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Criteria for assessing Transversal Skills

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Introduction

The VISKA project (Visible Skills of Adults) aims to make visible the skills of migrants and low-qualified people through identification, documentation and assessment of competences based on agreed criteria of Transversal Skills.

In the VISKA Briefing paper on Transversal Skills (Deliverable D1.1) - a set of skills were presented as a framework within the VISKA project, see the table here below. Further background information on the development of the framework can be found in the briefing paper (see: www.viskaproject.eu).

<p>Critical and innovative thinking, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem solving, creativity, entrepreneurship, ability to learn (from Key skills)
<p>Inter-personal skills, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presentation and communication skills; both in mother tongue and in foreign language (the specification from Key Skills) • organizational skills • teamwork
<p>Intra-personal skills, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-discipline • perseverance • self-motivation
<p>Global citizenship, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tolerance • openness • respect for diversity • intercultural understanding • cultural expression and intercultural, social and civic competence (from Key Skills)
<p>Media and information processing/literacy, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ability to locate and access information • the ability to analyse and evaluate media content • the ability to understand and analyze numerical and statistical information • digital competence (from Key Skills)

Following the framework for Transversal Skills, the VISKA team defines a set of assessment criteria which are presented in this paper. They are examples for the above listed Transversal Skills, which will be tried out in the form of a validation process in partner countries. The standards are mostly derived from the Human Resource System Group (www.hrsg.ca) and various European and international resources available online as well as documents shared by the VISKA partners. Within each category of skills, several subtitles are described revealing a progression of skills. The standards are examples that can be adjusted nationally and perhaps connected to National Qualification Frameworks.

The validation process

It is important that the validation process of Transversal Skills is well planned and conducted by trained frontline staff and professionals. A basis is set in the following VISKA deliverables. In the VISKA project, deliverable D3.3 – Training Module and Training for Frontline Professionals – presents examples of training programs. Deliverable D3.4 – Holistic Quality Assurance Measures for Validation Services – defines standards which support the quality of validation services and can be used as a guiding light for validation practices, in addition to the European Guidelines on Validation of non-formal and informal learning (CEDEFOP, 2015) and other related resources.

Identification and documentation are the first two phases of the VPL process as defined in the Council recommendation (2012). They may also involve what is called “skills audit”, which, according to the aim of the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (2015), has the aim:

- a) *to help individuals to reflect on and become conscious of their actual capabilities (knowledge, skills and competence);*
- b) *to help the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups – for example low skilled adults and migrants – to develop their careers and increase their employability prospects;*
- c) *to provide users with a means of making visible and marketing their skills and competences;*
- d) *to map needs for further training, considering the importance of matching the individual’s competences with labour market needs.*

The results of validation processes depend on which phases are completed:

Completing phase 1 and 2 in the VPL process may result in:

- a. identification and documentation of own competences/skills **in a wide perspective** (Transversal Skills for example) for personal development and/or appropriate job opportunities or education.
- b. identification and documentation of skills **against job related or curricula related criteria** leading to decision making linked to career development.

Completing all four phases will result in an assessment of the documented skills resulting in certification.

In the table below the use of Transversal Skills in conjunction with the VPL process is described, linked to the results described above.

VPL phase	Focus	Method
1 and 2)	a: Skills are identified and documented based on specific criteria for Transversal Skills . The results are formative – making visible a variety of skills, which can be used for personal development and matched with appropriate opportunities for continuing development with the support of guidance.	<p>a: Self-assessment against criteria based on Transversal Skills.</p> <p>Making a portfolio with relevant documentation to prove competences.</p> <p>May be related to NQF levels. Supported by career guidance (e.g. dialogue, reflections, group work).</p>

	<p>b: Skills are identified and documented based on a specific job or curricula criteria. The results are formative – making visible a variety of skills, which can be matched with appropriate opportunities for continuing development with the support of guidance.</p>	<p>b: Self-assessment against criteria based on a job/curriculum in a specific sector.</p> <p>Making a portfolio with relevant documentation to prove competences.</p> <p>May be related to NQF levels. Supported by career guidance.</p>
3 and 4	<p>Skills are formally assessed, and verification provided (certification, approval by stakeholders).</p> <p>The results are summative – making visible a specific skill set linked to <i>Transversal Skills or/and a profession</i>. The results are used to move into a job or continuing training/competence development.</p>	<p>Trained assessors assess the competences against job/curriculum/transversal skills criteria.</p> <p>Supported by career guidance.</p>

