

e-YOUTH!

PRO1: MAPPING CROSS-SECTORIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES



A project by

support GIRONA

INDEX

01	ABBREVIATIONS	03
02	INTRODUCTION	04
03	ANALYSIS	06
04	CONCLUSION	16
05	BIBLIOGRAPHY	17
06	GLOSSARY	18

Abbreviations

Cedefop: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

ESCO: European Skill, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.

NEET: Neither in Employment, Education or Training.

PR: Project Result.

UDAF 82: Union Départementale des Associations Familiales 82.

UNCRPD: United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Introduction

Eurostat 2022 study estimates that **1 in 10 young people aged 15 to 29 years old and living in Europe is Neither in Employment, Education nor Training** (NEET - see Figure 1). Far from referring to a homogenous group, the term NEET encompasses a wide variety of realities, personal situations, as well as education and skill levels. However, NEETs do share one characteristic: they are either unaware of their right to benefit or are completely cut off from public, parapublic and community services that could support them, and of training or work opportunities within their grasp.

1 in
young people
15 to 29
years old and living in
**Is Neither in Employment,
Education nor Training (NEET)**

15,00%

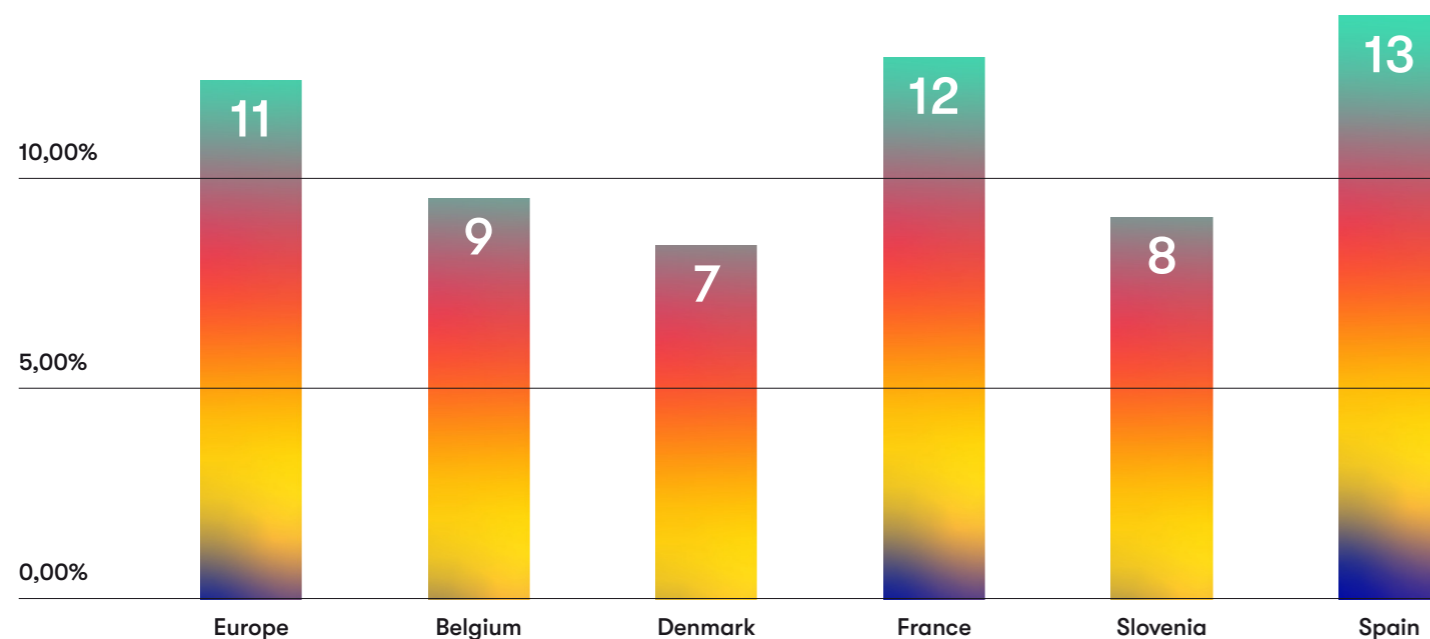


Fig. 1: Average percentage of NEETs in countries represented within the e-Youth project consortium.

Their difficulties may stem from an illness or disability, family responsibilities such as early parenthood, mental health issues, feeling discouraged or even desperate at the idea of not fitting in with the rest of society. When faced with these complex profiles, professionals may be or feel ill-equipped and thus react inappropriately.

For example, they may insist on reorienting young service users towards “specialised” services on the basis that they have a disability, perhaps using outdated language to refer to them. They may fail to identify symptoms of mental health problems resulting from a traumatic migratory journey. They may also neglect to adapt their expectations to a younger and less privileged audience.

For more details on the concepts and/or phrases indicated with numbers like '1', please refer to the [glossary here](#).

Exclusion, mistreatments and conflicts arise from mismatches between young service users' specific needs and professionals' attitudes when trying to address them, leading the former to become disillusioned, to sever ties and renounce their rights at getting the help they need to achieve autonomy.

The e-Youth project is powered by the ambition to empower professionals who work or are susceptible to meet with young people excluded from ordinary care and support services on the basis of disability, mental health problems, gender identity, race and/or language, education and skill level, etc. Regardless of their intervention level, professionals play a part in youth' feelings of inclusion or exclusion. While also acknowledging structural issues such as the lack of resources and the casualisation of social and care work, we aim to provide them with tools, resources and knowledge necessary for them to competently fulfil their role.

This project specific objective, **'Up- and reskill professionals by mapping their current competences and developing evidence-based and rights-driven training packages'**, is in alignment with both the European Skills Agenda and Pact for Skills, and their shared goal of implementing a culture of lifelong learning for everyone, including individuals already in employment. The final goal is to ensure access to ordinary services and institutions to young people with disabilities and/or in complex situations, on a basis of equality with their peers, and in accordance with both the European Social Rights Pillars and article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People Disabilities.

Project results ² and onward will focus on promoting new ways to address professionals' needs in terms of skills. However, the first step is to pinpoint the gaps between skills and attitudes currently used, and ideal ones that are either necessary or preferable to acquire to improve care and support provision to young people.

This PR, **Mapping Youth Workers' Cross-Sectoral Skills & Competencies**, takes on the task of examining how professionals perceive and describe what their roles, tasks, skills and attitudes are or should be in their day-to-day work.

Online survey

For that purpose, e-Youth project partners disseminated to their workers and respective networks of organisations an online survey between September and December 2022. Questions sought to identify and map what competences professionals use most or wish they had when working with young people in complex situations.

Participation was free and anonymous. Participants could choose not to answer all questions or to withdraw from the study at any moment. They were also not asked about personal information such as age, gender, country of residence, education level or diplomas. We only inquired about their current position or job. The reason behind this decision to exclude personal questions was motivated by the objective of sketching a **general profile** of what an ideally skilled and competent professional is.

It would have been outside the scope of the tool, as well as unethical and simply impossible to identify and rank supposedly “feminine” or “masculine”, “Danish”, “French”, “Slovene” or “Spanish” skills and attitudes. It would have required partners to delve into national laws and the history of social, care and educational work in each country. The e-Youth Cross-Sectoral profile is thus not prescriptive nor does it seek to determine which country has better practices and skills than the rest. It is a **snapshot** of how professionals who answered the survey currently conceive their professional roles, skills and attitudes when handling complex problems and situations.

