



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

# **A terminology on transversal skills and competences and its integration in ESCO v.1.1**

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# The expert group on transversal skills and competences (TSC)

Mandate spring 2019 from EQF Advisory Group and ESCO MSWG; to refine and structure the existing terminology on transversal skills and competences in ESCO

*Mapped and analysed existing terminological sources and approaches (+250 sources – building on these for the new proposal – 1200+ concepts identified – a final selection of 100+ concepts to populate the structure).*

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## ***The definition of transversal skills and competences***

*Transversal skills and competences (TSCs) are **learned and proven abilities** which are commonly seen as necessary or valuable for effective action in virtually **any kind of work, learning or life activity**. They are “transversal” because they are **not exclusively related to any particular context** (job, occupation, academic discipline, occupational sector, group of occupational sectors, etc.).*

(Source: ESCO expert group on transversal skills and competences)



# Categories of TSC

The working group suggests operating with five main categories of transversal skills and competences:

- Language skills and competences
- Thinking (cognitive) skills and competences
- Self-management skills and competences
- Social and communication skills and competences
- Life Skills and competences

These five categories are closely interconnected and moves from the individual's reasoning and self-awareness to the social and external.



# Language skills and competences - Clusters of skills and competences

Language is at the core of any human activity and provides the starting point for any terminology in this area. Skills and competences will relate to the four dimensions of language competence:

- Reading;
- Writing;
- Speaking;
- Understanding.



# Thinking skills and competences – clusters of skills and competences

Being in possession of thinking skills and competences allows the individual to deal with abstract cognitive concepts. Thinking skills and competences can be divided into the following clusters:

- Acquiring and managing information;
- Analysing or processing information;
- Planning and organising;
- Addressing problems and issues;
- Creating and innovating.

# Self-management skills and competences - clusters

Being in possession of self-management skills allows the individual to reflect on and make best use of own abilities and potential. Self-management skills can be divided according to the following clusters:

- Responding to routine requirements and tasks
- Acting according to values
- Acting independently and showing initiative
- Managing negative factors in life and work
- Reacting constructively to change
- Engaging in self-development

# **Social and communication skills and competences - clusters**

Being in possession of social and communication skills and competences allows the individual to interact with other people. Social and communication skills can be divided according to the following clusters:

- Using language, symbols and text to communicate effectively
- Showing respect and consideration for others
- Supporting others
- Collaborating with others in teams and networks
- Managing and leading others
- Conciliating and negotiating





# Life Skills and competences - clusters

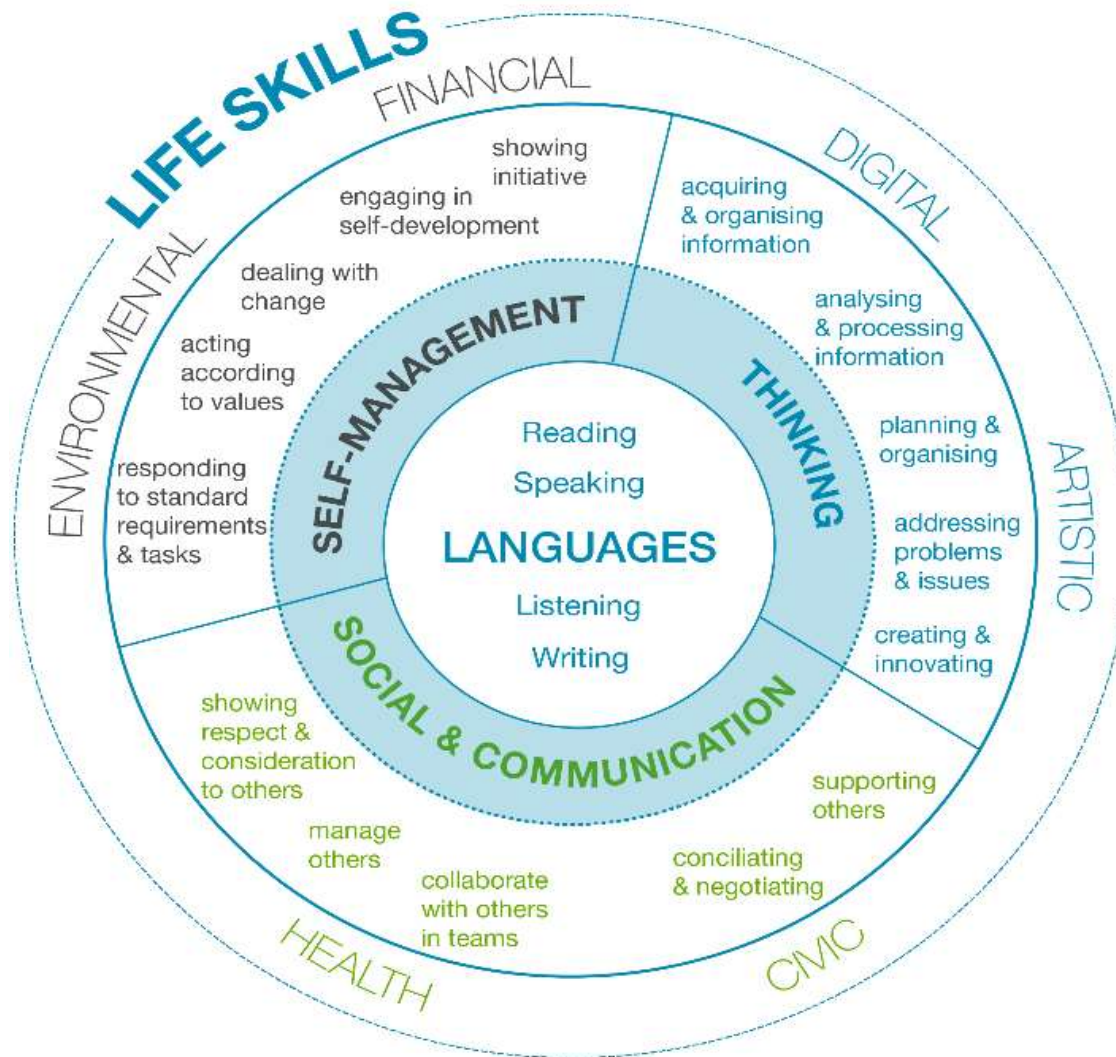
Being in possession of Life Skills and Competences allows the individual to deal with the conditions and responsibilities of life in modern society:

