



Assessment and recognition of transversal competences, acquired by young adults in international mobility projects, as a means to facilitate their socio-professional inclusion

AKI Guidebook

Five transversal competences acquired in international experience



AKI is a European project contributing to the identification and recognition of transversal competences acquired in international mobility experience, outside of school and university curricula, by young adults aged 18 to 30 years old. The project addresses a common task of making these competences more visible and fostering their relevance on the labour market and society. It is financed by the Erasmus+ Youth programme.

The issuing partnership consists of major international mobility operators and of the business world:

- l'Office franco-allemand pour la Jeunesse (OFAJ)/Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk (DFJW) ;
- l'Office franco-québécois pour la Jeunesse (OFQJ) ;
- l'Institut Supérieur de Formation Permanente (INSUP) ;
- l'Union Wallonne des Entreprises (UWE).

Associated partners added their expertise to the work:

- le Bureau International Jeunesse Wallonie Bruxelles (BIJ) ;
- les Offices jeunesse internationaux du Québec (LOJIQ).

International mobility experience places the participants in a new dynamic and allows for the development of certain competences. They complete their project with pride and undertake their commitments to society, business, the community, and civil organisations with enhanced confidence. Mobility experience prompts the participants out of their day-to-day reality to venture away from their comfort zone by modifying their habits. Openness to the world, to others and their differences, indubitably lays the grounds for citizenship and community-awareness.

Technical competences, whether specific or linguistic, can be formalized with reference to a professional skills base or on the Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The task is harder when it comes to transversal competences, such as the ability to adapt or the ability to get involved in a group.

Drawing from these observations, the work has led to the devising of a guidebook dedicated to describing five transversal competences acquired in international mobility experience:

- Open-mindedness
- Adaptation to change
- Interpersonal relations
- Sense of responsibility
- Self-confidence

The guide is completed by an assessment kit. It provides tools to help the participant to reflect upon their international mobility experience (questionnaire for the participant, follow-up sheet for the tutor, AKI competences recap sheet).

The partnership's output relies on the operators' practical knowledge of the impact of international mobility programmes in Germany, Belgium, France and Quebec. It rests on the expertise of European and Quebecois researchers and specialists in youth programs and the business world.

« Men build too many walls, not enough bridges.»

Isaac Newton

A guide: what for ?	p.5
For whom ?	p.5
What is it we are talking about ?	p.6
Your experience abroad : your set of cards to play	p.8
AKI competences reference grid	p.9
Sheets featuring :	
Open-mindedness	p.10
Adaptation to change	p.11
Interpersonal relations	p.12
Sense of responsibility	p.13
Self-confidence	p.14
List of annexes	p.15
Annex 1 : Methodology	p.16
Annex 2 : Glossary	p.17
Annex 3 : Bibliography	p.19

The challenges the younger generation faces today (difficult access to jobs, inclusion in a multi-ethnic society, recognition of their competences in a globalised context) justify closer attention to transversal competences.

While devising their guide, the wish of the AKI partners was to use a language common to the field of non-formal education and to the labour market, with a view to:

- demonstrating that international mobility is a means to develop transversal competences ;
- helping young adults to put their experience into words, to identify and bring out competences acquired in international mobility projects ;
- making employers aware that international mobility can produce the kind of competences they look for ;
- showing how useful these competences can be socially and professionally.

FOR WHOM ?

This guide is dedicated to:

- participants in non-formal international mobility programmes run by the AKI partners (outside of school and university curricula) as well as in other programmes such as the European Voluntary Service or the French Civil Service abroad ;
- tutors hosting mobility programme participants within their respective organisations.

The objectives and contents of our guide can nonetheless be of interest to beneficiaries of international mobility experience carried out in a formal context (school or university curricula).

May also be helpful to:

- young adults seeking to better understand transversal competences with a view to facilitating their socio-professional integration ;
- youth organisation professionals using tools to help their public appropriate the competences developed during non-formal education experience (volunteering, citizenship education activities) ;
- employers (from private companies, civil organisations, NGOs, public administration entities...) who look for ways beyond technical competences to better adapt to and evolve in the business world, and who therefore focus greater interest on transversal competences ;
- any organisation likely to use the guide (vocational training, career counselling organisations).

TRANVERSAL COMPETENCES

Competence is a combination of three elements necessary to the accomplishment of an action:

- knowledge ;
- aptitude (skills, know-how) ;
- attitude (knowing how to behave).

So, being competent means I know what to do and how to do it in a given context.

Transversal competences typically apply to a wide variety of situations pertaining to different spheres of life (professional, social, personal). In a professional context, they are useful in a large number of professions and professional areas.

According to the French Centre for Strategic Analysis (Centre d'Analyse stratégique français), transversal competences are tantamount to generic competences, i.e. they are directly related to basic knowledge or behavioural, cognitive or organisational competences.

Key competences for lifelong learning (European Community recommendation 2006/962/EC, dated 18 December 2006) fall under the category of transversal competences, defined by the European Union as a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment.

The 8 key competences are as follows:

- Communication in the mother tongue ;
- Communication in foreign languages ;
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology ;
- Digital competence ;
- Learning to learn ;
- Social and civic competence ;
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship ;
- Cultural awareness and expression.

