

**INTERLOCALITY**  
INCREASED LOCAL EMPLOYABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



# INTERNATIONAL TALENT JOURNEY CONCEPT

[www.interlocality.eu/](http://www.interlocality.eu/)



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# INTRODUCTION

The “International Talent Journey” (ITJ) was set up as an Intellectual Output within the ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership “INTERLOCALITY - *Increased local employability of international students*” with a consortium of four Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and one third-sector organisation in Europe. This initiative is exploring ways of increasing the needed retention of international degree students in their host countries and communities.

The INTERLOCALITY consortium has in common the predominance of small and medium sized employers (-250 employees) and the need for highly-skilled workforce in our regions. For UASs with compulsory internships, local employability is in fact a critical factor even for retaining and graduating the students. All four partner UASs have experienced significant difficulties in the local integration and employability of our international degree students.

Universities of Applied Sciences are often known for their close cooperation with local and regional businesses and their applied research and education. They are also positioned to connect closely to working life and to foster work-ready graduates. Especially in countries with diminishing populations access to highly-skilled talent is becoming a critical barrier to growth and it is crucial for local companies to either broaden their recruitment, also to international talents that are already in the country, or seek to attract them from abroad.

The issue of graduate employability has received particular attention in recent years. Various political, economic, and social phenomena have contributed to an increasing focus on the employment rate of graduates and have become one of the criteria for assessing the quality of Higher Education Institutions. For years, educational institutions have supported the transition of their students into the job market. They offer various resources to empower students and graduates to design their future and follow a meaningful career path. This partnership aims to address the specific needs of international students entering the local labour market.

In the INTERLOCALITY project, we believe that it is essential to not only address the issue of employability of the international students and graduates, but also the issue of employer-ability of the local small and medium enterprises and how Higher Education Institutions and third sector organisations can support the development of both. This is why we have created both an International Talent Journey focusing on the development of employability of the international students, as well as online learning modules for SMEs, HEIs and third sector organisations focusing on the development of employer-ability. In addition to SMEs, the HEIs and third sector organisations are of course also employers themselves.

We look forward to contributing to the development of both employability and employer-ability, and to balancing the responsibility of employment more evenly among those benefiting from it.

Münster, 2024

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



# 1 . BACKGROUND

## Lack of local employment of international higher education degree students and graduates

The lack of local employment of international higher education degree students and graduates is a growing problem in many countries in the world, especially in those with a diminishing population in need of work-based immigration and of international student and graduate retention. This problem touches many different stakeholders in the local employment market, e.g. the host government and municipality, the local companies and organisation in need of highly skilled labour, the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), third sector organisations, labour market unions, the international students and graduates themselves and their families, etc. We will highlight the four main stakeholder groups in the INTERLOCALITY below: local small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), HEIs, third sector organisations, and international higher education students and graduates.

### Local SMEs

Large, multinational enterprises are mostly well underway in attracting, recruiting, and retaining international talents. They have access to global talent pools and the resources and expertise to recruit and retain the international talent. They have identified the need for such talent and have strategies and processes in place. The situation for many SMEs, with less than 250 staff, can be quite different. It is certainly different for the small enterprises (less than 50 staff), and especially for micro enterprises (less than 10 staff, (European Commission)). These smaller enterprises might therefore rely more on external support, services, and networks as they are facing an increasing talent shortage.

## Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

There are several reasons why it is in the interest of universities that their international students and graduates find local employment during and after their studies in the host country:

- Attraction and recruitment of new students to HEIs is heavily dependent on the satisfaction and recommendation of previous students and graduates.
- National funding mechanisms for HEIs are sometimes tied partly to the local post-graduate employment and/or students and graduate satisfaction.
- UAS and their global counterparts (e.g. polytechnics, community colleges etc.) often have compulsory internships as parts of their degrees, and therefore cannot graduate international students who have not been able to secure internships in the host country or abroad.
- The affordability crisis is placing greater emphasis on employment during studies; also, the lack of employment causes some students to drop out entirely, especially the ones paying tuition fees.

### Third sector organisations

Private organisations, associations, NGOs and government organisations also provide services to both international students and graduates or to employers in order to facilitate the local employment. These organisations are dependent on the amount and satisfaction of their customers and thus the lack of local employment of international students and graduates is very much their concern. They often act as a bridge between the students and graduates and the employers.



## International higher education students and graduates

The lack of local employment is a growing concern for international students and graduates in many parts of the world, mainly due to the affordability crisis affecting e.g. the prices of housing, food, energy, and transport. This places even more emphasis on local employment during studies, as well as on the need to guaranteeing employment after graduation. The lack of employment also causes some international students, mostly the ones paying tuition fees, to drop out of higher education. In many countries, a significant number of international graduates express a desire to stay in the host country. However, the lack of employment opportunities often makes this challenging.

The employability activities of universities do not only focus on students, but also on employers. As Caroline Scheepmaker, Manager of the Career Centre, TU Delft, the Netherlands, and Nannette Ripmeester, Director of Expertise in Labour Mobility, the Netherlands already pointed out in their EAIE-blog from 2012 *“Employability: Matching employer needs with student capabilities”*:

*Higher education institutions need to shift from a focus on career education for graduates only (connecting them to industry) to facilitate the participation of industry representatives in activities. Joint student and employer career education is key to bridging the current gap in employer and graduate expectations.”*

C. Scheepmaker (2012)

# EMPLOYABILITY VS EMPLOYER-ABILITY

## Employability

Globally, the discourse around employment of international students and graduates centres on the term “employability” which commonly can be defined as:



*“A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.”*

M. Yorke (2006)

This implicates that employment is the responsibility of the individual student or graduate and that they need to develop their employability to secure, and eventually succeed in, employment. This will then benefit themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy.

While the employers are not explicitly mentioned, they naturally benefit from improved employability as well. Interestingly, the concept of employability places all the responsibility on the individual, although clearly many stakeholders beyond the individual benefit from it.

However, in this discussion, none of the benefiting stakeholders mention any responsibility for employment or the development of employability. It seems to be entirely up to the individual to benefit not only themselves, but also the workforce, the community, the economy, and the employers. Is this right? Fair? Possible to achieve?

HEIs are often considered responsible for developing their students’ and graduates’ employability, e.g. through curriculum, career support and connections to employers. But as employability is a set of personal attributes, the responsibility for developing them must lie within the individuals – not within the HEIs. What HEIs can and should do is to provide the suitable learning opportunities for this development to occur and the support for self-reflection it needs.

The same might be (but unfortunately is not) said for employers. They are seldom held accountable for providing suitable environments and support for the continuous development of employability among their staff.



## Employer-ability

If employment equals sufficient employability, then all the responsibility lies within the individual. This is not fair, realistic, or sustainable. Employment, and the responsibility for it, must go beyond individual employability and be balanced with “employer-ability”.

Employer-ability has never been defined as a term and has only been mentioned a few times in literature as such. By other terms, it might refer to e.g. employer willingness, ability, and readiness to employ international students and graduates. As with students, the development of these employer attributes does not happen all on its own, but requires suitable environments and support.

*"Perhaps we should develop the concept of employer-ability to balance out the power relations embedded in the employability discourse of recruitment and retention. The implication is that the education process should also extend to employers. They need to be more sensitized to issues pertaining to differences of gender, race, social class, disability and sexual orientation. Only then will the same employability attributes have similar economic and professional values for different social groups."*

L. Morley (2001)



# THE EUROPEAN SKILLS AGENDA

The European Skills Agenda 2020 builds upon the ten actions of the Commission's 2016 Skills Agenda. It is a five-year plan to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and apply them by:



Strengthening sustainable competitiveness, as set out in the European Green Deal.



Ensuring social fairness, putting into practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights: access to education, training, and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere in the EU.



Building resilience to react to crises, based on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rapid shift towards a climate-neutral Europe and digital transformation is changing the way to work, learn, take part in society and lead our everyday lives. Europe can only grasp these opportunities if its people develop the right skills.

The agenda also links to the “European Digital Strategy”, the “Industrial and Small and Medium Enterprise Strategy”, the „Recovery Plan for Europe” and increased support for youth employment.

The European Skills Agenda includes 12 actions organized around four building blocks:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>



# THE 12 ACTIONS

**A call to join forces in collective action**

**Action 1**  
A Pact for Skills

**Actions to ensure that people have the right skills for jobs**

**Action 2**  
Strengthening skills and intelligence

**Action 6**  
Skills to support the twin transitions

**Action 5**  
Rolling out the European Universities Initiative and upskilling scientists

**Action 4**  
Proposal for a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET)

**Action 3**  
EU support for strategic national upskilling action

**Action 7**  
Increasing STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and transversal skills

**Action 8**  
Skills for life

**Tools and initiatives to support people in their lifelong learning pathways**

**Action 9**  
Initiative on individual learning accounts

**Action 12**  
Improving the enabling framework to unlock Member States' and private investments in skills

**A framework to unlock investments in skills**

**Action 11**  
New Europass platform

**Action 10**  
A European approach to micro-credentials

## To sum up:

Employability results from complex learning and is a concept that goes beyond key competencies.



