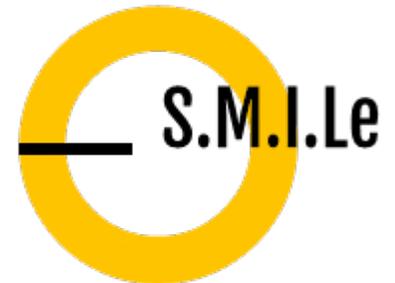




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Sale Management,
Inter-culture, Learning

IO1 - task 1.1
Desk research report

GENERAL REPORT AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Introduction

The **desk research** undergone by S.M.I.Le. project partners in their reference contexts is aimed to **analyse and evaluate from a qualitative and quantitative point of view the professional profiles related to the Cross Cultural Sales Agent.**

The present document represents the sum and the elaboration of all partners work and effort on their desk research, and constitutes the **Comparative Analysis and Dictionary Draft** that will lead to the Focus Group conduction, to furtherly complete the IO1 objective of constituting the **Cross Cultural Sales Agent Competence Dictionary.**

The following document comprehends the desk research objective, guideline, methodology, results and discussion, with additional reference to the EU context framework.

Methodology

To develop this research phase, partners were asked to select the **professional profiles** that are similar/related to the **CROSS CULTURAL SALES AGENT** (es: import-export manager, sales agent, international salesman ecc) defined by subjects/institutions -within the EU framework - from the **national/regional databases.**

The profile iterative design process had to be designed in terms of **competencies** (divided in **abilities** and **knowledge**).

Partners were asked to:

1. **Find national/regional database**
2. **Look for the Profile starting from the target one: Cross cultural sales agent**
3. **Extract 3 or 4 profiles**
4. **List of competence for each profile split: Ability / Knowledge** (see slides)
5. **Complete the Short report**

Then, results were collected, elaborated and commented focusing on the set of competencies to be verified and validated in the focus group and later included in the competencies draft.

The final list of profiles and competencies was produced by researching the following **keywords:**



Results

Professional profiles described in national and regional databases reflect duties related to sales activities at **different level of a company**, starting from the manager of sales department and then with salesmen. Both **internal and external sales roles** were found.

The job profiles were drawn up and certified at **regional and national level**.

Job profiles were intended, among other things, to be used for the development of VET programs and standards for the recognition and certification of qualifications. This is why for higher educational profiles the Greek part of research lacks results in these types of databases.

Some job profiles lists (Italy and Greece) are incomplete (including only professions intended to be the output of vocational education and training; territorial fragmentation; peculiar profile specification) or not updated.

However, many databases and relative profiles are defined with reference to the **ISCO framework**, and many of them are defined in terms of **EQF level, knowledge, skills and competence**.

In particular, most of the job profiles are complete descriptions of each occupation, those include: the title/definition of the job and/or specialty, the current legislative framework, breakdown of the job and/or specialty into specifications, knowledge, skills and competencies required to practice it, proposed pathways for acquiring the necessary qualifications, indicative ways of assessing the knowledge, skills and competencies associated with the job.

In all of the database searched, there are **no professions dedicated to intercultural jobs in sales nor to Cross Cultural Sales Agent in particular**.

Specific notes on methodology and sources can be found in the national reports.

With respect to the ESCO framework, the existing EU classification can be used as an additional benchmark. This database represents a major source of uniform information and comparison, even if its classification is in main (and optional) skills and knowledge, not is competencies, therefore it is not directly applicable to the partners' results.

The following table reports briefly profiles and related competencies.

