KMST COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK
FOR NATIONAL AGENCY OFFICERS (VERSION WITH LEVELLING)

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1 WHAT IS THE KMST COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK?

Knowledge Management and Staff Training (KMST), developed by the network of Erasmus+ National Agencies, has been a key instrument for the capacity building of National Agency staff since 2003. KMST is an integral part of the European Training Strategy (ETS). Since its foundation, the network has organised a large number of joint staff training activities and has started to develop the knowledge management component. Recognising the fact that in recent years, the work of national agencies has become more complex, more changing, more strategic and more digital, this is the right moment to rethink KMST and give it an additional boost. One way to bring KMST to another level is to invest in the development of a joint competence framework for National Agency staff. Now this has been done, it can be shared and owned across this diverse network.

The main **purpose of the KMST competence framework** is to strengthen the competence-based approach in staff development activities. Such an approach should allow for the greater developmental impact of staff training and knowledge management opportunities.

In addition, the KMST competence framework

- creates a 'common language' in the network about what matters and what is considered quality work;
- recognises the changing role of the National Agencies that goes beyond quality Programme implementation;
- emphasises both present and future requirements on National Agency staff;
- allows for a more strategic approach to competence development across the whole network;
- stimulates rethinking, deepening and broadening the scope of KMST activities.

On a more practical level, the KMST competence framework

- facilitates a sense of belonging and easier 'entry' for newcomers;
- provides an effective framework for self-assessment and feedback;
- allows for a more targeted mentoring and coaching of staff;
- can be used for the development of teams in the National Agencies;
- can provide a basis for training needs assessments (TNA);
- guides KMST trainers through training design.

2 HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

The KMST competence framework was developed between November 2020 and October 2021, using a **bottom-up approach**. The **competence framework was developed on the basis of the actual experiences of the National Agency officers** and how they recognise quality performance. During the process, the consultants remained in continuous communication with the KMST working group, ensuring rapid feedback and the validation of all steps taken along the way.

The process involved defining key functions of the National Agency officers, undertaking desk research, and conducting two extensive surveys with National Agency officers and interviews with the Heads of National Agencies.

REPRESENTATIVES OF 30 NATIONAL AGENCIES TOOK PART IN DEVELOPING THE COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK.

Some key considerations of the development process

- The framework should include the values and principles promoted by the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Programmes.
- It should recognise the shift in understanding of the role of the National Agencies, which goes beyond Programmes implementation and includes more engagement in youth work development and a closer link between the Programmes and the youth policies.

- It should take account of differences in working cultures and the way the work is structured across National Agencies.
- It should consider that National Agency officers often have multiple roles within their National Agency.
- It should respect differences in the development of internal HR policies and measures for competence development inside the individual National Agencies.

3 A COMMON, FLEXIBLE AND FUTURE-PROOF FRAMEWORK

Besides taking into account all these diversities, the main task was to map the essential competences relevant for various National Agency officers roles and share them across the National Agency network. The intention was to create **a flexible framework, adjustable to fit different needs and realities in the National Agencies and stimulate competence development in the activities organised under the KMST. In addition, the competence framework would acknowledge** both current and future competences needed in line with the foreseeable shift in the role of the National Agencies and the related requirements placed on National Agency officers.

The proposed competence framework should be **relevant** for National Agency staff, thus allowing for a sense of ownership. It should also be **easy to use** and understand, **flexible** for different types of staff training and **adjustable** to various organisational contexts and realities. Finally, it should be **future-proof**, allowing it to be applied not only in the current context but also in changing future working contexts.

KMST

The KMST competence framework is neither designed to replace the individual National Agencies' HR development measures or policies, nor is it a complete development programme for National Agency staff. It also does not seek to replace existing competence frameworks in the individual National Agencies. Rather, the KMST competence framework should be considered an additional synergetic developmental intervention, organised by the network of National Agencies. The KMST competence framework is solely designed to spotlight the zone of 'common interest' tackled in staff training activities.

