plan a project
4. Can delegate
5. Can analyse the strengths and weaknesses of a project

Can turn ideas into action was rated the most important skill in project management amongst the different countries (23% of respondents). The competence "Plan a project" scored second highest (21,6% of respondents), just after the ability to turn ideas into action. The competence "Can recognise the limits of abilities" and "Can analyse the strengths and weaknesses of a project" came in third and fourth place.

Differences per country



- **FRANCE AND POLAND**
The respondents gave their highest appreciation to the capacity to turn ideas into action and to plan a project.

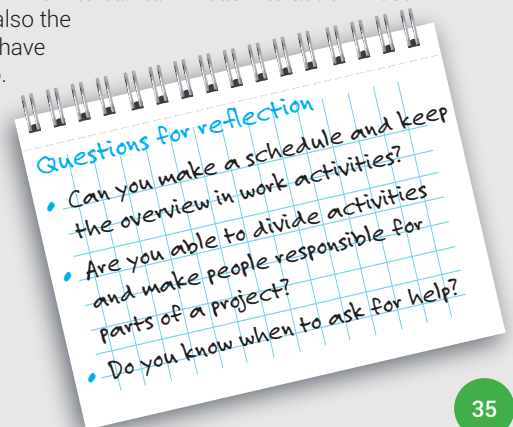


- **ITALY AND THE NETHERLANDS**
The respondents think that there turning the ideas to action has to be connected with analyse of limits.



- **SPAIN**
The respondents rank to know how to can turn ideas into action most important but they valorise also the importance that employees have to know how to delegate too.

The employers have a very pragmatic view; they want the employee to take action. To take action is connected with the planning or analyse of action. It is important to know the personal limits, analyse the strength and weakness of a project before acting.



Teamwork

Collaborate with other people

The competences to rank

1. Can collaborate with other people
2. Be team-oriented
3. Be experienced in international teamwork and collegiality

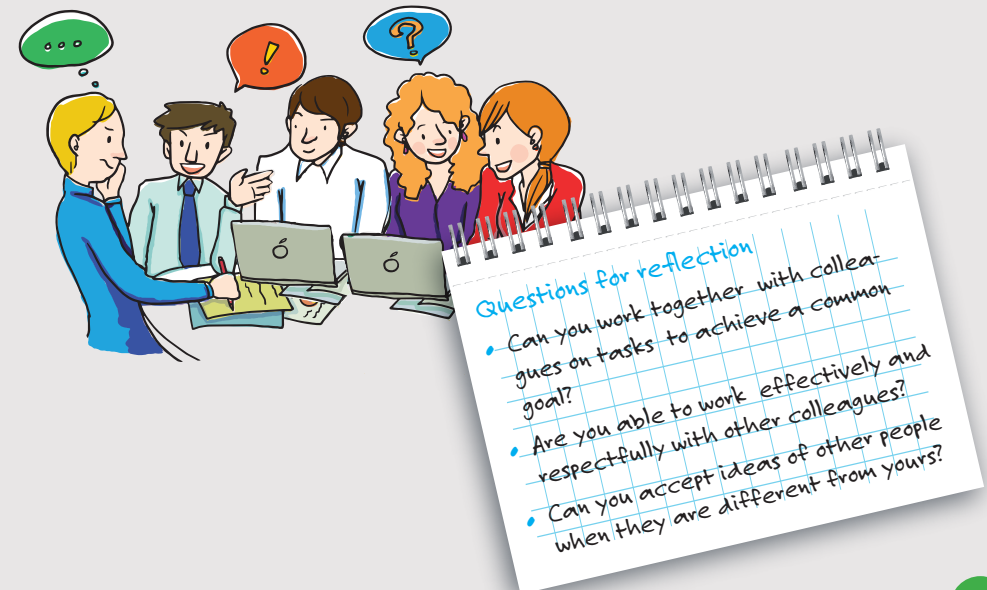
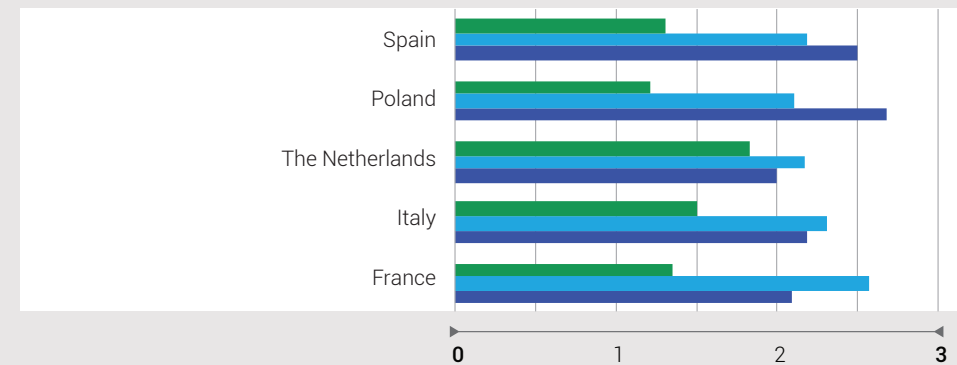
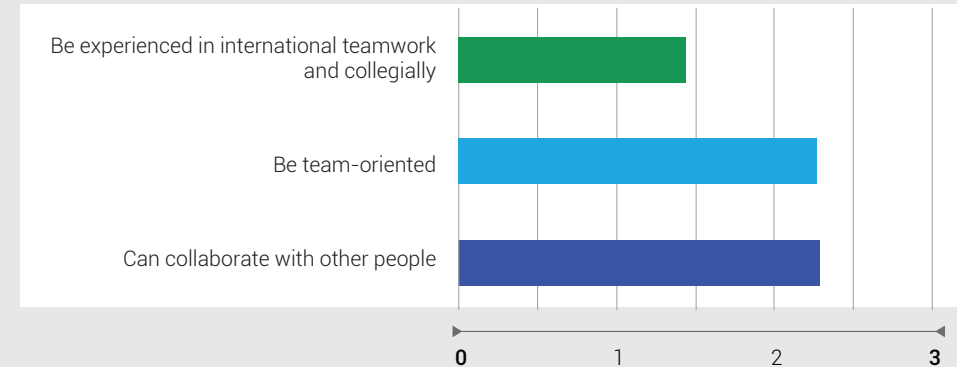
To be **team-oriented** (37,8% of respondents) and **be able to collaborate with other people** (38,2% of respondents) scored almost equally high among respondents. To have an international teamwork working experience was rated the least important amongst the respondents of the different countries.

Differences per country



- **FRANCE AND ITALY**
The respondents valued highly the capacity to be team-oriented.
- **THE NETHERLANDS**
Respondents divided their highest score between "Be team-oriented" and "Can collaborate with other people".
- **POLAND AND SPAIN**
The respondent ranked highly the competence "Can collaborate with other people".

The respondents' expectation about the cooperation between employees is very high, they want the employees to be able to cooperate and implement common actions. To be able to work in a team is directly connected with tolerance and professional behaviour. It is possible to work together if people act tolerant towards others and respect the organisation.



4

Cultural awareness
and expression



Cultural awareness and expression



Cultural awareness and expression involves appreciation of the importance of creative expression, ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts, etc.).

