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Intercultural Competencies of Managers in Podkarpackie Enterprises Employing Ukrainian Workers: Research Insights

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Barbara Mazur[1], Anna Walczyna[2]

Abstract:

Purpose: *The article aims to examine the assessment of intercultural competencies among managers and Podkarpackie enterprises employing Ukrainian workers. Conducting a comparative analysis allows for identifying the degree of similarities and differences both within the group of managers and across their respective organizations.*
Design/Methodology/Approach*: The research procedure employed the method of critical analysis of scientific publications concerning managerial competencies in the context of managing foreign employees, as well as the diagnostic survey method using structured interviews conducted with managers of Podkarpackie enterprises employing workers from Ukraine. The research tool was a questionnaire developed based on an intercultural competence model.*
Findings*: The obtained results indicate a partial consistency between the three competencies identified as key for organizations and those declared as the three most developed personal competencies. The greatest alignment was observed in the areas of intercultural communication and emotional management, which may suggest their central importance in the practice of intercultural management. The analysis also revealed significant competency gaps in coping with uncertainty and understanding the behavior of foreign partners. Although these competencies were recognized as important for organizations, they were much less frequently declared as well-developed by the respondents themselves.*
Practical Implications*: The analysis revealed significant competency gaps in the areas of coping with uncertainty and understanding the behavior of foreign partners. Although these competencies were recognized as important for organizations, they were much less frequently declared as well-developed by the managers themselves. This discrepancy indicates the need for targeted development initiatives that could enhance managerial effectiveness in the context of the volatility and complexity of contemporary international markets.*
Originality/Value: *The study identifies the competence gap in intercultural competencies between managers and enterprises of medium and large companies in the Podkarpackie region employing workers from Ukraine.*

Keywords: *Intercultural competencies, Ukrainian workers, managers, enterprises in the Podkarpackie region.*

JEL codes: *Q56, M14, O15.*
Paper type*: Research paper.*

[1]*Assoc. Prof., Lublin University of Technology, Poland, e-mail: b.mazue@pollub.pl;*
[2]*Lublin University of Technology, Poland, e-mail: a.walczyna@pollub.pl; .*

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Poland has experienced an increase in the number of workers originating from Ukraine. Although it is difficult to accurately estimate their total presence in the Polish labor market, the number of work permits issued indicates that, in recent years, they have constituted the largest group of foreign nationals legally employed in Poland.

This fact demonstrates the attractiveness of the Polish labor market for this particular nationality group (Szpakowska, Buchwald, and Romanowski, 2016). However, the level of interest in undertaking employment in Poland has not been uniform over this period. Between 2004 and 2020, four distinct phases can be identified in the growing interest of Ukrainian citizens in the Polish labor market:

- 2004-2013 - a period during which the Polish labor market was opened to foreign workers as a consequence of Poland's accession to the European Union. Additionally, certain facilitations for third-country nationals were introduced, such as the declaration of employment intention procedure. During this time, the number of Ukrainian citizens participating in the Polish labor market began to increase;
- 2014-2015 - a phase marked by a sharp rise in the number of Ukrainian citizens arriving in Poland for employment purposes, primarily due to the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine;
- 2016-2019 - a period of continued growth in employment among Ukrainian nationals, who began to play a significant role in certain sectors of the Polish economy, including construction, manufacturing, transport, and administrative services;
- 2020 - a year characterized by the most significant decline in the employment of Ukrainian citizens in Poland, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (Augustyńczyk, 2024).

To the chronology presented above, a fifth period should be added, beginning in 2022, when, following the outbreak of war, a large number of Ukrainian citizens arrived in the border region of Podkarpacie, taking up employment in local enterprises.

According to data from the Voivodeship Labour Office (VLO) in Rzeszów, from the beginning of the armed conflict in Ukraine until the end of 2023, 36,000 Ukrainian citizens either obtained legal employment or benefited from active labour market support measures in the Podkarpackie region.

In 2022 alone, several thousand individuals from across the eastern border found employment in local enterprises. VLO data further indicate that in 2023, 3,046 Ukrainian citizens were registered as unemployed, while 126 were registered as job seekers.

Among this group, 1,469 individuals made use of labour market instruments by engaging in internships, public works, and intervention works, or by accessing financial support for starting a business, as well as for the equipment and furnishing of workplaces (Tatara, 15 stycznia 2024).

This period, which began in 2022, continues to the present day. During the periods outlined above, Ukrainian citizens were employed across various sectors of the Polish economy. In the years 2004–2009, when their overall presence in the Polish labor market remained relatively limited, they most frequently found employment in manufacturing (accounting for nearly 18% of all work permits issued to Ukrainian citizens in 2009) and in wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles (almost 14% of all permits issued to Ukrainians in 2009).

