



HCEU for employers

General information

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HCEU for employers in the Healthcare sector

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1. Initiation

This explanation has been developed within the framework of the HCEU Erasmus+ project and centres the application of the project results in the form of employer instruments, which are particularly useful for the personnel management of health care facilities. For an in-depth analysis of the HealthCareEurope project, consultation of the website is recommended.



2. Personnel management in health care

Institutions that include nursing activities at least as part of their range of services have been desperately looking for personnel for some time. The debate about the shortage of skilled nursing personnel is highly present in many European countries. With the politically motivated change in health care systems, away from a social, health care system and towards a health care market, combined with increasing cost orientation and efficiency requirements, health care providers are being forced to develop and introduce effectiveness models. While in manufacturing companies the previous personnel management could establish itself already for a long time by structured personnel management with most diverse possibilities, far-reaching tasks and as for the management ever more important element, there is in the service sector and in particular in the social range still catching up potential; although health facilities recognize increasingly the necessity of good personnel management.

Nowadays, structured personnel management contributes significantly to the success of a company and requires close cooperation between different responsibilities. Along with the most important task of finding and retaining suitable employees for the right position in the company, the previously less important needs of these employees are increasingly being taken into account by personnel management. One of the main tasks of modern personnel management is to install suitable tools that meet the needs of the company with regard to achieving the company's goals as well as the changing requirements of employees. In addition to classical instruments such as job descriptions and payroll accounting, today in connection with personnel management you will find terms such as employer relationship management, talent management, organisational culture, work-life balance and human resource controlling - to name just a few. This shows how complex and extensive modern personnel management is and how important it is in companies today.

Personnel management in health care facilities, and thus in the HR intensive service sector, may face higher demands than in manufacturing sectors: Where staff are the highest cost factor, they have to perform incomparably higher services and prove that they are not only able to support the company's goals, but also to contribute significant results to the company's success. Health service providers differ considerably in the range of services they offer: hospitals and clinics address patients and try to meet the needs of the population with their services, whereas outpatient facilities offer their clients both nursing care and medical needs. Nursing facilities see their main task in the care and support of their residents and thus show the other focal points in their range of services. The target group of nursing staff places additional demands on personnel management, as these are employees who often show particular sensitivity with regard to interpersonal factors and relationships than may be the case with other employees. Often nursing professionals attach great importance to soft factors which are part of the requirement and competence profile in their activities, the care and provision of people with illnesses and of all ages.

But if one of the main tasks of personnel management in health care facilities is to be useful to the company, then what is useful for personnel management? The one and ideal tool cannot exist. Too complex are the organisational structures, the company objectives, the management guidelines and the situational requirements that personnel management in the various health facilities is confronted with. Nevertheless, it is possible to bundle a wide range of requirements in a single tool and open it up to a wide range of applications. Of course, such a tool is a very complex instrument that first needs to be developed. However, if it is used, it becomes clear that many individual components of personnel management in health care facilities with a focus on nursing staff are brought together and possible synergy effects in personnel management can be leveraged.

3. Qualifications and competences of professional caregiver

Good personnel management is defined by the terms qualification and competence, as it tries to center qualified employees who can competently perform their tasks in the company. One speaks of qualifications of a person, if this person fulfils demonstrably (e.g. in the form of certificates) the conditions, which are necessary for the assumption of certain vocational activities. A professional nurse's qualification thus proves that he or she is formally capable of providing nursing services. The employment of a nursing skilled worker without qualification is unthinkable, since its status as a skilled worker - its professionalism - is described by the qualification. The proven qualification was attained by a qualification measure (e.g. a study), which led to the acquisition and in the long run to the existence of authority.

While the qualification of an employee suffices thus formal requirements, the term of the authority management used within the personnel management shows that authority is substantially more specifically able to describe the actual behavior and characteristics of a person in vocational surrounding field, than this is possible by qualifications. The translation of the enterprise goals and the strategic requirements resulting from it to centre actually on the level of authority of the co-workers, represents the most important task of the personnel management in the authority management. The personnel management is supposed to actively control the competence level in the company. This is achieved by identifying competence gaps and making development measures available.

Competent employees show their strengths in a wide variety of professional contexts: availability of personal resources, mobilisation of knowledge, anticipation of events, self-organisation, ability to reflect and criticise, and social aspects - the list could be endless. All these competences and learning outcomes can be presented using descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with the terms competence, skills and knowledge. Competence development as an ongoing process can also be described. And exactly this was realised for professional care in the HCEU Erasmus+ project 'Professional Care': A competence matrix, based on the Vocational Qualification Transfer System (VQTS), shows levels of competence development in different professional contexts of professional care and is complemented by learning outcomes describing professional action in relation to specific professional tasks.

