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Assessing Human Resource Competencies in the Logistics and Transport Sector: A Case Study of the Baltic States

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Abstract

The article analyses employees' competencies in the logistics and transport sector in the Baltic countries - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Based on the assessment of 8 key competencies (including communication in native and foreign languages, digital competence, entrepreneurship, assimilation of new knowledge, etc.), an analysis of three organisational levels (employees, managers, management) was conducted. The results reveal significant differences between countries and organisational levels in the approach to the importance of competencies. Estonia stands out as a leader in digital and technological maturity. In Latvia, a consistent orientation towards learning and intercultural skills is observed, whereas in Lithuania, employees' identity competencies dominate, but management does not emphasise them. Cultural, structural, and managerial factors that determine the devaluation or recognition of competencies are discussed. The article emphasises that competencies must be developed at all organisational levels, integrated into strategic planning, and assessed not only as functions, but also as value and cultural foundations of organisations.

Keywords

human resources, competencies, logistics, transport sector in the Baltic countries

1 Introduction

Implementing Fourth Industrial Revolution technology and meeting employers' expectations, as well as addressing the labour market and sustainable development, pose new challenges for workers, particularly in terms of their knowledge and skills. The changes that occurred during the Industrial Revolution have always impacted (Boldizsár, 2024a, 2024b) the labour market and the competency needs of workers. The same can be said about the latest industrial revolution, in which the human factor played a significant role, mainly because the role of humans in digital reality posed new challenges (Kowal et al., 2022). However, there are also business sectors where the human factor will remain very important, and digitalisation will remain only an auxiliary tool to make timely decisions.

Therefore, the effective utilisation of human resources is crucial for the company's success. According to Alebiosu et al. (2022), organisations increasingly rely on the competencies of managers to ensure the optimal use of their human resources. However, due to several problems, companies lag in some areas in realising the benefits of managerial competencies. To address the shortcomings, Alebiosu et al. (2022) examine the influence of managerial competencies on employee behavioural outcomes, where recurring obstacles were identified that hinder managers from learning and developing. Among these obstacles are a lack of leadership, low or absent awareness, insufficient cost-benefit analysis, inadequate budget and resource allocation, ineffective communication, a lack of specificity in competencies, and a rigid bureaucratic structure (Alebiosu et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the meaningful relationship between organisational culture and employee performance is another important objective that aims to investigate how organisational culture affects the stress experienced by employees in the workplace and influences their performance (Kim and Jung, 2022).

However, it is also necessary to assess how employee competency development affects the efficiency of green energy use in organisations and how this activity supports the sustainable development of companies. In this regard, the results of research conducted by Kocot et al. (2024) show a significant relationship between the level of flexibility of employee competencies and energy efficiency in

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companies. Additionally, it is noted that most companies achieve better results by adopting only flexible practices (Kocot et al., 2024).

Therefore, the consistent mediating effect of a company's development competencies and emotional commitment practices on the relationship between organisational culture (supportive culture and goal-oriented culture) and employee turnover intentions is important (Palma-Moreira et al., 2024).

Given the recent events (COVID-19, geopolitical, etc.), it can be argued that remote work is a new business reality that involves adapting leadership styles to work effectively in a virtual environment. Technology-enabled leadership, also known as e-leadership, is a promising alternative to the traditional norm of remote work (Alkhayyal and Bajaba, 2023).

In recent years, researchers and organisations have increasingly focused on understanding how various aspects of the work environment affect employee well-being, recognising its critical impact on organisational performance and employee satisfaction. Results show that physical and social aspects of the work environment, intrinsic job characteristics, and prospects contribute significantly to employee well-being and the development of personal competencies. Key organisational factors, such as job autonomy and management (Rožić et al., 2025), support and enhance the work experience. Findings suggest that improving workplace conditions and relationships can positively impact employee well-being, with broader implications for organisational productivity and employee retention (Dumitriu et al., 2025), as well as performance.

Considering that human resource competencies are not a new subject of research from a scientific point of view, scientific works allow us to identify that their examination is multifaceted:

- Some researchers have investigated the influence of employee development practices on intellectual capital through knowledge management, and it has been stated that employee development practices have a significant effect on human capital, knowledge management, and social capital. The results reveal that knowledge management had a significant effect on human capital, but not on social capital. Finally, Al-Tit et al. (2022) state that knowledge management significantly mediated the effect of employee development practices on human capital (Al-Tit et al., 2022).
- Gąsior et al. (2021) identified hierarchies of importance of employee competencies. According to managers, the most important personal competencies are diligence, professionalism, and work ethic, as well as time management and kindness. Leadership competencies, IT skills, process management, and foreign language skills are the least important. Representatives of educational institutions believe that the most important is the entire set of interpersonal skills (Shah and Long, 2009), and the least important are those divided into the "leadership" category. Additionally, a gap in the perception of these competencies was identified among both groups (Gąsior et al., 2021).
- Organisations constantly strive to improve and adapt in today's ever-changing market environment. Supriya et al., (2023) focuses on uncovering the connections between various employee skills, knowledge, talents, and attitudes, such as technical expertise, interpersonal communication, flexibility, problem-solving, leadership, and emotional intelligence, and their impact on key organisational performance indicators. According to the study's author, understanding this connection is crucial for making informed strategic decisions and sustainable long-term growth (Supriya et al.,2023).
- Some scientific articles delve into the important topic of employee competencies and their impact on organisational performance, examining the role of competencies in ensuring sustainable competitive advantages for organisations (Suta, 2023).
- When assessing the impact of employee competencies on the economy, the following issues were identified in the WOS articles:
  1. competency aspects of employee performance assessment (Kharub et al., 2025);
  2. integrated models of competency development in organisations (De Vos et al., 2015);
  3. prospects of Industry 4.0 and its impact on competencies (Hornáková et al., 2020);
  4. the impact of digital competencies on innovative work behaviour of remote workers (Liu et al., 2024);
  5. employee competencies required for MIS implementation (Praj et al., 2025);
  6. the impact of digitalisation on the development of competencies and changing needs in the labour market (Roman et al., 2025);
  7. knowledge management through competencies (Martins at al., 2021), etc.
- The competences of transport sector (Boldizsár, 2024a, 2024b; Liachovičius et al., 2023) workers were examined in WOS publications from the following aspects:
  1. the impact of digital technologies on the labour market and the transport sector (Chinoracky and Corejova 2019);