Table 1. Summary of results: BULGARIA

COUNTRY	PROFILE AND DESCRIPTION	COMPETENCIES
BG	<p>Marketing assistant 342020 EQF level 2 Marketing assistants are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compiling and distributing financial and statistical information such as budget spreadsheets • analysing questionnaires • writing reports, company brochures and similar documents • organising and hosting presentations and customer visits • assisting with promotional activities • visiting customers/external agencies • helping to organise market research. <p>They work closely with employees in other functions, such as advertising, market research, production, sales and distribution.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Participation in the activity of the enterprise in compliance with the rules on safe working conditions and labor standards (general for the profession "marketing assistant") 2) Use of information and communication technologies in labor activity 3) Customer service
	<p>Business management and entrepreneurial education-qualification EQF LEVEL 7 Specialists with knowledge and competence for professional appearance as managers, experts, consultants in the field of international business. Graduates of this master's program can work as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heads of all levels of government; marketers; specialists in international departments of enterprises, branch and other organizations; management and management experts in international business; experts and marketers for marketing research, market assessment and marketing strategies; advisers to managers in international business; consultants in management and marketing of international business; in institutions and bodies of state and municipal government related to industry and production; banks, investment companies, consulting firms; experts in EU structures and bodies and other international institutions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) General economics and related legislation aspects and financial management learning and competence upgrade 2) International economics and management - Basic and specific aspects 3) International marketing - Basic and specific aspects 4) Intercultural competence - social aspects and communication

	<p>Sales representative 341040 / EQF 2</p> <p>The Sales Representative intermediates the sales of goods and services between the company in which he/she is employed and other commercial locations, companies and individuals. He/she informs, consults and demonstrates the clients the qualities of the offered products, as well as the terms and conditions for their delivery, using advertising materials such as catalogues, brochures and etc. He/she is in a constant contact with the clients: accepts client's orders by phone, fax or e-mail; processes the orders; prepares an optimal time and geographical schedule for delivery and organise the actual delivery of the goods/services.</p> <p>The Sales Representative researches the supply and demand for different products and services, including the competitors' activities and prepares analyses for the direct manager.</p> <p>He/she prepares all the documents (offers, contracts and etc.) related to the sale of the products, accepts claims from clients and responds as per the affirmed manner.</p> <p>He/she should know in details the properties of the products he/she sells, their technical characteristics, as well as the requirements for storage and transportation.</p> <p>He/she accepts payments in cash and via bank account and issues invoices for each transaction. He keeps record in his books for each transaction and payment.</p> <p>He/she is directly subordinate to the Sales Manager and in his/her work communicates with accountants, warehouse managers, suppliers, transportation workers, clients and controlling bodies. He/she bears material and financial responsibility for the assets entrusted to him/her.</p> <p>He/she is responsible to deliver the goods in quantity, type and price exactly as per the documents and is expected to be loyal to the employer and do not share information that may constitute trade secret.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Systematize the information about the products/services characteristics 2) Market analysis and planning 3) Advising the clients and taking role in the process of concluding sales contracts 4) Actual delivery of the goods/services and follow up actions and control
	<p>Vendor-consultant 5223 / EQF 2</p> <p>Vendor-consultant meets customers and provides service to them in a timely and polite manner at various types of commercial premises. They consult customers about the value of the products offered. They demonstrate the way of operation of the products upon demand on behalf of customers, and when applicable in view of the nature of the products.</p> <p>Vendor-consultants oversee the commercial appearance, expiry date, appealing product presentation, labeling, and provision of price tags of the products offered. They are responsible for</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Technical competence 2) Behavioral competence 3) Intercultural competence 4) Contextual competence

	<p>arranging the merchandise in an appropriate manner, maintaining adequate commercial appeal and hygiene at the premises. They are in charge of maintaining the required inventory level, respectively undertake the necessary measures upon inventory depletion, as well as upon the ending of product expiry dates.</p> <p>In view of product procurement activities, shop assistants communicate with suppliers, warehouse staff, shipping staff; while in view of commercial activities, they communicate with clients by demonstrating well developed communication and teamwork skills. As regards servicing foreign customers – at the commercial premises or at a distance (by phone, online, etc.) - vendor-consultants have intercultural communication skills, including foreign language skills.</p> <p>Vendor-consultants process complaints for defective products and make decisions regarding subsequent actions in view of the warranty provisions.</p> <p>Vendor-consultants may work single-handedly at the commercial premises, or be in charge for a specified area in a larger outlet, or be responsible for various activities, taking place in warehouse or office premises.</p> <p>Vendor-consultants should be reasonably observant, prompt, polite, able to concentrate their attention, and to have a commercial flair. They should be able to work in a team, to avoid escalation of conflict situations with colleagues and customers, to be honest, responsible and reliable.</p>	
	<p>Business services associate 345040 / EQF 2</p> <p>Business services associates are specialists with knowledge and experience that enables them to quickly adapt to the outside environment and to easily communicate with the business. They can be useful in activities such as making company decisions, collecting and processing information (including information for international activities and markets), presenting the companies' business. They are able to learn new technologies, to work with legal documents. They have knowledge on the methodologies in different business areas and perform services related to finance, trade and administration.</p> <p>Such specialists are very useful for the SMEs in particular as they possess knowledge and skills that the Bulgarian SMEs lack especially in the international business relations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Establish contacts with potential national and foreign clients 2) Coordinate the information flow and prepare the necessary reports 3) Business communication 4) Financial management