Defining competence

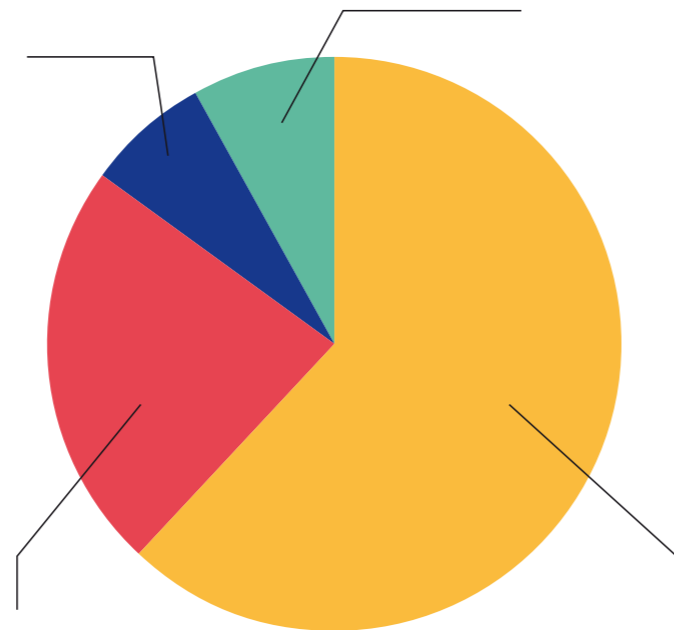
We draw from Rodrigues, Fernandez-Marcias and Sostero's 2021 '[Unified] framework of tasks, skills and competences' by defining competence as 'a general ability to do well in a particular task domain' and by acknowledging its difference with the concept of 'skill'.

Often used interchangeably as synonyms, skill and competence are per authors' words only 'related' to each other, “because ‘to do well in a particular task domain’ requires not only to have a number of specific **skills** but also to have a general understanding of the domain (**knowledge**) as well as certain **attitudes** (...)” To these elements, we add a fourth: to be in the **legal capacity** of undertaking specific tasks, sanctioned by a diploma and/or a work contract.

Sample

We received a total of **86 answers** to the survey, classifying the present study as a qualitative one. Each organisation received on average 14 answers. The two most receiving organisations were COCEM-FE with 24 respondents (Sevilla, Spain) and the Udaf 82 with 23 respondents (Montauban, France). Because their missions are within the field of social work, this distribution highly influenced results. The professional sector most represented in the sample is **Health & Solidarities** (62%) which refers to social and youth workers, medical and nursing professions, guardianships etc. It is followed by **Education & Training** (23%) composed of teachers, university professors and teaching aides. **Administration** (service heads, project managers) and **Employment** counsellors only amount to less than 10% each (see Figure 3).

These broad categories were outlined by regrouping occupations or “jobs” represented within the sample together on the basis of tasks and missions participants reported sharing. The physical places professionals may work in were not taken into account. School nurses, psychologists or social workers are considered to work in the Health & Solidarities sector, for example.



Analysis

Method

The following map of professionals' current competences is based on a comprehensive comparison of our study results with the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification and dictionary. Drawing from the most selected items for each question and the items the different professional profiles represented within our sample share as identified in ESCO, we have drafted a **general, cross-sectoral competence profile** (see attached) that includes tasks, core skills, core knowledge domains and core attitudes.

General cross-sectoral competence profile

Tasks

The first set of questions was dedicated to learning more about professionals' missions or tasks, as well as their ultimate role in young people's lives. In other words, we sought to identify how they conceive the concrete and practical, transformative actions they take (tasks) and distinguish them from the meaning they give to their work (role).

We first asked them to describe what their job is about, or what their daily activities are. Analysing their qualitative answers allowed us to outline three categories of tasks:

- Those relevant to young people's **Training & Employment**, as participants reported “carrying out activities for the development of young people's learning abilities” (20%) and “[supporting their] employment or socio-professional rehabilitation” (14%);
- Those that require professionals to **Support & Counsel** young people, with great importance given to “providing guidance, advice and information” (26%), as well as to “identifying preferences, wishes and needs” (20%) and “identifying obstacles and difficulties” (19%) through formal face-to-face interviews or in various informal settings;
- And finally those that contribute to the general **Service Organisation** through “[the conception] of projects and new interventions” (23%) and more basic tasks such as “team coordination, management and animation” (13%).

As for roles, our objective was to determine and rank what it is that professionals prioritise in terms of meaning and purpose when it comes to motivating their professional commitment. We thus used a different method to achieve this goal. Participants were asked to select three answers out of ten available options. The highest scoring items were then retained as the most meaningful motivators of professionals' intervention (see Figure 3).

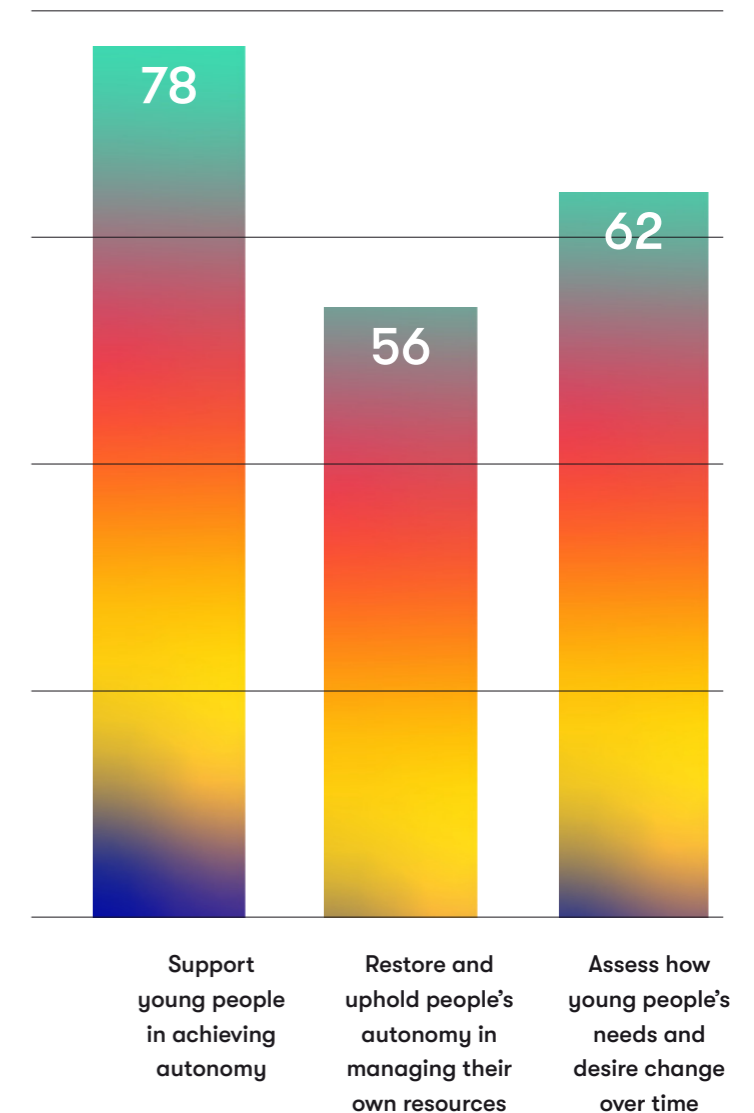


Fig. 3: Professionals' daily tasks (in %)

Young people's **autonomy, independence** and **self-reliance** appear to be professionals' final goals, what they are looking to achieve, when working to design and implement support or care plans with young people. As we analyse the **Core Skills** and **Core Attitudes** survey results highlight as most prevalent, we will also determine if they are coherent -as in useful to fulfil- these reported tasks and goals.