4 THE KMST APPROACH TO COMPETENCES

The approach to competences proposed here is reflected in the following quote:

'Competences focus on the person in a working context and summarise related behaviours built on the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities related to a particular domain (e.g., problem-solving). It is not just about having the work done (and therefore focusing on the requirements and tasks of a job) — it is also about questioning how people go about having the work done and considering the behaviours an individual demonstrates (without focusing exclusively on the job or task requirements).'

Simply put, competences take us beyond 'what we do' and focus on 'how we do it' when something is done effectively and with high quality.

Competences **can be** **trained** **and** **developed!**

5 STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE KMST COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK
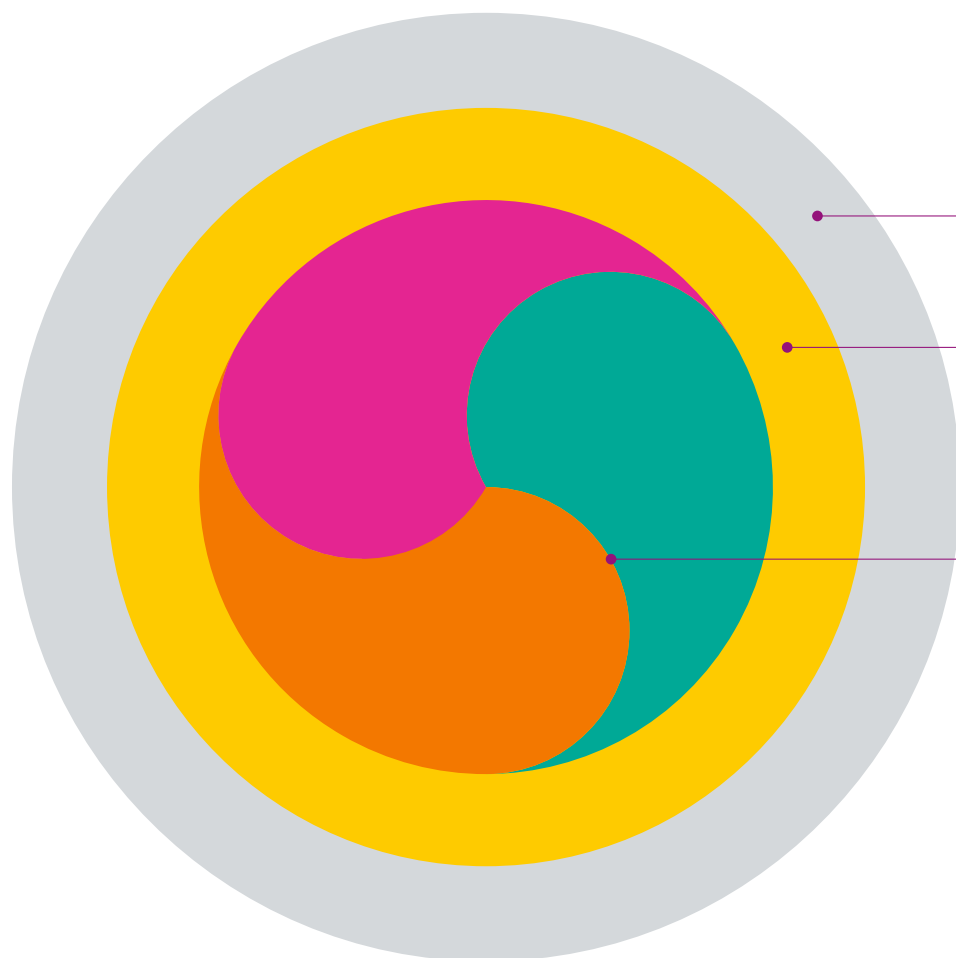
The competence framework has three parts:

A **Essential knowledge**, meaning the expertise needed to operate effectively as a National Agency officer.

B **Core values** to be promoted in the work of all National Agency staff, regardless of their role and position in the organisation. These nine core values underpin the overall competence framework.

C **Core competences**, which make explicit what is needed for effective and high-quality performance of National Agency staff in line with the values of the two Programmes.

