

Daria ROGOWSKA¹

ORCID: 0000-0001-8019-7365

Professional Competences in the Labour Market: Selected Development Perspectives

Kompetencje zawodowe na rynku pracy: wybrane perspektywy rozwojowe

*“Work is an essential human need — a need for the affirmation of life,
self-expression, and the establishment of relationships with other people.*

*In this sense, it makes a human being (an individual)
a truly human person; it humanises.”*

R. Lewandowski

*“The European labour market is subject to continuous transformations
as a result of social, economic, and political processes occurring
at both local and global levels.”*

M. Onufer

Introduction

The contemporary labour market generates significant challenges for various groups of employees. The subject matter addressed in this study is presented in the perspective of the future and emerging labour market trends.

¹ Daria Rogowska, MA, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, Poland, e-mail: daria-rogowska1@wp.pl

It includes both young people who are still in the process of education and individuals who have already completed their formal education and are just beginning their professional careers.

The relevance of this topic is also evident from the perspective of educational planning. As noted in the literature: *“The twenty-first century brings rapid economic, social, and political changes worldwide. These changes entail numerous consequences, including the erosion of existing, well-established labour market structures”* (Makuch, 2014). This statement can be complemented by identifying key trends in the labour market and business environment in the coming years. The selected trends are presented below:

- **Dynamic organisation:** In the context of this trend, the key factor shaping the labour market and business environment is the ability of organisations to adapt to technological and organisational changes. Companies operating in highly innovative technological environments will remain competitive and will offer attractive employment conditions. As a result, their competitive advantage is expected to strengthen.
- **AI-Fueled Business:** In the coming years, artificial intelligence and technological solutions will become a key component of business processes. Their implementation will lead to automation and increased work efficiency. Organisations that integrate AI-based technologies into their strategies will gain a competitive advantage and greater development opportunities.
- **Adaptation of hybrid work models:** Hybrid work will become a standard organisational model. Its implementation will require advanced managerial competences in planning, organising, and coordinating teamwork. At the same time, the importance of factors such as organisational location or employee availability will gradually decrease in favour of organisational flexibility.
- **Big data:** The use of large datasets will be one of the key factors supporting decision-making processes in business. Organisations using advanced data analytics will be better able to adapt to changing market conditions. Consequently, information technologies, HR processes, and data analytics will become increasingly integrated into organisational activities.
- **Employee Journey:** The concept of the “employee journey” refers to the holistic experience of an employee within an organisation from

recruitment to the end of employment. In the future, it will constitute an important element of human resource management, covering both recruitment processes and the planning of employee development and career paths.

- **Lifelong Learning:** Continuous improvement of competences and acquisition of new skills will become a standard feature of professional functioning. In a dynamically changing labour market, lifelong learning will be a necessary condition for maintaining employment and developing one's professional career.
- **Intelligent Leadership:** Modern leadership will require the combination of analytical and soft competences. Decision-making processes will increasingly be data-driven while simultaneously taking into account emotional and social aspects, including empathy towards employees.
- **Talent retention and internal mobility:** Talent retention and the promotion of internal employee mobility will become key elements of human resource management strategies. Organisations will design career paths enabling competence development and internal promotion, which may lead to increased employee satisfaction and reduced turnover.
- **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** Employee assistance programmes focus on providing support in the area of mental health and employee well-being. They enable access to professional support from specialists such as psychologists or career advisors (Syrówka, 2025).

The presented trends indicate that the contemporary labour market is increasingly dependent on employees' ability to adapt, learn, and function in a digital environment. Therefore, it is reasonable to reflect on professional competences and their importance in the perspective of the future, as professional activity constitutes an essential part of human life. Due to the dynamic changes occurring in the labour market, this issue is also becoming particularly relevant in the context of education and preparation for future professional activity.

The aim of this article is to present selected perspectives on professional competences and expectations towards employees in the context of dynamic changes taking place in the contemporary labour market. The research problem focuses on identifying which professional competences will be of key importance in the context of social, technological, and organisational transformations shaping the functioning of the labour market in the coming years.

The article has a review character and is based on the desk research method, including the analysis of literature and selected electronic sources, including research reports on professional competences and labour market trends. The analysis covered selected monographs, scientific articles, and expert reports published mainly between 2018 and 2025.

