

COMPETENCY-BASED CAREER PLANNING IN SCHOOLS

Methodological ideas and exercises for teachers
to prepare students for the labour market



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europass



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INTRODUCTION

The preparation of young people for adult life is a constant challenge for professionals working with them. The aim of this publication is to provide a small selection of ideas and practices for this complex development process.

With our collection of methodologies, we aim to support teachers and professionals working with children to help their students in the first steps of career building, further education and job search preparation. Key elements of this process include fostering self-awareness, developing a realistic self-image, gaining age-appropriate insights into personal competencies, and mastering the use of Europass documents. The practical tools and materials provided are easily adaptable for use in classroom lessons, career days, or afternoon workshops.

We aim to inspire children to begin exploring careers at the primary school level, helping them recognize their strengths from an external perspective, articulate their aspirations for a future career, and learn about a broad range of professions beyond those familiar within their family environment.

Since competency-based career planning is the current trend in the world of work, we place a strong emphasis on identifying strengths and competencies through engaging and playful planning tools.

By studying our publication, teachers will receive support in the following areas:

- Developing children's self-awareness.
- Strengthening self-reflection skills.
- Raising awareness of and identifying skills, abilities, and competencies.
- Encouraging process-oriented thinking.
- Promoting a 'growth mindset' instead of a 'fixed mindset'.
- Strengthening group cohesion and community through cooperative activities.

International and cross-sectoral surveys highlight the growing necessity for focusing on competencies. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, which forecasts the skills that will be competitive in the future, identifies the following key skills as essential for development and awareness.

Top 10 Competitive Skills for the Labour Market in 2025

-  analytical thinking and innovation
-  active learning and learning strategies
-  complex problem-solving
-  critical thinking and analysis
-  creativity, originality and initiative
-  leadership and social influence
-  technology use, monitoring and control
-  technology design and programming
-  resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
-  reasoning, problem-solving and ideation



INTRODUCTION TO EUROPASS

Europass was established by the European Commission to support job seekers and learners across Europe in accessing suitable educational and career opportunities. In addition to providing official documents that facilitate recognition of qualifications abroad, Europass aims to be the leading online portal for lifelong learning and conscious career building.

Europass provides unique tools and services for users that help with the complete procedure of job applications, documenting and assessing studies and professional experiences and enhancing mobility within Europe.

Europass tools and services available on the Europass portal

On the Europass portal, anyone can create a **free profile** after registration, where personal information, educational background, professional experience, skills, and competencies can be recorded. The portal allows users to create **Europass CVs** and **cover letters** in multiple styles and 31 languages. These can be stored in a **digital document library** along with all other necessary application materials (e.g., reference letters, diplomas, and certificates).

Based on the studies, experiences, and interests entered in the Europass profile, the portal suggests **personalized learning/training and job opportunities**. Additionally, opportunities can be searched across Europe using keywords such as country or position.

The Europass portal also provides **access to key supporting organizations, information centres, and related resources** to guide visitors. Europass collaborates with other networks, such as the European Employment Services (EURES), whose integrated services further enhance the level of support provided through the online platform.

The portal also offers a **digital self-assessment tool** to help users evaluate their digital skills and identify strengths and weaknesses. Based on the test results, the portal offers tailored training options to help users expand their digital knowledge.

Comparing national qualifications frameworks across Europe has never been easier, thanks to a tool also available on the portal.

Europass documents

Europass offers six documents that support job searching and conscious career development. Each document is created in a standardized format, ensuring that the skills and qualifications presented can be understood and compared across all countries within the European Union and the European Economic Area. The documents can be securely stored in the Europass profile, alongside any other application-related materials. Europass CVs and cover letters can be completed on the Europass portal.

These six documents are:

- **Europass CV:** A structured and transparent CV, easily customizable and available in multiple styles.
- **Europass cover letter:** Users can create a concise and formal cover letter that can be used for both job and study applications.
- **Europass mobility document:** A document that records competencies and professional experiences gained during international mobility activities (e.g., volunteering, internships, or study periods abroad).
- **Europass diploma supplement:** The Europass diploma supplement is the European Union's officially recognized document used for the recognition of higher education qualifications abroad.
- **Europass certificate supplement:** The Europass certificate supplement is the European Union's officially recognized document used for the recognition of vocational qualifications in foreign countries.
- **European Digital Credential:** An electronic document that authenticates acquired qualifications and certifies participation in learning activities.