These 15 core competences are grouped in three competence clusters:

#1 Nurturing self-leadership – includes competences needed for personal effectiveness and inner readiness for the role, including the need for continuous learning and development.
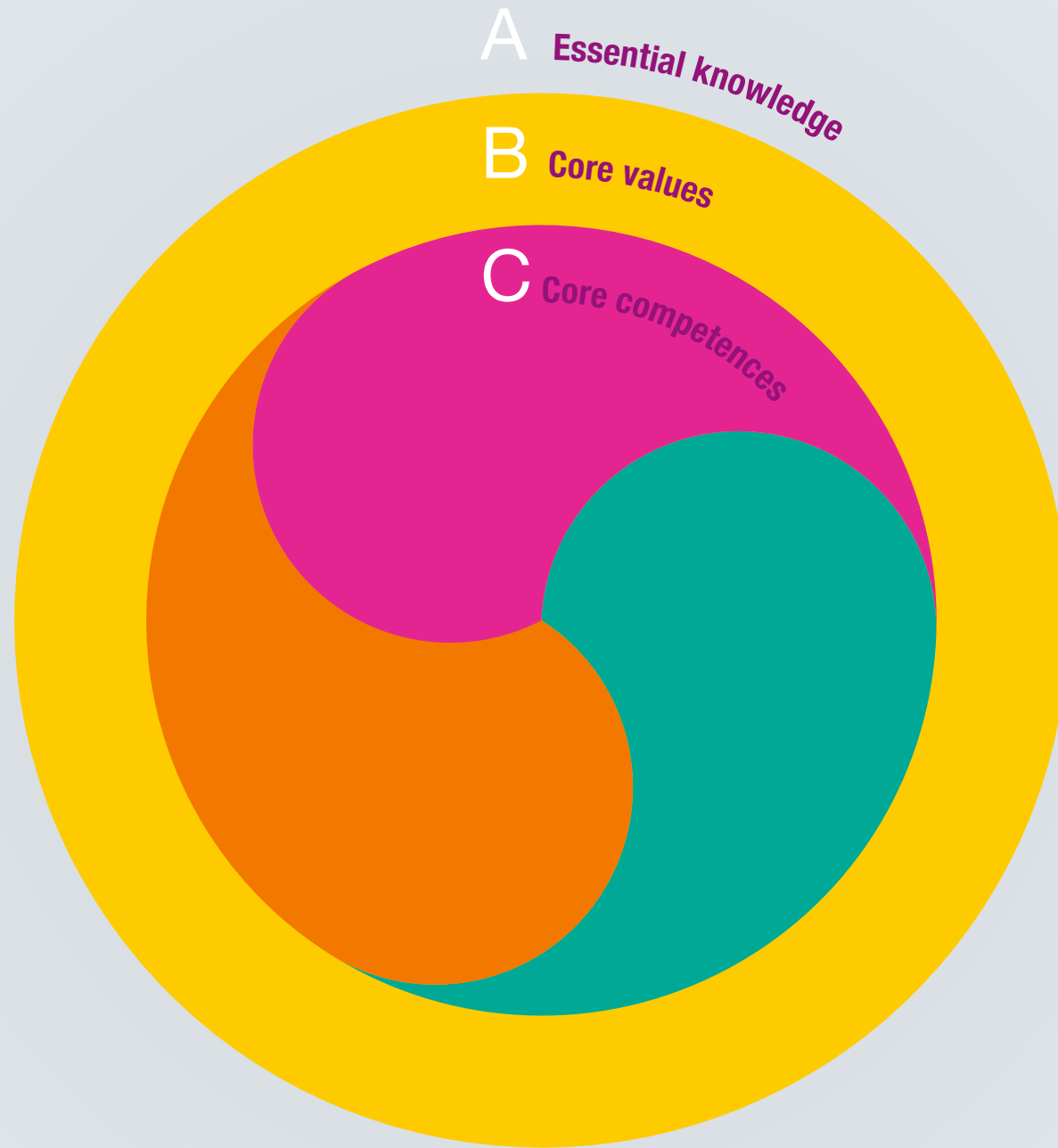
#2 Supporting and co-creating – includes competences needed for effective work and collaboration with other people, such as beneficiaries, colleagues at work and colleagues from other National Agencies.

