

A TOOLKIT FOR RECOGNISING INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCES

for students
in vocational
education and
training



An inquisitive all-rounder



A happy home body



A bold globetrotter



A skilful web surfer

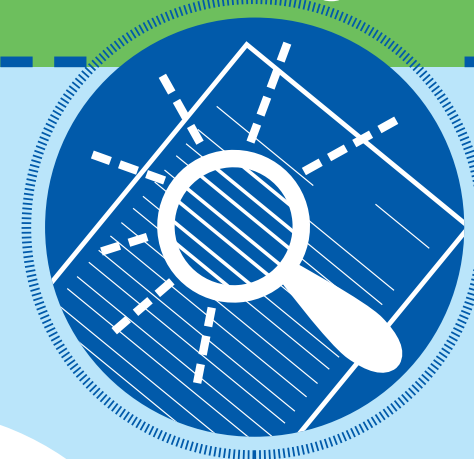
● Recognise your competences when job-seeking

Today's labour market requires curious, resilient and productive workers. People acquire competences in a variety of ways, sometimes even without realising it. Some of your competences can easily remain hidden from the employer when you apply for a job.

The following questions and examples will help you describe your competences, particularly from an international perspective. For example, what kind of competences have you acquired during an on-the-job training or a traineeship period abroad? A mere mention of your exchange abroad is not enough; the employer will want to know more about your competences.

The questions and examples are divided into different categories. They will give you ideas for different stages of the job-seeking process whether you are writing a job application or a CV or preparing yourself for a job interview.

Remember that you may have acquired international experiences in your home country and through the Internet, too!



FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT HIDDEN COMPETENCES

This material is based on a research project of CIMO (from 1.1.2017 EDUFI) and Demos Helsinki that studied the significance of international experiences in the society and the labour market. Results were published in English in the publication Faktaa - Facts and figures 1/2014: Hidden Competences.



● The ingredients of a good application:

Identify the key words that best describe your competences, skills and experiences.

Think carefully what kind of a message you want to convey to the employer.

Tell the employer about your international skills and hidden competences (curiosity, resilience, productivity) in different ways.

Allow your personality, enthusiasm and motivation to shine.

Describe your competences using concrete examples.

Tell about your previous work experience, what you did and your achievements. If you are able to describe your responsibilities and achievements, it is likely that you will also be able to succeed in your job in the future.

Be careful when using abbreviations.

Use active words, such as I led, I designed, I was responsible for, I developed, I was in charge of.

Make sure that your application and CV correspond to the job advertisement.



● General skills

What impact did your international experiences or your hobbies have on your competences? Give examples of your experiences.

What new perspectives or competences did you acquire abroad or during your hobbies? How can you benefit from them at work?

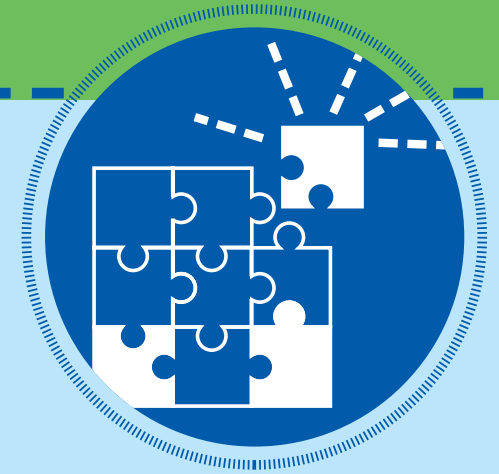
How have your international experiences or hobbies helped develop your hidden competences, such as curiosity, resilience and productivity?



"My on-the-job learning period in Sweden helped me improve my language skills, especially with regard to terminology in my field. At the same time, I discovered which area I wish to specialise in and learned new working methods."

"During my "Nordjobb" training period in Norway, I learned to manage in a foreign language in a new culture. I also got to know other Nordic colleagues and professionals in my field and I got valuable experience in care work."

"Practising athletics has made me more resilient and determinate. I continuously develop and challenge myself and I work purposefully to achieve my goals."



"Thanks to my study period abroad, I am now more confident, flexible and open to new challenges. The experience taught me initiative and the ability to make decisions independently."



● Communication and interpersonal skills

How have your international experiences, hobbies or your use of the social media helped develop your interpersonal skills? Give examples.

How have your international experiences or hobbies increased your interest in international media? Do you follow or read foreign newspapers, news or blogs? How could that benefit you in the job you are applying for?