Here are a few practical examples of how one can use Europass services:

- A student can use the Europass CV and cover letter to apply for a scholarship or job.
- A prospective employee can use the Europass mobility document to summarize information about their international studies and professional experiences.
- An employer can use the Europass CV and cover letter to review information about applicants.
- A prospective employee can use the Europass certificate supplement to make his specific vocational education qualification more easily understood in a foreign working environment.



CONSCIOUS CAREER PLANNING STARTS AT SCHOOL

The Europass portal offers a wide range of free services to support students' development and contribute to finding job and learning opportunities. Europass can be useful for:

Students:

- Students can create their Europass profile, where they can organize their experiences, studies, skills, and strengths. This helps them begin shaping their career goals.
- This process contributes to choosing a course or career path where students can truly utilize their abilities and reach their full potential.
- If the user already knows their goals, they can immediately search for relevant study or work opportunities on the *Europass portal*.

Educators:

- Educators can use Europass documents and services, along with the information available on the platform, to learn about different countries' education and qualification systems.
- By issuing *certificate supplements*, *diploma supplements*, and *mobility documents*, institutions can further support their students and make it easier for their qualifications and experiences to be recognized both domestically and abroad.
- Europass also offers institutions the option to verify official documents online, providing an additional layer of credibility.

Self-Assessment and Career Guidance

With the Europass 'Plan your career' tool, students can review their skills, experiences, and interests to define their career goals. This helps them choose study and job opportunities later that align with their abilities and objectives.

Documenting Studies and Professional Experience

The Europass CV and cover letter help students document their studies and professional experiences in a structured and transparent way. This can be useful when applying for scholarships and job positions.

Support for Studying and Gaining Professional Experience Abroad

The Europass mobility document helps summarize international study and professional experiences, making it easier to present and recognize qualifications gained abroad.

Raising Awareness of Opportunities in Europe

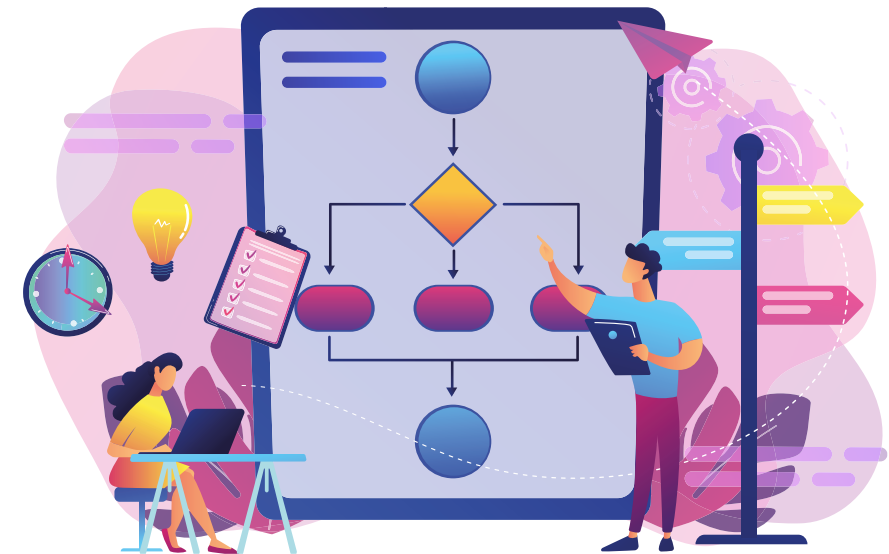
The information available on the Europass portal helps students stay informed about European study and work opportunities.

Using Europass tools in schools can help:

- Plan studies more consciously and align them with personal goals.
- Conduct more effective self-assessment to better understand skills and strengths.
- Discover free mobility opportunities within the European Union, expanding access to educational and professional experiences across Europe.

