

# Introduce youthself HANDBOOK



*Presenting the*

 **Competent** *app*

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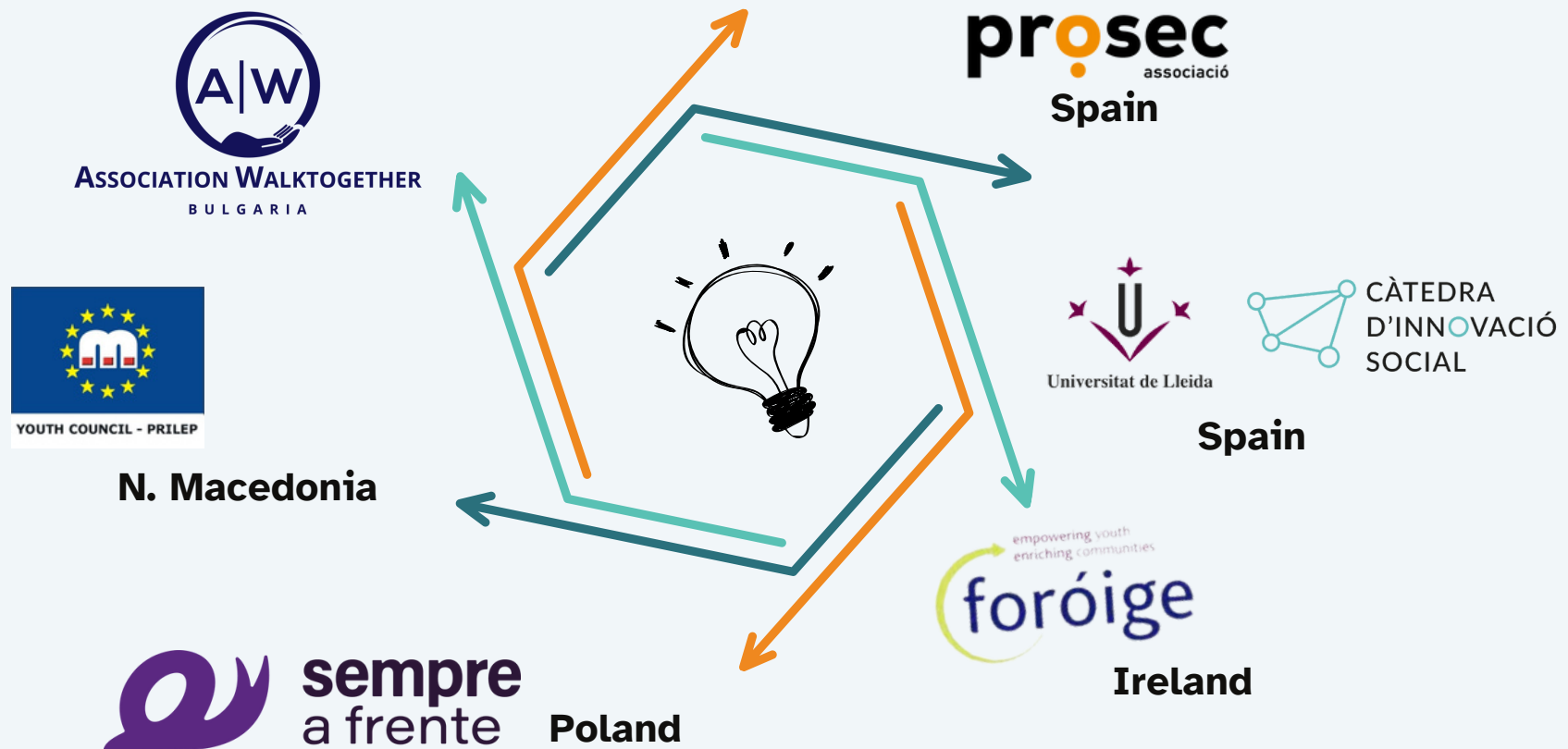
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## Where did the idea come from?