When working on validation processes linked to Transversal Skills, the process needs to be interactive and based on a dialogue, reflections and cases linked to personal contexts of the individual participant (work, leisure, school, family etc.), in order to clarify the content of the criteria and make them relevant to the participant's experience. There will always be a need for flexibility in criteria, methods and tools based on the contexts of different target groups and nations.

Some assessment criteria for Transversal Skills, for use in VSKA trials

Some assessment criteria for the above listed Transversal Skills are presented below. They will be tried out in the form of a validation process in partner countries, as suitable for the situational context in each country. Within each category of skills, several subtitles are listed, with their associated skills, to describe a progression of skills. The criteria are examples that can be adjusted nationally and perhaps connected to National Qualification Frameworks.

<p>Critical and innovative thinking, such as:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving • Creativity • Ability to learn etc.
<p>Problem Solving - Identifying problems and the solutions to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies basic problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifies basic problems based on clear and fundamental factors. ○ Describes the essence of a problem. ○ Identifies the influencing factors of a problem. • Solves basic problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifies links between related problems, while keeping distinct problems separate to avoid confusing the issue.

- When predefined solutions are not applicable, identifies straightforward, practical solutions.
- Selects solutions to basic problems, considering predefined options and using clear criteria/procedures.
- **Solves advanced problems**
 - Identifies alternate solutions, considering applicable precedents.
 - Identifies optimal solutions based on weighing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches.

Creativity - *Generating viable, new approaches and solutions.*

- **Acknowledges that new approaches can be used**
 - Is willing to do things differently through using new approaches.
 - Constructively evaluates current practices and processes/ strategy followed.
 - Suggests improvements to current approaches.
- **Modifies current approaches**
 - Modifies current approach to better meet needs.
 - Approaches problems from different angles.
 - Expands on the thinking or solutions proposed by others.
- **Identifies new approaches**
 - Creates new ideas, solutions or approaches to ongoing challenges.
 - Uses unconventional areas as sources of inspiration and insight into new options and solutions.
 - Solves complex problems through developing new explanations or applications.

Ability to learn –*Identifying and addressing learning and developmental needs to enhance own performance.*

- **Learns from available opportunities**
 - Self-assesses against standards for current position to identify learning needs.
 - Takes advantage of learning opportunities provided (e.g., courses, feedback from supervisor or peers) to meet requirements of current job.
- **Seeks learning opportunities**
 - Requests additional feedback to clarify learning needs.
 - Seeks coaching in areas where techniques are rapidly evolving.
 - Continually acquires and applies new knowledge and learning to improve job performance.
- **Implements a self-directed development plan**
 - Gathers information from varied sources to identify own strengths and weaknesses in current position.
 - Identifies and plans learning targeted to specific developmental needs in current position.
 - Monitors progress in meeting learning goals and updates learning plan as needed.

Inter-personal skills, such as:

- **Presentation and communication skills in mother tongue**
- **Organizational skills**
- **Teamwork etc.**

Presentation and communication skills in mother tongue. - *Listening to others and communicating articulately, fostering open communication.*

- **Listens and clearly presents information**
 - Listens/pays attention actively and objectively.
 - Shares information clearly, willingly and on a timely basis.
 - Presents information and facts in a logical manner, using appropriate phrasing and vocabulary, both verbally and in writing.
- **Fosters two-way communication**
 - Recalls others' main points and takes them into account in own communication.
 - Checks own understanding of others' communication (e.g., paraphrases, asks questions).
 - Maintains continuous, open and consistent communication with others.
- **Adapts communication**
 - Tailors communication (e.g., content, style and medium) to diverse audiences.
 - Communicates equally effectively with all organizational levels.
 - Considers others' underlying needs, motivations, emotions or concerns and communicates effectively despite the sensitivity of the situation.