From 2010 to 2020 (with the exception of 2018), the construction sector became the dominant area of employment for Ukrainian nationals. Between 2012 and 2015, the households employing domestic workers sector ranked second in terms of the number of work permits issued.

Ukrainian citizens were also employed in other branches such as manufacturing, trade and vehicle repair, as well as transportation and storage. In 2018, the classification of employment among foreign nationals in the Polish labor market was expanded to include *the administrative and support service* activities sector, which subsequently became the leading area of employment for Ukrainian citizens (Augustyńczyk, 2024).

In analyzing the employment of Ukrainian citizens in the Polish labor market, it is also important to consider the types of positions they have occupied. In 2004–2005, these were primarily managerial and professional or expert positions. Beginning in 2007, however, skilled workers became the dominant group among employed Ukrainians. Data indicate that in 2016, more than 40% of work permits issued to Ukrainian citizens were granted to skilled manual workers, while 26% were issued to employees performing elementary occupations.

Work permits for managerial staff accounted for less than 2%, and the remaining 32% were issued to other occupational categories. Between 2017 and 2020, craft and related trades workers continued to represent the largest occupational group among Ukrainian employees, followed by those engaged in elementary occupations. Employment of Ukrainian citizens as machine and equipment operators and assemblers was also frequent. Moreover, during the 2017–2020 period, there was a noticeable increase in the number of Ukrainians employed in office worker positions (Augustyńczyk, 2024).

An analysis of the spatial distribution of work permits issued to Ukrainian citizens indicates that, initially, their presence in the Polish labor market was concentrated primarily in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. However, over time, Ukrainian workers

increasingly chose to take up employment also in the south-eastern regions of Poland.

In light of the above data, it can be observed that in recent years the Podkarpackie region has become an important labor market for workers from Ukraine. Consequently, enterprises operating in this region are more frequently exposed than those in other parts of Poland to the cultural differences that exist between Polish and Ukrainian employees.

Similarly, managers of these enterprises are more often required than many other managers in Poland to manage these cultural differences to ensure the effective functioning of their organizations. This effectiveness can be facilitated by the development and application of intercultural competencies, which play a decisive role in determining organizational performance.

This article is devoted to the issue of intercultural competences and to the assessment of the relative importance of specific competences among the managers studied and the enterprises they represent. The research area encompasses the Podkarpackie region, located in south-eastern Poland.

The article consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. The theoretical section discusses the cultural differences between Poland and Ukraine, presents definitions of managerial competences, and introduces a model of intercultural competences.

The empirical section outlines the research methodology, presents the findings and their interpretation, and provides answers to the research questions. The article begins with an introduction describing the participation of Ukrainian workers in the Polish labor market and concludes with conclusions drawn from a comparison between the intercultural competences considered important for enterprises and those possessed by managers of enterprises in the Podkarpackie region, preceded by a discussion and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

Cultural differences between Poland and Ukraine:
According to the principles of intercultural management, effective supervision of Ukrainian employees in enterprises in the Podkarpackie region requires an awareness of the cultural differences between Poland and Ukraine. A key factor in successful intercultural management is the ability to conduct skilled communication aimed at understanding employees' expectations, their differences, and the opportunities and risks arising from these differences, followed by the adaptation of appropriate management measures (Piątek, 2010).

One method for identifying differences among culturally diverse employees is to refer to G. Hofstede's classification, which originally encompassed four bipolar

dimensions: individualism vs. collectivism, high vs. low power distance, masculinity vs. femininity, and high vs. low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2011).

Although studies of Polish culture have been conducted by other researchers (Huntington, 2007; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), and studies of Ukrainian culture by others as well (Małota, 2017; Prykarpatska, 2010; Szydło, 2017), G. Hofstede's classification of national cultures is considered the most frequently cited in the literature and the most widely applied framework in cultural research.

A comparative analysis of the indices assigned to Poland and Ukraine in G. Hofstede's classification indicates that Ukrainian culture is characterized by a high power distance, whereas Polish culture exhibits a moderate power distance. Ukrainians are culturally more collectivist compared to Poles, who display a stronger tendency toward individualism.