Source: own elaborations

Table 2. Summary of results: GREECE

COUNTRY	PROFILE AND DESCRIPTION	COMPETENCIES
EL	<p>External salesperson EQF 4 The promotion of a product or service, as a result of the productive or commercial process of an enterprise, is directly related with the operation of sales that is worthily represented by the External Salesperson. The external salesperson undertakes the role of promoting and presenting arguments in regard to the characteristics and advantages-benefits of the product with sale being the ultimate objective. He/she is the important link between the enterprise he/she represents and the customer, and he/she "exhausts" the strategy of maintenance, development and maximization of the sales' results.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Exploration of the company's client base and sales planning 2) Implementation of the sales process 3) Customers' transactions and account statements' control and feedback to the company
	<p>Commercial representative EQF 3 A Commercial Representative by definition is the one to who is assigned to negotiate on behalf of another person represented, to sale or purchase merchandises or to negotiate and contract these transactions in the name and on behalf of the represented. The need for commercial transactions – on a national and international level – resulted to the development of the profession of the Commercial Representative as mediator for companies' commercial activities within a specific geographic frame. Through their collaboration with a Commercial Representative, the companies could extend considerably their range of activity in various and different geographic regions. In Greece, the profession of a commercial representative is practiced primarily in wholesale trade and secondarily in retail trade.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Research on goods and representation agencies 2) Buyers' search for the sale of the represented products 3) Coordination of timely and accurate delivery of products to buyers
	<p>Executive of Wholesale Trade EQF 3 General profile description The Executive of Wholesale Trade deals with wholesale sales and operates in the sub-sector of wholesale trade, which constitutes an important part of economic activity. It is calculated that B2B sales outnumber retail sales. The executive in wholesale trade plans, organizes, controls and evaluates the operations of establishments that sell merchandise or services on a wholesale basis.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Coordination of purchases and supplies of merchandizes 2) Warehousing and inventory management 3) Distribution of goods

Source: own elaborations

Table 3. Summary of results: ITALY

COUNTRY	PROFILE AND DESCRIPTION	COMPETENCIES
IT	<p>Salesman 33420 EQF 3 The salesman achieves the sales objectives in implementation of the business strategy of the company or of the client, concluding commercial negotiations respecting the quantitative, qualitative and price constraints of the product / service, compliant with the norms of commercial law and oriented towards maximum satisfaction and consequent customer loyalty. There are numerous profiles that can be traced back to this figure: seller, technician commercial, representative, agent, promoter, business agent, salesman. The figure of the sales engineer differs from the generic business salesman due to the fact that it possesses a specific technological and merchandise knowledge of particularly complex and expensive products.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Being able to intercept potential customers 2) Be able to draw up a sales plan 3) Being able to handle sales negotiations
	<p>Sales representative 33460 / 33420 EQF 5 The Sales Representative is able to carry out action / sales plans geared towards performance targets and performance standards, as well as managing and concluding commercial negotiations that comply with both the strategic conditions and the maximum satisfaction and consequent customer loyalty.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Potential area representation 2) Planning sales actions 3) Business negotiation management 4) Data processing and sales projections
	<p>Cultural mediator 55340 EQF 6 The inter-cultural mediator is able to identify and convey the needs of the foreign user, assist and facilitate it to enter the host country, perform activities of connection between the user and the network of services in the area, promote measures aimed at disseminating of inter-culturality.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cultural mediation
	<p>Import-export specialist 43110 / 43130 EQF 4 The specialized operator import-export is able to perform, with executive role, tasks related to the main procedures of international trade by preparing the necessary documentation also with the support of IT tools. This professional figure can fit into companies operating in the field of import-export, of any size / sector, in the purchasing / sales functions with executive tasks and in support of more experienced personnel.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Contribute to the detection of management facts 2) Support the business system aimed at international trade

