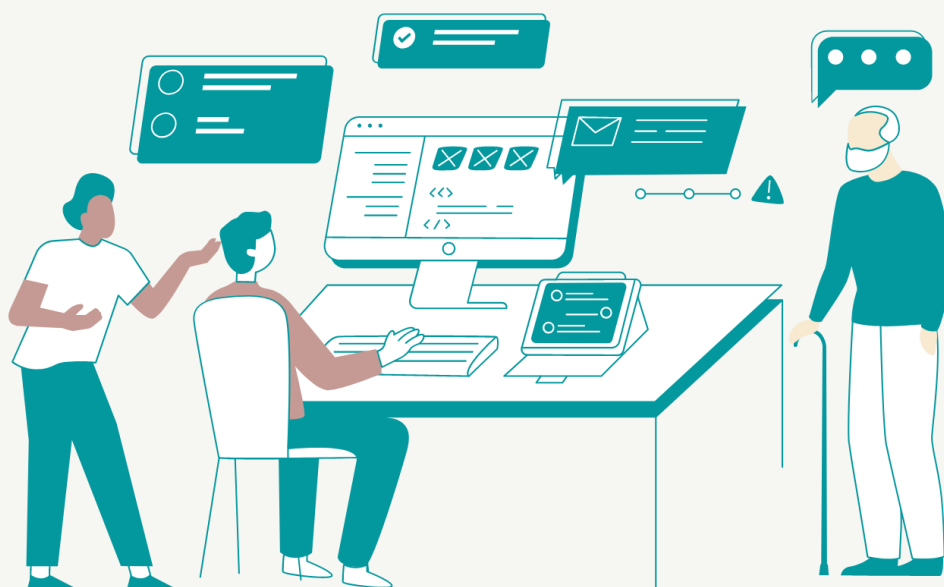




REPOSITORY OF SKILLS OF PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN THE DESK RECEPTION IN LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE CENTRES



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Skills repository for professionals working on the reception
desk of Lifelong Career Guidance Centres



Contents

Introduction	4
1.1. Methodology	4
1.2. Definition of the role of a front-desk receptionist in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres	5
1.3. Services	9
2. Skills of professionals working on the reception desk in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres	11
2.1. Customer Service Skills	12
2.1.1. Visitor Management Skills	12
2.1.2. Information Management Skills	13
2.2. Administrative Skills	13
2.3. Technical and Digital Skills	14
2.4. Transversal Skills	15
2.5. Complementary Skills	16

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Introduction

1.1. Methodology

The Desk Reset project is focused on the upskilling of front-desk receptionists working in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres (LCGC) - and, more specifically, members of the Cité des Métiers network - through training and skills validation. The primary objective of this project is to develop the skills of these professionals and provide them with the necessary tools to adapt to the post-pandemic context. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the daily operations of LCGC as well as on the expectations of users. In this context, it is critical to provide a high-quality service on the front-desk reception of LCGCs to meet their users' needs. In a broader sense, the aim of the project is to increase knowledge and awareness among European stakeholders regarding the major role of the reception officer in lifelong guidance centres.

This document is the first output of the PR2: Skills Repository and Non-formal Validation Framework. The skills repository for professionals working on the reception desk of Lifelong Career Guidance Centres has been developed based on a three-step research methodology with a participatory approach, and the results have been validated by 82 professionals.

The first step of the research was carried out via a survey with 38 European professionals working on the front desk of reception, which was conducted by RICDM, in May 2021, before the start of the project, as a preliminary needs assessment. According to this first survey, 68% of respondents found that the role of the reception front desk is as important as the other services in lifelong guidance centres. It also highlighted that users' access to the most appropriate services and resources mostly depended on the quality of the receptionists' referral and first-hand guidance skills.

The second step of the research methodology involved conducting semi-structured interviews with managers and HR representatives of LCGCs. The interviews were qualitative and allowed partners to collect in-depth information about current practices in LCGCs and the specific aspects of the front-desk receptionist profession, as described by professionals in the field.