Ukrainian culture is also more feminine than Polish culture and shows a greater propensity for uncertainty avoidance. The values of the cultural dimension indices - individualism, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance - for Poland and Ukraine are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Values of Selected Cultural Dimension Indicators for Poland and Ukraine*

Country	**Individualism**	**Power distance**	**Masculinity**	**Uncertainty avoidance**
Poland	60	68	64	93
Ukraine	25	92	27	95

Source: *Own elaboration based on https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool*

One of the key factors differentiating the two cultures is religion. Both cultures have been influenced by Christianity, yet in Ukraine, the dominant religion is Orthodoxy, whereas in Poland, it is Catholicism. Based on a review of the literature on the cultural characteristics associated with Orthodoxy and Catholicism, it can be inferred that adherents of the Orthodox faith exhibit a greater degree of collectivism than Catholics.

They also tend to demonstrate a higher propensity for uncertainty avoidance and greater acceptance of hierarchical authority compared to Catholics. Furthermore, Orthodox culture is generally characterized as feminine, in contrast to Catholic culture, which is more often classified as masculine. This characterization corresponds with the values of Hofstede's cultural dimension indices for individualism, power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance for Poland and Ukraine (Mazur, 2012b).

The diverse cultural spectrum is further confirmed by the results of research conducted by Ł. Sułkowski, which aimed to identify the cultural orientation of five countries, including Poland and Ukraine, based on a three-dimensional bipolar typology: hierarchy – equality, individualism – communitarianism, and high uncertainty tolerance – low uncertainty tolerance (Sułkowski, 2001).

The study results indicate that authoritarian and paternalistic leadership styles dominate in Ukrainian culture. According to the research, there is a strong demand in Ukraine for charismatic leaders who expect obedience from their subordinates. Consequently, employees anticipate precise instructions and detailed directives from their superiors. Authority often appears to stand above organizational rules or shapes these rules to suit its own needs. Interpersonal relations within organizations tend to be formal and official.

Ukrainian organizational culture demonstrates a moderate level of communitarianism. At the same time, it emphasizes reducing uncertainty in operations, which is reflected in conservative attitudes and resistance to organizational changes perceived as threats (Sułkowski, 2001). A comparative summary of the results for the five countries studied (Poland, Ukraine, Germany, Russia, USA) on an ordinal scale is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Cultural Scales in a Comparative Perspective – Selected Countries*

Measurement Scale					
Hierarchy	Germany	Russia **Ukraine**	Poland	USA	**Equality**
Individualism	USA	Germany	Russia **Ukraine**	Poland	**Communitarianism**
High Uncertainty Tolerance	USA	Poland Germany	**Ukraine**	Russia	**Low Uncertainty Tolerance**

Source: *Ł Sułkowski, 2001, 'System wartości organizacyjnych - wyniki międzynarodowych badań porównawczych', Przegląd Organizacji, no. 9, s. 25.*

Poland tends to lean more toward equality than hierarchy, more toward communitarianism than individualism, and more toward high uncertainty tolerance than low. In contrast, Ukrainian culture is characterized by a stronger orientation toward hierarchy than equality and toward communitarianism rather than individualism.

Similar conclusions have been drawn by other researchers conducting comparative studies between Polish and Ukrainian cultures. J. Szydło (2017), conducted research in enterprises operating in both Poland and Ukraine. Using a procedure that assessed cultural dimensions, including power distance, individualism–collectivism,

masculinity–femininity, and uncertainty avoidance, and their comparative characteristics by nationality, the study aimed to identify cultural traits in management within the surveyed organizations.

The results demonstrated that higher-level managers significantly influence interpersonal relations, interactions among employees, and relationships between employees and management. Comparable comparative research on management culture in Poland and Ukraine was conducted by W. Małota (2017).

Her study examined three aspects of organizational culture: management style, teamwork, and communication style, revealing notable differences between Poland and Ukraine, particularly in management style. The findings were interpreted in the context of cultural orientations such as individualism versus collectivism, universalism versus particularism, high versus low power distance, attitudes toward time, segmented versus holistic culture, and neutral versus expressive culture, discussing their alignment with global research findings.

The possession of competencies for managing foreign employees is crucial for the effective management of human resources in enterprises with multinational teams. In the Polish literature, a manager's competences are defined as their potential, which includes personality, knowledge, skills, attitudes, experience, and responsibility. The combination of these elements shapes the manager's behaviors, which in turn determine effective management (Tyrańska, 2018, p. 37).

Similarly, A. Rakowska and A. Sitko-Lutek (2000, p. 32) define managerial competences as comprising motives, personality traits, cognitive abilities and skills, knowledge, and interpersonal skills. Of particular importance for organizational strategy are key competences, defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate to a given situation (Szafrański, Borseková, and Jędrzejczyk, 2023).