Another aspect is the reference to secure jobs in the description of three abilities within employability:



# ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCES

The development of the entrepreneurial capacity of European citizens has been one of the key policy objectives for the EU and Member States for many years, and is one of the eight Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.

In 2016, the European Commission developed “EntreComp” - the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework. Its aim is to give a shared definition of entrepreneurship as a competence and establish a bridge between the worlds of education and work.

EntreComp helps to raise understanding of what it means to be entrepreneurial in all aspects of life. It emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship and how entrepreneurial competences can tackle economic, social and cultural challenges.

In 2017, the European Commission developed a User Guide called “EntreComp into Action” to support the further use and awareness of the EntreComp Framework. EntreComp describes entrepreneurship as a lifelong competence, identifies what are the elements that make someone entrepreneurial and describes them to establish a common reference for initiatives dealing with entrepreneurial learning.

The Danish Foundation proposed this definition for Entrepreneurship & Young Enterprise:

*„Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural, or social“.*

EntreComp is transversal to formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts and applies equally to education and training systems. The framework describes entrepreneurship as a transversal competence, which can be applied by citizens to all spheres of life (from nurturing personal development, to actively participating in society, to (re) entering the job market as an employee or as a self-employed person, and to starting up ventures, cultural, social or commercial.

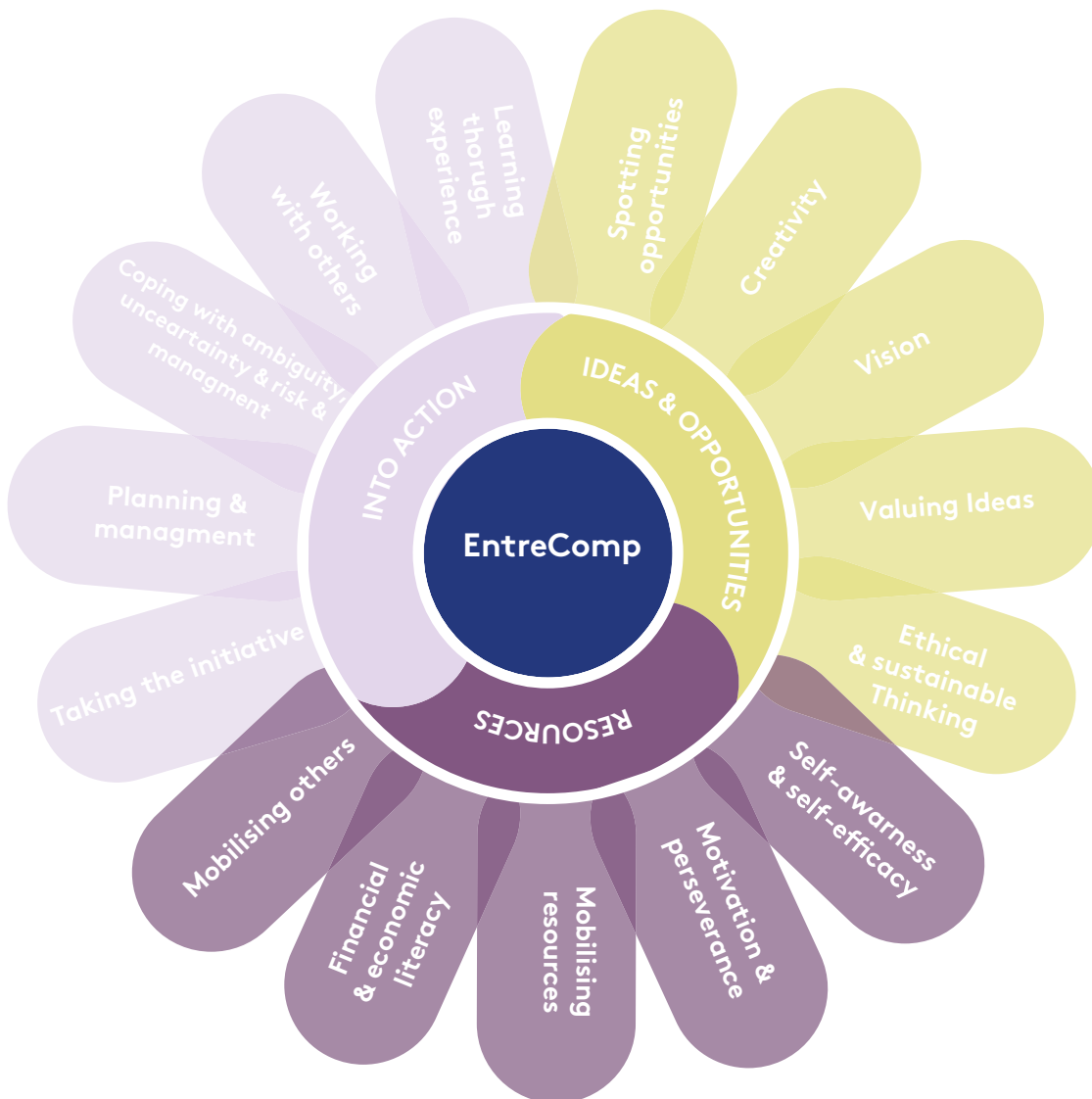
*“Entrepreneurship is when you act upon opportunities and ideas and transform them into value for others. The value that is created can be financial, cultural or social.”*



EntreComp consists of three interrelated and interconnected competence areas:



Each of the areas is composed of five competences:



European Commission / Joint Research Centre: EntreComp – Entrepreneurship Competence Framework

**The progression in entrepreneurial learning is made up of two aspects:**

1. Developing increasing independence and responsibility in acting upon ideas and opportunities to create value.
2. Developing the capacity to generate value from simple and predictable contexts up to complex, constantly changing environments.