2. the importance of employee qualifications given by employers (Smith and Ridoutt);
3. mathematical and ICT competence requirements in the Transport and Vehicle Maintenance and Repair study fields (Hasková et al., 2021);
4. professional foreign language proficiency (Vintere et al., 2019);
5. results of the KNOW-IN project for the training of road transport managers (Todorova et al., 2016);
6. synergy of technological development and logistics (Bajor et al., 2024; Beškovnik and Jakomin, 2010) cooperation of road transport companies (Vaiciute et al., 2022);
7. skills and employment opportunities in air transport (Zaharia et al., 2018), etc. Considering the information above, it can be stated that competencies are assessed in specific areas of activity or only part of them.

This article presents the results of an assessment of eight key competences (Communication in the mother tongue, communication in a foreign language, making informed decisions using basic knowledge of science and technology, digital competence, learning new knowledge, interpersonal, intercultural and civic competencies, entrepreneurship, cultural expression) in three Baltic countries – Lithuania (LT), Latvia (LV) and Estonia (EE). The study was conducted in the logistics and transport sector. The analysis is based on visual graphs and quantitative estimates presented in the cross-section of individual groups (ordinary employees, managers, management). A detailed interpretation, comparisons between countries and organisational levels, and structural insights are provided.

2 Communication in the native language

Communication in one's native language is a crucial component of organisational communication, influencing employee well-being, engagement, efficiency, and organisational identity (Fig. 1).

Based on the graph presented, which visualises the assessments of employees from three Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) – ordinary employees, managers and top-level executives – regarding the importance of native language communication, we can notice significant differences both between countries and between organisational hierarchy levels:

- Lithuania (LT): Employees: 58.1%; Managers: 62.5%; Executives: 45.2%;

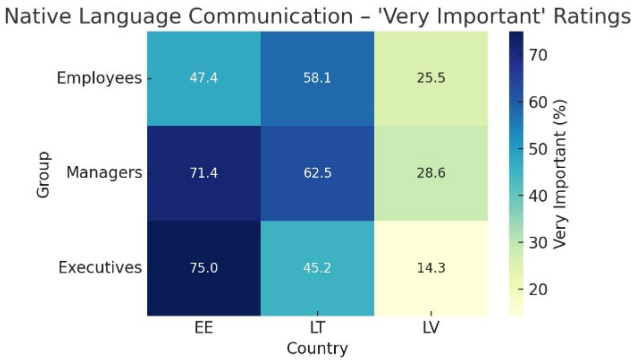

Fig. 1 The importance of communication in the native language

- Latvia (LV): Employees: 25.5%; Managers: 28.6%; Executives: 14.3%;
- Estonia (EE): Employees: 47.4%; Managers: 71.4%; Executives: 75.0%.

The results show that several clear patterns emerge:
1. In Estonia and Lithuania, managers value the importance of the native language more than ordinary employees.
2. In Latvia, assessments are low in all groups, and even lower among managers than among employees.
3. The largest amplitude of assessments between employees and managers characterises Estonia.
4. In Lithuania, an inversion is evident: top-level managers value the importance of the native language less than middle managers or even employees.

Considering the identity of each country, the following essential points related to communication in the native language could be distinguished:
- Lithuania. Lithuania's results are interesting because they fall between those of Estonia and Latvia. Employees (58.1%) and middle managers (62.5%) rate communication in their native language as "very important", but the indicator for top-level managers (45.2%) is significantly lower. Lithuania has also established Lithuanian as the only state language and strongly regulates its use. However, compared to Estonia, the policy has been somewhat more flexible – especially in the business sector. Due to greater internationalisation, especially in the services, IT and finance sectors, English is often used as a working language in Lithuania. Therefore, a natural question arises as to why management places less emphasis on the native language. In this case, several explanations are possible:
  1. Globalisation: Lithuanian business is often oriented towards international markets, where communication takes place in English;

2. Pragmatism: Managers choose the most effective language – it can be English, Russian or even Polish, depending on the audience;
3. Junior managers: There may be more people at the management level who have studied abroad and have multilingual skills. Meanwhile, rank-and-file employees and middle managers who interact directly with local customers, suppliers or institutions see their native language as more necessary.

- Latvia. In Latvia, the indicators are the lowest in all groups – from 25.5% among employees to just 14.3% among top-level managers. This raises questions about the connection between language and identity in Latvia. A large Russian-speaking community has long characterised Latvia. Although Latvian is established as the state language, Russian remains important in many private sectors, particularly in retail, transport, and medicine. This dual linguistic reality has led to:
  1. Linguistic tension: the need for Russian speakers to maintain Russian is opposed to the national interest of Latvians;
  2. Practical compromise: organisations often choose a "neutral" language – not Latvian, but Russian or English. Extremely low assessments of managers (28.6%) and management (14.3%) indicate that management does not emphasise language as a value.
- Estonia. In the case of Estonia, we observe the highest percentage of individuals who rate their native language as "very important" in communication, especially among managers and top-level managers (71.4% and 75.0%, respectively). This means that linguistic communication is considered essential in organisations. The fact that managers and management representatives in Estonia emphasise the importance of their native language even more than ordinary employees can be explained in two ways:
  1. Institutional responsibility: Managers feel a duty to respond to the norms of language policy and integrate them into the organisation's activities;
  2. Identity dimension: Managers, especially those born or raised after the restoration of independence, perceive the Estonian language as a necessary part of national identity. This approach has consequences: organisations become less open to linguistic flexibility but ensure cultural integrity. The assessment of ordinary employees (47.4%) is also relatively high, but lower than that of managers. This may indicate that ordinary employees are faced with real situations of linguistic diversity.