Core Skills

Social and communication skills

The majority of respondents' occupations include face-to-face interactions with young people in complex situations, whether individual ones in a bureaucratic setting or at the person's home, or collective and set in community spaces, classrooms or on the streets. They thus require that professionals build trusting relationships with young people, both to ensure that the latter contribute and commit to their care or support plan, and that they are able to de-escalate situations of misunderstanding or conflict.

This is made even more obvious by the percentage the "Listen with empathy" skill scored: 95% (see Figure 4), making it not essential but reportedly unavoidable in professionals' everyday work. It also serves professionals in their task of learning about young people's personal situation, and they do so based on how the latter narrate it. However, when doing their assessment, professionals need to keep in mind societal and structural circumstances that affect both young people's lives and their own perception.

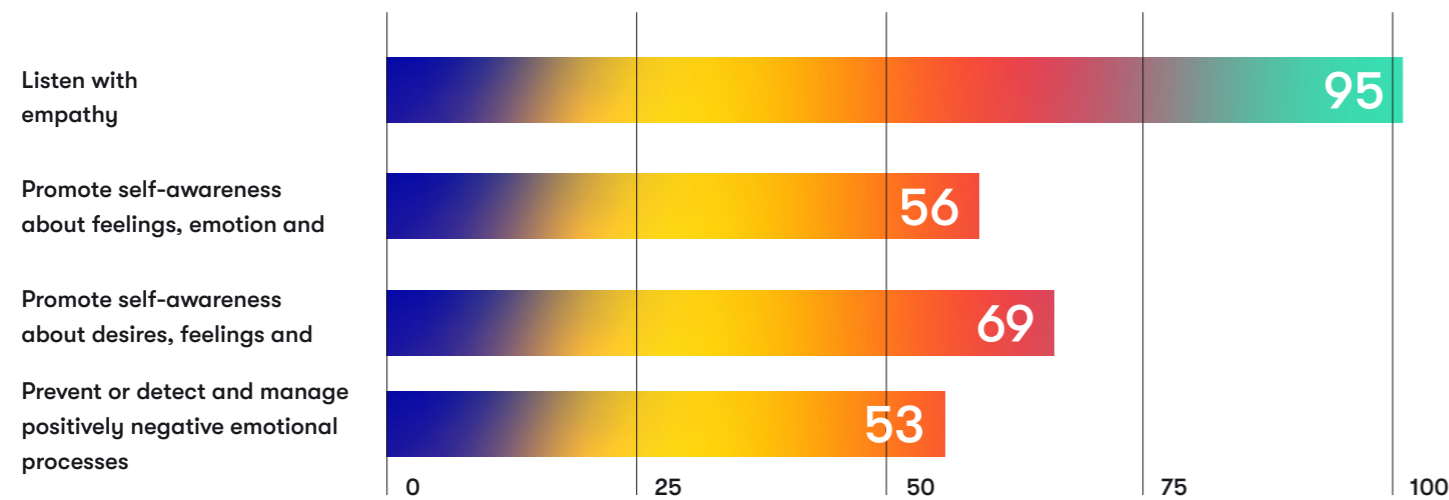


Fig. 4: Core Social and Communication Skills (in %)

A key aspect of empathy resides in active listening methods,⁷ "anti-oppressive practices"⁸ and "socially just working principles."⁹ Our comparative analysis of ESCO professional profiles also revealed the importance of another related skill across ten occupations represented within the survey sample: "accept [one's] own accountability."¹⁰ Beyond taking responsibility for an action or a decision that had poor outcomes, this skill requires that professionals reflect upon their own biases and potentially discriminatory practices.

Research and journalistic publications keep highlighting how stereotypes on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or class negatively affect how care and support are delivered and thus their outcomes (Chrisler, Barney, Palatino, 2016; Ross, Congress, Matsuzaka, 2018; Hamed, Thapar-Björket, Ahlberg 2020; Alvarez-Bernardo, Garcia-Berben, Lara-Garrido, 2022). The quality of the relationship between professionals and young people, and that of their dialogue, may deteriorate. Professionals may fail to take young people and the choices they make seriously, perhaps submitting them to enhanced scrutiny or holding them to higher standards than their peers.

Empathy and accountability could be considered not only as vital skills, but as **vital values** when supporting and caring for young people in complex situations.

If they are not solicited as much, "[Promoting] self-awareness" and "[Preventing] or [managing] positively negative emotional processes" (53%) skills together play an equally significant part, according to respondents (see Figure 3). Alternative labels drawn from the ESCO classification helped us define the meaning and scope of these two skills.

Self-awareness entails a variety of dimensions. Participants first recognised their role in "[promoting] and [enhancing] young people's ability to reflect on their own current situation, taking into account their desires, feelings and thoughts." (69%) It is very closely related to the "[promoting] self-awareness about feelings, emotions and moods" (56%) skill they also upvoted, which could be translated into "[having] emotional intelligence."¹¹

Preventing or managing positively negative emotions articulates being able to "[mediate] and [resolve] disputes"¹² and "tolerate stress"¹³ while "maintaining a positive attitude"¹⁴ to avoid discouraging or even alienating young people.

Guidance and counselling skills

This second family of skills is related to the first and shows that professionals consider themselves to be guiding forces in young people's lives.

A majority of respondents reported the importance of being able to "analyse young people's current situation, taking into account their personal, family and social environment" (82% - see Figure 5). In other words, they need to engage in formal interviews or informal discussions in order to "assess [their] situation"¹⁵, "(...) identify [their] needs"¹⁶ and "undertake risk assessment (...)."¹⁷ Learning about young people's lives is strongly related to demonstrating empathy, but it also equips professionals with the necessary information to design the most appropriate care, support and/or pedagogical plans for young people to achieve improvement.

This statistical prevalence however highlights what seems to be a shared representation between professionals across sectors. It could be interpreted as a tendency to associate youth with strong, negative, inappropriate or even violent behaviour due to their inability to control their emotions, which warrants the need for specific skills to counteract it. This idea is further supported by highly scoring skills within the e-Youth survey, not necessarily related to Social & Communication skills, but important to highlight for the purpose of this analysis.

For example, promoting self-awareness and emotional intelligence could also be aimed at "[identifying], [monitoring] and [managing] inner emotional conflicts" (41%), as well as "[identifying], [monitoring] and [preventing] specific problems that arise when the social context requires emotional adaptation" (40%). The underlying idea is that the relationship between professionals and young people should remain a controlled, linear and straight-tracked one in order to work or simply be maintained through time.

It appears rather incompatible with a professional ethos of active empathic listening and understanding of young people's problems, needs and growth process, as highlighted through the massive prevalence of the "Empathic listening" skill (95%).