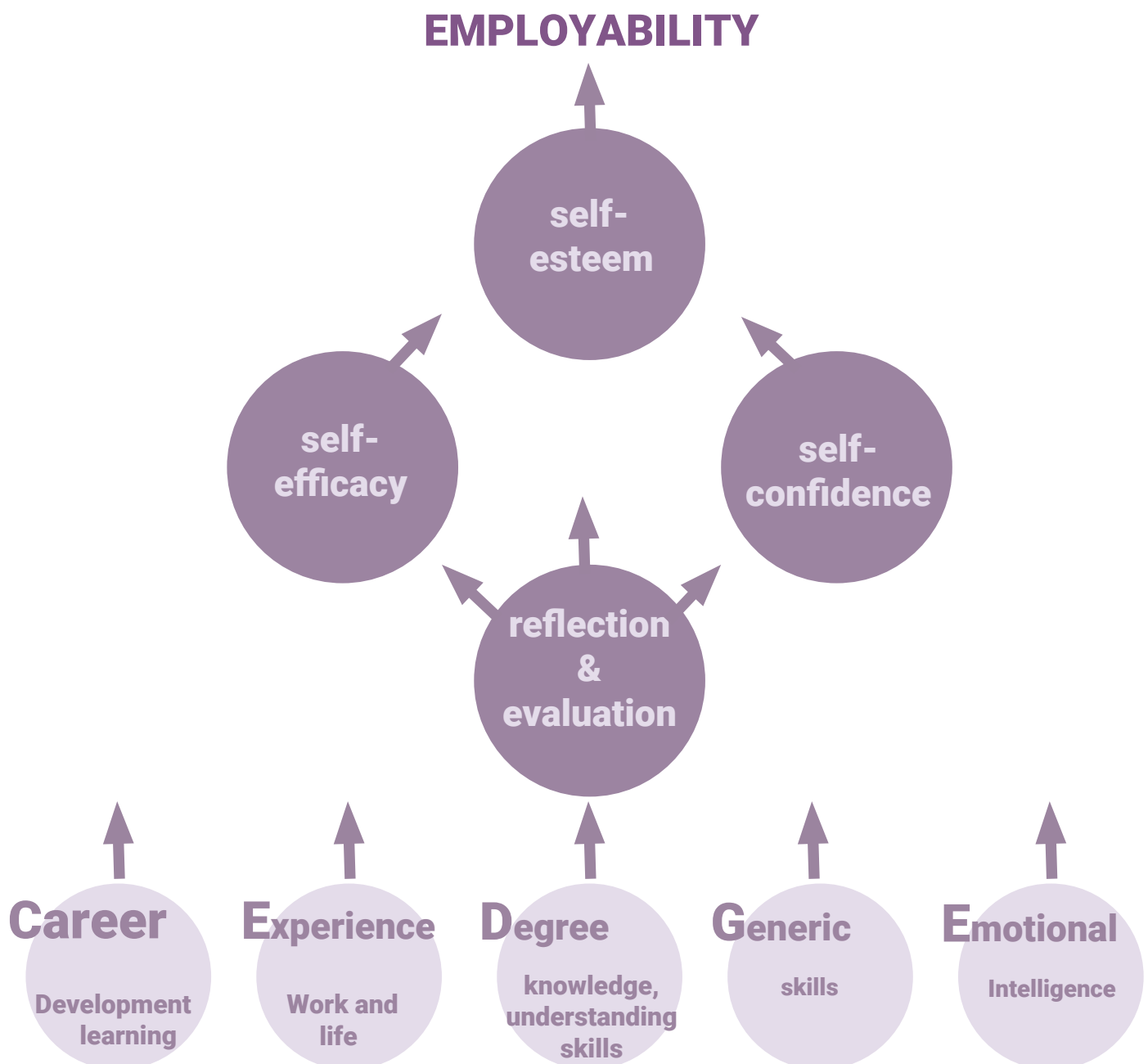


# THE "CAREER EDGE" MODEL

The complexity of employability development is perfectly described in the "CareerEDGE" model from Pool and Sewell (2007).

This model is a framework for employability development that is useful for academic staff, careers staff and any other practitioners involved in employability activities.

The model highlights that students need opportunities to reflect on and evaluate the experiences they made. This reflection is essential to develop higher levels of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem.



# THE "CAREER SKILLS PROJECT"

Within another EU-project called "Career Skills Project", 12 Career Management Skills are defined, based on the Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (2018). In this new framework personal, social and learning to learn competence is the "ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career". The ability to identify the own capacities is included and leads to competences of being able to focus, to deal with complexity, to critically reflect and to make decisions.

## CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS by "Career Skills Project" (2022):

### LABOUR MARKET AWARENESS

Information about future job trends, jobs and the skills they require

### EMPLOYABILITY

Job search strategies, career networking and self marketing skills, job skills

### CAREER PLANNING

Decision making, goal setting, developing a career vision

### RESILIENCE

Strength to cope with uncertainty and stress; flexibility and openness to change, career transition skills, work life integration

### SELF-AWARENESS

Building realistic self-image and healthy self-esteem, mindfulness, reflectivity

# CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS by “Career Skills Project” (2022):

## PROBLEM SOLVING

And critical thinking

## CREATIVITY

Innovation, inspiration in career

## SELF EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Sense of initiative and entrepreneurial spirit

## COLLABORATION

Teamwork, multicultural awareness, tolerance,  
handling job related conflicts

## CURIOSITY AND INQUISITIVENESS

Effective learning strategies, continuing  
self development

## COMMUNICATION

And customer orientation

## LEADERSHIP

Organisation, assertiveness and negotiation skills



## The “ITJ” as an impact response and a practical approach

Based on the above-mentioned findings, political recommendations for action, local statistics and experiences from previous employability initiatives, the partners identified a need for a structured and guided process that equips international degree students with the necessary skills to enter the local job markets.

Local employers seem to be unprepared to welcome international students as their staff, as the international students do not bring the adequate qualifications for integrations into the regions nor are aware of what it takes to get the food into the local labour markets.

The reasons behind these common patterns are expected to be further explored and justified explored and justified by the conclusions drawn from the research within INTERLOCALITY.

Thus, the focus of the "International Talent Journey (ITJ)" as a qualification process for international students is based on the identified needs and match with lack of skills and opportunities.

The ITJ as a structured career guidance model is also developed in reference to the attendance to different activities to increase various competences of international students. Equally, the ITJ focusses on the assessment and coaching parts in each ITJ process, which are mandatory for each student to attend.



## 2. LINK TO RESEARCH RESULTS AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

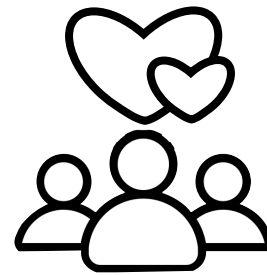
To set up the model of the ITJ and as a first step within the INTERLOCALITY project, needs were analysed through more than 100 interviews with students, employers and third-party organisations. First findings from interviews for shaping adequate activities within the ITJ are:

- Improve internal communication and internal infrastructure (e.g. professors do not know about the services provided by Career Service, International Office,...)
- Communication with students: Students are overloaded with information, new ways of contacting and addressing them
- Activities are not target-oriented – different support



As concrete wishes, students mentioned the following needed support from UAS:

- Job portals
- Student network and Alumni network
- Projects at company and company visits
- Courses on local work laws and local work culture
- Job application trainings
- Communication skills training
- Networking events
- Exit interview with students for feedback
- Assistance for employment contracts and recommendation letters
- Language courses



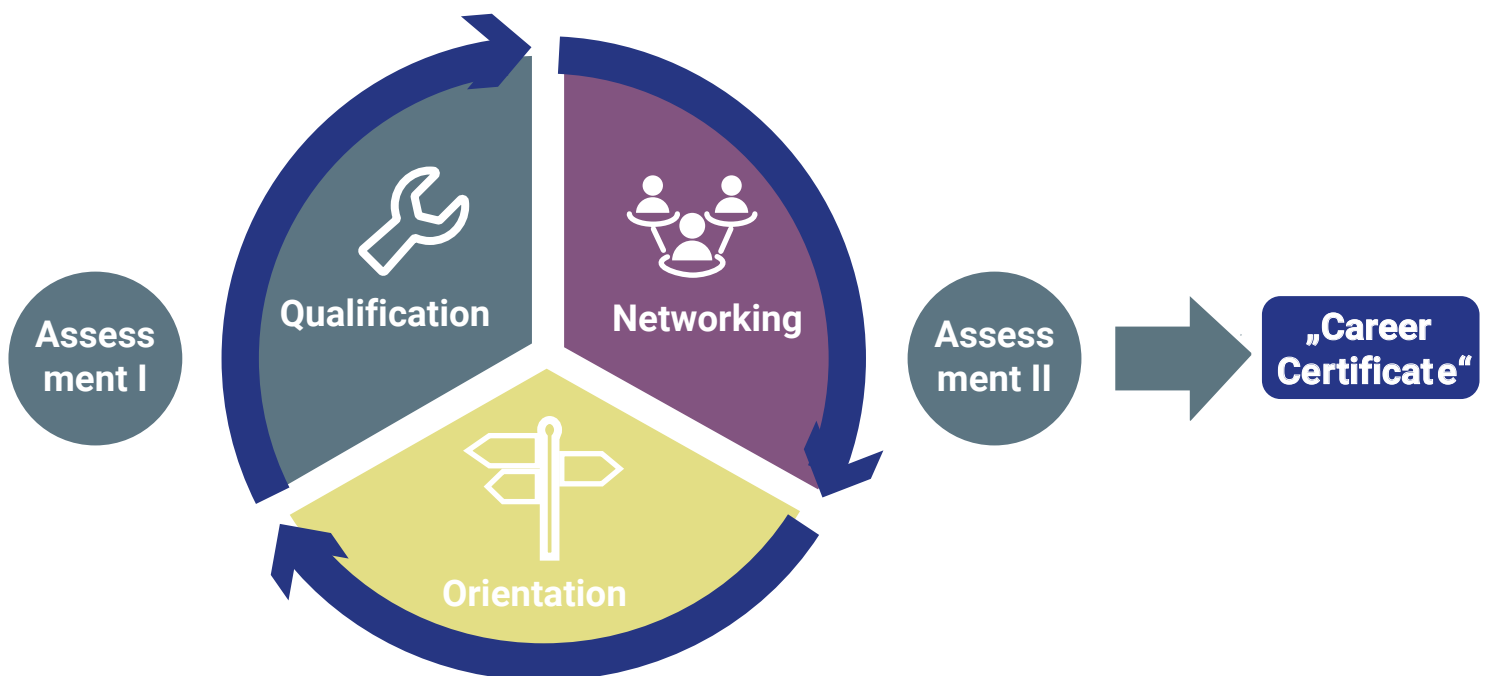
International students mentioned the following difficulties regarding entering the local labour markets:

- Need to speak local language
- Narrow-mindedness of employers
- Different work culture
- Bureaucracy
- Missing job application skills
- Hidden job market
- Other employees are afraid to speak English

### 3. STRUCTURE AND EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TALENT JOURNEY

The "International Talent Journey" (ITJ) is an intensive career development programme for international students. It was developed with regard to the difficulties international students have in entering local labour markets.

