EmplArt

COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes for Labour Market Inclusion of Vulnerable Adults

Prepared by: APSES

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1. Introduction and Purpose

This Competence Framework is the principal output of Activity A2.4 of the EmplArt project, an Erasmus+ KA210-ADU Small-Scale Partnership co-funded by the European Union. It is the analytical and pedagogical backbone for all subsequent project outputs, in particular the EmplArt Handbook (A3-A4), the Training of Trainers activities (A3.2, A4.1), and the non-formal arts/theatre-based educational activities for vulnerable adults (A4.2).

The Framework is grounded in three interconnected evidence streams conducted between October 2025 and February 2026:

- A2.1 - Desk research and mapping of good practices in the labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups across Italy, Romania, France and three additional EU member states, compiled in the EmplArt Inclusion Map (interactive Google Maps tool).
- A2.2 - Three national focus groups (Romania: 16 December 2025; Italy: 12 January 2026; France: 15 January 2026) gathering 20 stakeholders across employment services, local authorities, NGOs, employers and direct beneficiaries including Ukrainian refugees.
- A2.4 - Comparative analysis of the A2.1 and A2.2 findings, synthesised in the Comparative Focus Group Report (Romania · France · Italy, 2026), which directly informs this Framework.

2. Evidence Base: Key Findings from A2.1 - A2.3

The competency design priorities set out in this Framework emerge directly from the evidence gathered across three national contexts. The following synthesis draws on the Comparative Focus Group Report (2026) and the good practices catalogued in the A2.3 Inclusion Map.

2.1 Core Finding: Barriers are Communicative, Psychological and Structural - not Technical

Across all three focus groups, participants converged on a finding that fundamentally shapes this Framework: the main barriers preventing vulnerable adults - and in particular Ukrainian refugees - from accessing and retaining employment are not a lack of technical or vocational skills. They are:

- Language and communicative confidence (ranked first in all three countries)
- Psychological barriers: loss of self-confidence, eroded self-efficacy, trauma-related inhibition
- Structural and administrative complexity: bureaucratic hurdles, non-recognition of qualifications, work permit delays
- Social and cultural barriers: unconscious employer bias, social-cue mismatch, accent-based discrimination (France)

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> *"What holds people back is not a lack of skills or willingness - it is a loss of confidence and a sense of invisibility. The arts-based approach is not a luxury - it is one of the most effective tools we have found for rebuilding the self-belief that displacement takes away."*
>
> **- Plan International Romania - Romania Focus Group**

2.2 Competency Priority Hierarchy (Cross-Country Consensus)

The three focus groups produced strong agreement on the following competency hierarchy for labour market integration:

Priority	Romania	France	Italy
#1	Communication & language	Communicative confidence, self-efficacy	Linguistic + social-cue interpretation
#2	Adaptability	Adaptability in dynamic environments	Navigating a new environment
#3	Digital literacy	Baseline for all entry-level roles	Minimum foundation for any modern role
#4	Teamwork	Predictor of probation success/failure	Primary retention predictor
#5	Self-confidence / emotional regulation	Mentioned; linked to arts approaches	Explicitly argued as professional competency

2.3 Good Practices from the A2.3 Inclusion Map

The interactive Inclusion Map (A2.3) catalogues a minimum of 15 verified good practices - at least 3 per partner country plus 6 from other EU states - documenting employers and programmes that have successfully integrated Ukrainian refugees, persons with disabilities, people with low education levels and ethnic minorities. The following categories of practice were most frequently cited across the mapping exercise and the focus groups:

- Mentoring and buddy systems: identified as the single most effective and most under-resourced intervention in all three national contexts. France Terre d'asile's mentored cohort achieved a 68% job placement rate versus 31% in the control group. Faurecia (Romania) employed a dedicated bilingual HR coordinator with equivalent results.

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- Arts-based and theatre programmes: documented in Romania (Technical College theatre workshops), France (Seine-Saint-Denis theatre programme, France Terre d'asile) and Italy (Vertigo APS community theatre). The theatre programme in Seine-Saint-Denis is the strongest quantitative case: 68% placement rate vs 31% control group.
- Skills-first and competency-based hiring: Italian focus group participants referenced emerging practices that replace CV-based interviews with practical problem-solving assessments, with documented improvements in diversity and retention.
- Cross-sector partnership models: NGO + public employment service + employer networks, documented across all three countries, represent the structural condition most consistently linked to sustainable integration outcomes.
- Paid pre-work orientation and phased onboarding: French SME logistics case (9 Ukrainians integrated, 7/9 retained, 2 promoted) and Romanian Faurecia case (12 Ukrainians, 8/12 retained after 1 year) both relied on structured onboarding periods.

