

Intellectual Output 2

Matrix of Learning Competencies for the Erasmus Employment Plus Project

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IO2: Matrix of Learning Competencies

1. Introduction

Why a learning matrix?

This learning competencies matrix (IO2) will help with identifying training needs of career counsellors working with low and unskilled clients. These training needs will be met in IO3 (*Training Modules and Materials for Action Learning Sets*) and IO4 (*Learning Facilitators Guide*) within this project accordingly and is based on the research findings of IO1 (*Methodological Concept*) which had the purpose to give an overview on country-specifics referring to career counsellors working specifically with low and unskilled clients. Within the EQF (European Qualifications Framework) it corresponds to Level 6, i.e. “Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles”.

The learning matrix is supposed to support the creation of IO3 and IO4 and therefore help the creators (i.e. project partners) of both intellectual outputs to stick to the essential learning objectives and cover all necessary competencies within the training modules and materials which to be designed for career counsellors working with low and unskilled clients.

A learning matrix for whom - description of the target group

A) The guidance setting

Based on IO1 research in the partner countries¹ that was carried out in January 2019 most career counsellors working with the target group of low and unskilled clients work in single settings (87%), however 63% worked with clients in groups and 57% also provided training.

B) Content of setting / kind of support

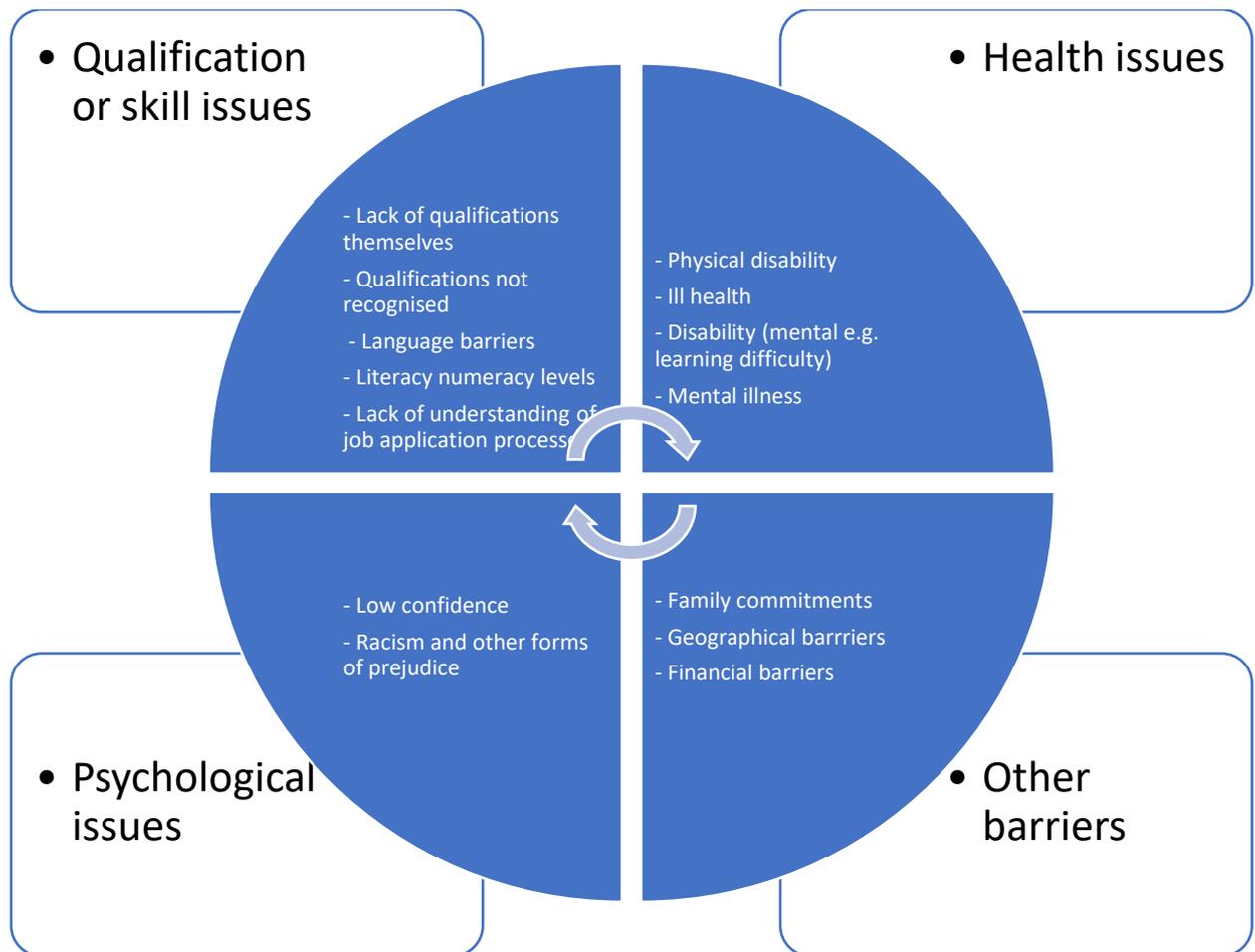
The biggest share of respondents provides guidance for interviews and job applications (82%), followed by supporting clients to develop life/personal skills (81%). Slightly fewer stated that they supported clients developing skills that are specifically “employability skills” (74%). Providing information about the labour market and new possible qualification/professions was an important part of job coaches’ roles, with 77% and 73% stating that they occupied this role.

C) The clients’ barriers

Being asked about the clients’ barriers the following answers were considered to be the most important ones, all achieving at least 50%:

¹ Online survey in Austria, Bulgaria, Poland, Portugal the UK with n=251

Graph 1: Clients' barriers



D) Desired training by career counsellors

Training setting

By far the most popular form of training was face to face training in a seminar (84%), 44% would like to have a paper-training pack. 37% thought an online webinar would be useful and 22% liked the idea of having a podcast. Within the qualitative interviews and focus group counsellors stated that training should take place within a working day.

Desired time for training

The time career counsellors would like to spend in training, varies from 2 hours a week (35%) to 4 hours a month (29%) or 1 hour a week (19%).

Desired training content

- highly practical information desired
- useful professional tools, such as questioning tools to better understand the complex needs of each client.
- conflict management in interviews
- personal stress management/relief
- methods/information on how to maintain a healthy work life balance

2. Theoretical and pedagogical framework

The learning competency matrix is based on Bloom's taxonomy² in order to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity. The cognitive domain list has traditionally been the primary focus in education and is frequently used to structure curriculum learning objectives, assessments and activities. However, Bloom's taxonomy consists of three different domains taking into account that learning goals generally should not only consist of cognitive but should also include emotion-based and action-based learning objectives.

- the cognitive domain (knowledge-based)
- the affective domain (emotion based)
- the psychomotor domain (action-based).

Based on these considerations the Matrix of Learning Competencies (IO2) for the Career Counsellors working with low and unskilled clients within the project Erasmus Employment Plus is comprised of four different thematic modules:

a) THEMATIC MODULE 1 – CLIENT'S ORIENTATION AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT: The competencies described in this module focus on the competencies needed by career counsellors in order to support clients in their orientation needs. The thematic module relates to the necessity that clients and guidance practitioners need some orientation- exploration and assessment of the situational context of the client- at the beginning of each guidance process. The orientation goes beyond just the working life but also covers family and private life issues if necessary and desired by the clients.

b) THEMATIC MODULE 2 – VOCATIONAL CHOICES: The second thematic module focuses on competencies needed by career counsellors in order to support clients taking vocational choices. It specifically concerns the vocational labour market and VET information, finding out about the clients' interests and competencies and matching them with possible jobs as well as VET offers for low and unskilled clients.

c) THEMATIC MODULE 3 – LEARNING MOTIVATION AND LEARNING STYLES: Motivating clients to participate in learning offers and get further qualifications necessary for sustainable jobs is crucial. It is important as people with limited skills and qualifications participate less in VET offers than higher skilled people being active in the labour market. As low and unskilled clients may be unaccustomed to learning it is essential that they get to know possible learning styles and learning techniques.

d) THEMATIC MODULE 4 – PRACTITIONER WELL-BEING AND BURNOUT PREVENTION: Module 4 focuses on competencies related to the health promotion of career counsellors only, specifically their psychological health. Counsellors display burnout symptoms far more frequently than other groups in the labour market which why addressing it is paramount.

² Bloom, B. S.; Engelhart, M. D.; Furst, E. J.; Hill, W. H.; Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain. New York: David McKay Company.

Each thematic module contains general learning objectives, which are anchored in three different competence areas:

Knowledge: Knowledge is a familiarity with, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning.

Knowledge refers to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit (as with practical skill or expertise) or explicit (as with the theoretical understanding of a subject).

Knowledge acquisition involves complex cognitive processes: perception, communication and reasoning. It is also said to be related to the capacity of acknowledgement in human beings.

Skills: A skill is the ability to carry out a task with predetermined results. Often this is constrained by a given amount of time, energy, or both. Skills can be divided into so-called hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills in guidance refer to labour market and VET information or how to retrieve relevant information online. Soft skills however, refer to communication skills, emotional intelligence, empathy towards the clients' needs and overall attitude.

Attitudes: An attitude is an individual's predisposed state of mind regarding a value. A person's attitudes are complex and acquired through experiences over time.

3. Matrix of learning objectives, knowledge skills and attitudes:

Thematic module 1: CLIENT’S ORIENTATION AND NEEDS ANALYSIS		
Learning objectives:		
<p><u>Guidance practitioners of low and unskilled clients shall learn how to</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage clients to reflect positively on their current personal and professional situation • positively explore past learning/training experiences with clients • support clients to set SMART goals according to their values and life context 		
Competencies:		
Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<p>Demonstrate knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the heterogeneity and differing learning/training needs of the adults with limited skills/qualifications. ▪ how to support clients in defining their future goals, taking the relationship between values and choices into careful consideration ▪ the existence / concept of internal resistance ▪ the importance of personal responsibility in vocational situations of change 	<p>Demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish strong rapport with clients, and encourage them to take part in guidance sessions ▪ find out what motivates clients to participate in learning/training, and discover their specific learning/training needs ▪ find out about clients’ goals and values, as well as support them in identifying current barriers and ways to overcome them ▪ support clients to take personal responsibility 	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ value of and respect for differences within the target group of those with limited skills and qualifications ▪ non-judgemental and encouraging stance ▪ openness and understanding ▪ optimism and confidence according the clients’ problem-solving capacity

