

TRANSVERSAL SKILLS FOR WORK AND LIFE

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What do we mean by transversal skills?

- In order to answer this question, we first need to understand **what skills are**.

Skills are the ability and capacity to carry out processes and be able to use one's knowledge in a responsible way to achieve a goal.

Skills are part of a holistic concept of **competency**, involving the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands.

[OECD \(2019\)](#)

What do we mean by transversal skills?

- [OECD \(2018\)](#) distinguishes between **3 types of skills**:

Cognitive
Meta-cognitive

Cognitive skills are a set of thinking strategies that enable the use of language, numbers, reasoning and acquired knowledge.

Metacognitive skills include learning-to-learn skills and the ability to recognise one's knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

E.g., critical thinking, creative thinking, learning-to-learn and self-regulation

Social
Emotional

Social and emotional skills are a set of individual capacities that can be manifested in consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that enable people to develop themselves, cultivate their relationships at home, school, work and in the community, and exercise their civic responsibilities.

E.g., empathy, self-efficacy, responsibility and collaboration

Practical
Physical

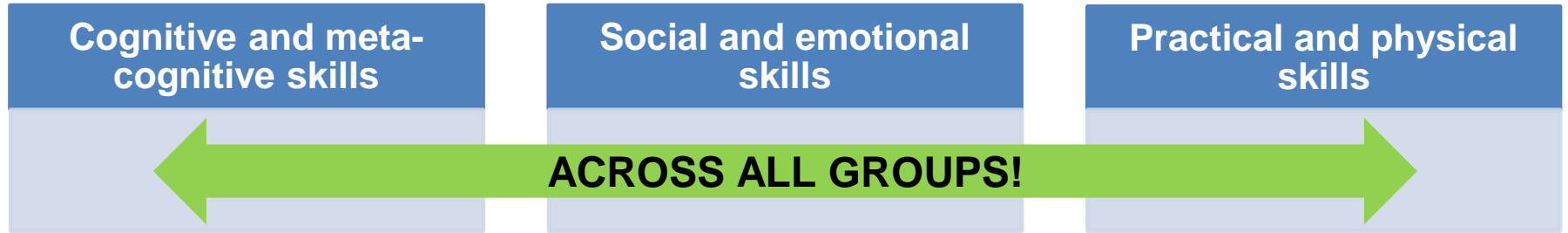
Practical skills are those required to use and manipulate materials, tools, equipment and artefacts to achieve particular outcomes.

Physical skills are a set of abilities to use physical tools, operations and functions.

E.g., manual skills, life skills, and the ability to mobilise one's capacities (e.g. strength)

What do we mean by transversal skills?

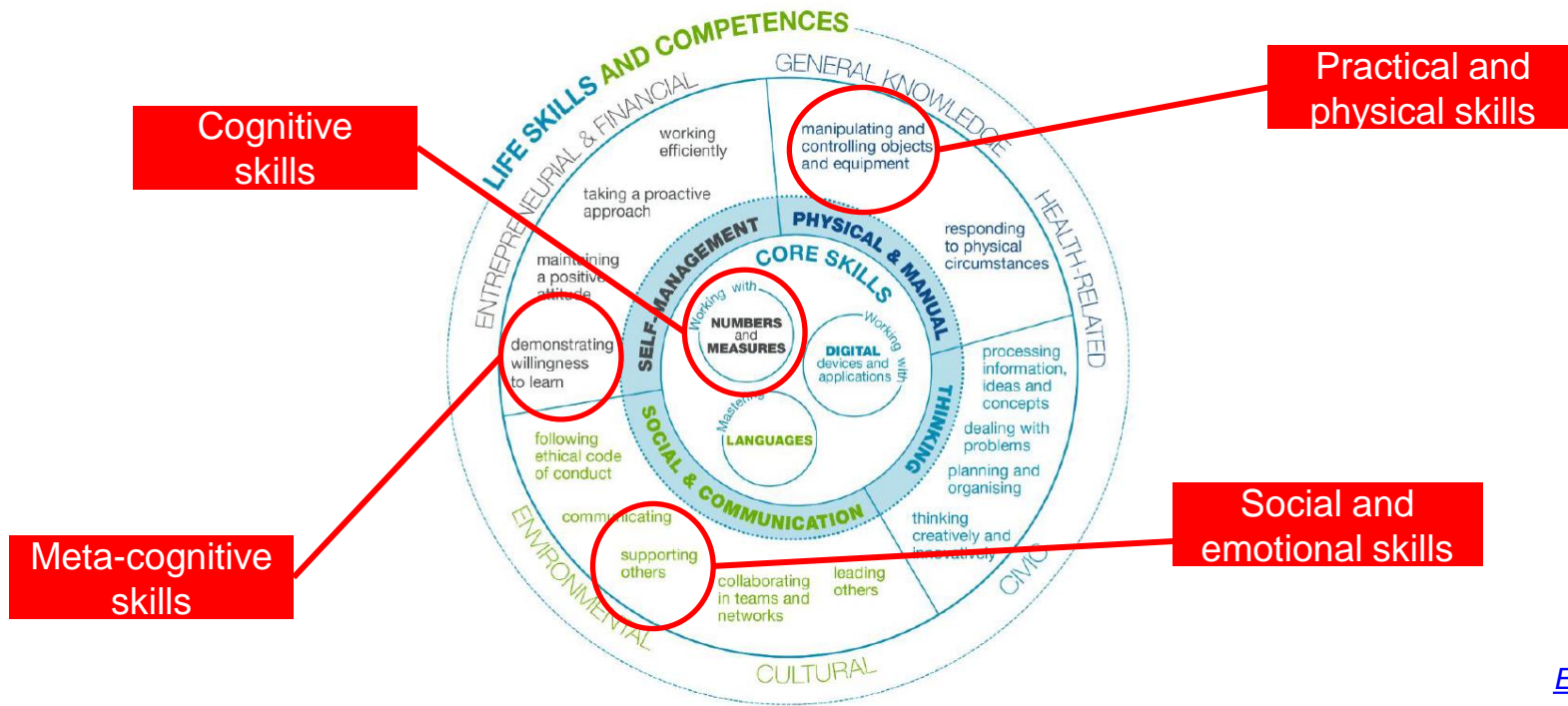
- So where are **transversal skills** in this taxonomy?