The concept contains common framework and content that all partners implement while the core activities are chosen due to the local differences.



To adequately address the needs of the students identified in the needs analyses, the ITJ is structured around three main categories that describe the activities of the participants.

Assessments frame the participation - one in the beginning to identify the needs of each ITJ-participant, the other to evaluate the learning outcome at the end.

Apart from the assessments, the ITJ consists of three consecutive categories of activities with these goals:

## Activities on orientation

aim to support students in living and working in another country, to enable them to move independently as internationals and to cope with everyday life. Activities in this category focus on the individual orientation and integration into the local surroundings.

Therefore participants:

- know the regional labour market and support structures
- are aware of local specifics and legal aspects
- are able to communicate in the national language
- are aware of cultural differences and can deal with intercultural situations.

## Activities on networking

aim to support students to build up important and above all helpful contacts and to create an own (business) network as early as possible – in our case in the region. Therefore, the category offers room for networking in which students can get in touch with potential employers as well as with persons who can share experiences and contacts.

A good (active) network with companies and labour market actors can make the transition into working life much easier. Internationals often lack these contacts, which are necessary to establish a foothold in a regional labour market.

For many reasons (e.g. lack of language skills), building up such a network is associated with a greater individual effort as well as with different and higher hurdles than for national students.

## Taking this into account activities also aim:

- to encourage and support this target group to use networking opportunities and to establish personal contacts with relevant people in the local labour market
- to break down barriers to the regional economy to strengthen the students in the contact with company representatives and to increase the interests of company representatives in international students
- to give insights in the practice on site.

## Activities on qualification

aim to support students in moving adequately, purposefully, and confidently in the labour market. This includes that students are able to develop strategies to find suitable jobs, to apply with self-esteem and present themselves convincingly and to arrive in the work life. Therefore participants:

- know ways of job search and success factors in application processes
- are aware of their wishes, goals and interests, skills and strengths and are able to use them for the transition to working life
- have essential soft and career skills.



## The Employability Activities Catalogue (EAC)

The activities in the ITJ are based on the collection within the EAC, the **“Employability Activities Catalogue”**: All employability activities within the consortium were collected and categorized according to the Student Life Cycle (onboarding, engaging, offboarding), the topic (Skills, Labour Market Contact, Acculturation and Integration) and conditions regarding effort, effectiveness and requirements. The EAC allowed to create a model for the ITJ easily applicable and tested at the partner Higher Education Institutions.

Besides, it is an inspiration for any institution that would like to become active in the field of employability and retention activities and initiatives

## The expected impact of the ITJ

**Partners** will gain essential knowledge in guiding and advising young students effectively towards a career in the local regions. They will identify, test and implement best practice activities and find an ideal model adapted to their local conditions contributing to increasing employability of international degree students locally.

**Local employers** will notice and appreciate the suitable education and qualification of the international students. Through the Career Certificate of the ITJ, they will realize what activities the students have participated in and what competencies they have acquired. Thanks to the pre-internship programme they get to experience the skills of international students early in the students' journey, thus maximizing both parties' matching potential.

**International students** will be better prepared to understand the local job markets. This enables a smoother transition from university to professional life. International talents will improve their chances of breaking down entry barriers to the local labour market thanks to early-stage low threshold contact formats.

## 4. TARGET GROUP(S)

The ITJ addresses all international degree-seeking students who come from abroad in order to complete their degree and subsequently be acquainted with the regional labour market.

The target group does not include exchange students who spend only one or two semesters at the universities. Likewise, the target group does not include students in the final part of the graduation phase, if they are exmatriculated during the ITJ and thus no longer have student status.

As part of the INTERLOCALITY project, the ITJ is to be tested and piloted as an instrument by the four participating universities. In order to ensure comparability of the target group in the evaluation, the ITJ focuses primarily on students from technical/engineering and business administration degree programmes. This does not exclude the participation of other interested international students.



# 5. JOURNEY GUIDES

A successful implementation of the ITJ requires continuous and professional support by responsible Journey Guides (JGs): The JGs are salaried employees of the universities who work in the areas of career development, career counselling and international affairs.

As far as possible, Journey Guides should meet the following professional requirements:

- Competences in Guidance and Counselling
- Competences in Career Guidance and Development
- Competences in project management
- Knowledge of current legal frameworks for the career entry of international students

The Journey Guides are responsible for the complete implementation of the ITJ with the following tasks (selection depending on local conditions at the HEIs):

- Promotion of the project / public relations
- Raising awareness among students for the topic “early preparation for a career”
- Recruitment of participating students
- Conducting the assessment interviews
- Support and supervision of students during ITJ participation
- Awarding the Career Certificate
- Evaluation of individual career paths
- Evaluation of the overall process
- Establishment of an employer network for networking events
- Maintain internal university network, contacts with programme coordinators
- Establish an international alumni network
- Offer own (information) events within the ITJ framework

To ensure a high quality of ITJ, a close contact from the journey guides to international students, regional employers and the providers of activities is required.

*Example FH Münster: The ITJ guides are staff members of the Career Service, the International Office and the Transfer Agency.*

# 6. ACTIVITIES

The activities, which form the core of the ITJ, serve as the means of participation in the ITJ across three categories. Participants take part in at least 6 individual activities, with preferably two activities from each of the three categories. The basis for the selection and realisation of concrete activities:

- the Employability Activities Catalogue (EAC)
- new activities are developed within the project INTERLOCALITY, based on research results within INTERLOCALITY project
- further respective offers at the individual universities that correspond to the goals of the categories.

The selection and design of concrete activities as well as their allocation to the categories always takes place in accordance with the goals of the category and along the respective circumstances of the Higher Education Institution.



## FORMATS:

- Information events
- Language courses
- Intercultural trainings
- Welcome Meetings

## CONTENT:

- Overview of the local labour market
- Legal aspects (taxes, social insurance etc.)
- Rights and duties for internationals entering the local job market
- Local cultural specifics

## FORMATS:

- Information events
- Presentations
- Trainings and workshops
- Coaching

## CONTENT:

- Job search
- Application strategies
- Application documents
- Job interview
- Assessment centre
- Soft skills
- Entrepreneurship skills

## FORMATS

- Contact making events
- Excursions
- (Pre --) Internships
- Company fairs

## CONTENT:

- Contacts with local companies and regional employers; Management representatives, HR and employees
- International alumni

## ORIENTATION

### This category includes activities that

- provide information about the (regional) labour market and the structures of the local economic area including professions and industries or current trends
- teach the local language and educate about legal and formal aspects of working life in general and for internationals in particular
- introduce local and regional support structures for various issues with contact points and contact persons inside and outside the university
- address cultural characteristics of the respective country including working culture and working life.

## ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CATEGORY

## QUALIFICATION

### This category includes activities that

- offer room, impulses and sparring for vocational orientation and reflection, clarification and development of job opportunities, personal interests and career goals
- offer room, impulses and sparring for the reflection, clarification and awareness of individual skills, competencies and strengths (all aspects of the professional profile)
- educate
- provide information about various ways (online and offline) for the job and internship search (job boards, initial application, social media such as LinkedIn etc.) to use them
- provide information and educate about application processes and application documents
- help to develop individual and convincing application documents and provide feedback on application documents
- help to prepare for job interviews, and to develop individual and convincing self-presentation strategies and to practice them
- open up possibilities to develop and expand soft skills for working life (such as teamwork, communication, presentation, dealing with conflicts, networking).

## ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CATEGORY

## ORIENTATION

### This category includes activities that

- provide an overview of possible existing companies in the region and introduce company representatives
- help to get to know local employers, to establish various contacts and to build up a sustainable (business) network that also includes alumni, other (international) students and further helpful persons
- open up possibilities for practical interaction with representatives of regional companies and give insights within the respective corporate culture
- give the possibility to arouse interest in oneself among local employers.

# Example FH Münster by Career Service:

## Career Service: (examples)

- **Where do I want to go?** Discovering your own career goals – a different kind of career orientation: Interactive workshop in which students reflect their interests, skills and competencies and develop or clarify personal career goals and wishes. The workshop uses creative methods and takes the individual motives and emotions into account. The students work in small groups as well as on their own.
- **Using social media to get a (new) job – here's how to do it with LinkedIn:** Interactive workshop in which students learn how LinkedIn works and which features it offers, how they create a good profile and how they build up and maintain their network. Furthermore, they learn how they can use LinkedIn to find vacancies.
- **Application basics – How to write a convincing application:** Information events that give an overview of the components of an application and explain step by step how to create a CV and a cover letter with regard to the content and convincing arguments, the format and design as well as certain wording.
- **Application basics – How to prepare for a job interview:** Information events that give an overview of the components of a job interview, along with advice on how to prepare properly.
- **Assessment center training:** Interactive training in which students get information about assessment center, their functions, settings and methods as well as the possibility to train the participation with typical tasks.
- **The stage is yours – Strengthening your own self-perception and external impact:** Interactive training in which students learn ways to influence their external image positively. They reflect their personality, discuss the levels of communication (verbal, non-verbal, para-verbal) and train body perception, body language and voice. A personality questionnaire is used as well as role-plays, video-feedback and individual coaching sessions.
- **Soft Skill Trainings:** Virtual teamwork, small talk and networking, communication in conflicts, business etiquette, negotiation etc.