Thematic module 2: VOCATIONAL CHOICES

Learning objectives:

Guidance practitioners of low and unskilled clients shall learn how to

- keep up to date with changes in the labour market related to low and unskilled clients
- support clients in enhancing their awareness on their existing skills and knowledge
- combine existing potential with desired working conditions to making vocational choices
- foster the decision-making process clients (choosing VET offers or professions)

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<p>Demonstrate knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ different professions, professional activities, working conditions as well as modes of vocational training ▪ the relationship between self-worth, motivation and the awareness of one's competencies ▪ importance of formally and informally acquired competencies ▪ importance of personal resources in difficult life situations ▪ importance of knowing the usefulness of VET for low skilled and those with limited qualifications ▪ relevance of financial needs to support a vocational choice 	<p>Demonstrate the ability to support clients in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reflecting upon clients' past vocational choices ▪ getting to know different vocational fields ▪ becoming aware of/assessing clients' competencies and how to actively apply them ▪ making informally acquired competencies visible ▪ getting feedback from family/friends on strengths / weaknesses ▪ activating their personal resources ▪ getting support from relevant personal resources like family, friends and other relevant environments ▪ finding out personal relevant criteria for vocational or educational choices ▪ getting to know "the inner team" (ambivalences and inner conflicts) to support decisions ▪ considering financial aspects when making a vocational or VET choice ▪ preparing for and reflecting on internships 	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding for people with problems in meeting decisions ▪ sensitivity for gender and diversity issues

Thematic module 3: LEARNING MOTIVATION AND LEARNING STYLES

Learning objectives:

Guidance practitioners of low and unskilled clients shall learn how to

- support clients in reflecting upon previous and personal negative experiences of learning
- support clients in using new skills & knowledge
- help clients increase their learning motivation
- support clients to reflect on personal journeys in education and training as a social process
- reflect on clients' preferred learning styles and providing learning techniques
- provide mentoring for clients during VET programmes to increase learning and work motivation and decrease the risk of dropping out

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<p>Demonstrate knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ relationship between structural discrimination, educational inequality and inequality of opportunity/progression ▪ learning motivation methods, learning types/styles and learning techniques ▪ relationship between school career and attitudes towards learning ▪ different ways of celebrating, recognising and reflecting on own achievement in order to increase motivation ▪ creative ways of getting access to VET/education ▪ how to be more proactive as a counsellor 	<p>Demonstrate the ability to support clients in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assessing and reflecting on learning style and motivation ▪ identifying and overcoming learning and working barriers ▪ generating a framework of barriers and motivations and a methodology to identify barriers and motivations ▪ reflecting upon the educational "heritage" of one's historical context e.g. family ▪ celebrating, recognising and reflecting on achievement ▪ explore attitudes towards education / VET and challenge negative attitudes ▪ applying different learning techniques 	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding of structural inequality and how it affects clients e.g. racism, discrimination against disabled people, sexism ▪ empathy towards people with negative attitudes towards education or VET ▪ empathy towards the life situations / personal biography of clients with low skills or limited qualifications

Thematic module 4: PRACTITIONER WELL-BEING AND BURNOUT PREVENTION

Learning objectives:

Guidance practitioners of low and unskilled clients shall learn how to

- reflect on their professional life and assess their work-life-balance
- exercise appropriate self-care and to set appropriate professional and personal boundaries
- understand and recognise the signs of stress and explore stress reduction techniques to assist with own wellbeing
- familiarize self with the concept of mindfulness and apply techniques in everyday life
- recognise when and where to seek additional support and advice

Competencies:

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
<p>Demonstrate knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ burnout assessments and characteristics that can affect wellbeing ▪ characteristics of a successful work-life-balance ▪ using interpersonal relationships to manage stress ▪ understanding attitudes and inner beliefs that hinder your ability to look after your wellbeing needs ▪ factors that drain energy and how to reduce or remove energy drainers ▪ recognise signs and symptoms of stress in work/personal life ▪ stress coping techniques ▪ the principle of mindfulness and how it can assist you in personal and professional life situations 	<p>Demonstrate the ability to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reflect on your professional boundaries and those you set with clients ▪ seek support /supervision in order to share or offload ▪ recognise physical symptoms of stress and overload and apply coping strategies and techniques to reduce the effects ▪ set and enforce appropriate personal boundaries and when to say “no” ▪ recognize own energy drains and how to reduce the drains ▪ enjoy and mindfully live life ▪ recognise limits and when to seek additional support from line/team manager 	<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a positive attitude towards self-care ▪ recognizing the necessity of recreation and good work life balance ▪ assertiveness skills in both professional and personal life, to set and maintain boundaries ▪ how to apply mindfulness techniques to assist with energy drains and clear decision making in stressful situations ▪ willingness to seek support when required