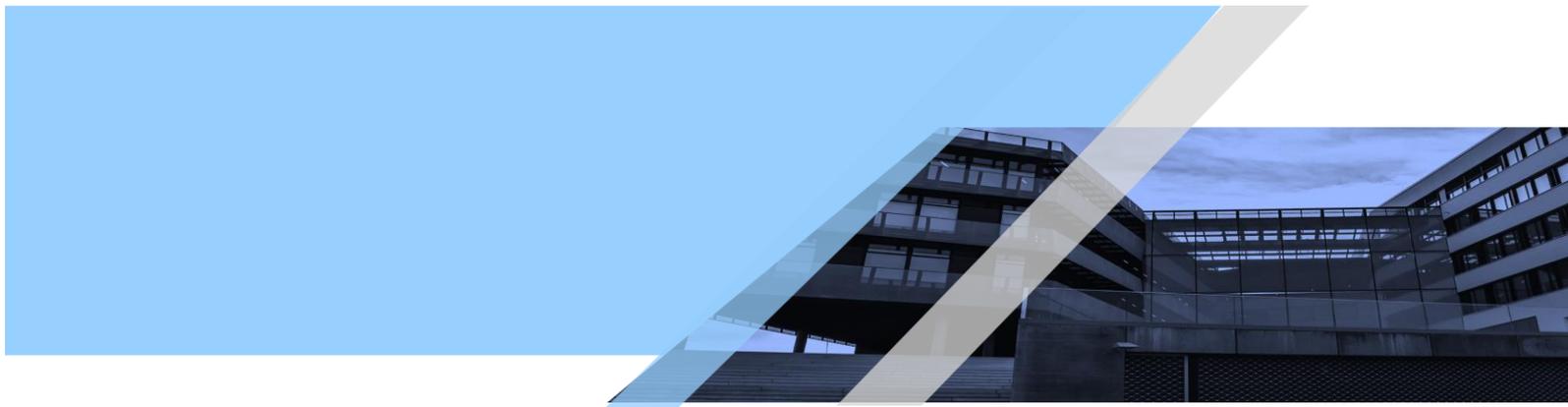




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**Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia / MILETUS**



# Competence profile for employees in international companies

DEV 1.3

Author: Larysa Chovnyuk, Ivica Manic, Nataliia Kyva

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## Introduction

The representatives of international companies in Ukraine and Serbia have been surveyed by NaUKMA and UNI, respectively, to detail competences that potential employees are expected to have for working in geographically dispersed groups, i.e. to be able to work for such companies. The results of the survey served as a basis to elaborate competence profiles for employees in international companies, aggregated in the assessment report.

## 1. General statements on the companies that participated in the survey

### Serbia

The representatives of international companies operating in Serbia were surveyed by means of the questionnaire, which was originally prepared by NaUKMA and then adapted by UNI for the use in Serbia. The total of 30 companies have been contacted by UNI and UNS, and response to the questionnaire was received from 10 companies. UNI has initially contacted 25 companies, but response was rather poor, only 5 companies answered to the questionnaire. Most of the companies did not respond at all, there were few automatic replies stating the request would be considered in the near future (but no further feedback was received), and representatives of a couple of companies declined indicating that their internal procedures did not allow them to participate in the survey. The additional 5 responses were then provided by UNS from the companies that UNS has been collaborating with, so the total number of respondents increased to 10. It should be noted that two reminders have been sent to the non-responsive companies, and attempts to get assistance from the local branch of the National Chamber of Commerce have been made as well. However, reminders sent to the companies were more or less fruitless and chamber representatives did not respond at all.

The spheres of activity of the companies that responded to the poll were various, including industrial production (oil and gas, cement and concrete, automotive, medical and technical gasses), telecommunications, FMCG distribution, design of integrated circuits and electronic systems, programming and IT consulting. Most of the respondents indicated Serbian cities (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Zemun, Beočin) as the location of their companies' main offices, even though their companies operating in Serbia are only branches of the more or less famous multinational companies (Coca Cola, Lafarge, VIP Mobile, Gazprom, Messer, Elsys). Only one of these (Novelic D.O.O.) seems to be truly located in Belgrade. Three respondents indicated Germany, Netherlands and Guildford, UK, as the locations of their companies' main offices.

