

# A TOOLKIT FOR RECOGNISING INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCES

for  
students  
in higher  
education



A bold globetrotter



A happy home body



A skilful web surfer



An inquisitive all-rounder

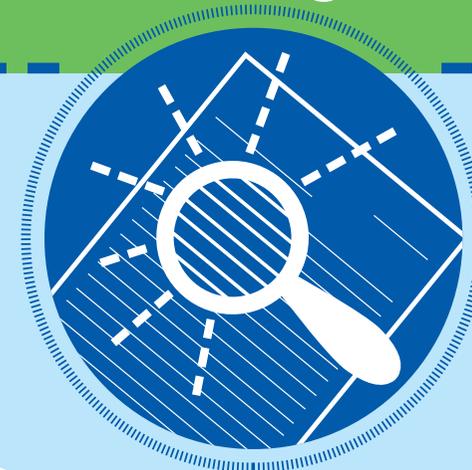
# ● Recognise your competences when job-seeking

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 international exchange period or a traineeship? 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 Fakta - 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.

Use abbreviations only when you are sure they are familiar to the reader, and remember to pay attention to grammar and spelling.

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?**

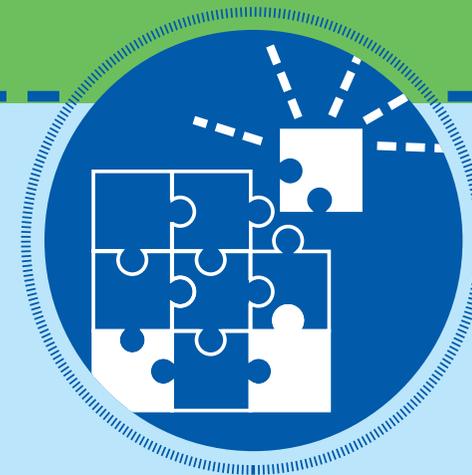
**How have your international experiences or hobbies helped develop your hidden competences, such as curiosity, resilience and productivity?**



“During my six-month traineeship in UNESCO in France I learned to adapt to the local working culture. I managed to establish many contacts and networks among my local colleagues; I’m still in touch with them. This is beneficial to my work at home because it helps me keep abreast with international trends in my field.”

“Volunteering in Kenya widened my world view and made me more interested in the issues of sustainable development. I have continued to learn about the issues during my leisure time, participating in the work of NGOs and following the preparation of the Post-2015 development agenda. I have also been able to put forward my in-depth views and knowledge about the issues in meetings.”

“A traineeship in Germany taught me about the importance of punctuality, efficiency and time management at work. I was often complemented for submitting my reports on time.”



# ● 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 the mega trends in your field in foreign newspapers, news or blogs? How can the skills and knowledge you acquire in this way help you in the job you are applying for?**

**How do you think the use of social media can help you in your field? How have your competences developed through the use of social media?**

“I studied in St. Petersburg and did a traineeship in Murmansk. My spoken and written Russian is excellent. I also know the intricacies of social customs in Russia, which helps me deal with social situations. I also used English daily editing newsletters, which helps me act as an interpreter in any kind of situation.”

“During my exchange period abroad, I worked in a multicultural environment with colleagues from Asia and Australia, among others. I learned to work well with people coming from different cultural backgrounds and to express myself clearly in English. I also learned how to argue my point constructively in a debating course provided by my employer. This is very useful in my field in which it is important to get along well with people who disagree with you, too.”



“My studies require knowledge and deep understanding of the world economy. For this reason, I actively follow international media and am well abreast with world events. I also participate in topical discussions on this subject online which has helped develop my debating skills considerably.”



# ● Team-working and leadership

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

**What kind of a team-player are you? Describe a situation involving team-work or leadership in which you succeeded particularly well.**

**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?**

"Studying and especially working abroad have increased my self-knowledge, confidence and curiosity towards new things. During my traineeship in the Finnish consulate in New York I made useful contacts and learned networking skills, which help me acquire new roles easily."

"As a project coordinator for a student association I have participated in planning and implementation of a variety of projects. The most recent one dealt with increasing knowledge of human rights among young people. During the project, I succeeded in motivating a group of volunteers to commit to achieving a common goal. This made our project a success."

"I participate actively in an international discussion group within my field on LinkedIn. Discussing topical issues with people from different countries has developed my conversation skills about challenging and abstract topics. I have also succeeded in directing discussions to become more constructive and balanced, taking different views into consideration."



# ● Specialist skills in your field

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

**Do you have hobbies and interests relating to your field outside your work/studies (e.g. writing a blog, involvement in NGOs, following and communicating about global affairs in social media)?**

**What kinds of knowledge and skills have you acquired this way?**

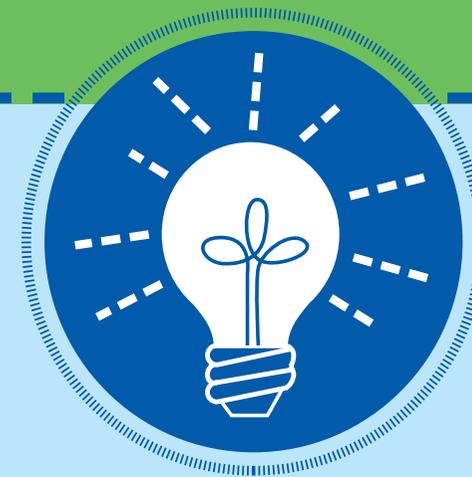
**How do you follow global affairs, trends or future challenges relating to your field through your hobbies, work or studies?**

**Which or what kind? How can you benefit from your knowledge in your job?**

"During my traineeship in Rome, I learned about international politics and EU channels of influence. I have also studied history so I am able to place political issues in their historical context."

"During my long career in playing volleyball, I have found sponsors and, at the same time, accumulated contacts in a number of businesses and organisations. Thanks to them, I believe that I can also negotiate funding for different projects and benefit from the cooperation of these businesses and organisations in my work. These skills are required to be able to succeed as a coordinator."

"As an active member of my student organisation, 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, time management and prioritising under pressure."



# ● ICT skills

**What kinds of ICT skills did you use, for example, during your traineeship in an international organisation? 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?**



"During my traineeship in Sweden, I was responsible for the online communications in our office. I communicated the most important news of our team on Intranet, Twitter and Facebook both in English and Swedish. I succeeded in combining the informal way of expression used in social media and the clarity and professionalism required by my employer in my communications. For this reason, my updates were a success among many different user groups and gave us positive publicity."

"During my traineeship in an embassy, in addition to the Office programmes, I used desktop publishing and photo editing programmes required by magazine editing. Consequently, I have good ICT skills and can work with different products with ease. I spend time on perfecting visual looks, which make my products clear and meet even international criteria for online communications."