In summary, it can be stated that:
1. In Lithuania, there is a noticeable vertical difference between the attitudes of managers and employees - the top tends to be more globalised, while the bottom relies on the native language.
2. In Latvia, low assessment prevails in all groups, indicating either linguistic pragmatism or an identity gap.
3. In Estonia, the importance of native language communication is widely recognised at all levels, especially in management, which indicates a strong identity connection with language and state policy.

3 Communication in a foreign language

Communication in a foreign language is particularly relevant in a globalised world, where linguistic flexibility is becoming a competitive advantage and a necessity to operate in a multilingual, international environment. In addition, the choice of language reflects the organisation's orientation - whether local or global, open or closed, customer-focused or employee-driven.

This part of the analysis continues the previous study on the importance of native language communication in the three Baltic States. Now the focus is on another significant aspect of linguistic communication – the role of foreign languages in organisations (Fig. 2).

The presented graph allows us to compare the extent to which representatives of different organisational levels (ordinary employees, managers, top-level managers) in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia believe that communication in a foreign language is "very important":

- Lithuania (LT): Employees: 18.6%; Managers: 75.0%; Executives: 73.2%;

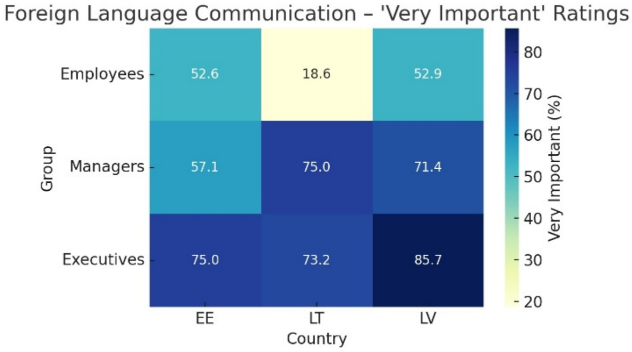

Fig. 2 The importance of foreign language communication in the Baltic States

- Latvia (LV): Employees: 52.9%; Managers: 71.4%; Executives: 85.7%;
- Estonia (EE): Employees: 52.6%; Managers: 57.1%; Executives: 75.0%.

The data reveals several key trends:

1. Top-level managers in all countries highly value the importance of a foreign language.
2. The greatest contrast between employees and management is in Lithuania. Only 18.6% of employees identify a foreign language as "very important", while as many as 73.2% of managers consider it a priority.
3. In Estonia and Latvia, the assessments of ordinary employees reach about 52–53% – significantly higher than in Lithuania.
4. At the managerial level (managers) in all countries, a high value is maintained (57%–75%) – indicating that a foreign language is an essential means of communication for this group.

Considering that the use of a foreign language in an organisation can be analysed through 4 main dimensions, by analysing the graph, we can assess how these dimensions are distributed between countries and organisational levels:

- Lithuania. Lithuania's results are striking in their contrasts: Employees, 18.6%; Managers, 75.0%; Executives, 73.2%. Several aspects can explain the sharp difference between ordinary employees and managers:
    1. Internal labour market. Many Lithuanian employees work in the domestic market, where the Lithuanian language is the dominant language. A foreign language is not required in such positions, so employees do not consider it "very important".
    2. Globalisation of management. Managers often cooperate with international partners, participate in regional meetings, and manage international teams, so a foreign language is essential for them.
    3. Growth of digital professions. Top-level specialists in Lithuania often work remotely with foreign companies or clients, so English is an everyday tool.
    4. Educational differences. Managers are more often experienced in studying or working abroad, which shapes their view of the importance of language. The Lithuanian situation reveals the fragmentation of linguistic reality - a foreign language is important only for specific functions, while most domestic market employees remain outside it.
- Latvia. In Latvia, the importance of a foreign language is rated extremely high – especially among management: employees (52.9%), managers (71.4%), and executives (85.7%). These results may indicate that Latvian business structures are more strongly oriented towards the international market than those of other Baltic countries. This could be determined by:
    1. Bilingualism and an "intermediate" position. Latvia has both Russian-speaking and Latvian communities. This in itself creates a multilingual environment that encourages linguistic flexibility.
    2. A high share of foreign investment. Many companies in Latvia are owned by foreign capital, meaning that the primary language of communication is often English or Russian.
    3. A small domestic market. As in Estonia, export dependence requires working in a multilingual environment. Latvia's high indicators among managers (85.7%) indicate that a foreign language is a function and a skill considered essential for leadership and decision-making.
- Estonia. Estonian data reveal a relatively balanced view of the importance of foreign languages: employees (52.6%), managers (57.1%), and executives (75.0%). These indicators allow us to conclude that foreign languages are considered important at all levels of the organisation, but top-level managers emphasise their importance the most. This is associated with several features specific to Estonia:
    1. Estonia's digitalisation and innovation ecosystem. Estonia is renowned for fostering startups and IT companies, where English is the primary language. This determines the need for linguistic mobility.
    2. Small domestic market. Due to the country's small size, many companies focus on export markets, so it is necessary to communicate with partners in other countries.
    3. Russian language heritage and the growth of English. Although many Russian speakers still speak Russian, the younger generation more often chooses English, which is changing the status of a foreign language in organisations. The Estonian case highlights the functional aspect of the importance of a foreign language, where language serves as a tool for external communication, rather than an internal communication norm.

The results allow us to make the following assumptions: one of the most interesting aspects, visible from the data of all three countries, is the vertical linguistic imbalance:

1. Managers and leadership in almost all countries assess a foreign language as "very important";
2. Employees - not always. The gap is especially pronounced in Lithuania.

This imbalance leads to several consequences:

1. Risk of communication gaps. If management communicates in a foreign language, but employees do not perceive it as important, there is a risk of information loss.
2. Motivation differences. If learning or using a language is not considered important, motivation to develop it decreases.
3. Cultural gap. Foreign language competencies can become a barrier between employees and managers, both linguistic and social.

In summary, it can be stated that:

1. In Lithuania, there is a large imbalance between employees and management, indicating limited relevance of a foreign language in the domestic labour market, but extremely high importance at strategic levels.
2. In Latvia, general recognition of the importance of a foreign language, especially in management, reveals the country's economic (Ötvös, 2025) and cultural orientation towards the outside.
3. In Estonia, a balanced approach to a foreign language at all levels indicates natural integration of the language as a reflection of a functional need.