The size of the companies that responded to the survey varies from small and medium (with 6, 27, 65, 120, 228 and 350 employees, respectively) to large, with about 1000, 1200, 2000 and even 10582 employees in Serbia. Three companies employ 100% local staff, while the rest have mostly small percentages (from 0.3% to 2%) of international staff. Only one company has somewhat more significant percentage of international staff (10 out of 120 employees that is 8.3%). Representatives of 6 companies agree, 2 partially agree and 2 do not agree that their company's branch in Serbia has geographically dispersed group of employees, which mostly correspond to percentages of international staff, though there is a little discrepancy considering that 3 companies have 100% local staff.

### Ukraine

About 60 companies were contacted for participation in the poll. Most of the companies contacted are the partners of the NaUKMA Faculty of Economics; others' contacts were obtained through the NaUKMA Job Center and NaUKMA Alumni Office. Additionally, after the decision of the project team to make an effort to increase the number of the replies other Ukrainian universities – MILETUS partners (MNAU, PHEI KUH "PUA" and EENU) were asked to contact companies, located in their



cities and / or with which they were partnering. Additionally, the letter with invitation of their members to participate in the poll was sent to the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce. As a result 25 answers to the questionnaire were obtained.

The highest number of answers were received from companies with FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) sphere of activity (3 answers), among other spheres of companies' activities represented in the poll are finance, education, audit-consulting, IT, banking, advertising and PR etc. The main office of the most of companies is located in Kyiv, among other cities are New York (USA), London (UK), Leuven (Belgium), Goteborg (Sweden) etc.

The number of employees ranges from 4 staff members to 5000 staff members. Part of companies represented in the poll has only local staff, the other part – has local and international staff. Percentage of the international staff ranges from 1% to 20%. Most of the employees (40,6%) agree that company's branch in Ukraine has geographically dispersed group of employees, 25,9 % do not agree and 29,6 partially agree.

## 2. Most important skills/competencies identified by the companies

### Serbia

Majority of respondents indicate education, knowledge and technical skills in the job related fields (electrical and mechanical engineering, programming and software engineering, electronics, electromagnetics, IC and RF design) as the most important skills their employees should generally have. Some of them require good language, communication and computer skills. In addition, flexibility and team work ability, commitment and personal accountability, willingness to learn (learning agility), proactivity (agility) and readiness to adopt innovation and innovative methods are generally required as well. Last but not the least, some of the companies require understanding of diversity, ability to build relationships with partners and customers, decision making capacity and adaptability to management change.

Among the above skills and/or competencies, flexibility, understanding and respect of diversity, good communication and language skills, team work ability, proactivity and agility, personal accountability and openness for innovation and new challenges are identified as specific for working in multicultural setting.

Regarding the 15 specific skills (competencies) listed under question No. 10 in the survey, the highest number of points, 49 out of 50 (49/50) received *good communication skills, in particular the ability to communicate well with the people from different cultures*, and is ranked first by the respondents in terms of the importance for working in geographically dispersed group. In addition, the *teamwork skills* (47/50) and *flexibility/adaptability* (46/50) have been given small priority over the *foreign language proficiency* (44/50), *tolerance* (43/50), *ability to take initiative - proactivity* (42/50) and *multicultural sensitivity* (40/50), which also achieved rather high scores and were definitely found highly important for working in geographically dispersed group. Just a little lower scores were given to the *awareness and respect to traditions of other cultures* (39/50) and to the *knowledge of business practices in different cultures* (38/50), which still keep these rather highly important as well, above *general intelligence* (37/50), *self-confidence* (35/50) and *basic knowledge of other cultures* (33/50). It is little surprise that *previous work/study experience in international community* received relatively low score (28/50). Finally, the survey has shown that international companies in Serbia consider *permanent interest in global issues* (24/50) and *permanent interest in political, economic and other issues of other cultures* (22/5) the least important skills/competencies for working in geographically dispersed group.



## Ukraine

Answering an open question about the most important skills (competencies), which potential employees should have in general, Ukrainian respondents reported the need for foreign language (English) proficiency (8 comments), as well as the need for such skills and abilities as sociability (7), responsibility / accountability (6), team-work skills (6), learning abilities (6), communication skills (5), analytical skills / structured thinking (5), ethics and tolerance (5). Other skills that were mentioned by 3 or more respondents are curiosity, low propensity to conflict / conflict management skills, leadership skills, corporate loyalty, proactivity / initiative, entrepreneur spirit, cultural sensitivity, stress-resistance, aspiration for development, passion, adaptability / flexibility and result-oriented approach to work.