Many activities of the ITJ are part of an extracurricular programme for further education called "PLUSPUNKT". This programme offers trainings, information events or presentations through which all students from all departments can gain general skills for their student and working life, e.g. soft skills, studying skills, career skills, digital skills, intercultural skills, entrepreneurial skills by various actors.

## Examples FH Münster by International Office:

- **Language courses:**

The International Office organizes language courses for all international students to improve their German language skills. While many study programmes require German language skills, there are some master programmes only taught in English.

- **International Alumni Talk:**

This is a 1-hour online event for internationals. In one hour, two international graduates from the FH Münster are invited for a talk round. The idea is that they share their experiences. The students are able to get to know their strategies to successfully enter the German job market. They can learn from the same target group on how to prepare for starting a career in Germany or how to overcome challenges in the application process. Alternatively, which strategies have proven successful and which must be avoided? The students can listen and address their questions at former students of FH Münster in a bilingual event -English and German.

- **Online Workshop on legal aspects** for NON EU employees and how to attract them:

This seminar is a free offer for companies from the Münsterland. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are already experiencing increasing difficulties in filling vacancies. Demographic developments have already led to a tight applicant market in many economic sectors in Münsterland. Recruiting young people through in-company training is facing considerable challenges. With the transition of the baby boomer generation into retirement, the situation on the labour market will become even more acute in Münsterland over the next five to ten years. It will therefore be important in the future to find new ways to recruit skilled workers. Immigration and labour migration from third countries within the framework of the Skilled Workers Immigration Act can make an important contribution to this. Representatives of the Federal Employment Agency explain which paths are possible, which opportunities are associated with them, but also which aspects and challenges need to be taken into account.



# Examples FH Münster by TAFH:

- **Meet & Match Internationals @Münsterland:**

This is a networking event especially for Internationals. "Meet & Match Internationals @Münsterland" is a format within the INTERLOCALITY project. Various companies introduce themselves, get in touch with international students about internship opportunities, career entry, and career paths. In the first part of the event, best practice examples will be presented and information on legal and language requirements will be provided. That part will be followed by a networking part "Meet & Match". In three rounds of 15 minutes each student can get into conversation with the 10 participating employers in small groups (rolling system). The organizers based on the wishes of both sides, will set up the discussion rounds /matches beforehand. As side programme, a workshop for employers will be held that will address the first steps towards this topic. The event will close with a "get together". The whole event is offered bilingually (GER & EN).

- **Firmentag:**

The company day ("Firmentag") is a one-day event and addresses students with technical specializations from engineering study programmes. Visitors – the students – can meet HR managers in person, get first-hand information about job and internship offers, and listen to practical presentations with tips on applications and career planning. On average, more than 70 companies from the region present themselves. During a whole day students have the chance to get into direct contact with regional employers in a very low-threshold format. For employers the participation has some extra benefits: in the fair catalogue, pre-scheduled interviews with students, postings of advertisements in the university's internal job portal. The readiness to pay a fee for a stand is a testimony to the high level of interest in attracting qualified talents.

- **Meet the Boss:**

"Meet the Boss" is a digital (or physical) speed dating: In the two-hour event, about 30 international students meet employers. These can be representatives from HR, for example, but mostly the company owners or CEOs themselves. After welcoming and presenting the participating companies, the students are divided into smaller groups and are assigned to an employer representative each. The allocation of the discussion rounds will be carried out by the FH Münster and will be based on the wishes of the students and the employers. This gives the opportunity to talk in a comfortable atmosphere and allows asking individual questions in a small and intimate group. After a time slot of 20 minutes, the next rounds take place after a short break. "Meet the boss" offers the opportunity to network with potential employers in an informal and low-threshold way and get a better understanding into the perspective of employers. This event takes place 4-6 times a year with different focuses on industry, trade or international topics.

- **UnternehmensFHahrt:** These are interdisciplinary excursions for students of all departments to longstanding partners of FH Münster in the region, which the FH Münster / TAFH Münster GmbH organizes in cooperation with the different regional partners such as Chamber of Commerce or economic development agencies. Per excursion two companies are visited. The motto of the company visits is "innovation". Students can select a tour / company when registering, so they can spend an afternoon in the company that best suits their studies to take the opportunity to have a look inside the company; can talk directly to company representatives in a very low threshold environment. By this, students have the opportunity to network in the region, strengthen their skills and take the first steps towards their career.
- **Entrepreneurial skills:** The entrepreneurship education consists of different online workshops in English for international students of the FH Münster who want to gain entrepreneurial skills. The workshops deal with different topics like time management, sales & marketing, how to write a successful business plan, online marketing, networking etc. In two hour long workshops students get knowledge in the field of thinking and acting entrepreneurially. Within this framework, international students acquire not only business knowledge but also skills in the field of German corporate culture.
- **Infosessions and regional employers' workshops:** In this entertaining workshop, a colleague from the Transferagency gives a brief overview of the regional labour market. Which sectors are there, which big players do we have? Which networks and associations are there that can bring international students in touch with them? Which contacts do I need if I am looking for a company in a particular sector or would like to approach one? In this way, internationals can get some initial tips on how to find companies for internships, side jobs or dissertations.
- Other involved departments:
  - Start-up / founding support
  - Central equal opportunities officer



# NEW DEVELOPED FORMATS WITHIN INTERLOCALITY

As a part of the project, the following additional activities are developed and realised initially. On the one hand, these new activities expand the chances for international students to get in touch with local employers. On the other hand, events for ITJ participants of all countries should facilitate the exchange of experiences, the development of new ideas and mutual learning.

## Networking events:

- Pre internship
- Meet & Match

## Cooperative events:

- Intercultural Training (SEND)
- Peer to Peer Events

The Danish Higher Education Institution UCN developed an innovative approach that is implemented during the INTERLOCALITY project:

## PRE-INTERNSHIP

### Concept Description:

The idea is to develop a "snoop internship" early during the study programmes, where a local student who is about to take an internship in a local company takes an international student along. The idea behind the name consists of the fact that the international student gets to try out a local internship place before they actually have to go on an internship themselves – typically during the 2nd or 3rd semester, so that they hopefully choose to have their internship in a local company when their turn comes (usually in their last semester).

Besides broadening the international students' horizons in terms of an internship in a local company, the activity is also meant to showcase the existing opportunities for a career in Denmark, as well as help them understand what it takes to achieve the competencies needed for entering the Danish labour market.

By introducing international students to local companies through a local student hired by the company, the activity also promotes the skills and competencies of international students that the companies otherwise would not know of or hire. This is highly important in a rather locally oriented business sector, where local companies tend to choose local students and workers over international students, due to prefabricated stereotypes such as the need for extra resources and cultural understanding when it comes to internationals.

The initiative is also expected to give local students insight in the international students' lives and cultures, thus enhancing their internationalization and improving the student environment on campus.

## Desired Outcome:

Pre-Internship has several outcomes that can be achieved through participation:

- Expansion of network
- Insight into local companies and understanding on what the internship is like
- Sharing of new ideas and perspectives (intercultural collaboration)
- Closer connections into national working life
- Increase the possibility of retention.

The goal of this initiative is to address some of the most obvious challenges related to the employability of international students in Denmark: the readiness of the international students and the willingness of the local companies to hire and collaborate with the international students. Furthermore, the initiative also aims at widening the local students' horizons by having them collaborate with international students in a professional context. A potential side win could be a better and more including study environment and boosted thriving of the international students.