3. Target Groups

The Framework is designed to support the employability of the following vulnerable groups, as defined in the project application and confirmed through the A2.1–A2.2 research phase:

Vulnerable Group	Country Focus	Principal Barriers (from focus groups)
Ukrainian refugees	All three countries (50% of each group)	Language, credential non-recognition, trauma, administrative complexity, loss of confidence
People with low level of education	Romania (primary); Italy + 1 EU state	Structural mismatch with labour market demands; limited digital literacy; vocational training gaps
Ethnic minorities	France (primary); Italy + 1 EU state	Accent-based discrimination, language barriers, intersectional gender barriers (France), limited social capital
People with disabilities	Italy (primary); Romania + France	Employer reluctance, accessibility barriers, rigid hiring criteria, low confidence in presenting skills

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Cross-cutting design principle: gender and intersectionality

The French focus group raised a critical gap: migrant and refugee women face compounded barriers (care responsibilities, community pressure against employment, a service system designed around male job-seekers) that standard employability frameworks do not address. This Framework incorporates gender and intersectionality as a cross-cutting design principle, with explicit guidance on adapting activities for women with specific barriers.

4. Methodology

The Framework was developed through a four-stage process, each stage grounded in empirical evidence gathered by the three partner organisations:

Stage 1 - Desk Research and Good Practices Mapping (A2.1 + A2.3)

Partners identified and documented at least 15 good practices from five EU countries (Italy, Romania, France + 3 additional). APSES prepared the research templates. The findings were compiled in the EmplArt Inclusion Map, an interactive Google Maps tool hosted on the project website. Practices cover: employers who hired Ukrainian refugees (all countries), people with disabilities (Italy primary), people with low education (Romania primary), and ethnic minorities (France primary).

Stage 2 - National Focus Groups (A2.2)

Three focus groups were conducted in December 2025–January 2026, gathering 20 stakeholders across employment services, local authorities, NGOs, employers and direct beneficiaries. APSES prepared the focus group guidelines. Key informants included: Faurecia România (employer, 12 Ukrainian refugees hired), France Terre d'asile (Seine-Saint-Denis theatre programme, 68% placement rate), and Vertigo APS community theatre practitioners. Both Italy and France included a Ukrainian participant - Andriy Marchenko (France) and a Ukrainian citizen employed in Italy - whose testimony directly shaped the competency priorities.

Stage 3 - Comparative Analysis (A2.4)

APSES led the comparative synthesis of A2.1 and A2.2 findings, producing the Comparative Focus Group Report (Romania · France · Italy, 2026). This analysis identified cross-country convergences and national divergences in barriers, competency priorities, success factors and support measures. The present Framework is the direct product of this analysis.

Stage 4 - Framework Validation (ongoing through A3–A4)

The draft Framework will be validated and enriched through the international Training of Trainers (A3.2, France, March–May 2026) and further tested in three national non-formal education cycles (A4.2). Vertigo APS will facilitate the A3.2 validation process. The Framework will be published as an open-access document on the project website and EPALE.

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5. Framework Structure

The EmplArt Competence Framework is organised into two dimensions and twelve competency areas, each described through three EQF-aligned descriptors (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes) and an Art & Theatre Connection. An Evidence from Focus Groups row is included for competencies where the three-country research produced particularly significant findings.

DIMENSION A - Transversal (Horizontal) Competencies	DIMENSION B - Professional and Functional Competencies
A1. Communication & Language Skills [5/5]	B1. Job Search & Career Planning [5/5]
A2. Collaboration & Teamwork [5/5]	B2. Workplace Conduct & Professional Norms [4/5]
A3. Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking [4/5]	B3. Intercultural Competence [4/5]
A4. Creativity & Adaptability [4/5]	B4. Gender Awareness & Inclusive Participation [4/5]
A5. Self-Confidence & Emotional Resilience [5/5]	B5. Civic Participation & Social Integration [3/5]
A6. Digital Literacy [4/5]	
A7. Learning to Learn [3/5]	

Priority ratings reflect citation frequency from A2.1-A2.2 research: 5/5 = very high cross-country priority; 4/5 = high; 3/5 = medium.

Key structural innovation: Self-Confidence & Emotional Resilience as a professional competency

Based on France's explicit argument - supported by Romania and Italy - this Framework elevates self-confidence and emotional regulation from 'secondary personal quality' to 'explicit professional competency' (A5). This reflects both the evidence from the focus groups and the documented impact of arts-based approaches on this dimension.

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DIMENSION A - Transversal (Horizontal) Competencies

Transversal competencies are cross-cutting abilities valued across all sectors and roles. They were consistently identified as the priority gaps in both the A2.1 employer mapping and the A2.2 focus groups across all three partner countries. They are the primary target of arts- and theatre-based non-formal education.

A1 - Communication & Language Skills	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Social Competencies) · GreenComp · EQF Levels 2–4 · CEFR A2–B1
Why it matters	Language and communicative confidence were the single most frequently cited barrier to employment in all three focus groups. Critically, all three national discussions distinguished between basic language proficiency and communicative confidence - the ability to express needs, ask for help and participate as a team member. France introduced the concept of 'accent-based exclusion' - discrimination targeting West African migrants whose French is technically proficient but whose register creates friction. Romania highlighted the practical cost of unsafe communication (translation of safety briefings). Italy framed it as both linguistic and social-cue interpretation.
KNOWLEDGE	• Functional understanding of the host country language at workplace level (CEFR A2–B1 for L2 speakers) • Knowledge of written workplace communication conventions (emails, forms, safety instructions) • Awareness of cultural differences in communication style (direct vs. indirect, formal vs. informal) • Basic occupational vocabulary in the relevant sector • Understanding of the concept of communicative confidence as distinct from formal language competence
SKILLS	• Can introduce themselves and describe work experience clearly in spoken and written form • Can understand and follow verbal instructions in a workplace setting