Although the most common distinction in reference to managers is between hard and soft competencies (Stanuch, Gorzelany-Dziadkowiec and Smutek, 2024), in recent years, the literature and empirical studies have increasingly used the concept of transversal competencies, which include social, civic, communication, and interpersonal competencies (Graczyk-Kucharska *et al.,* 2020).

These competences can be applied across different situations, contexts, professions, and organizational roles, as they are not tied to a specific occupation, position, or industry (García-Álvarez, Vázquez-Rodríguez, Quiroga-Carrillo, and Priegue Caamaño, 2022). They acquire particular significance in times of high environmental variability and business internationalization. Therefore, they are especially important from the perspective of employers, for whom human capital, including the development of employee competences, is a key factor for survival in a

competitive market at the intersection of Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 (Graczyk-Kucharska *et al.,* 2020).

Intercultural competencies belong to the group of transversal competencies and are particularly essential for the activities of enterprises and managers operating in conditions of cultural diversity. This situation applies to enterprises in the Podkarpackie region and their managers. The cultural differences between Polish and Ukrainian employees in these organizations require managers to possess a thorough understanding of the existing cultural distinctions.

Intercultural competences and their typology:
Intercultural competences refer to the effective management of interactions among people who represent different emotional, cognitive, and behavioral orientations toward the world (Gałuszka *et al.,* 2024).

The competences most frequently highlighted in studies of multicultural teams include openness to diversity, emotional management skills, intercultural communication competencies, tolerance for ambiguity, cultural understanding, conflict management skills, information management skills, and self-control/self-management skills. A brief description of the above-mentioned intercultural competences is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Intercultural competencies – characteristics and indicators*

Intercultural Competencies	**Characteristics**	**Indicators**
Diversity openness	A person's level of openness to perceived diversity will dictate whether or not they incorporate differences into work processes positively. Individuals high on the dimension of openness view differences as positive, individuals low on this dimension view differences as negative	– positive attitude – openness to others – tolerance – politeness/sociability
Emotion management skills	Good emotion management skills are required to reduce the impact of emotional conflict within multicultural teams. Individuals with sound emotion management skills deal with stressful situations more calmly, avoiding counterproductive activities	– interpersonal flexibility – emotional coping – behavioral adaptation and flexibility – empathy
Intercultural communication competence	For intercultural communication to be effective, individuals need to have an understanding of the cultures involved to effectively encode and decode messages. Cultural knowledge may be the basis for developing communication competencies	– knowledge of foreign languages – communication competences - humor – communication effectiveness – smiling

		– active listening
Tolerance for ambiguity	Individuals with tolerance for ambiguity can make decisions and deal with uncertain situations without the need to obtain more information, and are more open to new information about themselves and others. Individuals with low tolerance to ambiguity tend to base judgments of people on their first impressions. The higher one's tolerance for ambiguity, the more comfortable they will feel in a situation where they are not familiar with people on first impressions. The higher one's tolerance for ambiguity, the more comfortable they will feel in a situation that they are not familiar with	– ability to build interpersonal relationships – awareness of self and other cultures – engagement
Cultural understanding	Cultural understanding incorporates concepts such as sensitivity and empathy for cultural differences and flexibility towards cultural differences. It provides a foundation of trust between team members as it strengthens communication effectiveness between them. To diverse teams to be inclusive and effective, team members need to develop an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of other team members	– ability to understand others – cultural interaction – collaboration, participation in culture – openness to new information
Information management skills	Individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may have different ways of processing the information that they receive, different cognitive styles - the ways we structure our beliefs and attitudes, and respond to incoming information Therefore, the cognitive consequences of diversity refer to the effects diversity might have on the group's ability to process information, perceive and interpret stimuli, and make decisions	– data accuracy – effectiveness in implementing a new knowledge management system – average data access time
Conflict management skills	The success of the team may depend on the way in which they manage disagreements. Knowledge of conflict resolution strategies by team members may be critical to the success of culturally heterogeneous groups	– interaction management – ability to adapt to different cultures – stress management – etiquette rules
Self-management skills	Sound self-management skills are likely to improve the interaction of a diverse group. Self-monitoring theory suggests that high self-monitors tend to develop relationships at work with distinctly different people	– time management – setting priorities – independence – work organization – self-improvement

Source: *Own elaboration based on Korczyński, 2016; Lloyd and Hartel, 2003.*

3. Research Methodology

The study aimed to determine which intercultural competencies managers of enterprises from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship:

- consider the most important for the functioning of an enterprise in a culturally diverse environment (Q1),
- and which of these competencies they declare to have best developed themselves (Q2).