PRACTICES, TOOLS, TASKS

The most straightforward and exciting „entry point“ for conscious thinking about career for the age group 12-18 is discovering their strengths. It is advantageous that children/young people at this age are focused on themselves and can easily relate to the exercises. Strengths, also known as „top skills“ in labour market terms, are essentially their positive traits, abilities, knowledge, the self-image they have of themselves, and the opinions others have of them. These can be uncovered in both serious and playful ways. The exercises use positive, uplifting expressions, encouraging honest self-expression and openness with others. What we can achieve with children is: translating traits into competencies, making them aware that their environment sees them in a certain way, and reinforcing the idea that skills can be developed. The identified abilities can be then incorporated as competencies into the Europass CV.





10 QUESTIONS FOR MISSION EXPLORATION



FOR WHOM?

From age 13 onward, depending on cognitive abilities



HOW?

As an individual task, the students complete the questions and then discuss them in pairs or interview each other using a reporter exercise format. (The reporter exercise is a dynamic group task: find a partner, ask them the first question, alternate discussing the answers, then ask another partner the second question, and so on. At the end of the exercise, the group shares their insights and lessons learned. For those looking for a part-time job, volunteer work, or employment, it's recommended to summarize the insights in writing so that they can later be included in the Europass motivational letter (Europass 2023).



TIP

If the trust level in the class/group is high, the questions can also be discussed frontally. However, since most of the questions require deeper self-reflection, it's recommended to conduct this task in pairs or in a reporter exercise format (interviewing as many classmates as possible).

1. What makes you happy? What lifts your spirits?

.....

2. What do your friends say you're good at?

.....

3. What should you do according to them? ("You should be ...")

Why would people send others to you? Complete the sentence: "Ask (*here's your name*) - they're really good at or they're great at"
What skills or qualities have you been recognized for in the work or studies you've done so far?

4. What was the job (task, activity, subtask, not just a specific position) you enjoyed the most?

.....

5. What are some ways you like to help others?

.....

6. What could you teach others in two minutes? (knowledge/skill)

.....

7. How could you make money? What are you good at? Write down everything that comes to mind! Don't think about what others might say, and it doesn't matter whether it's your calling in life.

.....

8. When was the last time you couldn't sleep because you were so excited about something you wanted to do?

.....

9. Have you ever pushed yourself too hard? What was it for, and why did you work or act so hard?

.....

10. What 3-5 dream jobs or businesses can you imagine that would reflect everything you believe in?

.....



DESIGNING A COAT OF ARMS



FOR WHOM?

From age 12 onward



HOW?

An individual drawing task followed by a frontal presentation of the coat of arms.



REQUIRED MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

A4 paper and coloured markers



TIP

For digitally savvy students with access to devices, they can also design the coat of arms using a photo on their phones or create it in a PowerPoint presentation, which can be assigned as homework for the upcoming class. If the teacher wants to motivate the students, the first three volunteers could receive praise from the class leader. Encourage the students to speak in the first person, practising self-representation.

STEPS FOR CREATING A COAT OF ARMS:

1. Step: Fold the paper in half lengthwise!

2. Step: On the left side of the paper, draw a symbol that represents you well (e.g., a logo, animal, plant, favourite object, memory, experience). Feel free to use colours.

3. Step: On the left side of the paper, draw symbols that represent your best qualities.

4. Step: Introduce yourself based on the drawing.

5. Step (optional): Let your classmates give positive feedback: "What did you like most when XY spoke?" "What would you give positive feedback on in XY's presentation?"

The advantage of this exercise is that students can try themselves in a role similar to a job interview: "Present your three strongest skills!"





WHEEL OF COMPETENCIES



FOR WHOM?

From age 14 onward



HOW?

1. Step: Brainstorming in groups: gather competencies that can be useful in a workplace. Use a board or flipchart.

2. Step: Individual work. Draw a wheel and write the 8 most important skills/strengths/competencies in the eight spokes. Students can choose from the list on the board or come up with their own strengths.

3. Step: Everyone rates how strong they feel in each competency on a scale of 1-10.

4. Step: Sharing experiences in groups (in a small class, everyone can present their own competency wheel; in a large class, insights and experiences can be discussed, e.g., "What did you learn about yourself?")