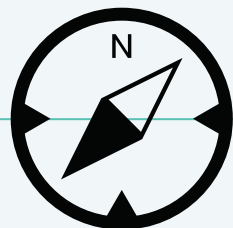
The Competent app was created during an **Erasmus+** Key Action 2 project called **Introduce Youthself** carried out by 6 organisations from 5 countries:



# Who is this guide for ?

This guide is designed to be a user-friendly support for organisations who are interested in using the **Competent** app and its integrated validation process within their activities.

It aims to provide clear guidance and helpful resources to assist in effectively carrying out competency validation processes for young people.



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## Introducing the **Competent** app



1

What are the benefits of a competency validation process for young people?

2

Who is the validation process for?

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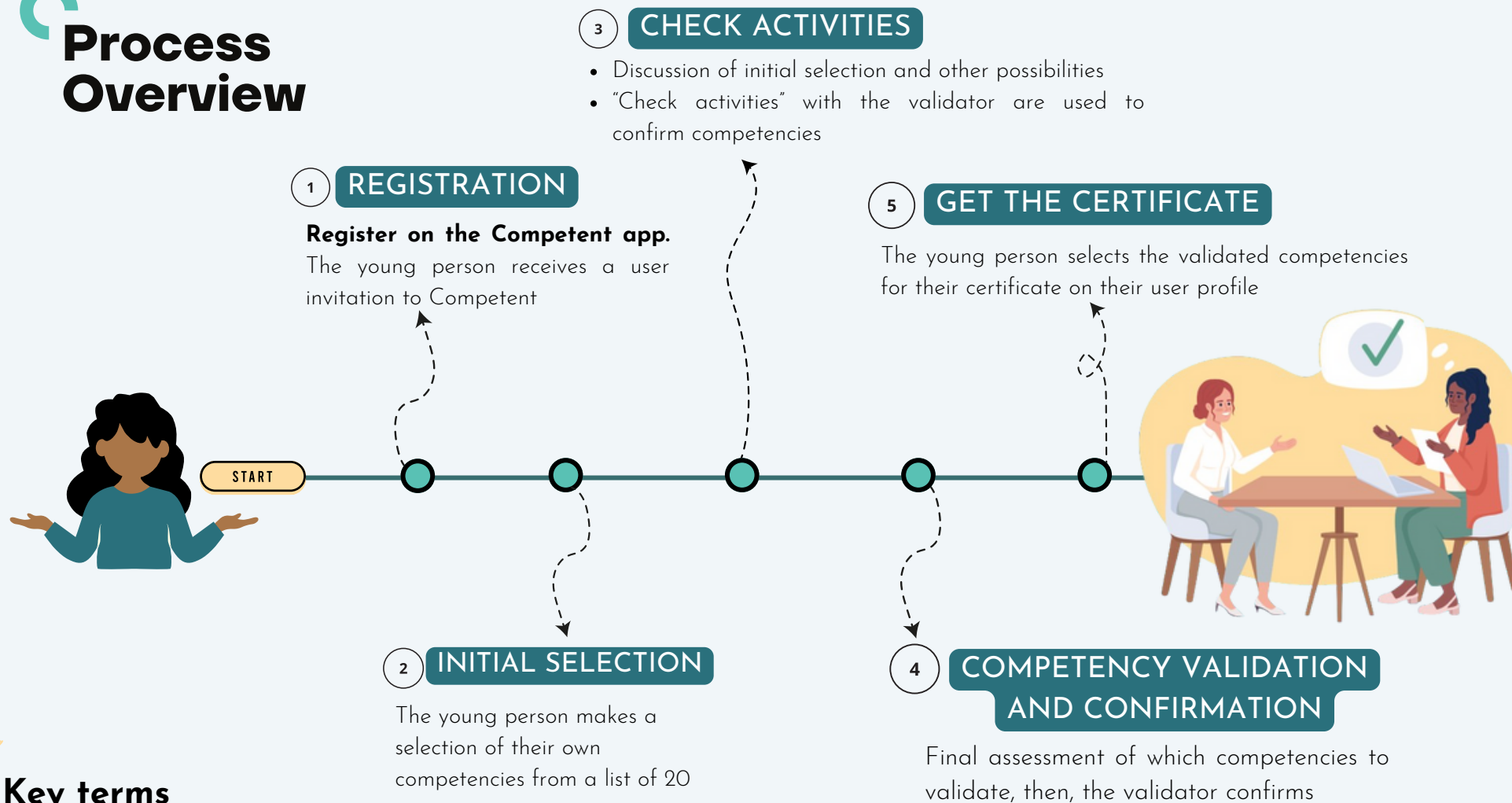
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Why is this process useful for potential employers?



