

# C E R T I F Y ✓

## Crisis and Employment: Tools and Methodologies For Your Future

### Information Survey



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## INTRODUCTION

This survey has been organised within the **CERTIFY** project to map the state of art of the recruiting system in the cultural and creative sectors in six partner countries, including Italy, UK, Greece, Austria, Lithuania and Belgium, and to compare the competences acquired **during** personal and educational development, through the completion of the formal education systems, with those required by the cultural and creative labour market in each country.

The results will lead to the development of a range of tools and training programmes designed to support the recognition of transversal and key competences, considering how to use them better in the job-seeking process.

**Transversal**<sup>1</sup> and **Key Competences**<sup>2</sup> include knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by everybody for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship.

## THE LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review on project related topics was carried out in the six partner countries.

From an analysis of terminology, it is evident that the term “cultural” and “creative” are linked within countries. The former refers to cultural heritage and traditional forms of creation, like “Architecture” (Belgium - Flanders, Austria and UK), “crafts” (UK) and “heritage” for “museums”, “galleries”, and “libraries” (Belgium - Flanders, Italy and Greece), whereas in Lithuania it is broader and includes fields such as “museums”, “cultural centres” the “cinema” and theatre.

The term “creative”, on the other hand, refers mainly to applied arts’ practices, like “advertising” and “communication” (Greece, UK, Belgium - Flanders, Austria), “broadcasting” (Austria, UK), “marketing: (Greece), “design” (Belgium-Flanders, Austria, UK), “engineering” (Greece), “fashion” (Belgium - Flanders, UK), “journalism” (Greece), “gaming” (Belgium - Flanders, Austria), “printed” and “digital media” (All partners).

Up to date statistical information has been collected from the six countries either from national statistical sources or from international publications. Moreover, the partners have made substantial use of existing country-specific reports. These published reports include the Flemish *iPro Research*, the Austrian *ArtS – Skills for the Creative Economy*, the Italian *Unioncamere* report and *Italia Creativa*, as well as the *Panteion University Report* for Greece. More recent original reports include the British *Best Practice Recruitment Guide for Creative Leaders* that was published in the UK as recently as in 2020.

## Quantitative data

From a quantitative point of view, all partners highlight the effects of the creative and cultural sector on their economy, employment and national growth. In Belgium - Flanders, for example, the cultural

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1 Transversal competences are those not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings.

Definition of ‘transversal competencies’ has six domains: 1) critical and innovative thinking, 2) interpersonal skills, 3) intrapersonal skills, 4) global citizenship, 5) media and Information literacy, and 6) others. The domain ‘others’ was created as a way for researchers to include competencies, such as physical health or religious values, that may not fall into one of the other (ref. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244022>).

See also [https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Transversal\\_knowledge\\_44\\_skills\\_and\\_competences](https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Transversal_knowledge_44_skills_and_competences).

Here we refer, as well, to ESCO, that applies the same definition of “competence” as the European Qualification Framework (EQF). According to this “competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.” They are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

While sometimes used as synonyms, the terms skill and competence can be distinguished according to their scope. The term skill refers typically to the use of methods or instruments in a particular setting and in relation to defined tasks. The term competence is broader and refers typically to the ability of a person - facing new situations and unforeseen challenges - to use and apply knowledge and skills in an independent and self-directed way; ref. <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Competence>

2 According to EU educational policies; see information here or here or download the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning here.

and creative sectors represent 6,3% of the active population. In Austria, more than one in ten companies belong to the creative and cultural sector, with a turnover of 22 billion euros. In Lithuania, 24 % of the country's workforce is employed in the cultural and creative sector. In the UK, creative industries amount to 6% of all workplaces. In Greece, the share of the total employment in the creative and cultural sector is 3,3% of the total workforce.

A large percentage of the workforce in the cultural and creative sectors in the partner countries are self-employed or work for SME's. In Austria, for example, 60% of companies in the creative industries are one-person companies. In the UK, self-employment represents the most common employment type in the cultural and creative sectors, with 47% considering themselves to be self-employed. In Greece, the self-employed account for more than 30% of the total workforce in the cultural and creative sector.

### *Some characteristic remarks*

There were some country-specific traits that were highlighted in the partners' research. In the Greek report, for example, it is stated that collective agreements by one or more trade unions in the cultural and creative sectors and employers' association declined during the financial crisis of 2010. The British report discusses a number of appropriate schemes and policies, like "the Creative Careers Programme", the "CFE Skills Needs Assessment" report, and the "Best Practice Recruitment Guide for Creative Leaders", all of which informed policymakers, identified key competences in the cultural and creative sectors, ensured the employment of individuals and inspired young people in their careers. The Belgian - Flemish report lists a large number of private and public-private partnership groups for music, fashion, design, architecture, printed and digital media, visual arts, and performing arts. In the Italian report, the country's crony capitalism in the political and economic life of this country is harshly criticized. and the large impact that neoliberalism has had on the creative and cultural sectors is discussed.