The transversal competences approach chosen by the AKI partners combines transversal competences per se and attitudes in line with the recommendation of the European Parliament and the European Council, as quoted above.

The five AKI competences acquired in international mobility experience, outside of school and university curricula, will likely be appealed to in social or professional contexts.

WHAT IS IT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT ?

ABOUT FIVE TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES DEVELOPED IN INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY EXPERIENCE

Setting a definite list of transversal competences was not our objective, rather to select a reasonable number of them, especially those developed on the occasion of international mobility experience with a view to facilitating the socio-professional integration of young adults.



After interviewing participants and employers from the partners' respective countries, we have identified competences characteristic of international mobility experience which are recognised as essential by recruiters in Belgium, France, Germany and Quebec.

These very competences were retained by the Brussels International Youth Bureau (BIJ) as characteristic of people's active citizenship. They also appear in recent skills bases such as the Canadian generic skills for communities proposed by the Réseau pour le Développement de l'Alphabétisme et des Compétences (RESDAC) – Network for the Development of Literacy and Competences.

The common stakes are to help participants gain awareness of the competences they acquire and to enable employers to better recognise the impact of international mobility experience in terms of transversal competences, such as self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

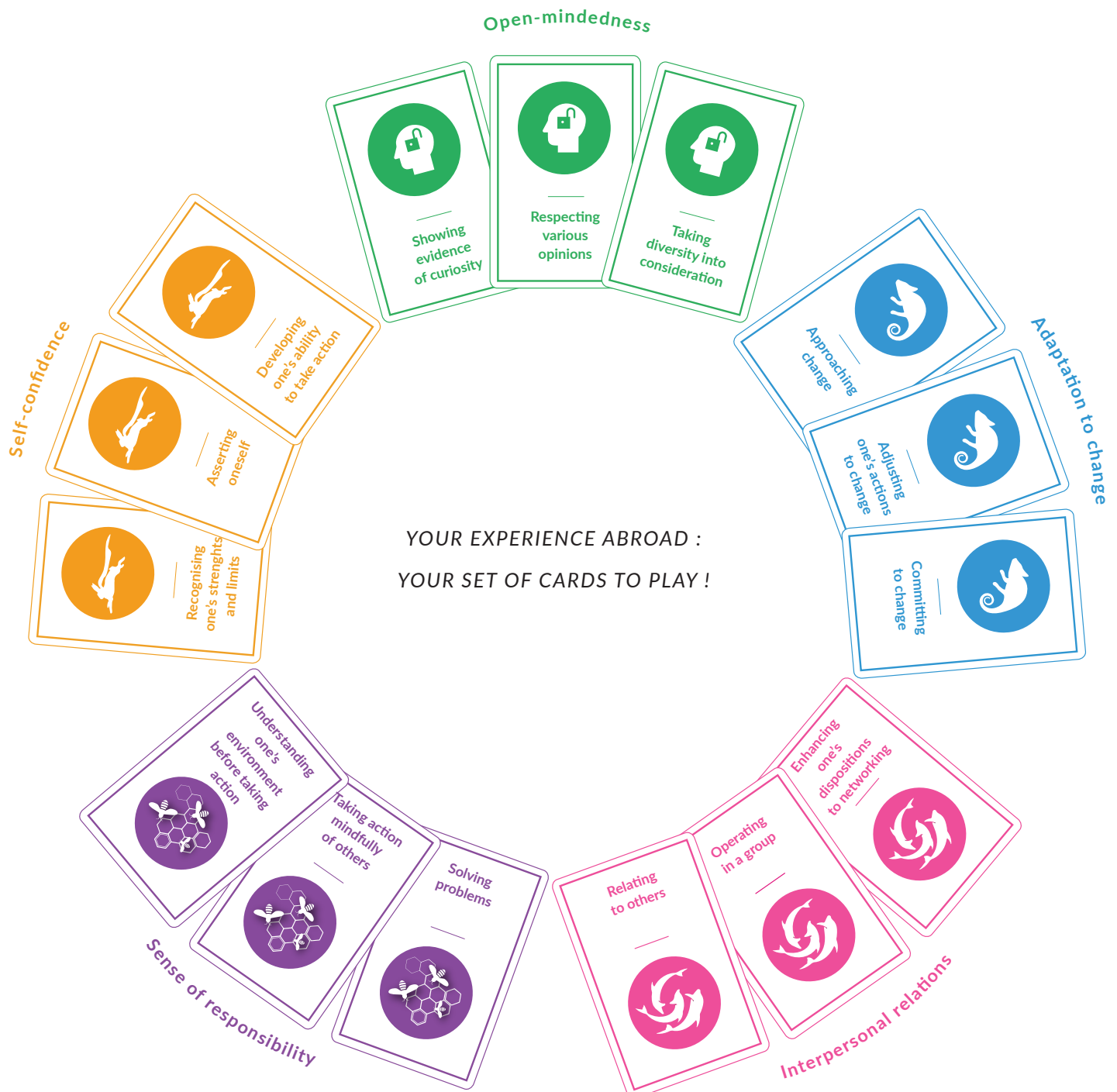
The featured competences are closely linked to one another.