Based on this premise, three research questions were formulated:

1. Which intercultural competencies are most frequently identified by respondents as the most important for the organization? Is there consistency among the responses?
2. Which competencies do respondents most frequently declare as their best-developed personal competencies? Is there a recurring set of such competencies?
3. Do the competencies considered most important for the organization (Q1) correspond to those declared as personal (Q2)? If not, can any gaps or complementarities between these two perspectives be observed?

The research method applied in the study was a diagnostic survey, while the technique used was a structured interview. The research tool consisted of an interview questionnaire.

The choice of a structured interview as the research technique was motivated by its effectiveness in reaching respondents and ensuring that the research objectives could be achieved despite the geographical distance between researchers and participants. This technique is characterized by a high level of standardization, meaning that all respondents are asked the same questions in the same order and form.

A key feature of this method is the minimal role of the interviewer, who neither interprets nor modifies the questions. The questions can be open-ended or closed, but their wording remains unchanged. The advantage of this approach lies in the comparability of data, standardization enables quantitative analysis of responses.

However, its main limitation is the lack of flexibility, which prevents deeper exploration of topics, as would be possible in an unstructured interview. The scientific quality and research value of data obtained through a structured interview depend largely on the skillful “contracting” of the interview and the communication competence of the researcher. The interview contract involves reaching an agreement with the respondent regarding the conditions of the conversation, for which the researcher, as the initiator and negotiator, is responsible (Kurkowska-Budzan, Soroko, and Stasiak, 2020).

The study involved six managers representing two medium-sized and four large enterprises located in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. All participants were postgraduate students in management at the Rzeszów University of Technology, which ensured access to a group of respondents with verified professional experience and a comparable level of managerial competence.

The sample selection was purposeful, resulting from the limited availability of managers from medium and large enterprises in the region. According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS), the structure of business entities in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship is strongly dominated by micro and small enterprises, which account for over 98% of all firms (Statistical Folder "Podkarpackie in Figures 2025" – GUS Rzeszów).

The share of medium and large enterprises is relatively small, which significantly limits the possibility of obtaining a representative sample from this group. In this context, using the available group of postgraduate management students constituted a justified choice, allowing for a preliminary exploratory analysis among individuals actively engaged in managing organizations of a larger operational scale. The interviews were conducted in July 2025. A detailed profile of the respondents is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Characteristics of the Research Sample*

Industry	**Enterprise size**	**Number of foreign employees**
Manufacturing	Medium	15
Manufacturing	Medium	40
Manufacturing	Large	0
Manufacturing	Large	0
E-commerce	Large	3
Education	Large	Don't know

Source: *Own elaboration.*

The research sample was selected purposefully. The interviews were conducted online and focused on intercultural competencies, specifically on assessing the importance of particular competencies in relation to both enterprises and their managers. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes.

Purpose and course of analysis:
To answer the research questions, a comparison was made between the competencies identified by respondents as crucial for the functioning of enterprises (Q1) and those declared as possessed (Q2). This approach enabled the identification of areas of alignment as well as competency gaps. The analysis was exploratory in nature and aimed to provide an initial insight into the discrepancies between organizational needs and expectations and managers' self-assessments.

The data were compiled in tabular form and then visualized using charts and a heatmap, which allowed for a graphical representation of response intensity and facilitated the interpretation of results.

The analysis included the seven most frequently indicated competencies to ensure clarity and comparability of the collected data. For the first question (Q1), the frequency of indications was treated as a measure of the perceived importance of a given competency for the enterprise, while for the second question (Q2), the analysis focused on respondents' self-assessment of possessing those competencies.

Comparing both sets of results allowed for the identification of areas of high alignment (e.g., communication, emotional intelligence) as well as competency gaps (e.g., dealing with uncertain situations, understanding foreign partners).

It is worth noting that the response of respondent no. 6 was included in the visualization but excluded from the aggregate interpretation. Unlike the other participants, who, according to the instructions, identified three competencies, this respondent selected all six available options in question Q1. Such a response pattern prevents meaningful comparison with the remaining results and distorts the distribution proportions; therefore, it was treated as an outlier and omitted from the quantitative analysis.

Due to the limited sample size, the analysis was exploratory rather than statistical. Its purpose was to capture qualitative patterns of alignment and discrepancies between organizational expectations and respondents' self-assessed competencies. The results should be regarded as a preliminary insight, which can serve as a starting point for further research involving a larger group of participants.

4. Research Results

After discussing the assumptions and course of the analysis, the results are presented below in a format corresponding to the structure of the research tool. In the first step, a summary of responses to question Q1 is provided, concerning the competencies identified by respondents as most important for the functioning of the enterprise.