#3 Maximising the Programmes' impact – includes the competences needed to see the 'bigger picture', the societal role of the Programmes and the ways to enhance its impact.
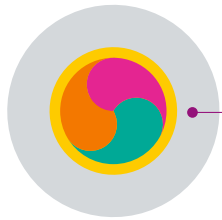
Each competence incorporates several behavioural indicators that were collected in the process of mapping. The indicators are grouped into three developmental levels (Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced) for each competence, reflecting progress made in competence development.

A Essential knowledge

B Core values

C Core competences

#1 - NURTURING SELF-LEADERSHIP
- Personal effectiveness
- Inspiring conviction
- Embracing change
- Digital savviness
- Continuous learning

#2 - SUPPORTING AND CO-CREATING
- Service orientation
- Inclusive development
- Tailored communication
- Diversity awareness
- Collaboration and co-creation

#3 - MAXIMISING THE PROGRAMMES' IMPACT
- Project management mindset
- System awareness
- Seeking synergies
- Strategic thinking
- Networking

Diversity
European awareness
Active citizenship
Solidarity
Sustainability
Equality
Mobility
Learning
Inclusion

A - Essential knowledge for National Agency officers

The essential knowledge for current and future-fit National Agency officers' roles includes the following:

- Detailed knowledge of the two Programmes
- Guide for National Agencies and other related documents
- Knowledge of Programme strategies (diversity and inclusion, participation, ETS, Youthpass, etc.)
- Young people (understanding the situation of young people and the challenges they face)
- Youth work (understanding the situation of and developments in youth work)
- Understanding of non-formal education principles and practices
- National youth policy developments (national legislation, structures and frameworks)
- European youth policy processes and documents (EU/COM functioning, structures and frameworks)
- Relevant youth research findings (e.g., RAY)
- Knowledge of mobility programmes other than E+ and European Solidarity Corps
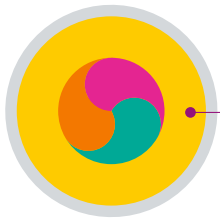
B - Core values underpinning the competence framework

Below are the nine core values that the National Agency officers across the network consider as crucial for the role. These values 'give colour' to the competences in the model. They largely reflect the Programmes' values, but should also be lived in everyday functioning within the National Agencies, in contact with beneficiaries and within the network as a whole. The list includes both descriptions and collected examples of how these values might be recognised in action.

- **Learning**
- **Inclusion**
- **Diversity**
- **European awareness**
- **Active citizenship**
- **Solidarity**
- **Sustainability**
- **Equality**
- **Mobility**
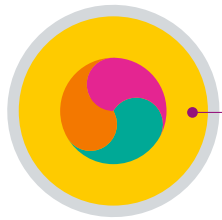
B - Core values underpinning the competence framework

Learning

Continuous learning and development are at the core of potentially life-changing international mobility programmes.
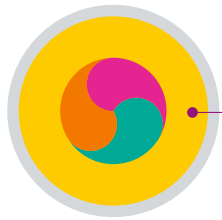
The value in action

- Demonstrating a good understanding of the principles (and practical implementation) of non-formal education.
- Encouraging beneficiaries to ensure quality of learning, facilitate the process, and promote reflection and recognition (through Youthpass).
- Recognising and ensuring learning in day-to-day activities in the National Agencies, including learning from beneficiaries.
- Providing an environment and opportunities for learning from experience and for capitalising on shared knowledge.
- Practising reflection as a core process within the National Agencies network and as a basis for further development.

Inclusion

Commitment to making the Programmes as accessible as possible and to actively reaching out to marginalised young people and beneficiaries.