International mobility, as a competence booster, supplies young adults with cards they can play socially and professionally.

YOUR EXPERIENCE ABROAD: YOUR SET OF CARDS TO PLAY !

The AKI partnership chose to present its tools in the form of a card game. Each transversal competences is broken down into three abilities, symbolised by three different cards. Any given young adult possesses at least some embryonic abilities within the five AKI competences, formerly developed through personal, professional or social experience.

International mobility experience will consolidate the participant's potential for these competences, or develop new ones.



AKI COMPETENCES GRID

> Open-mindedness

Showing evidence of curiosity

- Be interested in others
- Find out about one's environment
- Compare the new environment with what is already known
- Head out to the unknown

Respecting various opinions

- Listen to every person's opinion
- Listen without seeking to impose one's ideas
- Remain to all opinions differing from one's own
- Assimiler criticism in a constructive fashion

Taking diversity into consideration

- Be aware of the surrounding diversity
- Be mindful of others in their differences
- Share one's differences with others
- Broaden oneself through exposure to diversity

> Adaptation to change

Approaching change

- Be open to change
- Understand what causes change
- Understand what is to be gained or lost in change
- Keep a critical mind about change

Adjusting one's actions to change

- Leave one's references behind to make room for the new
- Change one's plans and way of doing things
- Provide oneself the necessary resources for adaptation
- Adapt to change without loss of efficiency

Committing to change

- Make proposals
- Learn new tasks, technologies
- Display creativity
- Initiate change

> Interpersonal relations

Relating to others

- Actively listen to others
- Place oneself in other people's shoes to understand how they feel
- Choose the most appropriate means of communication for one's interlocutor
- Communicate easily with strangers

Operating in a group

- Identify roles and places in a group
- Participate in the group's activities in pursuit of a common goal
- Bring help to members of the group
- Prefer the group's interest to one's own

Enhancing one's dispositions to networking

- Integrate into an existing network of contacts
- Create one's network of contacts
- Maintain one's network of contacts via NIT and real-life encounters
- Enlarge one's network of contacts via NIT and real-life encounters

> Sens of responsibility

Understanding one's environment before taking action

- Understand what is expected of oneself
- Take into account the resources and constraints of the environment
- Analyse the situation
- Devise an action plan

Taking action mindfully of others

- Avoid taking risks irrespective of oneself and others
- Answer for one's actions and take responsibility for their consequences
- Share decision-making with others
- Support collective decision-making

Solving problems

- Find a solution to a problem
- Ask for help when needed
- Teach others how to solve problems
- Anticipate problems

> Self-confidence

Recognising one's strenghts and limits

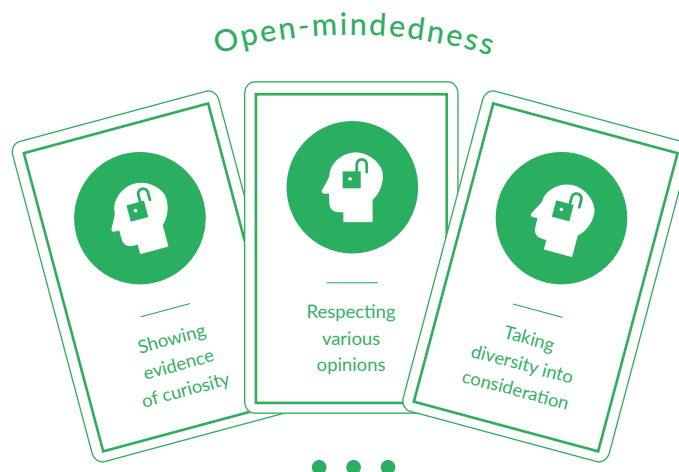
- Show awareness of one's strenghts
- Recognise one's limits
- Try to overcome one's limits
- Turn one's limits into an asset

