European Training Strategy 1

A set of competences for trainers working at international level

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European Training Strategy
Development of a set of competences for trainers working at international level

This set of competences for trainers working at international level aims to provide individual trainers, teams of trainers and training providers such as organisations and institutions with a model that helps

- to develop assessment tools (self- and external assessment) for individual trainers,
- to design tools for trainer teams that assist them in developing their individual and team competences, and
- to develop training strategies and related tools.

This document has been designed against the backdrop of major political developments at the European level, including the Agenda 2020 of the Council of Europe (2008) and its current work on the Strasbourg process, the EU Youth Strategy (2009), the Resolution of the Council of the European Union on youth work (2010), and the European Youth in Action programme.

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Part 1   Introduction

1.1   Background information

The development of a set of competences for trainers **working at international level** in the youth field has been on the agenda of the European institutions, non-formal learning providers, and (Erasmus+) Youth in Action programme providers for a number of years. Moreover, even though there is a general consensus that educators, trainers and practitioners working in the international youth field already deliver high-quality educational programmes and projects, a

need has been recognised that efforts must be undertaken to develop higher-quality training programmes and promote the requisite competences. Therefore, no matter where and in which specific field, there is a need for a set of competences that trainers require in order to implement European and international educational projects. To describe such competences in a standardised way, to identify trainers' competences and to support their implementation with tools such as quality indicators, self-assessment instruments, etc. will lead to stronger recognition of the contributions of youth work to society, develop capacity-building strategies, and strengthen resource availability and support mechanisms for training.

This set of competences for trainers in international youth work was drawn up as part of the European Training Strategy (ETS) for the Youth in Action programme. The ETS contributes to the development of high-quality support systems for youth activities and the capacities of civil society organisations in the youth field. For more information, go to https://www.salto-youth.net/trainercompetences

1.2   Objectives and target group

This set of competences also serves to work towards a competence framework for trainers that can function as a common framework reference when developing training courses for trainers who wish to undergo advanced professional development. In addition, it has been designed as a tool for enhancing quality training, in line with Yael Ohana and Hendrik Otten, who state that "those who are providing training to other deliverers of non-formal education are [also] those likely to be most interested in [a] competence profile."[1]

Hence, the objective is to develop a set of competences for trainers working within the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme and beyond, meaning the broader framework of training in international youth work and non-formal learning. In light of the above, raising the quality of training activities also requires focusing on those who provide training in the youth field - that is, trainers, and on those in charge of organising non-formal education[2] training activities – that is, institutions and organisations.

1.3   Note on the set of competences

This set of competences is to be seen as a flexible framework that can be adjusted to various training situations, strategies and contexts for further discussion and implementation.

In other words, it is not meant to be a 'must-have' list of competences that all trainers working in the European youth work field should possess to the same degree, but rather a possible

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[1] Hendrik Otten and Yael Ohana for SALTO T&C RC (2009): 'The eight key competencies for lifelong learning: An appropriate framework within which to develop the competence of trainers on the field of European youth work or just plain politics?', p. 5.

[2] The process of defining non-formal learning/education in the youth field is ongoing.

series of training-related competences, optional support mechanisms, and elements for trainers to consider while developing training courses and training modules, or while undergoing further professional training.

Neither should it be seen as a closed process, but rather as a dynamic and living document that keeps on evolving, partly through an online wiki, partly through future consultations.

Part 2   Set of competences for trainers, plus description

The term 'competences' refers to a system of values, attitudes and beliefs, and skills and knowledge that can be applied in practice to manage various complex situations and tasks successfully. Confidence, motivation and well-being are important prerequisites for someone wishing to apply developed competences.[3]

Understanding and facilitating individual and group learning processes
means:

- Selecting and adapting or creating appropriate methods
- Creating a safe, inspiring learning environment
- Supporting learners in identifying and meeting their learning needs and overcoming any barriers
- Understanding and facilitating group dynamics in a way that is conducive to different ways of learning
- Stimulating active participation and motivating and empowering learners
- Promoting creativity, problem-solving and 'out-of-the-box' thinking
- Effectively managing one's own emotions in training situations; respecting ethical boundaries vis-à-vis learners

Learning to learn
means:

- Assessing one's own learning achievements and competences
- Identifying learning objectives and pursuing them pro-actively
- Undergoing personal and professional development through feedback
- Acknowledging and dealing with unexpected learning moments and outcomes
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources to support individual learning

Designing educational programmes
means:

- Developing an educational approach based on the principles and values of non-formal learning
- Transferring knowledge or values related to the activity to learners
- Integrating learners' socio-political backgrounds into the educational programme
- Where relevant, integrating ICT,[4] e-learning and other tools and methods into the educational activity

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[3] SALTO T&C RC, Training of trainers: Self-Perception Inventory, http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/tc-rc-nanetworktcs/tot/tot-backgound-docs/

[4] ICT = Information and communication technologies

- Designing an evaluation process and impact assessment
- Choosing and designing appropriate methods for collecting, interpreting and disseminating information (data, resources, findings, etc.)