KEYWORDS

Being aware of the importance of local, national and European cultural heritage

Understanding cultural, economic, linguistic and religious diversity

The competences to rank

1. Be interested in current events happening abroad
2. Understand multicultural and socio-economic differences and act accordingly
3. Have experienced cultural and religious differences

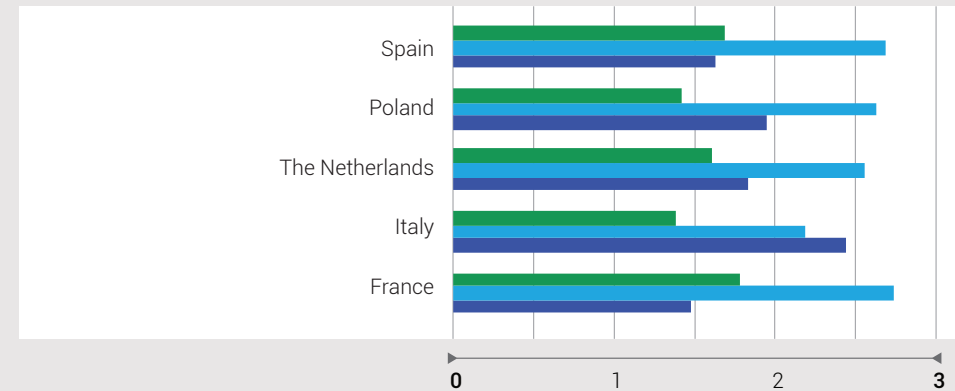
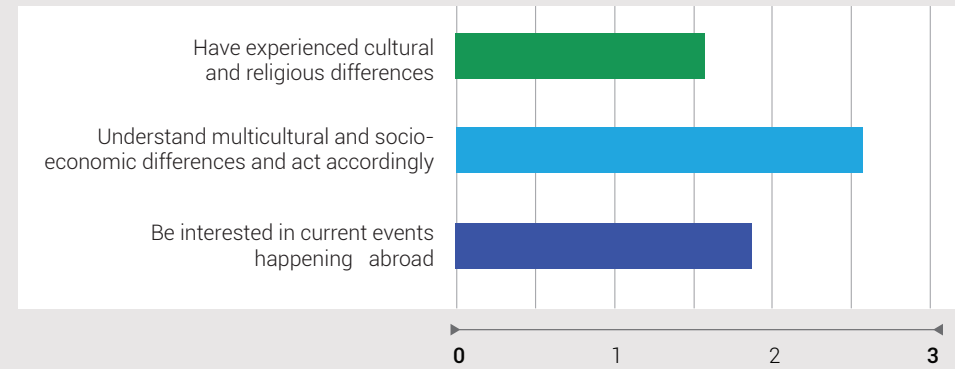
Understanding multicultural and socio-economic differences and act accordingly (42,7% of respondents) was ranked most important by four countries (France, The Netherlands, Poland and Spain). "Have experienced cultural and religious differences" scored significantly lower (26,2% of respondents).

Differences per country

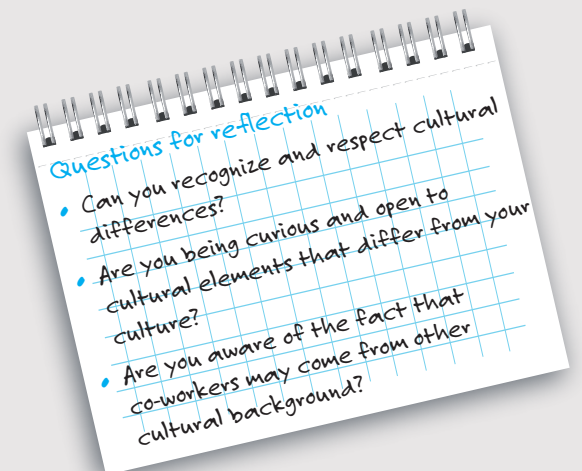


• ITALY

Roughly divided opinions on which criterion was rated the most important competence between "Be interested in current events happening abroad" and "Understand multicultural and socio-economic differences and act accordingly".



The respondents believe that the employees must understand the cultural and religious differences whether or not they have experienced living in another country. Again, professional behaviour is expected, the employees have to be tolerant, understand differences and act accordingly.



5

Communication
in the mother tongue



Understand

Listen and interact appropriately



Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.

KEYWORDS

Being able to communicate orally and in writing in a variety of communicative situations

Ability to distinguish and use different types of texts and styles

Formulating and expressing one's oral and written arguments in a convincing way appropriate to the context.

The competences to rank

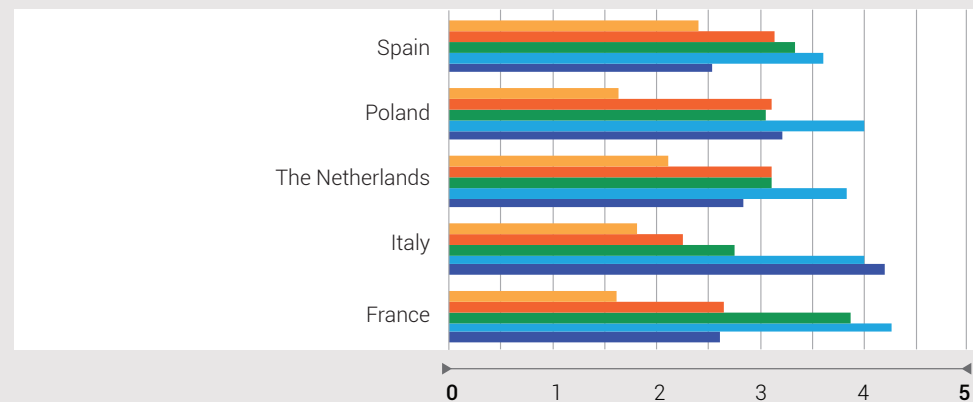
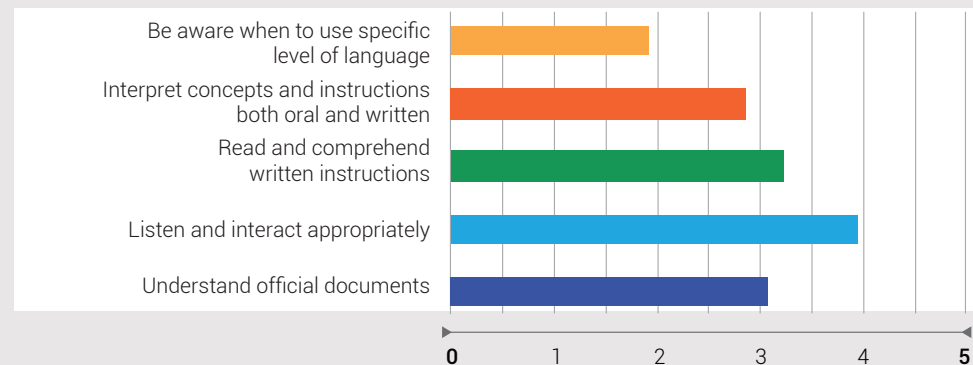
1. Understand official documents
2. Listen and interact appropriately
3. Read and comprehend written instructions
4. Interpret concepts and instructions both oral and written
5. Be aware when to use specific level of language

Only respondents from Spain had a different opinion, but all the other countries' respondents ranked **listen and interact appropriately** highest (26,2% of respondents). Read and comprehend written instructions and "Understand official documents" are ranked second and third place.

Differences per country



- **FRANCE, THE NETHERLANDS, POLAND**
Valued the capacity to listen and interact appropriately the most important competence.

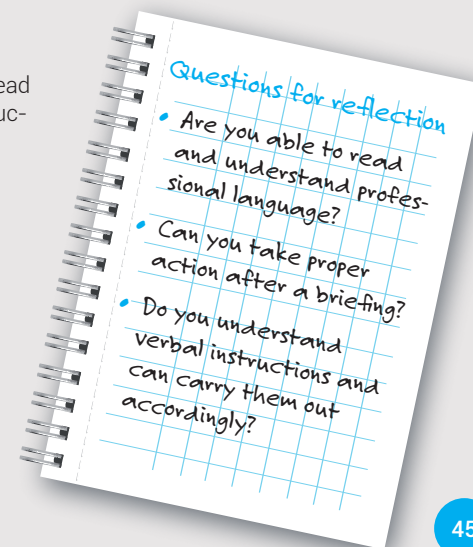


- **ITALY**
Ranked "Understand official documents" to be most important.