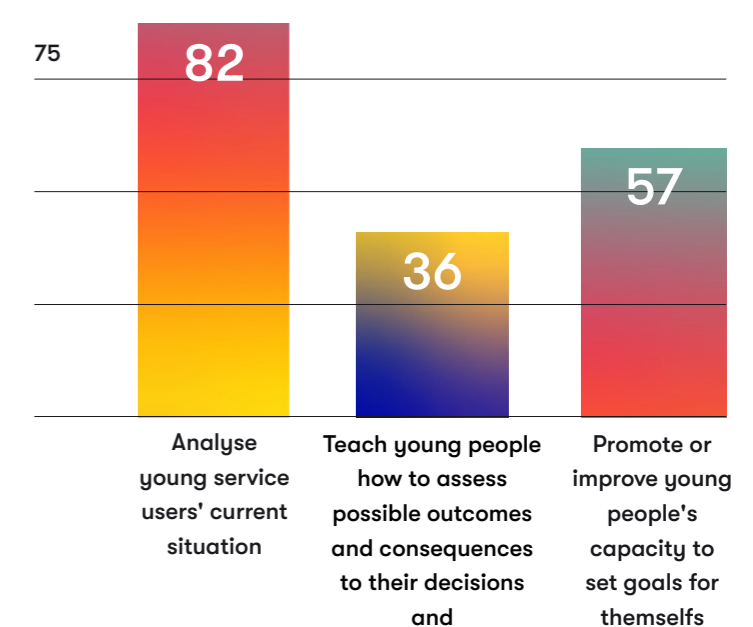


Fig. 5: Core Guidance and Counselling Skills (in %)

Other significant skills professionals reported is their role in “[teaching] young people how to assess possible outcomes and consequences of their decisions and actions” (54%) and “[promoting] and/or [improving their] capacity to set goals for themselves (57% - see Figure 5). Though closely related to “[Offering] young people different points of view and perspectives” (48%), these skills go beyond simply telling young people about repercussions their choices may have. Professionals actively work for them to be able to imagine them themselves. At its core lies the idea of transferability: professionals “support [young people] in developing skills”¹⁸ that will help them “prepare for adulthood”¹⁹ or a state of more or less independent living.

Results confirm professionals’ aim at being understanding of young people’s specific needs, limits and personal situation. However, the highlighted skills seemingly show a general tendency to consider youth through problematic lenses only. The current state a young person is and that warrants intervention is either bad or, at least, not ideal. But it did not transpire that professionals’ assessment also focuses on young people’s existing capabilities and resources in order to determine which levers they actually have in their hands to pull, and those outside their reach.

From a UNCRPD and European Social Rights Pillar standpoint, this leads to disregarding structural and societal origins to young people’s obstacles. Further research is needed to assess if and how professionals integrate understanding of ableism and other forms of discrimination to their practices. One reason could be that they might not be able to do so out of lack of knowledge of these discriminations. They may expect young people to adapt to their expectations, interpreting their problems to fit the paradigm of their intervention, but in the process fail to meet them halfway.

Life and civic skills

Participants consider they play a supporting role in the empowerment of vulnerable youth, both through advocacy and direct interventions. They have knowledge of how services and institutions work, as well as of young people’s current situation as opposed to the ideal life they are looking to achieve. This overview grants them competence when smoothing out essential relationships between fellow and other professionals, policy makers, and young people. Three skills and their 60% and above score support this claim (see Figure 6).

Respondents indicate that “[promoting] social inclusion”²⁰ is essential to their work. At an early stage of the support and care process, young people may experience stress and anxiety at the idea of fulfilling important tasks for themselves on their own. Professionals may thus step in and “advocate for [them]”²¹, to the extent of physically or remotely “[assisting them] to access services”²² or by “[assisting] individuals with disabilities in community activities.”²³

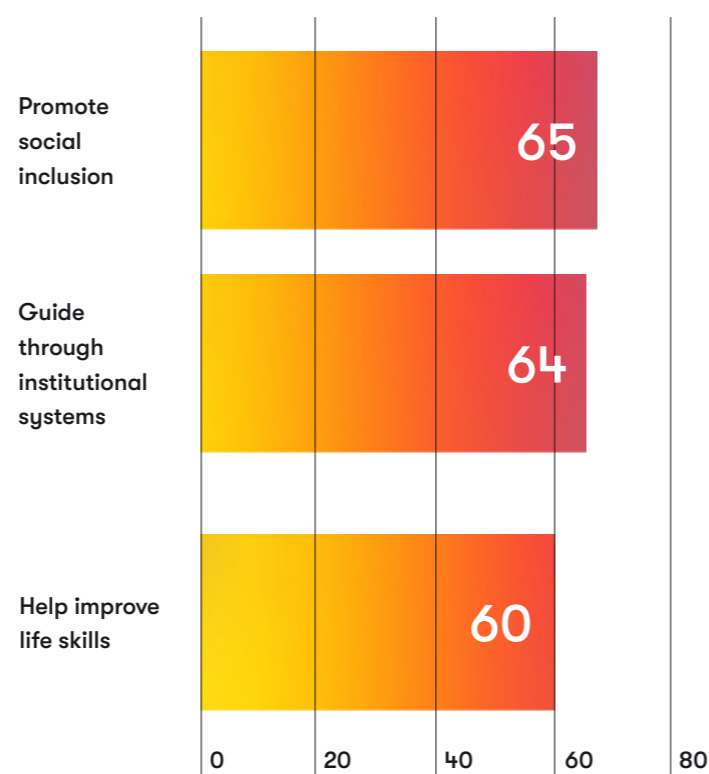


Fig. 6: Core Life and Civic Skills (in %)

It involves going with young people to waiting rooms or to their first lesson in a new hobby. It could also entail calling ahead of their arrival with their explicit consent, and communicate guidelines to professionals or volunteers on how to de-escalate should a crisis arise. In other words, they work to downplay and help young people go through stressful situations.

This is also why, though they are strongly related, these skills differ from the Processing relevant information skills, in that their final goal is to make sure young people eventually become able to accomplish these tasks on their own. The second most prevalent skill selected by participants, “[Guiding] young people through institutional systems” (64%), further supports this idea. The original label submitted to participants within the survey read as “[Promoting] and [enhancing] young people’s ability to understand administrative, legal and medical documents that concern them and their ability to navigate these systems.” Though we could not find an ESCO equivalent, we did find related skills such as “[assisting] with personal administration issues”²⁴ or “[supporting] informed consent.”²⁵ Professionals do with and not instead of young people, a key aspect of empowerment.

Overall, it is rather safe to say professionals work to be out of a job someday, or at the very least, not to be as necessary in young people’s ordinary lives. The latter may grow able to fill in paperwork, explain a health crisis de-escalation plan to a passer-by or more easily adapt to missteps in their daily routine, to a certain extent and always depending on what their personal needs and boundaries are. This may be why respondents have highlighted the “help improve life skills”²⁶ skill as prevalent in their daily work (60%).

The original label for this item was “Identify and improve young people’s assertiveness and overall life and social skills for them to be able to resolve conflicts on their own”. By “conflict” can be understood a variety of situations, from an argument with another person regardless of the topic, or a gap between what the young individual expected when taking action and what truly happened, which may have triggered a negative reaction on their end (confusion, fear, discouragement, anger, etc). Assertiveness in this context is almost synonymous to self-confidence and self-reliance. For example, a young person’s latest purchase may have led them to go over budget. As it dawns on them that they may not be able to afford rent, they panic and flood a trusted professional with messages and phone calls. “[Helping] young people to plan expenses, promoting [their] financial skills and their economic autonomy” (56%) can ultimately allow them to stay level-headed and face hardships with more autonomy.