Regarding the 15 specific skills (competencies) listed under question No. 10 in the survey, the highest number of points, (119/125) received *good communication skills, in particular the ability to communicate well with the people from different cultures*, and it is ranked first by the respondents in terms of its importance for working in geographically dispersed group. *Teamwork skills* and *Tolerance* gained equal number of points (114/125) and shared second and third place in ranking. Just a little lower scores were given to the *Foreign language proficiency* (112/125), *Flexibility/adaptability* (111/125) and *General intelligence* (110/125), which keep them rather highly important, similarly to *Ability to take initiative – proactivity* (109/125), *Awareness and respect to traditions of other cultures* (108/125), *Multicultural sensitivity* (99/125), *Self-confidence* (97/125), *Knowledge of business practices in different cultures* (96/125). Fewer points received *Basic knowledge of other cultures* (84/125), *Permanent interest in global issues* and *Permanent interest in political, economic and other issues* (both 80 points from 125), therefore they are considered to be less important. Finally, and surprisingly, the survey has shown that international companies in Ukraine consider *Previous work/study experience in international community* (77/125) as the least important skill/competence for working in geographically dispersed group.

**Table 1**

Skills, competencies	Score in Serbia	Rank in Serbia	Score in Ukraine	Rank in Ukraine
General intelligence	37/50	10	110/125	6
Basic knowledge of other cultures	33/50	12	84/125	12
Permanent interest in global issues	24/50	14	80/125	13 <sup>1</sup>
Permanent interest in political, economic and other issues	22/50	15	80/125	14
Foreign language proficiency	44/50	4	112/125	4
Awareness and respect to traditions of other	39/50	8	108/125	8
Knowledge of business practices in different	38/50	9	96/125	11
Good communication skills, in particular the ability to communicate well with the people from different cultures	49/50	1	119/125	1
Multicultural sensitivity	40/50	7	99/125	9
Tolerance	43/50	5	114/125	3 <sup>2</sup>
Flexibility/adaptability	46/50	3	111/125	5
Team work skills	47/50	2	114/125	2
Self-confidence	35/50	11	97/125	10
Ability to take initiative - proactivity	42/50	6	109/125	7
Previous work/study experience in international community	28/50	13	77/125	15



### 3. Employers' statements on current university programs

#### Serbia

Eight out of ten respondents stated that students in Serbian universities only partially gain skills and competencies necessary for working in geographically dispersed groups. One response was that students in Serbia gain the required skills and competencies, and the last response was that students do not gain these. The respondents did not elaborate on which of the required skills or competencies were missing.

#### Ukraine

Providing their opinion on the current status of multicultural component's presence at university programs 81,5% respondents answered "only partially", 11,1 % - "yes" and 7,4 % - "no".

### 4. Employers' recommendations for universities on skills/competencies required from students

#### Serbia

Two major recommendations have been given by the respondents. As many as eight out of ten respondents recommend enhanced cooperation with universities from European and other foreign countries as the most efficient way of helping students to develop skills and competencies required for working in multicultural environment. The cooperation should include exchange of knowledge, participation in joint research and multicultural projects, joint case studies, exchange of students and lecturers, international internships etc. The second important recommendation is related to implementing more practical work/experiences, internships and cooperation with interested companies into the study curricula. Internships, if possible international ones, and frequent visits to the local companies are underlined. Various aspects of internationalization can be recognized in both major recommendations. In addition to the above recommendations given by majority of respondents, it was also suggested that universities should encourage students' creativity and teach presentation skills.

#### Ukraine

Almost all respondents agreed universities should provide training and develop cooperation with international companies and universities. This cooperation should include invitation of foreign speakers and guest lecturers from other countries, usage of foreign literature during the study process, development and support of international exchanges, participation in cultural events and in international conferences and competitions (for example, moot courts for law students). The second important recommendation is related to implementing more practical work/experiences, e.g. universities should involve real business into the study process, provide real business cases, organize internships, equip students with soft skills etc. Both major recommendations are aiming at internationalization of educational process and helping students to experience international atmosphere.



## 5. Employers' perception of student mobility as a tool to improve skills /competencies

### Serbia

All respondents generally agree (nine of them fully and one partially) that international student mobility may help students improve the skills required by the international companies with multicultural environment.