- **SPAIN**
Gave their highest score to "Read and comprehend written instructions" and "Listen and interact appropriately".

The importance to listen and interact appropriately is directly linked to achieving the organisations' general objectives. There is also a connection with wanting to gain competences. If you listen and interact appropriately, it is also directly related to perseverance.



Express

Set out arguments respectfully

The competences to rank

1. Describe work procedures understandably
2. Set out arguments respectfully when discussing with another person
3. Can use appropriate telephone manners

The competence **set out arguments respectfully when discussing with another person** is ranked the most important skill (37,3% of respondents) by four countries, with the exception of Italian respondents. This competence is closely followed by the competence "Describe work procedures understandably" (35,5% of respondents). The capacity to use appropriate telephone manners was rated least important amongst respondents.

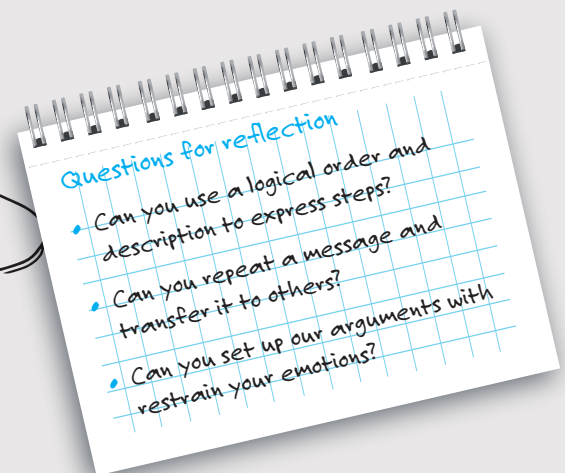
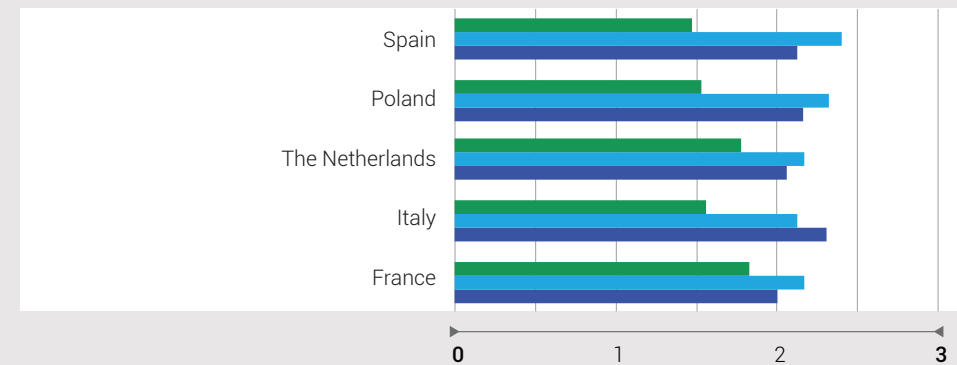
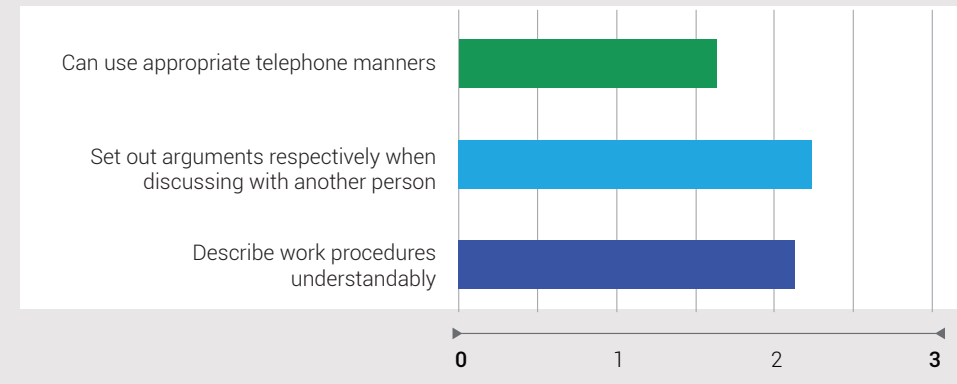
Differences per country



• ITALY

The most important competence ranked was "Describe work procedures understandably".

The respondents expect the employees to communicate while respecting others as well as set out their arguments respectfully. It is important that employees know how to set out arguments in professional level and are able to express them correctly to other colleagues and clients.



Write - Organize and structure the thoughts

The competences to rank

1. Can analyse and summarize ideas
2. Can organize and structure my thoughts to create structured reports
3. Can write complex reports and interact in writing with colleagues and clients

"Can analyse and summarize ideas" (36,4% of respondents) and "Can organize and structure my thoughts to create structured reports" (36,8% of respondents) scored almost equally high among respondents.

Differences per country



• FRANCE, POLAND

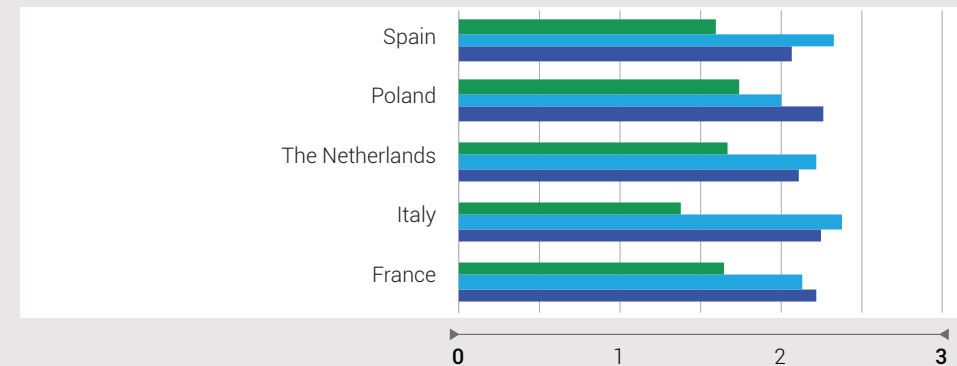
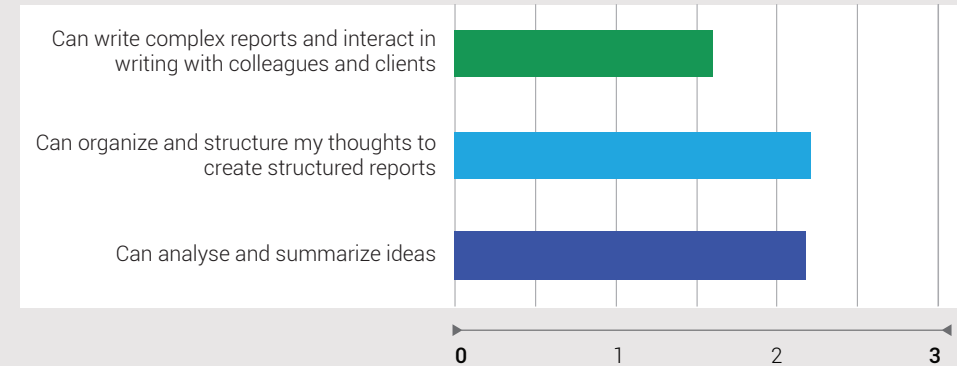
Respondents divided their highest ranking between the competences "Can organize and structure my thoughts to create structured reports" and "Can analyse and summarize ideas".



