

COMPETENCES



I01 INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Study among employers on requested competences for participants in mobility projects



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

A variety of recent European studies have underlined the employees having a range of competences for employers in the current economic context. The results have shown that business, technical and sectoral skills have a low level of transferability, whereas generic personal and professional skills possess a high level of transferability between sectors and occupations and thus promote employability. These studies also show that there is a link between the transferability of skills and securing employment ... and that people with a range of skills have been less exposed to the risk of long-term unemployment during a period of economic recession.

Other contributions confirm these results and show how the recruitment methods have evolved in recent years by adapting to the needs of the market: 'Soft skills' oriented towards human interactions and requiring emotional intelligence, are increasingly valued in the selection process, whereas those relating to theoretical, technical knowledge, diplomas, such as 'hard skills' are no longer the exclusive basis for recruitment.

Among the multitude of ways to develop transversal competences, it has been demonstrated that transnational mobility programmes represent a unique and privileged context for the growth of these competences.

The added value of a transnational work-based mobility experience in the development of an individual's competences is increasingly recognised by employers, who see a work-based learning experience as being a major asset in a candidate's application.

Professional recognition of transferable competencies resulting from periods of mobility has thereby also become a feature of the labour market: job vacancies that increasingly require these skills and include 'An internship experience abroad would be a plus' are more and more common.

However, the formal link between the experiences abroad, the development of competences and the resulting increase in employability have not yet been fully explored. Likewise, the majority of job applicants remain unsure how best to showcase to employers the competences that they have developed in their time abroad. For example, do social, intercultural, transversal skills acquired during periods of mobility constitute genuine criteria for assessment as part of a recruitment process in the same way as proficiency in a foreign language? How are they addressed? How do recruiters succeed in making the link between the transferability of competences gained abroad in a given professional context? How can candidates contribute to making this process clearer to potential employers?

The aim of this investigative report will be to learn about the competences that are desired and expected by employers, to better adjust the three other main outputs in the Compétences+ project. The innovative aspect of this study is that it has targeted a wide range of sectors in order to focus on the key competences that are expected in relation to people who have recently returned from a work-based mobility project.

We aim to learn more about what employers expect from participants to mobility project and which are the competences that are deemed the most important. This will allow the partners and key stakeholders to provide tailored support to their participants, to better match the expectations of the labour market. Employers will also provide their advice on how best to value and promote the competences acquired during a mobility project so that the partners can build on their propositions to create the trainings and the applications, and to design innovative ways to promote these competences for participants.



METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SURVEY

1. THEORETICAL REFERENCES OF THE SURVEY

Skills can be defined as 'the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems'. Skills are frequently classified as Hard Skills (Technical Competences), Soft Skills (Aptitudes & Personal Qualities), Intercultural Skills.

Competences can be defined as 'the ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development'. It should be noted that competence is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (including technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g. social or organisational skills) and ethical values.

However, the idea of competence remains a 'fuzzy' concept and there are as many definitions as experts who have been interested in this notion.

For example, according to Philippe PERRENOUD '*Competence is an ability to act effectively in a group of situations that we manage to master because we have both the necessary knowledge and the ability to mobilise it wisely, in a timely manner, to identify or solve real problems.*'

Jacques TARDIF says that '*Competence is a complex know-how based on the effective mobilisation and combination of a variety of internal and external resources within a group of situations.*' On the other hand,

Guy LE BOTERF states that '*Competence does not lie in the resources (knowledge, capacities, etc.) to be mobilised, but in the mobilisation of these resources. The competence is of the order of the knowing how to mobilise.*'

This having been said, common features emerge from these definitions. A competence is based on the mobilisation, the integration, the networking of

a diversity of resources: internal resources specific to the individual, his knowledge, abilities, skills, but also external resources that can be mobilised in the environment (other people, documents, computer tools, etc.). This mobilisation of resources is carried out in a given situation, for a specific action the competence is necessarily referenced; however, it is exercised in a variety of situations, through a process of adaptation & not just the reproduction of mechanisms. Situations encountered by individuals may be related to professional, personal daily life, social or educational contexts.

A possible overall definition could be 'Competence is the ability of a person to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes in a specific context and in a particular quality - head, heart and hand' (Blinc)

COMPETENCES



Basic skills are defined as 'The skills needed to live in contemporary society, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and mathematics' and are the outcome of assimilation of knowledge through learning.

Key skills / key competences are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. They are the sum of skills (basic and new basic skills) needed to live in contemporary knowledge society. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

In the **Compétences+** project we will base our work on the **European Recommendations (2006)** which identifies the following eight competences:

1. **Communication in the mother tongue;**
2. **Communication in foreign languages;**
3. **Mathematical competence and basic skills in science and technology;**
4. **Digital competence;**
5. **Learning to learn;**
6. **Social and civic skills;**
7. **Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit;**
8. **Cultural sensitivity and expression.**

The National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions (NAALC) defines four types of skills implemented in a professional activity:

- I. **Technical Skills,**
- II. **Organisational Skills,**
- III. **Relational / Personal Skills,**
- IV. **Skills Adaptation.**

Transferable Skills are skills that can be mobilised in a variety of work situations. This does not mean that they are all mobilised simultaneously in all professional situations. They come in five dimensions: Organisational dimension; Dimension related to adaptability and autonomy; Dimension related to sociability; Dimension related to communication; Dimension related to initiative taking and participation.

The notion of transferability is extremely important: which situations are «cross referenced» by the same skills? Any situation, any field: social, professional, personal; Any professional situation - work in all sectors - and job search.

In the Europass CV & Europass Skills Passport, language skills, communication skills, organisational /managerial Skills, job-related skills, digital skills, other skills (Driving Licence...) are all identified.

2. ORGANISATION OF THE SURVEY

The survey took place between March and June 2018 and a first draft was first proposed by ADICE & European Placement Network (EPN) and then discussed with the other partners in the project ASPEm & Blinc.

In order to reduce the potential difficulties of respondents in clearly articulating the specific criteria that add value to international experience and allow them to add any other relevant advice from their experience, the original proposal provided for closed questions (yes / no), punctuated with open questions to allow participants to develop their answers. These open questions made it possible to have lively exchanges with the respondents about their daily practices and life in the workplace.

To ensure the comparability of the results, common guidelines for the execution of the survey were also defined.

The revised version of the questionnaire was then tested by EPN with interviews with 5 UK-based companies. Fine-tuning of the working and presentation of the questionnaire followed as a result feedback from these interviews.

The final version of the questionnaire was then circulated to partners at the start of March 2018.

The process of designing the questionnaire was enriching, notably because of the multicultural nature of the team involved in the project, but also because of the varied practical experiences each partner. However, we were confronted with the

need to harmonise the initial items to consider the cultural specificities of all the countries, in terms of recruitment and/or the concepts used.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Between March 2015 and June 2018, a total of 97 interviews were conducted, with data capture and analysis of results between June and August 2018. A total of 26 were conducted in Italy, 25 in Germany & the UK and 21 in France.

In order to determine the most appropriate methods for entering the results and comparative analysis of the data, we produced two excel databases: the first was intended to capture data from results in each country; The second to transfer the data, perform dynamic crossings and formalise the statistical and qualitative analysis that is presented in the following pages.

Partners initially contacted potential businesses about the project by phone or email. The staff responsible for conducting the interviews were trained by the members of the «Compétences+» project within the partner organisations. The precise number of staff members involved varied according to the country and the geographical location of the companies. A total of 14 staff participated in the survey: 2 for ADICE (FR) and the Como region (IT); 2 for the Gottingen region (DE) and 5 for Manchester & Bristol (UK).

- 66% of the questionnaires were completed online or returned by email.
- 34% of the surveys were completed via interviews, via Skype, FaceTime, Zoom or face to face. The duration of the interviews was variable, from 20 minutes to a maximum of 2 hours. Some people had more time to develop their answers even if mobility was not a contextual element in their work. Likewise, others were more interested in the proposed themes because they had taken part in a transnational mobility themselves.



ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Section 1 About the Employers in the sample



1.1 COMPANY STATUS

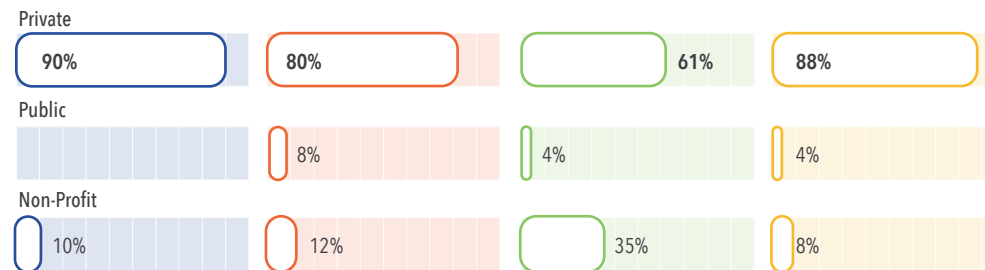
A majority of private companies.

90% of the companies interviewed by ADICE in France were from the private sector and 10% were non-profit organisations.

Blinc eG interviewed 25 German companies, 80% of which came from the private sector, 12% non-profit and 8% from the public sector.

ASPEm's companies interviewed are divided in 61% private, 35% not-for-profit, 4% public. The information found differs from the regional data (Lombardia), in which the private companies are the most common, but the non-profit organisations stand at below 3%. This is because Lombardy is the region with the greatest presence of private companies in Italy.

EPN interviewed 25 UK companies, 88% of which came from the private sector.



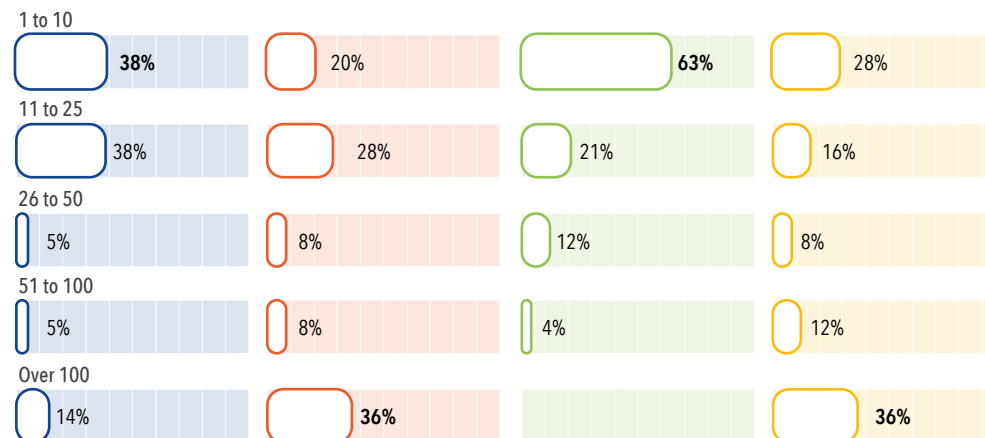
1.2 COMPANY EMPLOYEES

Majority of small companies.

6% of the French companies had fewer than 25 employees, 10% with between 26 and 100 employees and 14% with over 100 employees.

In the Italian sample, 84% of the companies had fewer than 25 employees.

In Germany and the UK, the sample included a greater proportion of companies with over 100 employees (36%). This will no doubt have an influence on the responses and the priorities in the survey responses.