Core Knowledge Domains

The e-Youth survey did not ask participants about knowledge they consider essential or may wish to acquire in order to perform well in their daily work. Most research articles about competence in relation to social, care and health work, as well as the ESCO classification, quote knowledge as an integral part of acting competently, alongside skills, attitudes (Rodrigues et al., 2021; ESCO v.1.1.1., 2022) and self-efficacy (Kangasniemi et al., 2020). The latter was excluded from our definition of competence. Rodrigues et al. (2021) define knowledge as “the cognitive outcome of an assimilation of facts and figures, concepts, ideas and theories which are already established ‘know-what’ about a domain.”

A person professionally exercising guardianship may be well advised to know about national laws regulating their practice, for example. Knowledge is acquired either through formal education and training, or direct life experience.²⁷

Using the ESCO classification, we established which knowledge domains were the most prevalent in the professional profiles represented within our sample and extracted from ESCO. We established which appeared the most as either Core or Additional Knowledge.

This method allowed us to identify three families or **Core Knowledge Domains** that are essential to professionals’ everyday work and practice.

Practice fundamentals

Since the e-Youth survey was disseminated within partners’ organisations and their networks, it is rather safe to assume it reached professionals who do not work alone. Most exercise their job in a service, in teams or any sort of collective setting. For

- **The legal requirements in the social sector**²⁸ meaning the “national and international laws regarding their field of work”;
- **Their company policies**²⁹ meaning “[the] set of rules that govern the activity of a company” or that of a non-profit organisation, public or

Professionals can rely on this knowledge domain to best navigate and integrate in their work environment. As they are able to identify where their responsibilities (or tasks) start and where they stop, as well as the code of ethics and professional deontology they are expected to follow, they are less likely to overstep boundaries, be negligent or make other mistakes. They may thus avoid legal liability for themselves and their institution.



Academic research and general concepts

A key knowledge domain prevalent across ESCO professional profiles is related to academic research and literature, general ethical principles and philosophical reflection. It includes:

- **Social work theory**,³⁰ meaning “[the] development and characteristics of social work theories underpinned by social sciences and humanities”;
- **Social sciences**,³¹ meaning “[the] development and characteristics of sociological, anthropological, psychological, political, and social policy theories”;
- **Social justice**,³² meaning “[the] development and principles of human rights and social justice and the way they should be applied on a case by case basis.”

Interestingly, this domain is absent from our results and could have been overlooked. Participants did not mention its role in their open answers about their missions and skills, just as much as we failed to interrogate them on the matter throughout the survey.

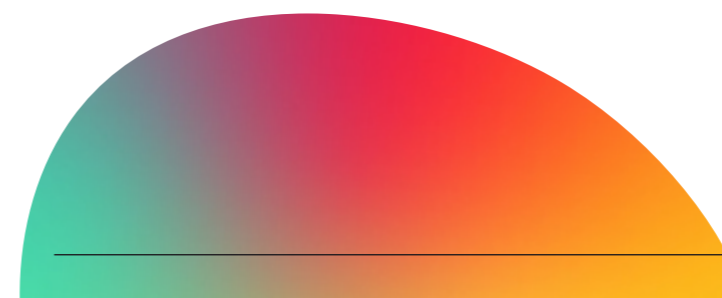
It would thus appear that bridges between the “practical work field” and the “world of research” in social sciences and humanities are not plain and tangible despite their foreseeable advantages (continuous learning, updated knowledge, evidence-based practices, etc).

Accessing academic literature indeed requires specific sets of skills, at the forefront of which is **epistemology**. For example, the capacity to navigate a bibliography, to distinguish between cherry-picked or unsupported claims from quality arguments, to understand what purpose peer reviews serve, is more generally acquired in University research studies than through practical training. It would have asked partners to examine professionals’ school and academic background, as well as national standards of training for each profession represented within the sample, to clearly establish the role that epistemological skills play (if they have any). It raises other essential questions, that of time and money. Are there enough hours in a work day to dedicate to reading articles and books, or should it be brought home? Plus, services and institutions may not be equipped to face the costs of scientific journals subscriptions and provide continuous access to the latest publications. Further reflection should be dedicated to addressing and accommodating that aspect of competence.

Target groups

Last but not least, most prevalent items across professional profiles point out the need for professionals to have basic and general knowledge of the issues that might be affecting the young people they care for or support. This domain serves as a tool for improved diagnosis, as the main reason the latter have been referred to them for may “hide” other social, personal and health problems that need to be taken into account. These include knowledge of:

- **Adolescent psychological development**,³³ which is “[understanding] the developments and the development needs (...) young persons, observing the behaviour and the attachment relationships in order to detect developmental delay”;
- **Disability care**³⁴ which is knowing “[the] specific methods and practices used in providing care to people with physical, intellectual and learning disabilities”;
- **Disability types**³⁵ which is knowing “[the] nature and types of disabilities affecting human beings such as physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional or developmental and the specific needs and access requirements of disabled people.”



The e-Youth survey results could not be used to assess if professionals did indeed consider these knowledge domains as important or lacking in their daily work. Further research is required to investigate this specific area of competence.

Core Attitudes

Core professional Attitudes were identified using a different method than previously described. Attached to the questionnaire was a **Glossary** with separate articles defining each item. Participants were asked to read through it and rate attitudes based on their **prevalence** (how often they think they use this attitude, on a scale going from “Never” to “Always”) and their **importance** (how essential they consider it to be, from “Useless” to “Indispensable”). It is worth noting that most attitudes were deemed of relative importance (see Figures 7 and 8). Professionals seldom used the “Never” and “Useless” options at their disposal, with notable exceptions for the “Acceptance of Others” (1% “Useless”) and the “Assertiveness” (2% “Never” and 1% “Useless”) attitudes.

This could indicate that professionals navigate from one attitude to the other, depending on the circumstances and their needs. However, mismatches from one dimension to the other are interesting to analyse. If discrepancies were to be observed -especially if one attitude was found indispensable but not as prevalent as expected- it could be highlighting an area on which professionals wish to improve and learn new ways to act and behave.

