



INCLUSIVE+
Inclusive & Practical Assessment Tools for Guidance Practitioners



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Erasmus+ Programme
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Transnational research report: The “basic employability skills” for low- skilled adults’ work integration

March 2019

This transnational research report: *The “basic employability skills” for low-skilled adults’ work integration*, has been developed within the framework of the project “Inclusive & Practical Assessment Tools for Guidance Practitioners - 2018-1-ES01-KA204-050779”. The transnational research report is open and available for any interested stakeholders.

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Introduction

Inclusive+ is a two-year-project, led by Fundación Coremsa (Spain) in consortium with four more partners from Italy (CESIE), Romania (Asociatia Consultantilor si Expertilor in Economie Sociala Romania), Slovakia (Europersonal & Servis s.r.o.) and the UK (Inova Consultancy LTD), funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Strategic Partnerships in the field of adult education) of the European Union. The consortium is composed of a multi-actor partnership of countries with a very high rate of low-qualified people and of unemployment among this population. Along with the national contexts, the consortium relies on a diverse and rich expertise of the partners, which have different profiles. First, the partnership involves organisations that are intermediary professionals (Fundación Coremsa, Europersonal), organisations that deliver training for intermediary professionals and/or low skilled adults (Fundación Coremsa, Europersonal, Inova, ACE-ES, CESIE), organisations with expertise in designing new training materials (all of them) and organisations applying innovative methodologies and are willing to transfer their know-how to other institutions (Inova).

The project aims to enhance the labour market integration of low qualified people by improving and extending the existent support tools for intermediary professionals. To reach this objective, the partners will provide inclusive and practical tools to help intermediary professionals identify their clients’ attitudes, skills and competences as a first step for a tailored, more empathic and efficient approach to recruiting and counselling. In order to design a targeted path for up-skilling low qualified adults, it is necessary to start with appropriate assessment methods.

Therefore, the partnership will create Competence Assessment Cards for Low Skilled Adults, which will consist of a profile-screening method especially designed for Low Skilled/Qualified counselling to identify their “basic employability skills”. Then, the Career Circles™ - Programme Training for Intermediary Professionals combining action learning, coaching and peer mentoring principles conceived by Inova will be adapted and implemented in every partner country. Finally, a Facilitator Guide will help professionals





make the most of the tools produced. These instruments will participate in Europe's need for an educated and qualified workforce to face the economic and competitive challenges of the future, at the same time prepared for multiple skills and competences to meet the ever-changing occupational demands now and in the coming years.

Methodology

This transnational research report combines quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The research subject is the "basic employability skills" for low-skilled adults in the five partner countries. In order to produce the Competence Assessment Cards, it was necessary to identify the most crucial skills low-skilled adults need to integrate more easily into the labour market. As the tool should also include cards on hobbies and interests that can help discover more of these people's skills, the research also aims to understand on which ones it will be useful to focus while developing the cards.

Two main tools have been used to collect information:

- **Questionnaires** on the key competences needed for low-skilled adults and the difficulty of assessing each of them have been distributed to every respondent. Based on the "Key competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework" of the DGEAC, it aims to select and classify the competences in order to identify those on which it is necessary to be focused in the development of the tool.
- **Focus groups and qualitative semi-structured interviews** with guidance professionals, employers, teachers, NGO staff experienced with low-skilled adults education and labour market integration in the 5 partner countries. The questions aimed to deepen and explain the data gathered in the questionnaires through more detailed information and justification, and to tackle issues that cannot fit in a questionnaire at all such as the challenges they face in their daily practice.

Additional techniques have been used by some partners on a common decision of the partnership in front of the challenge to gather at least 10 professionals in only one or even two focus group sessions. Therefore, some data has been collected through google forms, e-mails or by phone.





Using the mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative methods brings several advantages for the analysis of the main research objectives of the report as it allows to get clear and precise data on the one hand and to place it in its context in order to interpret it in the right way on the other hand.

Participants' profile

In total, 61 professionals participated in the research: 25 took part in focus groups, 6 in face-to-face interviews, 5 by phone, 9 by e-mail and 16 through google forms. This diversity of methods allowed the partners to reach even more people than the objective they had set (50 professionals).

They are all professionals who have experience with low-skilled adults. They are university professors, educators, employees/president/project managers/volunteers/intern in NGO or public/private work guidance organizations, vocational education counsellors, psychologists, recruiters (HR experts and employers active in the in the fields of catering, manufactory, agricultural and building industries, machinery distribution, warehouse and goods delivery), socio-labour insertion technicians, social workers and trainers, career advisors and coaches. This diversity of profiles offered an opportunity to collect information from two main categories that may have different points of view on the crucial skills needed by low-skilled adults: on the one hand, some of the participants help low-skilled adults to make a CV, find a job and/or develop their basic skills. On the other hand, recruiters try to evaluate their skills during the recruitment process.

Finally, some professionals also work specifically with migrants, whose particular situation can lead to challenges and skills needed that differ from those required for local low-skilled adults.





Summary per country

Country	Methods used	Number of participants	Proportion of recruiters	Proportion of professionals supporting low-skilled adults
Italy	Focus groups, interviews, phone	11	18.18 %	81.82 %
Romania	Focus group, e-mail, phone	12	0.00%	100%
Slovakia	e-mail, phone	8	87.5 %	12.5 %
Spain	Google form	16	43.75 %	56.25 %
United Kingdom	Focus groups	14	0,00%	100%

Findings of the Research

The findings of the research are elaborated in two main areas: basic employability skills and main challenges faced by intermediary professionals in assessing low-skilled adults' competences.

The analysis includes data and evidences from two parts of the research – the questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data of the questionnaire has been analysed in the light of the answers from the interviews that often provided an explanation for it.

1. Key skills





1.1. Background

The sectors in which low-skilled adults can find work are similar in the partner countries: they are low-paid jobs often characterized by simple execution tasks and/or jobs that require physical efforts.

In **Spain**, most available jobs are related to cleaning tasks, logistics, personal health care or in the services sector (catering).

The offer is quite similar in **Romania** where low-skilled adults can hope to integrate into the labour market as cleaning, sanitation or security agents, unqualified workers, elderly carers or truck and drivers. They may also have access to occasional and/or unskilled jobs in the clothing industry, food industry and construction sector.

In **Italy**, they are in the cleaning/maintenance sector, in the catering sector, in agriculture (during the harvesting season, and it may be without any employment contract), in the field of services to individuals, of marketing face-to-face, of waste disposal or in computer implementation works (e.g. positions that only imply inputting data). The participants identified some specific positions that are often offered to their clients, such as workmen, delivery people, warehousemen, security guards, doormen (e.g. in nightclubs), call centre employees, social food workers, salespersons, receptionists.

In the **United Kingdom**, low-skilled adults can find a job in similar sectors like construction and manufacturing, retail, packing, care, cleaning-streets, call centres, delivery, hospitality and catering, door knocking and fundraising. In addition, they can have opportunities in car wash and work or as Teaching assistants / learning support assistants. Globally, they usually have to do manual labour, unsociable hours work or unreliable seasonal work, with payment on commission (and impossible targets to reach).

In **Slovakia**, low-skilled adults are more likely to get a position as low-sales workers, metal & machinery workers (as operators and assemblers), agriculture laborers & farmworkers and as elementary workers (e.g. technical laborers, cleaners, helpers, food preparation, forest workers, etc.). They may also work in goods delivery or carry out supermarket replenish tasks.

When it comes to entrepreneurship, it seems that it can only moderately help low-skilled adults to integrate into the labour market. On the one hand, they may use their hobbies or





previous experience particularly in the case of migrants to create goods and sell them. On the other hand, starting and managing a business necessitates skills and knowledge that these adults often lack (e.g. financial and computability skills, knowledge and understanding of the specific legislation) that makes difficult for them to do it without the support of someone who has more experience.

However, entrepreneurship skills may help when looking for a job and are considered as very useful in order to integrate into the labour market.

1.2. Key soft skills

In all partner countries, participants globally agreed that soft skills are the most important type of skills in order to find a job with lowskills and qualifications. They often underlined that they are also the most difficult ones to assess.

All organizations collected similar data regarding the soft skills that are crucial in order to find a working position. These skills can be gathered in three main categories:

Social competences	Personal competences	Digital competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to communicate in the national language - teamwork - literacy - writing - availability - empathy/kindness - reliability - punctuality - positivity - ability to follow the rules - acceptance of feedbacks - ability to manage difficult situations and conflicts - politeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adaptation (coupled with an intercultural competence in the case of migrants) - organisational skills - will to discover and learn - motivation - flexibility - resilience/perseverance - accuracy and attention paid to details - basic problem-solving skills - stress-management - sense of responsibility - professionalism - patience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - search on the Internet - use the phone - use a mailbox - use social networks - basic use of a computer - use of basic applications and programmes - ability to type - make a CV - ability to learn how to use basic software





<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active listening - understanding of how to behave at the workplace - tolerance - customer services skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to observe a schedule, time management - self-confidence - self-awareness - capacity and will to reach objectives - take initiatives - evaluate and take risks - hard-working 	
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Digital skills were always referred to as important even for low-skilled adults. The participants insisted on the fact that only basic skills are crucial in this field. If they don't have all the minimum digital competences, they should at least have a positive attitude towards digital software, and a will to learn how to use it as it may be an unavoidable tool for their work (e.g. some employers from the catering industry underlined that their waiters have to use a tablet to take the client's orders). Those who are mostly concerned by a lack of digital skills are people over 50 years old.

When it comes to motivation, that is seen as a crucial skill, low-skilled adults often lack it. Indeed, it appears that they need support in order to keep being motivated in order to widen their opportunities and to sign up for trainings. The economic pressure and their personal situation are such that they are more focused on the short term than on the long term and favour an immediate reward. They don't see that there are more or better work opportunities of progressing if they keep learning since unemployment rate is also high, or even higher for more qualified workers. Therefore, they may be motivated to follow shortterm trainings directly connected to a job but refuse long or theoretical trainings. This seems to be even worse in the case of migrants: even if they may be very motivated to follow Italian lessons that help them get a residence permit, they are often motivated not to study but to work, which leads them to accept the first position they are offered. This lack of motivation to improve their educational level is probably related to a lack of self-confidence too: low-skilled adults often think that they cannot study, that they will not succeed.