The value in action

- Actively reaching out to those who have not benefited from the Programmes (especially those with fewer opportunities).
- When assessing projects, adjusting criteria, 'reading between the lines' and providing additional support when needed, while being clear and transparent to everyone involved.
- Highlighting the inclusion dimension to beneficiaries and guiding applicants to work meaningfully on this aspect.
- Organising activities specifically on the topic of inclusion.
- Collaborating with local and national stakeholders that promote inclusion.
- Taking an inclusive approach in every aspect of one's work (website, social media, organising events and meetings, during selection, etc.).

B - Core values underpinning the competence framework

Diversity

Curiosity about other cultures, places and realities and a commitment to learning and growing from diversity (intercultural learning).

The value in action

- Being open and welcoming ideas (including project ideas) and perceptions different from one's own.
- Not allowing bias towards specific social groups and organisations to influence actions and relationships.
- Encouraging beneficiaries to involve young people from diverse backgrounds and to capitalise on learning from diversity.
- Reflect diversity in communication, visuals and materials.

European awareness

Awareness of being a part of Programmes that are crucial for European integration; recognition of the potential of European cooperation, while having the global perspective in mind.

The value in action

- Having a European identity and living and promoting European values.
- Promoting the principles underlying European policies and Programmes and linking national and European policy developments.
- Actively following developments and practices in other countries.
- Investing in European cooperation, including an exchange across the National Agencies network, at the same time being aware of the important of global cooperation.
- Communicating the importance of the European dimension in in-country projects.
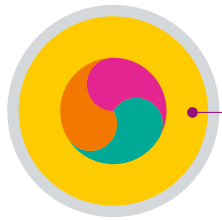
B - Core values underpinning the competence framework

Active citizenship

Belief in the importance of one's own active engagement and commitment to identifying and leveraging the potential of the Programmes to encourage critical youth citizenship on all levels.
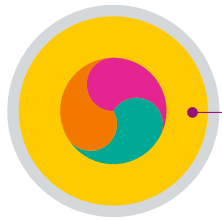
The value in action

- Emphasising the importance of having young people involved in every stage of the project and valorising the involvement of young people through assessments.
- Highlighting the potential of solidarity and participation projects.
- Promoting active participation in National Agencies-led activities.
- Being aware of general issues in society and participating in democratic life.
- Being proactively involved in the implementation and development of both Programmes.
- Promoting critical thinking as an essential set of competences for young people, beneficiaries and National Agency staff.

Solidarity

Feeling of the importance of solidarity on all levels, from the local community all the way to European and global level, as well as among peers and colleagues.

The value in action

- Promoting the solidarity dimension of the projects and being able to convey it to the beneficiaries.
- Demonstrating to partners and beneficiaries how much they are contributing through their engagement in the Programmes and on the grassroots level.
- Empathising with and supporting beneficiaries when encountering challenges during implementation.
- Reaching out to groups on the local level and assisting them in using opportunities offered by the Programmes.
- Demonstrating peer solidarity and support among National Agency colleagues.

B - Core values underpinning the competence framework

Sustainability

Understanding and respecting the importance of sustainable choices and environmentally friendly lifestyles.

The value in action

- Promoting sustainability as an educational principle and process and mainstreaming it in all actions and activities of the Programmes.
- Creating a sustainability-friendly work environment.
- Encouraging sustainable means of transport and promotional materials and gifts/gadgets.
- Encouraging the use of local products and supply chains during National Agency activities and among the beneficiaries.
- Promoting refuse, reuse, reduce and recycle practices during National Agency activities and to the beneficiaries.
- Spreading environmentally friendly practices beyond the National Agencies.

Equality

Equal opportunities for all to access the Programmes in the spirit of equity and social justice, including identifying and removing possible barriers and obstacles.

The value in action

- Treating the Programmes as vehicles that can contribute to equity and social justice.
- Having an equal approach to all applicants (and applications).
- If there are any barriers that beneficiaries are facing, helping to remove those barriers so everyone has the same opportunities.
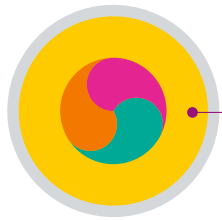
B - Core values underpinning the competence framework

Mobility

Genuine conviction in the potential of international mobility for young people's personal and professional development, as well as for encouraging solidarity, inclusion, active citizenship and intercultural learning.