1.3 BUSINESS SECTOR

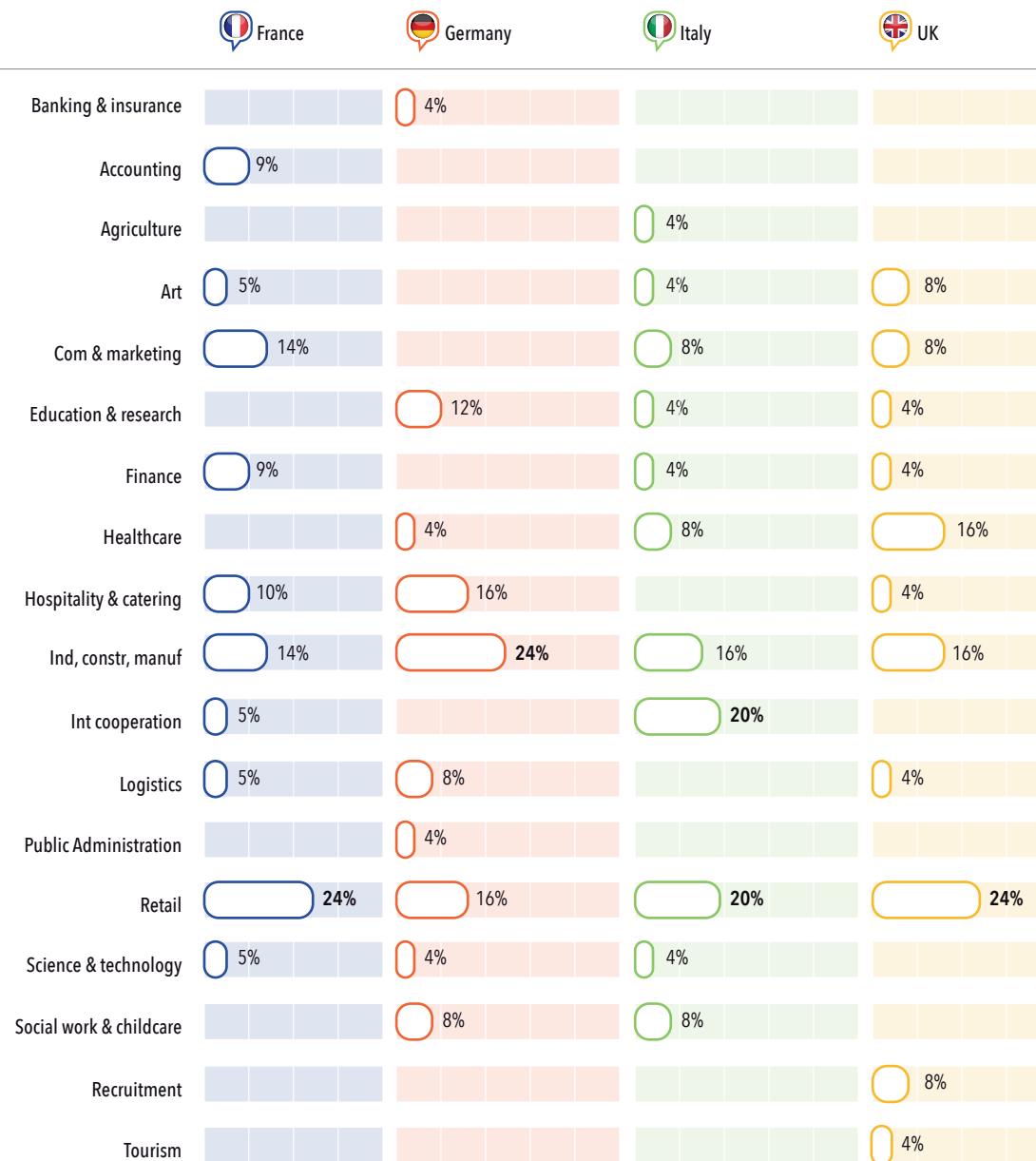
The retail sector was the most highly represented sector across the four countries.

The French companies come from different fields of activities (indicated in the table on the right) 5 are specialised in retail (representing 24%), 3 in communication, 3 in Industry, construction and manufacturing (each representing 14%).

In the Italian sample, the principal sectors identified are retail with 19% and international cooperation with the same percentage. Industry, civil engineering, construction and manufacturing follow with 15%, then have been interviewed companies working in healthcare, art, communication and marketing, science and technology, agriculture, fashion, social disability and education support, social work and childcare. All of these in a range between 4 % and 8 %.

In Germany, the companies came from a variety of professional sectors, with almost a quarter (24%) from Industry, civil engineering, construction and manufacturing, 16% from Hospitality and catering as well as from the Retail Sector and 12% from the education and research sectors. Other represented sectors were banking and insurance, healthcare, logistics, public administration, science and technology (mathematics, ICT, engineering), and social work and childcare - all represented with 8% or less.

In the UK, the companies came from a variety of professional sectors, with 24% from the Retail Sector, 16% from the Healthcare and Manufacturing sectors.





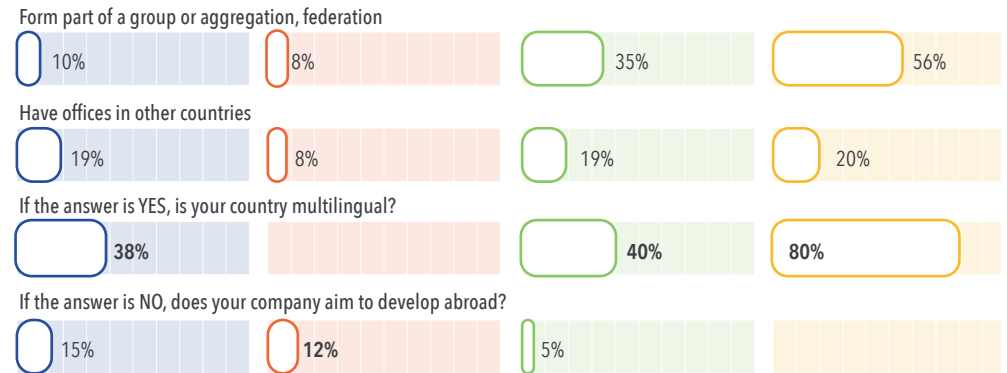
1.4 COMPANY DETAILS

A low percentage of companies aiming to develop abroad.

In the UK and Italy 56% and 35% respectively of companies were part of a group, whereas in France and Germany, this applied to less than 10%. Fewer than 20% of the companies in all 4 countries had offices in other countries and only in the UK did these companies consider themselves to be multi-lingual. A surprisingly low percentage of companies aimed to develop abroad, but this can perhaps be explained by the high proportion of small companies in the sample.

For example, in Germany, just 2 of the questioned companies (8%) were part of a group and also only 2 had offices in countries outside of Germany. None of them considered themselves to be a multi-language company.

This shows that the questioned sample of organisations were principally active in their own country. Additionally, only 3 companies (12%) stated that they aim to develop abroad in the future.

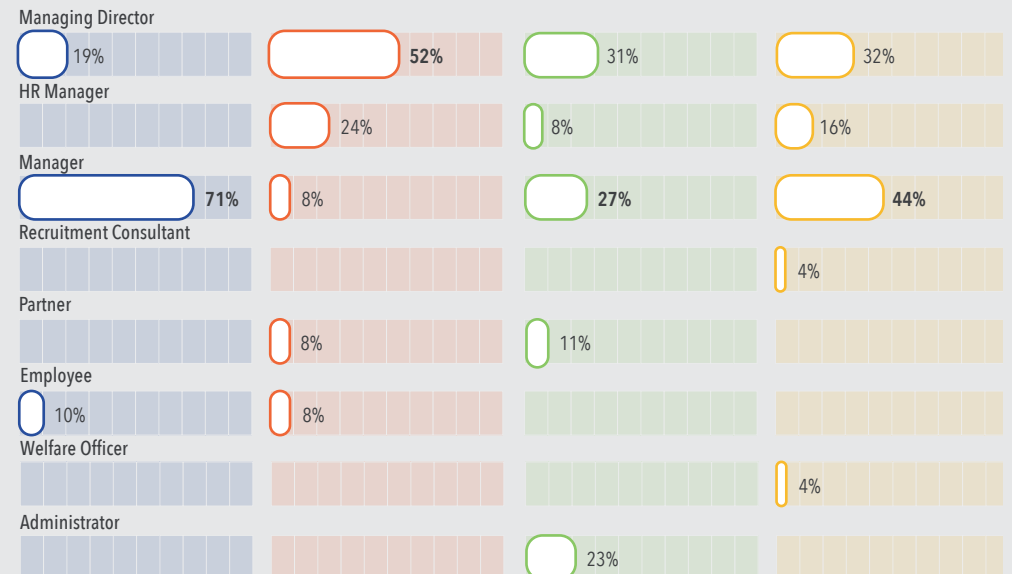
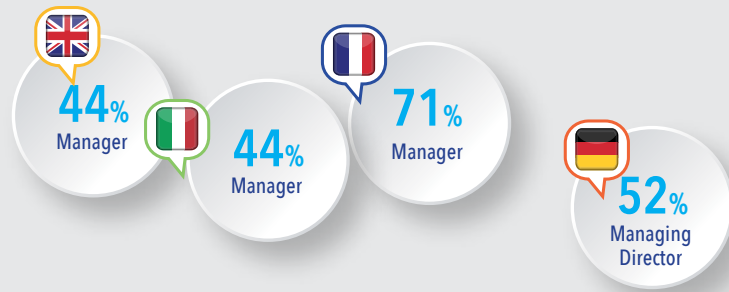


Section 2

About the person who replied for the employer

2.1 CURRENT POSITION

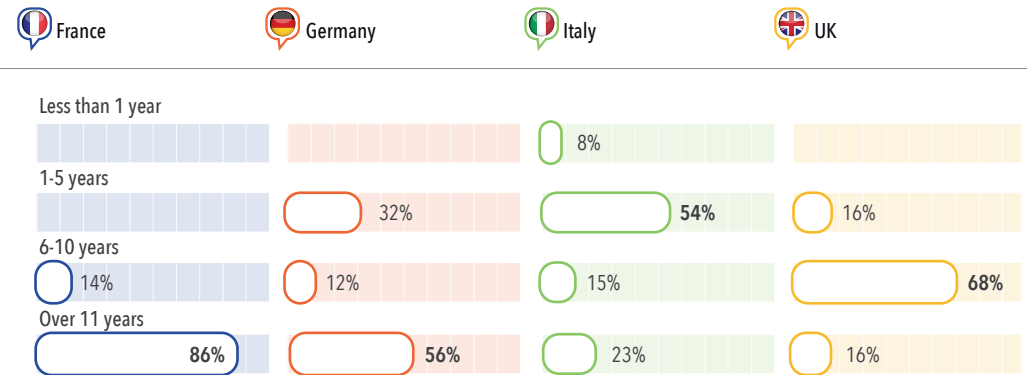
The majority of companies were represented by the Managing Director, a Manager or the HR Manager.



2.2 TIME WITH THE COMPANY

Very few interviewees had been with the company for less than one year.

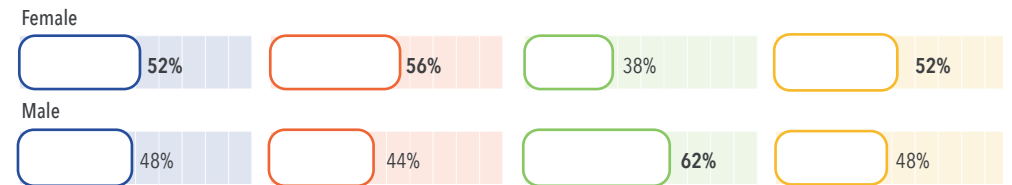
In Italy, the majority had been with the company for between 1 and 5 years; in the UK the majority had been with the company between 6 and 10 years whereas in France and Germany, most had been with the company for more than 11 years.



2.3 GENDER

Fairly even split between man and women.