• THE NETHERLANDS, SPAIN, ITALY

Ranked the competence "Can organize and structure my thoughts to create structured reports" to be most important.

The highly appreciated competence "Can organise and structure my thoughts" can be directly linked with everyday communication. Nowadays, written communication is done mostly by e-mail and therefore employers expect employees to be able to clearly write down and structure their thoughts.



6

Communication
in foreign languages



Understand Instructions from the employer

Communication in foreign languages involves more than the basic skills of communicating in the mother tongue. It implies skills in mediation, language comprehension and understanding other cultures. The degree of mastery depends on several factors including but not limited to the capacity to listen, speak, read and write.

KEYWORDS

Ability to understand both spoken and written messages

Initiate, sustain and conclude an interaction

Showing interest towards cultural diversity and intercultural communication

The competences to rank

1. Understand and perform instructions from the employer
2. Interpret concepts and instructions both oral and written
3. Understand native speakers

Only respondents from the Netherlands have a different opinion, all the other countries' respondents ranked the competence **understand and perform instructions from the employer** to be most important.

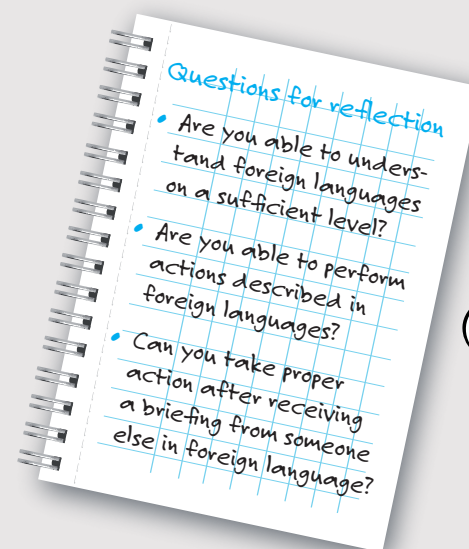
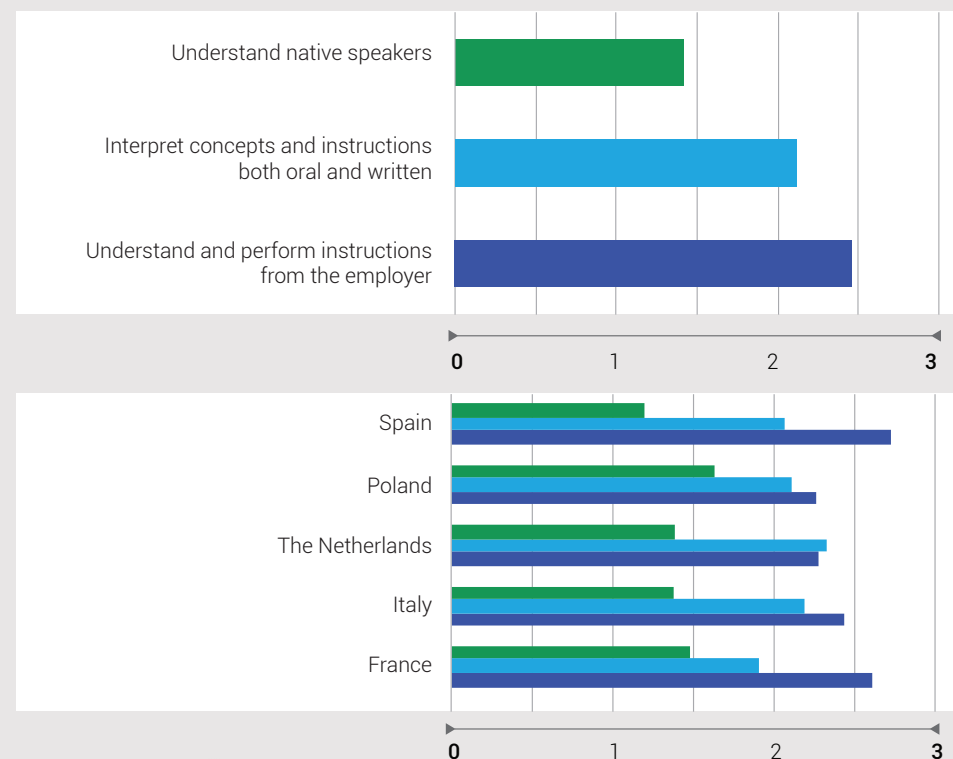
Differences per country



• THE NETHERLANDS, ITALY AND POLAND

Roughly divided their highest ranking between "Understand and perform instructions" and "Interpret concepts and instructions".

The employers expect the employees to be able to understand and perform instructions that were given in a foreign language. It is important for the employer to hire employees who can understand both oral and written tasks and information.



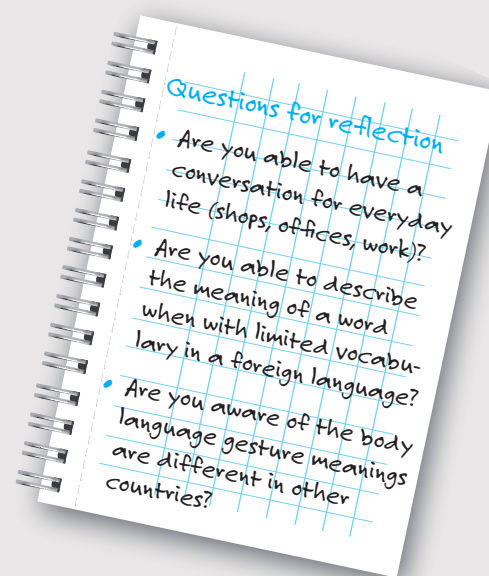
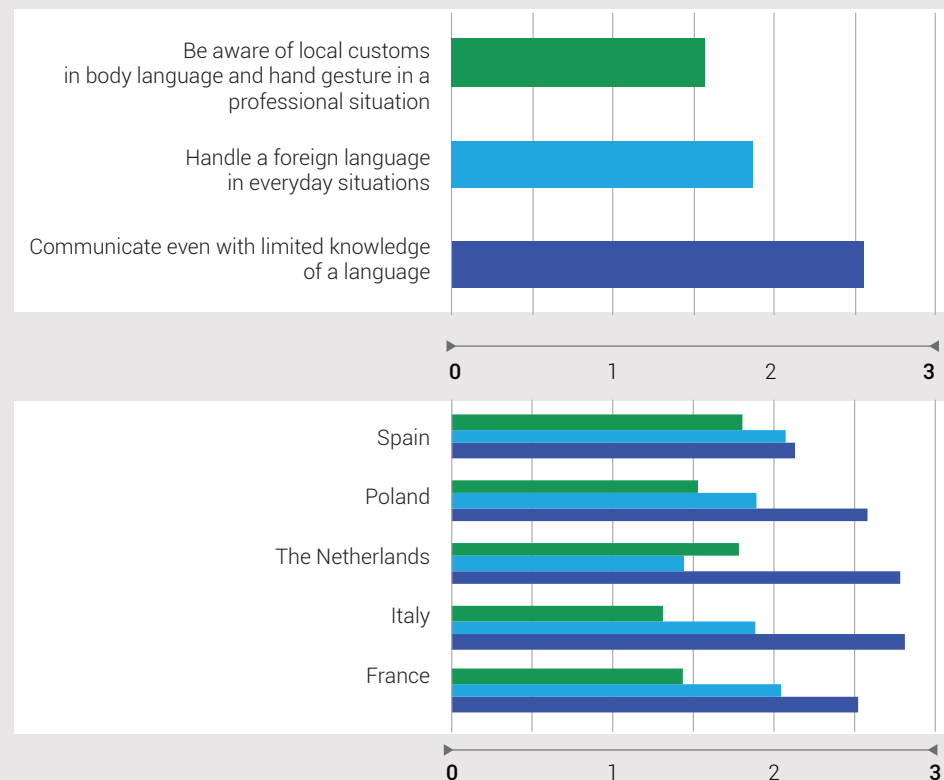
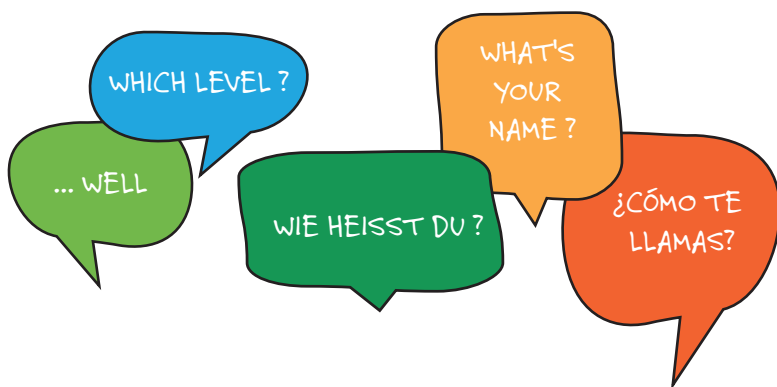
Express

