

Enhancing Remote Work Competencies in Croatia: Findings from VirtualEdu Project

The Erasmus+ project “VirtualEdu - Upskilling and certification scheme for virtual educators, managers, workers” aims to create a certification scheme that improves the skills of remote workers and certifies them. In addition, the main objectives of the project are the development of innovative training methods and materials, the establishment of a digital library of training materials and the organization of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to develop the skills of remote workers. This paper presents the results of a study aimed to identify a skills gap among remote workers in Croatia to support the design of the training curriculum for the VirtualEdu MOOC. In a developed questionnaire, respondents assessed the relevance of a set of competences and skills for remote work and for trainings aimed at developing these competences and skills. The questionnaire also aimed to determine perceptions of the usefulness of training to develop these competencies. The results showed that respondents (N=86) perceived the greatest need for the development of digital skills, self-management and organizational skills, specific skills for educators and collaboration skills. The interest of Croatian remote workers in developing remote work skills indicates the need for the development of lifelong learning opportunities such as VirtualEdu training.

Keywords: Remote work, remote education, Massive Open Online Course, lifelong learning, skills gap analysis.

Introduction

Academic research highlights the need to train educators, managers and other employees to work effectively remotely in order to prevent future crises. For a successful remote education, management and work, employees need many skills to properly apply remote working practices and information-communication technology (Emperatriz & Yudet, 2022), (Hoic-Bozic & Holenko Dlab, 2021), (Kiliç, 2022), (van Laar, van Deursen, van Dijk, & de Haan, 2019). The recent SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has forced educational institutions and companies to move their activities into the virtual space, leading to ad-hoc distance education and remote work initiatives (Meisner & McKenzie, 2023). However, the lack of established protocols has had a negative impact on student learning and teacher satisfaction, so improvements are needed (Donath et al., 2024). Companies have also switched to remote management and work, but success rates vary. Challenges include insufficient replication of physical interactions in virtual environments and a lack of digital skills among employees (Saniuk et al., 2022), (Tursunbayeva, Di Lauro, & Antonelli, 2021). As the DESI index shows (“Digital Decade DESI visualisation tool,” 2024), there are inequalities in the adoption of remote working practices and tools between countries in Western, Central and South Eastern Europe.

The Erasmus+ project Upskilling and certification scheme for virtual

1 educators – VirtualEdu, co-funded under Key Activities 2, Strategic Partnerships
2 for Higher Education (KA220-HED), aims to contribute to solve this problem by
3 setting up a certification scheme and then training and certifying teachers,
4 managers and other employees to work remotely. The overarching goal is to
5 support the European Union's digital transformation efforts and improve
6 preparedness to withstand the disruptive effects of pandemics and unforeseen
7 events that impact education, collaboration and professional work in general.
8 While other similar projects focus exclusively on the skills required for efficient
9 and effective distance education, the VirtualEdu project also aims to improve other
10 skills related to remote work, such as remote project management, document
11 management, business processes and productivity improvement. These skills are
12 needed by professionals in business, but also by managers and employees of
13 educational institutions (“VirtualEdu project,” 2024).

14 The aim of the VirtualEdu project is to create a certification scheme with a
15 clear definition of the required skills, training curriculum, resources and activities
16 to be included in Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), and certification exams
17 in line with the ECQA (European Certification and Qualification Association)
18 rules (European Certification and Qualification Association, 2010). As there is no
19 consensus in the academic literature on the essential skills and competences
20 required for the success, efficiency and improved performance of different
21 professionals engaged in remote work, the project consortium conducted a
22 questionnaire-based study. In the study respondents assessed the relevance of a set
23 of competences and skills for remote work and for training to develop these
24 competences and skills. The questionnaire also aimed to determine perceptions of
25 the usefulness of training to develop these competencies.

26 The aim of this article is to present the results of conducted study and identify
27 the main challenges that Croatian remote educators, managers and employees face
28 in their professional work and to show which skills they consider most important.
29 The research findings informed the design of the VirtualEdu training curriculum
30 and learning resources, but also contribute to the knowledge of the skills gap for
31 the professional roles of distance workers in Croatia, which is necessary for the
32 improvement of remote workers' competences.

33 The rest of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of
34 related work regarding enhancing remote work competencies through training
35 programs. Section 3 describes the methodology including research questions,
36 instrument, procedure, and participants. The results are presented in section 4.
37 Section 5 contains a discussion and section 6 contains conclusions.

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39

40 **Related Work**

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42 Various studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of training programs
43 aimed at enhancing the professional competencies of educators. For example,
44 Kmeta & Bjekić (2015) have highlighted the success of face-to-face and online
45 training which focused on empowering vocational teachers to integrate modern
46 technologies into remote education. Similarly, Sáiz-Manzanares, et al. (2022)

1 reported positive feedback from participants in a blended learning training course
2 designed to support teachers in the use of virtual learning environments. Evans et
3 al. (2019) also found that professional development courses organized according
4 to the blended learning model effectively improved teachers' use of Blackboard
5 LMS and resulted in increased teacher activity and adoption of various online
6 teaching tools.