4. HCEU-Competence matrix 'Professional Care'

The HCEU Competence Matrix 'Professional Care' developed in the project forms the heart of the tools developed and offers the most comprehensive tool currently available for describing competencies in the field of professional care on the European market.

The competence matrix depicts the everyday work and working processes of skilled nursing staff and focuses on competences that are necessary in order to meet the professional requirements of these working processes. At the same time, it is closely interlinked with requirements that are anchored in the curricula for obtaining nursing qualifications in the partner countries.



This approach is made possible by using the VQTS, the Vocational Qualification Transfer System. This is a method that not only depicts required vocational competences, but also defines competence development steps and thus makes it possible to depict different qualification levels. In the HCEU project, the VQTS approach is supplemented by the operationalisation of competence development steps with the help of the descriptors of the EQF which have become widely used in European vocational education and training in the meantime.

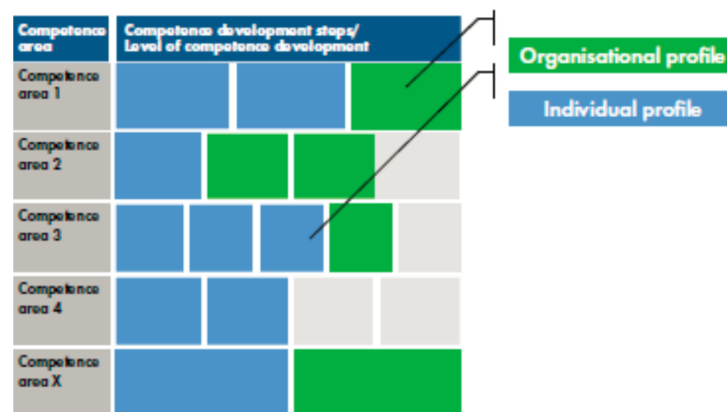
The competence matrix was developed within the framework of the transnational project with partners from Germany, Greece, Austria, Poland and Hungary. Methodologically, the most important curricula for the professional qualification of the most prominent nursing qualifications in the countries were reviewed and the requirements formulated there for professional nursing staff were included in the matrix, as were the experience and requirements of specialists from the field of vocational training, employer representatives, company managers and experienced nursing staff.

5. Competence profiles on the matrix

The HCEU Erasmus+ project aims to "promote transparency and recognition of prior knowledge in the context of the geographical mobility of health professionals". The concept of the "organisational profile" is a key instrument for achieving this goal. As a basic idea it is assumed that in different countries the work tasks of professional nursing staff differ, but if such work processes are taken over by nursing staff, they are carried out regularly using similar materials and similar work processes.

The organisational profile aims to be exactly this: a sum of knowledge, skills and competences associated with a particular qualification. This sum is regularly reported by the "standard" owner of the qualification underlying the organisational profile.

This organisational profile is projected onto the existing 'Professional Care' matrix and then presents itself as a specific section of the overall matrix.



In turn, the comparison of different organisational profiles means a comparison of the competences regularly acquired by holders of different qualifications. It is understandable that in such a comparison the competences of holders of a certain qualification can be related to each other much more precisely and reliably than is possible, for example, on the basis of curricular comparisons. Organisational profiles can therefore be useful tools, e.g. for recognition authorities, as they make various national qualifications available across national borders in the form of descriptions of competences. But also for employers - and especially those who employ skilled

workers with causal qualifications abroad - organisational profiles represent a comprehensive analysis of existing or missing competences of these workers.

The organisational profiles of the most prominent nursing qualifications in the partner countries and three third countries developed in the HCEU project can be directly integrated into the work of human resource management departments.

In addition to the organizational profiles, specific profiles for employees can also be developed. Deviating from the organisational profile, however, the individual specialist with his or her individual scope of competence is mapped on the matrix. As part of the HCEU project, guidelines were developed on how such individual profiles can be created. The development of further profiles is possible: Employers can define on the matrix which requirements they place on employees, e.g. for special positions within the institution. For example, a profile can be created for internal medicine departments in hospitals as well as one for specialists with competence in wound care for the elderly.