The competences to rank

1. Communicate even with limited knowledge of a language
2. Handle a foreign language in everyday situations
3. Be aware of local customs in body language and hand gestures in a professional situation

Communicate even with limited knowledge of a language (42,7% of respondents) was given highest appreciation and was rated most important by all countries. Handling a foreign language in everyday situations and becoming aware of local customs in body language and hand gestures in a professional situation was rated least important.

The expectation regarding how to express a thought in a foreign language is very pragmatic. The respondents do not expect the employees to be bilingual and find awareness of local customs in body language less important. They expect them to attempt to speak another language even if she/he has limited knowledge of this language.



Write, understand and use written language

The competences to rank

1. Understand written instructions
2. Use proper written language in a professional situation
3. Write reports or documents in a structured way
4. Translate documents from the foreign language to my mother tongue

Understand written instructions was rated most important within the category "**Communicating in foreign languages - Write**" (31,1% of respondents). All countries gave a relatively high score to the competence "Understand written instructions".

The ability to use proper written language in a professional situation is also highly appreciated by all countries (29,3% of respondents), and therefore it's importance is not to be underestimated.

Differences per country



• FRANCE, ITALY, POLAND

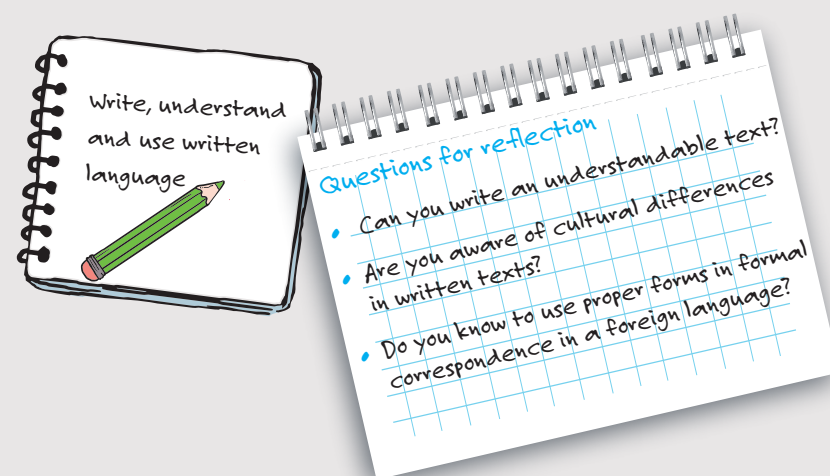
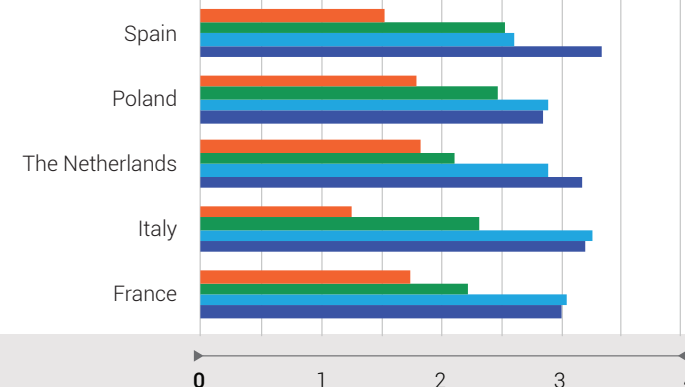
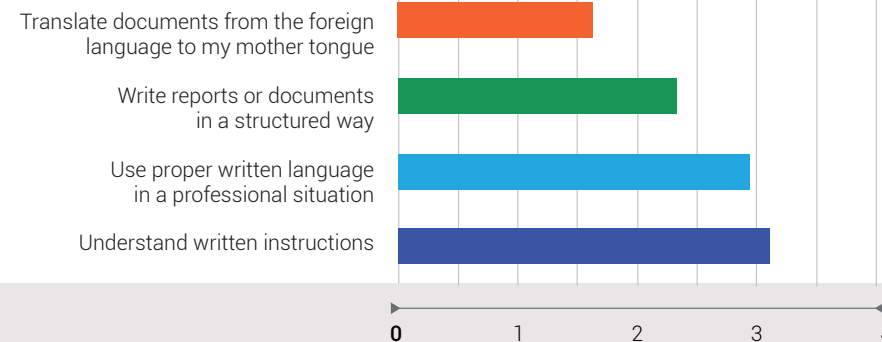
Ranked the competence "Use written language in a professional situation" to be most important.



• THE NETHERLANDS

Highly valued 'Understand written instructions' to be the most important competence.

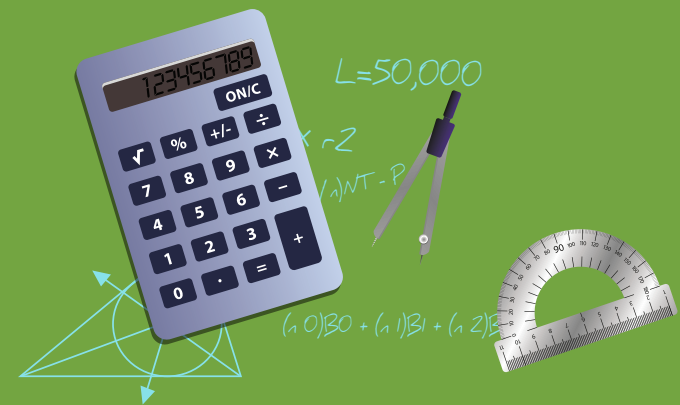
Similar to the communication in the mother tongue category, the high ranking given to the competence related to organising and structuring thoughts can be directly linked with everyday communication. It is common to use written communication via email, when communicating with international partners.



7

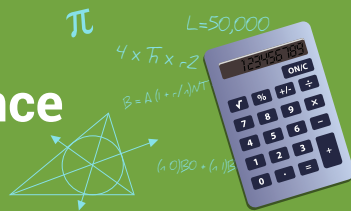
Mathematical
competence

Practical use



Mathematical competence

Practical use



Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations, with emphasis being placed on process, activity and knowledge. Basic competence in science and technology refers to the mastery, use, application of knowledge and methodologies that explain the natural world. These involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and the responsibility of each individual.

