

A TOOLKIT FOR RECOGNISING INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCES

for students
in upper
secondary
education



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 on a language course or during a student exchange year? 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?

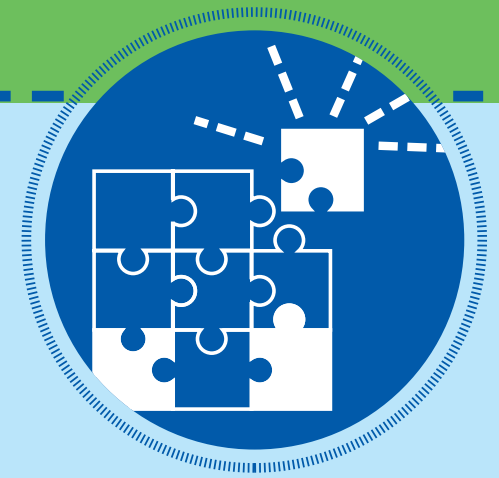
How have your international experiences or hobbies helped develop your hidden competences, such as curiosity, resilience and productivity?



“During my student exchange year, I complemented my studies with courses that were not available in my home school. Studying in English improved my language skills. I also became more open and confident during my exchange. This will help me face challenging situations in the future.”

“I have participated in planning and organisation of events of my student association. The participation has taught me organisational skills, resilience and planning. I have independently organised successful events for wide audiences.”

“Practising synchronised skating has developed my resilience and determination. I am developing and challenging myself continuously and I work purposefully to achieve my goals.”



● 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 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?

“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.”

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



“I follow several international newspapers and blogs online and am consequently well abreast with what is going on in the world. I can use this information effectively and am also able to talk about difficult topics with clarity.”



● Team-working and leadership

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?

"I have played football for a long time, which has developed my team-working skills in particular and my ability to listen to other people's opinions. Consequently, I am able to lead a team towards a common goal effectively and determinately. Our team is international and we usually communicate in English. I can work in a team in a foreign language and take different backgrounds into consideration."

"I have developed my leadership skills by playing complex virtual online games. I have successfully led a team with players from all over the world. I was able to share responsibilities fairly which had a positive impact on the team spirit. This hobby of mine has also helped me develop my language and IT skills considerably."



● Specialist 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 school (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?

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 long career in playing baseball, I have found sponsors and, at the same time, accumulated contacts in a number of businesses and organisations. I can negotiate effectively even in challenging situations and use information from my contacts to help me in decision-making."

"I follow several English and American vloggers on YouTube. I have learned useful vocabulary from the vlogs even for work situations and expressions that you won't learn from school books. At the same time, my knowledge about international trends has increased."



"During my leisure time, I look for information from a variety of media, helping me resolve problems using the latest and international information. Thanks to this, I can search for information effectively."



● ICT skills

What kinds of ICT skills did you use, for example, in your summer job and 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?



"In my hobbies, I use desktop publishing and photo editing programmes and systems required to produce a magazine. I have good ICT skills and I am able to use and combine different programmes effectively."

"When I look for information for course work, I use foreign online information sources, too. To this end, I use a variety of programmes. Judging the quality of sources has helped me develop my language skills and critical thinking."

"During my school exchange year, I kept a blog about my experiences and about adapting in a different culture. For this purpose, I learned to use, for example, a photo editing programme and a blog platform. I also actively use other social media applications, such as Twitter and Instagram. I can use ICT effectively and am also able to use these skills in my job."