### Stage 1 – Internal organisation:

- Internal team organisation
- Initial agreements with the involved study programmes, including the programme directors' approval
- Overall plan for the initiative

### Stage 2 – Planning:

- Planning meetings with the programme directors and internship coordinators
- Development of timeline for the initiative
- Development of promotional materials
- Introducing the initiative to the two groups of students with the help of the internship coordinators

### Stage 3

- testing

### Stage 4 – Conclusion and evaluation

- Internal evaluation
- Feedback from the study programmes
- Feedback from the students
- Feedback from the companies
- Decision regarding the sustainability of the project

## Formats of activities:

Activities can use different formats and vary in their implementation. The totality of the selectable activities ideally represents a mixture. This not only takes into account the goals of the ITJ, but also the heterogeneous participants, for whom the barriers to participation in extracurricular events are often higher. Formats could be:

- Informative events, group trainings / workshops, self-learning and individual coaching
- Come together and informal meetings
- Question and answer sessions virtual and in presence
- Face-to-face and online events



# SELF-LEARNING TOOLS

Implementing Higher Education Institutions can add existing self-learning to their range of face-to-face and online ITJ events and recognise this as an activity. Self-learning from their own university as well as external, freely available sources can be well used.

The advantages are both greater flexibility for ITJ participants to take part in activities and for the Journey Guides to be able to offer a wider range.

The tools are advertised in the first assessment and reflected on at the final interview.

These are recommendations for freely accessible tools:

## "MINA KOMPETENSER/MY COMPETENCIES"

A skill tool from Karriärcenter Arabia's website in Swedish and English. It is based on competency mapping theories and functions as a tool that the student/client can use before the career guidance session. The idea of the tool is to reflect on your skills and personal qualities to get a more concrete idea of your strengths.

The tool can be used to brainstorm ideas before a career guidance session or together with a career counsellor to support the dialogue.

<https://www.karriarcentret.fi/mina-kompetenser>

## "CAREER SKILLS MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE" (MOOC):

The Career Skills massive open online course (MOOC) contains 12 training modules covering the 12 career management skills. It is a result from an EU project called "Career Skills Project":

<https://app.career-skills.eu/index.php/en/mooc>

## "BE THE BOSS OF YOUR CAREER. A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS & GRADS"

"Be the boss of your career. A Complete Guide for Students & Grads": The Employment Support Centre team has compiled resources that will help students navigate the job search journey from start to finish. Whether students prepare for a work-integrated learning opportunity, a part-time job, or a career, this book will guide students on how to: plan for your career, research today's labour market, create robust self-marketing tools,

build a personal brand, diversify job search methods, utilize social media to create a professional digital footprint, master the interview skills and manage the career. Lindsay Bortot and Employment Support Centre,

Algonquin College, 2021.

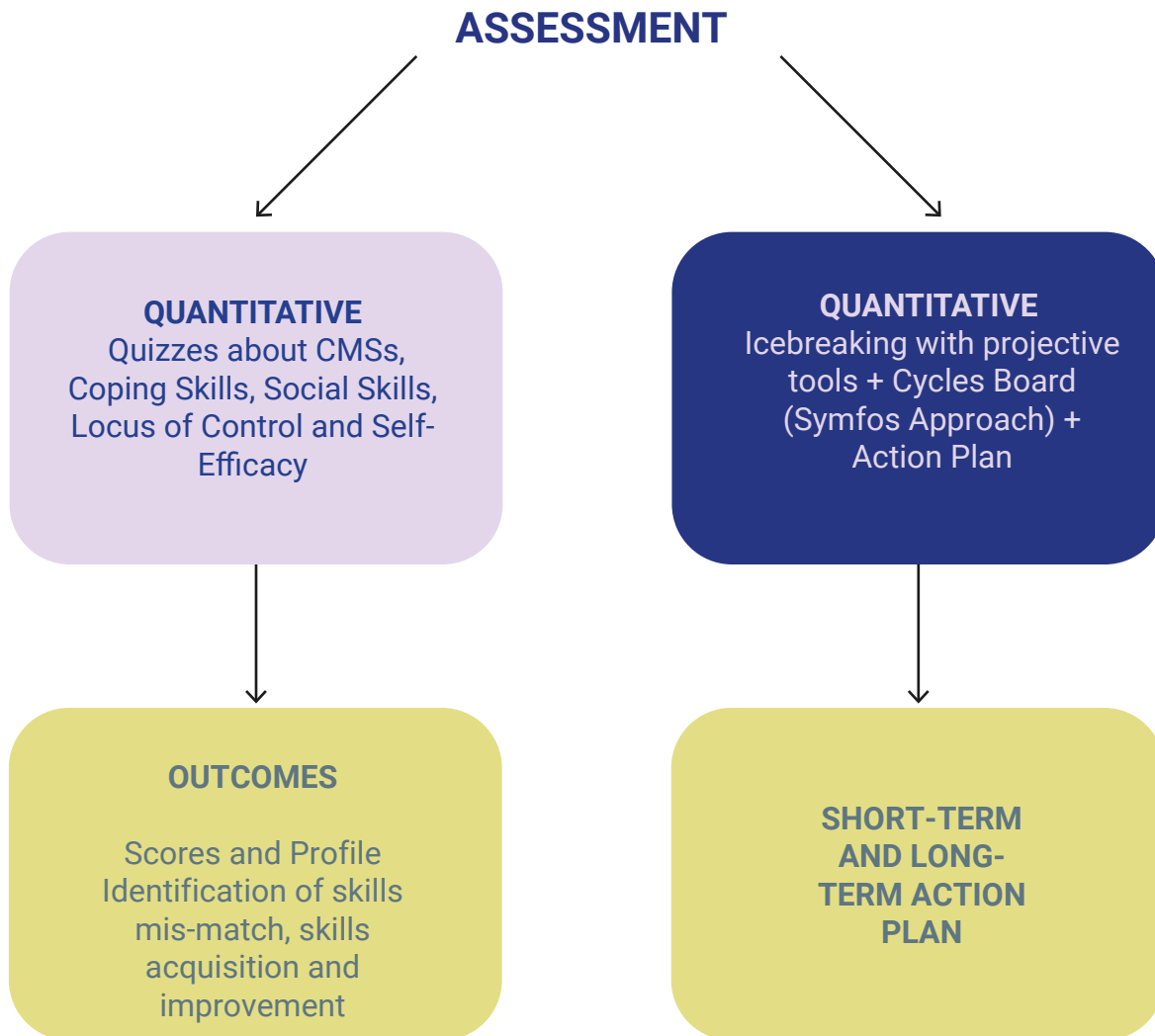
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/bethebossofyourcareer/>



# 7. ITJ ASSESSMENT

## (PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT)

For all participants, the ITJ starts and ends with an individual assessment. The attendance is mandatory – even if a registered participant does not want to reach the certificate. The example for this assessment is taken from the Italian partner organisation SEND.



### QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT:

Quizzes based on existing skills assessment tests, normally used by counsellors to assess individual's competencies and soft-skills. We will provide a pdf or an internet link with the quizzes and related scores and profiles. Each partner will decide to develop quizzes online (i.e. via google form or other platforms) or share a printable version. The quizzes will analyse the following skills and dimensions:

## CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Career Management Skills (CMS) are competencies, which help individuals to identify their existing skills, develop career-learning goals and take action to enhance their careers. The assessment tool below will help people evaluate their career management skills. It consists of 36 statements, addressing the 12 career skills, described in the glossary:  
<https://app.career-skills.eu/index.php/en/assessment-tool>

## COPING SKILLS

Coping is the use of cognitive and behavioural strategies to manage the demands of a situation when these are appraised as taxing or exceeding one's resources or to reduce the negative emotions and conflict caused by stress. The following test consist of 38 items and assesses coping skills and predominant methods of coping with stress:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/tests/career/coping-stress-management-skills-test>

## SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills are a set of learned abilities that enable an individual to interact competently and appropriately in a given social context. The following test consist of 57 questions:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/tests/relationships/social-skills-test>

## LOCUS OF CONTROL

Locus of Control is a construct that is used to categorize people's basic motivational orientations and perceptions of how much control they have over the conditions of their lives. The following test consists of 29 items to discover if your locus of control is internal or external:

<https://www.idrlabs.com/locus-of-control/test.php>

## SELF-EFFICACY

Self-Efficacy is an individual's subjective perception of his or her capability to perform in a given setting or to attain desired results. The following test consist of 15 items and measures general self-efficacy, which is your belief in your ability to handle situations so as to successfully attain your goals:

<https://www.excelatlife.com/questionnaires/self-efficacy.htm>

The insights of the quizzes will provide the Journey Guides with scores and quantitative data about the profile and skills of the student. This is the first step to understand what the student needs to improve and what kind of ITJ activities he/she needs to attend.

The quizzes can be filled in by students remotely or with the presence of the Journey Guide.

# QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

Qualitative assessment will be implemented after filling out the quantitative assessment. It will preferably take place physically in a face-to-face interview between counsellors / staff and the student. The results obtained during the quantitative assessment will be of support during the activities foreseen in the qualitative assessment:

## ICE BREAKER

Ice-breaking with Dixit cards, Giocherenda cards or alternatively, images obtained from magazines or online. The images can be used to promote students' self-awareness by using projective tools. The purpose can be achieved in several ways according to the question asked by the Journey Guide to the student. In this context:

- a. You can ask the student to choose a photo/paper representing his/herself and explain his/her choice.
- b. You can ask the student to tell an important episode of his/her life related to the chosen image.
- c. You can ask the student to choose a photo/paper representing his/her career goal(s) and explain his/her choice.

