



SEQ Elevate

Skills for
the Future

WP2

The SEQ Learning Model Framework

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Responsible partner: University of Macedonia

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List of abbreviations	
EU	European Union
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SEQ	Social and Emotional Skills
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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Introduction

The methodological framework of the SEQ Learning Model establishes a structured, evidence-based system for developing, practising, and validating social and emotional skills in NEET youth within the social economy context. The social economy refers to organisations and initiatives that prioritise social impact and community benefit alongside economic activity, including social enterprises, cooperatives, non-profit organisations, community initiatives, and other mission-driven entities that address societal needs such as inclusion, sustainability, and local development. The SEQ Elevate project focuses on this sector because the social economy often provides accessible entry points for young people facing barriers to employment and places strong emphasis on interpersonal competences, collaboration, empathy, and responsibility. The findings from the transnational research phase are reflected in the benchmarking analysis, which demonstrates cross-country convergence patterns, including confidence gaps, behavioural readiness deficits, stakeholder demand for observable competences, and a strong preference for short, practical, scenario-driven learning.

The framework is intentionally modular, behaviour-based, and validation-linked. It is firstly formulated as a paper-based methodological architecture and subsequently translated into a multilingual digital interactive tool, as it will be available in English, German and Greek. The development of this framework is driven by four interconnected components: common guidelines, skill taxonomy, performance benchmarks, and implementation methodology.

Guidelines

The lead methodological guidelines are issued by the University of Macedonia to guarantee conceptual coherence, research traceability, and cross-country comparability. However, the framework is not imposed from the top down; rather, it is iteratively refined through structured partner contribution loops, including national report findings, focus group interpretations, and feedback from the Collaboration Forums. In this way, the framework evolves through continuous partner input and contextual calibration.

Target group grounding

- The guidelines explicitly anchor the model in the realities of the target group and therefore focus on NEET youth profiles:
 - early school leavers
 - migrant youth
 - long-term disengaged youth
- Partners recognise that employability barriers are not purely technical, and therefore acknowledge that confidence, stress management, and behavioural readiness gaps are as critical as technical gaps.
- Partners also account for diverse disengagement trajectories, establishing the requirement for modular entry points due to mixed disengagement duration patterns.

The guidelines delineate the operational boundaries and quality criteria of the SEQ Learning Model. Partners actively define the design parameters within which the model must operate.

They specify that the model must be:

- research-derived, not theory-imported
- competence driven

- modular and stackable
- adaptable to different NEET disengagement durations
- usable by non-specialist trainers
- readable by employers and social economy actors

Partners contribute through three structured channels:

- contextual calibration, ensuring scenarios reflect national labour and social economy realities
- learner accessibility review, verifying language load, cognitive load, and cultural appropriateness
- implementation feasibility input, validating that activities can run in low-resource training settings

The guidelines also formalise non-negotiable design rules. These rules function as structural safeguards that preserve the practical and competence-driven orientation of the model:

- every skill must map to observable behaviour
- every unit must include at least one simulation task
- every assessment must be performance-based
- every badge must link to explicit criteria
- every learning path must include a confidence-building entry layer

The SEQ Learning Model is rooted in a practice-oriented learning philosophy, where skill development is primarily driven through action, participation and applied experience, as opposed to extensive theoretical instruction. The model deliberately prioritises learning-by-doing as the central pedagogical approach. The model does not prioritise abstract concepts or terminology. Instead, it emphasises behavioural and situational competence, which is defined as the ability to perform tasks in realistic contexts, respond to challenges, and interact with others in task-based environments. The dissemination of knowledge is undertaken in a manner that is solely conducive to its immediate utilisation.