7 In the context of digital transformation in general, not just in the field of
8 education, the focus is on promoting digital competencies. Digital competencies
9 encompass the awareness, attitude and ability to use digital tools and resources
10 effectively for different purposes, as defined by Martin & Grudziecki (2006).
11 Torres-Coronas & Vidal-Blasco (2011) describe digital competence as the ability
12 to use information technologies and social software for analytical, productive and
13 creative purposes. Existing frameworks that can guide the selection of those that
14 need to be included in the training with the aim of development of remote work
15 and education skills are DigComp (Vuorikari, Kluzer, & Punie, 2022) and
16 DigCompEdu (Redecker, 2017). These European competence frameworks outline
17 the digital competences required for citizens and educators.

18 DigComp encompasses five key areas of digital competencies: information
19 and data literacy, digital and content creation, communication and collaboration
20 skills, online safety, and problem-solving skills. These areas constitute the first
21 dimension of the reference framework. In the current version, DigComp 2.2, there
22 is 21 competence grouped in five above mentioned key areas. Second dimension
23 includes competence descriptors and titles for each area. To determine the
24 progression of individuals in the acquisition of each competence, a third
25 dimension of the framework is defined - proficiency levels of each competency
26 that are based on four overall levels: foundation, intermediate, advanced, and
27 highly specialized. Remaining dimensions include examples of knowledge, skills,
28 and attitudes specific to each competency (fourth dimension), and use cases (fifth
29 dimension) (Vuorikari et al., 2022).

30 DigComp 2.2 provides a detailed description of different competency areas
31 and can serve as reference framework to develop, assess, and recognize digital
32 competencies. However, in case of educators, DigCompEdu framework was
33 developed to outline the essential digital competencies that educators need to
34 effectively integrate digital technologies into teaching and learning processes
35 (Redecker, 2017). DigCompEdu identifies six areas of digital competence for
36 educators from all educational levels. Framework groups competencies based on
37 three different aspects: educators' professional competencies (professional
38 engagement), educators' pedagogic competencies (digital resources, teaching and
39 learning, assessment, and empowering learners) and learners' competencies
40 (facilitating learners' digital competence).

41 Although these two frameworks tend to seize the potential of digital
42 technologies for enhancing and innovating remote education and work, they do
43 not encompass all the competencies required for remote working.

44 A systematic literature review conducted by Kolm et al. (2022) concluded
45 that there is no study that covers all the competency needs for remote education
46 and work. In addition to ICT skills, the study highlights five other areas of

1 competence (intercultural and cultural competencies, communication skills, self-
2 management and organizational skills, collaboration skills and domain-specific
3 skills) that need to be considered when selecting topics for training in the field of
4 remote work (“VirtualEdu project,” 2024). Tusyanah et al. (2023) and Borge et al.
5 (2022) also emphasize the significance of multicultural collaborative skills in
6 enhancing interpersonal communication, developing shared ideas, and building
7 understanding and collective knowledge. Successful collaboration entails
8 interpersonal trust and open-mindedness towards colleagues’ viewpoints (Kulić &
9 Janković, 2022). Factors that contribute to successful remote work include self-
10 management and organizational skills, especially ‘time management’ (Manasia,
11 Ianos, & Chicioeanu, 2019). Self-management allows for greater availability of
12 resources, proactively initiating social interactions and improving task significance
13 during remote work (Costantini & Weintraub, 2022). Karim et al. (2021) argue
14 that it is important to integrate the 6Cs (critical thinking, collaboration,
15 communication, creativity, citizenship or cultural awareness, and connectivity)
16 into the training programs for remote workers.

17 Related research has shown that there are numerous professional
18 competencies required for remote work in addition to domain-specific skills. In
19 order to select topics for remote work training, the VirtualEdu project consortium
20 decided to conduct additional research and investigate the skills gap analysis of the
21 target group of participants using questionnaire.

22 23 24 **Methodology**

25
26 The study described in this article aims to identify the skills that remote
27 workers in Croatia find the most important and their attitudes towards the
28 usefulness of training to develop these skills.

29 The specific research questions were:

- 30
31 RQ1) What do Croatian remote educators, managers and employees consider as
32 main challenges of remote work?
33 RQ2) What skills do Croatian remote educators, managers and employees
34 consider most important for remote work?
35 RQ3) What skills do Croatian remote educators, managers and employees
36 consider relevant for a training dedicated to development of remote work
37 skills?
38 RQ4) What are perceptions of Croatian remote educators, managers and
39 employees of the usefulness of training for development and certification
40 of remote work skills?
41

42 The research methodology and the instrument used was defined by VirtualEdu
43 project consortium (“VirtualEdu project,” 2024).
44
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1 Instrument and Procedure

2
3 A quantitative research methodology was used to answer the research
4 questions. For the purpose of the study, the project consortium developed a
5 questionnaire with 21 questions.

6 The first part of the questionnaire was used to determine the profile of the
7 participant and included questions about the organization, the industry, the
8 experience with remote work and the professional status of the participant.

9 The second part of the questionnaire was designed to assess the need for
10 remote working skills and included questions on the participant's perceptions of:

- 11
- 12 • Challenges faced by the respondent when working remotely
- 13 • Relevance of certain skills in the context of remote work
- 14 • Relevance of certain skills for a training dedicated to development of
- 15 remote work skills
- 16 • Usefulness of a training for development and certification of remote work
- 17 skills (i.e. with reference to the certification scheme of VirtualEdu project).
- 18

19 Third part of the questionnaire was used to determine demographic
20 information (age, gender) of the participant.

21 The skills needs assessment in the second part of the questionnaire consisted
22 of assessing the relevance of different categories of skills using a 5-point Likert
23 scale, with 1 being "not relevant" and 5 being "essential/mandatory". Categories
24 of skills were in line with the competency framework for remote work, remote
25 management, and remote education ("VirtualEdu project," 2024) defined by the
26 project consortium, which includes the following dimensions:

- 27
- 28 • Digital competencies
- 29 • Collaboration competencies
- 30 • Self-management and organization skills
- 31 • Interpersonal and intercultural and communication skills
- 32 • Specific skills of remote educators.
- 33

34 The development of competency framework was based on DigComp and
35 DigCompEdu frameworks and other relevant academic resources.