The value in action

- Promoting mobility opportunities to young people and youth workers, beyond sharing technicalities and criteria.
- Highlighting the potential of mobility for changing lives and opening minds.
- Promoting mobility as a vehicle for international cooperation and building a common vision for the future.
- Searching for and sharing best practices and advantages of international exchanges.
- Demonstrating a commitment to hosting activities, as well as supporting participants.
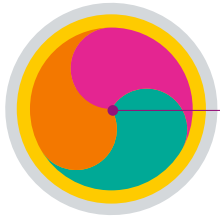
C - 15 core competences for NA officers

Understanding the levelling in the competence framework

Competences in this model are identified as **underlying characteristics of a National Agency officer, which translate into a certain quality of performance**. As these characteristics are visible in officers' behaviour, they can be assessed and measured through behavioural indicators. Such a framework provides practical support for trainers who develop competence-based staff training Programmes, and also for National Agency officers themselves who wish to set personal development goals. Competences can be developed and improved over a lifetime.

The 15 competences in this model are broken down into three developmental levels:
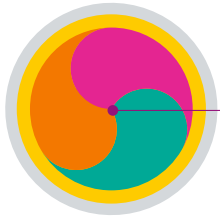
Foundation

Intermediate

Advanced

C - 15 core competences for NA officers

## Understanding the levelling in the competence framework

Progressing up the three levels involves **assuming more independence and proactivity in one's role, developing greater self-awareness through reflected personal experiences, and acquiring an ability to handle more complexity on the job, see the bigger picture and take a more longer-term (strategic) perspective.**

It also implies that **the next level embraces everything from the previous levels and adds to it.** For example, someone who has reached the Intermediate level concerning a certain competence should demonstrate all behaviours from both the Foundation and the Intermediate level.

Not all the levels have the same number of behavioural indicators. This is in line with the development process; it logically follows that the smallest number of indicators is found at the Foundation level.

It is also clear that some competences by their very nature 'belong' more to a higher level of competence (especially some of them from the cluster 'Maximising the Programmes' impact').

Finally, the existence of three levels in the framework may be very useful when it comes to **defining more specific job requirements for various types of National Agency officer roles**. In other words, while for some types of role it may be important for an officer to reach Intermediate or Advanced level for certain competences, for others it may suffice to be at the Foundation level. This could prove very useful for the heads of National Agencies and the KMST working group when designing tailor-made development opportunities for each job type.
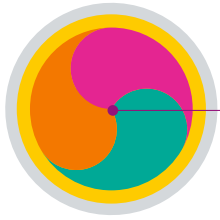
C - 15 core competences for NA officers

Cluster #1 - Nurturing self-leadership

Cluster #2 - Supporting and co-creating

Cluster #3 - Maximising the Programmes' impact

NURTURING SELF-LEADERSHIP

Focus: Self

This cluster includes five competences needed for personal effectiveness and inner readiness for the role, including the need for continuous learning and development.

#2

#3

Personal effectiveness

Ability to organise one's own workflow, be accountable for one's own tasks and stay committed to shared initiatives and processes.

Behavioural indicators:

⭐ Foundation

- Shows responsibility for the given tasks
- Respects deadlines and responds promptly

⭐ Intermediate

- Shows initiative in organising their own workflow
- Demonstrates accountability for their own tasks and outcomes
- Efficiently uses shared communication channels

⭐ Advanced

- Keeps commitments and stays in the process
- Is able to fulfil multiple roles and functions in the National Agency and navigate them effectively

Inspiring conviction

Genuine belief in the value of youth work, non-formal education and the European/international dimension of learning mobility.