Figure 1 shows the number of times each competency was indicated in question Q1. To ensure the reliability of the results, a sensitivity analysis was conducted, considering the response of respondent no. 6, who selected all available options.

Although this respondent's answers affected the percentage values, they did not change the hierarchy of competencies. Therefore, the subsequent analysis presents the version excluding this respondent, which is considered more representative of the overall response pattern.

Figure 1. *Priority Competencies for the Organization (Q1)*

Source: *Own elaboration.*

The competencies that received the most indications were those related to understanding the behavior of foreign partners and emotional intelligence, suggesting the high importance of interpersonal and reflective competencies in the participants' assessments.

These indications show partial alignment, although not all competencies were selected equally frequently, a common core of perceived priorities is visible, including communication, emotional intelligence, and understanding the intercultural context. In the next step, a summary of responses to question Q2 is presented, concerning the competencies that respondents declared as their best-developed.

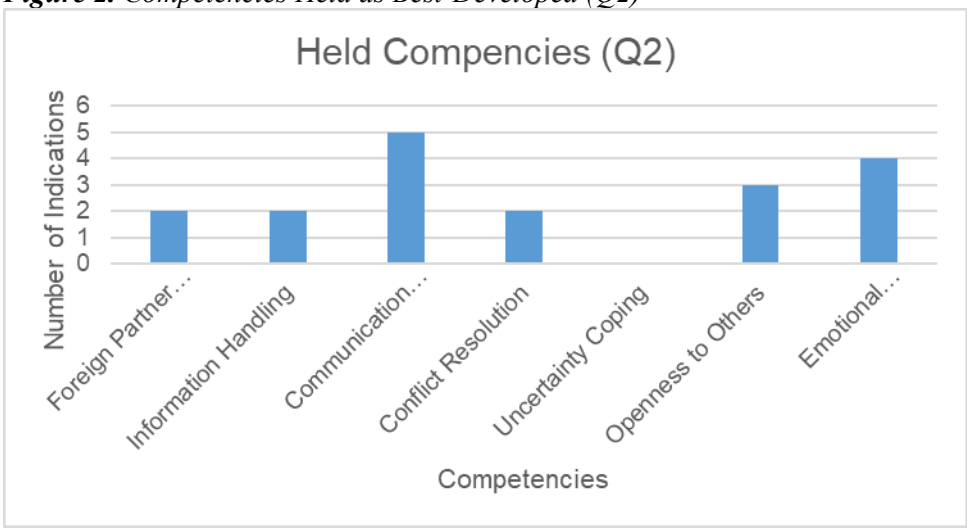
All respondents answered according to the instructions, indicating three competencies each. The most frequently selected areas focus on communication, emotional intelligence, and openness to others, suggesting their central role in participants' self-assessments and potential alignment with the organizational priorities identified in Q1.

The responses show recurring patterns, communication skills, emotional intelligence, and openness to others received the highest number of indications, reflecting a similar perception of personal competencies among the respondents.

In the next stage, a combined analysis was conducted to compare the competencies considered most important (Q1) with those declared as possessed and best-developed (Q2). The heatmap below presents the ten most frequently indicated

competencies in both questions, allowing for the identification of areas of alignment as well as potential competency gaps.

Figure 2. *Competencies Held as Best-Developed (Q2)*



Source: *Own elaboration*

Figure 3. *Comparison of Q1 and Q2 Responses – Heatmap*

Respondent	Q1, c1	Q1, c2	Q1, c3	Q1, c4	Q1, c5	Q1, c6	Q1, c7	Q2, c1	Q2, c2	Q2, c3	Q2, c4	Q2, c5	Q2, c6	Q2, c7
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
2	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
3	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
4	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
5	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1

Source: *Own elaboration.*

The abbreviations and colors on the chart represent specific responses of respondents to Q1 and Q2 for the same group of competencies. Columns labeled Q1_C1, Q1_C2, etc., correspond to competencies identified as most important (Q1), while Q2_C1, Q2_C2, etc., show respondents' declarations of possessing those same competencies (Q2). Rows represent individual respondents.

The cell values are binary: 1 indicates that the competency was selected by the respondent, and 0 indicates it was not. The colors in the visualization reflect these values: green signifies that the competency was selected (1), and yellow indicates it was not (0). This layout allows for a quick identification of alignment and discrepancies between organizational priorities (Q1) and respondents' self-assessed competencies (Q2).