The third step of the research methodology was based on an online questionnaire that was provided by IDEC and translated into all the partner languages. The questionnaire was distributed via [Google forms](#) to front-desk receptionists in each partner country. In addition to the three-step research methodology, documentary research was conducted

to identify European resources that could be used to define a European job profile, and the associated services and skills.

1.2. Definition of the role of a front-desk receptionist in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres

The job profile of a front-desk receptionist in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres (LCGC) has been defined based on three key components. The first component is a broad definition of the occupation of a front-desk receptionist and the second relates to the specific services that receptionists provide as part of their role in an LCGC. The third component concerns the new digital services that were added in response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. These three components have been combined to provide the updated European job profile for a front-desk receptionist in Lifelong Career Guidance Centres.

CEDEFOP classifies the occupation of receptionist under the category of Customer clerks and, more specifically, as client information workers. Customer service is the core activity, and, according to Eurofound's job monitor, *"the three key tasks and skills of customer clerks are service and attend, use of ICT and gather and evaluate information"*¹. According to the European Skills Competencies and Occupations (ESCO) Classification, receptionists are *"responsible for the reception area of a business. They answer the phone, greet guests, pass information, respond to inquiries and instruct visitors. They are the first point of contact for clients and customers"*.

According to job descriptions from various EU countries *"the front-desk receptionist is an administrative support employee that is responsible for performing general administrative and clerical support duties, including managing the front office reception"* and *"the reception is a position that interacts with all corporate departments, external contacts and the call centre. Therefore, the front-desk receptionist is an employee who can multi-task and effectively coordinate incoming requests"*³.

According to ILO (2012) *"receptionists receive and welcome visitors, clients or guests and respond to inquiries and requests, including the booking of appointments. Their tasks include a) receiving and welcoming visitors, b) making appointments for clients, c) dealing with*

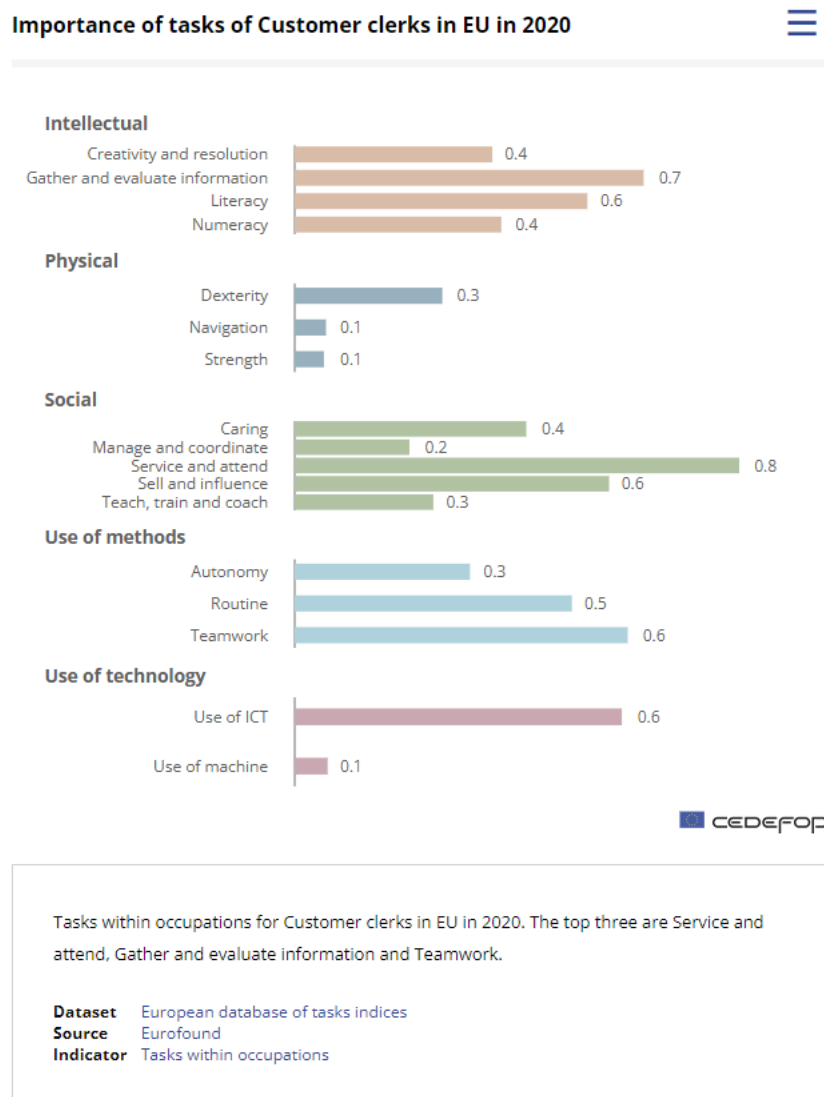
¹ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/data-insights/customer-clerks-skills-opportunities-and-challenges-2019-update>