Professional competences. Outline of the issue

When discussing professional competences, it is first necessary to present their general definitional approach. In the literature, professional competences are understood as an individual's resources that enable effective performance of job-related tasks assigned to a given position. It is also emphasised that the execution of professional duties requires the use of one or more competences, as their scope may refer both to single activities and to more complex configurations of tasks (Dziewulski, Dudzińska-Głaz, 2006).

Various typologies of professional competences are distinguished in the literature. Taking this diversity into account, three basic types within one commonly adopted classification are presented below. Their characteristics are summarised in Table 1 based on the study by Żeber-Dzikowska and Olczak (2014).

Tabela 1. Typologies of professional competences are distinguished in the literature

Type of competence	Description of skills
Core competences	Represent a common requirement for all employees within an organisation. Their primary function is to shape and strengthen organisational culture. They may also serve as a reference point for comparing employees' competences within a given organisation.
Function-specific competences	Relate to skills specific to particular areas of organisational activity and job functions, such as marketing, sales, or quality analysis. They enable comparison of employees within a given organisational unit and support processes related to career planning and professional development.
Role-specific competences	Include competences assigned to particular professional roles (e.g. managerial positions). They are used to compare employees at the same organisational level and support the design of horizontal promotion systems and differentiation of roles within the organisational structure.

Source: Own elaboration based on: Żeber-Dzikowska, G., Olczak, I. (2014). Competences in the labour market in contemporary times. *Society. Education. Language*, 2, 162.

Clarifying the above considerations, it should be emphasised that the purpose of competence development covers two main areas. The first is the labour market and its resulting needs, which may be described as a utilitarian perspective. The second relates to the autotelic nature of competences, referring to their importance in the context of individual self-development (Strojny, Nowak, Hetmańczyk, Malaka and Skrzek, 2021).

In the literature, Bombiak (2014) identifies a number of characteristic features of professional competences. One of their key properties is dynamism, understood as the ability of competences to change over time. Competences develop along with an individual's professional experience, while the pace of their evolution depends on environmental conditions, individual predispositions, and intellectual level. As the author emphasises, professional competences are closely linked to the performance of job duties and tasks assigned to employees. Another feature is their measurability and observability, which means they can be identified and assessed in professional practice.

Moreover, professional competences are characterised by synergy, understood as their mutual reinforcement, leading to higher outcomes than when used in isolation. Another feature is relativity, meaning that their value and significance become apparent in specific situational contexts of professional life.

An important property of competences is also their transformability, which refers to the possibility of applying the same competences in different areas of professional activity, not only within a single profession. Another key feature is their subjectivity, resulting from their linkage with the individual employee, the work team, and the employing organisation.

Professional competences in the context of future expectations. A review of perspectives

As emphasised by Dach (2011), one of the key factors shaping the process of globalisation, which simultaneously affects labour markets, is the development of production, information, and communication technologies. Changes occurring in the technological sphere influence transformations in the structure of labour demand and, consequently, also affect the scope of required qualifications and employee competences.

Kwiatkowski (2018) notes that "the concept of future competences is naturally associated with foreseeable directions of civilisational change.

These changes will concern all spheres of life. They can be predicted based on analyses of the dynamics of selected technological developments observed, for example, over the last decade.”

Extending the discussion presented in this study, selected future competences can be examined through the lens of the classification proposed by Komuda (2023). This classification is summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Selected future competences and their types identified as ‘very important’ in the literature review

Type of competence	Specification
Cognitive	In the literature on future cognitive competences, particular importance is attributed to skills such as unconventional thinking, creativity in problem-solving, analytical skills in the context of technology use, decision-making abilities involving risk analysis and assessment, as well as design thinking in teamwork.
Technical	In the area of technical competences, key importance in the future will be attributed to: proficiency in the use of digital and interactive media, programming competences, and the ability to work with robotic systems and their integration within the work environment.
Social	In the area of social competences, there is an increasing emphasis on lifelong learning, effective teamwork in virtual environments, social intelligence, readiness to work in culturally diverse settings, social agility, and the ability to manage information overload.

Source: Own elaboration based on Komuda, Ł. (2023). *Future competences. Which skills are worth developing*. Warsaw: Foundation for Social and Economic Initiatives.