### *Competences & competence gaps*

In terms of gaps in competencies, which essentially is the focus of the whole *CERTIFY* project, all partners remark on the fact that the majority of those who work in the cultural and creative sector has a university degree. There is however a consensus that in all countries investigated in the project there is a gap between the competences acquired during formal education – even at university level – and the needs of the labour market. As the Italian report puts it, a gap "... between the acquired education and the actual requirements for the job". A common pattern that emerged in all countries, is that most employees in the cultural and creative sector receive training upon employment. However, as the vast majority of the workers work in SME's or are self-employed, such training is not available to them. Therefore a need was expressed for easily accessible specialised training programmes in higher education institutions.

According to the research, core competences in the cultural and creative sectors include knowledge on legal issues, knowledge on regulation and intellectual property rights, accountancy skills, business administration and project management skills, digital capacity and social media skills, marketing skills, communications and leadership skills, problem-solving skills, fundraising skills, team working skills, problem-solving skills, flexibility, as well as skills in analyzing and synthesizing information. Also, a number of personality skills (traits), like determination, readiness and devotion were mentioned.

A common pattern that emerged is that the gaps mostly emerge in competences that are related to the practical functioning of enterprises in the sector that have to do with digital competences and entrepreneurial skills. As put in the Italian context, the most important gap in the cultural and creative sectors is "the incapacity to think of the cultural and creative sectors also as businesses and not solely as a purely intellectual activity".

## THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire was made available on the project website [www.certifyproject.eu](http://www.certifyproject.eu), in 5 languages (English, German, Italian, Greek, Lithuanian), out of the 6 official ones of the project from mid-February to end of May 2020.

The number of respondents from partners' countries was **303** in total<sup>3</sup>. Not all questions were answered and some questions allowed for more than one answer.

Most of the respondents are young adults or adults, with only a small number being over 65, two-thirds are women; 68,1% are employed, while the remainder is divided among unemployed, job-seekers and those in other situations. Among the employed, most have a long-term and full-time contract, although it's interesting to see that 23,5% have other types of contracts.

Almost half of the respondents have a private sector contract, one third a public sector one; the remaining, 23% opted for 10% - not for profit and 13% - other, which matches the "other types of contract" response to the previous question. This points to a reasonable assumption that in the analysed sample the typical employee contracts belong to the typical public and private sectors, while the not for profit or other sectors use what might be called atypical<sup>4</sup> employment contracts.

Most of the respondents work in Museums, Archives and Libraries; with more than half of them indicating "other" sectors, indicating a more in-depth analysis would have provided better information. The level of experience in the sample can be described as being high as measured by the number of years worked in the relevant job sector.

Although word of mouth was considered the best way to find a job in the respondent's chosen sector, most found their job in ways other than vacancy databases or word of mouth.

Most of the respondents have a high level of education and more than 80% of them have attended university or post-university education courses.

Of the respondents, only 14,3% can communicate in their native language only, the rest of the sample can express him/herself in another language (41,7%) or in more than one other language (44%).

At the time of their participation in the survey, those responding were mostly employees for a company or organisation that employs people within the creative and cultural sector (44,3%), 21,6% were currently or had recently sought employment; a significant share (20,3%) indicated the option "other" that leads us to think that more detail in the options offered could have provided better information.

Most of the respondents (69%) considered non-formal and informal education a very important learning environment to gain useful knowledge, skills and attitudes to be used in the process of finding a job or hiring a person. Nevertheless, 10,4% considered it not so important and 20,5% were neutral; these results led the research team to a conclusion that the distinction between informal and non-formal education and their relevance at the European level is not very well understood.

Asking the respondents whether during their personal and educational development they had acquired the different transversal competences, most of them replied positively regarding all of the suggested ones<sup>5</sup>, with less than 12% stating that no competences have been acquired and about 6% indicating a situation in between.

More than half of the sample answered the question about where and how **other competences were acquired** during their personal and educational development.

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<sup>3</sup> In detail: 55 in Belgium, 65 in Greece, 33 in Italy, 55 in Lithuania, 35 in Austria and 58 in UK

<sup>4</sup> Atypical contracts are generally defined as employment contracts that do not conform to a standard, open-ended and full-time contract. This can encompass many types of contract, including part-time, fixed-term, temporary, casual and seasonal (ref <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/atypical-contracts>).

<sup>5</sup> We focused mainly on Critical and Innovative Thinking, Inter-Personal, Citizenship and Media and Information Competences.

Most of their answers refer to elements or aspects of the competences already referred to in previous questions without making the connection to these competences which indicates that there is not a very deep understanding of the actual nature of the targeted transversal competences amongst respondents. In some cases, the answer indicates that the respondent doesn't have a very clear idea of what constitutes a formal vs an informal learning environment, so the question has been misunderstood.

Apart from the specific transversal competences related to the four domains that were investigated, the other answers refer mainly to technical skills related to the specific work or ideal work and the group of inter-personal competences, focusing mainly on discipline, self-management, reflection, sensitiveness, patience, persistence, flexibility, trust in the other, resilience.

Another important group of competences highlighted in the answers, linked more to the work environment, contains leadership, resistance to stress, foresight, responsiveness, problem-solving. Few respondents indicated how these other competences and skills have been acquired. Those that did indicated that they acquired them online, informally in daily life, through work experience or through specific activities like sports.