Behavioural indicators:

⭐ Foundation

- Reflects on their own international mobility experiences
- Demonstrates commitment to the Programmes and the opportunities they offer

⭐ Intermediate

- Has a clear understanding of why they do what they do
- Confidently acts on behalf of the Programmes
- Genuinely understands the horizontal priorities and can convey them

⭐ Advanced

- Communicates in an inspiring and motivating way about the value of the Programmes
- Believes in the idea of Europe and benefits from international mobility and cooperation
- Believes in the value of youth work and non-formal education

NURTURING SELF-LEADERSHIP

Embracing change

Ability to deal confidently with ambiguity and constant change, adapting, and learning quickly from emerging challenges.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Shows ability to learn quickly in new situations
- Sees challenges as learning opportunities

Intermediate

- Shows flexibility and adaptability to ambiguity when rules and circumstances change
- Demonstrates resilience when confronted with prolonged uncertainty

Advanced

- Actively searches for new ways to improve current practices
- Accepts and finds ways to navigate the increasing complexity in their work context

Digital savviness

Agile mindset when it comes to digital tools and approaches and demonstrating an ability to use them confidently and skilfully.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Is ready to embrace and master new Programme-related IT tools

Intermediate

- Skilfully and confidently uses digital tools and communication channels
- Shows curiosity and openness to exploring new digital tools and environments

Advanced

- Confidently analyses and interprets digital data
- Demonstrates awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of online learning mobility

Continuous learning

Readiness to learn and develop, thus continually improving one's own competences.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Shows curiosity and openness towards learning from colleagues and, where relevant, adopts good practices
- Keeps up to date with the Programmes' developments and changes

Intermediate

- Assesses their own needs for professional development
- Actively seeks feedback and is open to suggestions and proposed improvements

Advanced

- Anticipates upcoming learning needs as circumstances and roles change
- Actively looks for learning opportunities and follows relevant sources

SUPPORTING AND CO-CREATING

Focus: Other

This cluster includes five competences required for effective work and collaboration with other stakeholders, such as beneficiaries or colleagues in one's own National Agency or others.

Service orientation

Readiness to understand and communicate with empathy how the project's needs can be aligned with the Programmes' opportunities.

Behavioural indicators:

★ Foundation

- Is approachable for beneficiaries and encourages transparent and honest communication
- Matches beneficiaries' needs with the opportunities offered by the Programmes
- Understands and points out the limitations of the Programmes

★★ Intermediate

- Maintains regular contact with beneficiaries
- Listens to beneficiaries, understands what they need and responds with empathy
- Provides guidance and orientation concerning opportunities offered by the Programmes
- Offers opportunities for beneficiaries to meet and exchange

★★★ Advanced

- Strives to understand beneficiaries' contexts, needs and challenges
- Has an ability to see things from the beneficiaries' perspective
- Identifies possible risks inherent in the projects and supports beneficiaries in preventing future problems

Inclusive development

Ability to support beneficiaries and their development in an inclusive way.

Behavioural indicators:

★ Foundation

- Identifies needs and offers opportunities for beneficiaries' development
- Understands barriers potentially faced by beneficiaries in accessing the Programmes

★★ Intermediate

- Is able to recognise the quality behind 'simple words' AND the nonsense behind the 'smart words'
- Applies the proportionality principle and adjusts criteria/standards to fit beneficiaries' profile
- Provides clear and constructive feedback to support improvement and development
- Reaches out to new beneficiaries while maintaining contact with existing ones

★★★ Advanced

- 'Meets beneficiaries where they are', and matches support measures with identified needs
- Recognises the potential for beneficiaries' growth and gives concrete ideas for improvement and development
- Anticipates needs and offers progressive support measures
- Balances information giving with opportunities for beneficiaries to learn by themselves

SUPPORTING AND CO-CREATING

Tailored communication

Ability to adjust one's own communication style and choose channels appropriate for the target audience.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Uses simple, everyday language, with just enough information that can be digested
- Uses different channels and message formats to reach out to diverse groups

Intermediate

- Sends targeted (filtered) information to colleagues
- Uses engaging and participatory methods to convey the message
- Shares inspiring stories and examples (best practices) fitting the target audience

Advanced

- Asks the right questions to support the other person's thinking
- Translates complex policy language into digestible pieces of information for beneficiaries

Diversity awareness

Ability to remain curious and respectful when confronted with different cultural contexts and practices.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Shows curiosity and readiness to learn from youth work contexts and realities in other countries environment