36 The designed questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms application
37 from April to June 2023 for all partner countries. The responses of the Croatian
38 participants were then filtered and statistically analyzed.

39 Additionally, a competency matrix was formulated to identify the
40 competencies that should be focused on, categorized as either challenging,
41 missing, or highly essential for each of the three roles ("VirtualEdu project,"
42 2024). To underscore the *relevance* of each assessed competency, a weighted
43 average was computed using the following formula:

$$44 \quad R_{Ci} = \frac{[(N_{Nr} * 1) + (N_{Sr} * 2) + (N_R * 3) + (N_{Vr} * 4) + (N_E * 5)]}{5} \quad (1)$$

1 where:

- 2
- 3 • R_{Ci} – Relevance of competency i
 - 4 • N_{Nr} – number of responses rating competency i as “Not relevant”
 - 5 • N_{Sr} – number of responses rating competency i as “Somewhat relevant”
 - 6 • N_R – number of responses rating competency i as “Relevant”
 - 7 • N_{Vr} – number of responses rating competency i as “Very relevant”
 - 8 • N_E – number of responses rating competency i as “Essential/mandatory”.
- 9

10 Further, a second dimension, *score*, was calculated in a two-step process:

- 11
- 12 1. The difference between the number of responses rating competency i as
 - 13 “Very relevant” (N_{VrCi}) and the number of responses rating competency i
 - 14 as “Essential/mandatory” (N_{ECi}) was calculated:

$$IS_{Ci} = N_{VrCi} - N_{ECi}$$

- 15 2. A score ranging from 1 to 4 was assigned based on the following criteria:
- 16 • If $IS_{Ci} < -10$, then score = 1
 - 17 • If $-10 \leq IS_{Ci} < 0$, then score = 2
 - 18 • If $0 \leq IS_{Ci} < 10$, then score = 3
 - 19 • If $IS_{Ci} \geq 10$, then score = 4.
- 20

21 Participants

22

23 A total of 86 responses were collected using questionnaire from respondents

24 in Croatia. Respondents were recruited through the convenience sampling

25 technique. As can be seen in Figure 1, 38 (44.19%) of the respondents work in

26 higher education, 15 (17.44%) in primary or secondary education and 12

27 respondents (13.95%) stated that they work in the field of information technology

28 (IT). About half of the respondents, 51.2%, stated that they work in an

29 organization with more than 100 employees, 10.5% of the respondents stated that

30 they work in an organization with 50 to 100 employees, 33.7% in an organization

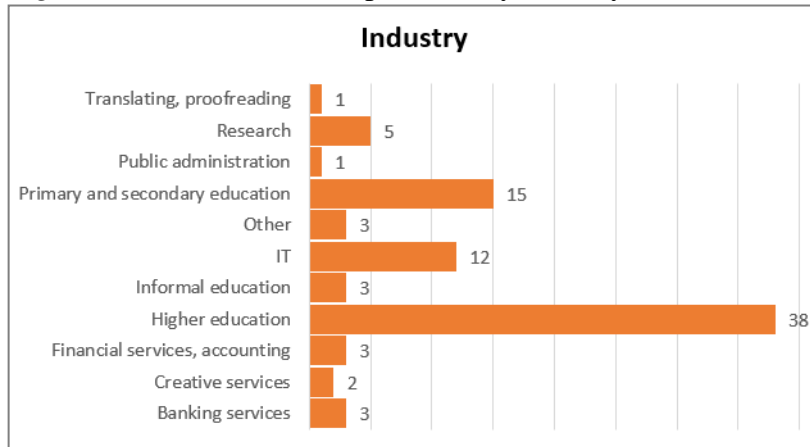
31 with 10 to 50 employees, while 4.7% of the respondents work for an organization

32 with less than 10 employees.

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1 *Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Industry*



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4 As can be seen from Table 1, 55 of the respondents (64%) were female and
5 30 (35%) male. The age distribution of respondents is balanced and ensures a
6 comprehensive analysis of the skills gap that includes the different generations
7 represented in the labor market: Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials.
8 The highest number of respondents is in the 35-45 age group (38 or 44.18%).
9 When asked about remote work status, 12 respondents (13.95%) indicated that
10 they are currently involved in remote work full-time, while 26 respondents
11 (30.23%) are involved in remote work some of the time. In addition, 43 (50%) of
12 respondents have already experienced remote work but are not currently working
13 remotely. Only 5 respondents (5.81%) indicated that they have never worked
14 remotely (Table 1).