Asserting oneself

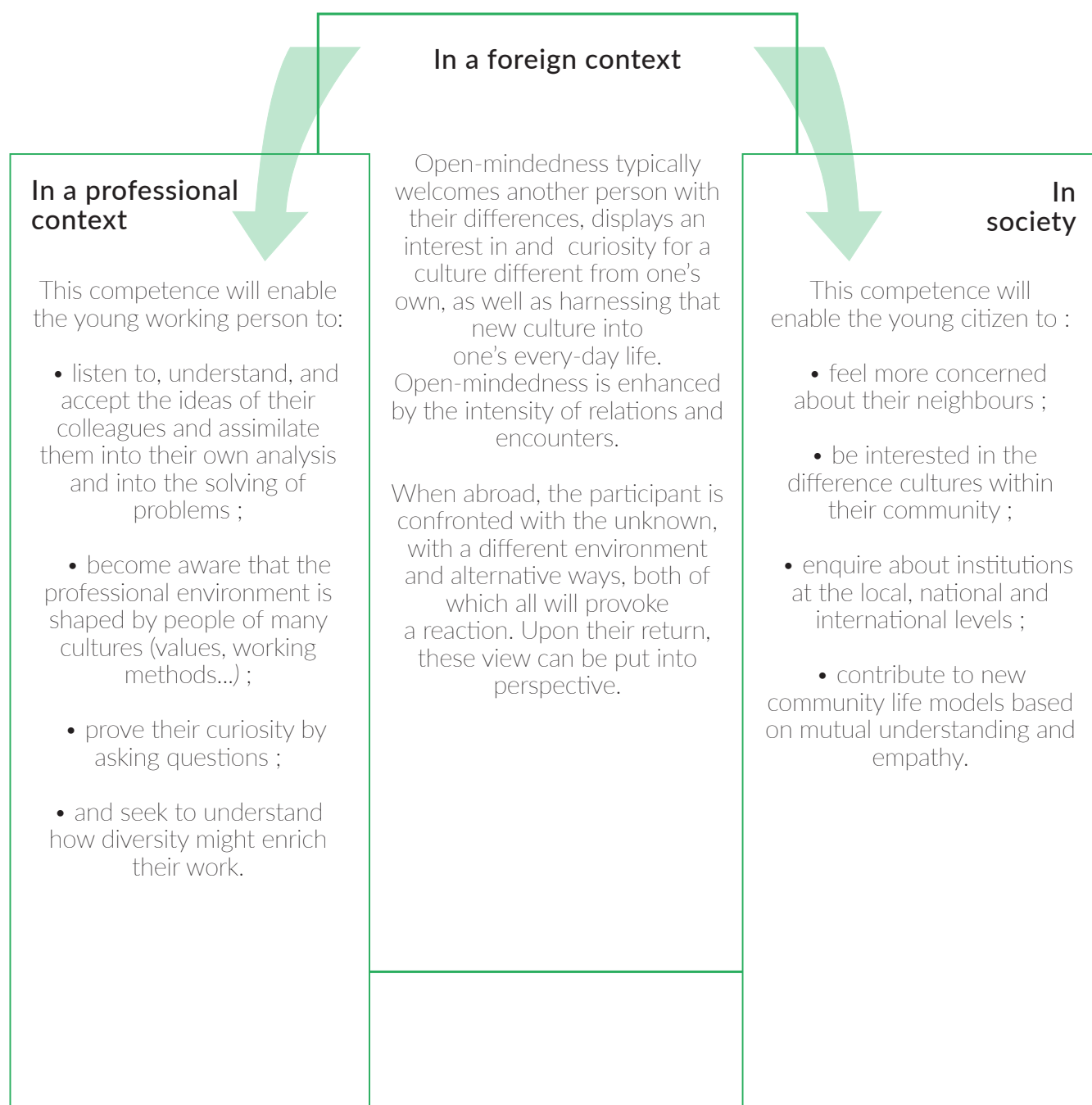
- Observe one's environment in order to act accordingly
- Find one's position in a group with regard to one's abilities
- Assert one's choices and one's opinions
- Express oneself without feeling destabilised by criticism

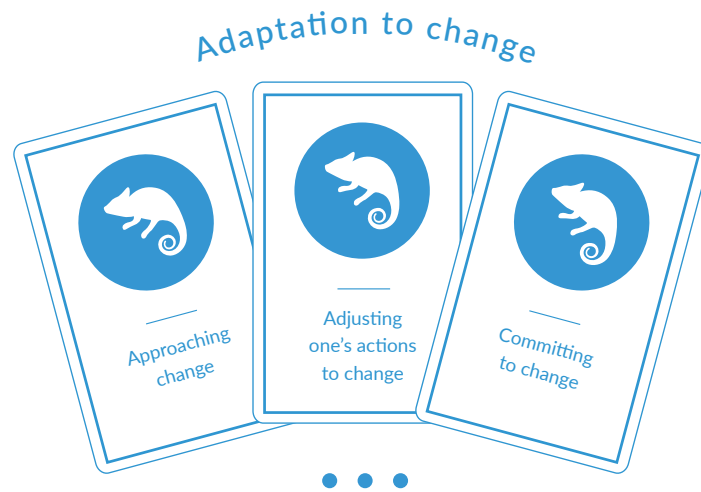
Developing one's ability to take action

- Ask oneself what can be done
- Take initiatives
- Take up challenges
- Looking for ways to bounce back in case of failure