KEYWORDS

Ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems

Understand mathematical problems, using appropriate aids

The competences to rank

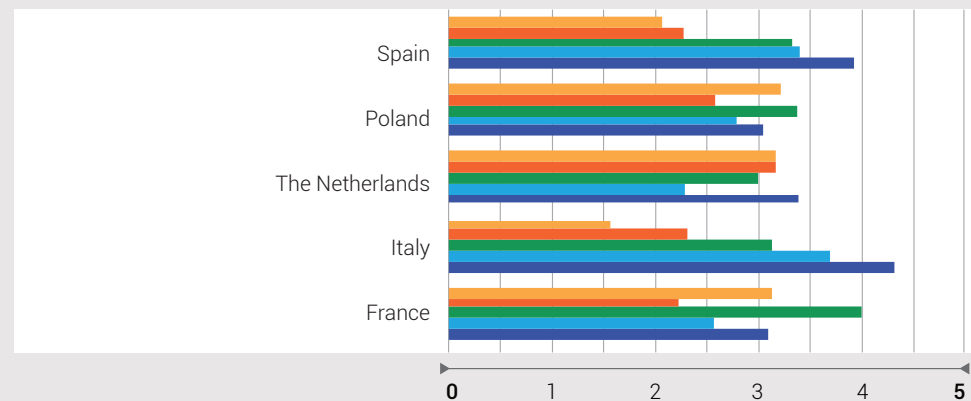
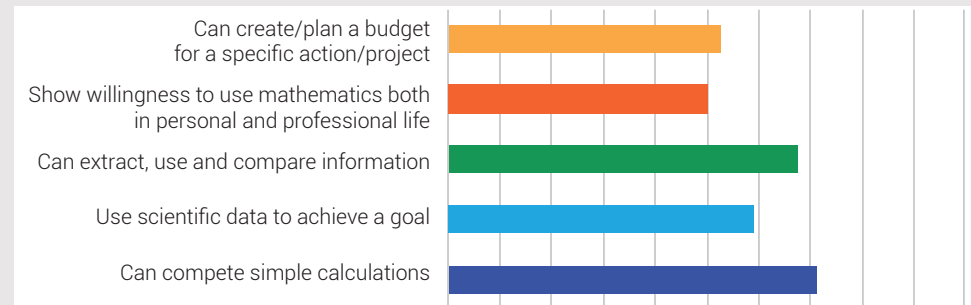
1. Can complete simple calculations
2. Use scientific data to achieve a goal
3. Can extract, use and compare information
4. Show willingness to use mathematics both in personal and professional life
5. Can create/plan a budget for a specific action/project

Can complete simple calculations was rated most important by all respondents (23,7% of all respondents). The capacity to extract, use and compare information was also ranked very high (22,4% of respondents), taking second place in the ranking.

Differences per country

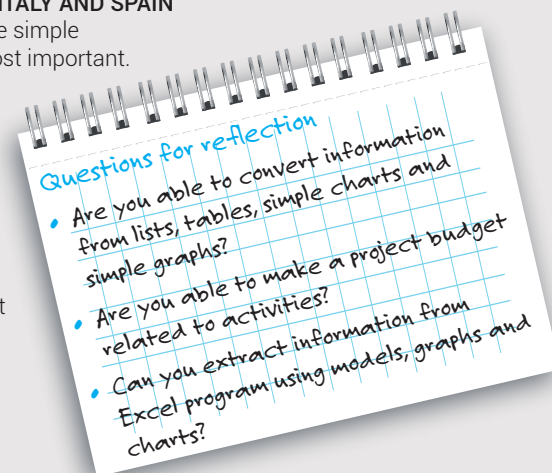


- **FRANCE AND POLAND**
Gave their highest score for sub-criterion "Can extract, use and compare information".



- **THE NETHERLANDS, ITALY AND SPAIN**
Ranked "Can complete simple calculations" to be most important.

The employer expects the employees to be very practical, meaning they can complete calculations. Being able to extract, use and compare information gathered by others, such as reading statistical data and creating data report are also highly valued by employers.



8

Digital
competence



Internet

How to find information



Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of information technology and digital communication and thus basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

KEYWORDS

Ability to use computer applications

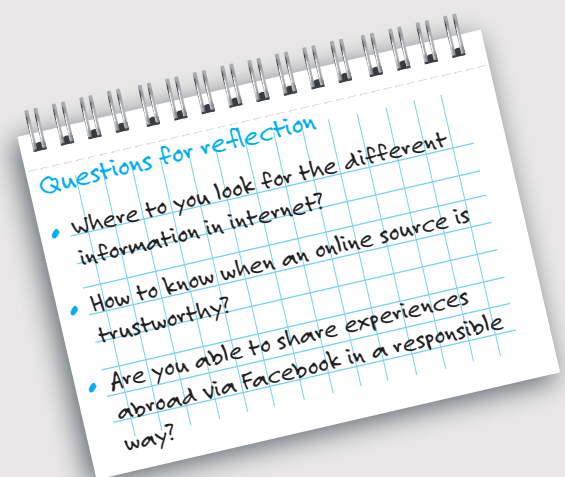
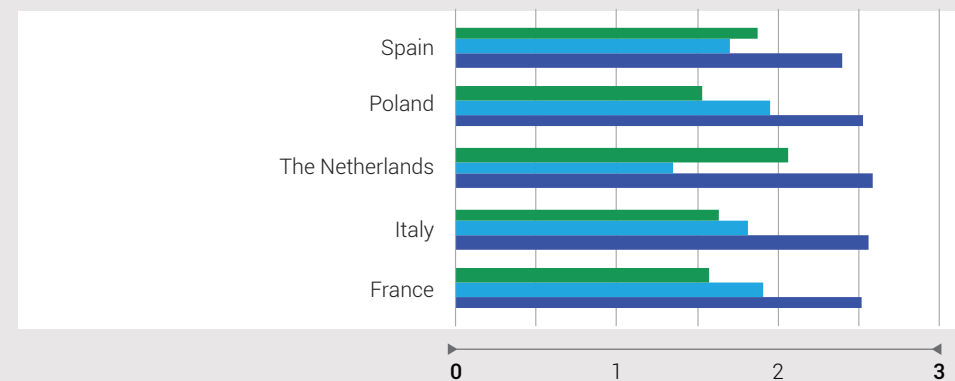
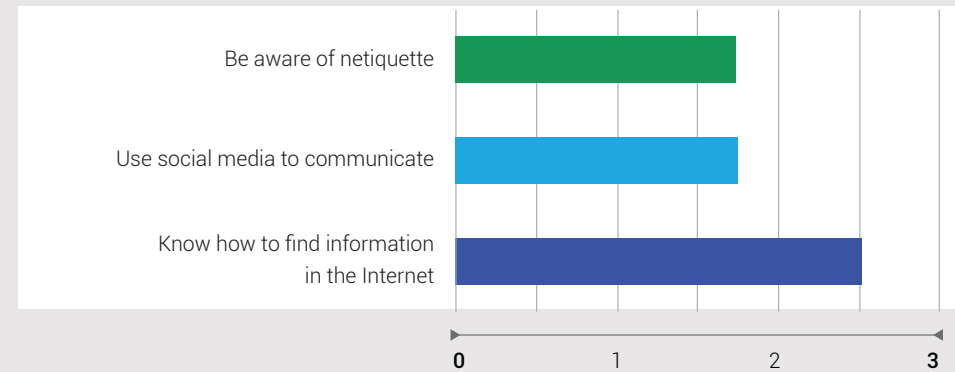
Understanding the opportunities linked to the Internet and the communication via electronic media

The competences to rank

1. Know how to find information in the Internet
2. Use social media to communicate
3. Be aware of netiquette

Know how to find information on the Internet is ranked to be the most important skill (42% of respondents). All the five countries' respondents agreed and rated it in first place in the ranking. Scoring almost equally after knowing how to find information on the Internet, were the competences related to using social media for communication and being aware of netiquette.