15

16 *Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age, Remote Work Status and*
17 *Size of Organization*

Indicator	Category	Number of respondents
Gender	Female	55
	Male	30
	Other/Not specified	1
Age	<25 years	1
	25-35 years	20
	35-45 years	38
	>45 years	27
Remote work status	Currently working remotely full time	12
	Partially work remotely	26
	Used to work remotely, but currently are not	43
	Never have worked remotely	5

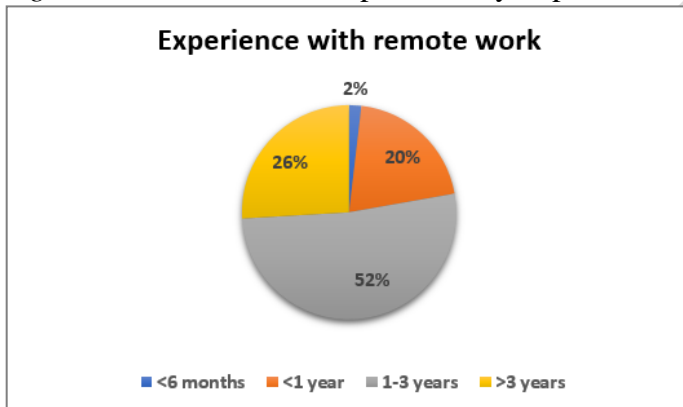
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1 Respondents who were currently working remotely full-time or part-time
 2 were asked how long they had experienced remote work and/or remote education.
 3 The results show that remote work and remote education have increased during
 4 the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. As shown in Figure 2, 52% of respondents who work
 5 remotely have between one and three years of experience with this type of work,
 6 26% of respondents have more than three years of experience working remotely,
 7 while 21.9% have one year of experience working remotely. Only 2% of
 8 respondents have less than 6 months' experience of remote work. These results
 9 suggest that the vast majority of study participants have sufficient experience of
 10 remote work.

11 The analysis of the answers regarding the current position/role of the
 12 respondents in their organizations (Figure 3) showed that all roles are sufficiently
 13 represented among the participants: 45 (52.32%) respondents are in the role of
 14 remote educator, 31 (36.05%) respondents are in the role of remote employee, and
 15 10 (11.63%) respondents are in the role of remote manager.

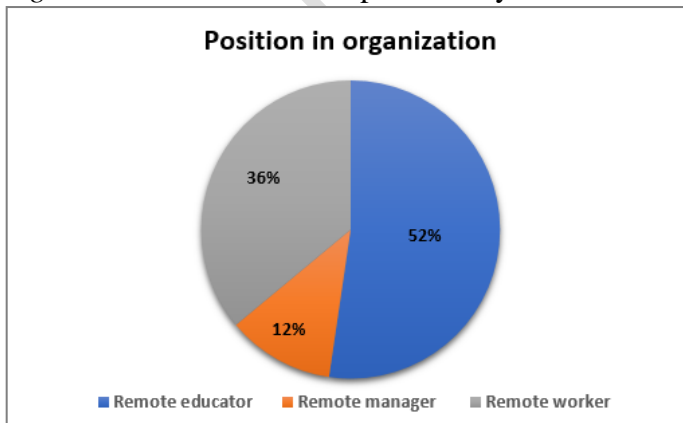
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Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents by Experience in Remote Work



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Figure 3. Distribution of Respondents by Position in Organization



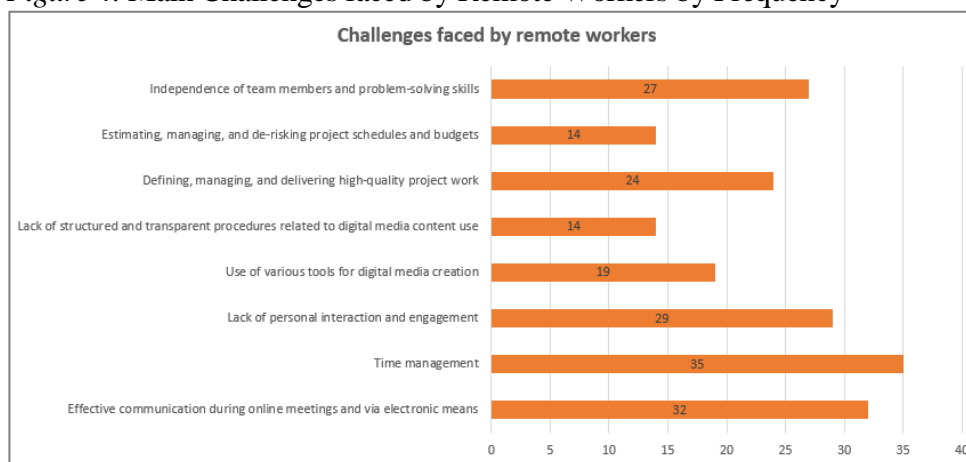
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Results

Main Challenges faced By Remote Workers

Among the main challenges (Figure 4) faced by educators, workers and managers working remotely in Croatia are *time management, effective communication during online meetings and via electronic means, and lack of personal interaction and engagement.*

