

MENTORme

Promoting social inclusion of people with fewer opportunities through the development of mentorship programme for HEIs students

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

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1. INTRODUCTION

This competency framework is linked to the European Erasmus+ MENTORme project that aims to support higher education institutions in promoting civic engagement as part of their services by fostering key social, civic, and intercultural competencies among university students and professionals. Specifically, in the second Intellectual Output, the educational orientation package is being developed, where the civic engagement-training module is being developed. The objectives pursued with this work package are to develop a framework of social and civic competences where the indicators to evaluate the students' performance are collected and to improve and deepen the competences of the mentors, helping them to be socially committed, to accept diversity, to develop responsibility and to understand the barriers that some groups of vulnerable people may encounter, among others.

The development of the civic competencies' framework, corresponding to IO2.A1, will be the basis for the creation of the training module that will later be used in the training of future mentors (higher education students).

In this document, we can find a general description of the higher education institutions and more particularly in relation to the countries that form the project consortium (Poland, Greece, Germany, Cyprus, and Spain) to know what their objectives and work goals are. Next, a contextualization of the key competences established with the European Commission in 2018 is made to then focus our attention on those linked to civic engagement (multilingual competence, personal, social, and learning to learn competence, citizenship competence and cultural awareness and expression competence). A detailed description of each of them has been made with the indicators and transversal competences that will be key for the construction of the training modules and the evaluation and accreditation of each competence.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Faced with the new social scenario, university institutions have required a redefinition and reconstruction, giving importance to the social and human development of citizenship. With the incorporation of the educational approach focused on learning competencies, it has meant, in universities, integrating and mobilizing different types of learning (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to face situations and problems in specific contexts, thus favoring automatic, self-regulated and directed learning and continuing learning throughout life (López et al., 2016).

Higher education was adapted to the needs of the European Union with the Bologna process in 1999. Its intention was to make higher education easier for students and professionals to move around, to make education more accessible and inclusive, and to make European education more attractive and competitive with the rest of the world. That is why all member countries took the same measures:

- Introduce a three-cycle higher education, consisting of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies
- Ensure mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of learning abroad completed at other universities
- Implementing a quality assurance system, reinforcing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching.

This reform has also enhanced dialogue between different countries regarding higher education and academic issues such as the independence of universities and student participation in civil societies. Linked to the unification of higher education, an international credit system called the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been established as a credit transfer system with theoretical classes and practical hours where the students' work dedication (seminars, study hours and work) is counted, each ECTS being 25 hours of work. This system facilitates homologation and comparison at European level.

In 2008, the European Council and the European Parliament approved the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF). This qualifications framework promotes lifelong learning. It aims to link qualification systems at eight common levels across Europe, covering all levels of education and training. Within each of the levels are the learning outcomes as what the person will be able to do at the end of the training process.

Improvements in higher education, changes in society and the promotion of lifelong learning have led to an increase in participation data in the different countries working on the project. In Cyprus, for example, more than 70% of secondary and high school students continue to higher education.

Goal of higher education institutions

Universities have an important role to play in achieving the 2030 Agenda (CRUE, 2020), which contributes to the Millennium Development Goals through teaching and learning, research, institutional governance, and social leadership. Among others, the principle of integrality of the agenda makes universities redefine themselves to incorporate sustainable development in their decisions and activities. It enables universities to be responsible for building a world committed to sustainable and inclusive development, justice, dignity, and equality of people.

Details of each country

- **Cyprus**

The Higher Education system in Cyprus is shaped by the European Higher Education Area and mostly use European Credit Transfer System. The Council of the Quality Assurance and Certification Body of Higher Education and the Cyprus Council provide quality assurance for university programmes and awards for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualification. Any distance learning programmes are separately validated by the Council of the Quality Assurance and Certification Body of Higher Education. Learning objectives, pedagogies, educational strategies, delivery modes and assessments are some of the items evaluated on both face to face and distance learning.

The main goal of HEIs in Cyprus is produce professionals in their respective fields, focusing primarily on the needs of the local industry and to establish Cyprus as a regional centre for education and research. HEIs are supervised mainly by the Ministry of Education and culture. The goals of HEIs align with the Smart Specialisation Strategy Study and include focus areas such as Information and Communication Technologies, Tourism, Research and Innovation, the environment, shipping, and others.

- **Spain**

From CRUE Spanish Universities, it is intended that universities across the country unify their strategies for the future. The Ministry of Universities is currently drafting a new law on universities, the Organic Law of the University System (LOSU). The University is a space that must contribute to the transformation of society to respond to the great challenges of the present and the future. To this end, universities must face the following challenges:

- To carry out a critical analysis of the current situation with the aim of rationalizing, correcting, and improving the educational offer to respond adequately to the demands of society.
- To make the educational offer more flexible, training students not only in knowledge but also in skills that will enable them to build a future related to technological and social change.
- The possibility of dual training is proposed as a teaching modality that combines professional practice with academic training.
- Ensuring the quality of distance education
- Promoting lifelong learning
- Internationalizing training
- Quality and innovative teaching, where weight is given to accreditation processes.

