Lifelong Learning Programme

Leonardo da Vinci Partnership

Development of Pan-European Competencies for Teachers of Deaf Through Partnership

FEAPDA

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Why this project?

The Issues

- *The underachievement and perceived exclusion of deaf children and young people across the European Union.*

- *The inconsistency and sometimes non-existence of appropriate education and support for families, young people and for schools.*

- *The right of each child to have access to the support and education that enables them to succeed.*

The Context

This project followed on from an earlier Comenius project in which the challenges for deaf young people during the secondary years were shared by partners from across Europe.

One outcome of that project identified that although teachers or educators of the deaf existed in each partner country, their level of qualification, expertise and roles were very different.

In some countries such as Denmark and England, the possession of a specialist qualification as a teacher of the deaf is mandatory. In others, there is no such requirement, nor even a clear specification of the knowledge, skills and understanding that teachers who specialise in working with deaf children should have.

It is well documented in research literature that families of children with hearing difficulties should have access to the right kind of support and information at the right time. Families, voluntary organisations and professionals across the European Union report very different access to such support.

The concept and benefit of a key worker who has a holistic approach to helping the family throughout their child's learning journey is also well documented and seen as central to the provision of effective services for disabled children and their families. For children who are deaf this role is fulfilled by the teacher of the deaf in some member states but is more ambiguous in others.

Do educators who specialise in working with deaf children and their families need specialist training, if so what should they be competent in and how can we check they have these skills?

Establishing the need for specialist training; identifying and sharing best practice

What were the challenges?	What did we do?
How many deaf babies, children and young people are there?	Through questionnaires, workshops, analysis of research papers and local surveys we reviewed the perceived need for the development of core competencies for Teachers of the Deaf.
If we don't know how many children there are it is difficult to estimate how many teachers of the deaf should be in place However many countries do not have data as to how many teachers are working as specialist teachers of deaf children nor what level of training they have.	In conjunction with partners and through a series of consultations and revisions developed an agreed set of core competencies.
What do all teachers working with deaf children need to know and be able to do and how do we train them for this role?	Conducted an online and face to face consultation process involving educators, parents and deaf people across both partners and wider EU Member States to review further the need for the competencies and the relevance of specific competencies.
How do we identify 'best practice' and how do we share it?	Establish a ''community of best practice' between partners ensuring that at every meeting elements of good practice were shared and observed wherever possible.

What did we find out?

" *Although there is agreement that newborn hearing screening is enabling deaf children to have improved communication skills, language and educational achievements, it is not uniformly available in Europe or even within individual member states.* "

" *Support for families was highly variable from country to country and within countries. Some families reported ready accessibility to professional advice immediately after diagnosis. Others indicated a lack of information, different messages for health, social care and education services as to the prognosis for their child.*

Families said:

You need someone to help you through it, to be there to talk to the school, audiology who understands what the hearing loss means for your child's development and future. "

" *We concluded that there is no regular pattern at all for the training and employment of Teachers of the Deaf. Our initial and subsequent surveys indicate uniform support for the development of a set of competencies which would be common across Europe would be beneficial.*

Most countries had no such list of competencies. "