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A1 - Communication & Language Skills	
	• Can participate constructively in team conversations, including asking for clarification • Can write simple professional communications (emails, forms, messages) with acceptable accuracy • Can recognise and navigate different registers (formal/informal, spoken/written) in workplace contexts • Can communicate needs and concerns to a supervisor respectfully and effectively
ATTITUDES	• Willingness to communicate even with imperfect language skills - without excessive fear of mistakes • Openness to adapting communication style to different interlocutors and contexts • Respect for cultural differences in communication norms • Motivation to continuously improve both language accuracy and communicative confidence
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Role-play (job interviews, phone calls, team meetings) develops spoken confidence in a protected space • Improvisation techniques ('Yes, and...') build spontaneous verbal expression and active listening • Group storytelling and scene work develop narrative communication and the ability to hold attention • Devised multilingual theatre explores code-switching and validates non-dominant language repertoires
Evidence from Focus Groups	France (accent-based exclusion; communicative confidence as distinct from language proficiency). Romania (cost of inadequate communication in safety contexts; Ukrainian workers' rapid adaptation when given structure). Italy (social-cue interpretation as integration barrier). Seine-Saint-Denis theatre programme: 68% job placement vs 31% control - communication development identified as active ingredient.

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A2 - Collaboration & Teamwork	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Social Competencies) · EntreComp (Resources) · EQF Levels 2 - 4
Why it matters	Teamwork was ranked the most consistent single predictor of probation success or failure in Romania, and the primary retention predictor in France (functional working relationships). Italy emphasised collaboration across cultural or personal barriers. The Ukrainian participant in France noted that learning 'to raise my hand in a team meeting' was harder than any technical skill.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of roles, responsibilities and interdependencies within a team • Knowledge of constructive conflict management principles • Awareness of how cultural diversity within teams can be a source of strength • Understanding of how individual performance contributes to collective outcomes
SKILLS	• Can cooperate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds towards a shared goal • Can take on and fulfil a defined role within a group, adapting as needed • Can share information, ideas and resources without being prompted • Can manage minor interpersonal tensions constructively • Can give and receive professional feedback without becoming defensive
ATTITUDES	• Genuine respect for others' contributions and for differences of opinion • Sense of shared responsibility for collective outcomes • Willingness to support and help colleagues proactively • Openness to learning from people very different from oneself
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Ensemble theatre work is structurally collaborative - no single performer can make a scene work alone • Collaborative devising (creating scenes together) builds negotiation and co-creation skills at a body level • Physical ensemble exercises (mirroring, synchronisation, weight-sharing) build pre-verbal trust • Post-exercise group reflection builds the vocabulary to describe and improve team dynamics
Evidence from Focus Groups	Ukraine refugee participant (France): 'The hardest thing was not learning to drive a forklift. It was learning to raise my hand in a team meeting.' Faurecia (Romania): phased onboarding with regular team check-ins was the key retention factor. France Terre d'asile: 'modified performance reviews' and 'language buddy' as structural teamwork supports.

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A3 - Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Cognitive Competencies) · EntreComp (Ideas & Opportunities) · EQF Levels 2–4
Why it matters	Across all three focus groups, participants noted that modern workplaces - especially in logistics, production and services - require employees to navigate situations independently. This is a significant adjustment for adults from more directive work cultures. Italy's focus group was most explicit: skills-first hiring assessment using practical problem-solving tests revealed talent invisible to CV-based processes.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of basic problem analysis approaches (identify, analyse, generate options, evaluate, act) • Knowledge of when and how to seek help appropriately • Awareness of common cognitive biases affecting decisions under stress or in unfamiliar environments • Understanding that mistakes are information, not failures of character
SKILLS	• Can identify the core issue in a practical workplace situation • Can generate two or three alternative solutions to a given problem • Can evaluate options against practical criteria (time, resources, consequences) • Can take initiative within their area of responsibility without waiting for instruction • Can learn from unsuccessful attempts and adjust their approach
ATTITUDES	• Curiosity and willingness to explore unconventional or unexpected solutions • Tolerance for ambiguity - comfort with situations that have no single right answer • Persistence and tenacity in the face of difficulty • Intellectual humility - willingness to revise one's view in light of new information
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Improvisation ('Yes, and...') directly trains rapid, constructive, generative problem-solving • Theatre games with unexpected constraints force creative responses under pressure • Character scenario work ('what does this character do when the plan fails?') develops contingency thinking • Devised work with incomplete briefs mirrors real-world professional complexity
Evidence from Focus Groups	Italy: skills-first assessment via practical problem-solving tests documented superior outcomes vs. CV-based hiring. All three contexts: expectation that employees navigate situations independently identified as a key gap. Romania industrial context: 'frequent production changes require adaptability and quick independent decision-making.'