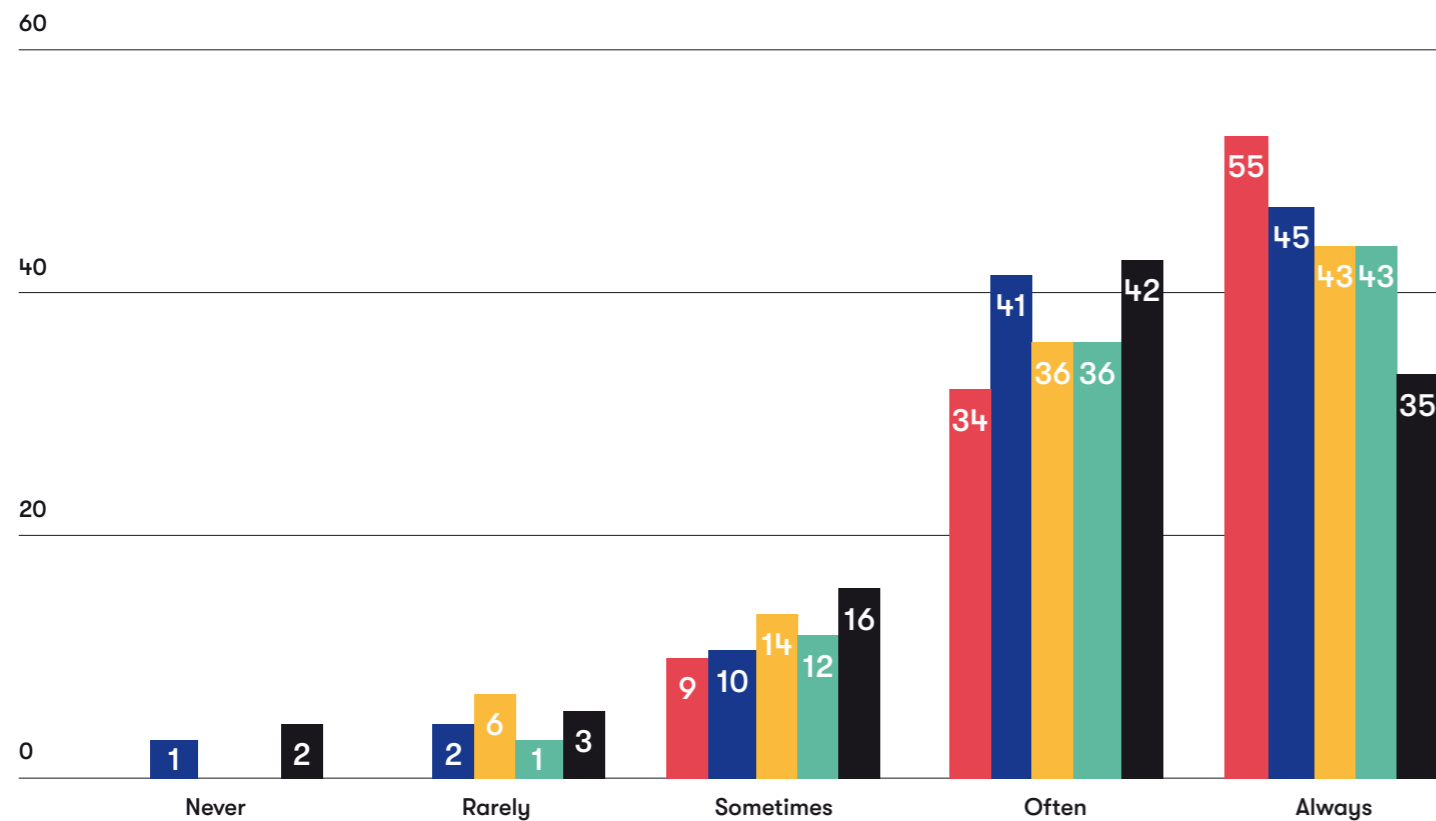


Fig. 7: Core Professional Attitudes based on their Prevalence or Frequency (in %).

For more details on the concepts and/or phrases indicated with numbers like '!', please refer to the [glossary here](#).

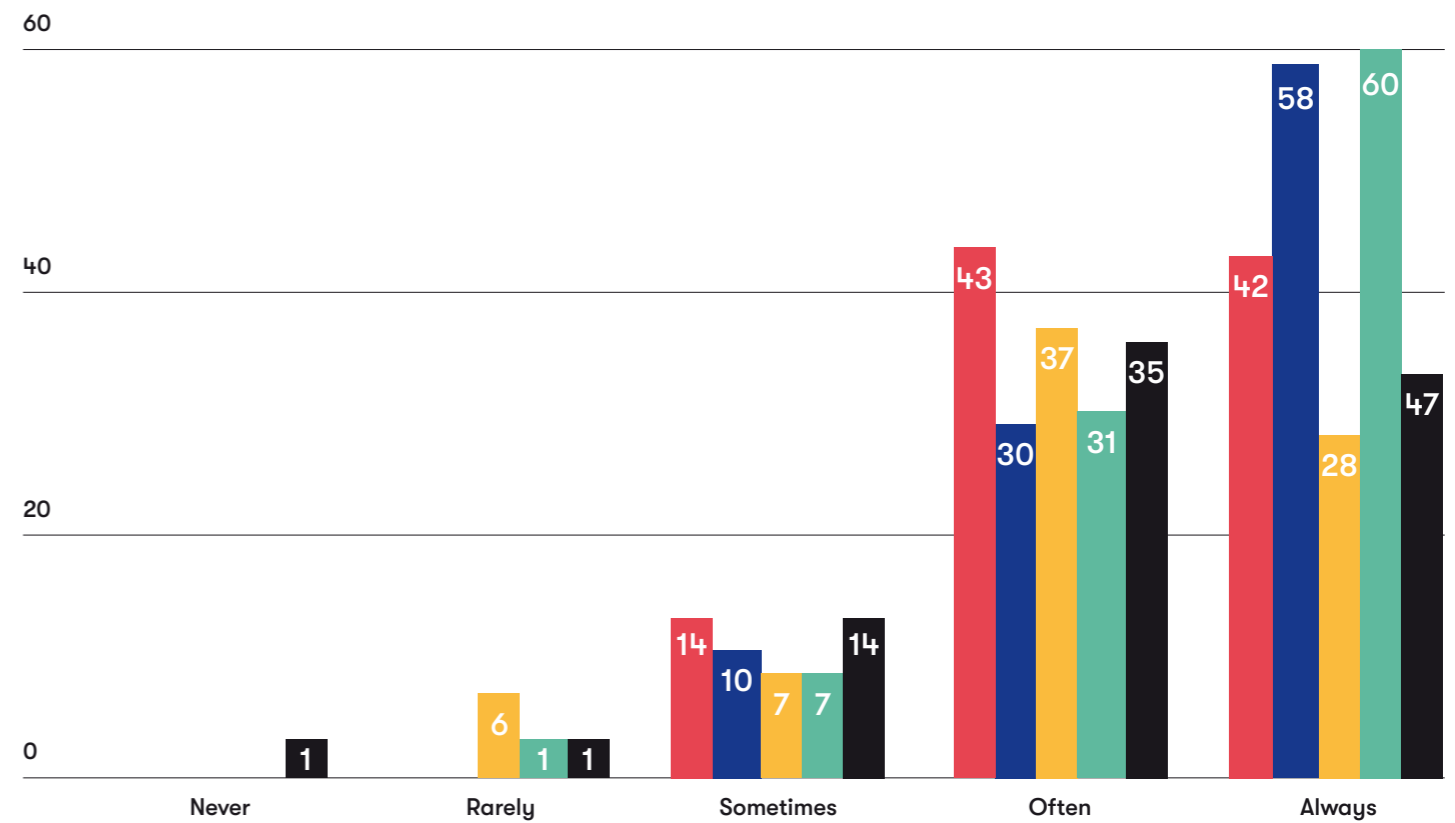
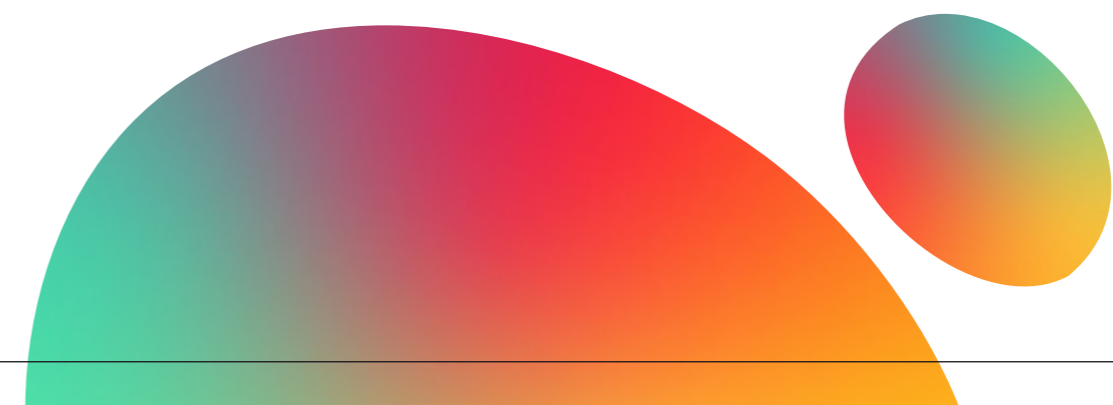


Fig. 8: Core Professional Attitudes based on their Importance (in %).