The role of social media is becoming more and more important today but the employers find the most important that employees are able to find information on the Internet. This can be explained with the huge amount of information available online. Today the internet provides us unlimited access to a lot of information and the companies appreciate employees' ability to correctly handle information.



Computer Ability to use



The competences to rank

1. Know how to use the computer
2. Be able to touch-type
3. Use Excel or similar software to create tables
4. Use PowerPoint or similar software to create presentations
5. Use Word or similar software to write and order reports
6. Use InDesign or similar software to design a logo
7. Use Photoshop or similar software to edit a photo
8. Program/write computer code

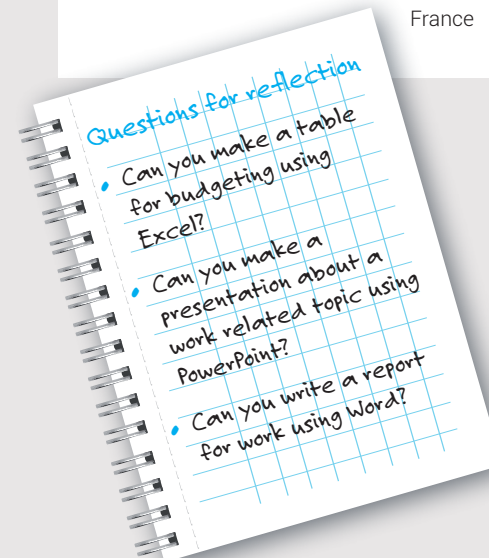
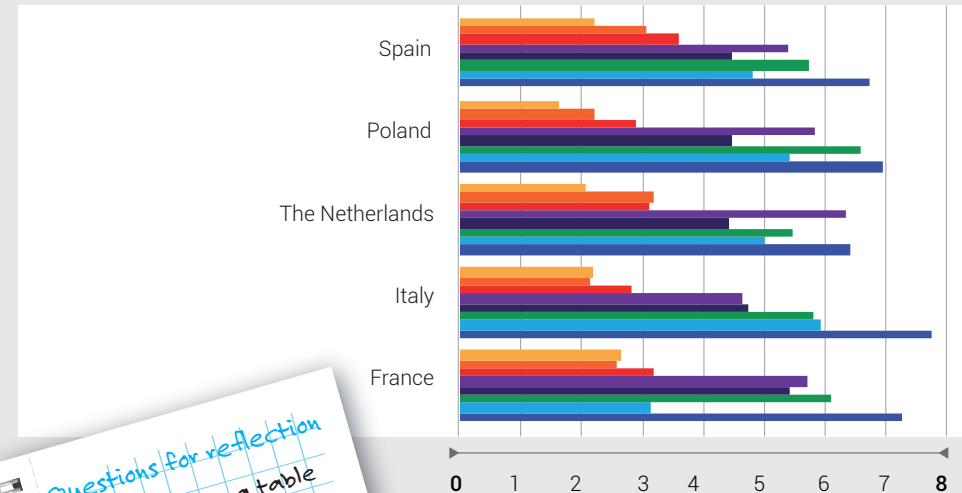
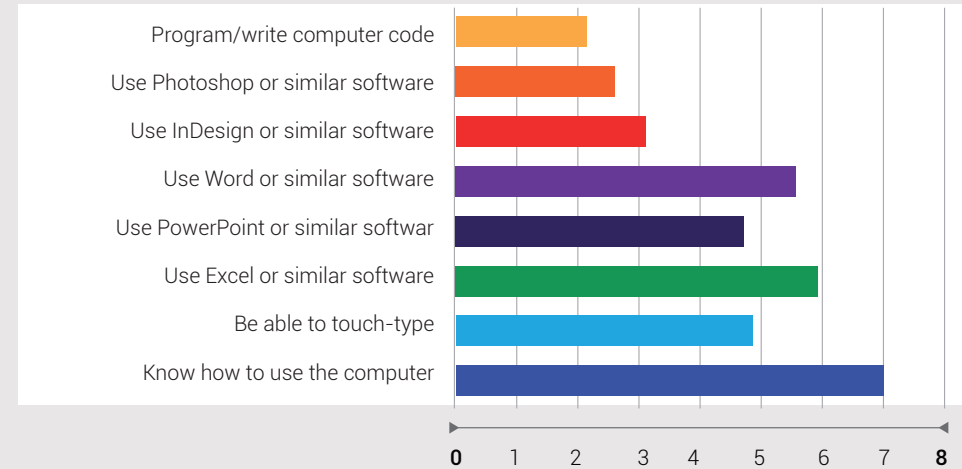
The competence **know how to use the computer** is ranked most important. All countries' respondents agreed unanimously. Knowing how to use Microsoft Office programmes such as Word and Excel are competences ranked highest after knowing how to use the computer. The ability to use Adobe programs such as Photoshop and InDesign are valued as less important and desirable skills.

Differences per country



- **FRANCE, ITALY, POLAND, SPAIN**
Rated the ability to use Excel to be more important than to use Word.
- **THE NETHERLANDS**
Ranked was the only country who thought that the ability to use Word was more important than the ability to use Excel.

As expected, general use of the computer is highly appreciated by all countries as nowadays more and more work becomes digitalised. The use of a computer is almost inevitable on a day-to-day basis. The type of software that the employers expect the employees to be able to work with strongly depends on their tasks.





Global vision
and priorities
about the key competences



Global vision and priorities...

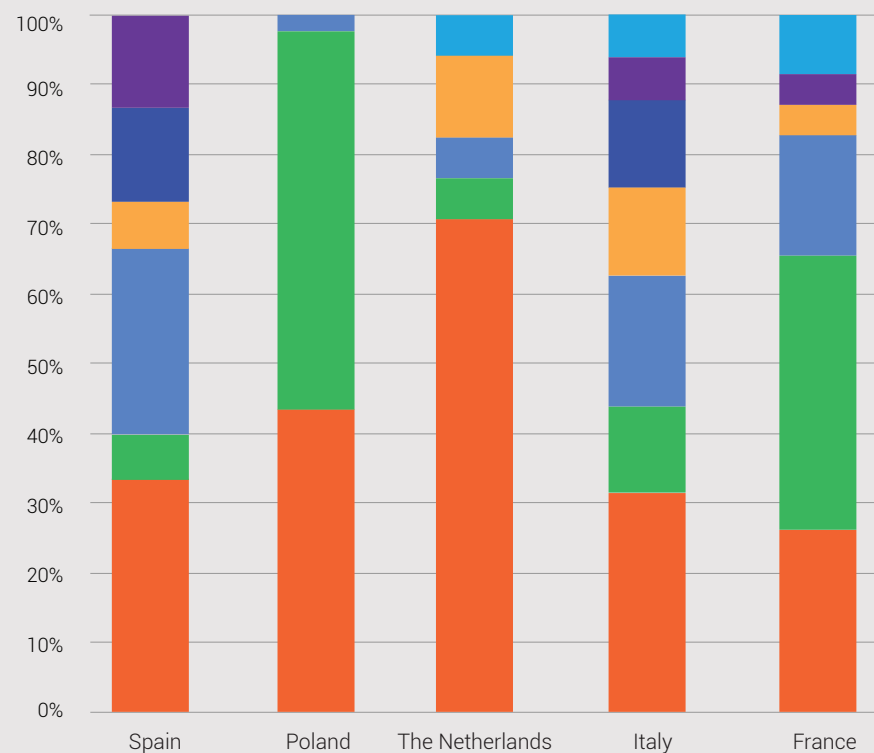
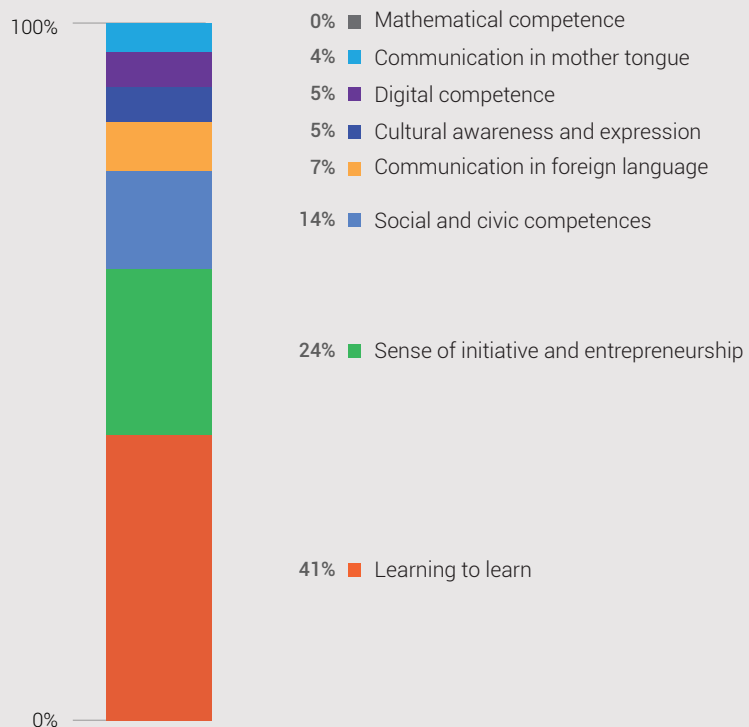