# Process Overview



## Key terms

**Competencies:** An individual’s knowledge and behaviour that enable them to achieve goals or complete tasks. They typically comprise a blend of skills, abilities, and knowledge that contribute to success in both personal and professional aspects of life.

**Validator:** Someone who knows the young person personally and well, and whose expertise is considered valuable. Validators play a crucial role in validating (or confirming) the young person’s competencies.

**To validate:** To make something officially acceptable or approved, especially after examining it closely. In the context of competency assessment, it involves confirming the skills, abilities, and knowledge possessed by an individual based on thorough assessment.

## What are the benefits of a competency validation process for young people?

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Many young people have a hard time figuring out what they're good at and expressing it clearly. It can often be difficult for them to define their skills and strengths. This leads to a series of problems that can get in the way of a young person's growth and development. These include:

- Inadequate awareness of the skills and strengths they possess.
- Difficulty translating non-formal or informal learning experiences into relevant qualifications.
- The need to demonstrate potential despite the lack of experience in the workplace.

When looking for a job, these challenges can make it difficult for young people to create a CV that highlights their individual talents and that puts them in a good position to gain employment.

Young people from disadvantaged social and economic background and who have no prior work experience are particularly affected by these difficulties.





## How does the validation process with the Competent app help?

The competency validation process offered through the **Competent** app aims to help young people overcome these challenges in recognising and demonstrating their unique skills and talents.

By working with a **validator** (a professional reference figure with direct knowledge of their competencies), they can assess and then validate their competencies, creating their unique competency profile.

They can then create a CV that more effectively showcases their unique abilities.

Instead of being a 'TEAM PLAYER' and 'ENTHUSIASTIC' (which have been written on almost all CVs, ever!), young people will be able to show who they really are: 'CATALYSTS OF CHANGE', 'AUTONOMOUS' or 'CRITICAL THINKERS'.





# Aims and objectives of the competency validation process

**Competent**'s validation process has two simple aims:

## **Empowering young people**

The process helps young individuals gain a deeper understanding of their skills, strengths, and competencies, fostering self-awareness and boosting their confidence.

## **Facilitating accurate self-presentation**

It enables young people to effectively articulate their abilities and qualities, allowing them to create a CV that highlights their unique talents.





## The main benefits

This validation process supports young people in understanding and expressing their unique strengths and competencies. It helps them to overcome barriers to success, guides them in adapting to the changing world of work, and fosters personal growth. It has two stand-out benefits:

### Getting a job

The validation process aims to enhance its users' employability prospects. By identifying and recognising an individual's particular skills and strengths, and then providing them with evidence of the support of a professional who knows them directly, the process has the potential to raise their chances of having success in the job market.

The competency validation process is particularly aimed at supporting young people who have been left behind by the formal education system and those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. It provides these individuals with a fair chance to compete by helping them to assess and showcase their skills effectively.

### Enhancing self-awareness

When young people understand their own set of competencies and strengths better, they can make more informed choices about their personal and professional growth. Their ability to articulate what they are good at credibly also leads to improved self-confidence.

The validation process addresses the need for young people to build an integrated identity. When validating their skills and competencies within the process, young individuals can better understand who they are and how their strengths contribute to their overall identity. These aspects of personal growth and self-understanding are crucial for young individuals facing the challenge of shaping their own identities within society.

## **Who is the validation process for?**

The validation process can be useful for anybody who is interested in reflecting on their own unique set of competencies and receiving the input of a professional who can support them. However, the process has been created with certain groups with specific profiles in mind:

### **Young people facing socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds**

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom have not been adequately supported by the formal education system, can benefit greatly.

The validation process provides them with a structured framework to assess and showcase their skills. The idea is to help to level the playing field and improve their chances of success.



# Who is the validation process for?

## **Young people lacking clear direction**

Young people who are unsure about their career path or future direction will benefit from assessing their competencies. The input from the validator, who will be an expert in the field of youthwork or education, can guide them in making informed decisions about their educational and professional pursuits.