Cooperating successfully in teams

means:

- Contributing actively to team tasks
- Being willing to take on responsibility
- Encouraging and involving other team members
- Learning with and from others
- Being aware of team processes and how they affect the team's effectiveness
- Managing disagreements constructively

Communicating meaningfully with others

means:

- An ability to listen actively
- An ability to be empathetic
- An ability to clearly express thoughts and emotions
- An awareness of identity-related issues
- Being diversity-aware

Intercultural competence

means:

- Reflecting acceptance of ambiguity and change
- Maintaining awareness of one's own identity
- Showing a willingness and ability to look at identity, culture and related aspects and dimensions from different perspectives
- Critically reflecting and distance oneself from one's own perceptions, biases, and stereotypical constructions of reality
- Reflecting and using diverse ways and methods to increase self-awareness
- Being able to apply human rights principles[5]

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[5] Although this aspect' (attitude, skills, knowledge and values) isn't referenced explicitly in other competence lists and profiles, it is part of the definition of 'intercultural competence' as used by SALTO CD RC ('promotion and protection of human rights'). Beyond the Youth in Action programme and other training contexts, human rights form part of the so-called 'IC Competence and Intercultural Dialogue' and are seen as a necessary component of many training courses for trainers, notably those of the Council of Europe and the EU-CoE youth partnership.

Part 3   Recommendations

3.1 Adaptation to specific training contexts

Analysing the competences proposed in the reference documents is complex since they are all part of a rather specific approach. They form part of a competence development framework that varies greatly depending on the target group, the youth workers, and the young people at whom the training is addressed – and once again, the context. Besides supporting the development of training modules, then, this proposed set of competences should be seen by trainers as an opportunity to develop their competences further.

The latter certainly involves risk-taking and facing up to personal challenges. It can also open the doors to peer support and peer review, to (self-)assessment, to a 'trying-out' process, and to working on one's personal and professional development. There is no such thing as a 'perfect trainer', and this document does not aim to create one. This set of competences must be adapted to the context in which it is used!

3.2   Ensuring a quality approach and the development of quality support measures

For a few years now, quality has been gaining traction as an aspect of training and non-formal learning. The aim is to define a potential common approach towards demonstrating the quality, seriousness and impact of youth work and non-formal education activities by illustrating the dimensions, aspects, criteria and indicators of training activities – an exercise that enables peer review as well as perhaps an external assessment.

With regard to measuring quality in training, moreover, it appears important to expand our understanding of quality and develop a holistic and systemic approach to it. Only too often is the concept of 'quality' applied only to the goals of the educational activity, to the competences of the trainers and participant-trainers and to other general elements. While these are indeed extremely important and relevant aspects that needs to be reflected when considering educational and training activities, it is equally important to remember that quality intrinsically encompasses the following dimensions[6]:

1. Ethos: Coherence
2. Fidelity to objectives
3. Change: Transformation
4. Innovation

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[6]   L. Harvey and Green D. (1993): 'Beyond Total Quality Management', 'Approaches to Quality Assessment'.

According to Harvey and Green (1993), when applying these dimensions to training in the youth field there is a tendency to refer to quality as a process of transformation or qualitative change. Transformation (and in turn, learning) goes beyond the very basic elements of training to encompass active involvement. Involved is not only the learner, but also all those involved directly or indirectly in the process, who hence influence on the potential for change. Various aspects of quality need to be considered in an apparently singular process (the learning process, in our case). According to Elton (1992) […] unlike many other services where the provider is doing something for the consumer, in education […] the provider is doing something for the consumer. This process of transformation is necessarily a unique, negotiated process in each case. This notion not only implies a need for quality in training (and education) but also fully considers the participation and the empowerment of the learner.