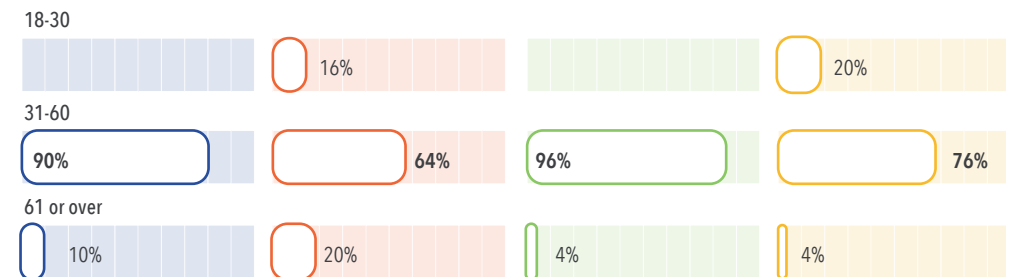
In France and the UK, the interviewees were split almost equally between women and men. In Germany, more women replied to the questionnaire and in Italy, more men.



2.4 AGE

The vast majority in all four countries of those who completed the questionnaires were aged between 31 and 60.

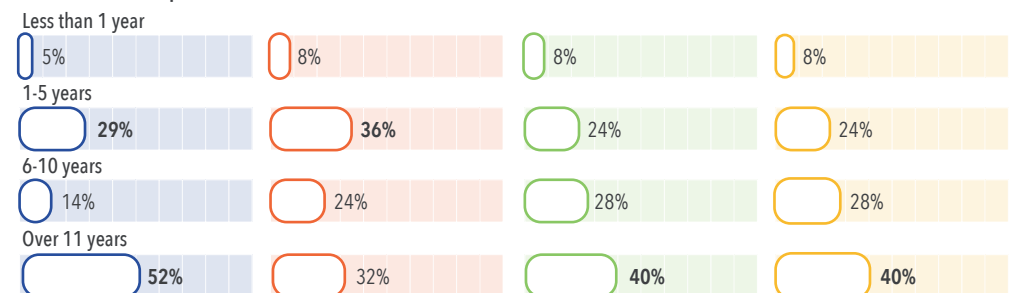
Only in Italy and Germany did a small proportion of the interviewees come from the 18-30 age bracket.



2.5 RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

Only 7% of interviewees across the four countries had less than 1-year recruitment experience.

There was a good range experience in the interviewees in each country, with 57% having over 5 years' experience.



2.6 KNOWLEDGE OF INTERNATIONAL WORK-EXPERIENCE SCHEMES

The schemes were not as well-known as expected in the 4 countries.

When asked about current international work-experience schemes, we discovered that not every French company knows about the existing mobility programmes. In fact, 81% were familiar with Erasmus+, 52% were familiar with the Voluntary Service, only 10% knew about Leonardo and no one had heard about Eurodyssée.

Given the fact that they have for the most, more than 11 years of experience, one could think that perhaps they have seen several candidates with different international experiences through various programmes.

It may be that previous candidates did not convince recruiters nor hold their attention on this subject. These interviews provided a major opportunity to draw the companies' attention to the programmes and their benefits.

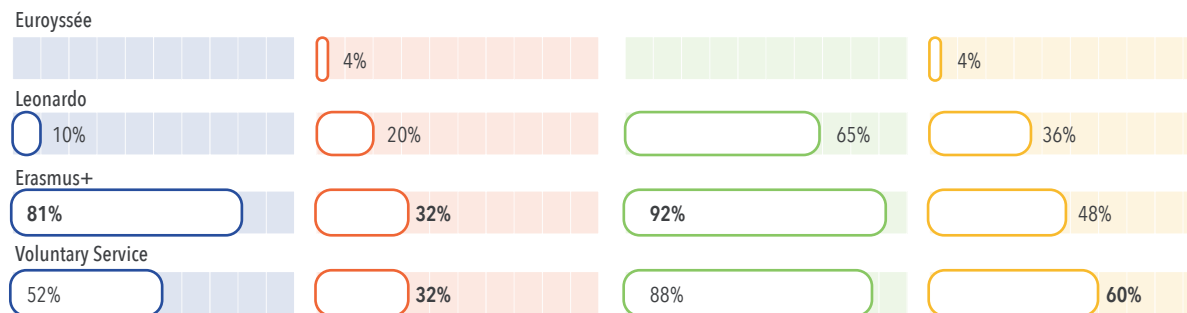
In Italy, the level of awareness was higher than in the other countries. 92 % of those questioned knew Erasmus+, the 88 % had heard of Voluntary Service, and 65 % of Leonardo.

In Germany, only 32% were familiar with the Erasmus+ programme and volunteering services, 20% with Leonardo and only 1 person (4%) with Eurodyssée.

This is not very surprising considering that almost none of the questioned companies is internationally active and most are from rather non-academic sectors. Those international work-experience schemes are hard to combine with the German dual vocational training system and therefore rather known in the university sphere.

In the UK, it was disappointing to note that only 48% of companies were familiar with the Erasmus+ programme, suggesting that marketing and publicity initiatives have not been very effective in developing awareness within UK companies. 60% had heard of or had personal experience with voluntary schemes.

The Eurodyssée programme was not well-known in any of the four countries.



Section 3

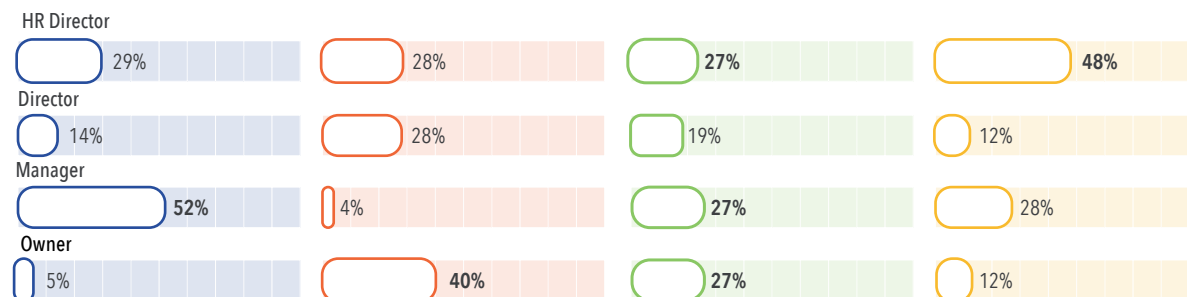
Recruitment management within the companies in the survey

3.1 RECRUITMENT MANAGEMENT IN THE COMPANIES IN THE SURVEY

In France, the manager was the person in charge of the recruitment (52%). 29% delegated the responsibility to the HR director.

In Germany, the fact that in 72% of the questioned organisations the recruitment of new staff is managed by the owner, the managing director or by a manager rather than an HR manager (28%) seems consistent with the relatively small company sizes. The presence of an HR manager in Germany tends to be limited to medium and larger companies with over 80 employees.

In most of the Italian companies, recruitment is managed by managers, owners or HR: all these three categories scored a 27 %, for a combined total of 81%. In the remaining companies, recruitment is handled by managers (15%), or by the administrative staff (4%). In the UK, as 44% of companies interviewed had fewer than 25 employees, it is not overly surprising that in 52% of companies, recruitment was managed by the owner, the managing director or by a manager rather than an HR manager. The presence of an HR manager in the UK tends to be limited to larger companies with over 50 employees.



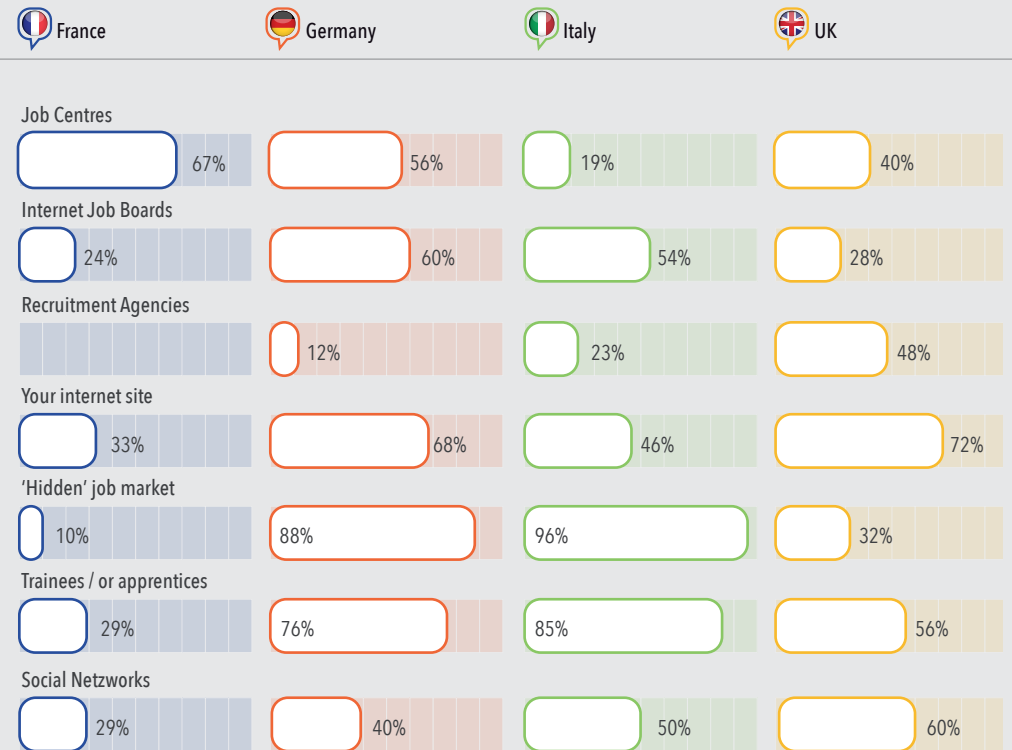
3.2 RECRUITMENT METHODS

Companies tend to undertake their recruitment online.

The French companies in the sample, tend to rely on job centres or their internet site to communicate available positions in their organisations. In Italy, the 'hidden job market' is the most important resource for the 96% of the people interviewed. The favourite tool between others is the internet with internet job boards at 50%, social networks and company's websites at 46 % each. Meanwhile recruitment agencies and job centres are only used by 23% and 19% only. Moreover, the 85% of the companies recruit their trainees and apprentices.

The German companies use a variety of recruitment methods, the most popular being the 'hidden job market/network' (88%) and recruiting from the company's trainees and apprentices (76%), which is also not overly surprising in light of the companies' sizes. Still, high numbers of companies use online measures to recruit applicants. 68% use their company's website, 60% internet job boards and 40% social networks, their own company internet site and social networks. Only 56% of the companies mentioned that they use the job centre to advertise job openings which is surprising because they are bound by law to do so in Germany. Considering the costs of recruitment agencies and the proven fact that their staff selection process is often not company specific enough and therefore not valid and reliable it is not surprising at all that only 12% use them.

The UK companies use a variety of recruitment methods, the most popular being their own company internet site and social networks. It was somewhat surprising that companies preferred these 2 methods to the more traditional Job Centres and Recruitment Agencies, but as in Germany a reluctance to use Recruitment Agencies could be linked to the costs in involved.

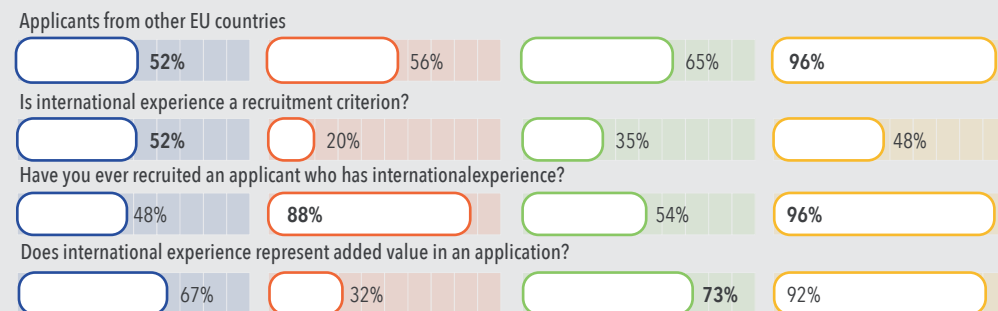


3.3 RECRUITMENT CRITERIA

International mobility experience is seen like added value.