4 Making informed decisions by applying basic knowledge of science and technology

In today's work environment, the quality of decision-making is increasingly associated with the ability to rely on facts, data, technological innovations and basic scientific principles. Despite the global promotion of digitalisation, automation, and innovation, this analysis reveals that the approach to the importance of scientific and technological competency in organisations is highly heterogeneous (Fig. 3).

The graph above illustrates how employees, middle managers, and top managers in the three Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – evaluate the importance of scientific and technological knowledge in decision-making. It assesses what proportion of respondents consider this competence to be "very important":

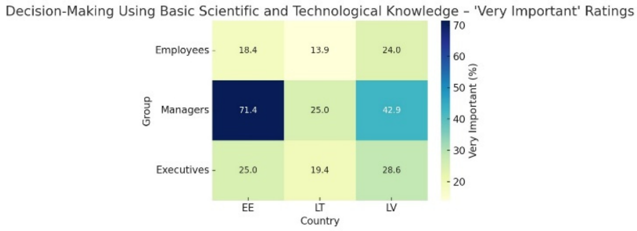

Fig. 3 Decision-making based on basic scientific and technological knowledge

- Lithuania (LT): Employees: 13.9%; Managers: 25.0%; Executives: 19.4%;
- Latvia (LV): Employees: 24.0%; Managers: 42.9%; Executives: 28.6%;
- Estonia (EE): Employees: 18.4%; Managers: 71.4%; Executives: 25.0%.

Several key points emerge from this data:

1. In all three countries, ordinary workers do not value scientific and technological knowledge as an important factor in decision-making – assessments range from 13.9% to 24.0%.
2. In Lithuania, assessments are lowest in almost all groups, especially among managers and executives.
3. Latvia shows moderate growth in managerial circles, but the absolute numbers are still low compared to the expectations of a modern technological society.
4. The attitude of Estonian managers is exceptional: as many as 71.4% of them believe this knowledge is "very important" – significantly more than in any other country.

Organisations that value and use these competencies more often achieve higher efficiency, accuracy, and innovation indicators. So, the question arises: why is such an important area so lowly rated among employees and even management in the Baltic States? In this case, the results of the study were distributed as follows:

- Lithuania. Lithuania's results are the lowest in the entire graph. The indicators at the managerial level are particularly surprising, which allow us to make the following assumptions:
    1. The dominance of traditional leadership. In many Lithuanian organisations, especially in the public sector and small businesses, decision-making is still based on experience, intuition or hierarchical judgment, rather than scientific reasoning. This indicates the dominant management traditions.

2. Educational gaps. Although technological skills are improving, many Lithuanian employees and managers lack strong practical experience in applying scientific principles at work. Scientific methodology often remains academic – separated from everyday management.
3. Distrust of innovation. A certain cultural wariness towards innovation – especially among the older generation – may reduce the appreciation of scientific methods.

- Latvia. In Latvia, the data indicate a slightly higher assessment than in Lithuania, but it is still far from sufficient when judged by global standards. This can be attributed to:
  1. Managerial foresight. Almost half of managers (42.9%) consider scientific knowledge to be important, indicating a notable shift in value. This is likely related to the influence of international organisations, particularly when data analysis or strategic planning is required.
  2. The influence of ethnic and cultural diversity. Bilingualism, intercultural work teams and foreign investors force organisations to apply more structured, scientific solutions.
  3. Lack of internal systems. However, Latvian organisations, especially small and medium-sized businesses, rarely have access to professional analytics tools, data experts or research competencies. This leads to dispersion between groups.
- Estonia. Estonia is the only country with a significant assessment of scientific knowledge, as many as 71.4% of managers consider it "very important". Several aspects can explain this result:
  1. Technology policy. Estonia has been systematically investing in digital infrastructure, e-government, and modernisation of education for more than two decades.
  2. Development of the IT sector. Estonia has a very developed IT and startup sector. Decision-making there is based on data analysis, experimentation, and algorithms, leading to a natural assessment of science and technology. Meanwhile, the low assessment of employees (18.4%) suggests a possible gap between management and executives, who may not always be clear about how scientific knowledge is applied to their daily work. However, Estonia is witnessing a targeted transformation – at least at the management level.

In summary, it can be stated that among all groups, ordinary employees systematically rate this competence the lowest. Possible causal factors:

1. Functional responsibility. Employees are rarely involved in strategic decisions; therefore, decision-making is often associated with executive, rather than analytical, functions for them.
2. Knowledge gap. Even if technologies are used in everyday work, employees may not associate them with "scientific knowledge" due to a lack of reflection or understanding of the nature of technologies.
3. Organisational culture. If management does not encourage open, data-based decision-making, employees have no incentive to value it.

This shows that decision science has not yet become an organisational standard – it remains an isolated behaviour, most often manifested at higher levels or in specific sectors:

1. In Lithuania, assessments are extremely low in all groups, signalling a systemic lack of approach to scientific decision-making.
2. In Latvia, growth dynamics are visible, especially among middle managers, but a value breakthrough has not yet been achieved across the entire organisation.
3. In Estonia, a very high assessment of science and technology is observed at the management level – indicating an advanced management culture.

5 Digital competence

Digital competence in the modern labour market is inseparable from productivity, innovation and efficiency. It includes the ability to use digital tools, technologies, information systems, work in a virtual environment, analyse data and use information securely. In the context of global trends, assessing digital competence is considered a key aspect in determining the readiness of employees and managers for change and technological progress (Fig. 4).