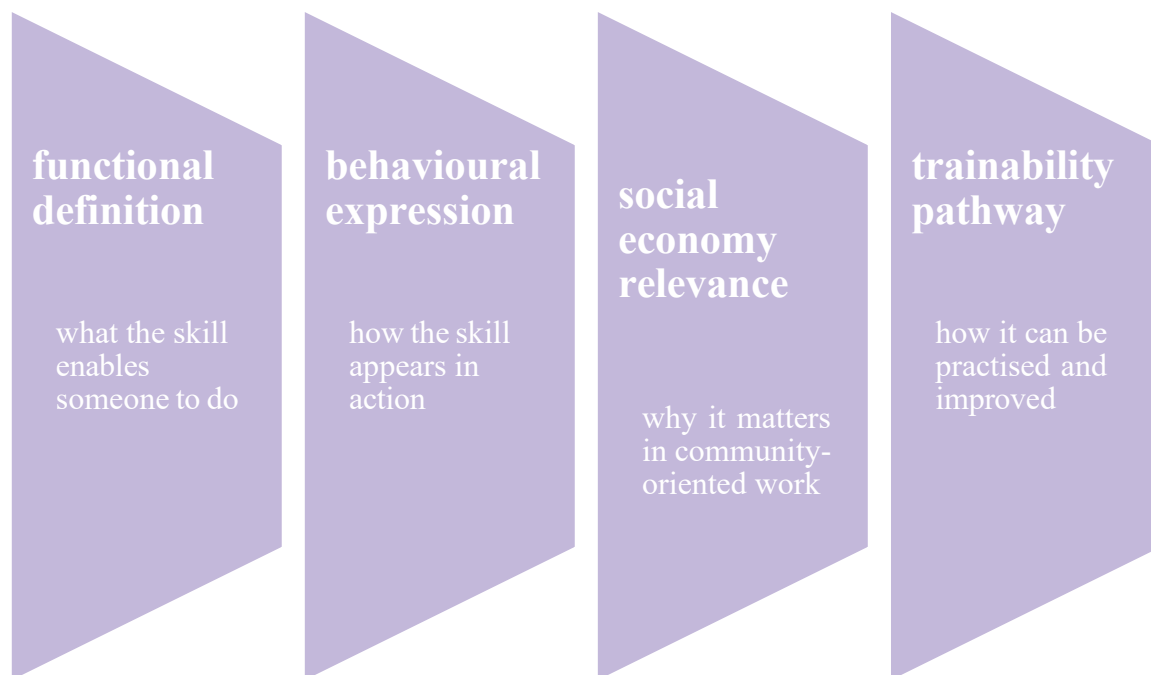
A fundamental design principle of the model is systematic confidence-building. Confidence development is not regarded as a secondary benefit; rather, it is treated as an explicit instructional objective that is embedded across learning units, activity sequencing, and feedback methods. This ensures that learners progressively experience achievable success moments throughout the training pathway.

The instruction is primarily delivered through the use of scenarios and simulations that mirror real social and economic workplace situations. These activities include role-plays, applied cases, guided simulations, and interactive exercises, which function as the primary instructional tools. Through these structured practice environments, learners actively rehearse behaviours, test decisions, and develop situational judgement. In this setting, learners are able to rehearse behaviours, assess decisions, and receive structured feedback in a controlled environment. This approach is designed to ensure that the acquisition of skills is directly transferable to real-life employment settings.

Definition of Key Skills

The SEQ skill definition process is based on a common framework, incorporating cross-country survey convergence, feedback from the Collaboration Forums, stakeholder hiring criteria, behavioural expectations, applicability to social economy and community contexts. Skills are not listed as abstract traits, but rather structured as applied competence clusters relevant to social and economic environments. In such environments, the quality of interaction, reliability, and adaptability have been shown to have a significant influence on employability.

Each skill cluster is defined through four lenses:



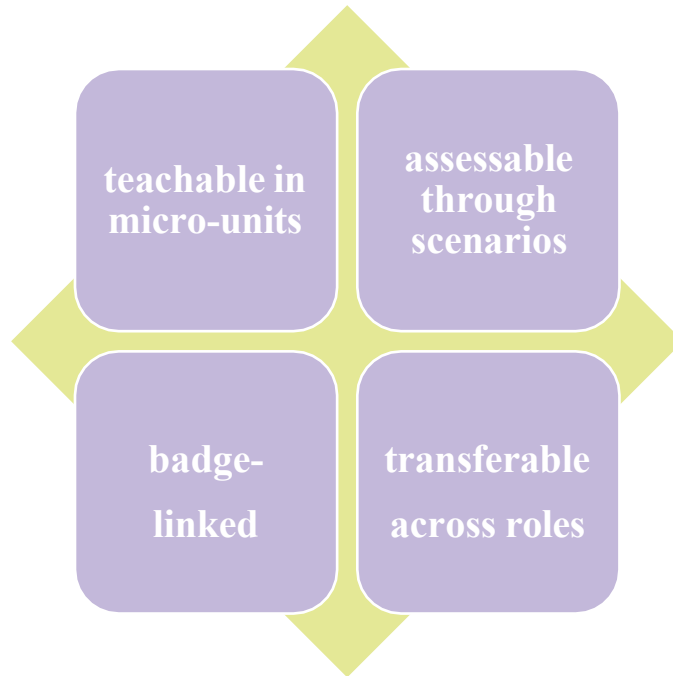
In line with the four defining lenses presented above — functional definition, behavioural expression, social economy relevance, and trainability pathway — the following examples illustrate how the SEQ framework translates broad skill areas into concrete, applied competence clusters. For instance, **communication** is not regarded as merely "speaking well"; rather, it is approached as a multifaceted concept encompassing clear instruction exchange, active listening clarification behaviour, respectful disagreement handling, and client/user interaction capability. This shows both what the skill enables a learner to do in practice and how it becomes visible in action.