Source: own elaborations

Table 4. Summary of results: POLAND

COUNTRY	PROFILE AND DESCRIPTION	COMPETENCIES
PL	<p>Sales specialist 243305 The sales specialist carries out sales plans of the business entity by maintaining contacts with regular trading partners and acquiring new clients. The sales specialist focuses in his work on selling products and services included in the offer of the company he/she represents. A person employed in this profession acquires a thorough knowledge of the market on which the company operates and the competition. One of the key tasks of the employee is building a customer base and implementing sales plans. The sales specialist is responsible for servicing business partners and acquiring new customers. [...]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Selling industry products 2) Preparation of reports, analyzes and forecasts regarding sales
	<p>Account manager 243302 Account manager is responsible for post-selling attendance for customers and for creating and maintaining good relationships with customers. Account manager represents the company in direct relationships with customers, creates and maintains long-term relationships with them, helps in solving problems and hear their complains. [...]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Post-selling attendance for customers 2) Preparation of reports and analyses of customer service
	<p>Customer advisor 524902 Customer advisor recommends the optimal solutions to the customers according to the analyses of their needs. Customer advisor is a professional of service nature, which aim is to support the customer in choosing the best solution for him. Customer advisor determines and analyses the needs and expectations of customer and then, based on the analysis of existing possibilities and solutions, he/ she presents the chosen products, services or technologies to the customer and advises him which option to choose. [...]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Offers' recommendation and presentation to customers 2) Analysis of the market of products or services to prepare the offer for customer
	<p>Manager of sales department 122102 Manager of sales department manages the sales team and is responsible for the realisation of sales plan. He/ she manages the team of sales department's staff in order to achieve assumed sales results, he/ she assesses the employees and motivates them to work. [...]</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Management of sales department 2) Sales process realization in collaboration with internal and external environment of the company 3) Preparing analyses and forecasts and making decisions

Source: own elaborations

Results are heterogeneous as the commercial roles are. In the list we find a series of codes that can be reconducted to managerial (1), intellectual (2), technical (3) and commercial (5) roles, those will help us collecting competencies, skills and knowledge, to design the Cross Cultural Sales Agent Profile.

Discussion

All of the 16 profiles retrieved from the national databases contribute, to some extent, to circumscribe and start defining the target profile.

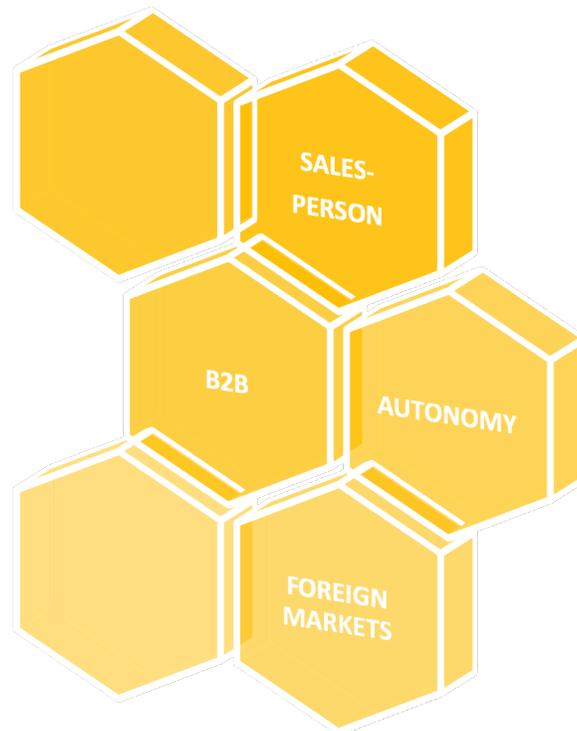
It is evident that not all of the results match perfectly the aimed qualification level (EQF 4-5) or the specific role (import-export manager/specialist; wholesale trade; marketing assistant ecc.) or hierarchy (manager; specialist; representative).

However all of the profiles contributed significantly with specific features and specification in defining, through a benchmarking iterative process, the important competencies that will define the Cross Cultural Sales Agent.