² <https://jobdescriptionandresumeexamples.com/front-desk-receptionist-job-description-key-duties-and-responsibilities/>

³ <https://www.randstad.gr/symvoules-karieras/job-profiles/reception-poies-einai-oi-deksiotites-poy-prepei-na-katexete-gia/>

telephone requests for information or appointments, d) directing clients to the appropriate location or person, e) supplying information pamphlets, brochures or forms”.

The tasks performed by customer clerks were rated according to importance by Eurofound, and the following were deemed the most important: Service and attend, Gather and evaluate information, and Teamwork. The results are presented on CEDEFOP's website as follows:



With regard to the second component, i.e. the occupation of receptionists working on the front desk at an LCGC, a more specific description is given in accordance with the services provided in the centres. The front-desk receptionist represents users' first impression of an LCGC and thus provides more than just another service. In contrast to a conventional receptionist, the role of a front-desk officer at an LCGC is driven by the user's needs and requests and not by the services offered by the centre.

Front-desk receptionists welcome and receive requests from end users, help them to express their concerns, clarify incoming requests and direct end users to the appropriate department. To do so, they must adapt their questions to quickly and comprehensively assess the end user's needs with the ultimate aim of identifying the specific request and not assessing the general situation. By making sure they fully understand the user's request and sharing their in-depth knowledge of the functions of all departments and services, they provide the end user with an integrated overview of the support that is available to him/ her in the center and ensure that they make the best use of the services provided.

It is clear that the front-desk receptionist has a strategic role in LCGCs and has multiple tasks under his/her responsibility: centralizing information, taking requests and supervising the reception area. In this position, the receptionist is responsible for a wide variety of tasks which he/she must perform simultaneously. New tasks have been added to the receptionist's many responsibilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Desk Reset is focused on defining a European Job profile for front-desk officers working at LCGCs that is aligned with their post-pandemic role.