Following the same logic, the concept of leadership is operationalised through its behavioural expression in realistic NEET contexts. The concept of **leadership** is approached from the perspective of micro-leadership within the context of NEET, signifying the adoption of an initiative-taking approach in modest tasks, the facilitation of brief coordination among peers, the formulation of solutions, and the assumption of responsibility, as opposed to the implementation of hierarchical management strategies. In this way, the skill remains relevant to entry-level social economy settings and realistic for the target group to practise and develop.

The same connection applies to resilience, which is defined not as a personal trait in the abstract, but as a trainable competence expressed through observable behaviour. **Resilience** is defined in behavioural terms as the capacity to persevere in the face of adversity, to accept feedback and make adjustments, to attempt tasks repeatedly, to maintain composure in high-pressure situations, and to regulate emotions in the context of receiving feedback. This definition directly links the skill to both behavioural indicators and progression within the learning pathway.

Finally, the inclusion of **green and community responsibility** reflects the specific social economy relevance lens described above. It is predicated on research findings and stakeholder input from the social economy sector, which demonstrate that value-driven decision-making behaviour serves as both a motivational factor and a sector-specific competence. Its inclusion therefore ensures that the skill framework is not limited to general employability, but also reflects the mission-driven and community-oriented nature of the social economy context.

Each skill cluster is designed to be:



Structuring skills into micro-units allows training to be delivered in short, manageable learning segments that are easier for learners to engage with and complete, especially for those who may face motivational, confidence, or time-related barriers. Scenario-based assessment ensures that competences are demonstrated in realistic situations rather than only described theoretically, enabling facilitators and employers to observe actual behaviours such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Linking each skill cluster to digital badges supports the validation of smaller learning achievements and provides visible recognition of progress, which can motivate learners and communicate competences clearly to external stakeholders. Finally, designing the clusters to be transferable across roles ensures that the acquired skills remain relevant in different contexts within the social economy and the wider labour market, allowing learners to apply the same competences in multiple professional environments.

Suggested Core SEQ Skill Clusters

Communication & Professional Interaction

- clear expression of ideas
- active listening
- respectful dialogue
- customer/user interaction
- feedback reception and response

Teamwork & Collaborative Behaviour

- cooperative task execution
- role awareness in group settings
- reliability within teams
- conflict navigation basics

Leadership & Initiative

- proactive task start
- small-group leadership
- decision readiness
- autonomous problem engagement

Adaptability & Flexibility

- response to change
- adjustment to feedback
- situational role shift
- uncertainty tolerance

Problem Solving & Applied Creativity

- scenario analysis
- practical solution generation
- resourcefulness in constraints
- social innovation mindset

Emotional Intelligence & Empathy

- perspective awareness
- user/beneficiary sensitivity
- intercultural awareness
- emotional regulation basics

Resilience & Stress Management

- pressure coping
- recovery after setbacks
- interview and evaluation readiness
- emotional self-regulation routines

Community & Green Responsibility

- social impact awareness
- ethical participation
- environmental responsibility behaviours
- sustainability-linked decision thinking

Establish Benchmarks and Indicators to Measure Proficiency and Progress

The SEQ model's benchmarking framework is predicated on observable progression rather than abstract scoring metrics. This choice reflects both the pedagogical orientation of the project and the profile of the target group. Many NEET learners have experienced difficulties with traditional evaluation systems that rely heavily on theoretical knowledge tests or numerical grading. As a result, the framework prioritises behavioural demonstration of competences in realistic situations, allowing learners to show what they are able to do rather than only what they can describe or recall. This approach also aligns with the needs expressed by labour market stakeholders during the research phase, who emphasised the importance of observable behaviours such as communication, teamwork, initiative, and reliability when assessing employability.