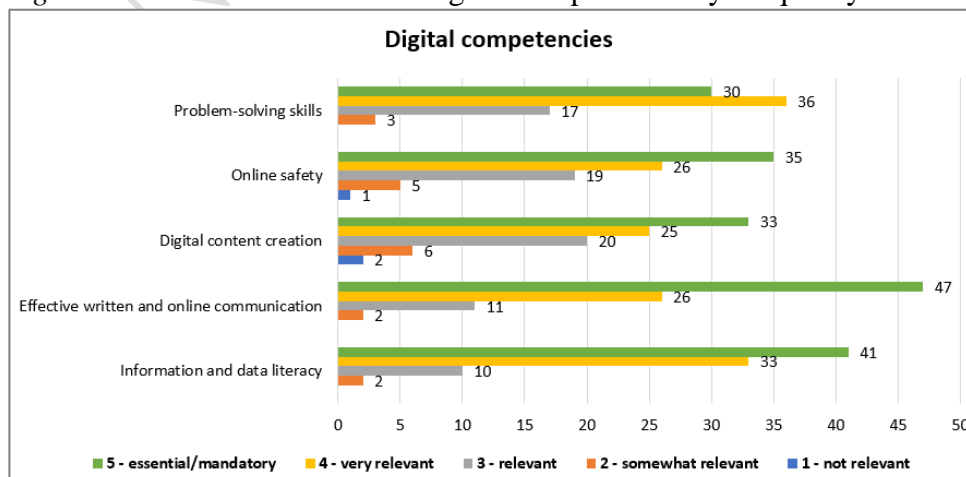
Figure 4. Main Challenges faced by Remote Workers by Frequency



Relevance of Remote working Skills

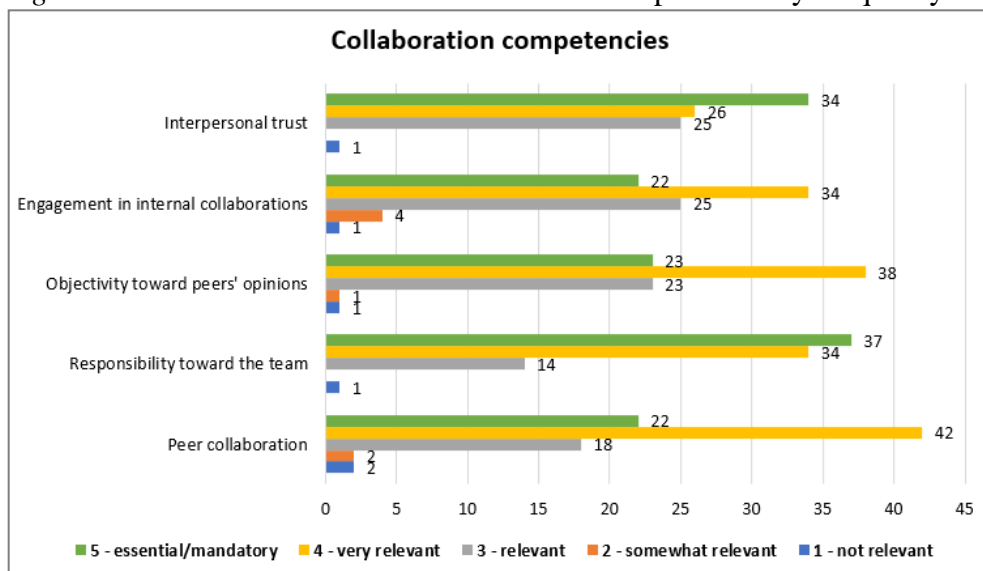
As can be seen in Figure 5, in terms of digital skills, effective written and online communication was most often assessed as essential/mandatory (47 respondents), information and data literacy (41 respondents), online safety (35 respondents) and digital content creation (33 respondents). Problem-solving skills were mostly rated as very important (36 respondents), while 30 respondents considered them essential.

Figure 5. Assessed Relevance of Digital Competencies by Frequency



1 As depicted in Figure 6, within the collaboration competencies category,
 2 *responsibility towards the team* (37 respondents) and *interpersonal trust* (34
 3 respondents) emerged as the most commonly considered essential/mandatory
 4 skills, whereas *peer collaboration* (42 respondents) and *objectivity towards peers'*
 5 *opinions* (38 respondents) were predominantly identified as highly relevant skills.

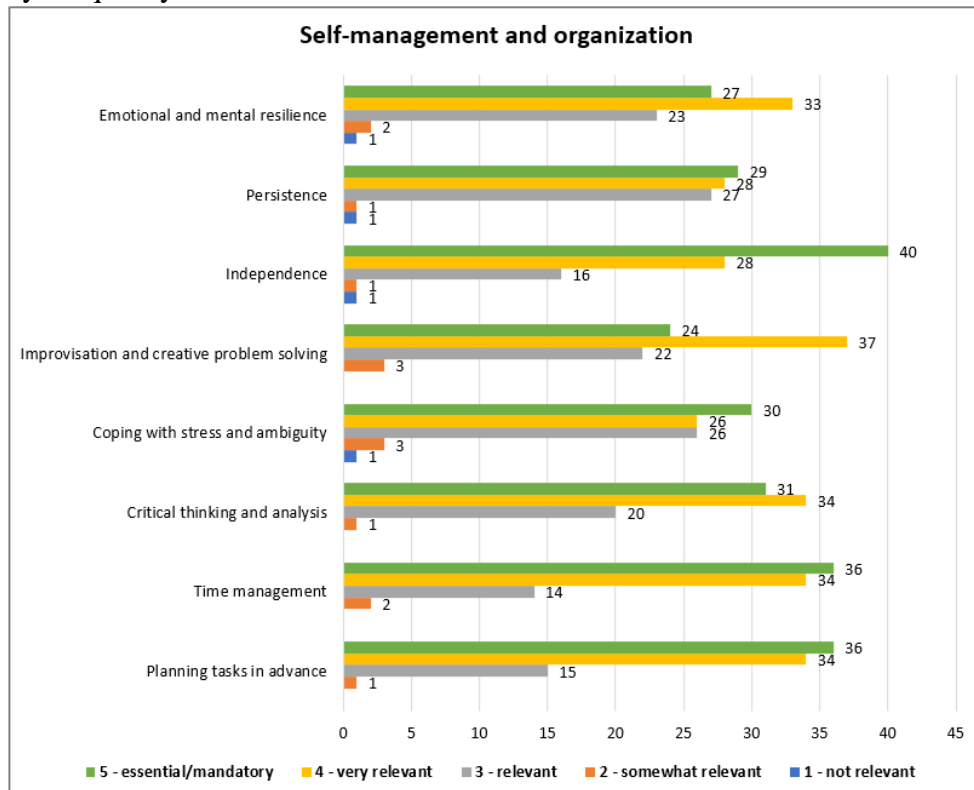
6
 7 **Figure 6. Assessed Relevance of Collaboration Competencies by Frequency**