In regard to recruitment criteria, international experience is always well regarded in France. The candidate shows that he/she dares to step out of comfort zone, that he/she is open to other experiences and that he/she can be effective in another cultural setting.

In Italy, 65% of the interviewees recruit from other EU Countries, and the 58% had at least an applicant with international experience. However, only 34% required previous international experience as a recruitment criterion but the



73% considered it to be an important added value. This is mainly because of the knowledge of foreign languages, autonomy, resourcefulness, flexibility, cultural enrichment which derive from such an experience.

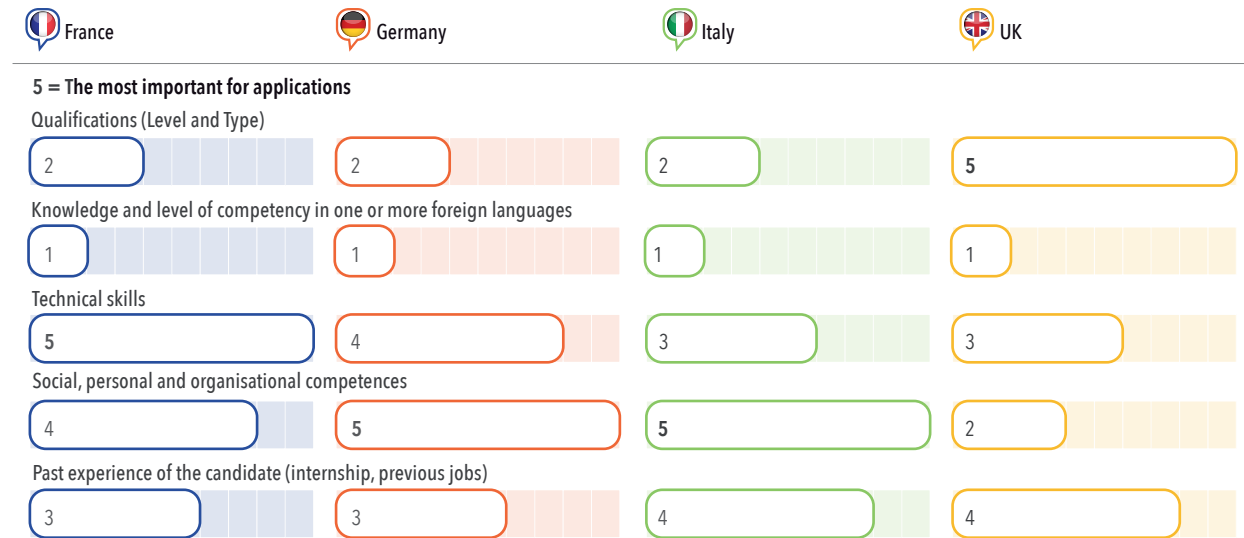
In Germany, 56% of companies recruit employees from other EU companies, but only 32% thought that international experience represented added value in an application, although only 20% considered it to be a recruitment criterion. 32% of companies thought that working abroad gave employees a wider range of experiences and would help with the communication of foreign customers.

Surprisingly, 96% of UK companies recruit employees from other EU countries and 92% thought that international experience represented added value in an application, although only 48% considered it to be a recruitment criterion. 31% of companies thought that working abroad gave employees a wider range of experiences and would be of help with the development of communication skills with non-English speaking suppliers and customers.



3.4 RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCES FOR APPLICATIONS

Social, personal and organisational competencies are most important.



The next three questions relate to the competences that companies perceive to be the most important competences for job applications and to cope with the demands of the current job market.

In regard to the most important competencies for job applications, in France the companies felt that technical and social skills were the most important.

According to the questionnaire results in Germany, the most important facts to consider in the application process are the social, personal and organisational competences of an applicant.

They were followed by the technical skills and past experience of a participant. Surprisingly, formal qualifications were only rated in the medium range of importance.

This is rather unexpected for Germany that is known for its intricate qualification based vocational training system and a labour market that is usually rather asking for certificates than experience.

The small sample of rather micro and small bu-

sinesses in a rural area of Germany might explain this result. It should also be noted that the knowledge and level of competency in one or more foreign languages was considered to be the least important of the five proposed factors for the current labour market.

In Italy, the most important aspects of the application process of a candidate are social, personal and organisational competences followed by the candidate's past experiences. Then came technical skills, qualifications and last of all, knowledge and competency in one or more foreign languages.

In the UK, it came as no surprise that qualifications came out as the most important factor and that competency in one or more foreign languages the least important.

This underlines the stereotypical view in the UK that everyone either speaks English or should speak English and that English is the language of International business.

3.5 RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCES IN THE CURRENT JOB MARKET

Technical work related skills are the "safe option" for companies.

Having highly developed technical work-related skills combined with past experiences define the ideal candidate in the current job market for a French company.

Therefore, in today's challenging labour market, recruiters go for the 'safe' option, a person who already worked in a similar work environment and could immediately assume responsibilities; they won't take risks in this particular context. However, the companies felt that other competences help distinguish between candidates.

In Germany, the answers to the question cannot be considered totally reliable because more than half of the questioned companies stated that they could not speak for the labour market and also didn't know what applicants needed for "the German labour market". They could only speak for the needs of their own company. Therefore, the answers should only be interpreted in this way. Social Competences, Personal Competences and Technical work-related skills were

all considered very important. Work-related experience was considered slightly less important while international experience was consistently viewed as being the least important.

In Italy, the most important competence was technical work-related skills, then personal competences and social ones. Work-related experience and international experiences were seen as less important.

From the UK results, it would appear that work-related experience defines the ideal candidate for the companies in our sample. These results reinforce the traditional, qualification-based nature of the UK society and show that although companies are looking for well-qualified candidates, candidates with work-related experience are at a considerable advantage.

This could reinforce the need to develop more apprenticeship or sandwich schemes and highlights the need for quality work-based learning as part of every educational or training programme from secondary school onwards. It should also be noted that international experience is considered to be the least important of the five proposed factors for the current labour market.

3.6 THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS TO COPE WITH THE CURRENT LABOUR MARKET

Highlighting strengths and Communicating fluently (change the graphic).

In France, companies also candidates to be able to adopt a constructive and practical attitude: mostly to be able to highlight strengths, communicate fluently, discuss weakness and move forward, adapt easily and develop relations and use past experiences strategically. Candidates should be able to exploit their skills and make the most of their work experiences in their new job.

German companies think that highlighting strengths and communicating fluently are very important qualities in an applicant. Additionally, companies mentioned that applicants should show confidence and a willingness to learn. The answers to the open question here are quite interesting. There is such a strong competition in the German labour market that even employers state that applicants need to be determined and really persistent to find a job. Furthermore, it was mentioned that people fresh with university degrees are not always prepared for working life. They do have a broad theoretical knowledge but need to express a real willingness to learn about practices in the real working world.

Communicating fluently is viewed as the most significant in both Italy and the UK. Other qualities highlighted were adaptability, a willingness to learn, patience and willingness to learn.



France



Germany

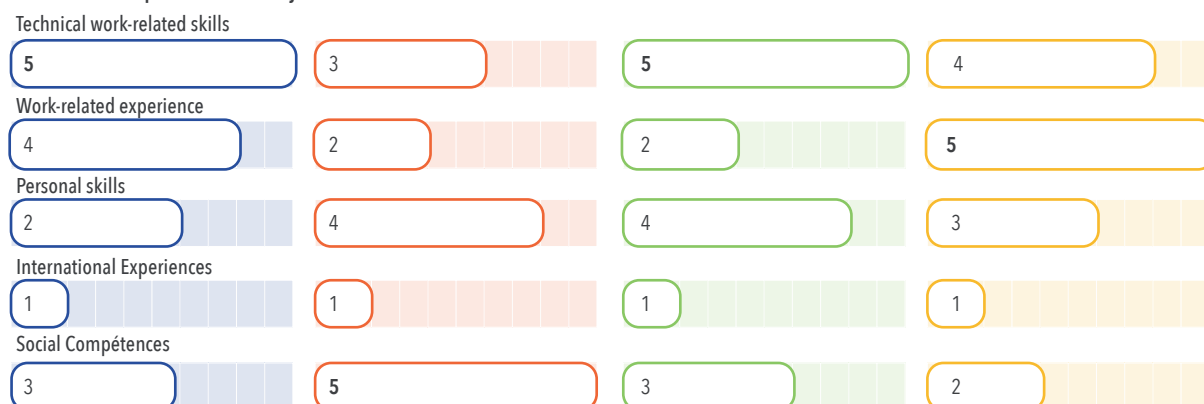


Italy



UK

5 = The most important in current job market





3 = The most important factors to cope with the current labour market

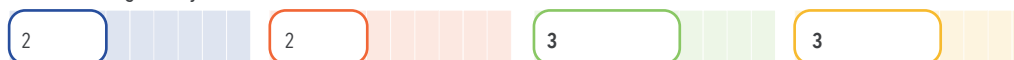
Highlighting strengths



Discussing weaknesses



Communicating fluently



Section 4 Aspects of Skills and Competences

In the third section of the questionnaire the companies were asked to rank the specific aspects of the European Key Competences in importance on a 1-5 scale according to importance. The interviewees were not asked to rank the importance of the entire key competence.

4.1 LEARNING TO LEARN

is about the attitude toward learning, the ability to deepen reflexion on learning outcomes and to stay focused on objectives and plans.

	France	Germany	Italy	UK
Eagerness to acquire new skills	1.24 1	1.52 1	1.69 1	2.48 3
Confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories	1.86 3=	1.80 3	2.08 4	2.84 4
Refer to someone for help and / or advice when facing difficulties	1.86 3=	1.68 2	1.88 2	2.44 2
Know how to solve problems autonomously	1.57 2	1.92 4	2.00 3	1.96 1

In three of the four countries, the eagerness to learn was considered to be the most important competence.

In France, when asked to choose between: 'Eagerness to acquire new skills', 'Confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories', 'Refer to someone for help and / or advice when facing difficulties' and 'Know how to solve problems autonomously', the interviewees ranked 'Eagerness to acquire new skills' at the top.

The most relevant is to be motivated and willing to learn no matter the strategy used to face new challenges. This outcome can link strongly to the fast-changing world and the development of the technology.

In Italy, for 58% of those who responded us, eagerness to acquire new skills is "very important", while for about half (29%), the confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories and know how to solve problems autonomously is seen just as much crucial. For 39% of the people interviewed refer to someone for help and/or advice when facing difficulties is "important".

In Germany, with average values between 1,52 (Eagerness to acquire new skills) and 1,92 (Know how to solve problems autonomously), the scores were so close as to render the differences insignificant.

All four aspects of the Learning to learn competence were ranked very important by employers. It can be concluded that companies in Germany are very keen to have employees that are able to quickly, autonomously and motivated to learn to close gaps in their knowledge or skills or solve problems.

A popular saying in Germany is 'time is money' - in the professional environment there is not much time to teach and train staff on the job. It is preferred to employ qualified personnel or hire such that are quick studies.

When asked to choose between the choices above, the UK companies interviewed ranked 'knowing how to solve problems autonomously' as the most important and 'confidence to ask questions and query established ideas and theories' as the least important.

This could be related to the fact that in the professional environment in the UK, there is little time to discuss procedures with employees and staff are largely left to 'think on their feet'.

