



# ENTEEF

Fostering Entrepreneurship through Freelancing

## Freelancer Competences

Understanding the competencies required for successful freelancing has become essential for policymakers, educators, and labour market stakeholders. The report addresses this need by examining freelancer competences across six diverse national contexts: Indonesia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and Ukraine. It is based on qualitative and quantitative research conducted in these six countries. The main purpose of the research was to identify the most needed competences for freelancers. By adopting a comparative perspective, the project aims to identify both shared patterns and country-specific differences in freelancer profiles, skill development pathways, and labour market engagement.

The results of the research comprise the basis for development of Competence Assessment Tool (CAT) and set of MOOCs directed to people who would like to enter freelancer market or already function on this market but see the need for enhancement of their competences (Work Package 4 in ENTEEF project).

© 2024. This work is openly licensed via CC BY 4.0



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# Methodology

## Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method approach combining qualitative interviews with quantitative survey analysis. This design allowed researchers to capture the experiences and perceptions of participants as well as measurable patterns in freelancer competencies.

## Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with two stakeholder groups:

- 18 freelancers from six participating countries (Indonesia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine)
- 6 representatives from companies that hire freelancers

Freelancers were selected from three main professional areas: IT and technical services, creative work and content production, and business or marketing consultancy. Company participants held decision-making positions such as HR managers, team leaders, or executives responsible for freelancer recruitment.

Interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and were conducted online using a semi-structured guide that explored topics such as skill requirements, freelancer-company collaboration, labour market trends, and perceived challenges in freelance work. Responses were analysed using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo), allowing patterns and themes to be identified and compared across countries, experience levels, and professional sectors.

## Quantitative and Comparative Analysis

The second phase involved a survey distributed to freelancers and companies, which enabled cross-country comparison of competencies and labour market dynamics. Statistical analysis was used to evaluate:

- respondent profiles and freelancer activity patterns
- skill importance and proficiency levels
- competency gaps between freelancer self-assessment and employer expectations

This comparative framework made it possible to identify common trends and differences in competency requirements across countries and organizational contexts.

# Comparative Data Analysis and Results

## Demand for Freelance Work

The findings indicate that freelance work plays an increasingly important role in organizational structures, although the extent of its use varies. Companies typically hire freelancers to address temporary skill shortages, specialized tasks, or fluctuating workloads, particularly in fields such as programming, digital marketing, design, and multimedia production.

Many organizations value freelancers because they provide flexibility and access to specialized expertise without the long-term commitments associated with permanent employment. Freelancers allow companies to scale teams according to project needs and respond quickly to changes in workload.

However, companies also report certain challenges when working with freelancers. These include communication difficulties, integration with internal teams, and concerns regarding reliability or project continuity. As a result, while freelancers are recognized as a valuable strategic resource, companies often approach freelance hiring cautiously.

## Competency Analysis

The comparative analysis reveals several competency categories that are consistently emphasized by both freelancers and companies.

### Technical Skills

Technical expertise represents the most frequently mentioned and most important competence. Employers prioritize freelancers who possess strong domain-specific skills, such as programming, software development, digital marketing tools, design software, or data analysis capabilities.

Freelancers themselves also emphasize technical competencies as central to their professional identity. Despite this alignment, companies occasionally report discrepancies between expected and actual levels of technical expertise, suggesting that practical application and depth of knowledge remain critical factors.

## **Communication Skills**

Communication is identified as a key transversal competence. Companies expect freelancers to communicate clearly with clients and team members, explain complex ideas effectively, and maintain transparent interaction throughout project development.

Although freelancers frequently consider communication one of their strengths, employers sometimes report difficulties related to unclear interactions, the need for repeated clarification, or inefficient client communication.

## **Personal Attributes**

Personal characteristics such as autonomy, self-discipline, and motivation are highly valued. Freelancers are expected to manage their work independently, organize tasks effectively, and demonstrate reliability in meeting project commitments.

Employers also emphasize initiative and adaptability, particularly when freelancers are required to integrate quickly into new projects or unfamiliar work environments.

## **Project Management Skills**

Project management competences, particularly time management and deadline adherence, are consistently highlighted. Companies often report challenges when freelancers take on multiple projects simultaneously or struggle to prioritize tasks effectively.

## **Collaboration and Teamwork**

Although freelancing is typically associated with independent work, collaboration remains essential. Employers expect freelancers to cooperate with internal teams, respond constructively to feedback, and maintain professional working relationships.

## What Is Most Important for Freelancers

The research identifies several factors that significantly influence freelancers' success in the contemporary labour market.

**Continuous learning and skill development** are essential, particularly as digital technologies and artificial intelligence reshape professional practices. Freelancers must update their competencies regularly to remain competitive.

**Reputation and trust** also play a crucial role. Client acquisition frequently relies on personal networks, referrals, and online reputation systems, making reliability and professional credibility key determinants of long-term success.

Finally, freelancers must maintain **a balance between technical and soft skills**. While technical expertise remains fundamental, the ability to communicate effectively, manage projects, and build professional relationships often determines the quality and sustainability of freelance collaborations.

## Conclusions

Across all countries included in the study, freelancers demonstrate high levels of education and strong engagement in knowledge-intensive and digitally oriented occupations, particularly in information technology and creative industries. At the same time, the analysis reveals substantial heterogeneity in demographic composition, professional experience, and market participation patterns. Distinct national ecosystems emerge, ranging from highly specialized digital markets to more diversified, service-oriented structures, highlighting the importance of contextualizing freelance work within specific economic and institutional environments.

## Disclaimer

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author or authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Foundation for the Development of the Education System. Neither the European Union nor the entity providing the grant can be held responsible for them.

Link to full document:

<https://enteef.uek.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/ENTEEF-WP3-A2-A9-Freelancer-Competences.pdf>