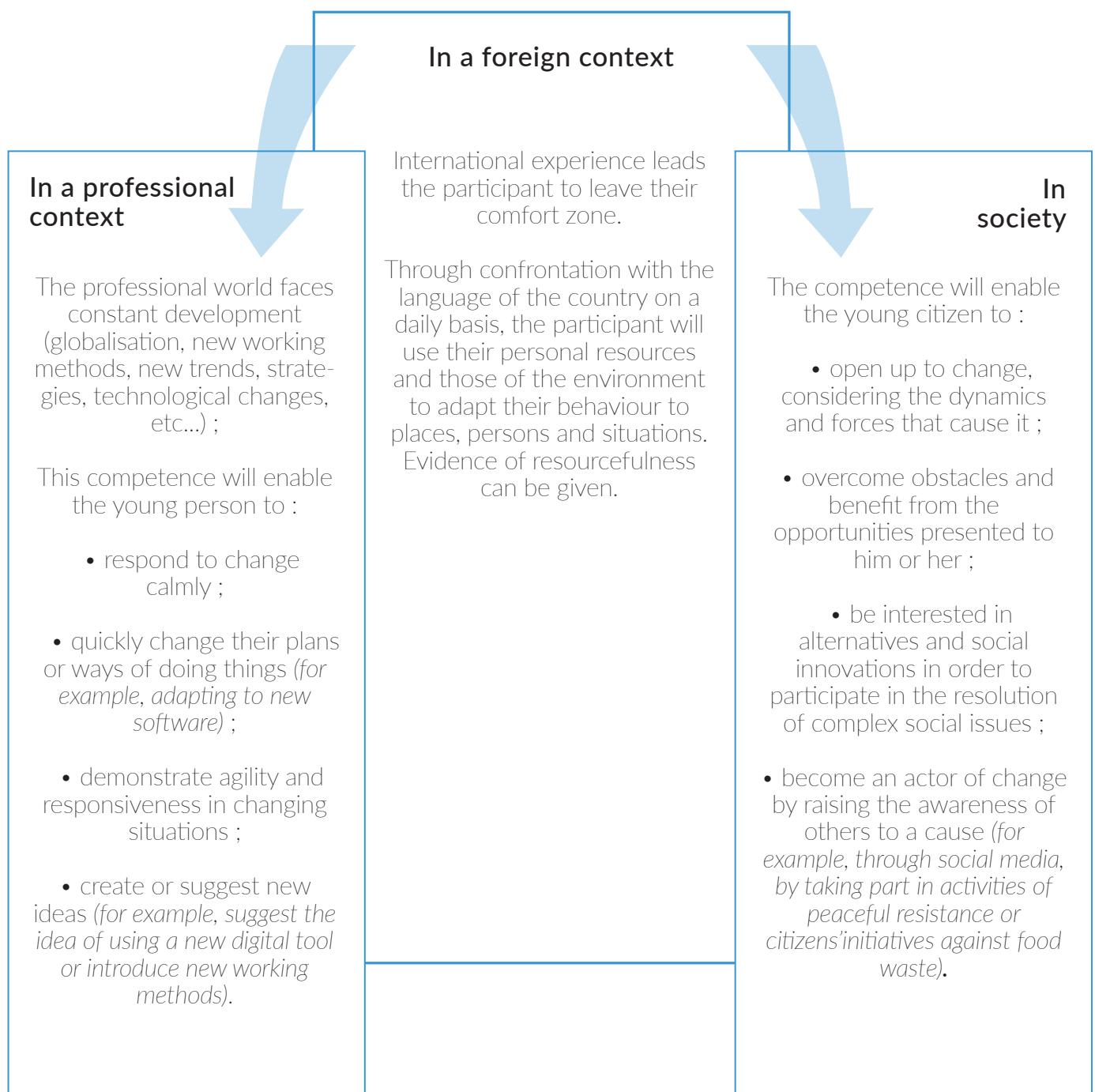


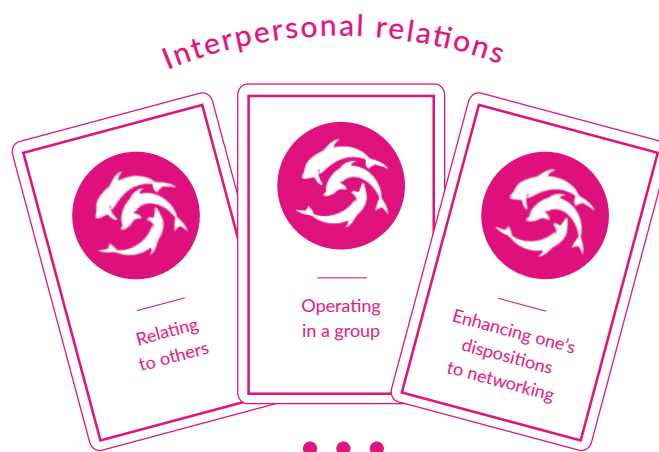
Open-mindedness allows a person to have a wider look at their surroundings, at others and how to adapt their behaviour and speech to individuals and context. In other words, to be open-minded means to welcome cultural and diversity of opinions and to adapt accordingly.