The results presented show that attitudes towards this competence vary greatly across the Baltic countries and organisational levels – from very high (85.7%) to complete non-recognition (0.0%):

- Lithuania. In Lithuania, compared to Estonia, a striking contrast is visible: Employees: 25.6%; Managers: 0.0%; Executives: 16.1%. The most striking is the assessment of managers – 0.0%, i.e. none of the surveyed managers indicated digital competence as "very important". This raises many questions about the management culture, priorities and concept of modernity in

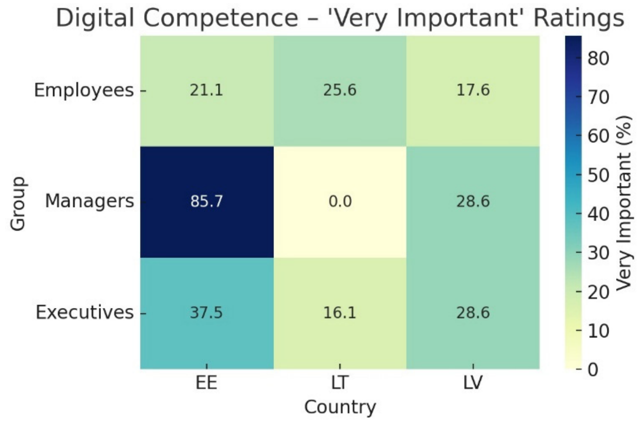

Fig. 4 Assessment of digital competence in organisations in the Baltic States

Lithuanian organisations and allows us to make the following assumptions:

1. Excessive delegation. Managers may believe that digital technologies are the responsibility of IT specialists or younger employees, and their own role is only management, not operational skills.
2. Traditional leadership paradigm. Many managers still adhere to a hierarchical model, in which personal connections, intuition, and experience are given more weight than systematic digital data management.
3. Digital distrust. Some managers may not believe that technology increases the quality of decisions – especially if their experience was formed in the pre-digital era.
4. Too little digital education. The development of managers' competence in this area often lags technological progress. If managers have not been trained to use data management systems, CRM, ERP, or analytics, they tend not to value them. Although this approach raises serious questions about Lithuania's ability to transition to smart management models and cope with the challenges of artificial intelligence and the data economy, it is worth noting that significant growth is being observed in the logistics and transport sector.

- Latvia. In Latvia, the assessments are relatively low across all groups: employees, 17.6%; managers, 28.6%; executives, 28.6%. Although the numbers are not high, they at least show some internal consistency – all groups assess digital competence similarly. This horizontal distribution may indicate:
  1. Signs of a digital transition. In Latvia, as in Lithuania, many organisations are still transitioning to digital management models, resulting in uneven adoption of technologies.
  2. Business orientation towards operationalisation. Many small and medium-sized businesses in Latvia operate in the service sector, where technologies are not yet fully implemented, so managers and employees do not associate them with the most important competence.
  3. Structural barriers. There is a lack of strategies, training, or leadership examples that demonstrate the advantages of digital competence, so even managers assess it cautiously. However, a uniform approach between levels can be a certain foundation on which further change can be built.
- Estonia. Estonia's indicators show an exceptional position in the region: Employees: 21.1%; Managers: 85.7%; Executives: 37.5%. These data reveal that digital competence is considered extremely important at the management level, as many as 85.7% of managers describe it as "very important". This is no coincidence – the Estonian context helps to understand the foundations of this assessment:
  1. National e-strategy. Estonia has long been implementing a broad digital policy. The business environment and the public sector primarily operate in a virtual space.
  2. Technological literacy. Managers in Estonia often have not only managerial, but also technological skills – especially in the startup ecosystem. Digital solutions here are not an additional tool, but a necessary part of the job.
  3. Cognitive transition. In Estonia, managers consider digital competence not only a technical skill but also a strategic ability to manage, anticipate risks and make decisions. Therefore, their assessment is more related to progress and quality of management. The results of employees (21.1%) and management (37.5%) are somewhat more modest, but still demonstrate that the importance of digital competence is recognised at all levels. Estonia is a vector of transformation here - it can be considered a role model for other countries.

In summary, the attitude of ordinary employees towards digital competences is low in all three countries, usually around 20%. Such results may be due to:

1. Automation of functions. If digital tools are simplified (e.g. cash registers, logistics systems),

employees do not consider them competencies requiring complex skills.
2. Lack of digital reflection. Even when using technology, employees often do not realise that this is a professional ability that can be developed and improved, and that can aid in career advancement.
3. Organisational culture. If managers do not emphasise this competence, employees do not consider it important.

Such a low assessment of digital competencies, especially among managers, has serious consequences:
1. Lack of innovation. Companies cannot fully exploit digitalisation, automation or artificial intelligence solutions without digital knowledge.
2. Lost opportunities. The inability to evaluate digital tools effectively limits the growth of exports, efficiency, and customer service quality.
3. Inadequate management. Managers who do not value digital competencies are often unable to make informed decisions, resulting in weaknesses in risk management.

6 Acquiring new knowledge

Continuous learning, development, and updating of knowledge in the modern work environment are considered one of the most important skills related to resistance to change, adaptation, promotion of innovation, and leadership. Increasingly, organisations are encouraging and requiring employees and managers to learn from one another (Fig. 5) on a continuous basis.

The analysis shows that this ability – or at least its perceived importance – is very unevenly distributed across groups and countries in the Baltic States:

- Lithuania. Lithuanian data is surprising: Employees: 9.3%; Managers: 12.5%; Executives: 45.2%

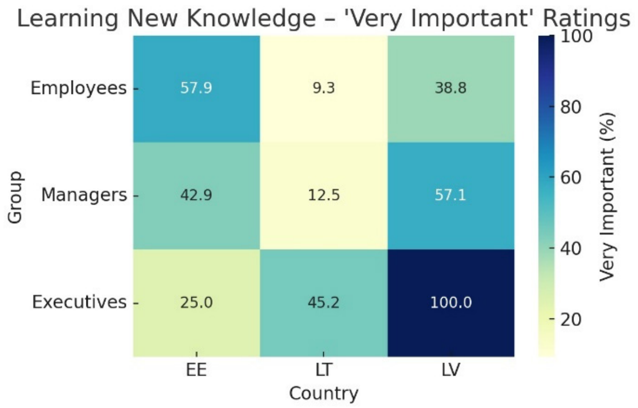

Fig. 5 The importance of learning new knowledge in organisations in the Baltic countries

Both employees and managers rarely indicate that learning is "very important" to them. The exception is top management, where almost half value this competence. Such results indicate that there is:
1. Employee demotivation. Such a low assessment of the importance of learning among employees suggests that learning is not considered a key part of their career or professional development. Perhaps they lack incentives, time, resources, or fail to connect learning with real benefits.
2. Managerial inertia. Among middle managers, the assessment of the importance of learning is extremely low (12.5%) - this may indicate either overemployment or a lack of understanding of how to learn strategically.
3. Self-reflection of elite management. Top-level managers, on the contrary, may be more involved in international networks, learning programs, and participate in forums, which promote openness to new knowledge. This imbalance in Lithuania indicates the fragmentation of organisational culture: if learning is relevant only to top management, it cannot function as an organisational value. Without broad inclusion, learning becomes a privilege rather than the norm.

