

Catalogue of Family Support Skills - Core and field specific family support skills: The position of EurofamNet



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EurofamNet is a pan-European family support network currently funded as a COST Action by the COST Association aimed to inform family policies and practices towards the ultimate goal of ensuring children's rights and families' well-being. EurofamNet is doing so by building collaborations between researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, children and families, public and private agencies, and general society.

The EurofamNet WG4 is committed to the development of a standardisation framework on skills and has conducted several studies to identify and reach agreement on the set of skills classifications for family support workforce, required for quality performance. This policy brief presents the Catalogue of Family Support Skills, which was developed in collaboration between academics, professionals, practitioners, and stakeholders. Catalogue strives to systematize, classify, present and describe family support workforce core and field specific skills in social welfare, education, mental health, medicine, and law in an illustrative way. It is intended for professionals and stakeholders that work with families in different areas of work to improve skills and knowledge in family support.

This document is collected within the work of EurofamNet **WG4 "Developing a standardisation framework on skills"**. For further information visit: <https://eurofamnet.eu/working-groups/wg4>

Key messages

The skills for family support could be applied in different fields and approaches. It is important to distinguish them from other skills used in helping, rights-based or protective contexts. Based on the consensus reached among experts during the WG4 research process, the following definition of family support workforce skills is proposed:

"Family support workforce skills is learned ability to work collaboratively while supporting different aspects of family functioning and the ability to use knowledge effectively and readily while serving families using holistic, strengths, rights and relationship-based approach."

- ▶ **Catalogue presents** definitions, explanations, and examples of behaviour for a set of core and field-specific family support skills, necessary knowledge, theoretical approaches, personal traits, and a combination (here mentioned as amalgam) of family support workers' qualities across professions and settings (i.e., social welfare, education, mental health, medicine, law), which all together are essential for good-quality, effective and efficient family support.
- ▶ **Set of core skills for family support workers across different professions and settings are** partnership and collaboration, empathic skills; advocacy and empowerment skills, good listening, problem solving, building trust and confidence, and user-friendly communication (Figure 1).

Key messages

- ▶ **Across different professions and settings**, a set of field-specific skills for family support workers was outlined as the most frequently identified in the areas of social welfare (advocacy and empowerment skills, partnership and collaboration, the set of empathic skills, and problem solving) education (partnership and collaboration, the set of empathic skills, and building trust and confidence), medicine (informing and referral, user-friendly communication, and building trust and confidence), mental health (partnership and collaboration, user-friendly communication, the set of empathic skills, and managing crisis) and law (documentation and reporting, informing and referral, and advocacy and empowerment skills) (Figure 2).
- ▶ **Particular approaches** such as: the whole family approach, strengths-based approach, relationship-based approach, and child-centred approach are essential for effective performance of the core family support skills.
- ▶ **Core personal traits of family support workers**, which are considered innate or acquired early, and which can be developed and improved through experiences, learning and multi-faceted self- development, are integrity, commitment, and flexibility.
- ▶ **Combination (amalgam) of family support workers' qualities** across different professions and settings represents a mix of different features (skills, personal traits, qualities) important for quality family support. Ethical stance and conduct, empathy and compassion, engagement with family members and professionals, management of emotionally demanding situations, along with non-judgmental stance, are these features.
- ▶ **Model of family support skills** (Figure 3) strives to present plausible interaction between core and field specific skills, knowledge, approaches, personal traits, and amalgam qualities of family support workforce.

Figure 1. Set of core skills for family support workers across different professions and settings

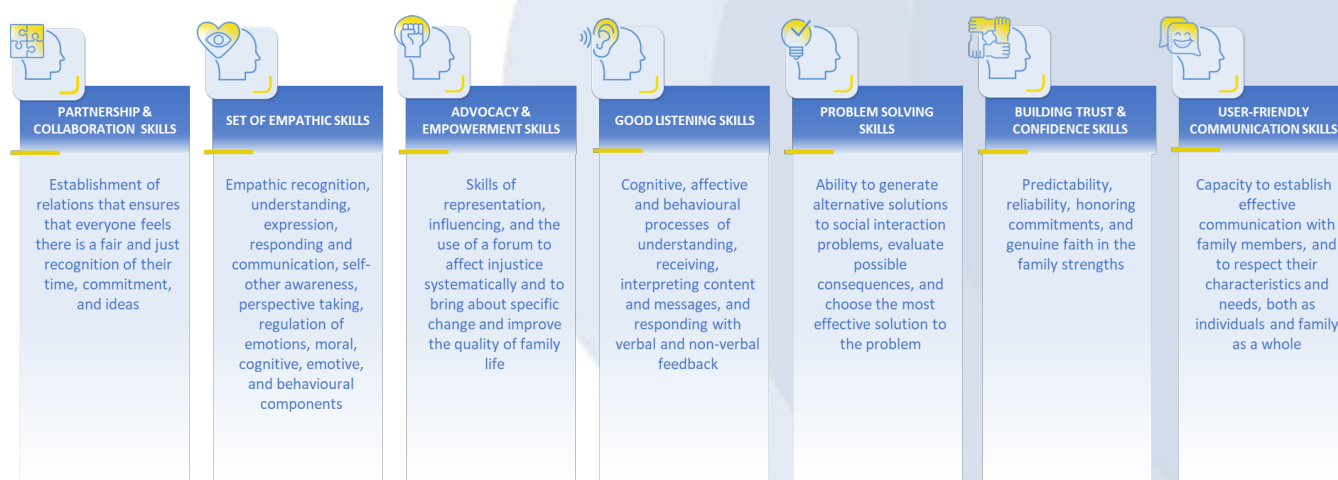


Figure 2. The set of core and key field-specific skills for family support workers

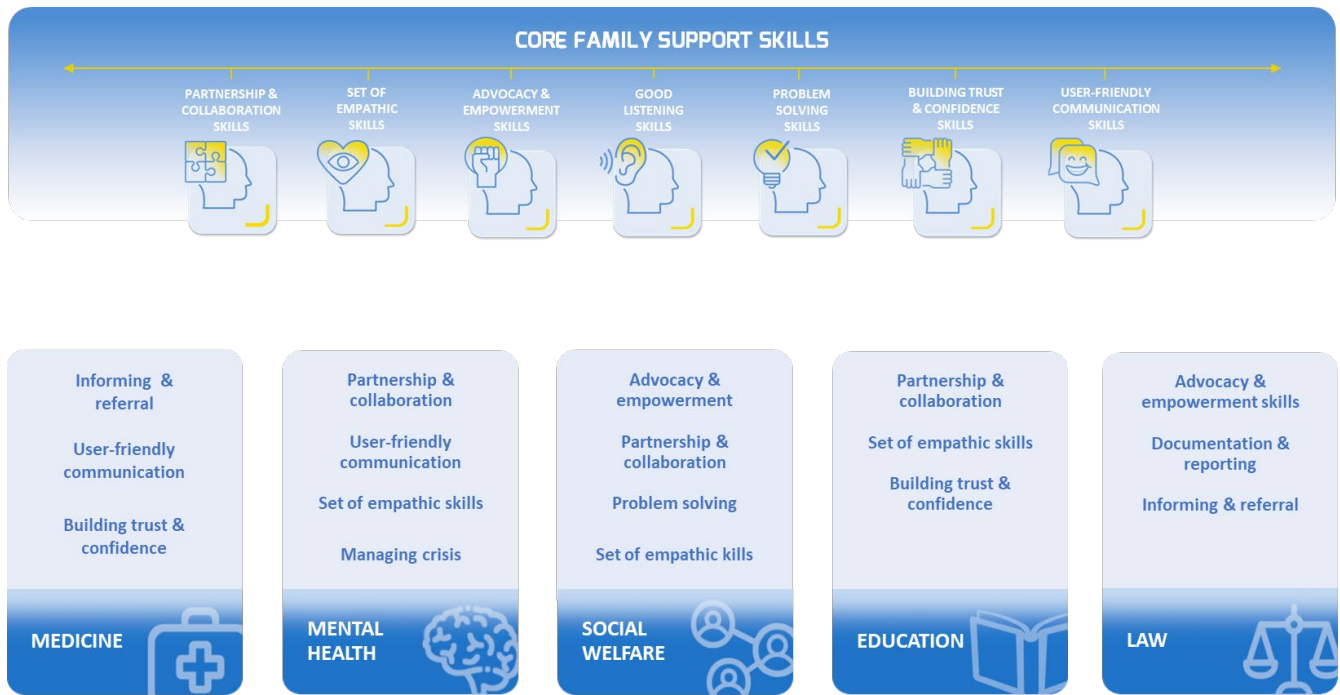


Figure 3. Model of family support skills



Implications

Policy implications	Practical implications	Challenges
<p>Tracing the path for family support workforce skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Progressive family support policies require competent and skilled professionals, policies regarding education, development of professional competences, and the design of family supportive organizations and services.	<p>Empowering tomorrow's providers and enhancing professional competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Empowering practitioners through training, education, and professional development.▶ Empowering practitioners throughout organizational changes in services and sectors is key to future advancement in family support practice.	<p>Evidence-based practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Improve research knowledge about the acquisition, maintenance, and transferability of family support skills.▶ Learn more about the family support process in different practice settings.▶ Including the voices of families and children in the knowledge base.



Additional Resources

Antunes, A. P., Avirovic Bundalevska, I., & Radulovic, M. (2021). *A review of books and handbooks related to the workforce skills in family support*. EurofamNet.

Buciuceanu-Vrabie, M., Mešl, N., Žegarac, N., & Kodele, T. (2023). Skills in Family Support: Content Analysis of International Organizations' Websites. *Quality of Life, 34*(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.46841/RCV.2023.01.02>

Burgund, A., Nunes, C., Zegarac, N., & Antunes, A. (2021). *Systematic review of Family Support workforce skills: conceptualization, process, and findings*. EurofamNet. https://eurofamnet.eu/system/files/wg4_systematicreviewworkforceskills_0.pdf

Mešl, N., Polić Penavić, S., Žegarac, N., Antunes, A., Radulović, M., Martins, C. & Nunes, C. (2023). *Catalogue of family support skills*. EurofamNet.

Zegarac, N., Burgund Isakov, A., Nunes, C., & Antunes, A. P. (2021). Workforce skills in family support: A Systematic review. *Research on Social Work Practice, 31*(4), 400–409. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315211006184>



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