## **Young people striving for personal development**

All young people prioritising personal growth and development can also benefit from this process. It will help them to understand how their competencies contribute to their overall identity, guiding their journey of self-discovery and self-improvement.



## What is the role of the validator in the process?

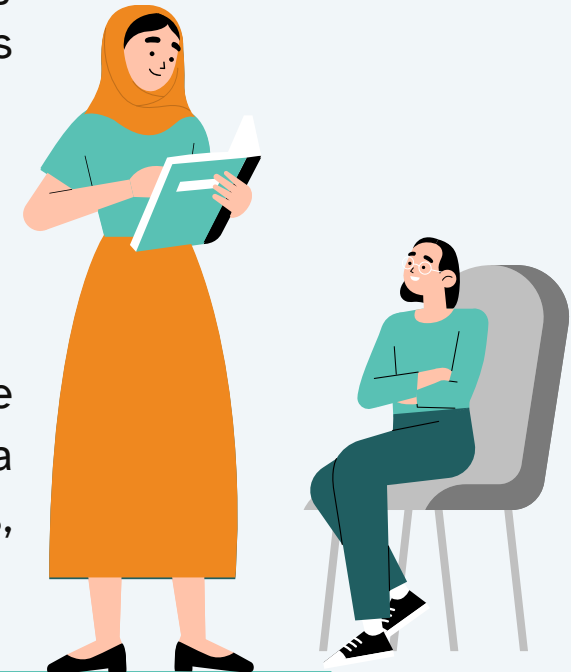
The validation process doesn't work without the validator. The validator is a figure who knows the young person personally and well, and whose expertise can be seen as valuable. The validator can come from various profiles, including the following:

### **Teacher or mentor**

A trusted teacher or mentor who has worked closely with the young person can serve as a validator. They know the young person's academic performance, personal growth, and unique abilities.

### **Coach, Counsellor, or non-formal educator (such as a youth worker)**

A coach, counsellor, or non-formal educator who has supported the young person in their development is ideally placed to work as a validator. They can provide insights into the individual's strengths, personal qualities, and achievements outside of formal education.



## Employer or Supervisor

An employer or supervisor from a part-time job, internship, or volunteering experience can serve as a validator. They can offer valuable insights into the young person's work ethic, skills demonstrated on the job, and their potential as an employee.

## Community Leader or Role Model

A respected community leader or role model who has interacted with the young person and is familiar with their contributions, character, and potential can act as a validator. They can provide a broader perspective on the individual's strengths and positive qualities.





## Why is this process useful for potential employers?

The validation process also has clear uses for employers. To begin with, it gives them a clearer and more complete picture of a young person's skills and strengths. This helps employers make informed hiring choices and ensures that the chosen candidate has the right qualities for the job.

Another great thing about the validation process is that it makes things more transparent and less uncertain for employers. It gives an external and informed evaluation of a candidate's abilities, making it easier to compare and assess different people.

The validation process also serves as a more reliable reference during hiring, allowing an employer to see if a young person's skills match the job requirements.

Most importantly, it allows a wider range of young people to access the job market and find opportunities that they may have otherwise missed.



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## The theory behind the process



- 1 Defining key terms
- 2 Developing a taxonomy of competencies
- 3 The taxonomy in **Competent's** validation process



## Defining key terms

Both **skills** and **competencies** are essential for inclusion in a young person's CV to enhance their chances of getting a job.

We understand skills as acquired and honed abilities that individuals develop through training and experience. They can be categorised as **hard** or **soft** skills.

**Hard skills** are technical and quantifiable, supported by qualifications or work experience. On the other hand, **soft skills** are non-technical abilities, such as interpersonal skills (such as **conflict resolution** or **written communication**) are versatile and applicable across various roles and life situations.



## Defining key terms



**Competencies** can include an individual's knowledge and behaviour that enable them to achieve goals or complete tasks. They often encompass a blend of skills, abilities, and knowledge that contribute to success in personal and professional aspects of life. In this project, our focus is on soft skills and competencies, which we will refer to collectively and simply as "**competencies**" for the sake of clarity and conciseness.