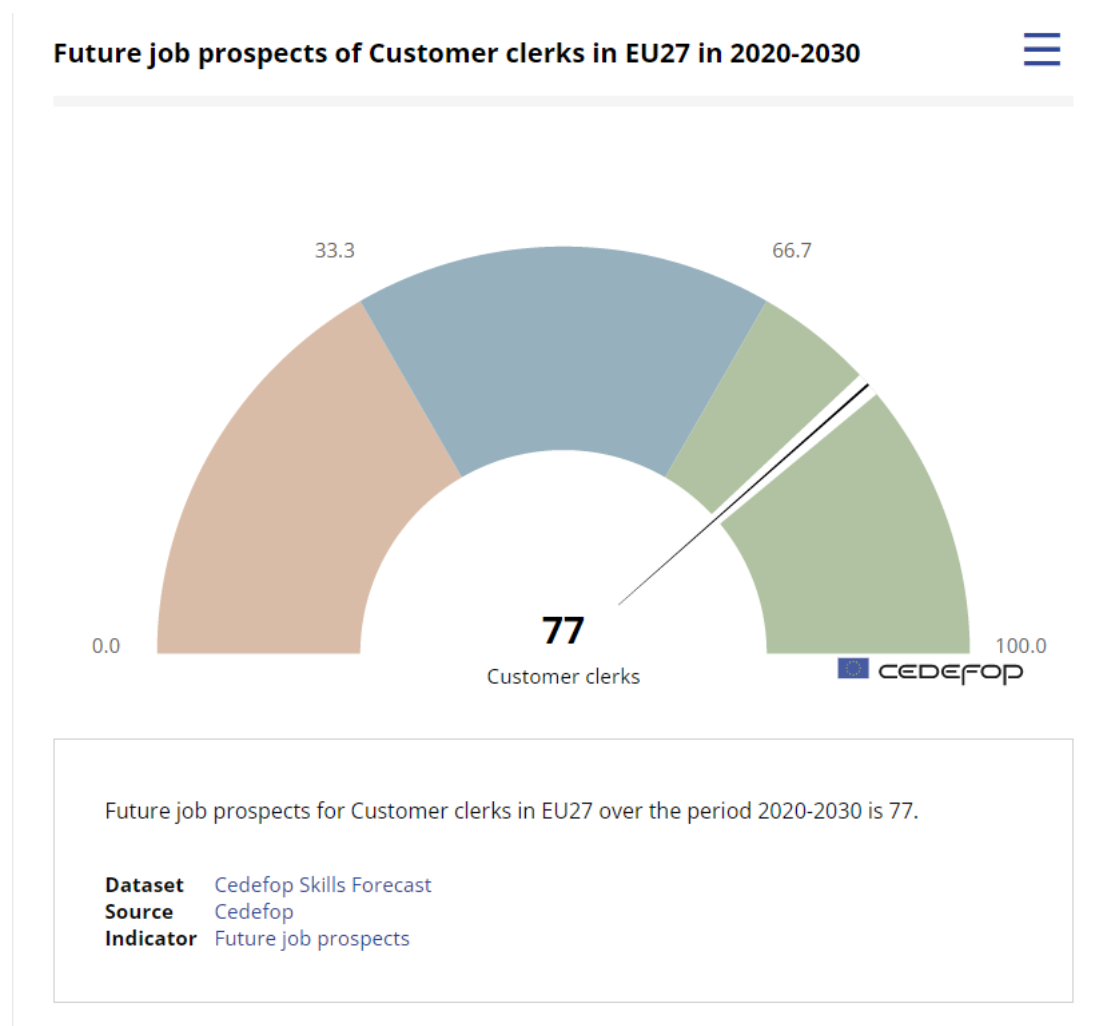
The Covid-19 pandemic led to many changes in nearly every occupation. It has also affected the role of front-desk receptionists, as during the pandemic, they were required to perform all of their tasks online. Without a shadow of a doubt, digital skills and data literacy have become the most valuable assets for all employees, and, at the same time, the skills most sought-after by employers⁴. Front-desk receptionists have been forced to change the way they provide customer service, often without any training.

Online customer service is the third component that has been added to their job description, along with the management of digital platforms for administrative tasks (i.e. booking appointments with counsellors, handling and understanding requests and queries) and video conferencing (Zoom, Teams, etc.). Due to the nature of their role, front-desk receptionists, who serve as a point of contact for all departments, should now add digital cooperation with all departments to their responsibilities. While they may have been required to perform these new tasks during the pandemic, they are still relevant in the post-covid era, as digital services have now become well-established and available to end users.

Lastly, a European job profile for the front-desk officer of an LCGC has been defined by taking into account these three components, which had not been done before, despite the importance of this occupation. The future prospects for this profession, as forecasted

⁴ https://eures.ec.europa.eu/8-essential-skills-succeed-post-covid-19-world-2020-06-30_en

by CEDEFOP in the graph below, highlight the importance and impact of this multi-tasking role.



The front-desk receptionist's role is clearly a dynamic sector, which highlights the importance and current relevance of DESK Reset's aims and objectives. It is evident that front desk receptionists should be supported and trained so that their skills are aligned with the three components defined in the European job profile for front-desk officers in LCCGs.