The analysis of the presented competences indicates that the contemporary labour market is increasingly moving away from a model based exclusively on technical qualifications. Growing importance is attributed to adaptive and social competences, as well as the ability to learn, which may indicate a progressive hybridisation of professional requirements.

The above typology can be supplemented by findings presented in the report *Future Competences. How to Develop Them in a Flexible Educational Ecosystem*. According to its authors, in relation to technical and digital competences, research shows that by 2030, individuals working in Europe will spend over 40% more time on tasks requiring this type of skills (Włoch, Śledziwska, 2019).

At the same time, the cited report emphasises that these competences will remain the domain of relatively small groups of employees. Notably, an increase in demand for IT and programming skills is also expected. It is estimated at approximately 90%. Furthermore, demand for competences related to problem-solving, information retrieval and analysis, as well as the use of digital technologies in everyday professional activities, is projected to increase to approximately 65%.

According to the analyses presented in the report, in relation to social competences, an increase in demand of around 22% is expected in areas such as entrepreneurship and the ability to take initiative. In turn, in the area of cognitive (higher order) competences, interest in these skills is projected to grow by approximately 14%.

At the same time, a decline in the importance of competences related to basic data processing is observed, which confirms the trend of labour market shifts towards more complex and advanced analytical and digital skills.

Further literature review indicates the necessity of taking into account the development of e-services and dynamically evolving processes within the digital environment, which relate to various areas of individual functioning. In this context, competences related to the use of the Internet and online environments are gaining particular importance in the future perspective.

The *Poland Development Strategy until 2035* emphasises that “the development of digital competences is essential in the context of rapid technological change, labour market automation, and the growing role of a data-driven economy.” In the literature, digital competences include, among others, the creation of digital content, data utilisation, information exchange skills, digital security awareness, as well as problem-solving in digital environments.

In recent years, an intensive development of technologies based on artificial intelligence (AI) has also been observed. These include both software systems and devices designed for data analysis, interpretation, and processing. Such technologies support the implementation of complex decision-making and operational processes based on previously defined assumptions.

Artificial intelligence-based tools are perceived as particularly attractive from the perspective of available and potential technological solutions they offer to contemporary society (Rzepka, Czerwińska, Boiko, Witkowski and Czerwiński, 2025). Considering the longer-term perspective in relation to the above findings, it may be emphasised that one of the key characteristics of the labour market in 2035 will be its progressive virtualisation. The structures of functional and role-based dependencies within organisations will increasingly take a horizontal form.

Consequently, it can be indicated that multidimensional organisational activities, including employee recruitment, internal team communication, and the execution of assigned tasks, will increasingly rely on internet-based solutions. This also applies to building relationships with the external business environment, as well as sales processes, which will be carried out in an online environment, using its extensive capabilities.

Research conducted by the Polish Economic Institute indicates that, in one of the visions of the labour market in 2035, transformative competences will play a particularly important role. As the authors of the report emphasise, these include: “the ability to adapt to new conditions, including highly unstable and uncertain ones, taking responsibility for assigned tasks (as well as one’s position in the labour market), and reconciling tensions and resolving dilemmas related, among others, to complex forms of employment (potentially with several entities simultaneously)” (Dębkowska et al., 2022). In the context of labour market forecasts, the growing importance of universal competences can also be identified, including self-initiative, critical thinking, and flexibility in undertaken activities. Furthermore, future-oriented analyses also highlight the significance of stress management skills and the ability to integrate various competences and apply them effectively in professional activity (Wiśniewska, Rosiak-Ogłaza, 2025).

Conclusion

Summarising the considerations presented in this article, it should be stated that professional competences constitute an inseparable element of individuals’ career paths in the labour market. In the context of the discussed issues, it should be noted that significant systemic transformations in the

labour market are expected in the coming years, affecting a substantial part of the global workforce.

According to available analyses, these changes will concern approximately 152 million jobs, affecting around 23% of 673 million economically active individuals. At the same time, research indicates that a decline in global employment of approximately 2% may occur in the longer term, which corresponds to a reduction of around 14 million jobs.