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A4 - Creativity & Adaptability	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Cognitive Competencies) · EntreComp (Ideas & Opportunities) · GreenComp
Why it matters	Labour market volatility - automation, sector disruption, migration itself - means adaptability is increasingly valued across all three national contexts. Italy ranked adaptability second in importance (after communication). France noted uniquely that refugees' lived experience of displacement is itself evidence of extraordinary adaptability - a strength that employers frequently fail to recognise.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding that change is a normal feature of working life, not an exceptional event • Knowledge of different approaches to the same task in different contexts • Awareness of one's own habitual responses to unfamiliar situations • Basic understanding of growth mindset and how it differs from fixed mindset
SKILLS	• Can adjust approach when circumstances change, without becoming blocked • Can generate original ideas or novel approaches to familiar tasks • Can operate effectively even when procedures or instructions are incomplete • Can learn new tools, processes or environments with guidance and self-motivation • Can recognise constraints as design parameters rather than obstacles
ATTITUDES	• Genuine openness to change and to doing things differently • Willingness to experiment and take manageable risks • Positive orientation towards new challenges, including those in a different cultural context • Resilience - capacity to return to equilibrium after disruption (linking to A5)
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Theatrical improvisation is structurally about adaptability: every scene changes moment by moment • Devised theatre (creating new work from a blank starting point) develops original creative thinking • Character work expands participants' behavioural repertoire - showing that there are always multiple ways to respond • Theatre in multilingual and multicultural groups directly reframes difference as creative resource

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A4 - Creativity & Adaptability	
Evidence from Focus Groups	France: 'The refugee's lived experience of displacement is itself extraordinary adaptability - a strength that hiring processes consistently overlook.' Romania: adaptability cited as critical in 'dynamic industrial environments where production requirements change frequently.' Italy: adaptability ranked second overall; skills-first assessment explicitly targets this.

A5 - Self-Confidence & Emotional Resilience	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Personal Competencies) · EQF Levels 1–4 · Trauma-Informed Practice frameworks
Why it matters	Self-confidence and emotional regulation were explicitly argued as professional competencies in their own right by the French focus group (Council of Europe consultant; France Terre d'asile), supported by evidence from Romania (Plan International) and confirmed in Italy. The French discussion distinguished between linguistic competence and communicative confidence, arguing that the latter is what determines whether a person can function effectively in a team. This competency is the one for which arts-based non-formal education has the strongest evidence base.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of the relationship between self-perception, confidence and professional performance • Knowledge of practical techniques for managing stress and anxiety in professional contexts • Awareness of personal strengths and areas for development (realistic self-assessment) • Understanding of how displacement, unemployment and social exclusion damage self-efficacy • Awareness of trauma-informed approaches and why they matter in adult education settings
SKILLS	• Can present themselves positively in an interview or first professional encounter • Can manage emotional responses in challenging professional situations (feedback, conflict, pressure) • Can articulate their own strengths and experience with confidence and specificity • Can tolerate constructive criticism without becoming defensive or withdrawn • Can set realistic personal goals and monitor progress towards them

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A5 - Self-Confidence & Emotional Resilience	
	• Can recognise and name their own emotional state and its effect on performance
ATTITUDES	• Genuine belief in one's own capacity to learn, improve and contribute • Sense of personal dignity and worth, independent of current employment status • A healthy relationship with failure - as information and as direction, not as identity • Courage to engage with new situations despite uncertainty and residual trauma
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Public performance - standing in front of an audience - is among the most powerful evidence-based tools for building self-confidence available to adult educators • Mask work and character embodiment allow participants to explore a more confident self at a safe distance • Celebratory group feedback rituals after exercises actively rebuild self-image in a witnessed, social context • Theatre's inherently non-judgmental process models what healthy failure-and-learning looks like
Evidence from Focus Groups	France: 'self-confidence and emotional regulation are professional competencies deserving explicit recognition, not merely desirable personal qualities' (Council of Europe consultant). Romania: 'the arts-based approach is one of the most effective tools we have found for rebuilding the self-belief that displacement takes away' (Plan International). Seine-Saint-Denis programme: arts-based approach identified as the active ingredient in the 68% vs 31% placement rate differential.

A6 - Digital Literacy	
EU Frameworks	DigComp 2.2 (Areas 1–5) · EQF Levels 1–3 · Council of Europe Digital Citizenship Framework
Why it matters	Digital literacy was cited as an essential prerequisite for any current employment in all three focus groups - including roles that do not appear 'digital'. France highlighted a specific systemic risk: France Travail platforms require digital access to register for employment services, meaning that low digital literacy creates a double barrier for refugees. Romania noted that HR and administrative processes are increasingly digitalised. Italy identified digital literacy as the minimum foundation for modern employment.