Organizational skills - *Developing, implementing, evaluating and adjusting plans to reach goals, while ensuring the optimal use of resources.*

- **Organizes own activities**
 - Plans and organizes own activities to accomplish pre-determined standards or procedures.
 - Monitors the quality and timeliness of own work and adjusts accordingly.
 - Responsibly uses the resources at one's immediate disposal.
- **Organizes group activities**
 - Identifies who needs to be involved and when.
 - Identifies who will do what, when, taking into account group members' skills, needs and, if possible, preferences
 - Monitors, adjusts and plans progress and use of resources (e.g., people, supplies, money).
- **Organizes major activities**
 - Identifies varied resources needed (e.g., different types of expenditures; different skill mixes).
 - Produces realistic, achievable and adjustable work plans (e.g. through breaking activities into smaller components to facilitate completion).
 - Evaluates the extent to which objectives have been achieved.

Teamwork - *Working collaboratively with others to achieve goals.*

- **Collaborates with others**
 - Deals honestly and fairly with others, showing consideration and respect for individual differences, situations, attitudes and emotions of others

- Seeks assistance from other team members and assists other, as needed.
- Shares all relevant information with others.
- **Proactively assists and involves others**
 - Initiates collaboration with others.
 - Assumes additional responsibilities to facilitate the achievement of team goals.
 - Seeks input from other team members on matters that affect them.
- **Fosters teamwork**
 - Connects constructively to a decision taken in a group.
 - Gives credit and acknowledges contributions and efforts of other team members.
 - Ensures that all group members have an opportunity to contribute to group discussions and contributes actively to the realization of common goals.

Intra-personal skills, such as:

- **Self-discipline**
- **Perseverance**
- **Self-motivation etc.**

Self-discipline - *Reflecting on past experiences in order to manage and continually improve own performance and attend to designated tasks.*

- **Recognizes opportunities for improvement**
 - Acknowledges areas where expectations about own service delivery, performance or interpersonal interactions are not met.
 - Able to provide reasons for the lack of success which may or may not involve self. Positively accepts constructive feedback.
- **Remains positive and addresses difficulties**
 - When faced with difficulties or changes, re-addresses the situation in order to persevere (within reason).
 - Approaches new situations with a positive outlook, despite previous disappointments.
- **Takes responsibility**
 - Acknowledges personal responsibility for outcomes, even when not all elements of a situation are within direct control.

Perseverance - *Remains energized and focused in the face of ambiguity, change or strenuous demands (within reasonable limits).*

- **Works effectively in standard situations**
 - Remains focused and productive in the face of standard work demands (e.g., sets own priorities and clarifies expectations).
 - Shows flexibility and strives to meet objectives when working under changing or unclear conditions (e.g., revises daily/weekly work priorities).
- **Works effectively in the face of occasional strenuous work demands**
 - Remains effective and retains perspective in the face of periodic disruptions (e.g., identifies own personal limit for work load and makes appropriate

<p>adjustments).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While remaining open to other viewpoints, demonstrates realistic confidence in own abilities, views or decisions when challenged. ● Adapts to ongoing, or regular strenuous work demands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remains effective and retains perspective in the face of difficult or demanding situations (pervasive ambiguity, frequent change, high workloads). ○ Views disruptions as challenges rather than threats.
<p>Self- motivation - <i>Motivated to set goals and standards and takes initiative to make things happen.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defines realistic and attainable goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Undertakes a task or activity on his own. ○ Works independently and interdependently without seeking ongoing reassurance (e.g. makes appropriate independent decisions). ● Takes initiative to make things happen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tracks progress toward the achievement of goals. ○ Demonstrates confidence in own abilities, views or decisions when challenged. ● Identifies and acts on issues and problems in own area of responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluates progress of goal achievement, adjusting one's actions to meet or exceed expectations. ○ Suggests ways to achieve better results. ○ Seeks challenging assignments/added responsibility.
<p>Global citizenship, such as:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respect for diversity ● Intercultural understanding ● Intercultural, social and civic competence (from key skills) etc.
<p>Respect for diversity <i>Understands one's personal attitudes and values related to diversity and enhancing one's and others, knowledge, behaviours and actions related to respecting diversity.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understands how own biases, personal perspective and attitudes impact own behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledges how own cultural influences and biases can affect own attitudes, beliefs and feelings towards others of diverse backgrounds. ○ Seeks to minimize impact of own biases, personal perspective and attitudes on actions and decisions. ○ Acknowledges the impact of cultural influences in various contexts. ● Interacts effectively with diverse groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adapts approach and methods to suit to the diversity of others. ○ Seeks to understand the beliefs, values, feelings and attitudes of others. ○ Dealing in a constructive way with differences between people and views of life. ● Advocates for fair and equitable treatment of all people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifies practical solutions to ongoing issues based on an understanding of underlying issues with other people/ stakeholders.