Intermediate

- Remains non-judgemental towards different practices
- Is aware of different perceptions and the status of the Programmes in other countries

Advanced

- Shows sensitivity to different working cultures in other National Agencies
- Is able to run projects in a European environment

Collaboration and co-creation

Readiness to collaborate with colleagues in a constructive and committed way.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Demonstrates willingness to actively collaborate with other National Agency colleagues
- Shows readiness to find common ways and approaches

Intermediate

- Co-creates the vision of the cooperation project and the process together with colleagues and/or external experts
- Actively builds on others' experiences, ideas and initiatives
- Establishes clear rules and roles in cooperation projects
- Shows readiness to support, take on and/or delegate tasks in cooperation projects and initiatives
- Maintains a sense of shared responsibility and ownership in cooperation projects

Advanced

- Initiates new projects and generates others' interest in and endorsement of proposed initiatives
- Is able to cope with different opinions and handle conflicts during cooperation
- Facilitates dialogue and searches for common ground
- Invests in long-term cooperation with other National Agency colleagues

Cluster #3

MAXIMISING THE PROGRAMMES' IMPACT

Focus: Outer

This cluster includes five competences needed to see the 'bigger picture', the societal role of the Programme and the ways to enhance its impact.

Project management mindset

Ability to apply project management principles in one's daily work.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Understands what the good conditions are for hosting a project
- Applies project management principles in their daily work

Intermediate

- Undertakes a risk assessment before activity implementation
- Distributes tasks according to required skills and motivation

Advanced

- Coordinates various roles (internal and external) in project implementation
- Makes necessary adjustments to project implementation while keeping the goals in mind

System awareness

Ability to see the bigger picture and understand one's own work in the wider societal context.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Shows genuine curiosity about youth and the youth work field

Intermediate

- Aims to capture the bigger picture using multiple information sources
- Actively updates their own knowledge about young people's realities

Advanced

- Is aware of all relevant stakeholders in the youth work system and how they relate to each other
- Has a clear understanding of how their work contributes to societal change
- Identifies trends in youth work at the local, national, and European level

MAXIMISING THE PROGRAMMES' IMPACT

Seeking synergies

Ability to connect the dots and identify synergies to maximise impact.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Sees how different Actions within the Programmes may build on each other

Intermediate

- Strives to identify potential synergies between the two Programmes (E+ and European Solidarity Corps)
- Understands how Programmes' instruments can be combined to respond to identified needs in the field

Advanced

- Seeks synergies between national-level opportunities and the Programmes
- Connects the Programmes' strategies with national-level strategies
- Harvests and links the results of multiple projects to strengthen impact

Strategic thinking

Ability to maintain a long-term focus and understand how the Programmes can contribute to the policy objectives.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Sees the clear link between the content of the Programmes and the European Youth Policy objectives

Intermediate

- Defines the change they want to contribute to with their activities
- Recognises how Programmes implementation helps achieving the European Youth policy objectives
- Connects national level policy priorities with European priorities
- Capitalises on the results of the projects to amplify impact

Advanced

- Invests in a long-term perspective and cooperation
- Demonstrates deeper knowledge of Programmes' strategies and strategic priorities
- Is able to embed their own activities in existing political frameworks
- Uses research insights to develop strategic objectives/build strategy

Networking

Building critical relationships and maintaining a network of key stakeholders to realise the Programmes' objectives.

Behavioural indicators:

Foundation

- Understands the importance of building their own network
- Uses opportunities to connect informally with relevant stakeholders

Intermediate

- Proactively seeks out opportunities to network
- Is able to listen to the points of view of different stakeholders
- Cooperates with other stakeholders to maximise the Programmes' impact
- Identifies and meets the needs of relevant stakeholders

Advanced

- Looks beyond the 'Programme bubble' and seeks input from the outside
- Builds and maintains their own network of local, national, and European stakeholders
- Involves actors from the national level in realising the Programmes' strategies

EDITORIAL

The KMST competence framework has been developed by the Network of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps National Agencies in the frame of the European Training Strategy (ETS).