" *As a result numbers of deaf children are not freely available nor is there data available in many member states as to how effectively they achieve or learn*
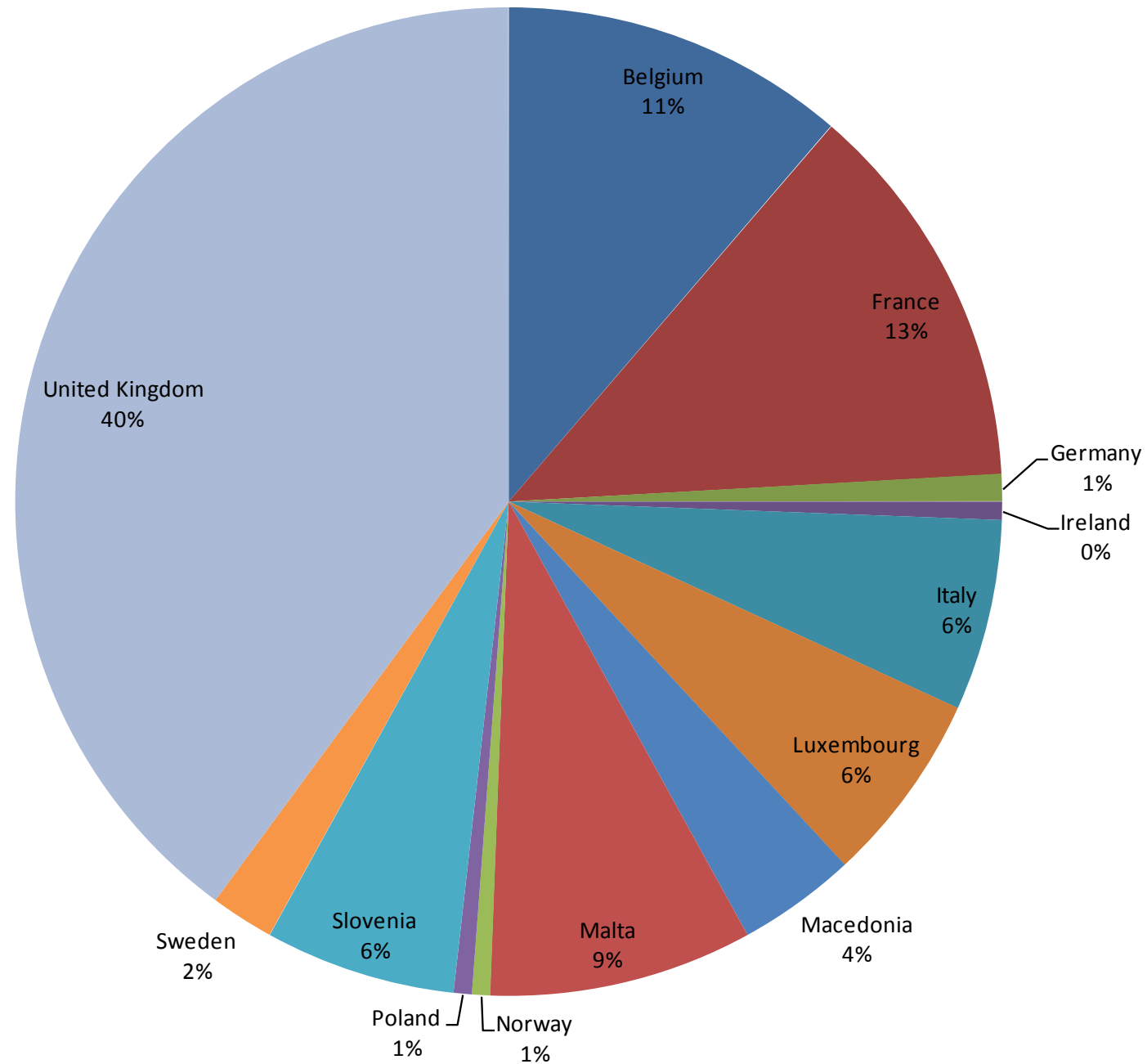
Also, there is much evidence of their underachievement in areas such as literacy. "

" *There was a wide variety of responses to the question about how many Teachers of the Deaf have a specialist qualification and whether this was mandatory*

There is huge variation in terms of numbers and qualification levels of Teachers of the deaf across the respondents' countries "

Who completed the survey and what did they say?