EQUIPMENT

Board/flipchart, A4 paper, writing utensils



SUPER-TYPE JOB INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE



FOR WHOM?

From age 14 onward



HOW?

Students complete a printed questionnaire, then transfer and discuss the results either individually or in a group. The goal of this exercise is for students to create a priority list of the values they consider important for their future career choice or job search. Students receive a sheet with 45 statements, which they rate from 1 to 5 based on their relevance to their career decisions.

The discussion focuses on the extreme values: the answers that received a score of 5 will be incorporated into the Europass motivation letter. In higher grades, particularly in senior years, an evaluation sheet can also be used, categorizing responses into value areas (e.g., self-assertion, creativity, financial motivation, etc.). For younger students, it's sufficient to provide them with criteria for evaluating potential job roles and help them use these criteria in job searching and writing motivation letters.

If students have difficulty interpreting some of the statements such as "Success or failure can only be decided by the next generation," it is worth discussing these together to broaden their perspectives. The teacher may also provide practical examples to clarify the meaning.



REQUIRED MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Printed test and pens



TIP

This age group highly values tasks where there are no right or wrong answers, allowing them to experience free decision-making and autonomy. For this exercise, it's worth emphasizing that there are no correct or incorrect answers, only individual preferences matter.

In a group setting, make it clear in advance that answers do not need to be shared with others.



The original test includes a scoring sheet, but this is typically not used for this age group, as they generally lack work experience.

I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A JOB WHERE I CAN...

Continuously encounter new, unsolved problems	
Help others	
Earn a lot of money	
Perform diverse tasks	
Make independent decisions in my field	
Gain respect through my work	
Even be an artist	
Belong to a group	
Let my mood decide what to do	
Achieve self-fulfilment	
Respect my boss	
Contribute to social justice	
Avoid ambiguity, as there are only right or wrong solutions	
Lead others	
Develop new ideas	
Create something new	
Objectively measure the results of my work	
Trust my leader to always make the right decisions	
Do things that may seem unnecessary to others	
Make the world a better place	
Make independent decisions	
Ensure a carefree life	
Encounter new ideas	

Leadership skills may be required	
Success or failure is determined only by the next generation	
Personal lifestyle can be expressed	
Colleagues are also friends	
You can be confident that others appreciate your work	
You don't have to do the same thing repeatedly	
You can do good for others	
You serve the well-being of others	
You can engage in a variety of activities	
Others look up to you	
You get along well with your colleagues	
You can live the life you love most	
You need to face conflicts	
You can manage the work of others	
You do intellectually stimulating work	
You can expect a high pension	
Your work is free from interference by others	
You can create beauty	
Sometimes you can play	
You have an understanding leader	
You can continuously improve and perfect yourself	
Your new ideas are always needed	

Please rate the statements above on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating how true they are for you (1 = least true, 5 = completely true)

LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITY OUTLINES

"Career Charades" – A Competency-Based Lesson



FOR WHOM?

From age 14 onward



DURATION

45 minutes



REQUIRED MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

Set up 4 tables in the classroom, distributing the students evenly around them. The ideal number of students per table is a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10. Place wrapping paper or flipchart paper and markers on each table.



ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES:

A fun brainstorming session where students come up with unusual or humorous professions. These professions can be invented or fictional, outdated and no longer in existence or future professions that do not exist yet.

As inspiration, you can show a 21st-century parody of *Busy, Busy Town* (Richard Scarry). Students should gather as many unique professions as possible within 5 minutes.



In the remaining 40 minutes, the small groups at each table should choose a real, currently existing profession or occupation and develop its competencies in detail. They must keep their choice a secret because the other groups will need to guess the profession based on the competencies described. Each group should also appoint a "table host" who will coordinate notetaking and ensure the group stays focused on the task.

The teacher can provide practical examples (e.g., cobbler – manual dexterity; coach – muscular physique, perseverance) or ask guiding questions to help gather competencies:

- What knowledge does this person have?
- What skills do they possess?
- What characterizes them?
- How are they perceived by colleagues or supervisors?
- What did they need to learn to perform this job?
- What is their best trait?
- What could be their strengths and weaknesses?
- What physical characteristics might they have?