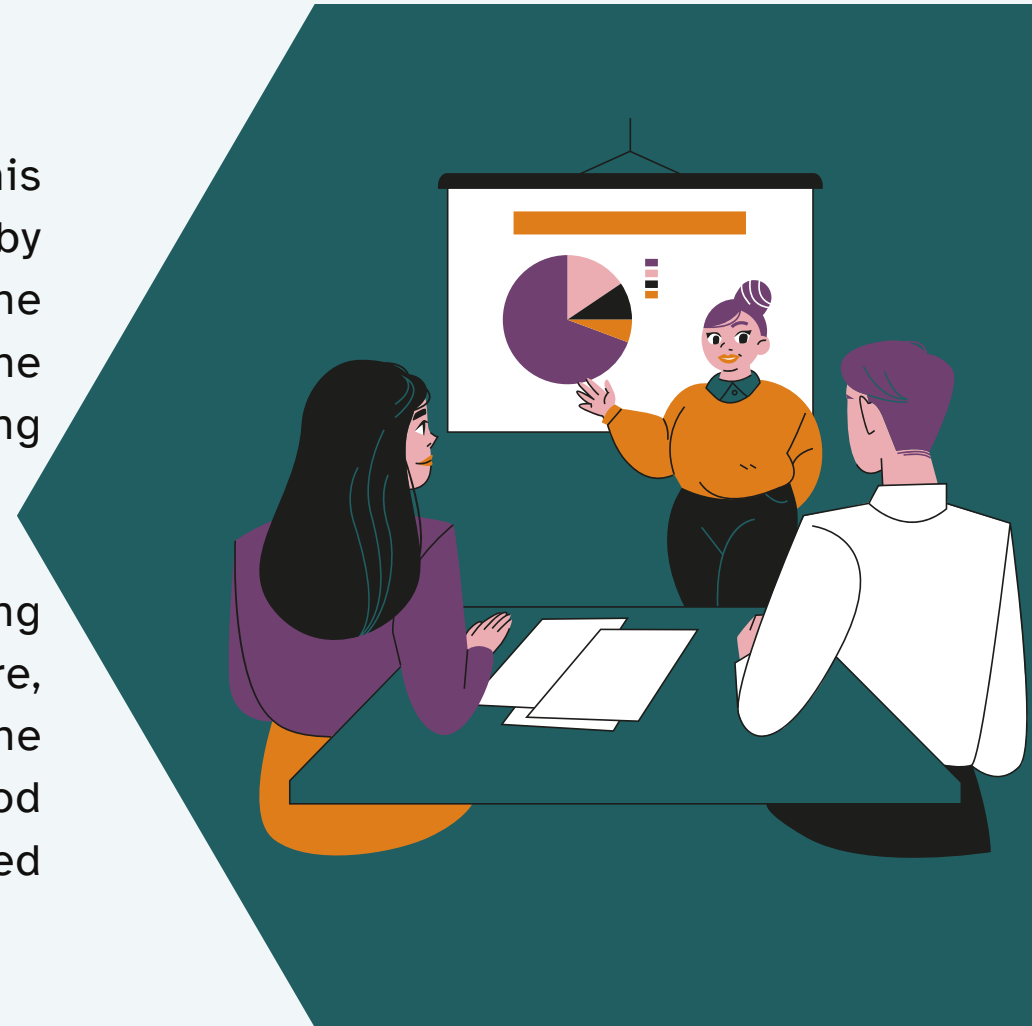
As there is no definitive consensus on the most critical competencies for success in life and work, the intention here is not to present an exclusive set of research-based key competencies. Instead, we have used existing research processes in the field outlined in key literature (Lippman et al., 2015; Mahasneh & Thabet, 2016) to develop the skills taxonomy which is the foundation of our validation process.

The valuable input from the diverse experiences of individuals participating in the original project greatly contributed to the process. This will be detailed further in the following sections.

## Developing a taxonomy of competencies

The competency taxonomy created within this project was built upon the process outlined by Mahasneh & Thabet (2016), which utilized the Literature-Based Discovery (LBD) method and the KJ method (an idea-generating and prioritising technique).