The greatest alignment between Q1 and Q2 is observed for competencies related to understanding the behavior of foreign partners (C1), communication (C3), conflict resolution (C4), and emotional intelligence (C7), which were indicated both as key for organizational functioning and as best-developed by the respondents. This pattern may indicate a high level of self-awareness among the participants and a good alignment of their competencies with organizational expectations.

In contrast, the competency related to dealing with uncertain situations (C5) was indicated by several respondents as important for the organization (Q1) but was not declared as possessed (Q2), suggesting a clear competency gap. Conversely, a reverse discrepancy appears for openness to others (C6), which was more frequently declared as possessed (Q2) but less often identified as key in Q1. This may indicate that the competency is underappreciated in the organizational context, despite being present among employees' skill sets.

Analysis of competency priority and competencies held:
In this analysis, respondents' answers to two questions were compiled: Q1 - concerning competencies considered priority for the organization (Table 1), and Q2 - concerning competencies held by respondents as their best-developed (Table 2).

Each participant indicated three competencies for both questions, except for respondent no. 6, who selected all available options in Q1. To assess the impact of this atypical response, a sensitivity analysis was conducted. Although the choices of respondent no. 6 affected the percentage values, they did not alter the hierarchy of competencies. Therefore, for the subsequent interpretative analysis, the version excluding this respondent in Q1 was adopted, as it was considered more representative of the overall response pattern.

The distribution of responses in both questions reveals recurring patterns, some competencies were rated highly in terms of both priority and competencies held, while others show discrepancies. To capture these relationships in a concise manner, a summary of the percentage differences between Q1 and Q2 responses was prepared.

Table 1. *Number of Competency Indications in Q1 (n=5, excluding respondent 6)*

No	Competency	n	%
1	Understanding the behavior of foreign partners	3	60
2	Information acquisition and processing	1	20
3	Communication competencies	4	80
4	Conflict resolution skills	2	40
5	Coping with uncertain situations	2	40
6	Openness to others	0	0
7	Emotional intelligence	3	60

Source: *Own elaboration.*

Table 2. *Number of Competency Indications in Q2 (n=6)*

No	Competency	n	%
1	Understanding the behavior of foreign partners	2	33%
2	Information acquisition and processing	2	33%
3	Communication competencies	5	83%
4	Conflict resolution skills	2	33%
5	Coping with uncertain situations	0	0%
6	Openness to others	3	50%
7	Emotional intelligence	4	67%

Source: *Own elaboration.*

The distribution of responses in both questions reveals recurring patterns, some competencies were rated highly in terms of both priority and competencies held, while others show discrepancies. To capture these relationships in a concise manner, a summary of the percentage differences between Q1 and Q2 responses was prepared (Table 3).

Table 3. *Differences Between Competency Priority and Competencies Held*

No	Competency	Q1 n (%)	Q2 n (%)	Różnica %
1	Understanding the behavior of foreign partners	3 (60%)	2 (33%)	–27%
2	Information acquisition and processing	1 (20%)	2 (33%)	+13%
3	Communication competencies	4 (80%)	5 (83%)	+3%
4	Conflict resolution skills	2 (40%)	2 (33%)	–7%
5	Coping with uncertain situations	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	–40%
6	Openness to others	0 (0%)	3 (50%)	+50%
7	Emotional intelligence	3 (60%)	4 (67%)	+7%

Source: *Own elaboration.*

The summary reveals clear areas of alignment (e.g., communication, emotional intelligence), as well as potential competency gaps (e.g., coping with uncertain situations) and perceptual mismatches (e.g., openness to others). These differences provide a starting point for a more in-depth interpretation, which will be presented in the following section.

5. Discussion

The study results indicate partial alignment between competencies considered key for the organization and those declared by respondents as their best-developed personal competencies. The greatest consistency was observed in the areas of intercultural communication and emotional management competencies, confirming their critical importance for intercultural management practice.

This finding is supported by research conducted by M. Korczyński (2016), which aimed to examine the relationship between intercultural competencies and the professional success of Polish employees abroad. The study involved 123 individuals employed in companies in southwest England and showed that only in two types of competencies, communication competencies and emotional intelligence, did participants who considered themselves professionally successful achieve significantly higher scores. No such differences were observed in other competency areas.

Therefore, a high level of competencies in intercultural communication and emotional management can be considered a determinant of professional success abroad. Similar conclusions were drawn by I. Bieniek and S. Steinerowska (2021), who emphasized that a modern manager should possess a "global mindset", be flexible toward cultural diversity, and be capable of effective communication in a culturally diverse environment.

The importance of communication competencies in intercultural settings and emotional management skills is also confirmed by research conducted by B. Mazur (2012a) on a sample of 50 Podlaskie managers, participants of postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Management, Białystok University of Technology.

Despite differing evaluations of intercultural competencies from the perspectives of managers and organizations, both competencies, although indicated separately, were among the three most frequently selected as key competencies for companies operating in the international market. Podlaskie managers most often reported possessing cultural understanding, information processing, and communication competencies to the greatest extent.

From the organizational perspective, they identified communication, information processing, and emotional management as the most important among intercultural competencies. At the same time, the study highlighted a lack of declared competency in coping with uncertain situations, despite its relatively high strategic importance, suggesting a potential need for developmental support.

Butryn and Kuropka (2019) emphasize that the ability to adapt to uncertainty and cultural variability is one of the key traits of managers operating in a global environment, a deficiency in this area may limit the effectiveness of actions in an international context.

In contrast, the competency "openness to others" was more frequently reported as held than as important for the organization. This may indicate an underestimation of its potential in building intercultural relationships, which is inconsistent with the findings of the GLOBE research program. GLOBE demonstrated that traits such as openness, empathy, and the ability to build trust are highly valued across many cultures as a foundation for effective leadership (Mączyński, 2006).

The variation in responses to Q1 and the lack of a uniform set of self-reported competencies suggest that managers operate in different organizational and cultural contexts, which influences their assessment of competencies. It is worth noting that respondent 6's answer, although non-standard, was included in the visualization but excluded from the overall interpretation to maintain methodological consistency.

The observed discrepancies between the perceived importance of competencies and the self-assessed level of possession highlight specific areas in need of developmental support. Gaps are particularly evident in coping with uncertainty and understanding the behavior of foreign partners.

Conversely, competencies such as openness to others, although rarely recognized as strategic, are relatively strong in self-assessments, suggesting an underutilized potential for building relationships and supporting collaboration in an intercultural environment (Knap-Stefaniuk, 2020).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that communication competencies and emotional intelligence represent the strongest areas of the surveyed group. These competencies are not only the most frequently identified as key for the organization, but are also most often reported as possessed by the respondents.

This alignment suggests that managers are aware of the importance of these competencies and feel confident in their abilities, which can provide a solid foundation for teamwork, negotiations, and collaboration in an intercultural environment (Bieniek and Steinerowska, 2021).

On the other hand, the analysis revealed significant competency gaps in the areas of coping with uncertainty and understanding the behavior of foreign partners. Although these competencies were recognized as important for the organization, they were much less frequently reported as well-developed by the respondents themselves.

This discrepancy indicates a need for targeted developmental initiatives that could enhance managers' effectiveness in the context of the variability and complexity of contemporary international markets (Butryn and Kuropka, 2019; PARP, 2019).

It is also worth noting the competency "openness to others," which, although not recognized as strategic, was relatively frequently reported as possessed. This may indicate an underappreciation of its organizational value, despite it being an important resource for building relationships, supporting collaboration, and fostering an environment conducive to knowledge and experience exchange (Mączyński, 2006).

The balanced distribution of responses in the areas of information acquisition and conflict resolution suggests that these competencies are stable but not dominant. Their presence in both sets of responses, although not in the top positions, indicates their operational significance, which merits further monitoring in future research (PARP, 2019).

When formulating conclusions and recommendations, it is important to keep in mind the limited sample size, which gives the analysis an exploratory character. Therefore, the conclusions should be regarded as preliminary and pertain specifically to the group of managers from the Podkarpackie region, which should be taken into account when considering their generalization to other organizational contexts.

These conclusions can serve as a starting point for designing development programs that address both the identified competency gaps and the underutilized interpersonal resources. It is recommended to provide targeted support in coping with uncertainty and in developing intercultural competencies, particularly in the context of international collaboration and responding to environmental variability (Butryn and Kuropka, 2019; PARP, 2019).

It is also worth considering the implementation of mentoring programs based on openness and intercultural collaboration, which could enhance the effectiveness of teams operating in multicultural environments. Such initiatives can support experience sharing, trust building, and the development of soft skills, which are crucial when working with partners from diverse cultural backgrounds (Knap-Stefaniuk, 2020; Mączyński, 2006).

The effects of such interventions should be monitored through a follow-up self-assessment of competencies after 3-6 months, allowing for an evaluation of their effectiveness and the identification of further development needs. It is also recommended to link competency development to specific business indicators, such as the effectiveness of international projects, the quality of intercultural communication, or response time to risks, which will help anchor development activities in organizational realities and enhance their practical value (Knap-Stefaniuk, 2020; PARP, 2019).

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