With the exception of the “Acceptance of Others”³⁶ attitude, those that are most frequently used (“Always” and “Often”) differ from those professionals consider essential (“Indispensable” and “Very Useful”).

Professionals report showing both “Acceptance of Others” and a “Cooperative Attitude” in their daily work, meaning that they take into account what young people consider to be their goals, needs and personal boundaries, as well as they seek to actively involve them in their own care and support plan from its conception through its realisation.³⁷ This could also explain why “Planning”³⁸ also scored so highly on the Frequency scale. The high frequency of use participants reported for both attitudes is coherent with prevalent Core Skills.

They also consider this attitude less important (42%) than having “Self Control”³⁹ (60%) and demonstrating “Assertiveness”⁴⁰ (47%), two very closely related attitudes. Earlier in the present article, we hypothesised that professionals tend to view young people in complex situations as problematic, as cases in need of solving. The importance they give to attitudes that allow them to “keep their cool”, while reporting they use them more “Often” (47% - 42%) than “Always” (41% - 35%), further supports this idea and raises another question. It could indicate that professionals are not able to maintain a calm and positive attitude as often as they would like when faced with young people making decisions they disagree with or showing poor impulse control. Furthermore, it could also or instead mean that professionals wished they were better trained or lacked tools to keep an even temper.



Conclusion

In light of all these elements, our comparative analysis of the e-Youth survey results and the ESCO classification helped draft a cross-sectoral competence professional profile, equipped with essential **Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes** to work with NEETs or more generally, young people in complex situations. The Core Skills and Attitudes participants to the survey highlighted show the true and genuine care professionals feel towards young people and what the latter consider to be their goals, needs and interests.

Professionals' commitment to building trusting and lasting relationships with young people is made obvious by two factors. First, they are willing to admit to personal limitations on an emotional level when they show worry towards their capacity to handle stressful situations and pursue the care or support plan in the aftermath of a crisis. They also clearly wish for more inclusive practices across professional sectors and for a more inclusive society in general, one that would welcome young people with their flaws and foster their qualities.

Drawing from this analysis, the four next e-Youth Project Results will tackle complementary aspects of support and care work directed towards young people in complex situations, providing both more data and insight on how to acquire or develop skills, knowledge and attitudes, in order to become better communicators, better counsellors and better carers for them.

What participants have reported being key obstacles in their daily work further supports this claim and its implications. The first one is the “distrust and emotional barriers young people have built as a consequence of past sad, harmful or traumatic experiences” (73%). They also find that young people “lack the minimum capacity to manage their own feelings, frustrations, impulsiveness and/or aggressive tendencies” (58%). Lastly, they regret “community stereotypes” (57%) and the “social isolation” (53%) that deters young people from seeking help. However, very few noted the need to develop new skills or acquire new knowledge (6 and 9% respectively).

Interestingly, these results are coherent with previous observations that professionals tend to perceive youth negatively, as problems in need of solving, and in the process miss opportunities to reflect upon their own practices. More research is needed to outline the extent of the paradox between professionals' ultimate goals (to help young people reach autonomy) and how their own biases in turn help and hinder them in achieving those goals. Major ethical risks attached to that endeavour would be to disregard professionals' agency, experience and direct knowledge of their work, as well as imposing undoubtedly necessary but nonetheless time and energy-consuming tasks, like keeping up with the latest academic publications in their domain.

Bibliography

Gloria Alvarez-Bernardo, Ana Belen Garcia-Berben, Adrian Salvador Lara-Garrido, 2022, “Cultural Competence and Social Work: Sexual and Gender Diversity in Two Universities in the South of Europe”, *Journal of Homosexuality*,

Cedefop, 2023, VET Toolkit for Empowering NEETs, Source of support of young people neither in employment, education or training, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/neets>

Joan C. Chrisler, Angela Barney, Brigida Palatino, 2016, “Ageism can be Hazardous to Women’s Health: Ageism, Sexism and Stereotypes of Older Women in the Healthcare System”, *The Society of the Psychological Study of Social Issues*, Vol. 72, pp. 86-104, DOI: 10.1111/josi.12157

European Commission, 2022, European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations v.1.1.1., <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en>

European Commission, 2021, “European Pillar of Social Rights”, Publications Office of the European Union, <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>

Eurostat, 2019, “Glossary: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)”, *Statistics Explained*, ISSN 2443-8219, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_and_training_\(NEET\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_and_training_(NEET))

Sarah Hamed, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert, Beth Maina Ahlberg, 2020, “Racism in European Health Care: Structural Violence and Beyond”, *Qualitative Health Research*, SageJournals, DOI: 10.1177/1049732320931430

Mari Kangasniemi, Sugen Karki, Ari Voutilainen, Reetta Saarnio, Leena Viinamäki, Arja Häggman-Laitila, 2020, “The value that social workers’ competencies add to health care: An integrative review”, *Review article, Health and Social Care in the Community*, N°403, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, DOI: 10.1111/hsc.13266

Margarida Rodrigues, Enrique Fernandez-Macias, Matteo Sostero, 2021, “A unified conceptual framework of tasks, skills and competences”, *JRC Working Papers Series on Labour, Education and Technology*, No. 2021/2, European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC), Seville

Abigail M. Ross, Elaine P. Congress, Sara Matsuzaka, 2018, “Intersectionality, Social Work, and Health”, in Janna C. Heyman, Elaine Congress (eds.), *Health and Social Work: Practice, Policy and Research*, Springer Publishing Company, pp. 51-63

Glossary

¹ Eurostat, 2019, "Glosario: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)", Statistics Explained, ISSN 2443-8219, ([Source Link](#)).

² Eurostat, 2023, "Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training" ([Source Link](#)).

³ VET toolkit for empowering NEETs, "Identify" ([Source link](#))

⁴ Margarida Rodrigues, Enrique Fernandez-Macias, Matteo Sostero, 2021, "A unified conceptual framework of tasks, skills and competences", JRC Working Papers Series on Labour, Education and Technology, No. 2021/2, Comisión Europea, Centro Común de Investigación (CCI), Sevilla.

⁵ Idem.

⁶ European Commission, 2022, "What is ESCO", European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations v.1.1.1., <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/about-esco/what-esco>

⁷ "Give attention to what other people say, patiently understand points being made, asking questions as appropriate and not interrupting at inappropriate times; [be] able to listen carefully to the needs of (...) service users or others, and provide solutions accordingly." ([ESCO link](#)).

⁸ "Identify oppression in societies, economies, cultures and groups, acting as a professional in a non-oppressive way, enabling service users to take action to improve their lives and enabling citizens to change their environment in accordance with their own interests." ([ESCO link](#)).