### Ukraine

Answering the question on international mobility (if it can help students to improve the skills requested by the international companies with multicultural environment) 92,6% respondents provided positive answer, 7,4 % replied "only partially"

## 6. Employers' perception of reasoning for student to participate in mobility programs

### Serbia

The respondents in Serbia expressed perception that the main reasons for students to participate in the international mobility programmes, such as e.g. Erasmus+, could be to *develop soft skills. i.e. adaptability, flexibility, taking initiative, proactivity* (10/10), to *improve foreign language proficiency* (8/10), to *gain study/work experience in international community* (8/10), to *develop communication skills* (7/10) and to *gain basic knowledge of the business culture of other nations* (7/10). Somewhat less important reasons to participate in mobility in respondents' opinions are to *enhance multicultural sensitivity/awareness* (5/10), to *gain basic knowledge of other cultures* (3/10) and to *learn how to respect other traditions* (3/10), and the least important ones are to *develop tolerance skills* (2/10) and to *enhance general intelligence* (1/10).

### Ukraine

According to Ukrainian respondents among the main reasons for students to participate in international mobility programmes are (from the most to the least important): to *improve foreign language proficiency* (25/25), to *gain study / work experience in international community* (21/25), to *get an opportunity to develop soft skills i.e. adaptability, flexibility, taking initiative, proactivity* (17/25), to *develop communication skills* (16/25), to *get an opportunity to gain basic knowledge of other culture* (11/25), to *enhance general intelligence* (10/25), to *gain basic knowledge of the business culture of other nations* (10/25), to *get an opportunity to develop tolerance skills* (9/25), to *enhance multicultural sensitivity/awareness* (7/25), to *get an opportunity to learn how to respect other traditions* (5/25).

## 7. Comparative review of the employees' profile required by international companies in Serbia and Ukraine

It can be summed up that in total 35 companies from Serbia (10) and Ukraine (25) participated in the survey.

The sphere of activities of companies in Serbia and in Ukraine has similarities (e.g. such spheres as FMCG distribution, IT), at the same time while Serbian companies include those from the industrial production (no such companies represented in the Ukrainian part of the poll), the Ukrainian companies participated also work in the spheres of finance and banking, as well as in services (e.g. education, audit-consulting, advertising, PR etc). This difference in the companies' nature can be



explain by different previous cooperation partnerships with employers /companies of particular university / faculty or individual university employee in Serbia and Ukraine, in charge of this task, rather than by any other reasons. The range of size of the companies participated in the poll and their structure (e.g. main office location) can be considered comparable. Companies in Ukraine demonstrate some higher percentage of international staff (up to 20%) in the office, as well as more companies / companies' branches in Ukraine believe that they have more geographically dispersed group of employees.

Answering open question Serbian companies concentrated on previous education, knowledge and technical skills in the job related fields as the most demanded features of their employees (only 2 Ukrainian companies mentioned that in their replies); while the Ukrainian companies were rather insisting on foreign language (English) proficiency and sociability as the most needed features.

Comparison of skills (competencies) reported by the companies as crucial for their potential employees for being able to work in multicultural setting is presented in the Table 1. Respondents of both of the countries gave comparable responses (no more than 2 places difference in the national rankings) for all the questions of the poll including first place in ranking for *good communication skills, in particular the ability to communicate well with the people from different cultures*. The only skill / competence, which was ranked substantially different is *general intelligence*, ranked 10<sup>th</sup> by the Serbian companies and 6<sup>th</sup> by the Ukrainian ones.

Most of the Ukrainian and Serbian companies agreed that universities in Serbia and Ukraine respectively only partially provide their students with the skills and competencies necessary for working in geographically dispersed groups.

It can be noted that employers in both countries gave almost the same recommendations for universities on equipping their students with skills and competences necessary for working in multicultural environment, them being exchange of knowledge, participation in joint research and multicultural projects, joint case studies, exchange of students and lecturers, international internships etc. It is interesting to mention that employers in both countries defined more practical work/experience need, involvement of real business into the study process, organization of studies based on real business cases as the second most important recommendation for the universities in this regard.