Consequently, the framework moves beyond knowledge-only measurement and instead employs behavioural progression ladders supported by structured observation and micro-evidence outputs. Skills are assessed through scenario-based tasks, role-plays, simulations, and peer or mentor observations, which generate tangible evidence of competence development. This method allows facilitators to capture how learners apply skills in context, while also making the assessment process more transparent and meaningful for both participants and employers.

Each skill cluster therefore incorporates a tri-level mastery pathway that has been calibrated to reflect the learning realities of NEET learners. The levels represent a gradual progression from assisted participation to independent performance and finally to consistent application across different situations. This stepwise progression makes learning achievements more visible, supports confidence-building through attainable milestones, and provides a clear structure for recognising improvement over time. By linking these levels to concrete behavioural indicators and scenario-based evidence, the SEQ benchmarking framework ensures that competence validation remains practical, credible, and directly relevant to employability in the social economy sector.

Foundation level indicators are designed to capture assisted performance and emerging awareness. These include participation with prompts, partial task completion, and recognition of correct behaviour even when execution is inconsistent.

Operational level indicators are designed to capture repeatable, independent performance in structured scenarios. In this setting, learners are expected to demonstrate behavioural stability, situational understanding, and the capacity for feedback integration.

Applied level indicators have been shown to capture transferability and adaptability. Learners demonstrate their proficiency by successfully applying the skill in a variety of scenarios. They also assist their peers and modify their behaviour without the need for prompting from the facilitator.

A few examples of the indicators are:

- facilitator observation indicators
- scenario outcome indicators
- peer interaction indicators
- self-reflection indicators
- task output indicators

Measurement tools are standardised across partners:

- scenario rubrics
- behavioural checklists
- task evidence sheets
- mentor validation forms

- peer feedback
- SEQ Comp Cards self-tracking grids

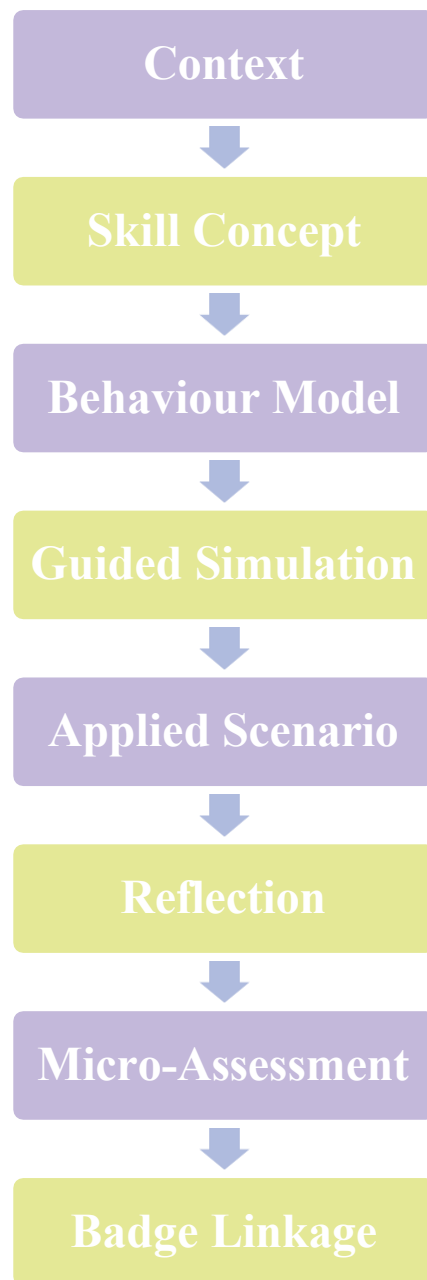
This multi-angle measurement reduces subjectivity and increases validation credibility.

Design of the Methodological Framework for Implementation in the Social Economy Context

The implementation framework translates skills and benchmarks into a repeatable training delivery system that is aligned with social economy work patterns. It is acknowledged that this sector places a greater value on interaction quality, service reliability, ethical behaviour, and adaptability than on narrow technical specialisation at entry level.