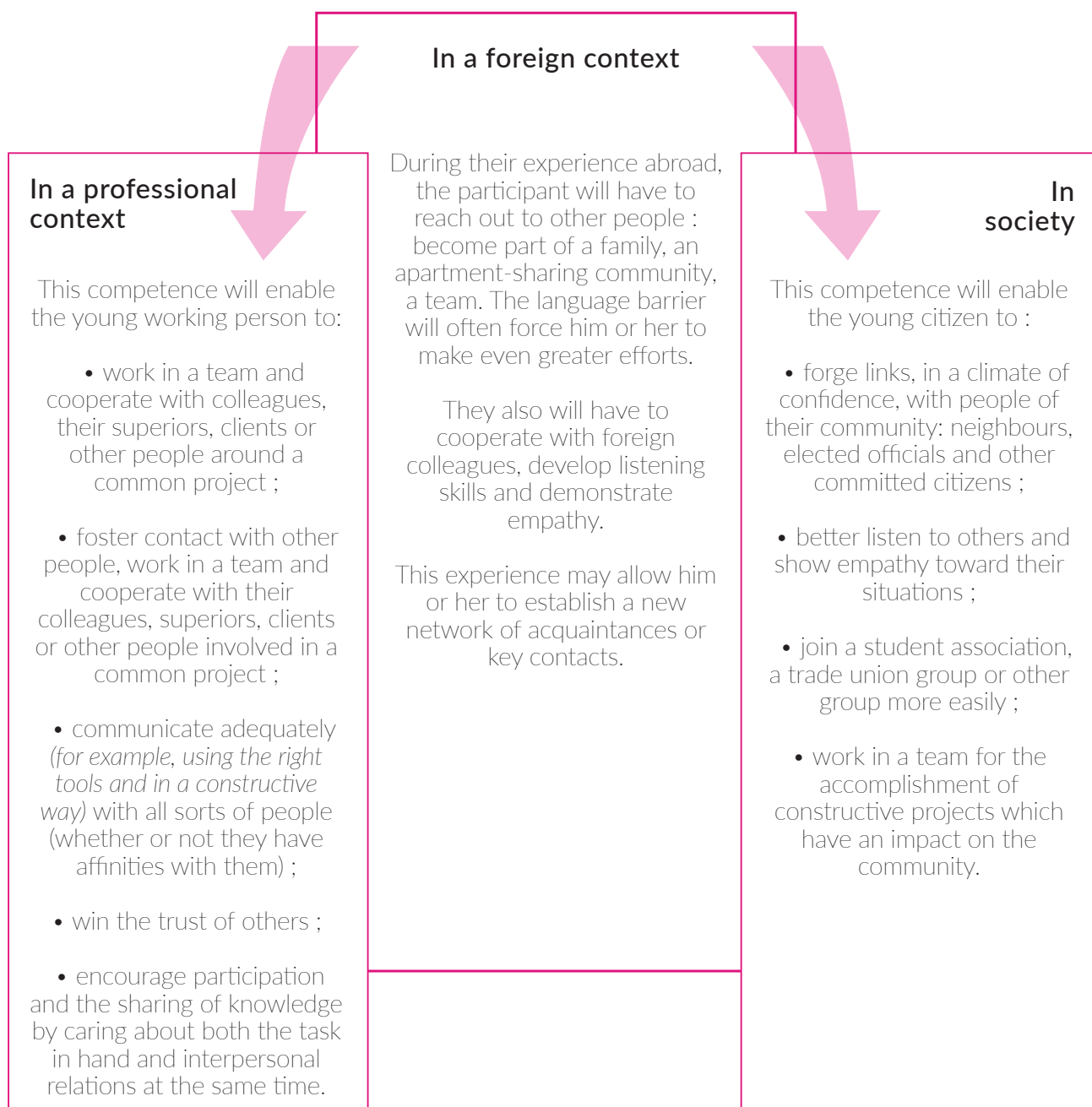


Adaptation to change allows a person to cope with unforeseen and diverse situations in a constantly evolving society