With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the university had to adapt its teaching methodology. If the classrooms could accommodate the number of students enrolled in compliance with the capacity and social distance measures, the class could be taught face-to-face. If the capacity of the classroom did not guarantee compliance with the distance, the teaching activity had to be carried out online. In the latter situation, if the classrooms were equipped with appropriate retransmission equipment, the

classroom activity could be carried out simultaneously with the online activity, an option in which the members of the group had to rotate periodically to carry out a mixed teaching modality.

Taking as a reference a ranking on the commitment of universities to the Sustainable Development Goals, Spanish universities (27 public and 5 private) rank fourth worldwide and second in Europe (Carolina Foundation, 2020).

- **Poland**

Higher education institutions in Poland are currently facing several key challenges. One of them is the introduction in 2018 of Act 2.0 - the so-called the Constitution for Science. This act assumes the introduction of wide-ranging changes in higher education in Poland, including: a new model of effective university management, broadening of the autonomy of universities, sustainable development of higher education across Poland, new academic career paths, a new model of doctoral education, guarantees of rights for employees and students, an effective system of financing universities and greater flexibility in this area, combining the potential of scientific disciplines, guarantees of additional funds for science and higher education, support for the Responsible Development Strategy (MEN, Constitution for Science). According to panellists of the 6th LUMEN 2020 Conference, the Act 2.0. is one of the sources of fundamental challenges facing universities in Poland today. The Constitution for Science has significantly broadened the scope of autonomy of HEIs, which means that it has also increased the scope of responsibility for its mission and development strategy (PCG Academia, 2020).

The second global challenge faced by HEIs in Poland today is the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to panellists of the 6th LUMEN 2020 Conference, the effect of the pandemic is the acceleration of the transformation of processes in universities, leading to a change towards a digital university. The related challenges for universities include the process of remote education, virtualisation of conducting research, and providing students with a sense of community during remote education (PCG Academia, 2020). The key conclusions of the report "Polish universities in times of pandemic" indicate, among others, that conducting classes in a remote mode requires their proper design. It is important not only to think about the scope of material to be mastered by students during the semester, but also to adapt the form of classes to the specifics of the online environment. The focus on interactive, workshop methods and project work, as well as a reduction in the form of lectures can help. Moreover, academic teachers need appropriate tools, both at the software and hardware level. According to the author of the report, it seems necessary to think about and introduce new solutions that would enable the creation of an academic community online - both among the academic teachers and among the students (Klimowicz, 2020).

The third mission of the university and cooperation with the socio-economic environment remains equally important (PCG Academia, 2020). Moreover, a shift of emphasis from education for pure knowledge to education for applied knowledge, equipping the student with skills, as well as increasing the role of the business environment for the university is also emphasised. International challenges are also including Polish higher education in global development projects and increasing the internationalisation of universities (Kościelniak, 2017).

In the area of educational policy at the Bachelor and Master level, the main objectives include (European Commission):

- to reduce the massification of studies, by promoting an adequate size of the teaching availability rate (number of students per academic teacher)
- increasing internationalisation through appropriate financial incentives (subsidy algorithm) and institutional solutions (establishing the National Agency for Academic Exchange)
- intensification of pro-quality activities (funding streams)
- better linking of the educational offer to the needs of the labour market.

- **Greece**

According to article 16 of the Greek Constitution, higher education is public and exclusively provided by Higher Education Institutions (HEI), which are legal entities under public law, enjoying full self-administration and academic freedom, while are legal subject to state supervision, carried out by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, and financed by the government.

Higher Education Institution in Greece pursue the following goals:

- To promote knowledge through research and teaching, to prepare students to use the acquired knowledge at their professional life and to boost arts and cultural
- To offer higher education and to contribute to lifelong learning using modern teaching methods (distance learning include) based on high quality scientific and technological research which follows international criteria.
- To develop student's critical thinking and skills, to care of their integration into the labour market and to create the appropriate conditions for the emergence of new researchers
- To correspond to the labour market needs and to the country's development needs as well as to promote the knowledge dissemination, the optimization of research results and of innovation focusing on the scientific ethics, sustainable development, and social cohesion.
- To promote cooperation with other Greek or foreign institutions and research organizations. To promote student and staff mobility contributing this way to the construction of the European Higher Education and Research Area.
- To create responsible citizens, capable of facing all human activities demands with scientific, professional, and cultural sufficiency as well as to respect values such as justice, freedom, democracy and social solidarity.