This activity will allow to break the ice, gain trust and create a welcoming and relaxing climate before starting the counselling.

## CYCLES BOARD

This activity will use the SymfoS method that is expressed by using symbols as tools of orientation and a way to talk about personal/professional obstacles and needs. Once the board is placed, the student is asked to evaluate the situation relative to each "sphere" of his/her life and make it visible graphically. The student will choose sticks and place them between the circle and the main objective. In the placement of the sticks, it is important to consider the meaning that the stick has according to the material of which it is made of:

- The wooden stick indicates safety and stability.
- The "ice" stick indicates a slight uncertainty.
- The transparent stick indicates deep insecurity.

Post-its placed inside the different cycles can be used to take notes and make lists of what the student is saying concerning that specific "sphere".

The Board will be adapted and adjusted to ITJ. The approach used will be the same, but the topics of each cycle will change according to ITJ dimensions of intervention.

# 3

## SHORT-TERM ACTION PLAN

Based on the weaknesses, needs, difficulties and skills-mismatches that emerged from the Cycles Board activity and Quizzes, the counsellor / staff together with the student will identify the most suitable journey using the Action Plan tab that will be provided.

# 4

## FINAL ASSESSMENT FOR ITJ

In the final assessment the same activities, implemented in the initial qualitative and quantitative assessment, will be proposed. The aim of this final assessment is to analyse and identify if the weaknesses, needs, difficulties and skills-mismatches have been overcome and fulfilled by the students thanks to the ITJ activities proposed in the Action Plan or if the students need further orientation, qualification or networking activities included in ITJ.

This will be also the phase where the counsellor/staff will support the student to review and develop his/her Long-Term Career Action Plan. This plan is specifically addressed to offboarding students that need to enter the local labour market.

The assessment is a proposal by SEND, Italy.

# 8. CAREER CERTIFICATE

Successful participation in the ITJ is certified with a Career Certificate, which outlines the value given by the university. The certificate shows the individual attended activities within the ITJ. This gives potential employers an impression of the commitment that the international students have invested in their career prospects in the regional labour market.

To receive the Career Certificate a full participation in the ITJ is required, including the attendance in at least six activities and both assessments. The individual recommendation from the initial interview should be the guiding factor.

The Journey Guides will hand out the Career Certificate after checking the completeness of participation in the ITJ in the final interview. The certificates are issued in the respective national language.



## Career Certificate

The Project Interlocality focusses the integration of international students in local labour markets. As one core process, the International Talent Journey aims to strengthen international students in managing their career path in Germany.

Therefore, the program sums up and provides extracurricular learning and networking opportunities, with which students gain relevant knowledge, develop career skills and get in touch with regional employers. Students participate voluntarily, self-organised and based on their individual needs.

The FH Münster awards this certificate to

### Maria Mustermann

for the successful participation in the International Talent Journey.

Besides pre- and a post-assessments Maria Mustermann took part in the following activities.

- | Orientation   | Qualification   | Networking  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Infoveranstaltung: Nach dem Studium geht's weiter</li><li>• Sprachkurs Deutsch B2</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to apply in Germany – job interview</li><li>• Bewerbungscheck beim Career Service</li><li>• Jobsuche mit LinkedIn</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• International Alumni Talk</li><li>• Meet and Match @Münsterland</li><li>• Meet the boss</li></ul> |

Münster, 31.12.2023

Signature Career Guide

Signature Career Guide

Stamp of the Institution



example





# 9. CORE PRINCIPALS

Participation in the ITJ is based on the following basic principles:

## **Voluntary participation:**

Students participate in the ITJ voluntarily and not as a mandatory part of their study programme.

## **Freedom of choices:**

Students can follow the recommendations from the initial assessment, but do not necessarily have to do so.

## **Self-responsibility:**

A group from Career Professionals of Canada generated the idea of students being “Career-preneurs”: This means they independently manage their own career paths and engage in opportunities while being responsible for their very own developing.

## **Orientation on individual needs:**

Despite the common international background, the group of participants will be divers regarding career and labour market related knowledge and business contacts. Thus, the minimum standardization of recommended activities takes into account the individual competencies and aligns with the needs identified in the initial assessment (“take what you need”).

## **Flexibility:**

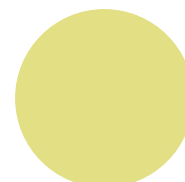
The offered activities should not require a certain amount of time but take into account individual living and study circumstances, e.g. students with kids.

## **Easy access:**

Activities within the ITJ should be organized as low-threshold as possible, both in communication, registration and participation. Students with special needs should be taken into account.

## **Orientation on local needs and regional requirements:**

The programmeme should be adaptable to local environments and take into account the regional job market, the need of local employers and the conditions at the university.





### **Peer-group strengthening:**

The organisers encourage networking among students to facilitate mutual learning. There should be activities with the focus on international students as well as activities that are open for all students aiming to get in contact with other students and to encourage peer-to-peer learning.

### **Using existing resources:**

It is not intended to build up a completely new programme but to reframe activities that are already offered by different stakeholders. The programme takes into account that there is already various support for international students and pools them in a clearly structured concept.

### **Sustainability:**

Through the merging and using of existing activities, sustainability is ensured after the official end of the project.

### **Bilingualism:**

All information is provided in both (local language(s) and English) languages. This applies in particular to the websites and the system through which the events are published and the registration management is handled.

### **Variety of methods and persons:**

Activities should use different formats and vary in their implementation. The totality of the selectable activities ideally represents a mixture. This not only takes into account the goals of the ITJ, but also the heterogeneous participants, for whom the barriers to participation in extracurricular events are often higher. The input is given by different groups of people such as job market experts, staff of universities, soft skill trainers, representatives of local companies and other students.

### **Recognition of every form of engagement:**

We strongly encourage students to get the most out of the ITJ. Nevertheless, the certificate should be given to all participants who took part in the minimum of activities.

# 10. FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

In order to ensure the functionality and flexibility of the programme, the following parameters are recommended for implementation:

The programme is semester-bound and takes place in spring and autumn. Ideally, the official programme duration is six months. The recruitment of the international students as well as the planning of the kick-off meetings take place with sufficient lead-time before the start of the respective semester. Depending on individual time availability, the initial interviews can also take place before the start of the semester.

At best, the events take place within the lecture period and outside the examination period. This can be adapted to the respective local conditions.

To strengthen networking among participants (peer groups), joint meetings are organised by the Journey Guide at the beginning of each ITJ run.

The planning of the final interview takes place at the request of the participants, provided they have fulfilled the minimum requirements, but at the end of the semester at the earliest.

In order to make the programme accessible to those internationals who do not yet have sufficient knowledge of the national language, the events are going to be offered in the national language as well as in English.

The ITJ events use different formats and are implemented as face-to-face and online events with different periods. These group offers are supplemented by time-independent self-learning offers.

The number of participants is adapted by the Higher Education Institutions to the respective capacities and staff resources, but should be limited if demand is high in order to increase attractiveness. If the number of interested persons exceeds the number of participants, criteria for the selection of participants must be defined. These criteria may include factors such as motivation, diversity, or the order of applications.

Within the project application, it was mentioned that a minimum of 100 international degree students from all participating HEIs will actively be involved in developing and testing new innovative employability activities such as the pre-internship as well as engaging in the rest of the elements that create the ITJ.

# 11. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS

There are several involved actors in the ITJ – in addition to the Journey Guides:

- Internal actors such as staff of departments, teachers and other staff with direct contact to the target group should support by encouraging international students and outlining the benefits of the participation.
- Internal actors who realise technical administration and marketing products.
- Internal actors who provide activities and decide e.g. on topics and are responsible for the organisation and administration.
- For some activities external expertise is needed, e.g. information on legal aspects through foreigners office or federal agency for employment.
- Important external multipliers are regional associations and third party organisations who represent regional employers, e.g. chamber of commerce and industry.



## 12. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

### REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION FOR THE ITJ:

- Participation in the ITJ is not possible without prior registration.
- There should be an official registration period. Depending on the local requirements, registration before or after this period can be useful.
- Every international student can register for the ITJ via an online form.
- To ensure that registered students are part of the target group criteria for admission is defined.
- Students must be in their second year at university and need to stay enrolled for at least the duration of one ITJ. Whether these conditions are fulfilled should be checked before confirming the permit.
- The registration for the ITJ does not include the registration for single activities. Registration for the ITJ is not automatically connected with the right to attend in single activities.