This can also lead to a 'sink or swim' culture and lead to considerable staff changes as individuals prove themselves to be able to complete their required tasks and missions or not.

4.2 SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES REFER TO THE BEHAVIOUR AND THE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

It includes personal and intercultural competences.

In France, the employers who completed the questionnaire, estimated that today the nature of jobs move and change constantly.

They need that any future employees have the ability to adapt to new contexts and situation is key, negotiation, dialogue skills and resistance to work stress are the most relevant in this list.





The questioned German companies ranked two aspects as most important - being motivated to put even more effort in activities ($x = 1.08$) and applying correct personal hygiene and dressing appropriately ($x = 1.24$). The employers are looking for highly motivated employees who are willing to go the extra mile.

All other aspects were still ranked as very important with an average value between 1.52 and 2.2.

In Italy, for most of the people surveyed mediation abilities as adaptation to new situations, tolerance and negotiation are "very important". A little less important are motivation, dealing with criticism and keeping a professional attitude.

In the end we can find demonstrating awareness of the organisations, be resistant in stressful situation and applying personal hygiene and dressing appropriately.

In the UK, the employers were looking for highly motivated employees who are willing to go the extra mile. This can lead to employees starting work early and leaving later and later, even working at weekends or when travelling to and for work. Being able to adapt is seen as very important as it the capacity to deal with stress, underlining the pressure to meet targets that exists in many professional environments in the UK.

	France 	Germany 	Italy 	UK 
Act tolerantly towards others who have different values	1.71 7	2.00 6	1.62 1	3.60 8
Can balance different views, negotiate and compromise	1.52 2	2.20 9	1.62 1	3.96 9
Adapt easily to new situations	1.48 1	2.04 7	1.65 3	1.68 2
Have motivation to put even more effort in activities	1.67 4	1.08 1	1.73 4	1.56 1
Be resistant in stressful situations	1.62 3	1.52 3	2.12 8	2.16 3
Controls emotions & keeps a professional attitude when disagreeing in work-place	1.67 4	2.04 7	1.85 6	3.20 6
Apply correct personal hygiene and dress appropriately	1.95 8	1.24 2	2.12 8	3.52 7
Demonstrate awareness of the organizations mission and values	1.67 4	1.56 4	1.96 7	3.12 5
Can deal with criticism	2.05 9	1.76 5	1.77 5	2.52 4

4.3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCES REFER TO COORDINATION OF A VARIETY OF TASKS AND DECISION-MAKING SKILLS.

It is the ability to plan and manage a project. Working together and being team-oriented were considered the most important across the four countries as a whole.

Being team-orientated was seen as the most important competences in three of the four countries.

The employers in France had a pragmatic approach. The most valuable attitude was being team-oriented and able to collaborate with co-workers. A genuine internal harmony was essential to ensure good project management. The ability to turn ideas into action, plan and analyse the weaknesses and strengths of a project were also required. There were clear connections between the social civic competences and project management. The employers estimated that the ability to balance different views, negotiate are the basis of being able to work together.

In Germany, while the questioned companies ranked qualities of an employee like 'can be team-oriented' ($x = 1.96$), 'can recognise the limits of abilities' ($x = 2.28$), and 'can turn ideas into action' ($x = 2.32$) as very important, the aspects 'can create/plan a budget for a specific action/project' ($x = 3.68$) and can delegate ($x = 4.00$) seem to be rather unimportant. It might be that the other aspects of project management are relevant for every member of a project team, while budgeting and delegating are specific tasks for project leaders who naturally are lower in numbers. Therefore, those aspects might be considered as less important.

The skill considered most important in project management in Italy is recognizing the limits of abilities, and turning ideas into action. Another important aspect was planning a project analysing strengths and weaknesses of a project and being team-oriented. The least important was

being able to delegate, understanding multicultural and socio-economic differences and planning a budget for a project.

In the UK questionnaires, the most valuable attitude was being team-oriented and having the ability to turn ideas into action. UK companies expect employees to be able to work autonomously as part of a team as each employee will have his or her individual missions that form part of a team project. One surprising aspect of the results is that, the capacity to delegate is not seen as more important by employers. For managers, this competence is generally seen as one of the most essential by leading Business & Management Schools.

	France 🇫🇷	Germany 🇩🇪	Italy 🇮🇹	UK 🇬🇧
Can recognise the limits of abilities	1.86 5	2.28 2	1.69 1	3.08 3
Can turn ideas into action	1.67 2	2.32 3	1.73 2	2.60 2
Can plan a project	1.81 3	2.96 6	1.85 4	3.72 6
Can delegate	1.90 6	4.00 8	1.96 6	3.92 7
Can analyse the strengths and weaknesses of a project	1.81 3	2.72 5	1.81 3	4.04 8
Can be team-oriented	1.57 1	1.96 1	1.85 4	1.32 1
Can understand multicultural and socio-economic differences and act accordingly	2.43 7	2.52 4	2.00 7	3.24 4
Can create/plan a budget for a specific action/project	2.48 8	3.68 7	2.08 8	3.52 5

4.4 COMMUNICATION IN MOTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS CONSISTS OF UNDERSTANDING, INTERACTING, EXPRESSING IDEAS IN BOTH SPOKEN AND WRITTEN FORMS.



	France 🇫🇷	Germany 🇩🇪	Italy 🇮🇹	UK 🇬🇧
Understand and perform instructions from the employer	1.57 1	1.20 4	1.58 2	1.84 2
Communicate effectively	1.71 2	1.52 3	1.54 1	1.64 1
Use correct and appropriate written language in a professional situation	1.90 3	2.12 2	1.81 3	2.68 3
Write reports or documents in a structured way	2.19 4	3.04 1	2.19 4	3.80 4

In France, the requisite skills are: understanding instructions and communicating efficiently, professionally both in written and oral.





For German companies, the aspects of spoken language (understanding and performing instructions from the employer and communicating effectively) were ranked more important than written language skills (use correct and appropriate written language in a professional situation, write reports or documents in a structured way). An explanation might be that the interviewed companies are often from sectors that focus on spoken rather than written work processes (hospitality and

catering, handicraft, manual labour). In rather academic or high professional white-collar jobs, it can be expected that the written language skills would be ranked more important.

In Italy and the UK, an ability to communicate effectively was viewed as the most important along with being able to understand and perform instructions from the employer. Skills related to oral communication are the most required. The correct use of appropriate written language was desirable but reporting or documenting in a structured way was not considered to be as important - although this would depend on the nature of the missions of the job involved.

4.5 COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONSISTS OF THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND NATIVE SPEAKERS AND INTERACT, EXPRESSING IDEAS ORALLY AND IN WRITING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

The ability to understand and perform instructions from the employer was clearly the most important competence across the four countries.

	France 	Germany 	Italy 	UK 
Understand and perform instructions from the employer	1.76 1	3.12 1	1.77 1	1.48 1
Understand native speakers	2.14 2	3.32 3	2.04 3	1.76 2
Communicate even with limited knowledge of a language	2.19 3	3.20 2	1.81 2	3.60 5
Use correct and appropriate written language in a professional situation	2.48 4	3.68 4	2.23 4	2.92 3
Write reports or documents in a structured way	2.71 5	3.76 5	2.58 6	3.24 4
Translate documents from the foreign language to his / her mother tongue	2.86 6	3.88 6	2.46 5	4.72 6

In France, the requisite skills are similar to the ones in mother tongue: understanding native speakers, performing professional instructions, although in such case communicating with a limited vocabulary appeared to be tolerated.

The questioned companies in Germany struggled with this question. Many distinguished that the importance of the aspects differ, if they do have an employee from abroad for whom German is the foreign language they work in or if their German employees need to communicate in a foreign language on the job.

Most of them interpreted the question in the sense that a German employee can communicate in a foreign language.

The ranking of overall medium (spoken language aspects) to low importance (written language aspects) is not surprising considering that only very few companies stated that they are internationally active. It is to suspect

that for employees from abroad for whom German is the foreign language, the importance ranking would be higher.

In Italy, the most interesting aspects of foreign language communication are understanding and performing instructions from the employer and communicating even with limited knowledge. After that, understanding native speakers and using correct and appropriate written language in a professional situation, and lastly writing reports in a structured way and translating documents from foreign languages considered almost "indifferent".

As in the other 3 countries, once again, understanding instructions and other native speakers were the most important for the UK companies in the sample.

It is no surprise that the ability to translate documents is the least important in light of the ever-increasing accuracy of internet-based translation programmes.

4.6 DIGITAL COMPETENCIES INVOLVE KNOWING HOW TO USE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY.





These have become progressively more important in the vast majority of jobs. Knowing how to use a computer, find information on the internet and common software programmes were the most important digital competences across the four countries. There was unanimity across the four countries.

In France, this concerns It is mainly how to use a computer and how to look for information on the internet that recruiters value and look for.

With an average value of 2.12 "know how to use a computer and common software programmes" and "know how to find information in the internet" ($x = 2.48$) were rated very important in Germany. Compared to that, with an average of 3.48 the use of social media to communicate was rate rather unimportant. Considering that social media activities of a company are public, usually marketing, activities, it is understandable that employers do not expect their general employees to be familiar with social media. It is sufficient if the person responsible for marketing or public relations is able to use them.

For the majority of the Italian employers questioned, it was "very important" to know how to use a computer and common software programmes, followed by knowing how to find information on the internet. Using social media and knowing their "netiquette" is the least important.

The UK companies interviewed actually considered all of the four factors to be important, although knowing how to use a computer and software programmes was consistently the number one choice.

	France 	Germany 	Italy 	UK 
Know how to find information in the Internet	1.81 2	2.48 2	1.77 2	1.96 2
Use social media to communicate	2.38 3	3.48 4	2.27 4	3.20 3
Be aware of 'netiquette'	2.38 3	2.76 3	2.08 3	3.52 4
Know how to use a computer and common software programmes	1.76 1	2.12 1	1.58 1	1.32 1

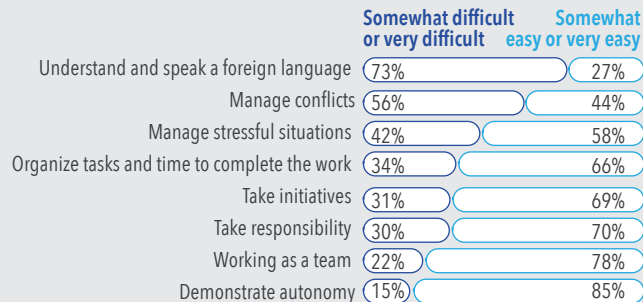
EUROPEAN KEY COMPETENCES

(SMALLEST VALUE = THE MOST IMPORTANT)

According to the survey, the five skills most valued by employers are: Motivation, Team-orientation, effective communications, understanding and performing, adapting easily to a new situation. This means that the employer expects to have an employee in his company who is motivated, who quickly understands attributed tasks, who knows how to adapt to new situations. In order to carry out his tasks, he must be able to work in a team and communicate effectively.

The Adice Association has carried out several studies to try to better understand and measure the acquired experiences acquired during a period of work-based mobility and see the level impact these experiences have on their professional career. The results of this investigation are very much in line with and are reinforced by the results that ADICE obtained in these previous projects. Most of the participants confirmed that during their period of work-based learning, they learned to work in a team and to take initiatives. They also learned to work in an international team and adapt in situations.

This means that work-based mobility provides an opportunity to test your abilities and acquire skills through the various tasks performed. It was also shown that these benefits do not depend on the age, education level or amount of previous work experience of the trainee. It was learned that in order to effect positive changes, such as acquiring professional, personal or intercultural skills, there is a need for action. If there is no action, there can be no real, lasting changes. It is therefore of considerable value to underline here that the expectations of employees tend to match the identified benefits of a work-based mobility experience.