6. Sustainability depends on personnel

As already mentioned at the beginning, personnel costs, especially in the personnel-intensive healthcare sector, play a central role in determining the success and market penetration of healthcare providers. This makes it all the more important to implement processes in the company that conserve human resources.

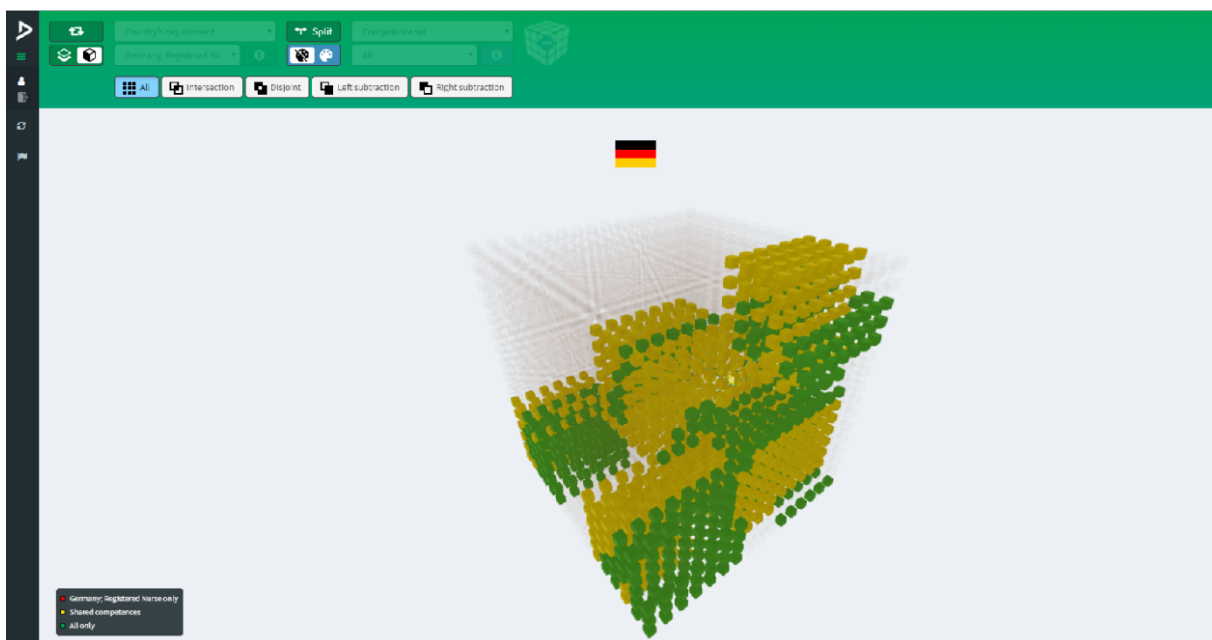


The demands that employees place on companies today have changed dramatically. The focus today is increasingly on a balanced relationship between working time and individual leisure experience. On the other hand, monetary aspects of employees' work are no longer so highly valued. But also the job satisfaction plays an ever greater role for employees and the responsibility for it is seen more and more with employers. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, occurs when employees feel both challenged and valued. Qualified personnel who are able to use competences to the fullest extent possible where these competences are needed is indispensable. The market shows that skilled workers who can make use of their resources are more satisfied than others. Satisfied employees, on the other hand, remain in the company longer and reduce recruitment costs and the effort that results from induction training.

Companies, and above all human resource departments, centre their employees. The planning and control of personnel requirements takes place together with the management. HRM departments should decide which employees are to be deployed in certain positions on the basis of which competencies and which measures are to be taken to recruit or qualify these employees. By using the HCEU matrix, which is of course tailored to the respective company, institutions can select, develop and deploy employees in a targeted manner and thus create job satisfaction and bind these employees to the company.

In the following, various possibilities for using the HCEU matrix 'Professional Care' are opened up. These partly require development effort, which must be carried out by the HRD department. Such developments must be understood as strategic, as they initially cause expenditure. At the same time, they open up the possibility of using the matrix to turn personnel development and control into a long-term personnel management tool that includes the following areas, among others:

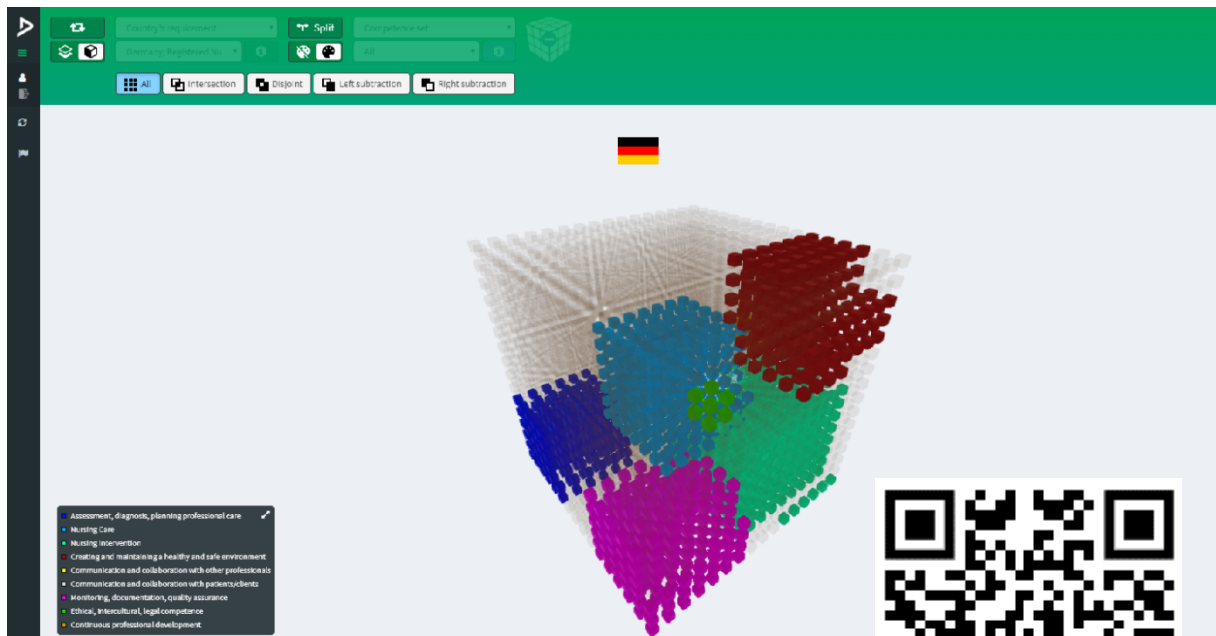
- Development of special organisational profiles for existing qualifications in the company. (e.g. nursing assistants, specialised nursing staff).
- Job descriptions and personnel requirement planning in the form of competence requirement profiles. (e.g. nursing specialist for oncology).
- Individual employee profiles (e.g. through in-service or in-service assessment of individual competence).
- Orientation and offer of targeted training, advanced training and further education for the development of internal employees.
- Increasing employee satisfaction through better management of competence requirements for positions and their coverage by suitable personnel.
- Enabling self-evaluations of employees.
- Integration of employees into the personnel development process through target-performance definitions of competence ranges.
- Various comparison possibilities of different profiles.



7. Additional information and the technical side

The complete VQTS Competence Matrix including all learning outcomes is available for download on the HCEU project website. In tabular form, a comprehensive document can be made available which depicts competence descriptions both within the framework of competence development (VQTS) and also contains learning outcomes using descriptors of the EQF. It is possible to deduce from this document how comprehensive nursing work content and the corresponding competence requirements are for skilled workers. Within the framework of the transnational project, the existing matrix comprises all learning outcomes that are necessary for professional practice in the partner countries.

In addition, there is a 'Virtual Matrix', a new tool that is a cube that can be rotated and swivelled in different directions and on which the HCEU Competence Matrix "Professional Care" is displayed. All competence areas and the associated learning outcomes are displayed on the cube. The entire matrix or even individual competence areas can be displayed and compared with existing profiles. In this way it is possible to quickly identify which competences belong to a certain qualification level. But it is also possible - and this is where the "virtual matrix" comes into play - to compare the various organisational profiles.



At present, the international comparison of vocational qualifications in the field of professional care and the respective skills behind the qualification in particular quickly reveals gaps and competence overhangs. This in turn already provides information about possible training needs of internationally migrated nursing staff in the target country. Thus it can be determined within a very short time where employers should send foreign skilled workers to post-secondary schools, but also which additional competences such skilled workers bring with them that could be made use of in their own company.

8. Last but not least

The consideration of competences in addition to pure qualifications is initially an additional expense. This additional effort is worth it: In the future, your institution will have employees who not only have qualifications, but also the necessary skills to fulfil their professional tasks. This improves the quality of facilities and their services!

Information on the application of the HCEU results as an employer or HRD department of employers can be found on the homepage www.project-hceu.eu