

## Developing European Competence Standards



*A report on the work of the consistent tuning model team, by Johannes Katsarov, Jukka Lerkkanen, Jacques Pouyaud and Kestutis Pukelis*

From November 21-22, 2013, the members of the "Consistent Tuning Model" team came together in Kaunas (Lithuania) to work out an idea of how we define common European Competence Standards for academic training in career guidance and counselling. Building on the common points of reference from NICE 1 (2009-2012) we had set out on a journey to define different levels of competence for acting in the NICE Professional Roles and elaborate these in modules which can be used for the development and comparison of curricula in our field.

The workshop in Kaunas was not only filled with hard work, but also very enjoyable, and all guests of Kestutis Pukelis left Lithuania with very nice memories, (in alphabetical order): Bernd-Joachim Ertelt (DE), Johannes Katsarov (DE), Jukka Lerkkanen (FI), Jacques Pouyaud (FR), Ivan Prelovský (SK), and Hazel Reid (UK). Several other meetings followed this workshop, as we will describe below.

One of our general agreements from Kaunas is that different people who deal with career guidance and counselling in different ways need different levels of competence. Therefore, the goal of our project is to set **minimum competence standards** for the people practicing career guidance and counselling, depending on the type of career service they offer. By a minimum competence standard, we mean a minimum expectation relating to the measureable performance of people in their relevant role or function. Such a standard can act as a benchmark to professionalize career guidance and counselling, to elevate the level of training around Europe

and to enable the mutual recognition of degrees and competences in the field of career guidance and counselling around Europe.

However, to avoid misunderstandings: We do not aim to "standardize" one or two degree programs in our field throughout Europe, nor do we wish to inhibit our freedom of designing customized degree programs with different points of specialization. Our framework shall be useful for different types of academic training in career guidance and counselling, and will be designed in such a way that it can be used flexibly for different types of academic training, including undergraduate diplomas, Bachelor and Master degrees, postgraduate certificates, and doctoral training.

In the concrete proposal, which we will present in Canterbury in September 2014, we describe different "professional functions" for the different NICE Professional Roles (NPRs) and ascribe them to three "levels of competence". We see the need to determine these three different levels of competence in relation to the actual need for career professionals, which is three-fold, based on our research. **All three levels are equally important for society and for people to receive excellent career services** – the distinction between the three levels only relates to the degree of competence, which their different professional functions require in relation to questions of career guidance and counselling.

The lowest of these competence levels relates to the people who clients with career-related

questions typically approach first. They primarily practice another vocation themselves (e.g. as administrators, psychologists or teachers), but need to be able to give good career advice (which is why we call them **Career Advisors**). Next to offering career advice, people at this competence level should be able to identify people, who would benefit from accessing professional career guidance and counselling services. This relates to the second level of competence, which is needed by people who specialized on offering career guidance and counselling, whom we call **Career Guidance Counsellors** (or Practitioners). Whereas the Career Advisors offer some career advice in addition to their normal roles in society, CGC Practitioners concentrate on offering professional career services. The highest level relates to people, who have specialized themselves on one of the NICE Professional Roles. As different types of **Career Experts**, e.g. "Experts for Career Assessment and Information" they commit themselves to particular questions as research, training and development, career policy, or the management and evaluation of large career services.

Within this article, we want to describe the **work process of how we have arrived at this concept** and thank all of the colleagues with NICE for their commitment to this project.

A central realization from our workshop in Kaunas was that the development of European Competence Standards would be a complex process full of political, scientific and communicative challenges, and that it would need to involve a higher amount of personal interaction than we had originally foreseen. Therefore, our next step was to present our concept and our roadmap for the development of the European Competence Standards to the **NICE Steering Committee**, which came together in Mannheim (Germany) from January 16-17, 2014. The steering committee members agreed to support our initiative for a higher involvement of NICE members at two further workshops. In addition, the participants of this meeting, including Jean-Pierre Dauwalder (CH), Bernd-Joachim Ertelt, Laura Nota (IT), Monika Petermandl (AT), Hazel Reid, Christiane Schiersmann (DE), Raimo Vuorinen (FI), and Peter Weber (DE) contributed a number of conceptual proposals to the project, which we used to improve our approach.



**Photo 3: Celebrating Lithuanian Beer in Kaunas (Nov. 2013), featuring Ivan Prelovský, Kestutis Pukelis, Jacques Pouyaud, Jukka Lerkkanen, Hazel Reid, and Bernd-Joachim Ertelt**



**Photo 4: Participants of Levels Workshop in Bordeaux (March 2014),** featuring Johannes Katsarov, Christine Lagabriele, Valérie Cohen-Scali, Koorosh Massoudi, Alain Kokosowski (top), Jacques Pouyaud, Jean-Jacques Ruppert, Anne Chant, and Hazel Reid.

With the support of the steering committee, our strategic goal for Canterbury Conference (September 2014) was clear: We would define the most central professional functions for each NICE Professional Role and assign them to one of the three levels of competence (originally, we had foreseen four levels, actually). In addition, we decided to define a competence description for each of these professional functions, as a key learning outcome, which can be used for the development of curricula and assessment criteria to measure achievement of appropriate competence level. In order to reach this goal, we organized two parallel workshops in March 2014, where two independent groups worked out all functions and competences for all levels of competence in all of the NICE Professional Roles. We chose this approach so to overcome the danger of groupthink and to come to outcomes that are more objective. Therefore, it was already a clear part of the plan that we would harmonize and integrate the results of both teams in May 2014, when the project coordinators came together in Heidelberg.

Both of the workshops in Bordeaux, France (hosted by Jacques Pouyaud and Christine Lagabriele) and Bratislava, Slovakia (hosted by Laura Gressnerová and Ivan Prelovský), were successful in defining full sets of professional functions and competences, applying the same methodology. At the **workshop in Bordeaux**, the hosts welcomed Anne Chant (UK), Valérie Cohen-Scali (FR), Johannes Katsarov, Alain Kokosowski (FR), Koorosh Massoudi (CH), Hazel Reid and Jean-Jacques Ruppert (LUX). At the **workshop in Bratislava**, the hosts welcomed Bernd-Joachim Ertelt, Lenka Hluskova (CZ), Jukka Lerkkanen and Kestutis Pukelis. In May,

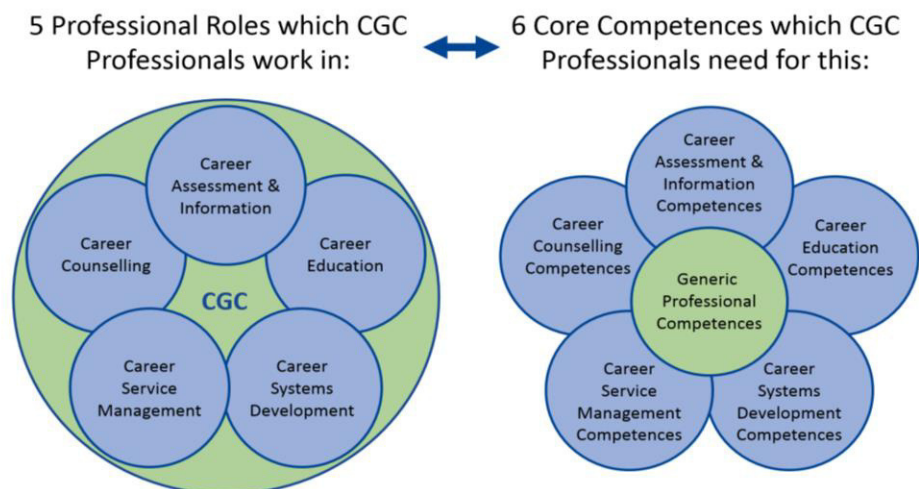
Johannes Katsarov, Jukka Lerkkanen, Jacques Pouyaud and Kestutis Pukelis – as the coordinators of the project – then harmonized the outcomes of this workshop, and discussed them with the other members of the **Tuning Coordination Group**, Sif Einarsdóttir (IS), Rachel Mulvey (UK), Christiane Schiersmann and Peter Weber.

One of the central outcomes of harmonizing the professional roles and the competences was the insight that we only need **three levels of competence**, instead of the four levels, which we had originally foreseen. For several months, we had agreed that there are two parallel tracks, that of “academic experts”, who focus on research and training in the field of career guidance and counselling, and that of “expert practitioners”. In the process of harmonizing the different levels, we concluded however that a differentiation between the academic and the practical orientation of Career Experts did not make much sense, but that both needed a high level of competence for research and training, among others. For this reason, next to others, there is a sixth field of professional functions and competences included in the model, next to the five fields, which relate to the NICE Professional Roles. This field, called “Generic Professional Competences”, relates to aspects that belong to the overall professional identity of the relevant competence level, but which cannot be allocated to one of the professional roles only.

At the Canterbury Summit, we want to discuss the draft for European Competence Standards

with all of the present stakeholders, to learn in which ways it might need to be developed further. We are also inviting interested stakeholders to comment on the draft until November 15, 2014 through an **open consultation**, which will also be published via the NICE website [www.nice-network.eu](http://www.nice-network.eu). There, a **detailed introduction** to our concept can be found, also, including our **proposal for competence standards**.

Of course, a product like competence standards will never be “finished”, so we will be dealing with a living document that needs to be revalidated every couple of years. However, we aspire to take the development of the competence standards further in the future too, and use them as a basis for identifying concrete learning outcomes for each of the competences in terms of values and attitudes, skills and knowledge, but also in terms of suggestions for assessment criteria, teaching and learning methods, recommended literature and teaching resources etc. We hope to discuss these ideas with NICE colleagues in Canterbury, when we all meet again and look forward to the summit!



**Graph 2: The Updated Version of the NICE Professional Roles and the NICE Core Competences (August 2014)**