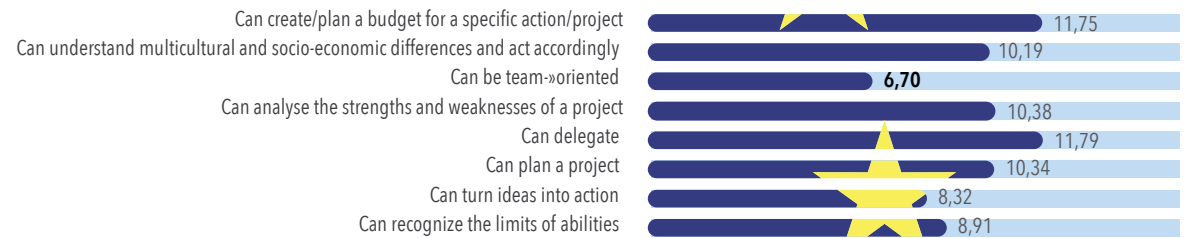
1.1 LEARNING TO LEARN



1.2 SOCIAL & CIVIC ASPECTS



1.3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT



1.4 COMMUNICATION IN MOTHER LANGUAGE



1.5 COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE



1.6 DIGITAL ASPECTS



EMPLOYERS STORIES

The questionnaires have given us a general idea what companies expect from applicants and which competences they value in their staff and respectively in their future employees.

However, it was felt that it would be beneficial to undertake some additional in-depth interviews with employers, based on more open questions in order to get a clearer picture of what employers think about international experience and what they do expect someone has learned during a period of work-based mobility.



France Employer Stories



CÉLINE,
MANAGER AT PAUL FRANCE
Employer - employee relations should be a win-win partnership



My name is Céline Vermoesen. I have a baccalaureate degree in management and finance. For 20 years, I have worked at PAUL, a bakery-café-restaurant and part of the Holder business group (900 million euros of sales revenue). I began my professional parkour at PAUL France where I established a management control unit. I carried out other support missions like introducing lease-management at Paul. Which consisted in entrusting the shop stewardship to directors. I also recruited new staff, offered management training and handled the legal contracts.

I left France in 2011 to support the companies' international growth (branches or franchises). I am currently the Financial Officer and Head of Support Functions. I manage Finance, Management Control, Operational and

Legal risks. My role is to provide support to the international growth but more importantly to control the profitability of our investments and secure our Franchise contracts. I have met all our business unit bosses and franchise partners in the follow-up of their business.

In my opinion, a young person coming out of school does not usually have a lot of operational skills. Young graduates are well educated but do not have enough common sense. Having a field experience is crucial, it helps to make the link between what we see on paper and the operational reality. Theoretical knowledge is relevant but it must be confirmed by an experience in the field.

It would be better if students could do a maximum of internships during their studies. They must be confronted with real life. When we welcome young people, we spend a lot of time training them because they lack maturity (the one you gain with experience).

I think that soft skills are very important. When I recruit people, I notice many candidates with a beautiful diploma and an ease to promote themselves. But sometimes they already become too quickly big-headed and claim unjustified salaries. The most difficult part when recruiting is to find the right person who will adapt to the values of the company and feel good about it. It should be a win-win partnership. For me, soft skills relate to the adherence to the values of the company, know-how, respect, interpersonal intelligence, being humble, ability to listen, discovering before expressing his opinion, ability to work, impeccable work and attitude.

The international experience of a collaborator is undeniably a plus for French companies that want to globalise. Internationalisation allows you to open up to other cultures, ways of life and work. Besides, mastery of a language can only be achieved by living in the country. It gives an open mind and a stronger ability to adapt. A young person who has done an internship abroad in the field of marketing for example will have acquired perfect knowledge

of the local market, habits of consumers, competitors ... This will allow PAUL to adapt its activities and services according to local needs but still keeping our DNA.



MARYSE,
MANAGER AT SPQI
Internships help me to keep current in my skills and ideas



The company SPQI (Services and Innovative Quality Products) was created in June 2016. It is based on the discovery of biomarker of the quality and functionality of spermatozoa. The development axes of the company are both in human health and in animal health. The company was founded by four medical researchers, it currently includes two employees and three trainees.

Through my work on different Interreg projects, I came across the platform dedicated to Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs. As a business creator, I know that training is very important. In addition, knowing that we could host for a period of one to six months people who are considering starting their own business seemed very interesting.

We thought that having a Young Entrepreneur within the company could bring new ideas and skills. Another expectation was to receive a person who could exchange with us and be open minded to prevent us from falling into a certain routine and shutting ourselves off from the outside.

Regarding the needs of the company, we already have an innovation thanks to the product that we develop. However, we needed help with graphics and marketing. It was also important for us to have a translation of our work to make it a marketable product abroad.

I could show them some creative paths to take and obstacles to avoid. Also explain to them that the creation of a company can sometimes be complicated but that there are certain doors that can open knowing shortcuts, having clearer explanations. Show them that by building a network the path to creation is simplified.

I was able to introduce them to many people from my network, which allowed them to expand theirs. The Young Entrepreneur was able to meet various stakeholders of a company, be it financiers, customers, etc. I think it was important for them to see the sets of steps and people to set up in a business to make it as effective as possible.



Germany Employer Stories

Three interviews were conducted (two with employers, one with a person who took part in a period of work-based a mobility) and some additional research on key scientific studies was carried out.

EMPLOYER 1

A managing director of a small company (<50 employees) in the sector of adult education. Company is managing and participating in European projects in the field of education and therefore internationally active on EU level.

She has +20 years of experience in managing a company and always recruited her employees by herself. New staff are never recruited via job centers or job adds. It was/is a rather informal process of spreading the word in own networks and employees' networks, recruit interns, ... Therefore, the interviewee is usually not even asking for formal application documents like cover letters or CV but directly meeting applicants after receiving a reference or having a chat on the phone.

For her, International experience is not something that she expects from applicants but due to the field of work (European projects), applicants do need to be willing to

go and work abroad. The past years showed that people who already were on mobilities or gathered some work experience abroad adjust more easily to the requirements of the job at hand.

Working in intercultural teams tends to be slower. There are many reasons for that like language barriers, potential of misunderstanding and conflicts due to language barriers and intercultural communication differences, different processes of consensus finding, and so on. People without international work experience can first be frustrated by the process and feel inefficient. It is a learning process to accept and understand that slower working tempo does not mean that the work is inefficient and that there is no need to be frustrated. People with former work experience abroad are better prepared for such situations because they usually experienced it before and know what to expect. She was not sure if this is actually due to competences that they learned abroad to cope with the situation or rather the experience to have realistic expectations of the situation. International experience is a benefit for an applicant because the interviewee can expect that the person has a tolerance to deal with above mentioned challenges.

Regarding specific competences that people with international experience bring to the table the interviewee is unsure. She cannot identify specific skills or competences that employees with former international experience had, compared to the other employees. Usually people with work experience abroad tend to be flexible and calm in unexpected surprising situations that need fast solutions. But this is not exclusively a trait of people with experience abroad.

She can identify a significant difference regarding communication skills in a foreign language. People with experience abroad do not necessarily have better language skills but they are usually less afraid or inhibited to just communicate in any way possible.

EMPLOYER 2

A vocational in-house trainer of a medium sized company (~250 employees) in the sector of IT security.

The company is providing IT security software and service for the public and private sector in Germany. The company is not acting on international level and not planning to expand, nevertheless do employees in this field need to have an international perspective. IT security and data protection are global topics regarding new technologies and international law. Interviewee has ~5 years of experience as in-house trainer of apprentices in dual vocational training (half of the apprenticeship is done in the company to learn on the job, half is done in a vocational school). In her position she is included in the recruitment and selection of apprentices and young professionals. Apprentices are recruited via official job adds on online platforms, the job center, at job fairs and so on.

The company sees International experience as recruitment criterion. Applicants for apprenticeships usually come directly from school and only rarely do have experience abroad. If they do, they usually participated in a work and travel program or did some kind of volunteering. The content of those work experiences and therefore the vocational skills that they learned, is not relevant for the job they are seeking with the IT security company. Nevertheless, the interviewee identifies differences between these applicants and those directly from school. During their mobility they have learned to manage their lives when being away from their usual support systems. They probably encountered challenges they had to conquer themselves without the help

of their families and social networks at home. The interviewee describes those applicants as often more independent and self-assured.

When hiring young professionals from uni the interviewee can also find differences between applicants with and without international experience. Both have good theoretical knowledge and maybe some practical skills in applying them - depending if they did some internships or not. But in general people with experience abroad are more equipped to think on their feet and to apply their skills and knowledge in the real working world.

Youngsters with international experience often have internalized to consider international perspectives in their realm of thinking. This is very important in IT security. There is always a global perspective when it comes to technology and regulations. People who have not been abroad for a longer period of time often struggle to remember that they have to take those aspects into consideration. People with experience abroad seem to be able to change perspectives more easily - perhaps because at one point they were in an environment where this different perspective was the norm and their own perspective was the exception.

English skills are very important in the field of work of the interviewee - but rather the understanding of complex technical texts and manuals than conversational skills. She reports that the English language skills are considerably better, if someone did a mobility in an English-speaking country. Other language skills or communication skills in general might also be better, but irrelevant for the recruitment.

EMPLOYER 3

TO GET A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON THE TOPIC WE ALSO INTERVIEWED A YOUNG PERSON WHO DID A VOLUNTEERING MOBILITY AFTER SCHOOL BEFORE STARTING UNI.

By now she is finished with university and already working for 3 years but can still value her mobility as important learning experience.

Some major points that she mentioned are that Mobility gives a chance to learn how to live in another culture or interact with another culture. First realizing differences and then understanding that they are not due to personality traits of the other person but culturally influenced differences. The real learning experience is to find strategies to professionally deal with those differences - especially when you do not like them/get irritated by them as a young person.

- A mobility forces to take ownership of one's life. To learn to make decisions on your own, without both, the control and support of your family - even if you don't want to, without your usual support system, you have to. Afterwards you learn how to take responsibility for your own decisions.
- Learning to communicate in every way you can with limited verbal communication skills and non-verbal communication skills. However, it is necessary to accept that your limited communication skills cause misunderstandings and conflicts. It is also a challenge to live in a state where you often feel misunderstood and cannot bring your point across. It trains the frustration tolerance as well as finding creative ways to convey your point of view.



Italy Employer Stories



PANDORA IS A NO PROFIT COOPERATIVE WORKING IN MILAN FROM 1997

Employees who are flexible, motivated and available

The main aspects sought in new employees in order to be hired are:

- flexibility
- motivation for group work
- strong personal responsibility
- availability for learning
- mobility

Over the years, we have had employees from other countries. Latin America and Africa are the areas of origin of most of our foreign employees. The different language is sometimes a problem in the event of specific design activities, hardly never in the relationship with colleagues or with the pupils of the schools where we work, while I have never noticed problems of integration between employees of different nationalities.

We did not find specific or insurmountable problems thanks to the time and linguistic training. Instead the comparison emerged from different life experiences has always been enriching. The experiences of international work in the curriculum of candidates are always evaluated positively because they demonstrate: resourcefulness, adaptability, interpersonal skills, autonomy.



PORRO - A PRIVATE COMPANY OF INTERIOR DESIGN BASED IN CANTÙ
 Professionalism, flexibility, critical spirit and constructive attitude

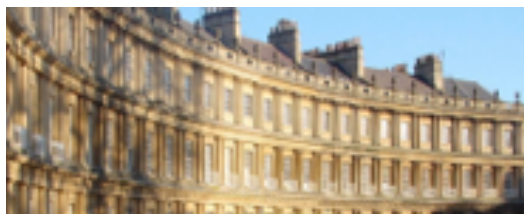
The main features that I look for in new employees are: professionalism, flexibility, critical spirit and constructive attitude as well as knowledge of the English language. As for recruitment we have a network of agents working with us from all over Europe: the different language is not a problem because we have a staff in the company prepared for foreign languages. There have been problems of integration in the past, linked both to linguistic barriers but also to religious differences. We haven't had that many foreign employees in our history to talk about these problems as a «priority» and so we are not able to make a case study in this regard. In some cases, these problems have been resolved over time with a progressive integration and acceptance. We had a case where the problem was not solved.