- Maintaining physical and emotional well-being (Health literacy)
- Managing financial and other resources to realise opportunities and achieve (Financial Literacy)
- Working with computers (Digital Literacy)
- Adopting environmentally responsible strategies, objective and practices (Environmental Literacy)
- Seeking opportunities for civic empowerment and involvement (Civic Literacy)
- Appreciating and expressing artistic potential (Artistic Literacy)



## The selection of single TSC concepts for the categories and Clusters

- Selection based on existing TSC terms in ESCO + extensive literature review (which identified more than 1200 single concepts and terms)
- Aimed for a limited number of concepts (100-200); allows for detail but supports user friendliness
- Single concepts were chosen so as to reflect the range defined by each Category and Cluster
- The basic structure of categories leaves room for future additions and improvement





## TSCs in ESCO

- ESCO v1.0. never fully integrated TSCs into the system; this needs to be systematically addressed by ESCO 1.1
- The terminology of transversal skills and competences outlined by the expert group should form part of version 1.1 of ESCO to be published in 2021
- We need to ensure that the TSC approach can interact with and support the overall ESCO skills pillar (+/-13000 concepts).

## Not a complete break with ESCO version 1.0

Individual transversal skills concepts contained in the new TSC structure:

- Either already existed in ESCO version 1.0, mostly as transversal (e.g. “demonstrate willingness to learn”), but sometimes also classified as cross-sectoral (e.g. “develop professional network”), or even as sector-specific (e.g. “reflect on practice”) skill/competence,
- or had to be supplemented to close terminological gaps (as in the case of e.g. “search for information” or “analyze information”).

# A terminological reference point

The new TSC structure needs to act as a reference point and resource for the overall development of the skills pillar. It will

1. Support a more uniform approach to expressing skills and competences, notably how TSCs can inform the description of skills related to tasks, functions, occupations and economic sectors
2. Allow for a simplification of terminology by avoiding duplication and unnecessary confusion of terms
3. Be used as a starting point for contextualisations; thus allowing for a more transparent and consistent expression of cross-sectoral, sectoral and occupation-specific skills.
4. Used as a construction template across sectors the TSC structure can help to systematically express and highlight transversal skills across occupations and sectors.



## Use of TSC structure outside ESCO

- The structure is designed as a map of transversal skills and competences, the approach allows users to clarify the orientation of own applications (along a continuum from the internal personal to the interaction with the external world).
- The logic behind the structure is critical when (for example) defining and writing learning outcomes statements to be used for an education or occupation standard, when designing a curriculum for vocational training or writing the specifications for an assessment procedure.