Each table should gather as many traits and characteristics as possible and write them on the flipchart paper. After 15 minutes, the group should decide whether to present the competencies collectively or select one person to do so. Then they present their work while the other tables must guess the profession based on the competencies described.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher should encourage reflection by asking open-ended questions:

- Who can be recognized by their competencies?
- What is your most defining trait?
- What are you most proud of?

LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITY OUTLINES

"What Do I Find Valuable in Work?" - Lesson



FOR WHOM?

From age 14 onward



DURATION

45 minutes



REQUIRED MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Printed Super-type work values questionnaire, pens, Post-it notes



ICEBREAKER EXERCISES

The students receive a Post-it note, and the teacher asks the question: "Imagine yourself in twenty years. What do you do?" The students write their answers legibly on the Post-it notes and then crumple them up. The task is to throw the crumpled notes around the room for 1 minute, ensuring that none of them fall to the ground. The teacher measures the time. After 1 minute, each student holds a crumpled note, unrolls it, and the teacher asks the question: "What is your understanding of what you read on the note? You can only say positive things."

The students try to imagine themselves in their peer's position and practise constructive phrasing instead of judgment. This exercise lasts for 10 minutes; it's not necessary to involve every student if the class size is large.

Afterwards, the teacher distributes the Super-type work values questionnaire and briefly explains why it is important for the students to be aware of what holds value for them in their future careers. (a job that is enjoyable, better mental health, more experiences of success, etc.) The teacher then asks the students to complete the questionnaire, pointing out that there are no right or wrong answers, and the values are not comparable to school grades.

Filling out the questionnaire will take 15-20 minutes, depending on the maturity, size, and pace of the class. After completing it, the teacher will engage in a discussion with the students about:

- What was the most surprising or novel aspect they hadn't considered before?
- Which aspects did they rate with a five, meaning these are important to them? Why?
- What new realizations have they made about themselves?

The questionnaire helps all age groups become more aware of the factors in choosing a workplace, enriching them with new criteria. The aspects rated five can be incorporated into the Europass motivational letter: "I would like to find a workplace where I can do good for others."

If the activity is part of a homeroom session, the teacher can ask the students to talk to their parents about what they enjoy in their jobs, and this can be discussed together in the next class.



LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITY OUTLINES

Collage Creation Lesson



FOR WHOM?

From age 12 onwards



DURATION

45 minutes



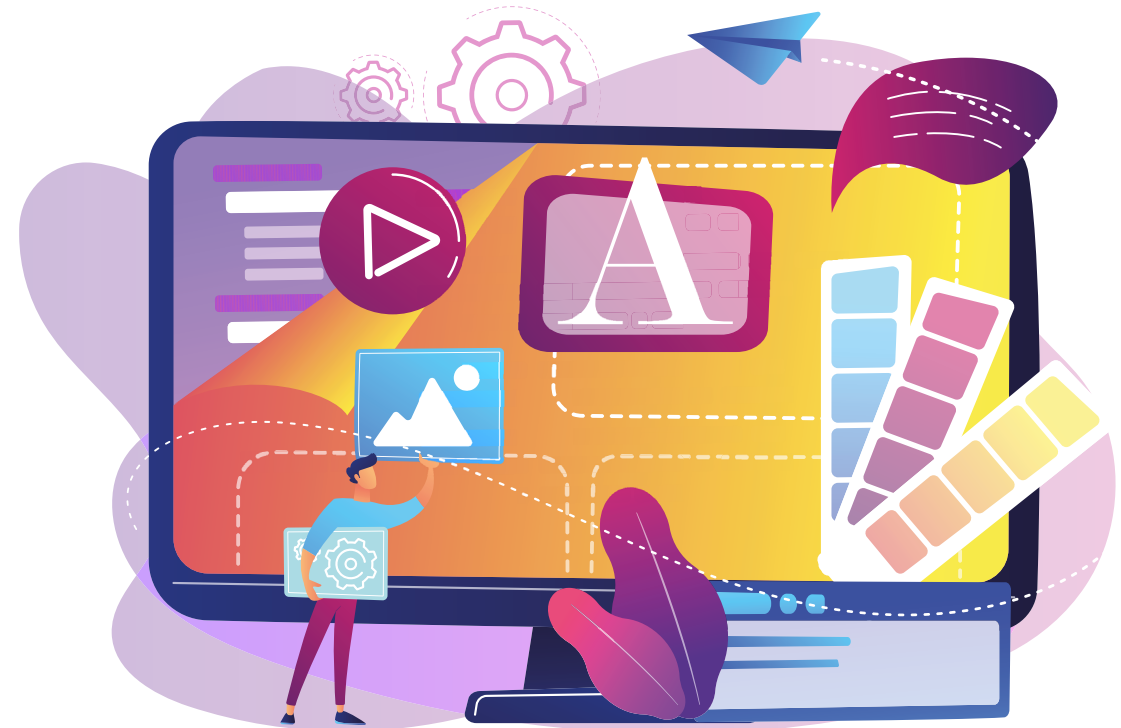
REQUIRED MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Coloured magazines, A4 cardboard, scissors, glue