Every situation/story is very different and unique.

What I can say is that in the office, where every day we work with the whole world, comparing ourselves with very distant realities, the term «foreign» is not even used. In production, however, the workforce is mostly Italian, it is here instead where the foreign being is perceived. We have different positive stories of employees of foreign origin who have started with simple and repetitive tasks and have now become the heads of production departments, also estimated by the workers subjected to them. A structure that thinks in meritocratic terms and that rewards professionalism is certainly one of the key tools to guarantee the right integration for foreign workers. The conduct of managers, management and property are also fundamental and work as an example. International work experiences represent added value of great importance.



UK Employers Stories



THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY IN BATH, UK)
 The UK needs Experienced and motivated workers from the EU



Since I started the company, I have always been looking for experienced and motivated workers. Their level skills and their availability are the most important things for recruitment. I have therefore employed a significant number of workers who've come from European countries. The most popular country is Poland, and all the Polish workers that I have employed have contributed to the company and done a really good job.

Of course, there have been the old problem with understanding. Often these Polish workers don't speak English fluently. However, because of the nature of the work in the construction industry, it has been possible for team leaders and other colleagues were British to explain by showing what needs to be done.

Another interesting feature of employing workers from Eastern Europe, is the other cultural exchanges that happen between the British workers and the European workers. This takes the form of jokes, banter, and all sorts of tricks. I haven't noticed any problems of integration within my employees.

As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, I'm very worried for the future. Have a workforce



at 25 are usually employing 5 to 10 builders from Eastern Europe. If these builders on longer allowed to work in the UK, I don't think I'll be able to find enough British workers to take place. This will have a huge impact on our business and also a huge impact on the construction trade in general.

I hope that the government and the European Union will be able to find an agreement that will allow me to continue to employ workers from other European countries.



A MANAGER AT A BMW DEALERSHIP IN THE SOUTH-WEST, UK
 Speaking good English is essential even for highly qualified mechanics

Here at BMW, we employ a wide range all professions. We have administrative assistants, we have salesmen and sales women will sell cars we have people working the parts department we have people working accountancy and credit control we have people work in insurance, we have a whole series of managers and of course we also have perhaps the most important categories employees, the mechanics.

Understanding and speaking English when you're dealing with customers is it is of key importance. Therefore, we have never employed anyone in a customer facing roll from another European country. We have had many applications, and indeed several interviews, only education the person involved didn't speak English well enough to allow us to employ them.

However, we have employed several European mechanics often coming from Germany who are highly qualified BMW technicians. This has been helped by the fact that BMW train their high-quality mechanics in English. >>>

>>> It can often take many years from mechanic to be trained. Therefore, we always looking for the most highly qualified and experienced mechanics possible because they are better able to diagnose problems with our customers vehicles. I can remember at least four mechanics from Germany working with us for a period of six months to several years. This pose no problem because they all had a good standard of English. However, without a good knowledge of English even a mechanic would not be able to work here at BMW.

I understand that in some professions, International working experience can be a real bonus. However, in the motor trade, because the variance of the vehicles the equipment and the options are specific to the UK market, and language skills are so important, I don't believe that international experience is necessary or even advantageous as somebody who decides to work with us.

I just remembered however that we did have one salesman who used to be French teacher. This came in very handy, when we had some French customers living nearby who wanted to buy a new BMW. The salesman was able to create a wrap or very easily and in fact he ended up selling for cars to these customers for all the generations of the family the grandparents to castle the parents and one one-car for the son. This was quite exploit, and the salesman received a sizeable bonus from the company for selling 4 cars in one go.



CONCLUSIONS

1. WHAT ARE THE MOST HIGHLY-VALUED COMPETENCES BY EMPLOYERS IN AN IDEAL EMPLOYEE?

What we have learned from this study is that employers' expectations of a future employee are very high. There are no key competencies that companies do not value. However, the survey results have shown that there are significant differences between countries:

The employers in France have a pragmatic approach. Recruiters go for the safer option, a person who already worked in a similar work environment and could immediately assume responsibilities; they won't take risks in this particular context. Other skills are an added value, an asset to stand apart other candidates. They are important but not the most practical to achieve their goals.

In the other hand, the study shows that the employer expects that future employee can adapt and wish to acquire new skills. These competences are essential today, given the rapid and permanent changes within the company. It goes with the sense of adaptability, the ability to quickly change gears or course. People who are resistant to change or who do not want or can only operate within the limits of their specifications, have a more uncertain future than those who adapt to the evolution of the company as and when they change.

The most valuable attitude is being team-oriented and able to collaborate with co-workers. Team spirit, in companies, is not just a fashionable principle. This is what drives the strength of the company. Understanding the importance of cohesion leads to the realization that teamwork is not just about getting all employees to have the same vision over time. In addition, team spirit induces

essential elements for the company, facilitating.

A genuine internal harmony is essential to ensure good project management. A cohesive team is a team in which leaders and members become true delegation experts, managing to assign the tasks to be performed to the most qualified people according to the work to be done. There are clear connections between the social civic competences and project management. The employers estimate that the ability to balance different views, negotiate are the base to work together

Small enterprises emphasize the importance of versatility or multi-functionality of the candidate. That is due to the fact that in small enterprises, employee can take over several core responsibilities. The recruiters want someone who could face challenge, difficulties with ease and manage all aspects of a project. For this reason, every experience and skill is an added value.

In Germany, overall, all the key competences learning to learn, social and civic competences, project management, communicating in mother language and digital aspects were ranked very important (single aspects in the key competences were exceptions and explained earlier). Only the communication in a foreign language was ranked rather medium important which might be because of the interpretation that the foreign language skills of German employees are meant. Overall this result is not very surprising. Handing a list of key competences to employers can have an effect like a Christmas wish list for a child. All the mentioned aspects "seem nice" and they wouldn't mind if their employees would have them. It should also be considered that the question was referring to the general workforce of the company and not to specific positions within the company. It is to be expected that employers would create a different profile of relevant competences for a department head and a janitor.

With a general perspective that is not distinguishing sectors or jobs it can be concluded that all key competences are very important for employers. None can be discarded or dismissed.

From the interviews and research studies, we can conclude that companies that are internationally active or from a sector that is highly influenced by international aspects (e.g. laws, regulations, and technical developments), competences to deal with interculturality are of a high value.

In Italy, most of the interviewed employers require candidates with personal and social attitudes and skills considered the precarious and diversified job context of recent years. These skills are often acquired during mobility experiences, which is why employers consider experiences abroad to be a positive element on a curriculum vitae, depending only on the specific technical competence where required.

First of all, flexibility is required to cover roles other than those for which we have been trained, with particular attention to the ability to adapt to different working contexts. Autonomy and the ability to solve problems on their own by finding innovative solutions is undoubtedly another highly valued skill that allows candidates to fit into organisations more easily.

The ability to negotiate and mediate is a skill that is assessed in the first few months of work during meetings and programming activities. Many companies live moments and situations of conflict due to the difficult economic contingencies and therefore have workers able to mediate between different partners and between opposing needs is a positive resource.

To prefer flexible workers is often also required to be able to recognize their limits and eventually change their minds to adapt to new challenges. All this can lead to preferring personnel with high personal and social skills even in the absence of specialised technical requirements.

The work-based sector in the UK remains a very traditional environment. Qualifications and work-based experience remain the most important considerations when selecting candidates for interview. However, -during the recruitment process other competences have key

importance, such as adaptability, the ability to work in a team and good communication skills. Foreign language skills are perceived to have relatively less importance in the UK due to the role of the English language as the language of business in Europe and the world.

Digital skills were perceived to be of high importance by all employers who took part in the survey for all types of position and sector of activity. This underlines that the digital world is now an indispensable part of all business activity in the UK.

Non-verbal communication is often a key selection criterion and candidates are expected to have good personal discipline, such as knowing how to dress and behave appropriately in an interview and in a professional environment.

2. WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF A PERIOD OF WORK-BASED MOBILITY FOR ACCESSING THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET?

Mobility experiences help to develop transversal skills sought by employers. If the definition of these competences differs from one interlocutor to another, they include common elements, such as autonomy, adaptability, creativity, mastery of a language, intercultural competences.

Moreover, the study carried out among companies show that mobility experiences generate a positive feeling. But, what is the link between the acquisition of these soft skills and the increase in employability informal or non-formal setting?

In France, tolerance to ambiguity, self-confidence, serenity, determination and liveliness are cited among the skills directly related to employability and particularly developed in mobility, this what employers are expecting from someone with international background.

International mobility is not only a lever for professional integration, it also has strong and many positive consequences for employers. Indeed,

companies that want to remain competitive in a globalized economic context, and always on the move, must take an interest in their recruitment process to the so-called international skills.

The interviews also showed that employers find that young people entering the labour market still do not have a great deal of work-based experience. They have knowledge and qualifications but have had only limited opportunities to put their knowledge into practice in a work-based environment.

Often, international mobility is one of the first work experience opportunities for young people. Technical skills alone often do not provide access to the labour market. Thus, mobility is both a lever for new work opportunities and a means of improving and developing skills. These skills can be technical but also social (openness of your personality, independence, critical thinking, self-confidence) in order to facilitate integration into the workplace. In addition, skills can also be organisational (teamwork, leadership, problem solving), learning to lean (planning and organization, autonomy, decision-making)

Learning abroad is accelerated when compared to learning acquired during a work placement in one's own country. This is explained by the effect of going abroad, creating a break with the participant's daily environment, allowing him/her to become autonomous and responsible. Being in another environment with a foreign language makes the young person confront his or her limits, changes values and attitudes since he or she needs to adapt and find solutions in an unknown context.

The study shows that employers are looking for employees who are operational and who can adapt to different situations. There is a renewed understanding of the need to help participants to develop the skills and competences they have acquired.

The researched studies and reports from Germany suggest that an applicant's experience

abroad is rather interesting for companies with an international focus. Nevertheless, the companies do not look for any kind of general experience abroad, such as travel or temporary low skilled jobs, but rather specific professional experience gathered abroad. According to the studies, companies expect stronger transversal competences from applicants with work experience abroad – general competences in the field of analytical/strategic thinking and action-oriented behaviour, problem solving, cognitive flexibility and interpretation as well as the ability to communicate in other cultures. Our interviewees support those mentioned competences.

They name various aspects from the learning to learn key competence (autonomous problem solving) as well as the social and civic aspects (resistant in stressful situations, can balance different views, negotiate and compromise, adapt easily to new situations, act tolerantly towards others who have different values).

Nevertheless, it has to be said that work-based mobility has the potential environment for a person to develop those competences but it is actually not guaranteed. Interviewees also suggested that applicants without international experience can have the same skill set acquired in other professional settings.

It also has to be mentioned that companies that act on a local/national level do not care for or don't see specific benefits or value in an applicant's experience abroad. One aspect might be that some of the named potentially acquired competences are of less value to them (e.g. intercultural communication). Another explanation might be, that the companies are just not aware that the international experience might bring an extra benefit even though they are not internationally active (problem solving, higher stress resistance,...).

This might be an interesting handle for the *Compétences+* project. Depending on the job opening, applicants might need to present their international experience not focusing on the "international part" but by showing how the company will profit of their acquired competences.