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A6 - Digital Literacy	
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of basic computer and smartphone operation for work-related tasks • Knowledge of common digital communication platforms (email, video calls, online forms, messaging apps) • Awareness of digital safety basics: passwords, phishing, privacy, data protection • Knowledge of common job-search platforms in the host country (ANOFM, Pôle Emploi / France Travail, ANPAL) • Understanding of how public employment services' digital systems work and how to navigate them
SKILLS	• Can operate a smartphone and/or basic computer for work-related tasks • Can send, receive and navigate email professionally • Can complete an online job application or registration form • Can participate in a video call for a remote interview or team meeting • Can search for and evaluate online information relevant to their work • Can use at least one productivity tool (document editing, spreadsheet, messaging)
ATTITUDES	• Curiosity and willingness to engage with new digital tools, even when initially unfamiliar • Comfort with asking for help when facing a digital barrier - not interpreting it as personal failure • Responsible and ethical use of digital platforms • Persistence when technology does not work as expected
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Theatre workshops that integrate digital tools (recording rehearsals, creating short video clips, digital portfolios) provide authentic practice contexts with intrinsic motivation • Using smartphones to document and share artistic work builds both digital competence and self-presentation skills • Online collaborative tools used in project preparation mirror workplace digital communication norms
Evidence from Focus Groups	France: 'France Travail platforms require digital access - low digital literacy creates a double barrier for refugees who need to register to access employment support.' Romania: 'HR and administrative processes are increasingly online.' Italy: digital literacy as the minimum foundation for almost any modern position.

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A7 - Learning to Learn	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Cognitive Competencies: Learning to Learn) · EQF Key Competence 5
Why it matters	The ability to learn continuously is more valuable than any single technical skill set in a volatile labour market. For vulnerable adults re-entering employment after disruption, the ability to learn efficiently and confidently is foundational to developing all other competencies. The focus groups consistently noted that negative formal education experiences - particularly for low-education adults and for refugees who could not continue formal study in their host country - create specific barriers to learning engagement.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of one's own preferred learning style and how to work with it • Knowledge of effective practice and study strategies • Awareness of the range of lifelong learning opportunities available (formal, non-formal, informal) • Understanding of how habits, routines and environment support or impede learning
SKILLS	• Can identify what they need to learn in order to achieve a specific professional goal • Can sustain focus and practice in a learning activity over time • Can apply what was learned in one context to a new and different situation • Can seek out and use feedback to improve performance • Can navigate available learning resources (courses, online tools, colleagues, mentors)
ATTITUDES	• Intrinsic motivation for personal and professional development • Intellectual curiosity - genuine interest in acquiring new knowledge and skills • Perseverance and patience with the learning process • Openness to being a beginner - willingness to be temporarily 'not good at' something new
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Non-formal arts education models a learning process that is iterative, exploratory and non-judgmental - ideal for adults with negative formal education experiences • Rehearsal-based learning (try, receive feedback, try again) makes the learning cycle visceral and concrete • The arts process intrinsically rewards curiosity and experimentation, building the disposition of a lifelong learner

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DIMENSION B - Professional and Functional Competencies

Professional and functional competencies are more directly linked to workplace readiness and navigating the labour market as a practical system. They were identified through the A2.1 good practices mapping and the A2.2 focus group analysis as areas where vulnerable adults consistently need structured support, and where systemic design - at the level of employers, employment services and policy - is as important as individual development.

B1 - Job Search & Career Planning	
EU Frameworks	EntreComp (Resources: Human Capital) · EQF Levels 2–4
Why it matters	All three focus groups identified significant gaps in vulnerable adults' knowledge of how to navigate the labour market - particularly in the host country context. The French discussion (former Director General of France Travail) was the most systemic: existing public employment services were designed for a stable population and need fundamental redesign to serve refugees as core, not exceptional, users. Romania highlighted a gap between knowing that employment support exists and knowing how to access it. Italy focused on the systemic shift from qualification-based to skills-first hiring.
KNOWLEDGE	• Knowledge of local job search platforms, public employment services (ANOFM, France Travail, ANPAL) and NGO employment support services • Understanding of what employers look for in a CV, covering letter and interview • Awareness of different types of employment contracts and fundamental workers' rights in the host country • Knowledge of how to prepare for an employment interview within the local cultural context • Understanding of how skills and competencies can be documented and presented when formal credentials are absent or not recognised
SKILLS	• Can write a basic CV and covering letter adapted to a specific vacancy • Can conduct a targeted job search using both online and offline channels • Can prepare for and perform competently in a standard employment interview • Can navigate public employment services and ask for relevant support • Can evaluate different job offers against personal criteria (conditions, development, sector) • Can articulate skills acquired informally or in a different national context in a compelling way

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B1 - Job Search & Career Planning	
ATTITUDES	• Proactive orientation to employment - treating job search as a structured activity with goals, not a passive state • Realistic self-assessment of skills and experience relative to the market • Persistence and resilience in the face of rejections • Openness to roles that require bridging training or involve a step down from previous professional level
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Mock interview role-plays using theatre techniques develop self-presentation confidence in a realistic but safe context • Autobiographical storytelling exercises help participants discover and articulate their experience in compelling, memorable ways • Forum Theatre (Boal) is specifically designed to rehearse and problem-solve high-stakes social scenarios like interviews or workplace conflicts • Scene work on 'the first day at work' makes abstract professional expectations visceral and rehearsable
Evidence from Focus Groups	France: former Director General of France Travail - 'The tools and processes we built were designed for a stable population with stable administrative status. We need to redesign from the perspective of the most complex user.' Italy: skills-first assessment via problem-solving tests documented superior diversity outcomes. Andriy Marchenko (France): 'I had twelve years of experience as a receptionist. Here, none of that counted.'