How are you participating in social media or online communities? How has this helped you develop yourself and your competences?

“During my language course abroad, I worked in a multicultural group with students from Asia and Italy, among others. I learned to work well with people coming from different cultural backgrounds and to express myself clearly in English.”

“During my on-the-job learning period in Germany, I learned about the bold conversation culture, questioning and debating and learned to work resiliently towards goals.”

“I am used to keeping in touch with my friends abroad through, for example, Skype and Facebook. I have a good command of different forms of communication and their requirements. So, it is not difficult for me to work in an international team with members from all over the world.”



“I actively use different channels of communication in social media through which I obtain information about the latest trends in my field. I can use different social media effectively to contact customers and to communicate with them.”



● Team-working and leadership skills

What have you learned about working in a multicultural team or environment? For example, team-working skills, professional skills, efficiency, problem-solving, creativity and cultural practices?

Have you worked in international teams in your own country or, alternatively, online, for example, participating in online games or discussion groups? What kind of competences have you acquired?

How do you act in a multicultural team or international situations, for example, in your studies or hobbies? What impact have different roles had on your competences? What did you succeed in?

"Studying and especially working abroad have increased my self-knowledge, confidence and curiosity. During my on-the-job training period in Madrid, I made useful contacts and learned networking skills."

"I have played ice-hockey for a long time. Playing in a team has developed my team-working skills in particular. Our team is international and we usually communicate in a foreign language."

"In my hobbies as a scout and playing basketball, I have learned to lead a team, to share responsibilities, to establish good team dynamics and to act as a responsible team leader."



"In my theatre hobby, I have learned team-working skills, to express myself and to adapt to different roles. This will also help in jobs that require adaptability."



● Special skills in your field

How have your international experiences or your hobbies helped you establish networks with businesses and people? What kind of networks do you have?

Do you have hobbies and interests outside your studies (e.g. online games, writing a blog, leading scouts, being a captain of a sports team, following and sharing international news in social media)? What kinds of knowledge and skills have you acquired in this way?

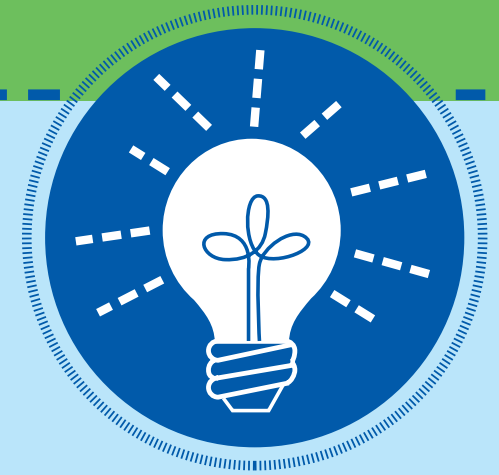
What specialist skills have you acquired in your own field during your international experiences or your hobbies? How can you benefit from them in the job you are applying for?

How do you follow global affairs, trends or future challenges through your hobbies, work or studies? Which or what kind? How can you benefit from your knowledge in your job?

"During my on-the-job learning period, I managed to expand my professional network in my host country and I also made contacts with local students and other trainees. These social skills will be useful at home, too."

"As an active member of my student association, I have good contacts with students in my field. As the financial officer of the board I learned not only about accounting but also about taking responsibility, networking, time management and prioritising."

"During my long career in playing volley ball, I have found sponsors and, at the same time, accumulated contacts in a number of businesses and organisations. I am used to raising funds for my team and know how to fill in funding applications and plan future projects to guarantee continuity of funding."



"During my traineeship in a French restaurant, I learned to prepare new dishes from local ingredients and to know local wines. I also became familiar with new techniques and tools and learned French terminology in my field. I learned about French cooking culture, employment legislation and safety and security issues. I will be able to apply these skills in my job back home."



● ICT skills

What kinds of ICT skills did you use, for example, during your training period and in your hobbies? Did you learn new good practices?

Which ICT programmes do you use daily? How could your knowledge of them benefit your future employer? Do you have hidden competences?



"I have excellent ICT skills. During my on-the-job learning period, I have used, in addition to the Office programmes, desktop publishing and photo editing programmes and systems required to produce a magazine."

"When I search for information, I also use foreign online sources. New operating models often take time to arrive in my home country, so I keep abreast with developments by following international discussions in my field through a variety of international media."



"During my on-the-job learning period, I kept a blog about my experiences and about adapting in a different culture. I also actively use other social media applications, such as Twitter and Instagram, so I can also use them in marketing."