- Latvia. Latvian data reveal a unique phenomenon: Employees: 38.8%; Managers: 57.1%; Executives: 100.0%. The country demonstrates a strong priority for learning at the highest levels: all management representatives indicated that learning is "very important". The assessments of managers and even employees are also significantly higher than in Lithuania. These results may be determined by:

1. The culture of education of managers. Latvian managers may be more involved in professional networks, alumni activities of programs, and international training.
2. Organisational reflection. If organisations have experienced transformations in recent years (e.g., digitalisation, change management), this may have encouraged managers to perceive learning as a condition for survival.
3. The influence of state strategy. Perhaps the development of education, innovation, or the business environment was linked to the paradigm of continuous learning, which strengthens the view of learning as strategic capital. This approach is particularly valuable in Latvia because it can

positively impact the entire organisation: if management serves as a model to motivate learning, it encourages lower levels to get involved as well.

- Estonia. In Estonia, the importance of learning is most strongly emphasised by ordinary employees (57.9%), while the views of managers (42.9%) and top management (25.0%) are more restrained. Such results indicate:
  1. Digital work culture. Many Estonian employees work in digitalised environments where technologies are changing rapidly; therefore, acquiring new knowledge becomes a practical necessity.
  2. Self-oriented learning. The younger workforce often seeks knowledge independently – through the Internet, courses, and platforms – therefore, learning is perceived as the basis for the growth of their own competencies.
  3. Managers' satisfaction with the current situation. Lower indicators among managers may indicate a certain stagnation – perhaps managers believe that they have already "reached the peak", and learning is becoming less relevant. This gap raises the question: Does organisational culture support continuous learning at all levels, or has it become the sole responsibility of employees?

An important causal relationship between learning as a value and the level of organisational maturity emerges:

1. learning is perceived as elite without organisational embedding in Lithuania;
2. In Latvia, learning is gradually becoming an integrated organisational value from the top down;
3. In Estonia, learning is encouraged from the bottom up.

These results have specific consequences:

1. Motivation dynamics. Learning as a value fosters internal motivation and a sense of responsibility for improvement.
2. Organisational flexibility. Learning culture helps an organisation quickly adapt to changes, technologies, and market transformations.
3. Leadership quality. Managers who are constantly learning become leaders not only hierarchically, but also competently.

7 Interpersonal, intercultural and civic competences

Interpersonal, intercultural, and civic competencies are "social skills" and the ability to function in a diverse, pluralistic society and be an ethical, empathetic, and responsible member of the organisation and community. These competences are often considered "soft", but in the 21st century, they are increasingly becoming key: inclusion, diversity management, cultural sensitivity, communication skills and social activism are increasingly identified as sources of organisational effectiveness (Fig. 6).

The results show that these competencies still do not occupy a strategic place in the Baltic countries, and in some cases, they are even marginalised:

- Lithuania. In Lithuania, interpersonal and civic competencies are rated the highest among employees (30.2%) across all three groups: Employees (30.2%), Managers (12.5%), and Executives (12.9%). This shows a significant vertical gap: employees recognise the importance of these competencies, but management almost completely does not. Such data allows us to make assumptions:
  1. Employees work in teams, contact customers, participate in various cultural and community contexts - so they intuitively understand the benefits of interpersonal skills.
  2. Managers may be oriented towards indicators, KPIs, technologies, and "soft" competencies, which are considered abstract and unrelated to performance.
  3. Citizenship is often understood narrowly in Lithuanian political and organisational culture; therefore, it is not identified as important in the organisational environment. Therefore, it can be argued that employees may be willing to work in an inclusive and culturally sensitive manner, but management does not support these values, which inhibit their expression.
- Latvia. The Latvian context stands out: Employees: 20.0%; Managers: 42.9%; Executives: 14.3%. The management group is the only one of the three countries where interpersonal and intercultural competencies are rated at the highest level. This may be due to:

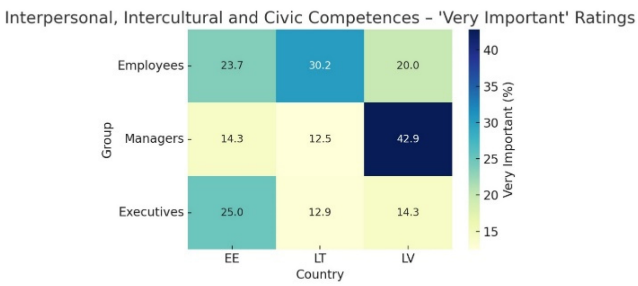

Fig. 6 Perception of interpersonal, intercultural and civic competences in the Baltic States

1. Ethnic diversity. There is a strong dichotomous distribution of Russian-speaking and Latvian in Latvia. Intercultural competencies are becoming essential for organisations that want to effectively integrate and motivate employees of different linguistic and cultural groups.
2. Management education. Likely, middle managers in Latvia are more actively participating in international programs where "soft" competencies are emphasised as critical.
3. Team management. Perhaps a model based on cooperation is emerging in Latvian management culture, in which interpersonal sensitivity becomes an essential element of managerial effectiveness. However, low ratings from employees, especially management (14.3%), indicate that this approach has not yet become established as an organisational norm.