However, the most recent forecasts also point to compensatory processes. It is anticipated that up to approximately 69 million new jobs may be created in the near future (Syrówka, 2025), which indicates a simultaneous transformation of the employment structure and dynamic changes in the labour market.

It should undoubtedly be emphasised that, in the context of rapid changes occurring in labour markets and current trends, the development of a broadly understood range of competences becomes crucial. This results from several key factors. Above all, it includes the necessity of meeting labour market requirements, as well as enabling individuals to achieve their own professional goals and maintain employment.

In this context, it should also be noted that the process of acquiring new competences is closely linked to the concept of lifelong learning, understood as a voluntary and continuous learning process undertaken after the completion of formal education. As Opiela (2019) notes, lifelong learning refers to learning throughout one's entire life and includes the acquisition of knowledge both within formal and non-formal education systems. The first refers to institutions within the education system and higher education, while the second encompasses educational activities carried out outside the formal state education system.

Considering the issues presented in this article, potential directions for further research can also be identified. In particular, these may concern the analysis of individuals' competences in the context of their career paths and related changes. Another possible research area includes the analysis of professional competences in the context of future occupations. This could be complemented by comparative studies on projected demand for professional competences in national and international labour markets, in relation to competency requirements placed on employees.

Abstract: The aim of this article is to present selected perspectives on professional competences and expectations towards employees in the context of dynamic transformations taking place in the contemporary labour market. The research problem focuses on identifying which competences will be of key importance in the context of social, technological, and organisational changes shaping the labour market in the coming years. The article has a review character and is based on the desk research method. The analysis included selected scientific studies, research reports, and electronic sources concerning professional competences and labour market trends, published mainly between 2018 and 2025. The article presents selected trends occurring in the labour market as well as development directions within the business sector, referring, among others, to the report *Future. Labour Market and Professions of the Future 2025*. The paper also discusses the concept of professional competences, their typology, characteristics, and significance in human resource management processes. Particular attention is devoted to future competences, indicating the growing importance of cognitive, technical, social, and digital competences in the conditions of ongoing technological transformation. Furthermore, forecasts concerning the demand for specific competences in the perspective of the years 2030–2035 are presented. The conducted analysis demonstrates that the contemporary labour market is increasingly oriented towards adaptive, digital, and social competences, which is associated with the necessity for lifelong learning and continuous adjustment to changing employment conditions.

Keywords: professional competences, future competences, labour market, labour market trends, digital competences, lifelong learning

Streszczenie. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie wybranych perspektyw dotyczących kompetencji zawodowych oraz oczekiwań wobec pracowników w kontekście dynamicznych przemian zachodzących na współczesnym rynku pracy. Problem badawczy koncentruje się wokół próby określenia, które kompetencje będą miały kluczowe znaczenie w perspektywie zmian społecznych, technologicznych i organizacyjnych determinujących funkcjonowanie rynku pracy w najbliższych latach. Artykuł ma charakter przeglądowy i został opracowany z wykorzystaniem metody desk research. Analizie poddano wybrane opracowania naukowe, raporty badawcze oraz źródła elektroniczne dotyczące kompetencji zawodowych i trendów rynku pracy, opublikowane głównie w latach 2018–2025. W artykule przedstawiono wybrane trendy zachodzące na rynku pracy oraz kierunki rozwoju w obszarze biznesowym, odwołując się m.in. do raportu *Future. Rynek pracy i zawody przyszłości 2025*. Omówiono również pojęcie kompetencji zawodowych, ich typologię, charakterystykę oraz znaczenie w procesach zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono kompetencjom przyszłości, wskazując na rosnące znaczenie kompetencji poznawczych,

technicznych, społecznych oraz cyfrowych w warunkach postępującej transformacji technologicznej. Zaprezentowano także prognozy dotyczące zapotrzebowania na określone kompetencje w perspektywie lat 2030–2035. Przeprowadzona analiza wskazuje, że współczesny rynek pracy zmierza w kierunku wzrostu znaczenia kompetencji adaptacyjnych, cyfrowych i społecznych, co wiąże się z koniecznością ciągłego uczenia się oraz dostosowywania do zmieniających się warunków zatrudnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: kompetencje pracownicze, kompetencje przyszłości, rynek pracy, trendy rynku pracy, kompetencje cyfrowe, lifelong learning

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