A total of 336 people completed the questionnaire, from 13 member states

Belgium 11%
France 13%
Germany 1%
Ireland 0%
Italy 6%
Luxembourg 6%
Macedonia 4%
Malta 9%
Norway 1%
Poland 1%
Slovenia 6%
Sweden 2%
United Kingdom 40%

96% of respondents said teachers of the deaf should hold a specialist qualification and all respondents agreed that teachers of the deaf should have specific competencies.
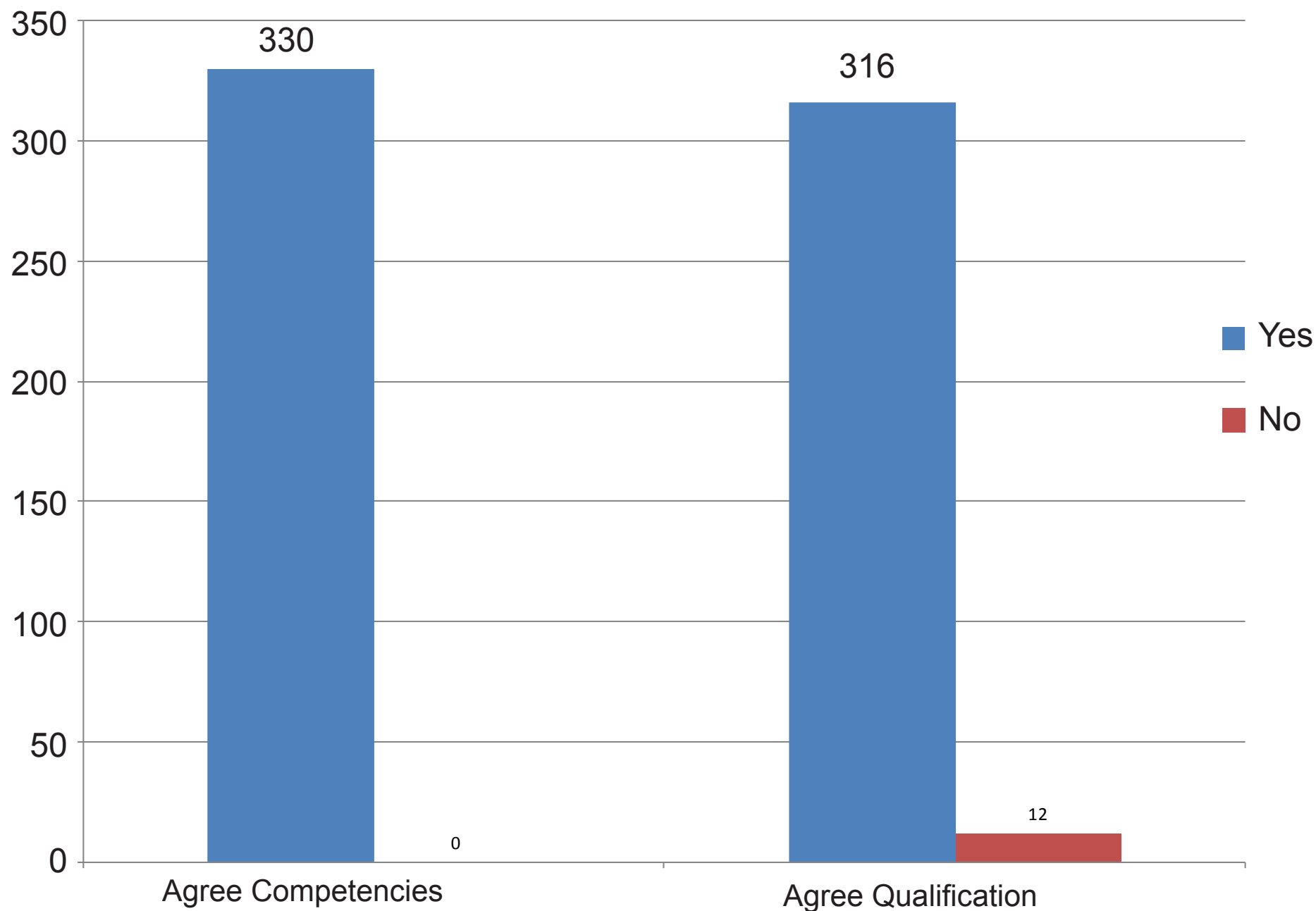
Overall responses
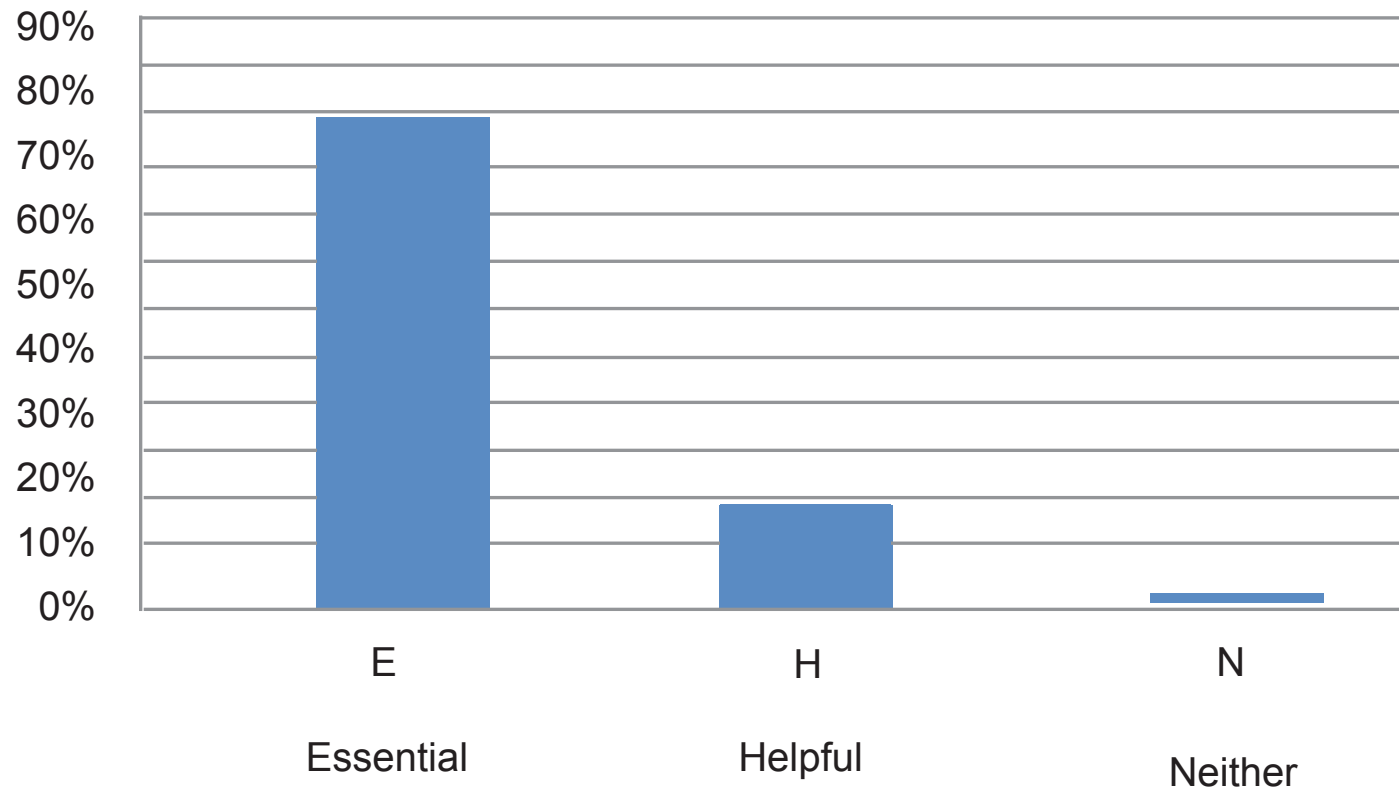
- *79% of all responses were in the Essential category*