### PARTICIPATION IN THE ITJ:

- The registration for the ITJ does not oblige to attend a certain number of activities, except the mandatory pre- and post-assessment.
- There is no fee for the participation in the ITJ and single activities.
- ITJ-Participants can choose freely between activities in English or the local language(s).
- The participation is successful with at least six individual activities in total.



## DEREGISTRATION OF THE ITJ:

Participants can sign out at any time.

## REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION FOR ITJ AS WELL AS PARTICIPATION IN SINGLE ACTIVITIES:

- ITJ-Participants have to check if there is a need to register for single activities and to do it independently. ITJ-participants have to make sure that they register properly.
- The target group of the ITJ should meet the participation requirements of the included activities.
- The provider of an activity sets the time and way of registration and needed data as well as criteria for admission. There is no extra capacity for ITJ-Participants in single activities.
- ITJ-Participants have to follow the attendance rules as every other participant.

The administration of ITJ-participants lies in the responsibility of the Journey Guides.

The administration of the participants of the individual organisers is the responsibility of the respective organisers.

# 13. QUALITY STANDARDS

- Activities are carefully selected to ensure quality. The selection is limited to events organized by various internal actors of the FH Münster, as well as activities in cooperation with cooperation partners of the FH Münster.
- Possible activities of the ITJ were carefully selected in advance during the creation of the „Employability Activities Catalogue“ (EAC) and checked with regard to realisation, financing and effectiveness. This ensures high quality standards. Newly developed activities that are not mapped in the EAC are examined individually.
- If possible, each activity as well as the learning outcomes should be evaluated regarding expectations and meeting the needs, time, format and didactic methods, learning outcomes.



# 14. EVALUATION OF THE ITJ

The evaluation of the ITJ takes place on two different levels:

1. Evaluation of the instrument of the ITJ at the respective partners
2. Evaluation of the ITJ instrument in the INTERLOCALITY project

In the first level, there are different target groups:

1. Participants
2. Higher Education Institutions
3. Local employers

## **QUANTITATIVE CRITERIA** (EACH MEASURED PER PARTNER AFTER ONE ITJ / IN GENERAL AT THE END OF THE PROJECT):

- Number of students informed about ITJ
- Number of students registered to start the ITJ process
- Number of pre-assessments
- Number of post-assessments
- Number of employability activities offered
  - # Orientation activities
  - # Qualification activities
  - # Networking activities
- Number of students taking part in the activities
- Number of students who fulfil whole process and get the Career Certificate

## **QUALITATIVE CRITERIA**

The success of international students participation in the project is measured on some of the key elements linked to their employability and chances of retention.

## # MOTIVATION

### TO STAY IN THE LOCAL REGION UPON GRADUATION

- “Are you planning to have your internship / your work place locally, nationally or abroad?”
- “Why are you planning to stay / to leave?”
- “Are you planning to stay and work locally upon graduation?”

## # STUDENTS’

### KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT THROUGH TO THE COMPANIES:

- 1 PARTICIPANTS**  
**TARGET GROUP**
  - “Do you feel better prepared through the ITJ?”
  - “Do you know what it takes to find a job or an internship locally right now?”
- 2 HEI STAFF (ONLY PARTIAL EVALUATION POSSIBLE)**  
**TARGET GROUP**
  - “Do you think students are better prepared through the ITJ?”
- 3 LOCAL EMPLOYERS (ONLY PARTIAL EVALUATION POSSIBLE)**  
**TARGET GROUP**
  - “Do you think students are better prepared through the ITJ?”

## # OVERALL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

- “Has participation in the ITJ improved your insight into what it takes to become employable in XX country? To what extent?”
- “Has participation in the ITJ increased your readiness to work in XX country?”
- “Has participation in the ITJ influenced your ambitions to stay in XX country after studies?”

The evaluation of single activities and events is included in the organisation of these.

The evaluation of individual biographical learning experiences of the students is made within the final assessment at the end of each journey.

To verify sustainability, all ITJ graduates should do a survey immediately after graduation from ITJ and additionally another one after 6 months.

Evaluation on the part of employers is desirable.

## 15. TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION

Each partner university should find its own way to technically administer the ITJ.

### Example FH Münster:



Within the project, the ITJ is administered through an event catalogue for extra-curricular activities. This will also test a possible implementation in order to be able to create a technical solution for other universities after the end of the project. For FH Münster, the technical piloting means the potential integration into an existing system that can ensure a sustainable and steady use of the ITJ after the end of the project.

# ADAPTATION OF THE CONCEPT

## The development of an International Talent Journey at ARCADA Finland

At Arcada, the ITJ pilot is about integrating career support as a compulsory part of the regular curriculum, instead of as extra-curricular activities, or as stand-alone courses or credits.

The two participating degree programmes are the Bachelor's degree programme in International Business (IB), and the Bachelor's degree programme in Mechanical and Sustainable Engineering (MSEs), all first-year students. However, in the future the plan is to space out the ITJ over the 3,5 - 4 years of study.

### The three phases of the talent journey

The ITJ started during the first week of the academic year with an initial assessment in the form of an online survey about the students' previous education (formal, informal, and non-formal), work experience, interests, and hobbies. It also included self-reflection on personal values, language skills, soft and hard skills, as well as strengths and weaknesses with regards to host country employment. Additionally, the students were asked to share their needs for, and expectations of, career support provided by Arcada during their studies.

Throughout the academic year, the students take part in various career support activities, which are integrated into the regular curriculum and thus not elective. The ITJ students also meet with their teachers responsible for the tailored implementation of the ITJ in their respective degree programmes along the journey to gain information and share experiences.

The ITJ students will be asked to fill out a self-reflective career skills test as sort of a halfway point through the journey. This, together with the initial assessment survey, will be the basis for a one-hour individual session with a career guidance counsellor where the students have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their personal development and experiences of the ITJ. This session will also be the final assessment of the ITJ for the students, who will be issued a certificate of participation upon completion of the journey.

### Needs for, and expectations of, career support provided by Arcada during studies

The initial assessment survey included a question about the students' needs for, and expectations of, career support provided by Arcada during their studies. The students provided open answers, which can be summarised as:



*"Through participating in the project, it has become clear that host country employability is a universal challenge for international students. Project partners have generously shared their approaches, and we have realised that embedding career-focused learning in the curriculum and adopting a proactive job-seeking approach are key steps toward enhancing employability. We are eager to actively pursue new and innovative opportunities to foster a more sustainable local talent ecosystem and the ITJ provides platform to explore solutions by engaging with partners across Europe"*

Rizwan Ullah, Degree Programme  
Director for Mechanical and  
Sustainable Engineering

## Support for looking for a job

- Resume and cover letter assistance
- Job searching resources
- Career-related events and resources
- Networking support, e.g. recommendations and connections
- Finnish labour market insights and employment culture
- Access to alumni networks
- Interview preparation
- Workplace Readiness training

## Guidance and counselling

- Personal guidance
- Career development workshops
- Career assessment tools
- Personal assessment of prior experience and knowledge
- Career guidance for change of field of study
- Matching current studies with previous knowledge and work experience
- Study counselling and psychological services
- Support for students with special needs

## Support for securing work opportunities

- Part-time job during studies
- Internship and co-op opportunities
- Entrepreneurship support
- Support in finding a job related to studies and previous work experience

## Education

- Support to improve professional skills
- Support in improving local language skills
- Guidance from experienced professionals

*“Early exposure to career planning helps students make informed decisions about their future. They can explore different career paths and understand the qualifications and skills needed for various professions in host country. Career-oriented curricula often involve interactions with industry professionals, which can lead to valuable networking opportunities and potential job leads.”*

Susanna Fabricius,  
Degree Programme Director for  
International Business

*As a career counsellor at Arcada, I'm committed to addressing various elements that include job search assistance, refining resumes and cover letters, providing job-hunting resources, and organising career-centric events tailored to our international students. Recognising the unique challenges faced by international students, Arcada's Career Centre provides personalised support, including networking assistance, interview preparation and skills recognition. We also strive to provide valuable insights into the Finnish labour market and its employment culture. Through counselling, events and workshops, we assist students in career development, matching their experiences with their goals, and support them in changes in fields of study or career paths. We also collaborate with Arcada's Entrepreneurship Hub which is an incredible resource serving students interested in entrepreneurship. While we don't facilitate specific agreements for internships or jobs, we want to empower international students in taking proactive steps toward their career goals. Looking at the results from the initial assessment of the ITJ, I'd say we have identified the students' needs correctly and are already addressing them.*

Olivia Lindström, Career Counsellor

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# ABOUT

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