Focusing on the respondents' direct experience, we asked them to state the importance of transversal competences in the part of the cultural and creative sector to which they refer themselves. More than 88% agree on the fact that they are important, while only 2,3% disagree about this and 9,4% remains neutral.

A first comparison of the answers highlights interesting elements relating to the gap between the respondents' acquisition of transversal competences during their personal development, and the extent to which the cultural and creative sectors require such competences.

In particular, **Critical and Innovative Thinking**, **Interpersonal** and **Media and Information** competences are acquired to an extent less than the cultural and creative sectors consider them important, while **Citizenship** competences are acquired to an extent more than the sectors consider them important.

Respondents were also asked to list **other competences they perceive to be important for their job**, apart from any technical skills or knowledge desirable for the work done or expected to be done.

A number of question were misunderstood, that confirms the need for a more in-depth explanation of the different concepts (competence, skill, knowledge). However, what clearly emerges from the list of the competences perceived as most important for the job are **creativity, communication, flexibility, media and information literacy, critical thinking** and **empathy**, which could be an interesting development driver for the CERTIFY Project.

Informal education was considered important for the raising of transversal competences in almost all the participating countries.

The national detail shows whether for each transversal skill there is a gap between the requirement of the sector according to the respondent and what the respondents acquired. The table below shows an overview of the results, marking in red (■) the skills for which the respondents think an improvement is required:

Country/skill	Critical and Innovative thinking	Interpersonal Skills	Citizenship Skills	Media and Information Skills
Belgium	■	■	■	■
Greece	■	■	■	■
Italy	■	■	■	■
Lithuania	■	■	■	■
Austria	■	■	■	■
UK	■	■	■	■

## THE INTERVIEW

52 interviews were carried out by the partners among recruiters, job seekers and workers in the targeted sectors, of which xxx were via video or telephone.

Within the creative and cultural sectors, we use the term **recruiter** to refer to anyone responsible for employing people, to **jobseeker** for anyone who has been seeking employment recently and to **worker** for anyone who is an employee for a company or organisation that employs people in the cultural and creative sectors, both for themselves and for other companies.

The job status of respondents was 48% recruiters, 23% job seekers and 29% workers; their distribution among the sectors of interest or in which respondents are working is the following: Graphic Design 1,9%, Photography 5,9%, Theatre and Dance 13,7%, Museums, Archives and Libraries 27,5%, Broadcasting, TV and radio 21,6%, Film Industry 3,9%, other 25,5%.

From the answers, it became clear that what constitutes transversal competences is not always fully understood, at least until a definition is given. Quite often, there was a moment in the interview when the interviewees realised that they have always known what transversal competences are because somehow they have some of them.

The number of those who are able to define transversal competences is higher among the recruiters and the definition varies from a general idea about skills other than the technical ones to an exact definition.

One general result that we identified, is the **need to better clarify** what transversal competences are, the details of their different domains and the different ways in which people refer to them.

On a practical level, it means that we need to work generally towards improving **awareness** of transversal competences, in order to make them part of our daily behaviour, followed by a second step that should provide tools by which they can be graded, so as to help employees and job-seekers alike choose how to refine those most needed in the specific job market or framework.

Once the concept of transversal competences was clarified, all those interviewed agree as to their importance in everyday life as well as in the work environment; talking about the assessment of these competences, there is again a variety of answers, both on the presence or possibility of the assessment itself and on the tools to be used for the assessment. In general, only in a few cases did interviewees refer to a clear competence assessment, in even less cases were they able to refer to a specific tool for assessment, while most of those interviewed, in all countries, agreed that it could be useful to better evaluate/assess the candidate in terms of their transversal competences.

Looking at the answers, the perception again is that, once transversal competences are “discovered”, both for recruiters and jobseekers, the need for their assessment arises, the first to better chose, the latter to better introduce themselves during the selection process. What also emerged was the discomfort of not being, or only partially being, aware of this fact before the interview.

Focusing on the cultural and creative sectors, the interviewees seem to be aware of the specificities of the labour market. They do understand, however, that even though it is so important, that it may not be easy to assess transversal competences during the job application process; they think that one way to demonstrate them could be by referring to them in the application and motivation letter or the portfolio, which is very important in the Creative Sector, highlighting experiences that could give the recruiter a more comprehensive picture of the candidate.

For **CERTIFY** project purposes, it’s useful to analyse the list of competences towards which there is a need for improvement, having seen that very often interviewees referred to general skills, abilities or attitudes, instead of specific transversal competences, due to their difficulty in fully understanding those under discussion.

From both recruiters and jobseekers, comes the wish to better develop the following:

- within critical and innovative thinking: **creativity**, initiative, networking, organisation skills, stress and time management, as part of **entrepreneurship**;
- within interpersonal competences: **communication, teamwork, empathy**;
- other: flexibility and adaptability.

The next steps of the **CERTIFY** project will focus on tools, methodologies and training programmes to be tested amongst job seekers within the cultural and creative sector, considering how to better use them in the job-seeking process in order to improve their opportunities in the labour market.