- *Only 13 out of 87 competencies were considered essential by less than 70% of respondents*

- *All of these 13 were considered desirable by the vast majority of those who did not see them as essential*

Outcomes

We have a set of competencies that are agreed as essential by respondents across the European Union

We have other competencies which appear to be thought of by some as desirable and others as essential

A preliminary analysis reveals these differing views appear to be primarily linked to:

- *Whether teachers work in special schools or mainstream settings.*

- *If teachers had already undertaken some sort of specialist training, these teachers were more likely to see specific competencies as essential than those who had no formal specialist training.*

- *Differences according to the main approach to communication used in the respondent' place of work. Those working in auditory oral contexts considering the use of residual hearing competencies more essential than those working with total communication or sign language environments.*

However the vast majority of respondents in all of these contexts still considered all of the competencies essential.

What did people say about the competencies?

An Italian respondent said:

sono tutte competenze molto importanti, quasi tutte essenziali o quantomeno necessarie. è stata condotta una ricerca di competenze molto approfondita I think all of these competencies are very important, most of them are essential or at least necessary. I think a very thorough research has been done

An English respondent said:

Very detailed and useful. It clearly highlights the vast and specific skills/knowledge and understanding that Teachers of the Deaf require, in addition to their qualification as a Teacher

A Maltese respondent said :

The competencies cover several aspects and I agree that Teachers of the Deaf should be competent in all of them because the ultimate aim is to educate for life. The deaf student's potential should be maximized and all means should be exploited that are suitable for each.

A French Respondent said :

Il faut qu'elles soient reconnues... Et communs à tous les professionnels...

They need to be acknowledged ... and they should be common to all the professionals

A Flemish Respondent said :

De meeste competenties zijn relevant en het belang ervan mag zeker en vast niet onderschat worden!

Most of the competencies are relevant and their relevance should not be underestimated!

So what are our next steps?

- **To submit a full report to both our National Agencies and the European Union including the competencies**

- **To apply for a Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Grant to enable us to:**

    - *Conduct a larger scale survey including other member states to secure further validation of the competencies.*

    - *Develop resources and materials on line and with partners to enable educators working with deaf children to have access to training linked to the competencies.*

    - *Develop a skills ladder of qualifications linked to the competencies that will be recognised in all member states.*

Development of Pan-European Competencies for Teachers of the Deaf through Partnerships

Professional attributes and ability to work with other professionals and stakeholders

Competency Area A

1.	Learning, Access and Inclusion
A1	Have a clear commitment to inclusion in society, understanding what inclusive practice for deaf students looks like and what needs to be in place to secure it.
A2	Use information available about the achievements and well being of deaf children/students to measure the success of current approaches, policies and provision.
A3	Make well-founded evaluations of situations upon which they are asked to advise and offer advice that can be acted on.
A4	Understand the range of provision, resources and support available to deaf children, students and their families at different times in their lifelong learning journey and how to access these.
A5	Know the different placement options for deaf children/students in their own country, their criteria for admission, advantages and dis-advantages and how to evaluate their potential effectiveness.
A6	Understand the roles and responsibilities of a range of specialist services and agencies that work with deaf children/students and their families. These include the range of communication and learning support workers and technological support service.
A7	Contribute to reviews of provision and how well it matches needs, recognising their accountability to parents/carers, managers, local authority officers and/or inspectors.
A8	Reflect carefully on the progress of all deaf students they are responsible for, making recommendations as to the effectiveness of provision and what needs to change if necessary.
A9	Have advocacy skills and the confidence to use them in support of deaf children/students and their families.
A10	Keep up to date with research and innovations in practice including new technologies.

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Professional attributes and ability to work with other professionals and stakeholders