- Confronts others whose behaviours or actions are contrary to appreciating and accepting diversity.

Intercultural understanding - *Building on one's own cultural values and knowledge to communicate/ work effectively with individuals of diverse backgrounds in different contexts.*

- **Recognizes cultural diversity and personal biases**
 - Has an understanding of own attitudes, beliefs and values towards people of different cultures.
 - Seeks out opportunities to learn about cultures different from own.
 - Recognizes the impact of culture on thinking, feeling and acting (e.g. use of image, music, movement, drama or media to express oneself).
 - Respects human rights legislation and company policies on diversity.
- **Adapts behaviours based on an understanding of cultural diversity**
 - Encourages constructive discussions of differences.
 - Adapts behaviours in different cultural contexts.
 - Expressing his/her appreciation for cultural heritage here and elsewhere
- **Creates an environment that embraces diversity**
 - Facilitates open and transparent communication about cultural issues.
 - Coaches others in displaying behaviours that support diversity.
 - Supports the development of cultural competence among individuals and in groups.

Media and information processing/literacy such as:

- **The ability to locate and access information**
- **The ability to analyse and evaluate media content**
- **Digital competence (from Key Skills) etc.**

The ability to locate and access information - *Locating and collecting data from appropriate sources and analyzing it to prepare meaningful and concise reports that summarize the information.*

- **Follows prescribed information gathering procedures**
 - Identifies information needs based on relevant facts and issues underlying a particular problem.
 - Identifies and consults the most useful source of information to meet the requirements of the task.
 - Obtains feedback on results.
 - Follows prescribed methods of information collection.
- **Adapts information gathering strategy-analysis to situation**
 - Recognizes the need for a modified approach to data/ information gathering/ analysis.
 - Gets more complete and accurate information by checking multiple sources.
 - Accesses various complementary, rapidly changing sources of information (e.g., print, on-line, CD-ROM).
- **Processes complex information from various sources**
 - Critically evaluates data sources for reliability.

- Knows when to seek expertise to discern and compare information or to clarify a problem.
- Maximizes the potential of available technology to identify relevant information.
- Quickly processes large volumes of information discerning relevant and irrelevant information.

The ability to analyse and evaluate media content – *Verifying and determining the accuracy and authenticity of media information.*

- **Identifies the origin of a resource**
 - Is aware of that resources vary in reliability based on their origin.
 - Knows what to seek for when determining the origin of resources (e.g. .com; .org; and .edu).
- **Reads media content from a critical viewpoint**
 - Looks for the age of the media site and whether it has been updated.
 - Looks for the responsible actor/person of the media site and explores if the information can be corroborated from other sources.
 - Concludes the reliability of media content based on exploring and comparing resources in regards to accuracy and authenticity.

Digital competence - *Using software and information technology to accomplish one's work.*

- **Uses a few basic, standard commands requiring minimal knowledge of software (e.g. cut, copy, paste)**
 - Uses basic functionality of word processing, Internet, Intranet, e-mail.
 - Uses features of IT tools (e.g. telephone, e-mail, photocopiers, fax).
- **Uses several, common software features (e.g. produces business formatting of documents)**
 - Converts files from one format to another.
 - Importing data between common applications.
 - Conducts simple database searches.
- **Experiments and problem solves to produce the desired effect**
 - Customizes own interface with the software.
 - Uses a wide range of features or options for a given software package.
 - Uses a few different software packages to produce the desired result.

Assessing Transversal Skills

Is it possible to measure or assess Transversal Skills? Is it possible to assess for example Problem solving skills or Teamwork skills? How can that be done?