- In fact, transversal skills are defined as “*learned and proven abilities which are commonly seen as necessary or valuable for effective action in virtually any kind of work, learning or life activity. They are “transversal” because they are not exclusively related to any particular context (job, academic discipline, community engagement, etc.)*” ([ESCO, 2021](#))

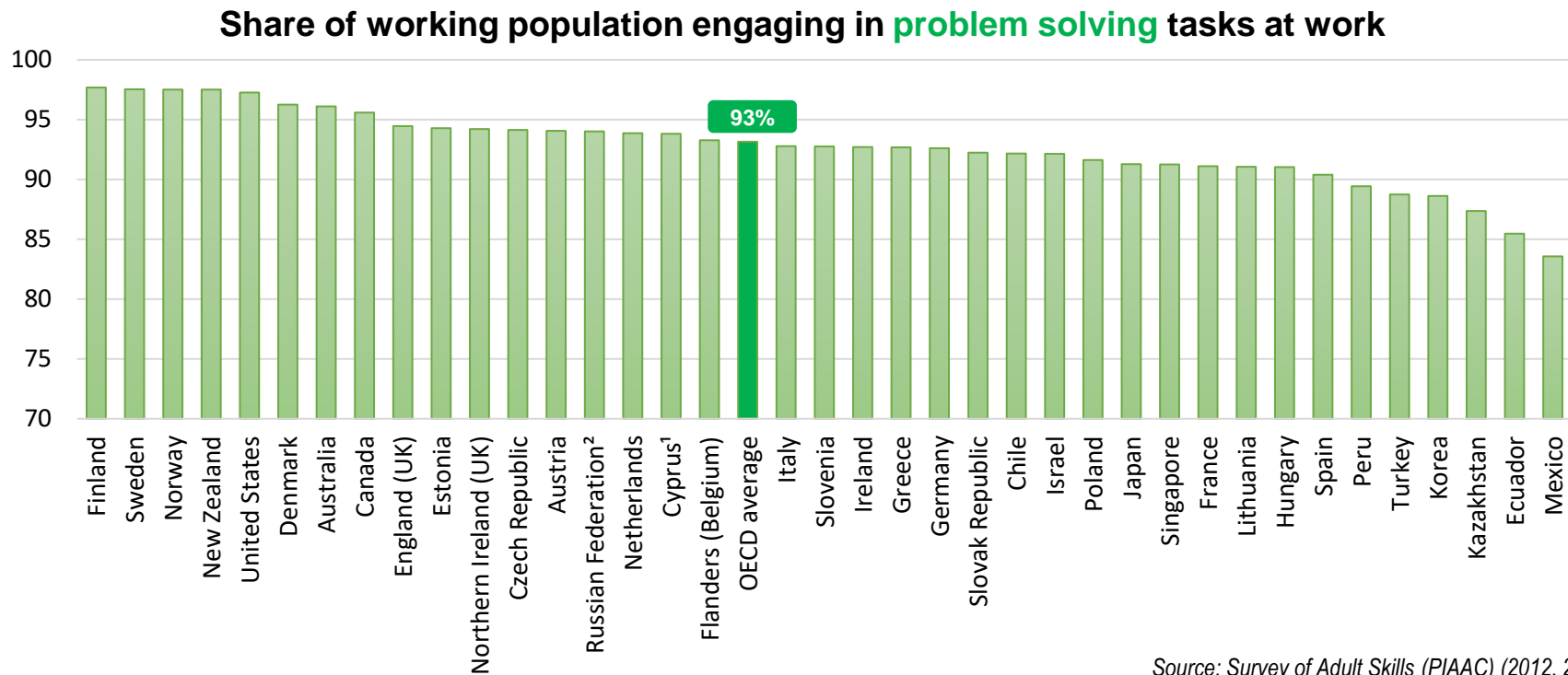
What do we mean by transversal skills?

TRANSVERSAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES



ESCO, 2021

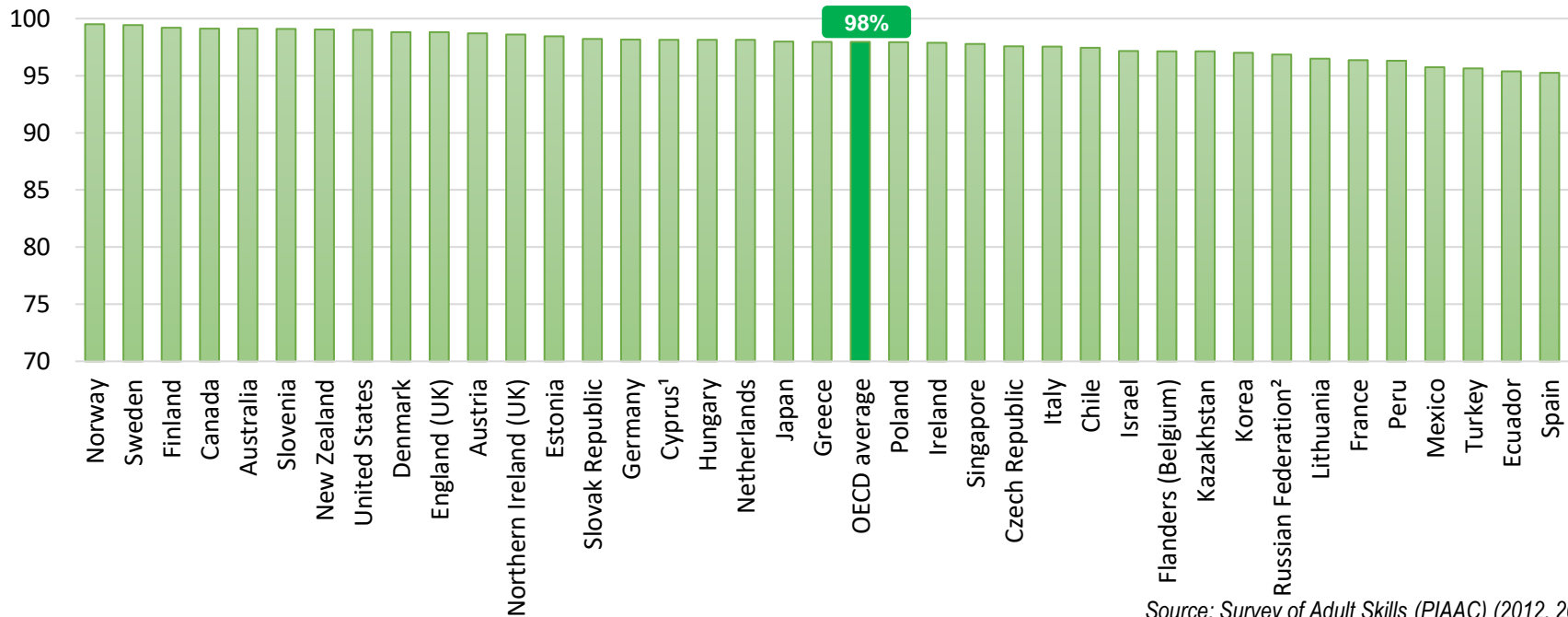
The importance of transversal skills



Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018)

The importance of transversal skills

Share of working population engaging in **social interaction** tasks at work



Source: Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) (2012, 2015, 2018)