One of the needs expressed by both private and non-profit companies in Italy is to open up to foreign markets, this means having staff resources who speak

different languages and have known different ways of working than national ones.

Another important skill is to be available to change your mind and ask, this is a skill that is exercised in an experience abroad where especially at the beginning, knowing how to ask to learn in the right way is essential to understand how to work.

The same mediation capacity exercised during a knowledge of intercultural contexts is sought by companies and associations working with third countries. Great patience and ability to stay on the goals. There are some differences between large and small companies, the employers prefer some more technical skills such as languages and the acquisition of new work techniques, small ones seek adaptability and flexibility. In general, however, it can be said that experience abroad is an added value for the candidate if accompanied by practical experience and a good capacity for intercultural relations.

In many companies interviewed people from other countries work and within the same staff it is necessary to exercise the skills of cultural mediation experienced in an experience abroad.

International experience therefore has for many companies an added value if accompanied by a work activity and not just a study. During the interviews are highlighted ways to address problems of different origins, the experience in another country can facilitate the discovery of new solutions in complex contexts. The companies find very important then the methods of approach and the development of technical skills through teamwork and the ability to adapt to different contexts. Having learned specific skills thanks to relational skills seems to be an added value for many breeders.

Knowing how to communicate well with people from other countries is considered a technical skill, for example knowing how to explain the functioning of a machine taking into account the cultural aspect of the people you are address-

ing is a skill that is learned with an experience abroad.

One of the unexpected advantages of the *Compétences+* project is that undertaking the interviews has generated interest amongst the UK companies and we have found that all of the companies seem more enthusiastic to host trainees, are they more open and aware of the benefits of international experience). Indeed, of the companies contacted that were not part of our network, three have since accepted to host an internship. Likewise, this type of project and research can provide extra arguments and evidential support when contacting companies and encouraging them to host work placements.

The process has also been beneficial form members of our organisation, and has increased awareness of the added-value and benefits of a professional mobility experience in addition to highlighting differences between the UK and the three other partner countries involved in the project. The UK National Erasmus+ Agency aims to increase the number of UK young people who go abroad to undertake a professional work experience and the number of UK companies who encourage employees to gain experience in the European work space. The *Compétences+* project is therefore certainly be in line with stated objectives of UK National Agency and can make a positive contribution to the achievement of these aims.

3. SOME 'INTERESTING' OR 'UNEXPECTED' RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

In Italy the scenario that emerges from the interviews shows the profile of the ideal candidate desired for the world of work as projected into the future, but not yet always available in Italy. It amazes us that as this request for internationalisation is so present, many young people with work experience and experience of study abroad are still struggling to find work.

In the UK, we obtained some 'interesting' or 'unexpected' results from the survey. For example, international development and opening offices abroad was not considered appropriate for all types / sizes of company or for all activity sectors, for example, in construction. Direct or generalised conclusions based on company size and/or sector would be problematic. 96% of the companies involved in the process had recruited applicants from other EU countries. This figure surprised the other partners in our project, but we felt that this was very much in line with the multi-national nature of the UK labour market.



LESSONS-LEARNED FROM THE SURVEY FOR THE COMPÉTENCES+ PROJECT

Having work-based experience abroad is not essential for employers. It is seen by employers as a positive added value. On the other hand, the results of the study show that the expectations of employees at the time of recruitment correspond strongly with the competences they have learned and/or developed during their stay abroad - such as speaking in a foreign language, working in a team.

For the Compétences+ project, in what way do the results of the survey help us to deliver appropriate programmes to prepare young people to undertake a period of work-based mobility and to access the job-market afterwards?

TO PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE TO UNDERTAKE A PERIOD OF WORK-BASED MOBILITY

It is necessary to prepare young people preparing before leaving for work-based mobility. Through this training, the objective is to provide them with knowledge, methods and tools that will enable each young person to continue to build on and make the most of their mobility project and to approach it in different dimensions (personal, civic, professional).

The training must be a rotation of periods of learning, simulation, testimonies and sharing of experiences. It must also address the participants' skills and adaptability (anticipation and putting oneself in a situation of what each person will have to accomplish in an intercultural, different context, etc.). Finally, in order to prepare young people as well as possible, they must be provided with advice and methods to be able to an-

ticipate the return of mobility and the capitalisation of experience (personal, professional, etc.)

Thus, if effective preparation is undertaken before the work-placement abroad, we will be better able to talk about the results obtained because each young person will leave with clearly defined tools and objectives.

TO HELP TO VALORISE AND SHOWCASE THE MOST VALORISED COMPETENCES

International mobility makes sense if it provides a path to career development or employment. Of course, it allows young people to learn about interculturality, solidarity and European citizenship. But beyond this experience, it should be remembered that it is a very concrete way of increasing one's chances of access to employment. This experience allows young people to test their abilities, identify their talents and learn in new situations.

A lot of youngsters never categorise what they know in terms of knowledge and skills. School/university graduates absorb a lot of information that is not integrated with knowledge and competencies gained through work and life experiences. When you are in a job interview young people need to know how to present themselves, and their skills. The employer will likely ask about work situations, where they drew on their knowledge and skills to solve a problem, or accomplish a difficult task.

It is therefore important to remind young people of the purpose of mobility, that it is a positive journey, an «extra» experience that they must then succeed in explaining and translating in the context of recruitment or a selection panel.

A mobility service provider will actually help you learn and consolidate what young people actually know.

In Italy, we can conclude that knowledge of languages at a good level is now a basic skill that

employers seek and that can be obtained mainly by living abroad for some time. In addition, employers emphasise the willingness to learn and adapt to the company style as fundamental requirements, these are also skills that are exercised during mobility.

GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ADJUST THE CV AND COVER LETTERS ACCORDING TO THE PRECISE REQUIREMENTS OF THE POSITION

Participants need to find out which competence aspects are really important for their aspired job or even specifically for the company they apply for. Only if they know that, they can adjust their CVs and cover letters and present their personal competences accordingly.

It is necessary to give young people time to reflect on how and tools to enhance the experience: CV, cover letter, letter of recommendation, Europass mobility, professional social networks, job interview, etc. With regard to the CV, it is essential to indicate the work experience carried out abroad and the skills that have been acquired

Workshops to create letters and CVs allow young people to be offered various document formats, particularly according to content expectations that may vary from one country to another. It is essential to indicate the work experience done abroad and the skills that have been acquired.

In Germany, for the Competences+ project it can be concluded that applicants need to find out which competence aspects are really important for their aspired job or even specifically for the company they apply for. Only if they know that, they can adjust their CVs and cover letters and present their personal competences accordingly.

MAKE SPECIFIC TRAINING CONTENT TO HELP VALORISE THEIR EXPERIENCE

It is of key importance to help young people to showcase the benefits gained from their period of work-

based mobility abroad. They must be given time for evaluation, feedback and exchange of experiences. The objectives are to encourage the involvement of young people in a self-evaluation process and to enable them to be active in the rest of their career path.

It is also necessary for young people to take part in exercises that will enable them to make the most of their experience and skills. This can be done through simulated job interviews.

Therefore, in order to enable young people to make the most of their experience, it is necessary for them to review the skills they have acquired and to identify them as one of Europe's 8 key competences. It is useful to create a verbalisation technique that allows them to express their experiences around key competencies.

In order for young people to make the link between these skills and their experiences, they will be able to highlight the missions and discoveries they may have made during their work-based mobility. In fact, during all kinds of transnational mobility, intercultural learning is a very important aspect. This will allow them to put their developed skills into words and thus better showcase them.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

We can see that the situation is very different in each of the four countries in the Compétences+ partnership. This is particularly in relation to the popularity of undertaking a work-based placement in another country with fewer British young people involved than from the other three countries.

The availability of additional sources of funding to complement funding through EU programmes is also of key importance. For example, in France, many Regional Councils and County Councils give young people financial grants when they take part in a work placement in another European country, whereas in the United Kingdom, this kind of additional financial support does not exist. This results in fewer young people being willing or able to decide to do a work placement in another country.

Cultural characteristics and in particular national attitudes towards travelling, including the degree to which openness and curiosity are actively encouraged can also influence the popularity of



transnational work placements.

Legislation and regulation also play a key role as part of the preparation for any internship abroad must take into account the substantial differences in regard to accepted practices in each different country. For example, in order to undertake a placement in a hospital, the immunisation requirements for trainees are so different between France and Germany that they make such placements extremely challenging to set up and administer.

THE EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYER ARE LINKED TO THE ACQUIRED EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS

The partners conducted a study with 97 employers in 4 different countries to understand employers' expectations during the recruitment position. Also, to know which skills are essential to get a job. Employers gave their opinions on the different skills: desire to learn, civic and social skills, project management, communication and digital skills.

The study showed that recruiters mainly prefer to choose someone who has already worked in the company's sector of activities and who can be quickly operational. The other skills acquired are viewed as an added value. But how can we deal with young people who do not yet have enough sector-based work experience?

The professional job market is more and more difficult to penetrate and it is important for the people who are outside to get knowledge about how to gain entry and gain employment. For this, they need to know how to capitalise effectively their experience and the benefits of having worked abroad and how to promote and showcase this in order to secure employment.

The aim for them is to be able to acquire new skills on three levels: social, professional and intercultural. These competences are necessary to find a job of course, but also to develop critical awareness, open-mindedness and the feeling of self-confident.

The extensive research undertaken by partners provides a hands-on reference resource for VET organisations, host companies and trainees who aim to design,

prepare and/or take part in transnational work-based mobility.

The organisation and structure of VET based training systems and programmes influences the opportunities to undertake transnational work placements. Trainees are positively encouraged to take part in countries such as France, where a work placement can be fully integrated into the academic/vocational programme. In Italy, it is precisely because of the absence of a generalised and structured VET system that the main priority for a large proportion of outgoing Italian mobilities is language learning. In Germany because of the extremely well-structured dual system of on the job training and school, the companies where the apprentices work in the are reluctant to let the apprentices participate in transnational mobilities because they would be losing a valued worker. This is also partially true in France.

TO BUILD INTEGRATED PATHWAYS BY CARRYING OUT SUCCESSFUL MOBILITY PROJECT

The innovation is also to propose a whole integrated pathway, from info day at the beginning to return to employment and to make sure participants will make the most of their experience to get access to the labour market

The relative importance accorded to the development of linguistic skills and the learning of other languages also influences young people to complete an internship abroad. In countries, such as Germany and France where the learning of English is afforded a high importance in educational programmes, young people feel more confident in their ability to cope with the challenges of working using a different language. The level of language skills can be seen to be a major influence here.

MAKE A STEP TO EMPLOYMENT - BY CREATING THE "BRIDGE TRAINING PROGRAMME" TO BE EMPLOYED QUICKLY

The study has shown that companies generally believe that the undertaking a transitional work placement has a highly positive effect on a trainees' chances of securing employment. However, the degree of benefit is linked to how well the applicants can showcase the benefits of their experiences and the competences that they have developed.

It is important for young people to learn to describe their experiences abroad in context. These skills, which are well developed, can help to make the experience relevant to obtaining a job, an internship or a return to education and training. Employers will not be impressed simply by the fact that the young person has completed a period of work-based learning abroad. Applicants need to learn to contextualize and present their experiences to employers and not just make general statements about their stay abroad.

The Compétences+ project aim to help create the bridges between what has been learned and being able to showcase these competences to employers. This is why it is very important that mobility operators play a role in helping to link the mobility experience with the future work of young people. There is a need to help participants make connections based on concrete examples, transferable skills and acquired competencies.

The benefits are also linked to the length of the placements, the nature of the placement, the preparation and to the way that the acquired learning is assessed, evaluated and capitalised upon. Indeed, the capitalisation of benefits for easier transition into the labour market and to help young people into enriching and challenging careers.



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