1.3. Key hard skills

Even if they appear as less important than soft skills for the types of jobs offered to them, some hard-skills can strongly participate in helping low-skilled adults to find a job.

The information collected show that it is ideal if the low-skilled adult received some specific training on the offered position or has some previous experience, but as a minimum they should desire to learn job-specific operations as they can learn them quickly if they are willing to.

As these skills depend very much on the professional sector, some skills corresponding to the sectors low-skilled adults are more likely to access include:

- general manual competences
- general basic mechanical knowledge
- basic selling skills, ability to work at shifts
- warehouse management
- driving skills
- warehouse systems
- lifting machinery
- parts catalogue knowledge
- basic mathematical skills
- knowledge of the main hygiene and alimentary norms (e.g. the HCCP is required in Italy to work in the catering sector, sometimes even to clean the kitchen)
- basic knowledge of care: disinfection of a wound, to wash children or old people (for caretakers or babysitters)

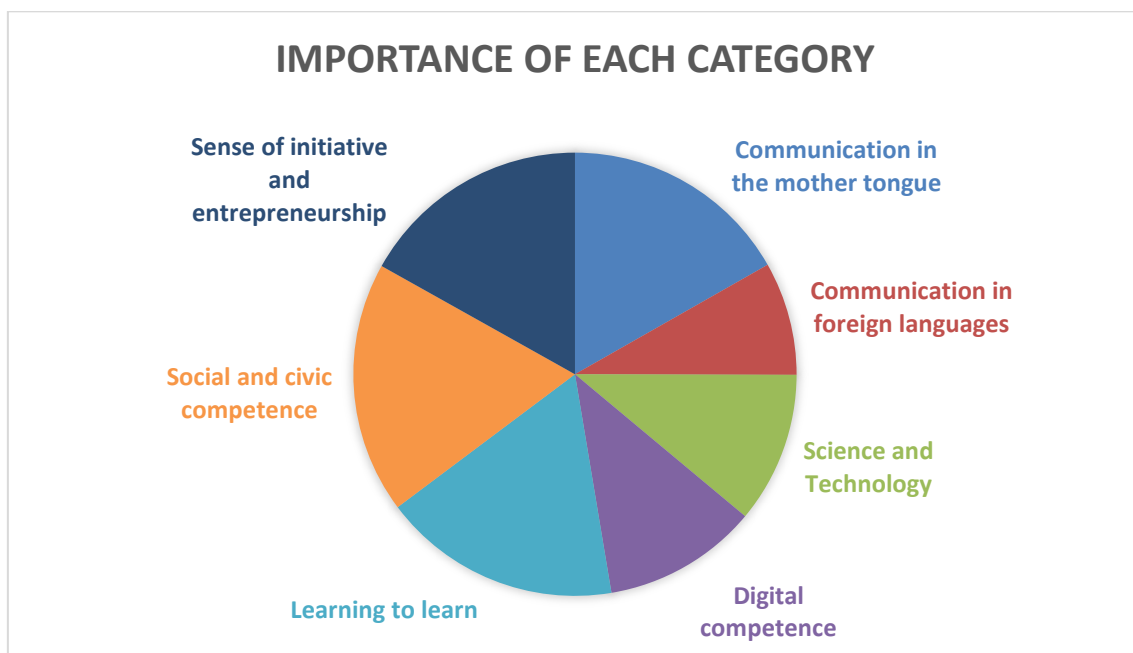
It is often required to have a driver's license and to be physically fit. When looking for a job, some participants noticed that it is also important to have knowledge on the national labour Law and on the functioning of the local labour market and to be aware of the existence of services to help unemployed people to find a job.





1.4. Key macro-categories of competences: analysis of the questionnaires.

According to the “Key competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework”¹ of the Education and Culture DG, the competences have been split into seven categories. The partners collected similar data in their countries, even if minor differences can be noticed. However, the sample and these differences are too small to draw real conclusions on the local contexts. The only significant differences observed between countries are about the necessity to be interested in foreign languages, which is much lower in the United Kingdom and Romania than in Spain and about entrepreneurial competences for which the views are much more qualified in Romania and in Slovakia than in the other partner countries. The results of the questionnaire reflect what had been said during the discussions and it allowed the partners to have a global vision of the competences low-skilled adults need, paying particular attention to the macro-categories.



Source: Data collected in the questionnaires

The questionnaire confirms that the ability to communicate in the mother tongue (language of the host society in the case of migrants) is absolutely crucial in order to integrate into the labour market. It shows that the professionals are almost unanimous on

¹ Education and Culture DG, Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007. <<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/file/272/download>>





this point. Consequently, these competences have to be assessed, but according to the participants, they have an easy-moderate difficulty level of assessment.

On the opposite, the answers indicate that foreign languages are not necessary. In Italy, the professionals explained that it can be an asset according to the job sector (e.g. it can be required in the tourism sector) but it is usually not a criterion.