B2 - Workplace Conduct & Professional Norms	
EU Frameworks	EQF Key Competences (Sense of Initiative, Social Competence) · ILO Decent Work Framework
Why it matters	Unfamiliarity with professional norms in the host country context - punctuality expectations, communication with managers, handling feedback, social conventions - was cited as a retention barrier in all three focus groups, particularly for Ukrainian refugees and long-term unemployed adults. The Romanian employer (Faurecia) described this as one of the most significant integration challenges after language. The French SME owner noted that misunderstandings about professional norms frequently arose from cultural difference, not negligence or bad faith.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of professional norms in the host country context (punctuality, dress codes, hierarchy, break procedures, notification protocols) • Knowledge of employees' rights and responsibilities under host country employment law • Awareness of workplace health and safety basics

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B2 - Workplace Conduct & Professional Norms	
	• Understanding of how to give and receive professional feedback constructively
SKILLS	• Can be reliably punctual and notify employer proactively and appropriately in case of absence • Can navigate the social norms of a professional workplace without constant guidance • Can receive constructive feedback without interpreting it as personal attack • Can respectfully raise a concern or difficulty with a supervisor • Can maintain appropriate professional boundaries with colleagues and clients
ATTITUDES	• Sense of professional pride and personal responsibility for the quality of one's work • Respect for colleagues and organisational structures, even when one disagrees • Commitment to reliability - doing what one says one will do • Willingness to go beyond minimum requirements when the situation calls for it
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Character work and role-play create an explicit 'training ground' for professional role behaviour - participants can rehearse being a good colleague, a confident employee, a constructive team member in scenarios that feel real • Theatrical scenarios involving power dynamics (employee/supervisor; customer/service provider) help participants navigate hierarchical relationships with confidence and dignity • Post-exercise reflection links the dramatic experience directly to real workplace situations
Evidence from Focus Groups	Romania (Faurecia): 'dedicated bilingual HR coordinator' specifically managed cultural and professional norm differences. France SME: 'modified performance reviews' to account for cultural communication differences. Romania: phased onboarding with regular check-ins specifically designed to support norm acquisition.

B3 - Intercultural Competence	
EU Frameworks	Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC) · LifeComp (Social Competencies)
Why it matters	Workplace diversity is an increasing reality in all three partner countries. For vulnerable adults - especially refugees and ethnic minorities - operating effectively within culturally diverse workplaces is essential for integration and retention. The Italian focus group employers' association raised unconscious bias from existing

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B3 - Intercultural Competence	
	colleagues as a structural obstacle. France highlighted that cultural differences in professional communication style can be misread as competence issues.
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of the concept of cultural difference in values, communication styles, attitudes to hierarchy, time and feedback • Knowledge of the cultural norms of the host country's professional environment • Awareness of one's own cultural assumptions and how they can become blind spots • Understanding of how stereotypes and unconscious bias operate - and affect both employers and employees
SKILLS	• Can interact respectfully and effectively with colleagues and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds • Can interpret behaviour that seems 'strange' or 'rude' through a cultural lens rather than a judgmental one • Can adapt communication and working style when operating across cultural contexts • Can recognise and name a cultural misunderstanding and begin to address it constructively
ATTITUDES	• Genuine curiosity about other cultures - approaching difference as enrichment, not as a problem • Respect for cultural difference as a source of creativity and strength • Intellectual humility - willingness to question one's own cultural assumptions • Commitment to the equal dignity of all people, regardless of cultural background
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Multicultural ensemble theatre is inherently an act of intercultural negotiation and creation • The shared artistic process creates conditions for deep human connection across cultural difference that classroom instruction cannot replicate • Playing characters from different cultural backgrounds develops empathy and perspective-taking at a physical, embodied level • Devising together across language and cultural barriers makes visible the mechanisms of miscommunication - and the creative potential of diversity
Evidence from Focus Groups	Italy: unconscious bias from existing colleagues identified as a structural integration obstacle. France: cultural differences in professional communication style misread as competence problems - a systemic employer education gap. Romania: 'Ukrainian workers brought a work ethic that genuinely raised the bar for the whole team' (Faurecia) - a positive intercultural dynamic that emerged through structured support.