...about the key competences

The key competence **Learning to learn** was valued the most important competence among the five countries. Even if Polish and French respondents ranked this key competence second, it can be stated that the employers of these EU countries share a common view on what important skills an employee should have; "willingness to learn", "attitude towards learning", "eagerness to learn new skills", "perseverance" and the ability for "solving problems even through unusual paths" are qualities appreciated throughout European employers.

The key competence **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** scored second place but in this case, the respondents did not value the competence unanimously. **Social and civic competences** like "Turn ideas into action", "analyse weaknesses and strengths of a project" "be team-oriented" and "collaborate with others" are evaluated important skills among European employers but in this case, they do not share a common view on which quality is considered most important among those.

The competences linked to languages, cultural awareness, mathematic, digital skills are ranked less important among the 8 key competences.



Differences per country



France

Amongst French respondents, the following priorities have been given:

1. **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** 39,1%
2. **Learning to learn** 26,1%
3. **Social and civic competences** 17,4%

The French respondents rank the key competence **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** to be very important. The French employers expect the employees to behave themselves according to the values and culture of companies. The common values and teamwork help to achieve the company goals. The working culture is built up to promote the common activities amongst colleagues (teamwork). There are lots of meetings, seminars and discussion groups to promote the communication and common activities.

The second important competence is **eagerness to acquire news skills**. The companies know that teamwork can give good results but to keep the competitiveness in the market, new skills are required continuously. That is why the French employers also expect the employees to keep their motivation up and to be able to **adapt easily to new situations**.



Italy

Amongst Italian respondents, the following priorities have been given:

1. **Learning to learn** 31,25%
2. **Social and civic competences** 18,75%
3. **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** 12,5%

In Italy, the most important key competence for employers is **Learning to learn**, as the labour market prefers potential employees eager to acquire new skills and knowledge, useful for the specific labour sector. Moreover, any company, especially a company active in the service industry sector, appreciates workers involved in the local community. For example, the companies appreciate the engagement in the volunteer activities. The collaborative mind-set and devotion to the common good are very important in Italian culture.



Poland

Amongst Polish respondents, the following priorities have been given:

1. **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** 52,6%
2. **Learning to learn** 42,1%
3. **Social and civic competences** 5,3%

Collaboration with others was appreciated the most. Culturally, Polish people can be very individualistic which sometimes makes it difficult to perform teamwork efficiently.

Planning a project received also received high appreciation. It seems to be a crucial stage from the logical standpoint and something, which seems to cause problems. Quite often initial assumptions are neglected resulting in the need of changes and increase in workload.

The ability to acquire new skills seems to be crucial for Polish employer. Companies have to adapt quickly to the constantly changing market, rotation among employees (who leave to work abroad), so there is a need for new workers to be able to take over from them quickly.



Spain

Amongst Spanish respondents, the following priorities have been given:

1. **Learning to learn** 33,3%
2. **Social and civic competences** 26,7%
3. **Cultural awareness and expression** 13,3%

Amongst Spanish respondents, the most important key competence is **Learning to learn**. For Spanish employers the most appreciated values are the motivation, the interest and the eagerness to learn and improve. The previously attained knowledge is also relevant but the attitude of the employee is considered more important. The employees have to be independent but at the same time flexible enough to adapt to the characteristics of each company.

Very close to the appreciation of Learning to learn, is the key competence **Social and civic competences**, it is due to our Spanish culture that socialization is part of our daily life and very important from a work perspective. Unfortunately, compared to other countries the Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship is not appreciated as highly as it should be among our employers. It is also important to highlight that the key competence Communication in mother tongue is not important for them, as employers in small and medium companies are flexible enough to find the way to communicate avoiding the language barriers.



The Netherlands

Amongst Dutch respondents, the following priorities have been given:

1. **Learning to learn** 70,6%
2. **Communication in foreign languages** 11,76%
3. **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** 5,88%

Eagerness to learn and curiosity are highly valued competences in the Netherlands. As the Netherlands is a country with limited natural resources, it grew towards becoming a knowledge economy. Within the Dutch mind-set it is encouraged to continue to learn (concept of life long learning) and look for innovative and new solutions.

The Dutch employers gave a high appreciation for **communication in a foreign language skill**. Learning multiple languages in school is seen as a standard practice. It is very common for Dutch people to speak at least one foreign language. Very often, they are able to speak more foreign languages. The linguistic interest eases the pathway to international business for the Dutch inhabitants.

In the context of **initiative and entrepreneurship**, teamwork and project management are seen as very important qualities. Even if someone does not want to become an entrepreneur, the entrepreneurial thinking and continuous learning is encouraged from a young age.

Conclusion

In order to get an insight into the expectations and needs of the labour market the following question was asked to employers:

"What do you think - as an employer - are important skills for people in your organization after they have completed a mobility?"

Even if the activities, aims and sizes of the companies are different, the expectations in transferral skills are quiet similar between the employers of five countries: France, Italy, Spain, Poland and the Netherlands.

The survey carried out amongst 100 employers shows that the expectations in term of competences and skills are quiet common amongst employers from the 5 different nations: companies common characterises: motivation to learn, focus on objectives, team working, organize the ideas, are team oriented etc. The expected level is very high; they want an "ideal employee"

The employee should know how to:

- **acquire new skills** - have the desire to learn and to absorb new knowledge
- **solve problems** - how to find the solution independently, respond to unforeseen situations with innovate solutions in their work environment
- **concentrate on objectives** - focus on objectives, respect the planning and challenge established ideas
- **balance different views, negotiate and compromise** - communicate and cooperate knowing how to negotiate and find the compromises
- **be resilient in stressful situations** - how to act in stressful situations and know how to react professionally
- **demonstrate awareness of the organisations mission and values** - know their organisations values and rules and respect these
- **turn ideas into action** - to take action but know the personal limits, analyse the strength and weakness to project before acting
- **be team-oriented** - to be able to cooperate and implement common actions
- **understand multicultural and socio-economic differences and act accordingly** - must understand the cultural and religious differences whether or not they have experienced living in another country
- **organize and structure the ideas** - able to clearly write down and structure their thoughts
- **use the computer and find information on the Internet** - able to find correctly handle information



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