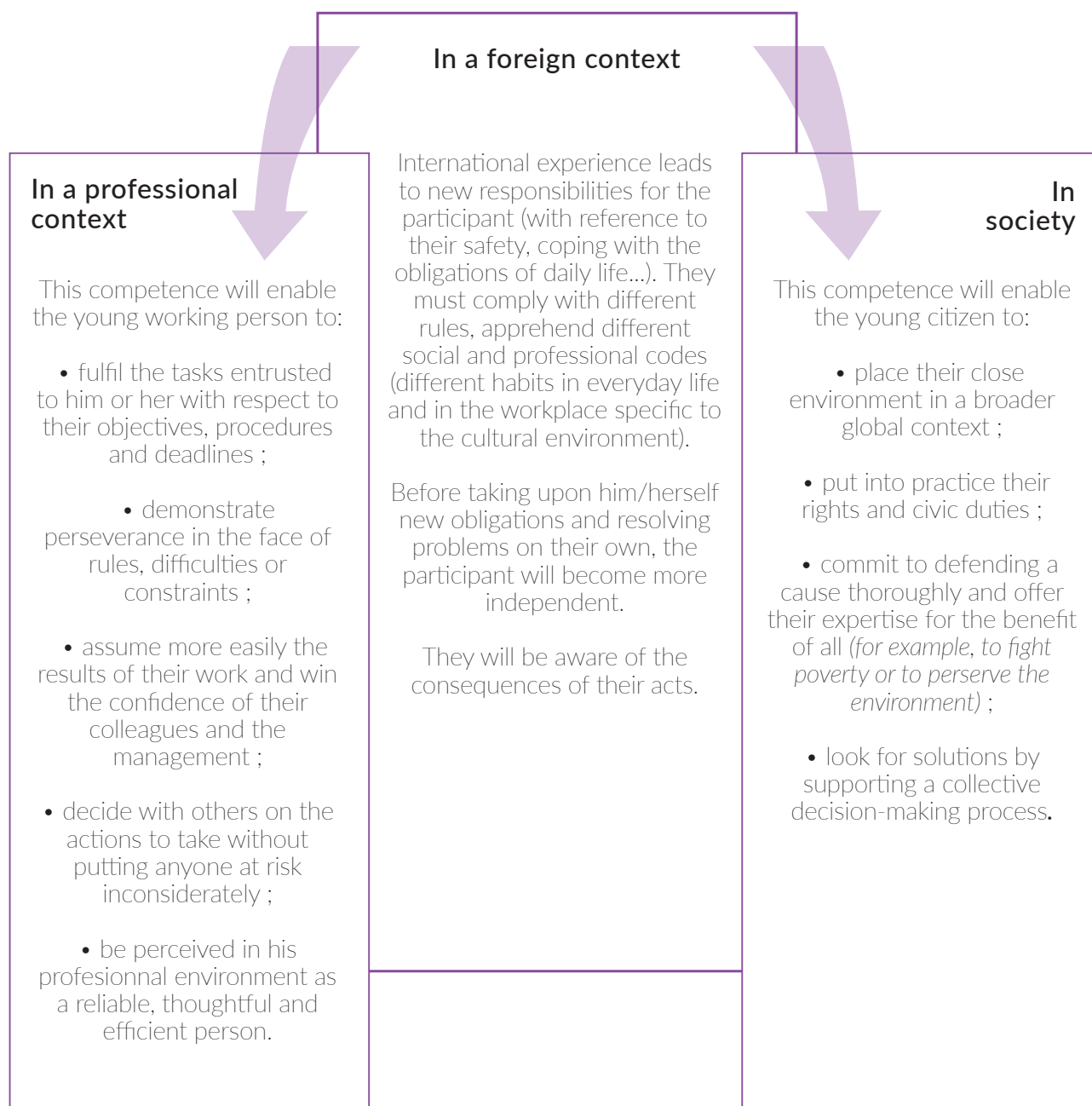


Having a sense of interpersonal relations allows a person to adequately communicate with others in order to build relationships, to engage in a group by being actively involved in the pursuit of a common goal and to maintain a network of acquaintances or contacts with people from all backgrounds.





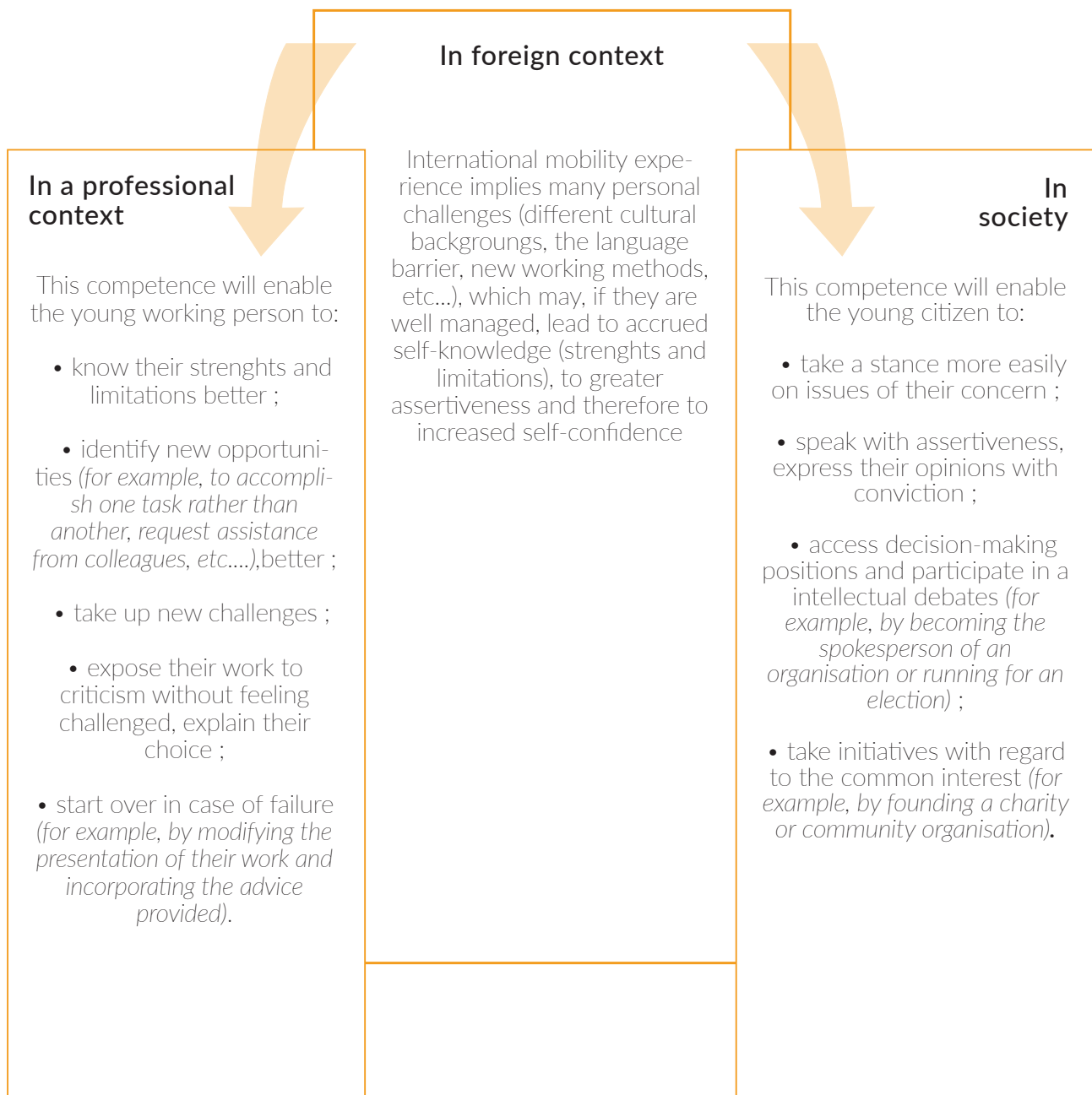
Having a strong sense of responsibility allows a person to respect their commitments, taking into account the resources and constraints of their environment, to account for their actions and to be accountable for the consequences. A responsive person is reliable and trustworthy.