- Estonia. In Estonia, the distribution of assessments is relatively moderate: Employees, 23.7%; Managers, 14.3%; Executives, 25.0%. The reasons for this are:
  1. Estonia is focused on the IT sector, data management, and innovation. As a result, "soft" competencies can be considered secondary or "unsystematised" because they are difficult to measure.
  2. Since Estonia has a fairly pronounced ethnic line between Estonians and Russian-speaking residents, intercultural integration occurs formally but not always effectively. Such a context may reduce the motivation to consider these competencies "very important".
  3. Although the level of managers (14.3%) is low, the assessment of executives (25.0%) indicates at least partial strategic understanding of these abilities. In Estonia, the importance of these competencies remains a functional addition, not an organisational setting.

In summary, the future organisation will lack sufficient data analytics, digital, and management skills; it will also need the ability to collaborate with others, understand their perspectives, and act on their behalf. Only then will we be able to talk about true organisational maturity.

8 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial competence is the ability to take initiative, create new ideas, take risks, see opportunities, accept responsibility, and act according to instructions and create value. It is one of the key competencies of the 21st-century labour market, closely related to innovation, change management and strategic thinking. Despite its importance, the presented Fig. 7 reveals that employees in the Baltic countries and even managers in some countries often do not value this competence as highly as expected.

The conducted research allows us to identify that middle managers most value entrepreneurial competence, while among employees and management, these values are much lower, in some cases even very low (the assessment of Lithuanian employees is only 7%):

- Lithuania. The results obtained allow us to state:
  1. The attitude of employees is extremely low. Only 7.0% indicate entrepreneurship as "very important". This is an extremely low indicator, which indicates not only the devaluation of entrepreneurship but also a cultural norm of passivity – employees do not expect to take the initiative, and perhaps they are afraid of responsibility or the consequences of mistakes.
  2. Middle managers remain active. The assessment of 50.0% indicates that this layer in Lithuania, as in Estonia, assumes entrepreneurship as a function, particularly in areas such as process improvement, micro-innovation, or mediation between strategy and operations.
  3. Cautious optimism of management. 35.5% – an average, but not low indicator, indicating that some executives understand entrepreneurship as important, but perhaps identify it only with founding activities, not organisational behaviour. Therefore, it can be stated that in Lithuania, there is a clearly hierarchical concept of entrepreneurship, which is supported only by strategic and managerial layers, but not transferred to employees, either through training or through incentives.

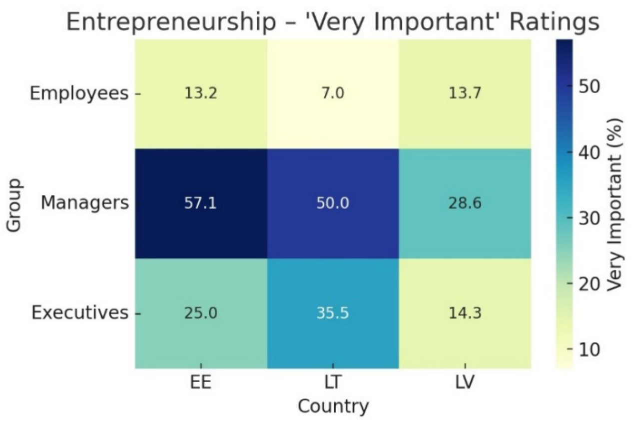

Fig. 7 The importance of entrepreneurship

- Latvia. The obtained survey data allow us to state that:
  1. low or average assessment in all groups. Entrepreneurship in Latvia is not exceptionally valued at any level of the organisation.
  2. Managers are relatively reserved. Only 28.6% indicate entrepreneurship as "very important" – this shows that even at the management level, this competence has not established itself as necessary.
  3. In summary, it can be stated that the concept of entrepreneurship in Latvia has not yet been established as an organisational value or behavioural norm.
- Estonia. The results allow us to state that:
  1. The managerial intermediate link as a driver of change. In the managerial layer, entrepreneurship is valued the highest (57.1%). This indicates that entrepreneurship is perceived as a crucial characteristic for project management, process improvement, and innovation initiation at this organisational level.
  2. Separation of employees from creative responsibility. 13.2% of employees indicate that entrepreneurship is not perceived as a field of responsibility or opportunities. Employees may be focused on execution and procedural work, with little or no room for initiative.
  3. Reserved attitude of management. Top-level managers (25.0%) value entrepreneurship less than middle-level managers, perhaps because their activities focus on strategy, stability or capital management, rather than risk and experimentation. In summary, it can be stated that in Estonia, entrepreneurship is localised at the management level but does not transcend into organisational culture as a shared value.

In many groups, employees hardly rate entrepreneurship as "very important": Lithuania (7.0%), Latvia (13.7%), and Estonia (13.2%). Such results could be due to the following:

1. Structural dependency. Many employees work in clearly structured systems that provide neither responsibility nor empowerment.
2. Cultural barriers. The Baltic countries have a historically strong tradition of vertical management, in which the employee's main function is to execute, not to suggest or take risks.
3. Identification of entrepreneurship with "self-expression" or "leadership". If an employee does not understand that entrepreneurship can mean everyday initiatives (e.g., making suggestions, solving problems, improving customer experience), they do not consider it important.

9 Cultural expression

Cultural expression is the ability to convey one's identity, values, aesthetics, and sense of belonging to a community, language, or nation through symbolic, artistic, linguistic, or behavioural forms. In the work environment, cultural expression becomes important not only as a means of personal self-expression but also to foster organisational values, strengthen a sense of belonging to the collective, and promote mutual understanding, especially in a diverse society (Fig. 8).

The difference is immediately obvious: Lithuanian employees (58.1%) value cultural expression extremely highly, while in Estonia and Latvia, management and leaders almost do not attach importance to this competence:

- Lithuania. The results indicate that identity activism is present at the employee level. As many as 58.1% of employees in Lithuania consider cultural expression to be "very important". This can be considered an act of identity maintenance – employees may view their cultural markers (e.g., language, national heritage, regionality) as an integral part of their work identity. However, there is also a gap in organisational culture. Significantly lower indicators among managers and executives (12.5% and 12.9%, respectively) suggest that this group does not consider cultural expression an important organisational competence – perhaps they associate it with "unproductive self-expression". Therefore, there is a form of resistance. Employees' strong assessment may be a silent protest against standardisation, globalisation or organisational structures that diminish individuality. This is a sign that organisations lack space for cultural dialogue. In summary, it can be stated that in Lithuania, cultural expression is important for employees, but not institutionalised - it is not seen as an organisational value or competence.