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B4 - Gender Awareness & Inclusive Participation	
EU Frameworks	Council of Europe CDC · LifeComp (Social Competencies) · European Pillar of Social Rights (Principle 2: Gender equality) · DAPHNE Programme
Why it matters	This competency area responds directly to the gap identified in the Comparative Report: the French focus group raised gender and intersectionality as a substantially under-addressed dimension. Migrant and refugee women face compounded barriers - care responsibilities, community pressure against employment, a service system designed around male job-seekers - that go unaddressed in standard employability frameworks. The Council of Europe consultant (France) noted that EmplArt has a specific opportunity and responsibility to address this. This area is also relevant for the employers and adult educators targeted by the project (A3.2, A4.1).
KNOWLEDGE	• Understanding of how gender intersects with migration, displacement and employment to create compounded barriers • Knowledge of the specific barriers facing migrant and refugee women in the host country labour market • Awareness of care responsibilities as an employment barrier and of the support structures available • Understanding of gender-sensitive and trauma-informed facilitation principles for adult educators
SKILLS	• Can identify and name gender-based barriers in employment processes (job ads, interview practices, workplace norms) • Can navigate employment support services and assert their rights as a woman worker • Can access information about care support and flexible work arrangements • Adult educators: can design and facilitate activities in a gender-sensitive and trauma-informed way
ATTITUDES	• Belief in the equal right to professional participation, dignity and development regardless of gender • Willingness to challenge assumptions - about gender roles and about who 'belongs' in which workplace • Solidarity and support for colleagues facing gender-based barriers • For educators: commitment to inclusive design that actively addresses, not merely 'tolerates', difference
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Theatre has a long history of exploring gender roles, power and identity - providing a safe space to examine and challenge assumptions • Role reversal exercises (playing a person of different gender or background) build empathy and reveal structural power dynamics

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B4 - Gender Awareness & Inclusive Participation	
	• Playback Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal) are specifically designed to give voice to those whose experience is under-represented • Performance spaces created by and for refugee women have documented therapeutic and empowerment effects
Evidence from Focus Groups	France: 'migrant and refugee women face care responsibilities, community pressure against employment, and a service system designed around male job-seekers' (Council of Europe consultant). Comparative Report: 'gender and intersectionality is strongly foregrounded in France; largely absent in Romania and Italy - a significant gap that should inform the EmplArt Handbook design.' This Framework responds by making it an explicit competency area.

B5 - Civic Participation & Social Integration	
EU Frameworks	LifeComp (Social Competencies: Civic Engagement) · European Pillar of Social Rights
Why it matters	Employment is inseparable from broader social integration. Vulnerable adults - particularly Ukrainian refugees - often lack knowledge of the civic, administrative and community structures of their host country, creating barriers not only to employment but to accessing the support that would enable employment. Romania advocated for a national competency passport model; France for an entirely redesigned public employment service; Italy for legal validation of informally acquired skills - all reflecting a shared view that systemic change is as necessary as individual competency development.
KNOWLEDGE	• Basic knowledge of the public service landscape in the host country (healthcare, housing, employment support, education) • Understanding of the rights and obligations of residents and workers • Awareness of community organisations, NGOs and voluntary sector resources available locally • Knowledge of how to access social support without stigma or fear of consequences
SKILLS	• Can navigate basic public administration interactions (registering with a doctor, accessing benefits, attending appointments) • Can identify and proactively access relevant support services • Can participate constructively in community or associative activities • Can advocate for their own rights in a composed and effective way
ATTITUDES	• Sense of belonging and investment in the local community

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B5 - Civic Participation & Social Integration	
	• Willingness to contribute - not only to receive - from civic life • Trust in institutions, built through positive experiences of being treated with respect • Sense of personal agency - confidence that one's participation makes a difference
Theatre & Arts Connection	• Community-facing performances (A4.3 open days) give participants a public role in the local community - a powerful experience of belonging and visibility • Theatre projects with civic themes (community rights, social participation, neighbourhood life) connect artistic work to civic awareness in a concrete way • The performance event creates a moment of public recognition: the audience sees the person, not only the category
Evidence from Focus Groups	Romania: national cross-ministerial action plan, local employment hub model and inclusion clauses in public procurement - all proposed by focus group participants. France: fundamental redesign of France Travail for refugees as core users; European Asylum and Refugee Employment Framework; mandatory inclusion training for public officials. Italy: legal validation of informally acquired skills.

6. Summary Overview

The table below provides a rapid overview of all twelve competency areas, priority ratings, principal target groups and art/theatre connection.

	Competency	Priority	Primary Target Groups	Theatre Connection
A1	Communication & Language Skills	5/5 - Very High	All groups - esp. Ukrainian refugees	Role-play, improvisation, storytelling
A2	Collaboration & Teamwork	5/5 - Very High	All groups	Ensemble work, devising
A3	Problem-Solving & Critical Thinking	4/5 - High	All groups	Improv games, scenario work

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	Competency	Priority	Primary Target Groups	Theatre Connection
A4	Creativity & Adaptability	4/5 - High	All groups - esp. refugees	Devising, character work, improv
A5	Self-Confidence & Emotional Resilience	5/5 - Very High	Refugees, long-term unemployed	Performance, mask work, feedback rituals
A6	Digital Literacy	4/5 - High	Low-education adults, 40+	Digital integration in workshops
A7	Learning to Learn	3/5 - Medium	All groups	Rehearsal cycle, exploratory process
B1	Job Search & Career Planning	5/5 - Very High	Refugees, low-education	Mock interviews, Forum Theatre
B2	Workplace Conduct & Professional Norms	4/5 - High	Refugees, long-term unemployed	Role-play, character scenarios
B3	Intercultural Competence	4/5 - High	Refugees, ethnic minorities	Multicultural devising, role reversal
B4	Gender Awareness & Inclusive Participation	4/5 - High	Women; all educators (A3.2/A4.1)	Forum Theatre, role reversal, Playback
B5	Civic Participation & Social Integration	3/5 - Medium	Refugees, ethnic minorities	Community performance, civic themes

Blue rows = Dimension A (Transversal).