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 10 In terms of self-management and organizational skills, all competencies were
 11 mostly assessed as either essential/mandatory or very important (Figure 7). Within
 12 this category, *independence* received the highest number of respondents affirming
 13 its essential/mandatory status (40 respondents), followed by *time management* (36
 14 respondents) and *planning tasks in advance* (36 respondents).

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1 *Figure 7. Assessed Relevance of Self-management and Organization Competencies*
 2 *by Frequency*

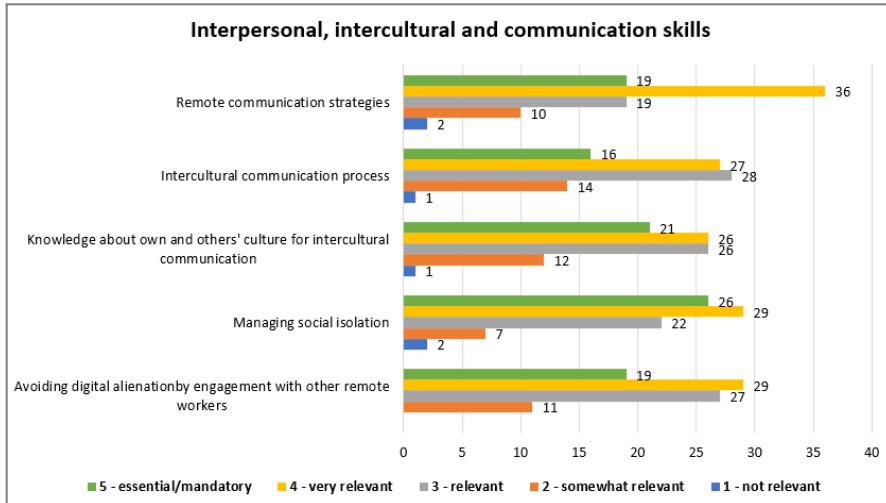


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 5 Interpersonal and intercultural and communication skills were primarily
 6 assessed as highly relevant (Figure 8). Particularly noteworthy were *remote*
 7 *communication strategies* (36 respondents), *avoiding digital alienation by*
 8 *engagement with other remote workers* (29 respondents), and *managing social*
 9 *isolation* (29 respondents), which were frequently assessed as very relevant.
 10 Notably, *managing social isolation* received the highest number of essential/
 11 mandatory ratings (26 respondents).

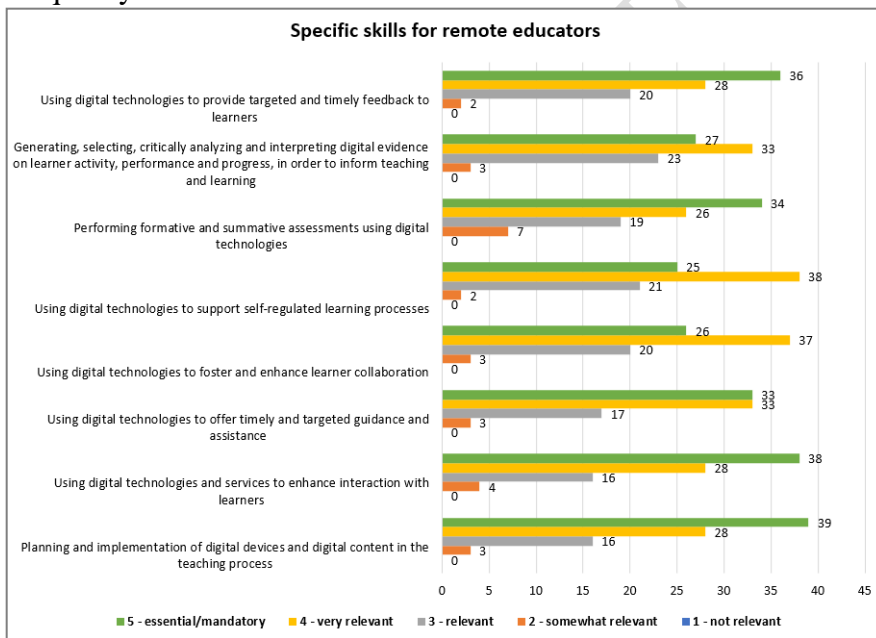
12 Figure 9 shows the results of the last category of skills proposed for
 13 assessment, i.e. *specific skills for remote educators* required to adequately address
 14 the specificities of remote education. *Planning and implementation of digital*
 15 *devices and digital content in the teaching process* (39 respondents), *using digital*
 16 *technologies and services to enhance interaction with learners* (38 respondents)
 17 and *using digital technologies to provide targeted and timely feedback to learners*
 18 (36 respondents) were most frequently rated as essential/mandatory.