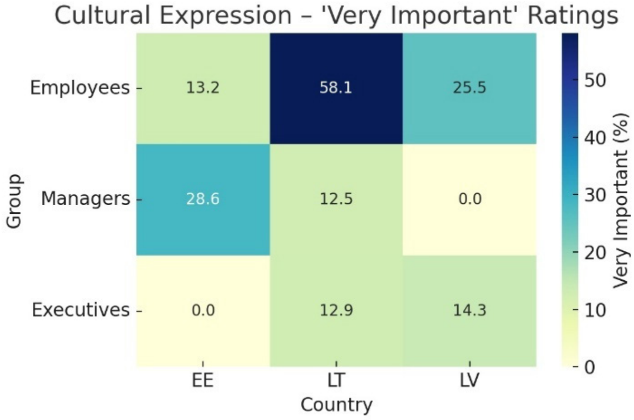

Fig. 8 Assessment of cultural expression

- Latvia. The results indicate the presence of an employee identity signal. A quarter of employees consider cultural expression to be important. This shows that cultural diversity (Russian-speaking and Latvian-speaking) still plays an important role in workplace identity. 0.0% indicates that middle managers do not perceive a connection between culture and managerial functions. They are likely focused on operational processes and technological solutions, where culture seems "subjective" or "unnecessary", while executive management (14.3%) – slightly higher than zero, but too low to indicate a systemic understanding. In summary, it can be stated that in Latvia, cultural expression remains an individual, unorganised need, which is neither enabled nor structurally supported by managers.
- Estonia. It can be said that cultural identity in Estonia is so deeply embedded in everyday life (language policy, symbols, holidays) that additional forms of expression are not reflected as a separate value. Middle managers show the highest comparable assessment (28.6%). They may be directly exposed to cultural diversity (e.g. employees from different language communities) and therefore assess this competence as a means of mediation. 0.0% of top managers indicate cultural expression as "very important". This indicates that this competence does not figure at the strategic level. In summary, it can be said that in Estonia, cultural expression is like "fundamental but invisible" – it is taken for granted, but not a dimension of organisational excellence.

Cultural expression is often considered a private space rather than an organisational skill. As a result, managers do not consider it a competency that needs to be developed or maintained.

10 Conclusions

The assessment of the competencies carried out allowed us to identify that:

1. Language in an organisation is not just a tool – it is a bridge between a person and a structure, between personal identity and collective responsibility. The different approaches to the importance of the native language in the three Baltic countries reflect not only communicative choices, but also deep cultural, political and value differences. These differences must be viewed not as obstacles, but as an opportunity to create a conscious, inclusive and value-based organisational environment.
2. Foreign language communication in a modern organisation is becoming not only a practical but also a strategic competence. However, the perception of its importance differs between countries and organisational levels. Both employees and managers need not only to master the language, but also to understand its meaning in the context of communication, culture, and power. It is equally important to maintain linguistic sensitivity towards native and foreign languages so that the organisation becomes effective, inclusive, and sustainable.
3. Decision-making based on science and technology is one of the most important management components in the 21st century. However, the organisational reality of the Baltic countries shows that this value has not yet been established at all levels. To create advanced, effective and competitive organisations, it is necessary not only to have technologies, but also to have people who trust them, understand them and use them in making decisions.
4. Digital competence is not a matter of the future but a necessity of the present. While Estonia shows progress, Lithuania and Latvia continue to struggle with structural and cultural barriers that hinder technological growth. If managers do not understand the importance of digital competence, they cannot lead a modern organisation. If employees are not trained to assess their digital skills, they cannot improve and use them. Only a systemic, targeted change can ensure that digital transformation in the Baltic States is not just technical, but also value-based.
5. Learning is more than an individual choice. This reflects organisational culture. The Baltic countries differ significantly in this regard: from the activism of Estonian employees to the example of Latvian managers and the inertia of Lithuanian managers. Understanding these differences is essential if we want to create organisations of the future that are flexible, curious, and constantly growing. Because learning is not a side activity but the growth process itself, it must be universal, not selective.
6. Interpersonal, intercultural and civic competences are the invisible glue that supports a healthy organisational environment, allows for harmonious work in a diverse team, builds trust and strengthens social capital. In the Baltic countries, the importance of these competences is not yet universally recognised. Estonia and Lithuania still tend to consider them "nice extras", while in Latvia, their appreciation is limited, but seen as emerging among managers.

7. Entrepreneurship should not be perceived only as an independent business establishment. This is a way of thinking and behaving that helps an organisation adapt, grow, and discover new forms of value. Analysing this graph, it is obvious that entrepreneurial competencies are not currently widely recognised, but the potential for recognition is visible at the management level. The biggest challenge is to involve employees in this paradigm and turn entrepreneurship not into a privilege but into a norm.
8. Cultural expression encompasses not only folklore and symbols. It is the ability to be yourself, even in a structured, process-based organisation. It is a bridge between human authenticity and organisational culture. This analysis revealed that organisations in the Baltic countries are only just beginning to realise the potential of this competency, and in some places, it is not visible at all. However, the exceptional assessment of Lithuanian employees reveals that deep identity processes are still at work even when organisations do not value them. This signals that cultural expression is a waiting expression, not an excess "cultural addition".

In summary, it can be stated that assessing competencies in the Baltic countries depends largely on the organisational level, cultural context and functional orientation. Estonia is characterised by functional and technological maturity, Latvia is approaching a balanced model, and Lithuania is dominated by the identity aspect, but lacks systematic competence development. It is proposed to rely on the internal empowerment model, promote organisational learning, implement a cultural sensitivity policy and integrate competence development into organisations' strategic planning.

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