ICEBREAKER EXERCISES

The teacher asks the students to imagine themselves 15 years from now: What would they like to be doing? What kind of environment surrounds them at work? What tools do they use, what tasks do they perform, who are their colleagues, etc.? Then, give them time to search for appropriate pictures in the magazines that they can use to create a collage.



TASK

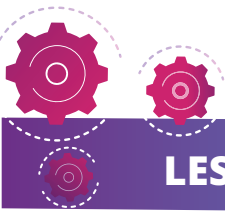
Create your collage from photos/letters/images, titled: "Me and My Job 15 Years from Now." When you're done, present your creation to the others.

This task is valuable not only because it mentally helps students imagine and create their future employee/leader/entrepreneur selves, but it also gives them the opportunity to practise presenting, thinking about themselves in a structured way, and expressing themselves.



TIP

The students can organize an exhibition or a virtual exhibition of their creations and decorate the classroom with them.



LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITY OUTLINES

“My route” / mind map Lesson



FOR WHOM?

From age 12 onward



DURATION

2x45 minutes



REQUIRED MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Coloured markers, A4 paper



INTRODUCTION

The teacher asks the students to imagine themselves as working adults.
What path leads them there? Two different approaches can be tried:



1. My Route:

Draw the path of how you will become a successful chef. The two endpoints of the paper are the future and the present—how do you connect them? What happens between the two? Is the path straight or winding? Who accompanies you on your journey? What milestones will you stop at? What do you need to move towards your goal? Write it down, draw it, and mark the milestones!

FUTURE



PRESENT



2. Mind Map:

Draw the desired future in the centre of the paper and name the profession you see yourself in. Collect everything that surrounds this goal and create a mind map.



FUTURE

After the illustrations are completed, the students will present themselves based on their drawings, forming pairs if the class is large. The teacher will ask the students to take the drawings home and discuss them with their parents. In the following lesson, each student can voluntarily share their drawing with the entire class for one or two minutes. The presentation skill will be essential throughout the entire job search process, so practising it playfully and visually can start from upper elementary grades. It's important that the students' presentations are accompanied by positive feedback and supportive body language.

The worksheets in the publication are available for free download from the Publications section of the europass.hu website.



Useful links:

Europass portal

Your free, personal tool for learning and working in Europe.

europass.europa.eu

Europass Europe – social media

www.facebook.com/europasseurope

www.instagram.com/europasseurope

www.linkedin.com/company/europass-europe

Euroguidance Network

Informational portal on lifelong guidance and international mobility.

euroguidance.eu

www.facebook.com/Euroguidance

Eurodesk

Informational portal for youth.

eurodesk.eu

www.facebook.com/Eurodesk

Erasmus+

Information on all of the Erasmus+ mobility programs.

erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu

www.facebook.com/EUErasmusPlusProgramme

European Youth Portal

Volunteering, learning and job opportunities for young people.

youth.europa.eu/home_en

European Employment Services

Information and advisory network made up of employment services in the EU Member States, Switzerland and EEA countries.

eures.europa.eu/index_en

www.facebook.com/EURESjobs



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