Regarding the competences included in the category of Science and Technology, the professionals have much more qualified opinions as only a bit more than the half of them consider they are relevant in the context of low-skilled adults.

The same observation can be made on digital skills, but some of them appear to be much more important than the others. The professionals explained their views during the discussions on the skills: they globally think that it is quite fundamental to have basic digital skills or at least the will to discover and learn in this field in order to get a job for a low-skilled adult. More skills may be required for specific jobs but are not in general. They find they have an easy-moderate difficulty level of evaluation.

The professionals' opinions are much stronger when it comes to the learning to learn skills. Many of them have been cited during the discussion as crucial skills like flexibility or adaptation. They are considered to have a moderate-difficult difficulty level of evaluation.

Opinions are also almost unanimous regarding social and civic skills. It can be partly explained by the jobs offered to low-skilled adults, particularly in the sectors of care or tourism, which require to have good relations with the others. These skills are quite difficult to evaluate.

At last, entrepreneurial skills are also very important according to the professionals. Some recruiters and guidance experts have asserted that some of them are useful at the workplace whereas others help in the process of looking for a job. These skills are quite difficult to assess too.





N°	Competence	Number of professionals who found it relevant	Number of professionals who didn't find it relevant	Number of professionals who found it... to assess				
				Very difficult	Difficult	Neither difficult nor easy	Easy	Very easy
Communication in the mother tongue								
1.	Ability to communicate both orally and in writing	57	3	0	6	9	29	16
2.	Disposition to critical and constructive dialogue	38	23	3	28	11	17	1
3.	Interest in interaction with others and to establish interpersonal relationships	51	9	1	16	19	19	2
Communication in foreign languages								
4.	Interest and curiosity in languages and intercultural communication	24	37	6	16	14	14	8
Science and Technology								
5.	Numeracy and ability to use and handle technological tools, machines and scientific data to achieve a goal or reach an evidence-based decision/conclusion	34	26	5	11	23	18	3
6.	Ability to apply knowledge and technology to human needs	30	29	6	24	15	12	1
Digital competence								
7.	Knowledge of the main computer applications	40	21	3	10	8	28	10
8.	Understanding of the opportunities and risks of the Internet and communication via electronic media	35	25	4	17	14	17	4
9.	Understanding how ICT can support creativity and innovation	21	39	7	22	15	13	1
10.	Awareness of the legal and ethical principles for the use of	26	34	5	26	22	7	0





	ICT in the workplace							
11.	Ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way	28	32	5	32	14	5	2
12.	Positive attitude towards available information	47	11	2	13	20	23	2
Learning to learn								
13.	Understanding of ones' own preferred learning strategies	43	17	12	18	16	12	2
14.	Perseverance	56	1	4	21	19	14	3
15.	Autonomy	54	6	0	17	17	21	5
16.	Self-discipline	52	8	3	12	26	16	3
17.	Critical and creative thinking	38	22	6	21	17	9	3
18.	Self-confidence	48	10	2	24	18	11	5
19.	Flexibility and adaptation	55	5	2	22	15	16	4
20.	Ability to follow the rules/instructions	58	2	1	13	24	16	6
Social and civic competence								
21.	Understanding of the codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in different societies and environments (e.g. at work)	57	3	7	20	18	12	3
22.	Awareness of basic concepts relating to individuals, groups, work organizations, gender equality, non-discrimination, society, culture	52	8	9	26	18	6	0
23.	Ability to show tolerance	54	6	9	23	13	12	0
24.	Ability to express and understand different points of view	55	5	2	24	18	13	3
25.	Ability to negotiate and create confidence	50	9	5	25	15	11	3
26.	Ability to feel empathy	50	9	6	21	17	11	4
27.	Ability to cope with stress and frustration and to express them in a constructive way	56	4	8	31	10	9	2
28.	Ability to value diversity and	54	5	6	26	15	10	2





	respect of others							
29.	Reliability	52	6	6	20	16	13	4
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship								
30.	Ability to work as an individual and collaboratively in team	58	2	4	21	16	19	1
31.	Ability to judge and identify one's strengths and weaknesses	46	14	9	24	14	10	3
32.	Ability to assess and take risks	41	19	8	20	20	12	0
33.	Attitude of initiative, proactivity, independence and innovation	42	18	7	18	15	18	2
34.	Ability to problem solve	52	8	2	21	18	16	2
35.	Motivation and determination to meet objectives	55	5	5	22	14	13	6

It may be noticed that in couple of occasions, interviewees did not select whether a competence was relevant or no, therefore there are some minor differences in the total number of respondents for certain competencies.

1.5. Hobbies and interests

One of the contents of the tool shall be the Set of Talents, which will consist of hobbies or interests that can favour the discovery of low-skilled adults' potential talents or hidden competences. Generally, the professionals liked this idea to pay attention to the hobbies in order to identify more competences that can help finding a job or guiding to an adapted professional training course to improve employability. Indeed, they underlined the fact that many young people find their way thanks to their hobbies (e.g. jobs within the field of computer science).

The participants provided examples of hobbies that low-skilled adults are susceptible to have and can help identify their skills:

- Sports and team games: they usually help develop the spirit of initiative and team spirit and as they involve contacts with other people, this type of activities helps them improve their oral communication and build relationships. They also increase levels of motivation and self-fulfilment. Playing and personal achievements in any





hobby or sport will reflect in the work environment. If someone is able to set personal targets and commit to achieve them in their free time, with the right level of empowerment and delegation, they will be able to do the same at work.

- Handicrafts, decorating and more widely artistic and creative activities: they can provide low-skilled adults with creative and/or manual skills that can lead to a job, guide towards a training in the handicraft sector (e.g. tailoring, pottery, etc.) or be turned into a business opportunity. It can also increase the ability to pay attention to details.
- Drawing /music/theatre: these activities can help express one's emotions in a non-conflictual manner.
- Foreign languages: they can provide work opportunities (e.g. in Italy, some migrants became cultural mediators).
- Animal care, gardening: it involves caring, respecting some constraints and schedules.
- Playing chess: it helps improve critical thinking.
- Yoga: it may reveal good stress management skills.
- Reading: it may improve concentration and it can help to learn the national language in case of migrants or to improve writing communication in the mother tongue for locals.
- Cooking and baking: it can help guide low-skilled adults who already like it and are good at it towards a training course in order to find a job in the catering industry.
- Volunteering: it favours team spirit, provides with social skills and usually makes a positive impression on employers.
- Playing computer games: some of them such as Fortnite, Minecraft, the SIMs... where the user needs to administrate the available resources, play in cooperative situations, negotiate, etc.... all in an advanced and visual format that everyday have more in common with working applications. When playing computer games, they might improve their organizational skills, problem solving and time management skills. Other games like poker online help develop mathematical competences and improve risk evaluation competences.
- Social Games improve communication and teamwork. Some games might improve self-confidence. For example: Cooking fever (time management), War craft and similar (Time and Resources Optimization, Teamwork and Leadership).





- Music: it can help low-skilled adults to improve their linguistic competences (e.g. if they watch videos of English songs with subtitles).
- Using Social Networks: it can contribute to employees' integration and motivation in a workplace. It can also lead people to self-employment as youtubers / vloggers / bloggers.
- Passion for make up or hairdressing: it could help identify an interest and a talent to guide low-skilled adults towards a short training course to become a beautician/hairdresser.
- Seaside activities like sailing, managing boats: they can allow to acquire technical competences that may lead to a job, in particular in the regions where there is a strong seaside tourism. As these activities provide with specific skills that not anyone has, it can improve low-skilled adults' self-esteem. It may also help improve problem-solving, assessment and taking of risks and learning to learn skills.
- Activities in the mountain: knowing the mountain and in general nature very well can also help finding a job, above all in the sector of tourism (e.g. mountain guide).
- Interest in motorcycles or cars: it provides with technical competences that can lead to a job, directly or through an additional training course (mechanics, electronics, etc.).

These hobbies and activities can help develop and improve some skills considered as crucial by the professionals like team spirit, confidence and motivation. Moreover, employers underlined the fact that if the work of low-skilled adults is directly connected to a hobby or interest, it becomes an asset for them as it enhances curiosity and then helps them in their professional practice.

2. Main challenges

2.1. External factors

First, the research revealed that soft skills are more difficult to assess than hard skills. To identify their clients' hard skills, professionals can look at the qualifications, previous employment and work experience. On the opposite, soft skills can be developed through previous work experiences but also thanks to hobbies, interests or personality and therefore in formal, non-formal and informal settings, and the validation and recognition of such skills is still an issue in European countries. Consequently, there is often a lack of





time in order to assess soft skills because it necessitates to have time to spend, to observe (preferably directly on the job, because missing competences can be identified only in a work environment) and to get to know the person. Professionals who have the opportunity to follow these adults in the longterm and to see them in other contexts (e.g. NGO professionals may have this opportunity) also assert it helps them to guide better the beneficiaries towards a specific training or job as it is easier to identify their soft skills. As assessing soft skills often necessitates observation, the Slovakian report suggests that the best assessment is to be done through role-plays.

It also appeared that low-skilled adults are not able to assess their own skills, and they do not know what they are capable of. This is challenging for professionals as they have to bring out their clients' competencies, but they also tend to have difficulties steering the conversation in order to find out these skills, buried in hobbies and other activities which are not classified as a profession. Low-skilled adults' difficulty to understand if they have a skill or not may be linked to the fact that they are not used to nor have time for introspection on the one hand, and to the challenge it represents for them to understand what the competences exactly consist in on the other hand. However, even if low-skilled adults have difficulties or are not used to assess their own skills, they will be able to perform a proper assessment if the competences are clearly explained.

Moreover, it is often difficult for human resources managers to identify which skills shall be evaluated during the recruitment when it comes to low-skilled jobs as they have a poor awareness of the skill set needed for the job. As a consequence, if the candidates do not have any training specific to the position, they often choose people because they are "nice" or "hard-working".

The UK report underlines that the jargon used in job offers does not help as it confuses low-skilled adults and makes them think they cannot apply. As these adults often have a poor self-esteem, this is a point that professionals try to improve to support them into applying. More generally, low-skilled adults have a poor understanding of the language and requests of the assessor during the assessment of competences: this situation can still derive from the technical terms used, but can also be linked to poor literacy or, in the case of Italy, to people only speaking dialects but bad Italian.

In addition to the language barrier, another challenge in assessing migrant people's competences sometimes consist in the different scale of evaluation: some participants from Italy underlined the fact that very good computer skills in an African country may not





correspond to very good computer skills in a European country. In this case, professionals have to check, even if the beneficiaries are able to self-assess their skills.

Sometimes, it is the lack of crucial skills in itself that is challenging. The Romanian professionals mentioned a very low tolerance level of low-skilled adults to any frustration or stress factor that, combined with resistance to change, novelty and rejection to new challenges, can lead to difficulties in guiding them towards a training or a job. The UK report also emphasized the lack of professionalism professionals find when talking to their clients. There is a difficulty identifying how clients act in a professional setting as they do not feel it relates to them, as they are unemployed or low-skilled. As it is considered as an important soft skill by professionals, they often assess a need for improvement of professionalism.

Human Resources professionals also notice that candidates with high expectations do not want to participate in a selection process, so even their attitude can become the biggest challenge.

Finally, professionals said they lack tools adapted to low-skilled adults like psychological and vocational tests that could ease the skills assessments.

The Italian report mentions the recommendations of some professionals asserting that particular attention should be paid to the previous positions occupied by the low-skilled adult as it is often challenging for them to link it to the competences they were able to develop or acquire through a work experience. For low-skilled adults from 40 years old, they also have to trace the history of their previous experiences, which can start to be quite long: the professional should try to link them in order to connect them to jobs that are available on the labour market.

2.2. Challenges linked to psychology and behaviour

However, challenges faced by professionals can come from psychological processes too. Indeed, the Romanian report highlighted that low-skilled adults fear evaluation and that other people discover their level of ignorance. Consequently, they may not want to open up with the professionals, to get to know themselves and their real needs and abilities.

The professionals have also identified that having a coach or adviser is shameful for some low-skilled adults, and it results in a refuse to talk to the professional, dishonesty or difficulty to be open about their true goals and aspirations.





Dishonesty on the CV or with the professionals has been underlined as a big challenge. It can be the result of complex mechanisms to protect the Ego in order to conceal their ignorance, capture attention or transmit only what they like. On the other hand, and this may happen even if they are aware of their own skills, low-skilled adults may lie because they feel compelled to say they have some particular skills even if it is not true as they are required for almost any type of work (e.g. ability to work in team). It is a challenge for an advisor as the lack of consistency between the claimed and actual competencies of low-skilled adults will lead him/her in a false direction of enquiry.

Low-skilled adults often have difficulties to assess their own behaviour, which may result in difficulties to adapt it to different contexts. For example, in the case of migrants, the different concept of time may require the presence or development of additional skills like flexibility and intercultural competences in order to adapt to the behaviour required at the workplace in the host society. The Italian report notices that this difficulty may be linked to their lack of awareness regarding what low-skilled adults do as they are not used to self-analysis and self-reflection, and usually do not call into question the context in which they grew up. However, the professionals asserted that it gets easier for them to become aware and adapt their behaviour if they benefit from external support. Here again, the possibility to follow the adults' paths can also favour this process.

3. Conclusions

Grounded in the research phase conducted in all the partner countries, the following conclusions are deduced to inform the Inclusive+ development of the tools. Based on the discussions and interviews analysis and the results of the questionnaire, salient features can be taken in consideration for the conception of the cards. First, partners will pay particular attention to soft skills, with an emphasis on those considered as crucial by professionals working with low-skilled adults, namely language, social and civic, learning to learn, entrepreneurial and basic digital skills. The macro-categories included in the questionnaires could be gathered in only four wider categories corresponding to four different types of cards with regard to attitudes, skills and knowledge, to which the hobbies and interests would be added:

- Social skills, that are “necessary in order to communicate and interact with others”².

² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/social-skills>





- Personal skills, which are “those concerned with how people manage and express themselves”³.
- Digital skills
- Professional skills, which are skills specific to the work environment.
- Hobbies

In this way, there would be only four types of skills (social, personal, digital and professional) instead of seven in order to simplify the use of the cards. In addition to the crucial skills identified by the professionals, the data collected through the questionnaires will also be directly taken into account as a card will be created for every competence that gathered more than 50 out of 61 votes or gathered more than 40 out of 61 if at least half of the professionals found it “difficult” or “very difficult”. This method will enable to pay attention to the level of importance of the skills as well as the level of difficulty for their evaluation. Regarding the hobbies, the most relevant ones will be included.

The information gathered about the challenges faced by professionals while trying to assess their clients’ competences will be used in order to conceive an Evidence Toolkit for Guidance professionals tailored to their needs.

³ https://careersportal.ie/careerskills/transferable_skills_personal_skills.php





References

Education and Culture DG, Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.
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“Personal skills”, Careers Portal.
<https://careersportal.ie/careerskills/transferable_skills_personal_skills.php>





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Annex 1 – Transnational Research Guidelines

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Research Guidelines

IO1 – Competence Assessment Cards for Low Skilled Adults

CESIE

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the world is only one creature

Developed by CESIE December 2018





This paper is part of the IO1 – Competence Assessment Cards for Low Skilled Adults within the Inclusive+ project. These guidelines aim at guiding the partners of the project to implement successfully a research addressed to the professionals working with low-skilled adults to identify their basic employability skills.

The main aims of the IO1 are:

- To develop Competence Assessment Cards for low skilled Adults, a profile-screening method especially designed for Low Skilled adults counselling to identify their “basic employability skills”.
- To help intermediary professionals identify their clients’ attitudes, skills and competences as a first step for a tailored, more empathic and efficient approach to guidance.
- To create open, flexible and adaptable tools to help discover, document and develop low qualified workers’ skills.

The Competence Assessment Cards for low skilled Adults will be developed according to the results of this research that will help the partners identify the basic employability skills of low-skilled adults.

This research will be implemented with the method of interviews and/or focus groups with at least 10 relevant stakeholders, namely career advisors, coaches, employers etc.

RESEARCH

Focus group and interviews guidelines

Objective: the main aim is to understand what are the “basic employability skills” of low-skilled adults and what could be the hobbies that may favour their work integration.

Means: focus groups or interviews.

Researching tools: questionnaires.

Target: intermediary professionals working with low-skilled adults.

Methodology: each partner will organize focus groups and/or interviews with at least 10 intermediary professionals working with low-skilled adults. This approach will encourage the participation of the target groups in the project’s activities as their answers will be used to develop new tools that they will be able to test during the piloting phase and to use in their daily work.

Proposed number of target to be involved: at least 10 professionals for each partner.

During the focus group it is important to have 1 facilitator able to manage the group conversation. If a second person can take notes in the meantime, it could be easier. The facilitator can follow these tips:

Recommendations for the facilitator





- ✓ Fluid approach to asking questions
- ✓ Not to ask a question if you think the topic was already covered by all participants
- ✓ Respect everybody's space
- ✓ Respect the time allowed

Before starting please make sure that you have provided the participants with the following information:

- ✓ "We would like that everyone participate"
- ✓ "Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential"
- ✓ "Stay with the group and please don't have side conversations"
- ✓ "Turn off cell phones if possible"

Welcome and introduction from the facilitator

- ✓ Short Presentation of the Inclusive+ project
- ✓ Presentation of the purpose of the focus group
- ✓ Explanation of the rules

Recruitment: in order to identify the intermediary professionals, you should start contacting the key stakeholders already involved in your network to offer them to participate in the project. Therefore, you should inform them on the project aims and on the foreseen activities, making clear what will be the advantages of the tools that will be developed for their daily work. You should create a contact list of interested people and agree with them when and how to organise the focus group. If you prefer doing several interviews, make sure to always refer to the questionnaire to get answers on the same points with every stakeholder.

Implementation: fix the date according to the availability of all participants, find a suitable venue and before starting create a comfortable environment by sitting in a circle. Act as a facilitator moderating the discussion and guiding the groups through the questions proposed by all the partners. If you choose to do interviews, do not hesitate to show your interest in what the person is saying by acknowledging. Ask if you can register the interview in the framework of the research, namely only to be able to record what has been said.

Duration: approximately 90 min-120 min (focus group) or 30-45 min (interview).

Reporting/Evidencing: Each partner shall produce a national report in English summarizing the key results of the interviews/focus group and including a list of basic skills so that CESIE can analyse the data in English and directly deliver the overall report. Ideally, photos could be taken while implementing the focus group if you choose this option, to be used for articles and/or final publications, but do not forget to ask for permission in advance.

All partners can use the following agenda template to have an idea of how to organize the focus group discussion:

AGENDA (INDICATIVE)

Focus group meeting with focus groups of at least 10 intermediary professionals.





Date: [date of the meeting]

Place: [place of the meeting]

Organized by: [partner organization]

Expected duration of the focus group meeting is between 1.5 and 2 hours.

10.00		Welcome and Agenda
10.05		Introduction of the participants of the focus group
10.30		Presentation of the project Inclusive+ and of the aims of the meeting
10.50		Focus group work using the developed questionnaire*
11.45		Conclusion of the meeting

*CESIE sent the questionnaire in December 2018.

NATIONAL REPORT

CESIE has also produced and shared with the partners the template to develop the National Reports.

Every partner will have to complete it in EN. The National Reports will be divided into three categories and should include the key information collected during the focus groups/interviews.

OVERALL REPORT

All partners will collect the research findings in the National Reports and send them to CESIE. CESIE will then develop the overall report, on the basis of the National Reports received.





IO1 ACTION PLAN

Activities	Partner	Deadline
Feedback on the Guidelines and questionnaires	ALLPARTNERS	21/12/2018
Final version of the Guidelines & Questionnaire	CESIE	07/01/2018
National reports from partners	ALL PARTNERS	15/02/2019
Overall Report	CESIE	01/03/2019
Feedback Overall report IO1/A1	ALL PARTNERS	08/03/2018

Please find attached to this document the following Annexes, to be used in order to implement and report the research:

Annex1_Inclusive+_IO1_Questionnaire → Questionnaires for the focus groups and interviews.

Annex2_Inclusive+_IO1_template_National_Report → template to report the results of the research at national level.

All partners are responsible for implementing the researches in their own countries according to the Research Guidelines. Therefore, CESIE developed this document in order to ensure that the Inclusive+ project runs as planned.





Annex 2 – Questionnaire

Questionnaire for focus group/interviews with professionals who work with low-skilled adults.

1. What are the types of jobs available for low-skilled adults at local level in your country?
2. In order to get these jobs, what are the skills your clients should have as a minimum? (Please focus on soft skills⁴)
3. In order to get these jobs, what are the job-specific competences (knowledge, abilities) they should have as a minimum? (Please focus on hard skills⁵)
4. Different skills are required for different jobs. In your opinion which are the key competences necessary for your clients? Why?
5. What are the difficulties you face when assessing your clients' competences?
6. Do they have difficulties in assessing their own behaviour, in social settings or the work place?
7. Are the clients able to assess their own motivation? (e.g., do they have a knowledge of life-long learning opportunities, self-learning etc. as a way to enhance their work integration and their employment situation? Do they know about the possibilities to get certifications?)
8. Could entrepreneurship skills have an impact on low-skilled adults' integration into the labour market? Can they self-assess these skills?
9. Could you identify the main digital competences low-skilled adults should be able to have in order to get a job (e.g. understanding how to use digital technologies, articulate information needs, to search, collect and process data, information and content in digital environments)?
10. According to you, are there any hobbies that can facilitate work integration better? Which ones particularly? Do you think you would be able to link your clients' hobbies to potential competences favoured or required by the practice of such activities? (E.g., teamwork demonstrated by sport played in teams).

⁴ In order to be sure to get answers in line with the questions, the facilitator shall remind the participants of the definition of soft skills.

⁵ In order to be sure to get answers in line with the questions, the facilitator shall remind the participants of the definition of hard skills.





Additional Questionnaire

N°	Competence	Relevant for low-skilled adults		Do you find it... to assess				
				Very difficult	Difficult	Neither difficult nor easy	Easy	Very easy
Communication in the mother tongue								
1.	Ability to communicate both orally and in writing	Yes	No					
2.	Disposition to critical and constructive dialogue	Yes	No					
3.	Interest in interaction with others and to establish interpersonal relationships	Yes	No					
Communication in foreign languages								
4.	Interest and curiosity in languages and intercultural communication	Yes	No					
Science and Technology								
5.	Numeracy and ability to use and handle technological tools, machines and scientific data to achieve a goal or reach an evidence-based decision/conclusion	Yes	No					
6.	Ability to apply knowledge and technology to human needs	Yes	No					
Digital competence								
7.	Knowledge of the main computer applications	Yes	No					
8.	Understanding of the opportunities and risks of the Internet and communication via electronic media	Yes	No					
9.	Understanding how ICT can support creativity and	Yes	No					





	innovation							
10.	Awareness of the legal and ethical principles for the use of ICT in the workplace	Yes	No					
11.	Ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way	Yes	No					
12.	Positive attitude towards available information	Yes	No					
Learning to learn								
13.	Understanding of ones' own preferred learning strategies	Yes	No					
14.	Perseverance	Yes	No					
15.	Autonomy	Yes	No					
16.	Self-discipline	Yes	No					
17.	Critical and creative thinking	Yes	No					
18.	Self-confidence	Yes	No					
19.	Flexibility and adaptation	Yes	No					
20.	Ability to follow the rules/instructions	Yes	No					
Social and civic competence								
21.	Understanding of the codes of conduct and manners generally accepted in different societies and environments (e.g. at work)	Yes	No					
22.	Awareness of basic concepts relating to individuals, groups, work organizations, gender equality, non-discrimination, society, culture	Yes	No					
23.	Ability to show tolerance	Yes	No					
24.	Ability to express and understand different points of view	Yes	No					





25.	Ability to negotiate and create confidence	Yes	No					
26.	Ability to feel empathy	Yes	No					
27.	Ability to cope with stress and frustration and to express them in a constructive way	Yes	No					
28.	Ability to value diversity and respect of others	Yes	No					
29.	Reliability	Yes	No					
Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship								
30.	Ability to work as an individual and collaboratively in team	Yes	No					
31.	Ability to judge and identify one's strengths and weaknesses	Yes	No					
32.	Ability to assess and take risks	Yes	No					
33.	Attitude of initiative, proactivity, independence and innovation	Yes	No					
34.	Ability to problem solve	Yes	No					
35.	Motivation and determination to meet objectives	Yes	No					

This questionnaire has been developed according to the “Key competences for Lifelong Learning, European Reference Framework” of the Education and Culture DG.

Reference:

Education and Culture DG, *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework*. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007.<<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/file/272/download>>





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