1.3. Services

According to the abovementioned job profile for front-desk receptionists, and the survey conducted both with LCGC managers and front-desk receptionists, a receptionist should provide the following services:

1. **Welcoming visitors:** greet visitors (in person, on the telephone or online), in a friendly manner and offer services tailored to the needs of end users as the centre's first point of contact.
2. **Managing incoming calls and internal communications:** the receptionist should answer incoming calls, pass on information and put the end user in contact with the appropriate departments.
3. **Managing the flow of visitors and directing clients to the appropriate location or person⁵:** help end users to find their way around the centre.
4. **Informing end users about the services provided by the centre:** provide information in person, or by providing information pamphlets, brochures or forms, or via email.
5. **Deciphering end users' needs and requests and providing them with support:** identify end users' needs through short, targeted interviews, refer them to counsellors or book an appointment with the appropriate staff member (in-house service) or refer them to other organisations and services (external).
6. **Identifying the right information:** the receptionist should have in-depth knowledge of the information available and the information channels that can be exploited to help the end user.
7. **Following-up on end users' enquiries:** after providing information and guidance, the front-desk officer should follow up on the end user's progress and any further requests they may have.
8. **Registering requests in digital records and saving files:** requests should be recorded, and files and records should always be updated.
9. **Handling and prioritising incoming requests:** the receptionist must refer requests to the right department in the correct order.
10. **Supporting end users to fill in documents, forms or CVs templates:** provide initial support to the end user with completing paperwork and performing administrative tasks. The receptionist may help the visitor to update a CV, register with a job vacancy or apply for a training programme.

⁵ International Standard Classification Of Occupations ISCO-08/International Labour Office, Geneva, ILO 2012, 1v.

11. **Supporting end users in using digital services:** support users in the open access area where computers with dedicated operational platforms are available, for example, when requesting a document or booking an appointment online.
12. **Checking, sorting and forwarding emails:** emails should be filed and forwarded to the appropriate department.
13. **Managing technical problems:** deal with printing problems, issues with internet access, lighting failures, etc. and refer the issue to the right department if they cannot find a solution.
14. **Organizing the space:** always keep the reception area tidy and clean, and provide support with arranging the space for workshops or events.
15. **Applying and monitoring safety procedures:** Comply with the safety procedures for each center and know and apply safety procedures in case of emergency.
16. **Managing the document area:** Conduct inventories of the documents available for the public and provide new folders, brochures etc.
17. **Monitoring office supplies and placing orders when necessary:** manage office supplies and place orders when stocks are running low.

2. Skills of professionals working on the reception desk of Lifelong Career Guidance Centres

Front-desk receptionists at LCGCs must have a wide range of skills to meet the demands of the multitasking service. There is no specific requirement regarding the level of education of a front-desk receptionist but, according to CEDEFOP Skills Intelligence, receptionists “usually need to have completed the first-stage of secondary education but in some instances they will need to have completed the second-stage of secondary education, perhaps by undertaking specialised vocational education and training⁶”, corresponding to EQF Levels 3 and 4.

The recommended core skills for a front-desk receptionist can be classified under four main categories.

1. **Customer service skills**
2. **Administrative skills**
3. **Technical and Digital skills**
4. **Transversal Skills**

2.1. Customer Service Skills

2.1.1. Visitor Management Skills

Maintaining a welcoming attitude:

- Is readily available and remains accessible to diverse members of the public
- Manages the flow of visitors
- Greets visitors
- Maintains eye contact with visitors
- Adopts and exhibits appropriate behaviours to foster a relationship of trust (politeness, attentiveness, adaptability to diverse members of the public, active listening, patience, trust, empathy, responsiveness)
- Monitors the area: the receptionist makes sure that the space remains tidy and in good order, with a welcoming and user-friendly layout (plants, arrangement of the coffee table and room layout), and ensures that his/her workstation is in working order, (including electronic devices).

Asking the user questions:

- Asks open-ended, closed, or alternative questions, etc. to identify the need/request
- Determines the precise need/request of the user
- Carefully analyses the request

⁶ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-intelligence/occupations?occupation=4.42&country=#2>

- Understands the person speaking and ensures they understand the response (rephrasing questions, checking the person has understood)
- Prioritises queries and the speed with which users are dealt with;
- Is at ease with stopping in the middle of tasks and resuming work depending on the flow of visitors;
- Diversity and inclusion skills
- Applies and demonstrates appropriate communication skills by using fundamental communication techniques and methods, such as non-violent communication, neuro-linguistic programming, assertiveness, transactional analysis, verbal and non-verbal communication and an effective interview guide, while respecting privacy rules.