Green rows = Dimension B (Professional/Functional).

Priority ratings: 5/5 = very high cross-country priority; 4/5 = high; 3/5 = medium.

Based on frequency of citation in A2.1-A2.2 research across all three partner countries.

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7. Alignment with European Reference Frameworks

The EmplArt Competence Framework is designed for compatibility with the principal European frameworks for competencies, skills and qualifications, ensuring that learning outcomes are recognisable, transferable and communicable across EU borders.

EU Framework	Relevance to EmplArt	Aligned Competency Areas
LifeComp (JRC, 2020)	Primary reference for personal, social and learning to learn competencies	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, B3, B4, B5
DigComp 2.2 (JRC, 2022)	Digital literacy across 5 areas: information, communication, content creation, safety, problem-solving	A6
EntreComp (JRC, 2016)	Entrepreneurship as transversal competence: ideas, resources, action	A3, A4, B1
GreenComp (JRC, 2022)	Sustainability: adaptability and creative systems thinking	A4
EQF (Council Recommendation 2017)	8-level qualifications framework; EmplArt activities target Levels 1–4	All areas
Council of Europe CDC	Competences for Democratic Culture: civic, intercultural, critical competencies	A3, B3, B4, B5
CEFR (Council of Europe)	Language proficiency A1–C2; target level A2–B1 for L2 workplace speakers	A1
European Pillar of Social Rights	Principles 1 (education/training), 2 (gender equality), 3 (equal opportunities)	B4, B5

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8. Assessment and Validation Approach

Competencies developed through the EmplArt programme will be assessed through a combination of tools appropriate to non-formal and informal learning. The French focus group (former Director General, France Travail; Faurecia Romania) identified the development of communicable, policy-relevant outcome measures as the project's most urgent challenge. The following approach is designed to meet that challenge.

Self-Assessment

At the beginning and end of each educational cycle, participants complete a structured self-assessment questionnaire. For each competency area, they rate their perceived proficiency on a 4-point scale: not yet developed / developing / achieved / exceeds expectations. The shift between pre- and post-assessment is the primary indicator of progress. Questionnaires are available in the national languages of all three partner countries.

Educator Observation Log

Adult educators maintain a simple structured observation log for each participant, noting evidence of competency development in real learning situations. Evidence is recorded against specific descriptors from this Framework (e.g., 'participant initiated asking for help from a colleague - A1 skills descriptor'; 'participant spontaneously adapted their approach after the first attempt failed - A4 skills descriptor').

Portfolio of Evidence

Where feasible, participants compile a simple portfolio of evidence: photographs from activities, short written or video reflections, clips from rehearsals or performances, written peer feedback. The portfolio is designed to be usable as a complement to a CV and as a communication tool with potential employers.

Final Performance as Summative Assessment

The closing theatrical performance (A4.3) serves as a summative demonstration of competency development - particularly in communication (A1), collaboration (A2), self-confidence (A5), intercultural competence (B3) and gender-inclusive participation (B4). Performance before a real audience is itself an assessment: it is the integration of all competencies in a public, real-stakes context.

Placement and Retention Tracking

In line with the evidence model demonstrated by France Terre d'asile's Seine-Saint-Denis programme (68% placement rate vs 31% control group), the project will track placement rates, 6-month retention rates and self-reported confidence measures for all A4.2 participants. These outcomes will be compiled in the final version of the EmplArt Handbook (A4) to provide the communicable evidence base that policy-makers and employers require.

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Note on formal validation

This Framework does not confer formal qualifications. Partners are committed to exploring pathways for recognition of learning outcomes through national validation frameworks: Romania (CNCPIS - Centrul Național de Calificări și Orientare Profesională), Italy (INAPP - Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche), France (CPF - Compte Personnel de Formation). Alignment with EQF Levels 1–4 is indicated throughout.

9. Use of the Framework within the EmplArt Project

Activity	Role of the Competence Framework
A3.1 - Handbook first draft	Provides the competency-by-competency structure for the first draft of the EmplArt Handbook. Each handbook unit is linked to one or more competency areas from this Framework.
A3.2 - International ToT (Livorno)	The 12 trainer participants (4/partner) select from this Framework the competencies best suited to arts-based non-formal development. Their selection drives the co-created content of the Handbook.
A4.1 - National ToTs	Provides a shared professional language for 72 adult educators trained across three countries, ensuring coherent quality standards despite national differences.
A4.2 - Adult learner activities	Learning objectives for all non-formal activities with 120 vulnerable adult participants are drawn directly from this Framework's Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes descriptors.
A4.3 - Final performances	The closing performance event reflects the competencies developed during the programme. Educator assessment uses this Framework to identify and document visible outcomes.
A5 - Dissemination	Published as an open-access standalone resource on the project website and EPALE for use by adult education practitioners beyond the direct project beneficiaries.

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