The above builds on the approach to quality employed by Total Quality Management (TQM) a concept that was initially developed by W. Edwards Deming, Joseph. M. Juran and Armand V. Feigenbaum (1989[7]) and later revised by Cua, McKone and Schroeder (2001[8]) in their set of nine common Total Quality Management (TQM) practices. Cua, McKone and Schroeder (2001) describe a series of elements that – in our youth training context and in a quality framework – stakeholders and trainers aim to provide to learners/participant-trainers. While implementing a TQM approach with reference to the training-of-trainers in the European youth work field, teams therefore ought to focus on

1. Ethics
2. Integrity
3. Trust
4. Training (process, contents and methodology)
5. Full involvement and participation of the learner
6. Quality culture and approach
7. Recognition
8. Communication (including partnerships)

There is some overlap here with the values and principles of non-formal learning in training as developed by Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten in Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work (2008).

Any quality debate should take the above into consideration when developing assessment tools and mechanisms. If one considers the natural evolution of competences and competence development, simply looking at a set of competences for trainers, any curriculum and appreciation of the level of 'acquisition of competences' by the participant-trainer may be

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[7] W. Edwards Deming, Joseph. M. Juran and Armand V. Feigenbaum (1989): How to Build Quality, Economist, September 23, 1989, 91-92.

[8] Cua, McKone and Schroeder (2001): Relationships between implementation of TQM, JIT, and TPM and manufacturing performance. Journal of Operations Management 19 (6) 675-694.

biased - no matter whether it considers self or external assessment. In case of long-term training courses, the quality of the set of competences for trainers and the 'evaluation' of their level of competence development ought to encompass other dimensions, too, ensuring a more holistic and systemic approach to quality, and therefore an adherence to quality standards and indicators.

3.3　Some remarks on culture and identity

If culture is considered a dynamic process that is strongly related to the notion of identity, it also relates to the individual and to the group they may belong to in a given context, situation and period of their life. Although this may not be so obvious in workshops or approaches to 'intercultural learning' in a training context, it is probably most accurate and relevant nowadays, although it involves the risk of relativism. This is not to say that 'there is no such thing as culture'; rather, the perspective should be shifted to a wider or systemic approach. In other words, it's important to think outside the box.

Tackling culture and identity also challenges the views on culture and intercultural learning as practiced in training in European youth work. It questions the fact that standardised approaches may lead to beliefs and established 'training modules' that have proven to no longer be entirely adequate or accurate. Naturally, deeper reflection could link this to other approaches such as those inspired by Gestalt therapy, art therapy, emotional intelligence, drama, coaching, etc. While they are not new, these pedagogical approaches are increasingly used in training and have expanded our vision to include culture and identity (and also group processes). The consequence is that there is a duty to revise approaches to such topics.

3.4　Two perspectives to consider when establishing a set of competences for trainers in the youth field

The development of a set of competences does not exclude having a list of standalone competences as such. However, it could support the latter in certain contexts and situations. Training for trainers always has a specific focus or entry point and such a set could support the development of training modules very adequately.

Competences should be considered from two different though not contrary angles:
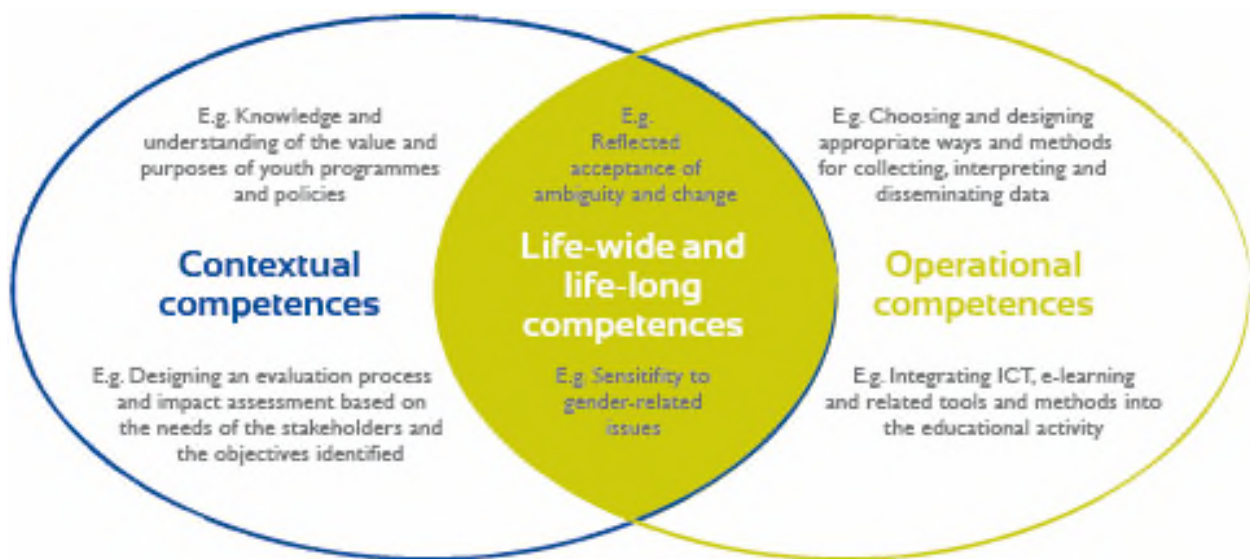
a) Competences that are considered important and necessary by the trainer community and by all trainers involved in training activities in the youth field and non-formal learning
b) Modules that ought to be addressed in training curricula for trainers

Both should be seen from the perspective of 'training and learning in practice' and as the result of past and current experiences and their related evaluation outcomes.