The LBD method involved evaluating existing knowledge, extracting soft skills from literature, reducing, and grouping them, and updating the taxonomy through collaboration. The KJ method was employed to organise the extracted information into groups.



## Developing a taxonomy of competencies

The taxonomy development process consisted of several steps, as summarised in **Figure 1**. Initially, we utilised the competency inventory list from Mahasneh & Thabet (2016) as a foundation, which contained 120 competencies.

Additionally, the project partners contributed suggestions deemed important but missing from the inventory list. This resulted in an inventory list of 150 competencies.



**FIGURE 1. Summary of the taxonomy development process**

## Developing a taxonomy of competencies

The next step involved reducing the list by merging similar competencies or removing those that were not relevant to the project's objectives. Subsequently, the competencies were grouped and organised.

Following the approach of Lipmann et al. (2015), who classified competencies into four general categories, we defined ten skill groups based on previous projects on competency taxonomies (e.g., Lipmann et al., 2015; Mahasneh & Thabet, 2016).

These categories were:

- Intrapersonal/personal qualities skills,
- Interpersonal skills,
- Cognitive skills and attitude
- Technical skills/knowledge.



# Developing a taxonomy of competencies

Within these four general categories, the final taxonomy encompassed ten skill groups, providing a comprehensive framework for assessing and categorising the final list of competencies.

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Social intelligence skills   | 6. Stress management skills         |
| 2. Positive self-concept skills | 7. Effecting positive change skills |
| 3. Productivity skills          | 8. Higher-order thinking skills     |
| 4. Professionalism skills       | 9. Collaborative skills             |
| 5. Communication skills         | 10. Ethics and diversity skills     |



## Developing a taxonomy of competencies

The process of developing the competency taxonomy followed a similar approach. In step four, the proposed competency list was integrated into the ten competency groups.

The taxonomy was then shared with the project partners, and their feedback was incorporated, resulting in the final version of the taxonomy. The completed normative competency taxonomy consisted of **148 competencies**.

Throughout the process, there were adjustments made to the competency list. In step two, the initial list was reduced, but in step three, competencies were changed and added to ensure a comprehensive representation within each group. This allowed for a broader understanding of each competency group.

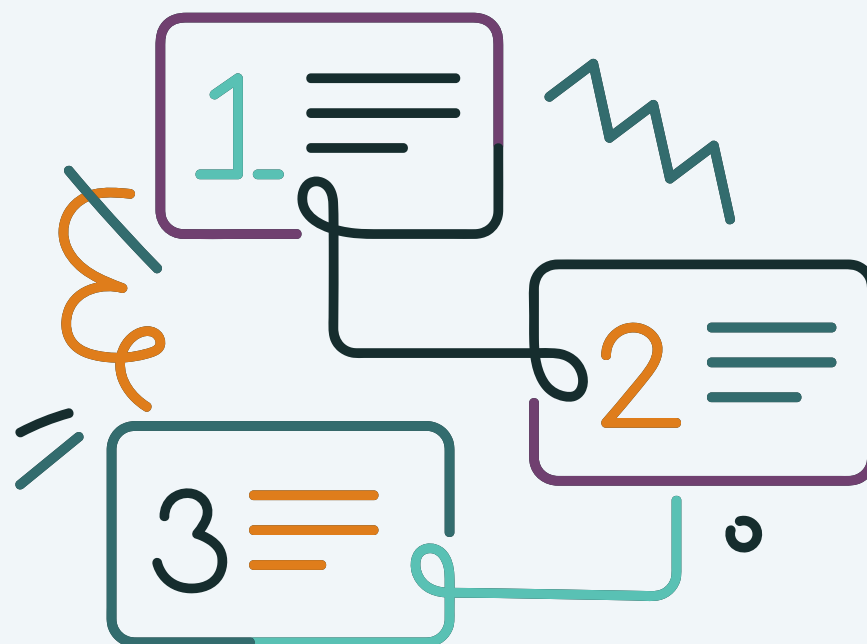
It's important to note that while a systematic process was followed to select the competency taxonomy, internal staff discussions were also conducted to reach a consensus among all parties involved.