Competency Area A

2.	Working with other professionals and stakeholders
A11	Has strong communication, advisory and training skills that enable teachers, teaching assistants, families and other professionals to acquire skills and meet the needs of deaf children/students effectively.
A12	Have skills in and support skills of others in: The use (and modification) of materials and specialist equipment.
A13	The identification of deaf children/students' strengths and needs.
A14	The identification of targets or next steps for children/students and the devising of programmes to meet them.
A15	Act as a lead professional or keyworker for families and children where necessary, a) helping families to access services and express their views, b) co-ordinating the team working with the family so that the child/student's needs are met, c) ensuring that services for deaf children/students continue to improve.
A16	Recognises support staff's strengths and areas of improvement through sensitive and constructive feedback.
A17	Ensuring all professionals involved are clear about next steps for child/student and how this will be achieved.
A18	Provide information in ways which take account of family diversity and supports their ability to make informed choices.
A19	Deliver and/or help parents or others deliver the parents' choice of communication.
A20	Model, coach, encourage and work in partnership with the family and others so that the deaf child/student's linguistic development is optimised.
A21	Work collaboratively with colleagues, other specialists and parents/carers to assess and support deaf children/students to maximise their opportunities through joint planning, implementation of policies, evaluation of practices and reporting.
A22	Train and advise families and other professionals so that they can check, understand and use amplification equipment effectively.

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Knowledge and Understanding

Competency Area B

1.	Educational philosophy : education policy, human development, and curriculum theory and the application to deaf education
B1	Understand the different attitudes to inclusion and deafness including those related to deaf identity and deaf culture.
B2	Understand the potential educational, psychological, social and cultural implications of deafness.
B3	Understand the factors that contribute to securing optimum learning environments for all learners and steps that can be taken to make .
B4	Understand the curriculum, including the National Curriculum if in place, and its challenges for deaf children/students.
B5	Understand how language difficulties affect learning across the curriculum.
B6	Be familiar with regional, national and European legislation, policies, procedure and guidelines related to deaf children/students.

2.	Teaching Approaches and assessment for learning
B7	Know about the different teaching approaches that can be used with deaf children/students in order to meet the specific needs of deaf children/students in different educational settings.
B8	Have a detailed understanding of child development and learning and the challenges a hearing loss might present.
B9	Understand the relationship between language and literacy and how different approaches support reading and writing with deaf children/students.
B10	Know about the range of additional needs that a deaf children/students might have, including additional learning difficulties and how these may affect their development.
B11	Understand the range of ways in which learning and development (Including language and communication) can be assessed and how to identify learning priorities following assessment.
B12	Know about different approaches to supporting the wellbeing of deaf learners, including through personal, social and health education.

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Knowledge and Understanding

Competency Area B

3.	Communication and Language
B13	Understand how deaf children/students process auditory and visual information and how this might affect the teaching and learning approach.
B14	Understand the impact of deafness on the process of language acquisition and communication.
B15	Understand how communication difficulties might impact on the cognitive, emotional and social development of deaf children/students and the need for urgent intervention.
B16	Know how to support the deaf child/student's expressive and receptive language to enable them to access the curriculum more independently.
B17	Understand the full range of approaches to communication and how they support the development of spoken and/or sign language competence. For example: • Understand the different auditory oral approaches • Understand the range of sign language systems, including total communication approach and when and how to use them.
B18	Have knowledge of different programmes and technologies that can support language acquisition particularly where deaf children/students have additional needs.

4.	Working with parents/carers and other stakeholders
B19	Understand the rationale, principles, objectives, strategies and practices of working in partnership with families, stakeholders and other agencies.
B20	Understand and respect the diversity and uniqueness of each family and deaf child/student including their different challenges and strengths.
B21	Understand the variety of responses of parents following diagnosis of hearing impairment in deaf children and the potential impact that such a diagnosis may have on family life.

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Knowledge and Understanding

5.	Hearing and vision
B22	Have a detailed understanding of how we hear, the different types and degrees of hearing loss and how we measure these.
B23	Know about the range of different types of amplification devices available to support children's/student's use of residual hearing including hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM and other systems and how they might be used to meet individual need.
B24	Understand the stages of listening development and how to support and assess these.
B25	Know how to assess the listening and visual environments and make recommendations.
B26	Understand the importance of audiological review especially if there are concerns regarding the child/student's progress.
B27	Understand the role of vision in the communicative and other development of deaf children/students.

Development of Pan-European Competencies for Teachers of the Deaf through Partnerships
Professional Skills

1. Supporting Learning

C1	Teach a wide range of deaf children/students demonstrating high expectations for their learning and behaviour.
C2	Develop, implement and evaluate a range of approaches to help deaf children/students achieve agreed outcomes.
C3	Identify and anticipate the difficulties that **particular study areas present** for different children/students or groups.
C4	Support deaf children/student's literacy and numeracy development.