The combined evidence from the cross-country questionnaires, national focus groups, and the European-level expert focus group points to a clear set of design implications for the SEQ Learning Model. Learning should be organised in micro-units focused on specific skills, delivered in concise 1–2 hour modules, and structured around scenario-based and simulation-driven practice rather than broad thematic courses. Delivery should remain blended and human-supported, with mentoring and peer work integrated throughout, while training activities should explicitly connect SEL competencies with observable employability behaviours. At the same time, the model should include modular entry points that respond to different disengagement durations and should embed motivation mechanisms such as real-world tasks, employer-informed activities, and visible recognition of progress. These differences do not contradict the common model direction; rather, they indicate that the SEQ Learning Model should combine a shared core structure with adjustable national emphasis layers, including motivational incentives, language support, or confidence-building intensity, depending on context. In summary, the findings support a model that is not only skills-focused but also activation-oriented, with mentoring, guidance, and employability preparation embedded throughout.

It is important to note that each SEQ learning unit adheres to a fixed pedagogical architecture, thereby ensuring consistency and transferability. Thus, it follows a structured instructional pathway that gradually moves learners from contextual understanding to applied competence demonstration and validated skill recognition.



The learning activities will be meticulously designed to prioritise practical application. Theory input is concise and practical. The majority of the time is allocated to role-play, simulation, scenario resolution, and peer interaction exercises. This finding is indicative of a cross-country preference among learners for experiential learning over auditory learning.

Implementation methodology will include:

- scenario banks per skill cluster
- graded difficulty ladders
- facilitator scripts
- feedback templates
- reflection prompts
- adaptation notes for migrants and low-literacy learners

The framework is founded on the principle of confidence-first sequencing, which involves the deliberate design of early units to ensure both achievable performance and visible success prior to the escalation of complexity. This finding directly corresponds to the prevalent pattern of a pronounced confidence deficit that has been identified across diverse national contexts.

Additionally, the interest in digital tools as complementary learning supports, alongside the preference for interactive experiences, is consistent during the project's research phase. While face-to-face delivery remains essential for trust-building, confidence development, and sustained engagement, the evidence supports a blended model in which digital and gamified elements reinforce repetition, feedback, and accessibility for learners with mobility, time, or language constraints. Interactive tools, micro-challenges, and scenario-based digital tasks can therefore function as complementary mechanisms that sustain motivation and make progress visible without replacing human support. This mapping demonstrates a high level of policy and practice consistency: field evidence points towards practical, modular, validated learning, while the wider European discussion supports those same mechanisms for inclusion and employability.

The framework is also designed to facilitate seamless digital translation. The interactive version will utilise:

- visual skill maps
- clickable skill cards
- scenario tiles
- progress ladders
- badge stacks
- self-validation dashboards

The language will be unembellished, behaviour-focused, and employer-readable when translated into English, Greek and German.

Validation & Micro-Credential System Recommendations

Across the project research evidence, including the national questionnaires and focus groups and the European-level expert discussion, a clear direction emerges for the validation layer of the SEQ model. Recognition mechanisms should be skill-focused, practice-based, and easily interpretable by employers. Rather than issuing generic certificates, the model should allocate a badge to each distinct skill cluster, with each badge linked to specific social and emotional competencies as well as related employability behaviours. This approach keeps validation granular and transparent while also allowing learners to build recognition progressively over time.

The validation of such competencies must be grounded in observable performance criteria, rather than relying solely on attendance records or knowledge checks. Practitioners, employers, and European-level experts consistently stressed that credibility depends on seeing what a learner can do in realistic situations. For this reason, each credential unit should be associated with micro-evidence tasks, such as scenario responses, role-play performance, teamwork exercises, or short practical challenges, all documented through structured rubrics. In this way, assessment remains aligned with the strong cross-country preference for simulation and applied learning.

A complementary self-validation layer, facilitated by the SEQ Comp Cards, is strongly recommended to support reflection and learner agency. The Cards enable participants to monitor their own progress, compare self-perception with facilitator feedback, and collect structured evidence across modules. At the same time, badge descriptions should be written in employer-readable language so that the practical meaning of each credential is immediately clear. Credentials should also follow a stackable logic, whereby individual skill badges accumulate into broader competence profiles, enabling flexible pathways and progressive recognition.