

COMPETENCY MAP

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This report summarises the research activities carried out by the consortium partners to define a competency map based on an updated analysis of needs and in-depth benchmark research due to the progress of COVID-19 (sixth wave) and its continuous consequences in 45+ adults, within the Erasmus+ project **PRIORITY45: Promoting employment of 45+ adults through a disruptive training approach** (Cooperation partnerships in adult education, project number: 2022-1-PT01-KA220- ADU-000087183).
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1 INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly changing and complicated labour context (especially after the terrible pandemic of COVID-19), people over 45 are one of the groups that suffer the most from the changes and evolution not only of the labour market, but also from the need to obtain knowledge related to innovation and creativity, which are increasingly in demand in any job.



Upgrading skills is a necessity for all employable people, but it is also clear that young people (in the 18-35 age bracket) are better equipped to enter the labour market and, if they are unemployed, to take up new jobs. On the other hand, people over 45 years of age may have remained in an age bracket where, except for training or employment needs, they do not have the same knowledge as younger people. Not only training skills, mainly related to ICT or innovation are necessary and valid, but also increasingly important. In this case, transversal competences are another branch of knowledge that not all employees have. But what are transversal competences?

The simplest definition of transversal competences would be a set of knowledge or skills gained through experience, in this case, work experience. However, a more technical definition could be "A set of competences [1] related to attitudes and values (know how to be) and procedures (know how to do). They can be transferred from one specific professional field to another".

It is at this point where we should focus our attention, because if earlier we spoke of the greater educational knowledge of younger people due to the context of life and their ease of handling ICTs, transversal skills are obtained through experience, which is why people over 45 should have greater training in this area, because due to their age, they should have more years of experience in the labour field.

One of the main problems encountered by people over 45 is how to assess this type of knowledge since training skills are assessed by means of a Curriculum Vitae where this type of knowledge is indicated. But transversal skills do not have a possible measure that reflects all the qualities that a worker has been able to acquire in his or her working life. One of the solutions proposed to obtain a measure of these competences would be to use technologies [2] such as Artificial Intelligence or Blockchain. Through these technologies, it would be possible to obtain a clearer evaluation of a worker, considering not only their CV, but also the skills obtained in their previous jobs and training in certain

situations. This would expand the labour market and make it easier for disadvantaged groups such as people over 45 years of age to obtain new jobs.



2 WHAT TRANSVERSAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES DOES A PERSON OVER 45 HAVE?

At the beginning of the text, we have defined what a transversal competence is, it can be given other names such as "soft skills" and encompasses a series of experiences that have been gained throughout working life. At this point we are going to focus on the main transversal competences and skills available to people over 45, one of the groups most affected by the labour crisis and the problems derived from it.

SKILL LEVEL



In 2020 [3], the unemployment rate among people over 45 years of age (45-64) stood at 50% of the active population in that age range, very high figures that offer very worrying data for a group that has already been severely affected by the economic and labour crisis that began in 2008 and by the health crisis of 2020, which has extended to the present day.

One of the main problems is the knowledge that these people have, in a totally computerised era, with more and more needs and knowledge related to ICT, people over 45 have not been able to adapt to the new labour and training needs. This type of workers has other competences [4], a set of skills that they have acquired over the years in their jobs, the main transversal competences they have are related to the work situations they have experienced, and we can define them step by step.

Trust

Older people are more confident than their younger counterparts in the jobs they are in. Just as young people have the advantage of office and computer skills from the cradle, older people generate among their own colleagues and in their superiors a confidence to carry out the tasks performed that has nothing to do with the confidence [5] towards younger people, who tend not to be constant in their work, offering greater distrust.



Work ethics

Workers over the age of 45 have generally suffered very hard times in terms of work, worse conditions than the current ones, unemployment, low salaries... Thanks to this, most of them have a great work ethic, focused on carrying out the tasks they must carry out in the most correct way, without wasting time and being proactive for the companies. In contrast, workers between 18-45 do not count this quality [6] among their main virtues. In this context, various reports [7] confirm that 90% of workers surveyed believe they have a high work ethic, while 83% of respondents aged 18-45 believe they have a high work ethic.