Respondents from both countries generally agreed that international student mobility may help students to improve skills required by the international companies with multicultural environment. Serbian and Ukrainian companies differently prioritized the main argument for students to participate in the international mobility programmes – in Serbia *develop soft skills. i.e. adaptability, flexibility, taking initiative, proactivity* was found the most important, while in Ukraine the student were recommended first of all to *improve foreign language proficiency* while participating in the mobility projects. At the same time each the answers, which was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in one country, appeared to be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place among the employers' answers in another, which allows us to find the mobility priorities' perception to be similar in Serbia and Ukraine. Among the other most important skills which could be developed during the mobility respondents in both of the countries defined *gaining study / work experience in international community, developing communication skills*. The other reasons were evaluated comparatively similar, while the least important ones (among the top-5 most important) appeared to be different in different countries – to *develop tolerance skills* (20% of respondents in Serbia, 36% in Ukraine) and to *enhance general intelligence* (10% in Serbia, 40% in Ukraine) were defined as least important (among top-5) reasons to participate in the mobility programmes by the respondents in Serbia; while to *enhance multicultural sensitivity/awareness* (28% in Ukraine, 50% in Serbia) and to get an *opportunity to learn how to respect other traditions* (20% in Ukraine, 30% in Serbia) were the least valued in Ukraine.



## Annex 1 - Research instrument: Questionnaire

### Competence Profile for Employees in International Companies in Ukraine and Serbia

This questionnaire was prepared as part of implementation of the Erasmus + KA 2 Capacity Building project, entitled Student's Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia - MILETUS (GA No. 2016- 2562 / 001 - 001), co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. The project is coordinated by Hamburg University of Technology - TUHH, Germany. Serbian universities participating in the project are: University of Novi Sad, University of Nis, and Singidunum University.

\*Required

#### General statements

1. Company name \*
2. Sphere of the company's activity \*
3. Location of the company's main office \*
4. Contact person and his/her contact details (email,telephone) for this questionnaire in the company's branch in Serbia \*
5. The number of the company employees in Serbia \*
6. Percentages of the local and international staff working in the company's branch in Serbia \*
7. Do you agree that the company's branch in Serbia has geographically dispersed group of employees? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Partially agree
- Other:

#### Competence profile for employees

8. Which are the most important skills (competencies) your potential employees should have in general? \*
9. Which of those skills (competencies) are specific for working in multicultural setting? \*

#### Skills for working in geographically dispersed group

10. Please rate the following skills (competencies) in terms of their importance for working in geographically dispersed group from the least important (1) to the most important (5) \*

Mark only one oval per row.



	1	2	3	4	5
General intelligence	<input type="radio"/>				
Basic knowledge of other cultures	<input type="radio"/>				
Permanent interest in global issues	<input type="radio"/>				
Permanent interest in political, economic and other issues of other cultures	<input type="radio"/>				
Foreign language proficiency	<input type="radio"/>				
Awareness and respect to traditions of other culture	<input type="radio"/>				
Knowledge of business practice in different cultures	<input type="radio"/>				
Good communications skills, in particular the ability to communicate well with the people from different cultures	<input type="radio"/>				
Multicultural sensitivity	<input type="radio"/>				
Tolerance	<input type="radio"/>				
Flexibility/adaptability	<input type="radio"/>				
Teamwork skills	<input type="radio"/>				
Self-confidence	<input type="radio"/>				
Ability to take initiative, proactivity	<input type="radio"/>				
Previous work/study experience in international community	<input type="radio"/>				

11. In your opinion, do the students in Serbian universities gain skills and competencies necessary for working in geographically dispersed group? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Only partially
- Other:

12. In your opinion, what universities should do to help the students develop skills and competencies necessary for working in multicultural environment? \*

### International student mobility

International student mobility is usually one semester or one year of studies or training abroad, within e.g. Erasmus+ programme etc, though virtual mobility is also being actively developed at many universities

13. Do you agree that international mobility might help students improve the skills requested by the international companies with multicultural environment? \*



Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Only partially
- Other:

14. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for students to participate in the international mobility programmes, such as e.g. Erasmus+ (please choose up to 5 answers)? \*

Tick all that apply.

- Improve foreign language proficiency
- Enhance general intelligence
- Develop communication skills
- Gain basic knowledge of other culture
- Learn how to respect other traditions
- Gain basic knowledge of the business culture of other nations
- Develop soft skills, i.e. adaptability, flexibility, taking initiative, proactivity
- Develop tolerance skills
- Enhance multicultural sensitivity/awareness
- Gain study/work experience in international community
- Other: