European Qualification Profile of Job Coach for Persons with Disabilities

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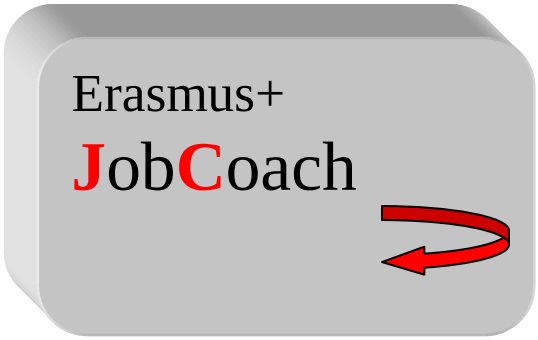
„Job Coach for persons with disabilities”



European qualification profile

for the Job Coach for persons with disabilities

(Edited by Ewa Matuska)

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Beroepsvereniging Jobcoaches Nederlands
Netherlands

Cordaan
Netherlands

Grone-Bildungszentrum NRW GmbH
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Germany

The Queen's University of Belfast
UK

Les Genêts d'Or
France

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Poland

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Poland

Introduction

The European qualification concept presented below is the result of the cooperation of international partners from Germany, Netherlands, France, Poland and United Kingdom, who together have realized the Erasmus + project entitled *Job coach for persons with disabilities. Strategic partnerships in vocational education and training (2015-2018*).

The main objective to prepare an internationally recognized **qualification profile** for the further education and training of job coaches at the European level, was to facilitate the social and economic inclusion of people with developmental, cognitive and mental health problems.

Although "Job Coach for person with disabilities" (JC/D) does not have (till now) the status of an established profession in space of EU, there exists common agreement that their main professional task is to provide personal on-site assistance in employment for persons with specific health needs[1]. It is why, we propose to conceive JC/D as a new occupation in the 2423 (Personnel and Careers professional) group[2] with regard to the European Skills, Competences Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO system)[3].

As non registered occupation, also JC qualification is not regulated in terms of the European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) - the recommended rules of European Council and Commission which addresses the process of acquiring qualifications[4]. EQF demands the orientation of any proposed educational curricula on previously defined educational outcomes described in a form of competences expected as the result of planned education conducted on defined qualification level.

In different EU countries were already developed variable educational curricula for semi - Job Coach qualification. The project's team carefully have analysed them searching for the best practices and trying to cluster the most inspiring ones into a kind of pan-European proposal of JC /D qualification. The starting point on this journey was preparing **job description** for Job Coach occupation, the next one - identifying and standardizing the **competences profile** of job coaches, which is presented here in a form of a competence matrix for this qualification.

The description of JC/D as new occupation and their qualification defined in terms of EQF, opens the gate to the standardization of job coach profession in space of the whole European Union. Placing JC/D occupation in European Skills, Competences Qualifications and Occupations system, designing their job description and possible qualification path, allows in a future to disseminate the new qualification in Europe also via ESCO functionalities.

Project's team hopes that presented below *"European qualification profile for the Job Coach for persons with disabilities"* can be further easily adapted to the different national curricula of EU countries, and maybe also - to other disadvantaged target groups – not only to persons with disabilities.

[1] H. R Röttgers & C.Metje, *European quality standards for the profession Job Coach for persons with disabilities*, 2016.
[2] www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/docs/resol08.doc
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home
[4] *European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*, European Council, Official Journal C 111, 6.5. 2008.

1. Job description of JC/D

1.1. Job coaching concept

The general objective of the **job coach profession** is to deliver job coaching to persons with disabilities in the wider work context. In Supported Employment (SE) concept which is recognized as: "*Providing support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to secure and maintain paid employment in the open labour market*"[5] job coaches play key role. They first assist in building client's motivation to be employed, and together with them, shape their vocational profile and help acquiring required skills (if necessary), actively seek available job offers on the open labour market and, after agreeing a post, negotiate with the employer the client's work conditions, and helping in them to get onboard. Furthermore, the job coaches are required to help service users to maintain the job and/or change jobs, if he/she decides to do so. Job coaches are expected to be assessors, trainers, counsellors, coordinators, sales wo/men, mentors, and negotiators.

The professional Dutch association of job coaches provides the definition of the job coach as: *"the person who coaches the client and the employer"*[6]. In the *Code of Ethics for the profession Job coaching (2014) of "*Beroepsvereniging Job Coaches Nederlands", the function of job coaching profession is defined as follows:

"*Provide methodological support to people with occupational disabilities on a professional basis, aimed at finding and keeping a job on the regular labour market. The activities for this purpose insert by the job coach characterized by: from an inquisitive attitude client support in finding answers to questions, learning to exploit opportunities, optimizing the independence in performing work, teaching (work) activities and in the development of knowledge and skills. If necessary, the job coach tunes with a supportive social network. The job coach works in his support towards a time when the remaining guidance needs of the client can be taken by the employer"*[7].

The job coach has to take into account the interests of the three stakeholders: the client, the employer, and the customer, where:

- **Client** – is the individual who is experiencing limitations in performing work and is therefore supported by a job coach;
- **Customer** – is the company or legal person who gives the order to carry out job coaching, who provide the financial resources and to whom the job coach / job coach organization is accountable (it can be governmental/regional/ local support institution, NGO, etc);
- **Employer** – is the natural or legal person who enters into an employment relationship with the client and which must assume responsibility for the company.

The description of job coaching can be also conducted on the analysis of the tasks which are typically undertaken by hob coaches on the each of the five stages of supported employment[8]:

- ✓ on SE 1st stage – Client engagement: assisting the disabled job seeker in building motivation to be, and stay, employed on the open labour market
- ✓ on SE 2nd stage – Vocational profiling: recognizing labour market trends and organizational structures which fit with the health and life situation of the client;
- ✓ on SE 3rd stage – Job finding: identifying suitable workplaces for the client and helping employer(s) to adapt workplace for client's needs;
- ✓ on SE 4th stage – Employer engagement: preparing client for taking up the job place agreed with employer;
- ✓ on SE 5th stage – On and off the job support: assisting client with work adaptation and with maintaining or changing job.

[5] *European Union of Supported Employment. Information Booklet and Quality Standards*, EUSE 2005, p.13
[6] *Code of Ethics for the profession Job coaching*, Beroepsvereniging Job Coaches Nederlands, version from 30.03.2014, p.4
[7] Ibidem, p. 4-5.
[8] *European Union of Supported Employment. Toolkit for Diversity* EUSE 2014, p.7.

1.2. Tasks and responsibilities of JC/D

Job coaches can fill different jobs and different positions in different organizations. Employed by organizations delivering supported employment services, job coaches are part of the **professional staff** of these organizations. If self-employed, they act as "independent professionals", similarly to free-lance counsellors, psychologists, or other specialists. Working both within SE organization, as well as free-lance, JC have to be mentored, supervised, and line-managed by an authorized person, but the level of control depends on the job coach training, experience, and specialization (basic or advanced). Job coaches provide a number of important services to help people with disabilities find and maintain meaningful and enjoyable employment on the one hand, and to meet the needs of employer on the other. JC professional tasks represent the mixture of specializations including:

- **Essential tasks:** first–level tasks, connected with labour market research/personnel marketing and counselling/coaching tasks, and
- **Technical tasks:** secondary-level tasks, connected with administrative work, documentation or other tasks, such as where special tools (e.g., in IT programmes, competence tests, HR profiles)or equipment(using computer, driving car, etc) are used.

Essential general tasks are key professional activities of job coaches aimed to achieve the expected outcomes of their work, namely:

- ✓ Help with identifying client's job-related strengths and weaknesses;
- ✓ Delivering adequate training opportunities;
- ✓ Penetrating job market offers and negotiating work conditions with potential employers;
- ✓ Facilitation the transition from the job training centre (school)to the workplace via providing on-the-job and post – job support and assistance.

The **main responsibilities** of the occupation of job coach lie in adequate career assistance to the person with disabilities, namely:

- ✓ Recognising and adopting most accurate model of intervention for job coaching of the client;
- ✓ Upholding the quality and ethical standards of a contract with client;
- ✓ Providing service of high standard to the client;
- ✓ Monitoring client's work performance;
- ✓ Coaching and training of the client;
- ✓ Providing client with adequate feedback;
- ✓ Collecting proper documentation;
- ✓ Ensuring safety is being maintained in the work environment;
- ✓ Knowing and adhering to established useful agency policies, procedures, and regulations;
- ✓ Collecting proper documentation for the purpose of supported employment;
- ✓ Helping the clients to understand their job duties and employer policies;
- ✓ Helping the clients to build and maintain positive relationships with co-workers and customers;
- ✓ Helping the clients to develop a strong work ethic;
- ✓ Explaining new job responsibilities to the clients;
- ✓ Helping the client to understand how their life outside of work may affect their; performance while at work.

Further responsibilities are connected with the service to employer:

- ✓ Delivering accurate information about supported employment rules, employer's duties and benefits;
- ✓ Delivering accurate information about the health and life situation of job seekers;
- ✓ Respecting employer's organizational structures and values;
- ✓ Honest cooperation with employer's HR staff and using employer's templates for completing client's personnel documentation;
- ✓ Preparing client's personnel employment documentation according to existing law;
- ✓ Negotiating possible job position adaptations with employer, to meet client's needs;
- ✓ Guaranteeing ongoing support to client at job place after employment, including coaching and training;
- ✓ Delivering necessary training for co-workers, promoting inclusion of disabled client in project teams, conflict resolution, mediation, mentoring, etc;
- ✓ Helping to prepare client on a possible de-recruitment situation, including guiding common outplacement activities.

2. JC/D qualification and occupation

2.1. JC/D qualification in terms of EQF

The **European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)**[9] is an overarching qualifications background that makes it possible to link the qualifications of different countries together. EQF acts as a translation device to make qualifications easier to understand across different countries and systems in Europe, but primarily as a proposal of the standard framework for educational offers and programmes which aspire to bring trainees to obtain formal qualifications necessary to meet requirements of particular occupations and jobs. It is why project partnership uses EQF frame for planned new JC/ D qualification.

The specificity of EQF is just the focus on learning outcomes – what a person with a particular qualification knows and is able to do, as a professional after finishing the educational process. Three kinds of expected outcomes prove achieved qualifications, namely outcomes of:

- **Knowledge** - described as theoretical and/or factual;
- **Skills** - described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments); and
- **Competence** - described in terms of responsibility and autonomy and interpersonal attitudes specific for the acquired qualification[10].

The learning outcomes descriptors referred to as KSC (the popular abbreviation of Knowledge - Skills-Competence) allow to differentiate eight **qualification levels** recognized by EQF[11].

The project's team proposal is to establish the **common minimum of educational demands** for the 'job coach for persons with disabilities qualification' using the EQF basis.
It was realized, after research in countries participating in the project, the minimal level of the qualifications for job coaches is currently at level 4– specialist (certified), technician (certified), graduated from high education.

However, after analysis done by project experts, it was concluded that recommended minimal level should be the 6th level - master professional, bachelor professional, certified specialist etc., equivalent to bachelor´s degree, having graduated from the first cycle of higher education according to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Higher level of education requirement is connected to the conclusion about the growing complexity of tasks of job coaches. Because of the wide scope of disabilities, diversity of individual situation of clients, constantly changing situation on the labour market and regulations regarding supported employment, every job coach for persons with disabilities undoubtedly needs also further education, realized as a different form of long life learning. Following this assumption, the project team specifies the following qualification requirements for the profession of JC/D:

- **As an essential basic qualification:**

Level 6 **–** Bachelor professional, certified specialist etc., equivalent to bachelor´s degree; at least one year of supervised career development experience;

- **As desirable (optional) basic qualifications:**

Level 6 - bachelor's degree or higher in dedicated fields: pedagogy (special pedagogy), social care, psychology, counselling, human resources management; at least one year of supervised career development experience with persons with disabilities;

- **As postgraduate essential qualifications:**

Level 7 **–** Specialist, after bachelor's degree or higher - specialization in career counselling or coaching (postgraduate studies or certified courses); at least three years of supervised career counselling or coaching experience with persons with disabilities;

- **As postgraduate advanced qualifications**:

Level 7- Strategic professional, after master´s degree in disciplines related to pedagogy (special pedagogy), social care, psychology, counselling, human resources management - specialization in selected kind of disability

[9] European Council: *European Qualifications Framework - Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008*, Official Journal C 111, 6.5. 2008.
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008H0506(01)&from=EN
[10] See: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Cross-sector_skills_and_competences
[11] European Council: *European Qualifications Framework - Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008*, Official Journal C 111, 6.5. 2008, Annex 2.

(postgraduate studies or certified courses); at least five years of supervised career development experience with persons with disabilities.

All EU countries who would like to include this profession in their own official catalogue of professions should make a clear definition what kind of qualifications and educational qualities are necessary to meet their requirements.

2.2. JC/ D occupation in official classifications

The **International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)** developed by International Labour Organization (ILO)[12] does not include an occupation called 'job coach' (JC) nor job coach for persons with disabilities (JC/D).

According to project partnership, the most fitting occupation group for the profession JC/D seems to be the occupation group number **2423 - Personnel and careers professionals**. In the ISCO jobs classification it is located in the following hierarchical way[13]: 2 - **major group** - professionals; 24 - **sub-major group** - business and administration professionals; 242 - **minor group** - administration professionals; 2423 - **unit group**- personnel and careers professionals.

The ESCO - European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations Internet platform[14] is the project that realizes one of the main objectives of the *Strategy Europe 2020*, in that it facilitates internal EU work force mobility and work transition through easy comparison of skills, competencies and qualifications obtained in different EU countries. Today, the JC nor JC/D occupations are not presented or categorised in ESCO, but they can be here placed similarly as on the ISCO-8, i.e., under personnel and careers professionals.

Placing JC/D occupation in ESCO system, designing their job description and possible qualification path in EQF terms, allows in a future to disseminate the new qualification in Europe also via constantly broadening ESCO functionalities.

3. Job Coach competences profile

It is necessary to note that the JC/D profile presented here[15] represents an occupation specific competences profile and includes only the main professional and technical competences for this occupation. We have consciously refrained from description of the lower levels of competences, including transversal skills and cross-sector skills and competences, as they are not exclusively relevant to the tasks and responsibilities of JC/D and are necessary for all occupations represented in the same 'jobs family' ("personnel and careers professionals" - group No 2423 in ESCO and ISC0- 8), Basic **transversal skills**[16] of JC/D include:

- ✓ general communication skills
- ✓ sharing information
- ✓ collaboration on tasks
- ✓ building networks
- ✓ using office software
- ✓ negotiating
- ✓ ability and willingness to learn.

Core competences of the JC/D can be derived from the description of the roles identified for "employment support worker" that is defined in the current SE concept. It is illustrated in Figure 1.

[12] ILO acts as specialized labour market agency of the United Nations and developed the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) which is a four-level classification of occupations grouping by education level. The latest version of ISCO is ISCO-08 (dating from 2008). See: http://www.ilo.org

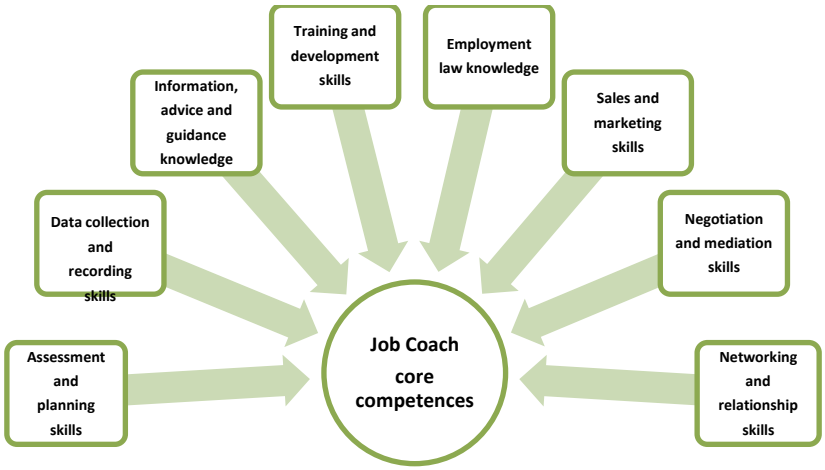
[13] See: Resolution Concerning Updating the International Standard Classification of Occupations, 2007, p.17

[14] See: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Occupation#Occupations_in_ESCO

[15] Presented competence profile of JC/D was elaborated on the basis of results obtained from questionnaire disseminated between project partners. The results of this examination allowed to extract project partners' best practices connected with job coach profession. The second source were partners' recommendations collected during joint project meetings.

[16] Transversal skills(or transferable) - skills which have been learned in one context or mastered in relation to a specific situation/problem and can be transferred to another context.

Figure 1. Core competences of JC/D derived from SE concept



Source: Project elaboration based on European Union of Supported Employment. Toolkit for Diversity EUSE 2014, p.122

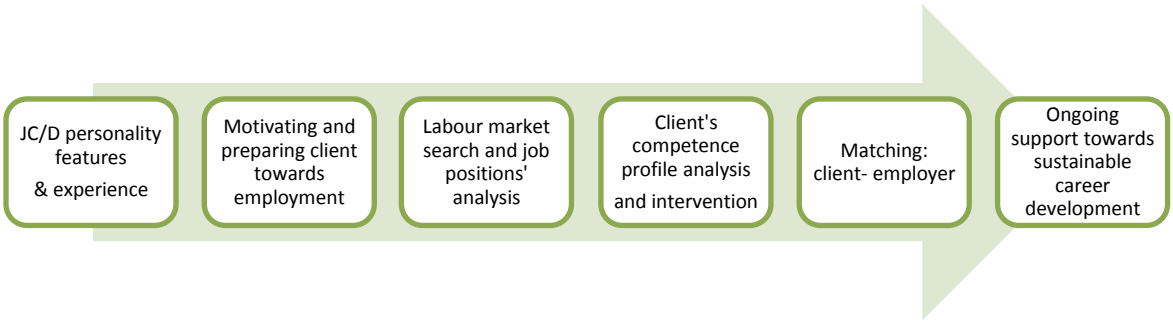
The job coach profession involves a wide range of roles, including assessor, salesman, trainer, coordinator, counsellor, mentor and negotiator. This variety of roles demands also a variety of professional competences. Given that it is rare to find someone who has previous experience of all of these roles, future research needs to explore what sort of previous experience is most valuable to carry this profession. It may be that personal attributes or attitudes are more relevant, or at least just as important as previous work experience or education.

3.1. KSC concept of JC/D qualification

The JP/D competence profile, conceptualized according to EQF rules, and with the aim to be part of the qualification path published in a future on ESCO portal – obviously has to be created in line with KSC concept (Knowledge–Skills –Competence, according to definitions of EQF/ ESCO).

Searching for the simplest concept of KSC for JC/Ds, project partnership have decided to use the **functional approach**, based on earlier recognized job description of this profession. This kind of approach fits well with the schema of linear stages of SE process enriched by the initial demand for the component "C – competence" (which can be referred to the personality features and experience of the candidate for Job Coach). This proposal is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Functional approach to JC/D concept based on SE process



Source: Project partners' elaboration on the basis of SE stages

The starting point for a JC/D KSCs concept is adequate **competence (C)** - defined by EQF terms as the ability of a person, facing new situations and unforeseen challenges, to use and apply knowledge and skills in an independent and self-directed way. Obviously, the candidate for JC/D has to be able to act in terms of **responsibility and autonomy**. The person with adequate personality base (ethical value system, adequate

aptitudes) will have to acquire a set of **knowledge (K) and skills (S)** defined for JC/D profession[17] to be success in their job. The "Competence" component expected from the candidate for JC/D includes at least:

- ✓ Awareness of own professional predispositions and abilities;
- ✓ Sensitivity and humanistic orientation towards people;
- ✓ Sense of responsibility;
- ✓ Auto-reflection and orientation on self- development;
- ✓ Stress auto-regulation.

The basis for developing the necessary knowledge and skills for JC/D was the analysis of questionnaires circulated and completed by all project partners, dedicated to establishing initial *"European quality standards for the profession Job Coach for persons with disabilities"* – delivered as the project's Product 1[18].

In this paper, the project team agreed that JC/Ds must demonstrate knowledge:

- about the general and professional education system
- about the interaction between (potential) employers and state agencies and bodies supporting employment
- about the respective legal frameworks for unsupported and supported labour
- about common application and placement procedures
- about the conditions for apprenticeships, internships, non-permanent occupation
- about work and organizational psychology
- in the fields of the respective job environment
- and skills in conflict moderation and resolutions.

A job coach charged with the integration of disabled people in the open labour market must additionally have specialised knowledge about the different disabilities and strengths and challenges for specific target groups. He/she should be able to evaluate in which way and to what extent these disabilities have an influence on the individual's perspective for finding a job in the open labour market.
In particular, a JC/D should have in-depth knowledge about:

- ✓ Pervasive development conditions like autism spectrum disorders
- ✓ Intellectual disability
- ✓ Psychotic disorders like schizophrenia, major depression and bipolar disorder
- ✓ Non-psychotic psychiatric conditions like anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorders, somatoform, eating and personality disorders
- ✓ Childhood based behavioural conditions like attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder

Clustering above knowledge/skills demands it can be assumed that knowledge and skills component in KSC concept, required from JP/D is in line with a competence functional approach based on SE and includes at least:

- ✓ The knowledge and skills connected with coaching process oriented on individually centred career/ employment motivating and training, where the client is a person with disability;
- ✓ The knowledge and skills connected with open labour market (LM) research and analysis with using tools specific for Human Resource Management (HRM);
- ✓ The knowledge and skills connected with profiling client's competence for employer – on tools used by the company (HRM) and respecting client's health situation (the knowledge and skills connected with in-depth recognizing different disabilities,
- ✓ The knowledge and skills connected with profiling/adopting job place to client's needs/ barriers (HRM) and respecting client's health situation,
- ✓ The knowledge and skills connected with support in work adaptation (coaching) and job maintaining by client,
- ✓ The knowledge and skills connected with ongoing support in keeping client's employment motivation between employments periods (coaching) and respecting client's health situation.

[17] It is possible that knowledge and skills learned by a person who aims to become a JC/D, but who does not have the required pre-requisite personality may be used improperly in the process of client's coaching.

[18] Röttgers H. R., Metje C., *European quality standards for the profession Job Coach for persons with disabilities*, Fachhochschule Münster - Grone-Schulen Niedersachsen, 2016.

The project team have agreed that the whole spectrum of KSC in relation to JC/D can be summaries into the fifth functional categories of competences which apply to all stages of the job coaching process, i.e., they can be considered as **cross-cutting competences**.
The necessary expertise (knowledge & skills)of JC/D should cover the following fields:

1. **Training**
2. **Coaching**
3. **Labour market search and human resources**
4. **Behaviour analysis**
5. **Task analysis.**

This real "mixture" of scientific fields which are involved in the qualification process of JC/D, confirms that this occupation has to be based on a sufficiently high level of initial education, which is further continued via number of specialization paths (maybe in few stages of specialization). Thus, it should start with 6th level (or 5th in a SCHE) of qualification according to the EQF, and go through level 7th, and maybe even 8th.

3.2. JC/D competence matrix

In a functional approach to mapping competences, the project team has also prepared the proposal for a competence matrix for the Job Coach for Persons with Disabilities. In the development of the profile we used the KSC (Knowledge -Skills - Competence) framework defined by EQF and respected by ESCO system. Given this framework, opens the possibility of legalizing the occupation of JC/D, both on national levels and/or on a European level. The competence profile of the JC/D is conceptualized here as "occupation specific", thus it includes the **five main professional and technical competences** that were identified as relevant for JC/D core knowledge and skills, namely: *training coaching, labour market search and human resources, behaviour analysis*, and *task analysis.*
They represent cross-cutting competences, involved in the whole coaching process offered to the person with disability. Each of the five functional competences may need to be more precisely specified in the matrix, were two sub - competencies need to be added to each of the main categories. However, the project team objective was the evolving competence model would not be too detailed, so as to not lose its clarity and coherence.
The competence matrix is presented in Appendix.

Summarization

This paper presents an overview of completed and an outline for further steps and activities of the present Erasmus + project, that is dedicated to prepare an internationally recognized qualification profile for education and training of Job Coaches at the European level. This report builds on project's Product no 1, the first intellectual input delivered by the project team, i.e., the *'European quality standards defined for the profession JC/D'*.

To prepare the competence profile for JC/D, we started by designing the job description for this profession and by analyzing the possible qualification path/s, respecting the rules of European Qualification Frames (EQF).

The competence profile of JC/D presented here is defined in terms of KSC (Knowledge - Skills-Competence), which are recommended by EQF. As the EQF definitions were also adopted by ESCO – European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations Internet platform, our proposal allows for development of a plan for the legalization procedure of the JC/D occupation both on a national and on the European level. In future, it is possible also to disseminate the new qualification in Europe via ESCO functionalities.

The project team aim was to search for most suitable ways of using support of such programmes, like Erasmus+, in an effort to improve disabled persons' skills transferability and include them in employment on the open market.

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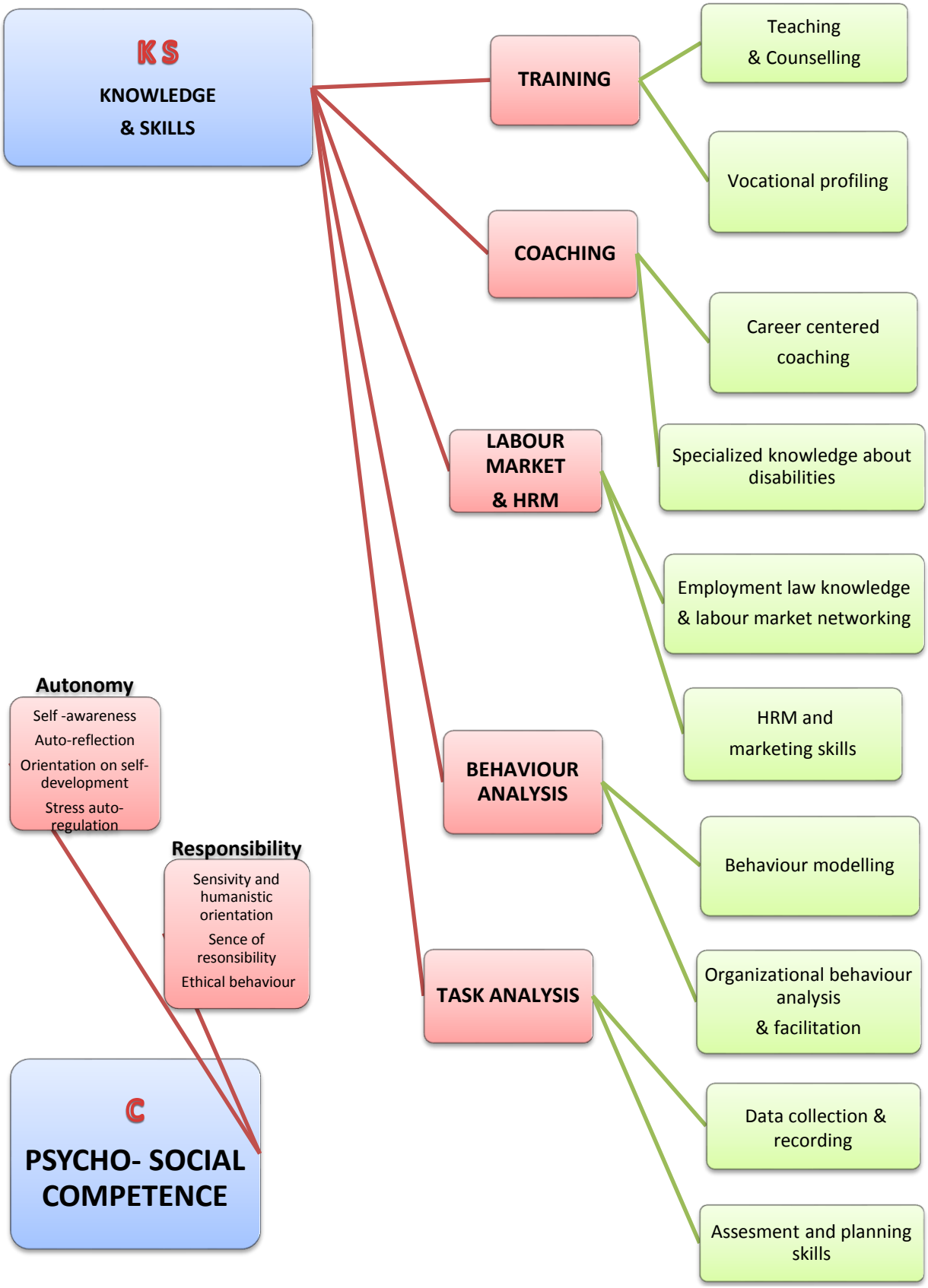
http://www.ilo.org
www.dgr.de
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriSer

Appendix - JC/D competence matrix

Job Coach for persons with disabilities KSC competence model