Providing a solution tailored to the request/need and guiding the end user:

- Information and memory skills
- Guidance skills
- Ability to adapt on the spot/Multitasking
- Initiative and creativity
- Ability to assess user satisfaction
- Knowledge of the specific services provided at the centre
- Ensures appropriate use of the space and the centre's resources
- Provides assistance with using the software provided by each center
- Encourages visitors to reflect on what they can do next (further research, search for information, visits to other places, participation in workshops or other collective actions).

Developing a pedagogical/informative approach to visitor management:

- Promotes visitor autonomy
- Ensures appropriate use of the space and the centre's resources
- Provides assistance with using the software specific to each center
- Encourages visitors to reflect on what they can do next (further research, search for information, visits to other places, participation in workshops or other collective actions).

2.1.2. Information Management Skills

Information flow management:

- Locates, identifies and updates relevant information resources
- Expands the range of available resources and disseminates them to users and the appropriate departments
- Manages databases
- Disseminates new information to the appropriate department or staff member (knowledge of the organization chart and the organization)

Analytical and critical thinking skills

- Analyses needs
- Selects information according to the activity objectives and context (EQF Level III)
- Identifies and recognises biased and/or incomplete information (EQF Level III)
- Assesses the relevance of information and potential biases in the data according to established guidelines and shares it appropriately (EQF Level IV)

Interview skills to identify the precise needs of the end user

- Demonstrates active listening
- Reformulates the needs expressed by users
- Correctly interprets users' requests

Tailoring information to each individual user

- Assesses the available information resources and establishes the most suitable information to pass on to the visitor.
- Provides guidance to members of the public and helps them use multimedia resources and other services

2.2. Administrative skills

Main administrative skills

- Takes responsibility⁷ for end users' requests
- Applies the Centre's administrative procedures
- Manages the space

⁷ <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/administrative-skills>

Project management skills

- Time management skills
- Management and organisational skills when dealing with incoming requests in person or online
- Multitasking skills to respond in a timely manner to emails, phone calls and requests in person, as well as project requests
- Prioritises tasks and monitors their implementation

Teamwork skills

- Collaborates on administrative projects, new processes or new resources
- Responds to requests or refers them to the appropriate department either by booking appointments or forwarding emails (online requests)
- Manages registrations
- Archives visitor registrations and requests
- Uses databases effectively to support users and staff

Resource Management⁸

- Applies the correct procedures to make resources available for routine tasks, such as ensuring supplies of informative documents, consumables and stationery (EQF Level III)
- Adapts their own behaviour based on the outcomes of their resource management (EQF Level IV)

2.3. Technical and Digital Skills

Communicating using digital technologies

- Communicates regularly and autonomously, selecting the appropriate digital technologies, depending on the activity and context (EQF Level III)
- Selects and applies the appropriate standards and safety rules when communicating using digital technologies (EQF Level III)

⁸ https://www.transvalproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/D2.3-Transversal-Competence-Framework_EN.pdf

- Sets up social media account(s) in order to create one's digital identity (EQF Level III)
- Customises digital technologies to one's communication needs or the needs of the communication circumstances (EQF Level IV)
- Selects, customises and adds new content to one's social media account(s) in order to develop and profile one's digital identity (EQF Level IV)
- Develops resources for different target groups

Helping end users to use digital technology

- Uses ICT media and software for information purposes
- Uses digital solutions to provide effective services (Bimrose, J et al., 2010)
- Uses digital platforms for teleconferences
- Solves technical problems (DigComp 2.2)
- Demonstrates digital administrative skills (DigComp 2.2)

Training/continuous training in the use of digital technology

- Provides access, uses search engines, finds relevant information
- Provides access to information and online services for a wide audience (EU Digital Strategy)
- Ensures equal access to services and information for disadvantaged groups
- Information and data literacy (DigComp 2.2)
- Digital content creation (DigComp 2.2)
- Secure use of ICT (DigComp 2.2)

2.4. Transversal Skills

2.4.1. Transversal Skills according to EQF level ⁹

Managing and organising activities

- Adapts one's organisation to the constraints of the situation (EQF Level III)
- Plans and organises one's own activity and the team's activity (EQF Level IV)