2. Assessment and assessment for learning

Use of assessments

C5	Use assessments to prioritise learning targets and support next steps, including writing personal learning plans, behaviour plans or education plans.
C6	Prepare and write accurate assessment reports, whose findings can be understood and used by teachers, other professionals, and parents/carers.
C7	Include deaf children/students and their parents/carers in assessment and target setting processes and procedures, ensuring that they contribute to and understand what targets are set and why.

Language Development

C8	Use a range of appropriate procedures (formal and informal) to assess and evaluate all aspects of children/student's communication and language development (spoken and/or signed).
C9	Have skills in observing and promoting very early communicative behaviour in deaf babies and young children, including supporting the skills and understandings of families/carers.

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Professional Skills

	Educational development
C10	Assess, monitor and evaluate the deaf child/student's progress in all aspects of the curriculum, including the national curriculum where in place.
C11	Assess, monitor and evaluate the deaf child/student's learning attitude and thinking skills.
	Personal, social and emotional development
C12	Assess and monitor the social and emotional wellbeing of deaf children/students, including their behaviour.
C13	Assess and monitor the self help and independence skills of deaf children/students, including their independent learning behaviour.
C14	Advise and support families and schools in providing environments and experiences that support the child's emotional wellbeing.
C15	Provide targeted support on key skills and at key times, such as transition that smooth the child/student's individual learning journey.

3.	Curriculum Access and Inclusion
C16	Differentiate mainstream curriculum and personalise provision to match and develop the abilities of deaf child/students.
C17	Foster perseverance and concentration by structuring tasks and learning so that learners are clear about what is expected of them and why.
C18	Help deaf children/students become independent and take responsibility for their own learning.
C19	Use effective strategies to promote positive behaviour, manage difficult situations in accordance with the school/setting's policy on discipline and the deaf child/student's needs.
C20	Promote and support knowledge and skills related to personal, social and health education, and sex and relationship education.
C21	Use strategies to overcome barriers created by additional learning needs such as limited cognitive ability and other disabilities in conjunction with hearing loss.

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Professional Skills

Competency Area C

4.	Communication and Language
	Are able to :
C22	Design and implement a coherent communication programme based on known best practice in relation to the deaf child/student's language/communication choice and needs
C23	Provide a wide range of opportunities for the development of receptive and expressive language to age appropriate levels as swiftly and fully as possible
C24	Support language acquisition and extension in all lessons regardless of the subject being taught
C25	Acquire sign language skills to a required minimum level, and beyond this, wherever there are sign language users on their caseload or in their class

5	Maximising use of residual hearing and vision
C26	Enable deaf children/students to make optimal use of their listening and speech reading skills
C27	Carry out listening checks of personal hearing aids and other equipment
C28	Carry out electro acoustic checks of personal hearing aids and other amplification equipment and interpret data related to this
C29	Make functional checks of earmould condition and suitability
C30	Evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the deaf child/students' amplification package for the different listening environments in which they are placed

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Professional Skills

C31	Use personal amplification and assistive devices to best support inclusion and the child/students' learning in a particular lesson.
C32	Identify and link the most effective technology/devices to support access to auditory and visual information for a specific child/student and environment.
C33	Use a range of educational technology effectively and demonstrate its use to others.
C34	Develop listening programmes for individual children/students and monitor their implementation.
C35	Evaluate the deaf child/student's listening development, making recommendations and referrals to audiology and other professionals where appropriate.
	The listening and visual environment
Are able to :	
C36	Assess and recommend adaptations to the physical environment of classrooms and homes in order to meet the needs of deaf children/students.
C37	Evaluate the acoustic (listening) environment and know how to adapt it to support access and inclusion.
C38	Advise and support families in creating a facilitative listening and visual environment.

The Leonardo da Vinci project