## The taxonomy in **Competent**'s validation process

The purpose of developing a taxonomy in this project was to assist young people in identifying their key competencies through an evaluation process. The resulting taxonomy consists of the skill groups, each with specific competencies, along with their definitions and two examples containing simple language and relatable scenarios.

In the evaluation process, the definitions and examples of each competency are provided to help each young person clearly identify and choose their top competencies. Additionally, these definitions and examples will aid validators in suggesting alternative options that may not have been considered by the young individuals during their initial selection process.





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## Explaining the role of the validator



1 Who is the validator?

2 What does the validator do?



## Who is the validator?

The validator should be a professional who knows the young person well enough to be able to have an informed opinion on his/her/their competencies.

Examples of validators can be schoolteachers, social workers, personal or group trainers, adult educators in a specific formal or non-formal activity, or youth workers.



## What does the validator do?

The validator plays a crucial role in the validation process, providing guidance and assistance to the young person throughout. The validator oversees every aspect of the process, from explaining the main objectives and app functionality to validating the final list of competencies.

**The validator carries out the following tasks (which must be completed in the same order as they are given):**



### **Introduce the young person to the process:**

The validator must explain the entire process, its main objectives and the exact steps that will be taken:

- What is the goal of Competent's validation process?
- How does the app work?
- What is the initial competency list?
- What do the 'check activities' entail?
- How is the final competency list generated?
- How can the young person use the certificate and the QR code?



Please refer to the flow diagram ([page 6](#)) for a visual overview of the process. The diagram can be used to explain the validation process to the young person.

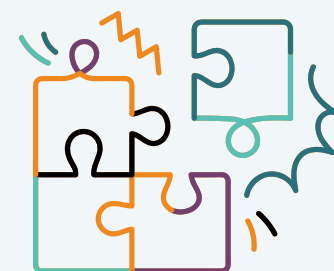
## **2 Provide access to Competent:**

From your Validator Profile, send an email containing detailed instructions to the young person, facilitating their access to the platform.



## **3 Validate selected competencies:**

The validator should review the competencies selected by the young person, assessing which other competencies might be more suitable to their skills and qualities.



## **4 Engage in discussion regarding choices and additional competencies:**

The validator discusses the young person's initial selection and further possibilities with them.



## 5 Carry out *Check Activities* (optional):

When necessary, the validator may need to verify the one or many of the young person's competencies. This process involves selecting an appropriate *Check Activity*, arranging logistics (such as scheduling, location, and materials), and overseeing its execution.

Throughout the activity, the validator should evaluate the competencies in question and determine whether to confirm them or identify additional ones.

## 6 Generate a revised list:

Following the competency validation process, the validator conducts a final assessment. The result of this final stage on the app is a final list of validated competencies, based on his/her/their professional judgement.



**For guidance on the validation process, see the Validator's Guide on the project website**





## **Frequently Asked Questions**





## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Is personal data protected within the app?**

Yes, all data is fully protected and safe in accordance with the EU rules for the protection of personal data. All relevant information regarding our data protection policy can be found on the app.

### **Who can use this app? Are there any age restrictions?**

This application can be used by anybody over 16 years old.

### **Will someone who uses the app be guaranteed to get a job by using Competent?**

No. The validation process is designed to help the user to understand their own competencies and provide valuable support in this process. The end result will be a list of validated competencies that will provide credibility in the search for a job or future opportunities.



## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Is the app free?**

Yes. The app is free to all its users.

### **Are the validated competencies and a **Competent** certificate sufficient to replace formal qualifications?**

No, the purpose is to complement other educational and training activities.

### **Which languages is the application available in?**

The application works in English, Spanish, Catalan, Macedonian, Polish and Bulgarian.

### **Are previous qualifications required?**

Not at all. The process is intended to confirm a young person's existing competencies.

### **How can I get in touch with you?**

You can get in touch with the team that created the app by sending an email to [erasmusplus@promotorasocial.net](mailto:erasmusplus@promotorasocial.net)

# Introduce youthself

# Competent

**prosec**  
associació



CÀTEDRA  
D'INNOVACIÓ  
SOCIAL



**sempre**  
a frente



ASSOCIATION WALKTOGETHER  
BULGARIA



Generalitat de Catalunya  
**Agència Catalana de la Joventut**



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