For instance, he/she

- Collaborates with marketing (especially internationally) but is a **salesperson**.
- Works in a **b2b** market.
- In order to be independent and proactive on foreign markets, does some planification and resource allocations in **autonomy**.
- Is **independent** in mastering **communication and negotiation** with foreign counterparts from the linguistic, cultural, contextual and legal point of view (no translators, context knowledge, basics of legislation and taxations).

Figure 1. Cross Cultural Sales Agent features



Source: own elaborations

This stated, the **comparative analysis**, thanks to **all the project contexts results** in terms of competencies of the related profiles and coherence with the aim of the project, leads to take into consideration the following **competencies** (duplicates free):

General competencies

- **Being able to intercept potential customers**
- **Implementation of sales process**
- **Selling industry products**
- **Preparation of reports, analyzes and forecasts regarding sales**

Specific competencies

- **Planning sales actions**
- **Business negotiation management**
- **Data processing and sales projections**
- **International marketing - Basic and specific aspects**
- **Intercultural competence**

In particular, the target profile draft could be as reported in table 2.

Table 5. professional profile draft/proposal

Professional Profile
Cross Cultural Sales Agent
Number of reference (24XXX)
EQF LEVEL 6-7
General profile description
<p>The Cross Cultural Sales Agent carries out sales plans of the business entity by maintaining contacts with regular trading partners and acquiring new clients.</p> <p>The sales specialist focuses in his work on selling products and services included in the offer of the company he/she represents. A person employed in this profession acquires a thorough knowledge of the market on which the company operates and the competition.</p> <p>One of the key tasks of the employee is building a customer base and implementing sales plans. The sales specialist is responsible for servicing business partners and acquiring new customers.</p>

The person performing this profession has a broad knowledge of the company's products. In addition to active sales, he/she also deals with complaints and supports clients in problem situations. Undertakes sales support activities, such as promotions for customers or consumers, analyzes and prepares an optimal commercial offer. He/she takes part in industry events, where he often represents the company. He/she regularly reports sales results to his superiors.

The sales specialist should be a creative and open person, able to make the right decisions that will meet the expectations of business partners. However, the basic characteristics of a sales specialist should be the developed interpersonal and analytical skills.

He/she can communicate with clients by demonstrating well developed communication and teamwork skills. As regards servicing foreign customers – at the commercial premises or at a distance (by phone, online, etc.) – the cross-cultural sales agents has intercultural communication skills, including foreign language skills.

He/she advises to managers in international business and consults in management and marketing of international business.

Negotiation skills and rapid decision-making are also required. It is important to easily make and maintain contacts with people. The specificity of the profession requires resilience to stress, ability to cope with time pressure and control in difficult, conflict situations. The sales specialist should have the ability to concentrate and divide attention, speak accurately and logically. Working with a large group of people, often in changing conditions, requires patience and the ability to quickly adapt to the new situation. The opposition to the profession is speech defects.

COMPETENCE A

Planning sales actions

COMPETENCE B

Business negotiation management

COMPETENCE C

Data processing and sales projections

COMPETENCE D

International marketing - Basic and specific aspects

COMPETENCE E

Intercultural competence – social aspects and communication

This step is fundamental for building the project Focus Group Guide and to continue with the research, aimed at validating the competencies set found in the first research task.

Please note that the profile description and the series of competencies included should be validated and ranked in the Focus Group task.

Conclusions

The present research was intended to investigate their reference context databases to find and select professional profiles and competencies to define the features and characteristics of the **Cross Cultural Sales Agent**.

The present document represents the sum and the elaboration of all partners work and effort on their desk research. Following data collection, this profiles' **Comparative Analysis** will help in defining the **Dictionary Draft** and leading the **Focus Group**, the aim if which is involving experts and professionals in validating the research findings. These research steps all refer to IO1 objective of constituting the **Cross Cultural Sales Agent Competence Dictionary**.

Researchers want to stress that data collection and analysis conformed that despite the rich and varied set of results and sources, this type of profile lacks in all partners' contexts. The absence of such a profile, while professionals, businesses and international studies call for new professionals with this specific skillset, proves the necessity and the opportunity to introduce it into the European professional profile scenario, to close the gap between job offer and demand, create employment, provide young graduates with career opportunity, and boost firms' performance with skilled and smart young professionals.