Self-confidence



Having self-confidence reflects the ability to believe in one's potential (knowledge, abilities, qualities, values) and to act with assertiveness in a specific context (professional, personal, social).



Annex 1 : Methodology

Annex 2 : Glossary

Annex 3 : Bibliography

We have carried out some research to take stock of the situation concerning:

- the competences acquired during an international mobility period as a non-formal learning experience
- the transversal competences expected on the job market
- the competences associated with the notion of participative citizenship
- the transversal competences present in three international recruitment tests (PAPI¹ ; SOSIE² ; D5D³)

In addition, we have analysed the assessment practices of each AKI partner in order to identify the transversal competences commonly used in their assessment grids or questionnaires.

A primary list of transversal competences based on a common denominator (competences acquired in mobility projects and useful professionally and socially) and submitted to a sample of participants and organisations, in order to refine our selection.

Belgian, French, German and Quebecois cultural references were taken into account.

The AKI partnership has indeed benefited from the contributions of the Quebec sections of the OFQJ and of the BIJ (via LOJIQ, Les Offices Jeunesse internationaux du Québec). A working group organised in February 2016 in Montreal by the OFQJ French section gave way to the first presentation of our work to Quebecois employers and was an opportunity to benefit from the expertise of Ewan Oiry and Sylvie Guerrero, human resource management professors from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) – University of Quebec in Montreal. Also, the working group discussed with Hervé Dignard, from the Institut de Coopération & d'Éducation des adultes (ICEA) – Institute for Cooperation & Adult Education.

Finally, our work is indebted to the contributions of Rita Bergstein, Project Coordinator at SALTO Youth Cooperation & Training.

After revising and validating the list of transversal competences as a consequence of these exchanges, we were able to:

- define each competence by using the key-words collected from participants and employers,
- separate each competence into three abilities,
- present each ability in 4 dimensions,
- write a short paragraph for each competence describing its development in an international mobility experience and its meaning in the workplace and in society (cross-field links).

¹ Perception and preference inventory (PAPI).

² SOSIE 2nd GENERATION.

³ Description en 5 Dimensions de la personnalité (D5D) - *Description of Personality in 5 Dimensions*

- **Competence¹** : Competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a given context.
- **Key Competences²** : The European Union defines them as a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment.

The 8 key competences, as presented in the Common European Framework of Reference, are as follows:

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in a foreign language
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning to learn
6. Social and civic competences
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
8. Cultural awareness and expression

- **Language competence** : All the capacities that allow expression in one's mother tongue or other languages. The language competences can be assessed in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)³ . This framework of reference is used in Europe as well as in other continents. It is available in 40 languages.

- **Competence specific to a profession / professional competence** : Specialised knowledge and implemented know-how, instrumental in performing a task, achieving a result.

- **Transversal competences** : Transversal competences are generic competences (directly related to basic knowledge or behavioural, cognitive or organisational competences)⁴ . They typically apply to a wide variety of situations pertaining to different spheres of life (professional, social, personal). In a professional context, they come in handy in a large number of professions and professional areas.

¹ Definition drawn from Recommendation 2006/962/EC on key competences for lifelong learning.

² Definition drawn from Recommendation 2006/962/EC on key competences for lifelong learning.

³ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR).
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp

⁴ Definition by the French Centre d'analyse stratégique (Centre for Strategic Analysis). Note n°219 – “Transversal Competences” and “Transferable Competences”: competences that facilitate professional mobility.

- **Formal education**⁵ : Education provided by the traditional teaching system, hierarchically structured and organised in successive levels, from primary to higher education.
- **Informal education** : Is a process allowing the individual to acquire attitudes, values, competences and knowledge, thanks to experience on an everyday basis, for example with family, friends, peer groups, in the media or due to other influences and factors present in their environment.
- **Non-formal education** : Extends to educational activities organised outside of the official teaching system aimed at particular target-groups, pursuing specific learning objectives.
- **The valuing of learning experience** : Consists in the promotion of formal or non-formal learning processes and the issuing outcomes in order to favour awareness in concerned professionals to their intrinsic value and support their recognition.⁶

⁵ Definitions of formal, informal and non-formal education by UNESCO (Youth, Education and Action to the New Century and Beyond, 24 July 1998)

⁶ Cedefop, European Commission, 2001.

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