To describe the competences and to focus on the context and situations to which they belong or relate would surely be an additional source of support when it comes to 'harmonising' the approach taken to the training of trainers.

3.5 Visualising the competence framework

Given the nature of the training of trainers, several competence frameworks may be considered relevant for a future set of competences for trainers that allow for addressing both the profile of trainers as well as the training modules to be developed. The approach chosen for this set of competences divides competences into contextual competences and operational competences. A third category, provisionally referred to as life-wide and life-long competences, could encompass competences that belongs to the former but which are also seen to be essential for the development of an individual. Below is a suggested visualisation of such a framework:

E.g. Knowledge and understanding of the value and purposes of youth programmes and policies

E.g. Reflected acceptance of ambiguity and change

E.g. Choosing and designing appropriate ways and methods for collecting, interpreting and disseminating data

Contextual competences

Life-wide and life-long competences

Operational competences

E.g. Designing an evaluation process and impact assessment based on the needs of the stakeholders and the objectives identified

E.g. Sensitivity to gender-related issues

E.g. Integrating ICT, e-learning and related tools and methods into the educational activity

This competence framework would be advantageous in that it does not separate life-wide and life-long competences from the other categories; rather, it clearly highlights the interdependencies between them.

Part 4   Reference documents

The set of competences for trainers in the youth field is the result of an analysis of existing studies, models, communications and recommendations:

- 'Quality in non-formal education and training in the field of European youth work' by Helmut Fennes and Hendrik Otten for SALTO T&C RC (2008): http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/europeantotstrategy/trainercompetencestudy/ ;
- 'The eight key competencies for lifelong learning: An appropriate framework within which to develop the competence of trainers on the field of European youth work or just plain politics?' by Hendrik Otten and Yael Ohana for SALTO T&C RC (2009): http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/europeantotstrategy/trainercompetencestudy/ ;
- 'Competency Model for Trainers in the Youth Field', Estonian National Agency for Youth in Action Programme (2011): http://mitteformaalne.ee/compmodel ;
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Key competences for a changing world', draft joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2010 work programme' (2010): http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/progress-reports_en.htm ;
- 'Competence Framework for VET professions – Handbook for practitioners' by Kristiina Volmari, Seppo Helakorpi & Rasmus Frimodt (Eds) for the Finnish National Board of Education and Cedefop: http://www.oph.fi/english/publications/2009/Competence_framework_for_VET_professions ;
- 'Competence Improvement Map', TALE (Trainers for Active Learning in Europe) (2009-2010): http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/TALE-Documentation/11.html ;
- Self-perception Inventory - SALTO T&C RC Training of Trainers (ToT): http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/training-and-cooperation/tc-rc-nanetworktcs/tot/tot-backgound-docs/ ;
- 'Evaluation form for Experiential Facilitator's Competences', Via Experientia (2009): http://www.viaexperientia.net/uploads/Evaluation-form-for-experiential-facilitators-competences.pdf ;
- 'Youth Work as part of the Flemish Qualification Structure', by Michael Debusscher for CESOR and VUB (2007);
- The Interim Standards Council for Community Learning: 'The Competences for Community Learning and Development' (2009): http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/the_competences/Competences_for_Community_Learning_and_Development ;

- Networks for Youth Development: 'Core competencies for youth work' (2008): http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/downloads/pdf/core_competencies_for_yw_professionals.pdf ;
- Spanish National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme, XL2 Training for Trainers: Mapa de Mejora de Competencias (2011-2012)
- SALTO Cultural Diversity Resource Centre: Intercultural Competence (ICC) developed and acted out within the framework of European youth work

In this analysis, specific attention was given to the following aspects:

- The types of competences that are tackled, taking into account the possible clustering results (contextual, professional, social, etc.), where relevant and appropriate
- The links to non-formal learning training activities/courses
- Transferability and/or adaptability of the examined competence profiles or models.

A related glossary and the competence model with criteria and indicators please find here: https://www.salto-youth.net/trainingstrategy

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