The importance of transversal skills

Skills frequency in job postings in the United States in 2019

Skill category	Frequency
Customer and Personal Service	41%
Time Management	41%
Installation and Maintenance	38%
Office Tools and Collaboration Software	33%
Physical Abilities	31%
Writing	24%
Management of Personnel Resources	21%
Management of Financial Resources	20%
Reasoning and Problem-solving	18%
Self-management	16%
Speaking	15%
Coordination	14%
Management of Material Resources	13%
Quantitative Abilities	11%
Digital Data Processing	11%
Motivation/commitment	9%
Training and Education	7%
Quality Control Analysis	6%
Design	5%
Active Listening	4%
ICT Safety, Networks and Servers	3%
Originality	3%
Computer Programming	3%

Note: Only skill categories with a frequency greater than 3% are presented.

Source: Mullock et al. (2023)

Main challenges and way ahead

Yet, despite their clear importance in today's society, transversal skills remain often overlooked by policy makers

- 1** Focus on youth
- 2** Focus on technical skills
- 3** Focus on new training

Main challenges and way ahead

1 – Challenge

- Transversal skills should not solely permeate the training curriculum of initial education, nor should such training focus **solely on young people**. Yet this is often the case, especially for what concerns civic competences, learning to learn, cultural awareness, etc.
- **People of all ages** should continue to develop their transversal skills, since the world of work increasingly requires a range of them, and innovative learning approaches are spread throughout an individual's life course.



Main challenges and way ahead

1 – Good practice

- In Spain, Launching Pads (**Lanzaderas**) aim to bring jobseekers out of isolation through teamwork.
- Lanzaderas are a group of 20 adults coming together to help each other reactivate their lives, under the guidance of a coach, who guides them through a schedule of activities.
- This includes activities aiming at strengthening **professional competences**, such as simulating job interviews, reviewing, improving and updating CVs, etc, but also **transversal skills** such as emotional intelligence and communication skills.



lanzaderas
empleo y emprendimiento solidario

- ✓ Since the start of the programme in 2013, more than 730 Lanzaderas have been implemented in +300 cities across Spain, involving over 19,000 jobseekers.
- ✓ 60% of participants have improved their employment situation – they either found a job or entered formal education.

Main challenges and way ahead

2 – Challenge

- By definition, transversal skills are not tied to any particular field or occupation, and therefore approaches to developing transversal skills should **go beyond subject-oriented training**.
- However, **learning models today** remain largely focused on settings where learners tend to assume a receptive position, teachers are trained in narrow subjects, and learning schedules are organised around single subject lessons.
- This setting does not promote **cross-fertilisation** among different areas and subjects, possibly hindering the development of transversal skills at training provider.



Main challenges and way ahead

2 – Challenge

- Along with more traditional settings, countries should consider promoting **real-life learning environments** that are not classroom-based.
- Interactive methods are increasingly **technology-enhanced**, allowing the use of innovative tools such as virtual or augmented reality.
- Similarly, transversal skills can be developed in an **applied context**, through work-based learning, placements, and apprenticeships.



Main challenges and way ahead

2 – Good practice

- In Wallonia (Belgium), the **CISP** offer training to people disconnected from the labour market using a specific non-formal pedagogical approach that allows adults to obtain both general and technical skills, as well as psycho-social support.
- Recognising their prominence for labour market integration, the CISP have created a **common training standard** (*référentiel*) to include transversal skills in their courses for careers in personal services (e.g. caregiver, educator, ...)



Main challenges and way ahead

2 – Good practice

Social autonomy

Know yourself and take care of yourself

Communicate

Participate in a collective life

Integrate into the labor market

Professional autonomy

Work in a team

Communicate in a professional situation

Organise and plan your work

Adopt a professional behavior

Respect the environment

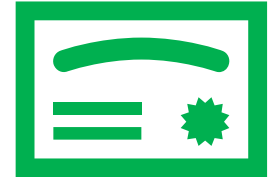
These transversal skills are integrated throughout the whole training course next to the technical skills

Source: <https://www.interfed.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Referentiels-de-competences-transversales-preparatoires-aux-metiers-de-service-aux-personnes1.pdf>

Main challenges and way ahead

3 – Challenge

- There is a growing attention to transversal skills in the adult learning's world. **New training programmes** are being developed and the role of transversal skills as foundation for work and life success is being acknowledged.
- Yet, many **adults have already acquired** a number of transversal skills during their lifetime. These should be recognised and valued by countries, so that individuals can use such validation titles to signal employers their actual skill profile.



Main challenges and way ahead

3 – Good practice



Thank you!

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