⁹ "Work in accordance with management and organisational principles and values focusing on human rights and social justice." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁰ "Accept accountability for one's own professional activities and recognise the limits of one's own scope of practice and competencies." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹¹ "Recognise one's own and other people's emotions, distinguish correctly between them and observe how they can influence one's environment and social interaction and what can be done about it." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹² "Working with two or more separate people or groups involved in a disagreement or dispute to bring about an agreement, settlement or compromise." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹³ "Maintain a temperate mental state and effective performance under pressure or adverse circumstances." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁴ "Withstand adversity, demonstrate resilience and find ways to resolve or manage the effects of difficult life events." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁵ "Assess the social situation of service users balancing curiosity and respect in the dialogue, considering their families, organisations and communities, and the associated risks, and identifying the needs and resources in order to meet physical, emotional and social needs." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁶ "Engaging in discussions in order to identify expectations, requirements, desires, needs and problems of clients, co-workers, students and others." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁷ "Follow risk assessment policies and procedures to assess the risk of a client harming [themselves] or others, taking the appropriate steps to minimise the risk." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁸ "Encourage and support [young people] in sociocultural activities in the organisation or in the community, supporting the development of leisure and work skills." ([ESCO link](#)).

¹⁹ "Work with children and young people to identify the skills and abilities they will need to become effective citizens and adults and to prepare them for independence." ([ESCO link](#)).

²⁰ The original label submitted in the survey was "Promote, protect and defend young people's social inclusion and access to cultural, educational and leisure activities, as well as the labour market." The ESCO definition for "[Promoting] inclusion goes as follows: "Promote inclusion in health care and social services and respect diversity of beliefs, culture, values and preferences, keeping in mind the importance of equality and diversity issues." ([ESCO link](#)).

²¹ "Speak for and on behalf of service users, using communicative skills and knowledge of relevant fields to assist those less advantaged."

²² "Assist others to gain access to social, legal or other services and benefits, including making referrals to other professionals and organisations." ([ESCO link](#)).

²³ "Facilitate the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the community and support them to establish and maintain relationships through access to community activities, venues and services." ([ESCO link](#)).

²⁴ "Assist individuals with administrative activities such as shopping, banking or paying bills." ([ESCO link](#)).

²⁵ "Make sure patients and their families are fully informed about the risks and benefits of proposed treatments or procedures so they can give informed consent, engaging patients and their families in the process of their care and treatment." ([ESCO link](#)).

²⁶ The original submitted label was "Identify and improve young service users' assertiveness and overall life and social skills for them to be able to resolve conflicts on their own". No ESCO equivalent could be found.

²⁷ Rodrigues et al., 2021, (...)

²⁸ [ESCO link](#)

²⁹ [ESCO link](#)

³⁰ [ESCO link](#)

³¹ [ESCO link](#)

³² [ESCO link](#)

³³ [ESCO link](#)

³⁴ [ESCO link](#)

³⁵ [ESCO link](#)

³⁶ e-Youth Glossary: "Professionals and/or families respect and accept young people's objectives, projects and vital interests. It is sometimes difficult to fully understand people with behavioural, emotion and/or social difficulties but this quality facilitates communication between the care and support providers and the young people they work with."

³⁷ Idem: "Professionals -individuals in general- that have developed this attitude take into account young people's opinions, their interests and needs. Moreover, we could interpret this attitude as a mechanism to promote youth participation in all processes and interventions relevant to their well-being. **The Cooperative Attitude** supposes to actively listen to and, at least, try to understand young people's feelings in order to gain their active cooperation."

³⁸ Idem: "Though closely related, this attitude should not be mistaken with Critical Thinking. While the latter requires analysing options and associated consequences, as well as assessing the quality of professionals' interventions, **Planning** refers exclusively to professionals and/or families looking ahead, designing action plans and putting strategies into walking order that are appropriate to young people's personal goals in order to achieve those. In other words, Critical Thinking focuses on professionals' practice and self-reflexion, while **Planning** focuses on care and support plans."

³⁹ Idem: "Professionals and/or families often face and have to overcome defiance, as well as distressing situations due to young people's potentially disruptive and even violent reactions. In these circumstances, any person can experience nervousness or negative feelings. Moreover, professionals and/or families may be presented with the need to act when faced with certain problems, and do so without having had the time to analyse risks and consequences beforehand. Therefore, the Self Control attitude refers to professionals and family members' capacity to manage their negative emotions and thoughts, and to keep control over their impulsive reactions."

⁴⁰ Idem: "Professionals and families who try to support young people with complex needs are submitted to big pressures. Under these circumstances, they can easily react impulsively, without logical reasoning, thus losing young people's trust as they battle with behavioural, emotional and/or social problems. But someone with enough Assertiveness is capable of controlling their instinctive and/or defensive reactions, as well as maintaining an even attitude when experiencing stress."



Cross-sectoral competence profile

For **professionals** working with **NEETS**

Current position
Since
Diploma

Priorities

Autonomy & social inclusion

Work for the empowerment of youth, for their ability to advocate and make important choices for themselves

Resource management

Work to build young people's financial skills and budget properly

Risk assessment & migration

Work to prevent crisis or conflictual situations with young people, avoiding legal liability

Qualities

Observation

Understand young people's environment to spot strengths, skills and resources

Active listening

Know when and what questions to ask, know when not to interrupt

Mediation

Help resolve conflicts or misunderstandings without taking sides

Communication

Adapt to people's cognitive capabilities when providing them with information

Personality

Planning —●— Improvisation

Assertiveness —●— Diffidence

Impulsiveness —●— Self Control

Cocreation —●— One-sided

Prejudice —●— Acceptance

Competence is less something we have than a way to describe how we are doing in doing a task. To do well when working with young people in complex situations, one must have and combine the relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes, described above and below.

Social skills

Listening with empathy

Understand without interpreting the challenges young people face and what their needs, interests and goals are for themselves

Emotional intelligence

Promote young people's self awareness and ability to de-escalate internal crisis

Positivity

Face distressing situations with an even temper, and keep young people hopeful

Counselling skills

Assessing situations

Identifying preferences, wishes and needs, obstacles and difficulties

Support decision making

Teach young people to imagine the most probable outcomes of their choices

Define goals

Help young people set life goals for themselves and strategise on how to fulfill them

Life skills

Promote social inclusion

Advocate for young people and build inclusive work environments

Navigate institutions

Assists young people in accessing ordinary services they need

Improve self reliance

Help young people become able to manage their own personal affairs and their resources

Knowledge

Policies

Know about and abide by crisis, resource and team management policies as well as inter- and national laws

Social sciences & humanities

Stay alert on latest academic publications in one's work field and be able to reflect ethically on work practices

Disability types & care

Know about the health factors that can affect youth and how to treat or care for them

This competence profile was outlined using the e-Youth 2022 online survey which reached 86 professionals from Belgium, Denmark, France, Slovenia and Spain. It serves as a map of professionals' current skills, knowledge and attitudes that they use when working with NEETS or young people in complex situations.

Created by the Udaf 82
Contact





Co-funded by
the European Union

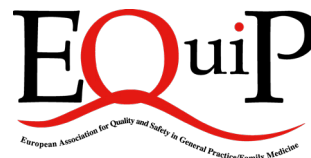


CC BY-SA 4.0 LEGAL CODE
Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0
International

A project by

support
GIRONA

With the collaboration of



"Empowering Youth Individuals with fewer opportunities towards citizenship"

Project identification number: **2021-1-ES02-KA220-YOU-000028882**

The support of the European Commission for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the content, which reflects the views of the authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