One perspective is that as in other validation measures it is a matter of assessing defined learning outcomes which an individual may have achieved through various experiences from diverse contexts in life. If the learning outcomes/criteria have been defined for Problem solving and Teamwork, described in accurate terms and possibly on levels – or in a progressive manner – they can be on par with more traditional validation learning outcomes/criteria and procedures, such as validation of prior

learning against curricula or specific jobs (e.g. carpentry, sales representative). Based on clear learning outcomes/criteria, traditional methods and tools can be used, such as the competence portfolio, self-assessment, dialogue with guidance professionals, peers (through group work) and assessment interviews (based on dialogue, examples and cases). Cases linked to the individual's prior learning can be highly efficient in bringing forth competences for validation. Hence, they are always context based – as is the development of Transversal Skills for they are gained through particular contexts, and in many cases transferrable between contexts.

The identification and documentation phases (phases 1 and 2 in the VPL process) linked to Transversal Skills can also be useful for individuals whereas they get an overview of skills that are considered valuable in the society. Through the process the individual can get assistance in verbalizing and reflecting on these competences and identify ways to strengthen them which can increase access to the labour market or into further education and training.

Example of self-assessment methods

Self-assessment can be conducted in groups or individually. Sufficient time and guidance needs to be provided for the identification and documentation phase where the focus should be on assisting the participant in reflecting on his/her prior learning and experience linked to each assessment criteria.

One way of conducting self-assessment can be seen in the table below. The assessment criteria is presented in the first box, followed by a more detailed examples of what the assessment criteria could look like in practice. The third box provides the individual with an opportunity to reflect on own experience and prior learning linked to the criteria. The guidance practitioner supports and motivates the participant in verbalizing his/prior learning. Group work can also be conducted where peers support each other in reflecting and identifying own competences and skills.

Problem Solving - Identifying problems and the solutions to them		
Criteria	More detail about what these skills look like	You can demonstrate examples of those skills (at home, from work, community work)
Identifies basic problems		
Identifies basic problems based on clear and fundamental factors. Describes the essence of a problem. Identifies the influencing factors of a problem.	<i>Follows working rules at work Makes appropriate decisions based on working rules „If I spill, I dry it up – if it rains, I remove the tablecloth“</i>	<i>Through my work as a waitress and cashier and raising three children...</i>
Solves basic problems...		
Identifies links between related problems, while keeping distinct problems separate to avoid confusing the issue.	<i>„.....“</i>	<i>Through my work as...</i>

When predefined solutions are not applicable, identifies straightforward, practical solutions.		
Selects solutions to basic problems, considering predefined options and using clear criteria/procedures		

Example of the assessment process

In Iceland, validation of *employability skills* is conducted based on the following example. Validation of Transversal Skills could be based on a similar plan – adjusted as suitable:

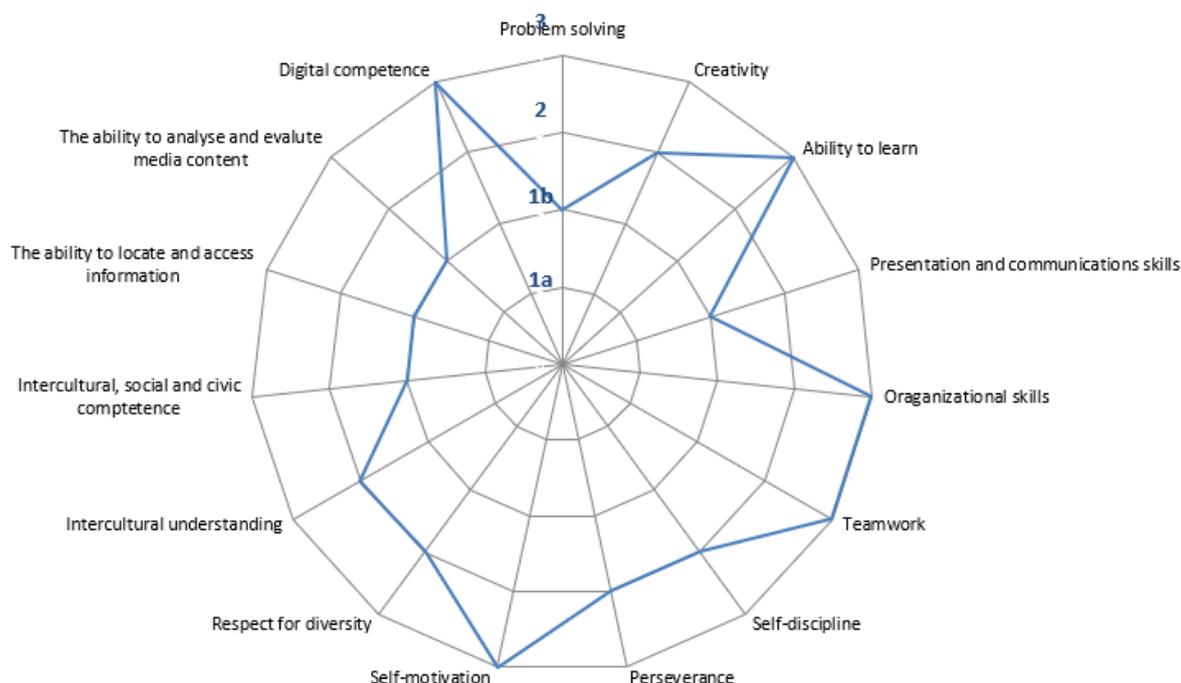
Introduction	Who	Material
Introduction to VPL, the project, VPL staff, the process, schedule etc. Participants are offered to sign up for a screening interview	Project manager, assessor(s), guidance personnel, participants and stakeholders	Introduction pp Overviews
Screening		
Interview with a guidance counsellors, reviewing background information and discussing participation in the project	Participant and guidance personnel	Screening-list, assessment criteria, competence portfolio form
Group work 1 – assessment criteria presented		
The concept of employability skills is presented and the aim of the VPL process	Project manager, assessor(s), guidance personnel and participants	Introduction pp Overviews Competence portfolio form
Group work 2 – portfolio work and criteria		
Exercise: the lifeline and more. Start filling in the open competence portfolio. Group work: analysing criteria	Guidance personnel, assessor(s) and participants	Table Exercise papers Competence portfolio form Assessment criteria descriptions
Group work 3 – portfolio work and criteria		
Continuing portfolio work. Exercise: Analysing own competences in connection to assessment criteria	Guidance personnel, assessor(s) and participants	Portfolio Analyses of competence form
Group work 4 – Self-assessment completed and preparation for assessment		
Self-assessment form filled out. Introduction of	Assessor(s), guidance personnel and participants	Self-assessment form Examples of assessment methods (questions, cases etc)

assessment process and assessment methods.		
Assessment		
Assessment interviews according to schedule. Assessor follows assessment guidelines and has read through individual material and prepared approaches for the use of cases for each participant (relevant context)	Assessor(s), guidance personnel with each participant individually	Portfolio Self-assessment form Analyses of competences form Cases
Results reviewed – next steps discussed		
Conversation about the results of the assessment interview and possible continuing competence development	Assessor(s), guidance personnel and participant	Assessment material and results
Recognition		
Results formally handed out	Project manager, assessors, guidance personnel, participants, stakeholders	Certificates

Example of how results can be presented

Descriptions of the criteria/sub-categories recognized can be described in a certificate stamped by stakeholders. In addition the participants main strengths can be highlighted and how he/she can continue progressing where needed. The spiderweb is also a way to present and discuss the results in a vizual manner, see example here below:

Spiderweb diagram presenting results



Based on the results, an interview with guidance personnel is conducted focusing on ways to continue towards further competence development or work. After the process the individual has a clearer overview of own strengths related to Transversal Skills.

Additional resources

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – European Commission

https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en

The Digital Competence Framework 2.0 - DIGICOMP (EU, 2013)

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>

Assessment of Transversal Competencies – Policy and Practice in the Asian-Pacific Region:

<http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=TVEtipedia+glossary+A-Z&filt=577>

On Basic skills, found on Skills Norway website

http://www.kompetansenorge.no/English/Basic-skills/#Toolsandresources_5