Adaptability

Here it is important to explain that adaptive [8] capacity focuses on actions that may arise while the work is being carried out. This type of worker has often suffered extreme situations, not only in the workplace, but also in their own lives, which has led them to have an enormous capacity for adaptability to move forward and continue to carry out their work without being affected by these circumstances.

Problem-solving

In the work environment, as in the rest of life, problems often arise, sometimes they are simple problems to solve, but sometimes they are problems that if there is not a person with a high capacity for problem-solving can generate a failure in the work where this happens. Another of the main transversal skills [9] of workers over 45 is the ability to resolve compromising situations in a work

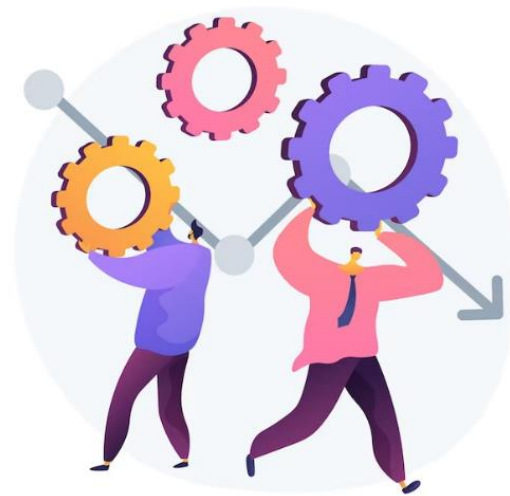
environment. Previously, the ability to solve problems has always been a skill that has been of interest to employers and companies, nowadays and after the COVID-19 pandemic, companies have concluded that they not only need employees with more technical skills, but also with this kind of skills, especially problem-solving.

Critical thinking

If we consider skills such as problem-solving or good decision-making among the main skills of people over 45, critical thinking [10] should have its place alongside these. The ability to think logically, to have the ability to study the situation without losing control and to make cold decisions without getting carried away by feelings or other circumstances is a soft skill that most older people have thanks to their experience. A clear example of the value placed on this skill is the average age of the top leaders in Europe [11], the average age is around 53, falling within the 45+ age group.

Teamwork

It is perhaps the most influential cross-cutting capacity in the rest we have already seen, as it brings together several within the same term. Teamwork [12] has always been considered a skill for employers and companies, and when it comes to interviews, it is always considered that a person stands out in this skill, as it brings together effort, sacrifice for colleagues, respect, social and communication skills, and the ability to adapt to the situation. In addition, teamwork offers a solution for younger workers with very little experience and more transversal knowledge, because thanks to the other soft skills of their adult colleagues, they can gain experience and gain knowledge that is not taught in any university, work experience.



These are the most outstanding transversal skills within the group of workers over 45, but they are not all, there are more skills such as seriousness in the workplace, concentration, ease of coordination between people, they are very organised, they adapt well to flexible working hours, they still can learn... In short, the most outstanding transversal skills in a worker over 45 revolve around the accumulated experiences, teaching how to deal with all kinds of situations and offering their knowledge to younger colleagues with this lack of learning.

Which transversal competences and skills are currently the most important in the labour market after the COVID-19 pandemic?

3 WHICH TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES AND SKILLS ARE CURRENTLY THE MOST IMPORTANT IN THE LABOUR MARKET AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

The labour market and its stability have been in flux for several years now, starting with the financial crisis of 2008, when most countries suffered a terrible period of economic recession and a huge number of jobs were lost. This led to the market having to adapt in the years to come to get back on track and create jobs again. Over the last few years, the trend in job creation had been good, unemployment was falling [13] in all but a few countries in the European area, economic and financial confidence to hire was returning, new jobs were being created through R&D and creativity...

But the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic [14] brought not only Europe but the whole world into one of the toughest situations in living memory. In 2020 the world came to a standstill, factories stopped, jobs (except for those that were strictly necessary) were lost, the employment situation changed radically, the previously little exploited possibility of teleworking emerged. All this new scenario led many people to become unemployed, many others to retrain, and others to improve their IT skills and knowledge.

After overcoming the worst global crisis in living memory, the labour market has undergone several quite drastic changes, the workforce has to become more and more specialised, the need for computer skills has become a priority for employers, gaining new training skills also adds up.



After carrying out an analysis of the current labour market and its needs, as well as the evolution of technology until Industry 4.0 is implemented, a series of skills and competences related to the new employment situation have been collected to be able to access jobs more easily. In this sense, soft skills or transversal competences have been considered, already mentioned in the previous point, but also skills and knowledge derived from educational learning. The most important of these are:

Transversal competences [15] (soft skills)

Critical thinking: The use of the internet has led us to an excess of information from everywhere, even to the point of saturating us and often leaving us without our own criteria and allowing us to be swayed by the opinions of the majority. For this reason, being able to be critical in our reasoning is becoming increasingly important and is such a valid skill for employers, even more so in the wake of the pandemic.

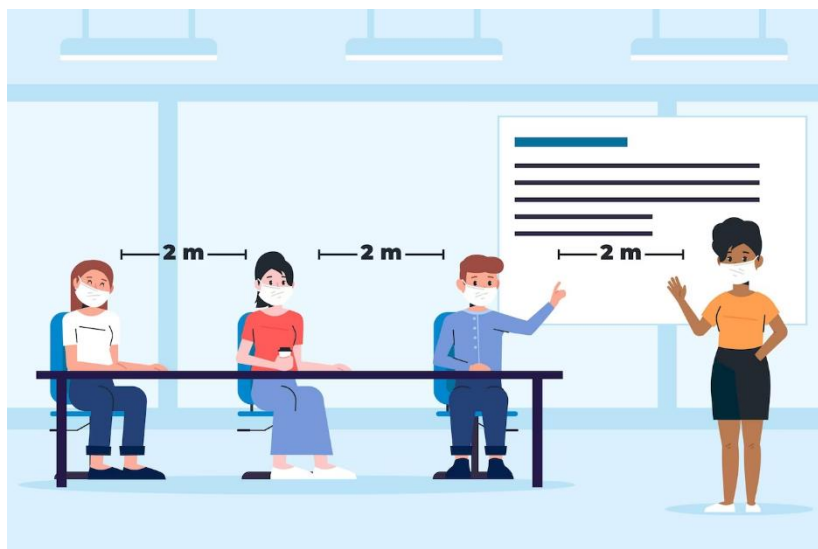
Adaptability and flexibility: In such a changing, diverse and variable environment, the ability to adapt to new technologies, to be open to new challenges and not to close oneself off to lifelong learning can secure a future job.

- Visual, auditory and speech skills
- Resolution report
- Capacity to influence
- Originality and initiative
- Resource management
- Problem-solving
- Ability to manage and organise (be decisive)
- Be honest, humble, and disciplined
- Resilient, organised, and proactive.

4 HOW HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED PEOPLE OVER 45 IN THEIR JOBS OR IN THEIR ACTIVE JOB SEARCH?

The employment trend changed after the last crisis in 2008, as we have commented before, the market needs changed drastically and the hiring options focused on people between 20 and 45 years old, all these changes come from the need of knowledge and training, employers and hiring companies are looking for more "technological" profiles with computer skills, high levels of ICT-related skills, creativity and higher education.

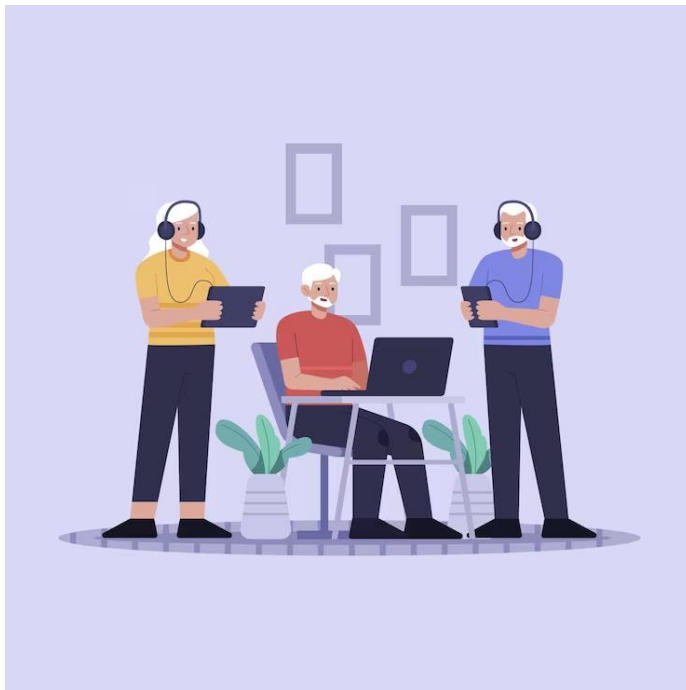
After the huge health crisis of COVID-19 and the other crises that followed (labour, food, personal...) the labour market [18] has undergone a huge change in ideals. The paradigm shifts for the recruitment of people of working age has been enormous since the end of 2020, 2021 and 2022, and there are groups of people who have suffered and are suffering from this abrupt change. In this case, we can focus on people over 45 years old, a sector with a huge amount of work experience, with a very high level of knowledge or soft skills but who may have been left behind in other more technical skills.



Other factors have had a negative influence on the employability of this group of people (remember, over 45), fear, the ageing of this group of workers, the possibility of being able to retire with favourable living conditions... In this point, we will explain the main impediments and problems that have arisen in this new employment scenario for workers over 45 and those who are actively seeking employment in the same age range.

4.1. Main Problems Encountered After Covid in Workers Over 45 Years

One of the main concerns with the arrival of the COVID-19 virus was the high mortality rate among older adults, the data indicated that the most affected were older people, something that reduced the possibilities for people over 45 years of age when it came to work. In the context in which we find ourselves and knowing that the disease is transmitted directly through the air, people over 45 who had pre-pandemic jobs saw how their jobs could be endangered as a result of direct contact between colleagues in the workplace.



The problem of social contact within the work environment has been a negative point for workers over 45 years of age, as their exposure to the virus through their colleagues was more dangerous, all this added to the lack of preparation of most companies to avoid contact between employees.

The options for maintaining work in the first months post-pandemic for these workers have been the possibility of retirement (at advanced ages), remote work (not all have the option because of the actions they employ) or secure adaptation in their workplaces to avoid possible contagion.

Early retirement: One of the main possibilities that arose for older workers

to avoid contact and contagion of COVID during the first months after the pandemic was early retirement for various reasons such as fear of the disease and its effects on older people, restructuring on the part of companies or the lack of the necessary skills to be able to work remotely (mainly computer skills).

The COVID-19 virus affected most of the population, virtually everyone has been affected by the virus. The first months of the pandemic were especially hard for older adults, as the virus attacked this age group, with higher mortality. Many workers opted for early retirement [19] for fear of the disease and its risks, preferring to retire from active life to avoid contracting the disease in the early stages and where there was most uncertainty.

Remote work: The option of working from home emerged before [20] the pandemic, although not in the form that it took after the most difficult months of the pandemic. The option of working from home emerged before the pandemic, although not in the form that it took after the most difficult months of the pandemic. In the first months of the pandemic, teleworking [21] was introduced in most companies around the world, since, although the world was at a standstill, companies still had work to do and the only way to carry it out without the risk of contagion through direct contact was this option.

It should be borne in mind that teleworking is conditioned by a series of requirements that must be met to be able to carry it out. Not all work can be carried out from home, assembly lines, factories and industrial buildings cannot work remotely, and it was necessary to adapt these workstations to avoid the possible transmission of the COVID-19 virus. This process was costly for the companies and complicated for the workers because of its adaptability.

Another problem with teleworking [22] is the home workplace suitability. In principle, the average household has the internet and the capacity to work without problems, but it must be borne in mind that older people do not have the same office and computer skills (more on this later) to work at home, including the problems of computer, stable connection and equipment.

Secure workplaces: This was perhaps the most difficult problem to solve as most companies were not prepared and had separate spaces to completely avoid social contact in the workplace. The adaptation of factories and their workplaces to avoid contact led many companies to lay off workers, production during the first months of the pandemic was drastically reduced, which "facilitated" the restructuring [23] of many companies in terms of personnel. This is why many workers over 45 years of age became unemployed, as employers and entrepreneurs considered workers between 20-45 years of age to be more valid, thanks to their higher level of training, education and computer skills.

4.2. Unemployed older people

We have talked about employed older people and the problems arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are also the older people who were unemployed and who have suffered from the employment consequences of COVID. The main problems arise from the lack of training in relation to the new 4.0 technologies, the lack of interest in retraining and the lack of interest of companies in this group. In this sense, we can say that the need to create training scenarios for this group of unemployed older people is important.

Business restructuring: The forced arrival of digitalisation in most companies because of the pandemic led to a series of changes and restructuring of many jobs. Many jobs were affected by this total change in the employment paradigm [24], and one of the groups most affected were those over 45 years of age who were already unemployed or who, because of these restructurings, became unemployed.



The implementation of 4.0 technologies in the leading companies [25] of the main sectors dragged the rest of the companies to follow their path, a very big effort for companies that did not have such big budgets and were therefore forced to make staff cuts (also the use of these technologies could save jobs).

- Creativity
 - Conscientiousness
 - Entrepreneurial spirit
 - Ability to learn.
- **Interpersonal skills:** These are the skills that are used every day when we communicate [29] and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. They include a wide range of skills, the most notable within this category are:
 - Presentations
 - Oral communication, time management and active listening
 - Organisation
 - Teamwork.
- **Intrapersonal skills:** They are the skills [30], behaviours and habits that help you face challenges, cope with change, learn new things and regulate all your emotions. Intrapersonal skills represent the relationship with yourself and with the people and situations around you. Some of the most prominent are:
 - Self-discipline
 - Enthusiasm
 - Perseverance
 - Self-motivation.
-
- **Global citizenship:** The social, political, environmental and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a global scale. This may refer to the belief that individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks, rather than single actors affecting isolated societies. The most prominent in this category are:
 - Tolerance
 - Openness
 - Respect for diversity
 - Cultural understanding.
- **Media and information:** it is a wide range of skills [31] that enable people to consume, analyse, modify, and even create many types of media. Media literacy can help someone think critically about what they read, see, or hear in the media. The most prominent in this context are:
 - Locating and accessing information
 - Media analysis and evaluation
 - Content, digital competence
 - Arithmetic and statistics.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The 45+ age group has been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in the world of work, as demonstrated in the various studies analysed in this report, the causes being mainly educational, economic (corporate restructuring) and lack of motivation [32].

The training requirements of employers and companies have changed and have been oriented towards training in new 4.0 technologies, adapted to the new needs and the rapid digitalisation of all industrial sectors and businesses. This has led to people over 45 years of age becoming an occupational risk group in future years, and points to the need to create training spaces especially for these groups [33].

People over 45 years of age have transversal knowledge or soft skills, which are superior to younger people, mainly due to the work experience they have gained over the years [34]. Although their educational knowledge may lag, soft skills offer a plus to companies and after the pandemic experience, companies and employers consider that these competences can be very interesting for their companies. All of this is conditional on these groups agreeing to continue training and gaining the necessary skills to adapt to the new working era with all the 4.0 technologies.



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