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1 *Figure 8. Assessed relevance of interpersonal and intercultural and communication*
 2 *skills by frequency*



3
 4
 5 *Figure 9. Assessed Relevance of Specific Skills for Remote Educators by*
 6 *Frequency*



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 8
 9 Table 2 presents the results of the two dimensions, relevance and score,
 10 calculated for the competency matrix, sorted from largest to smallest.
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 12

1 *Table 2. Perceived Usefulness of Training for Development and Certification*
 2 *of Remote Work Skills*

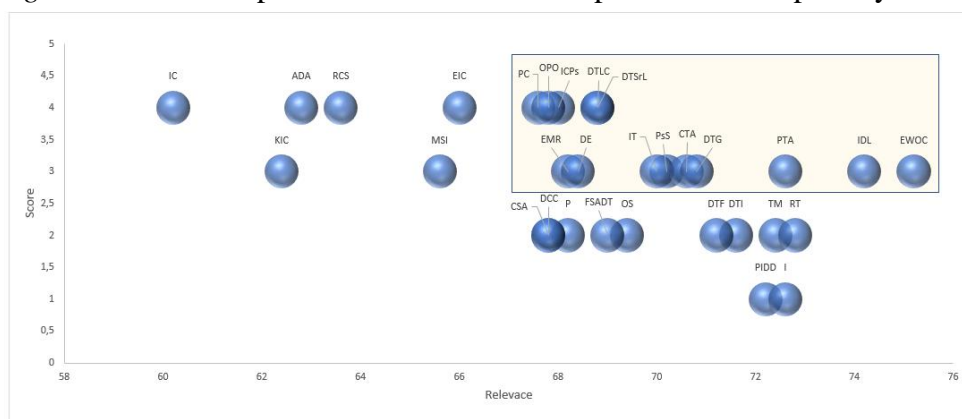
Competency	Abbreviation	Relevance	Score
Effective written and online communication	EWOC	75,2	3
Information and data literacy	IDL	74,2	3
Responsibility toward the team	RT	72,8	1
Planning tasks in advance	PTA	72,6	2
Independence	I	72,6	1
Time management	TM	72,4	1
Planning and implementation of digital devices and digital content in the teaching process	PIDD	72,2	1
Using digital technologies and services to enhance interaction with learners	DTI	71,6	1
Using digital technologies to provide targeted and timely feedback to learners	DTF	71,2	1
Using digital technologies to offer timely and targeted guidance and assistance	DTG	70,8	2
Critical thinking and analysis	CTA	70,6	2
Problem-solving skills	PsS	70,2	3
Interpersonal trust	IT	70	2
Online safety	OS	69,4	1
Performing formative and summative assessments using digital technologies	FSADT	69	1
Using digital technologies to foster and enhance learner collaboration	DTLC	68,8	4
Using digital technologies to support self-regulated learning processes	DTSrL	68,8	4
Generating, selecting, critically analyzing and interpreting digital evidence on learner activity, performance and progress, in order to inform teaching and learning	DE	68,4	3
Emotional and mental resilience	EMR	68,2	3
Persistence	P	68,2	1
Improvisation and creative problem solving	ICPs	68	4
Objectivity toward peers' opinions	OPO	67,8	4
Coping with stress and ambiguity	CSA	67,8	1
Digital content creation	DCC	67,8	1
Peer collaboration	PC	67,6	4
Engagement in internal collaborations	EIC	66	4
Managing social isolation	MSI	65,6	2
Remote communication strategies	RCS	63,6	4
Avoiding digital alienation by engagement with other remote workers	ADA	62,8	4
Knowledge about own and others' culture for intercultural communication	KIC	62,4	3
Intercultural communication process	IC	60,2	4

3
 4 Figure 10 shows the visual representation of the skills gap using the data from
 5 Table 2. Competencies that should be in the focus are framed by a yellow

1 rectangle in the figure and shown in bold in the table.

2

3 **Figure 10.** Visual Representation of the Skill Gap based on Competency Matrix



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5

6 **Relevance of the Training for Development and Certification of Remote Work**
 7 **Skills**

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9 To examine relevance of the training for development and certification of
 10 remote work skills, participants were asked to express their attitudes on a scale of
 11 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). According to the results (Table 3),
 12 majority of participants (75%) agree and strongly agree that their professional
 13 competencies can be improved while 56% of participants are actively seeking to
 14 acquire additional skills and to extend their professional competencies. In addition,
 15 64% of participants reported they would like to improve their capacity to face the
 16 new challenges for enhanced performance in remote work.