Solving problems and reacting to the unforeseen

- Applies the correct procedure to common problems related to one's activity (EQF Level III)
- Solves common problems related to one's activity or the team's activity (EQF Level IV)

Cooperating and fostering cooperation

- Makes proposals and takes other team members' opinions into account (EQF Level III)
- Leads and develops collective activity, is able to change position and role (EQF Level IV)

Using oral communication in one or several languages

- Understands and manages conversations in one's first language in different situations according to one's needs (EQF Level III)
- Can react to another person's body language in an appropriate manner in simple (one-to-one) conversations (EQF Level III)
- Recognises and applies different types of verbal communication, taking into consideration the interlocutors (EQF Level IV)
- Adapts one's body language in complex situations such as speaking in public or in a group (EQF Level IV)

Taking professional, social and cultural norms into account

- Takes relevant instruction and procedures into account in every aspect of one's activity (EQF Level III)

⁹ https://www.transvalproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/D2.3-Transversal-Competence-Framework_EN.pdf

- Considers relevant professional, social and cultural customs in every interaction (EQF Level III)
- Monitors and adjusts the compliance with instructions and procedures (EQF Level IV)
- Self-assesses interactions in the light of professional, social and cultural customs (EQF Level IV)
- Demonstrates ethical behaviour and professional conduct (IAEVG)

Using written communication in one or several languages

- Uses most common written sources needed for one's activity (EQF Level III)
- Writes documents related to one's activity and context (EQF Level III)
- Uses most common sources of various nature needed for one's activity to compose texts (EQF Level IV)
- Conveys the meaning of a text in one's own words in written form (EQF Level IV)
- Writes elaborated pieces (EQF Level IV)

Building one's career path

- Defines and explains one's professional project (EQF Level III)
- Plans the steps needed to realise one's career project (EQF Level IV)
- Understands how you can integrate information on occupations, education, economy, and employment into management of your career (EQF Level IV)

Developing one's competences and profile

- Develops new learning strategies in order to improve one's actions and project (EQF Level III)
- Explores one's own learning interests, processes and preferred strategies, including learning needs and required support (EQF Level III)
- Suggests new ways of learning for oneself and possibly for the team (EQF Level IV)

Self-reflection

- Is able to self-assess the interaction between specific context and one's own interests, attitudes, values and aspirations and adapts accordingly (EQF Level III)

- Examines in predictable/continuous contexts how self-concept/awareness has an impact on achieving one's personal goals and decisions, how it influences one's professional and life expectations (EQF Level IV)

2.4.2. Other transversal skills defined via the survey

- Empathy
- Good judgement
- Assertiveness
- Reliability
- Motivational skills
- Flexibility/Ability to adapt to customers' needs
- Active listening
- Intercultural/intergenerational skills
- Communication skills (oral and writing)
- Self-assessment skills
- Assessment skills
- Conflict management
- Stress management
- Time management skills
- Teamwork
- Willingness to learn
- Self-learning skills
- Negotiation skills
- Continues to update skills
- Continues to update specific knowledge
- Maintains personal balance
- Builds relationships
- Sets priorities
- Uses cross-comprehension in communication
- Creativity

2.5. Complementary Skills

Co-facilitating or leading a session, workshop or group:

- Clarifies information needs
- Determines content
- Applies appropriate facilitation methods
- Supports the learning process while taking into account group dynamics
- Checks that results are integrated into participants' projects.

Designing and delivering training modules:

- Designs and plans sessions
- Provides information on the reference framework and the training objectives
- Leads sessions
- Evaluates the overall facilitation/learning process

Implementing a project:

- Defines objectives
- Produces an action plan
- Leads the project according to proven standards
- Evaluates the progress of the project
- Disseminates findings
- Ensures the project's impact in practice

Meeting quality standards:

- Defines measuring tools on a regular basis (satisfaction questionnaires, impact of the service)
- Collects data
- Analyses, interprets and discusses the results
- Makes suggestions for improvement, new measures
- Verifies the impact of the measures taken