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18 *Table 3.* Perceived Usefulness of Training for Development and Certification of
 19 Remote Work Skills

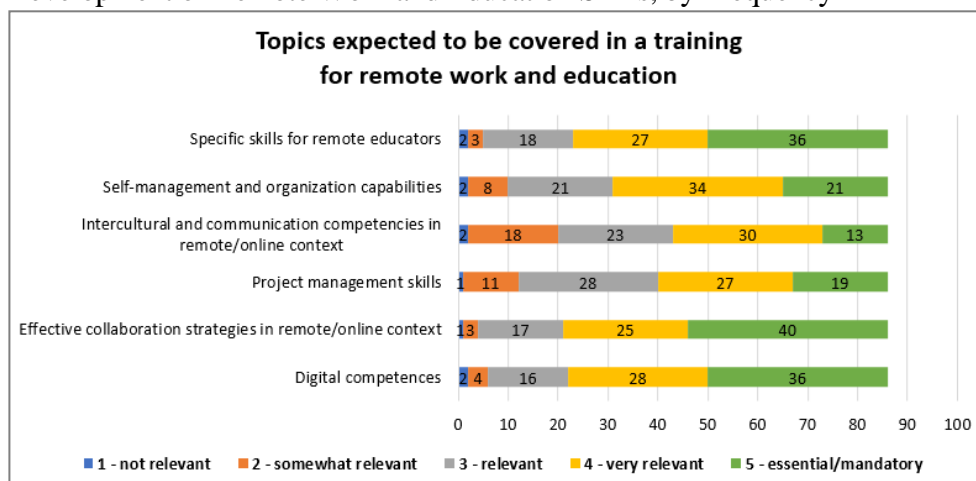
Statement	AVG	1	2	3	4	5
I consider that my professional competencies can be improved	4.10	2%	5%	17%	52%	23%
I am actively seeking to acquire additional skills and to extend my professional competencies	3.96	6%	10%	28%	30%	26%
I would like to improve my operating capacity to face the new challenges for enhanced performance in remote work	4.07	7%	7%	22%	36%	28%

20

21 When asked about the topics they would anticipate being addressed in a
 22 training session aimed at enhancing remote work skills, respondents conveyed
 23 significant interest in *effective collaboration strategies in remote/online context*
 24 (40 respondents), *digital competencies* (36 respondents), and *specific skills for*
 25 *remote educators* (36 respondents). However, all proposed skill categories were
 26 consistently rated as either essential or very relevant (Figure 11).

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1 *Figure 11.* Preference for Specific Topics to be considered for Training on
 2 Development of Remote Work and Education Skills, by Frequency



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Discussion

8 A total of 86 respondents from Croatia participated in the survey-based study,
 9 which was conducted jointly by all partners of the Virtual Edu consortium. The
 10 main objective of the study was to identify the skills needed to complement the
 11 current knowledge and competencies of remote educators, remote workers and
 12 remote managers.

13 Regarding the challenges faced by remote workers, educators, and managers
 14 in Croatia (RQ1), the results have shown that time management, effective
 15 communication during online interactions and the absence of personal interaction
 16 are the biggest hurdles, so addressing these challenges is essential in training to
 17 develop skills for remote work in Croatia.

18 Among most important skills for remote work, Croatian remote educators,
 19 managers and employees consider a whole range of skills (RQ2). Among digital
 20 skills, *effective written and online communication* received the highest number of
 21 respondents affirming its essential/mandatory status. Regarding skills related to
 22 self-management and organization, *independence* was most often assessed as
 23 essential. Within the collaboration competencies category, *responsibility towards*
 24 *the team* and *interpersonal trust* were most frequently rated as essential while
 25 *planning and implementation of digital devices and digital content in the teaching*
 26 *process, using digital technologies and services to enhance interaction with*
 27 *learners* (38 respondents) and *using digital technologies to provide targeted and*
 28 *timely feedback to learners* (36 respondents) emerged as the most commonly
 29 considered essential among specific skills for remote educators. Participants
 30 assessed skills for interpersonal and intercultural and communication primarily as
 31 highly relevant. These results indicate that the training for enhancing remote work
 32 competencies should cover a wide range of skills.

33 Regarding the RQ3, the competency matrix revealed the numerous training
 34 needs for Croatian educators, managers and employees. A significance of these

1 results is the validation of the proposed topics for the training curriculum through
 2 the findings of the questionnaire. Main finding is that training needs for the
 3 Croatian beneficiaries are in line with the categories of skills initially considered to
 4 be covered by the VirtualEdu training and certification program.

5 Respondents acknowledge the relevance of training for the development and
 6 certification of remote work skills (RQ4). They expressed the attitude that their
 7 professional competencies can be improved as well as a desire to do so in order to
 8 meet the demands of the remote work market. In addition, just over fifty percent of
 9 them are actively seeking opportunities to achieve this goal.

12 Conclusions

13
 14 The results of the study presented in this article provide insights into the skills
 15 gap among remote workers in Croatia, which is essential for enhancing their
 16 competencies. The results also informed the development of the VirtualEdu
 17 training curriculum by revealing actual needs of target group of participants as
 18 well as the perceived opportunities and usefulness of the VirtualEdu training and
 19 certification program.

20 The expected outcomes of training that will be organized through MOOC
 21 course promise significant benefits for educators, managers, students and
 22 employees in Croatia working remotely. Through training and certification
 23 program, educators and other professionals in the education sector will improve
 24 their remote working skills, which will have a positive impact on both educational
 25 institutions and private organizations. The results of the project are expected to
 26 extend beyond the education sector and impact the broader labor market as well as
 27 enrich corporate practices. Managers or employees who obtain certification in
 28 remote working skills will gain a competitive advantage. In addition to
 29 professionals, students from Croatian universities will also have opportunity to
 30 develop practical skills needed for employment.

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