Objectives of higher education institutions

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) aims to establish criteria and mechanisms to facilitate the adoption of a comparable system of university degrees by developing common objectives and making universities more attractive and competitive internationally. The EHEA seeks to promote (Educaweb, 2021):

- Respect for the educational and cultural diversity of Europe

- The promotion of the competitiveness of the European university system at the international level
- The adoption of a comparable system of university degrees in Europe, facilitating the mobility of professional and students
- The promotion of quality and excellence as values of European higher education

Details of each country

• Cyprus

The Educational Strategy and key objectives across the whole education system are described in the Government Programme. The objectives focus on practical and tangible ways of achieving quality in materialising the main goal of satisfying the needs of the local industry while establishing Cyprus as a regional centre for education and research.

• Spain

The Ministry of Universities regulates the University in Spain. Its department of the General State Administration oversees proposing and executing the Government's policy in relation to universities and their activities. Organic Law 6/2001, of December 21, 2001, on Universities (Official State Gazette, 2001), the universities are considered as a higher education service in which research; teaching and study are carried out. Among its functions, we can find:

- The creation, development, transmission and critique of science, technology, and culture.
- Preparation for the exercise of professional activities
- Dissemination, valorisation, and transfer of knowledge within and outside the university community.

• Poland

In general terms, the mission of the higher education and science system in Poland is to provide the highest quality of education and scientific activity, to shape civic attitudes, to participate in social development and the creation of an innovation-based economy. The system of higher education and science consists primarily of academic and vocational universities, as well as other entities conducting mainly scientific activities (Law on Higher Education and Science, 2018).

According to the provisions of the Law on Higher Education and Science, 2018, the basic tasks of universities include (Law on Higher Education and Science, 2018):

- providing education on degree programmes
- providing postgraduate education or other forms of education
- conducting scientific activity, providing research services, and transferring knowledge and technology to the economy
- providing doctoral education

- training and promotion of university staff
- creating conditions for disabled persons to participate fully in higher education
- educating students in the sense of responsibility for the Polish state, national tradition, strengthening democratic principles and respect for human rights
- creating conditions for the development of students' physical culture
- disseminating and multiplying the achievements of science and culture, including through collecting and making available library, information, and archive collections
- acting for the benefit of local and regional communities.

In the case of non-university (vocational) higher education institutions, the range of basic tasks is similar, except that it does not include scientific activity (and thus the provision of research services and technology transfer) and the training of doctoral students, while it does include the provision of specialist training (European Commission).

Learning Methodology at the University

With the construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), values and good teaching practices have been promoted to guarantee the quality of Higher Education. The learning process is student-centered. The ECTS credit system estimates the workload of students to achieve the established objectives. This implies an active and participative role of the students in their training process.

Active methodologies are teaching methodologies focused on the student and his or her training in specific and transversal competencies. It is understood as the means, techniques and strategies used by the teacher to convert the teaching process into activities that encourage active student participation and lead to learning. Within this, we find different types such as case resolution, project-based or collaborative learning, among others. The use of this new learning methodology provides a better response to the need for change in the new approaches of the EHEA.

For example, in Cyprus, the pillars of HEI learning methodology are academic excellence with support for diversity and inclusion. This includes distance learning, student mobility, employment opportunities and access to more advanced resources. In the case of Greece, the materials necessary for the teaching of the students are free of charge and provided by the Departments as technical material.

There is the possibility of studying at the university through distance learning. The methodology to be followed consists of tutorials with the teachers of the course, practices related to the content and the final exam to pass the course. In Greece, for example, if you fail the final exam, you must take a nationally fixed exam.

The most popular types of classes conducted at universities, especially in Poland are:

- lectures - the academic teacher presents theoretical issues in a given area, often using a multimedia presentation
- practical classes - practical classes complementing the lecture form; they may include individual and group tasks, problem solving, developing practical skills

- seminars - classes that prepare the student to independently write a graduate work (thesis)
- foreign language courses - classes that include learning a foreign language
- laboratory classes - practical classes during which students conduct research with the use of laboratory equipment or research apparatus
- work placement - students undertake professional work related to their field of study to acquire specific skills that will prepare them for performing a specific job.

Indicators on the level of competence acquisition of higher education students

The educational model advocated by the European Higher Education Area focuses on learning competencies. The inclusion of basic competencies in the educational curriculum implies assuming changes in different aspects of teaching practice.

Below, we can find how each of the participating countries extracts the indicators for the acquisition of the different knowledge implicit in the curricula:

- **Cyprus**

The European Credit Transfer System is used to indicate the level of competence, and this is achieved in a hierarchical mode by a course, which results in an award, and which is made up of modules with internal assessments that reflect the sub-component of modules, the lessons. To be awarded for the course a student must complete several ECTS; these are obtained by completing several modules successfully, each of which is worth several ECTS (less than the ECTS for the course).

Thus, a key indicator is number of students completing their courses (consider types of courses, type of awards, areas of awards, etc.). In addition, given the focus on industry alignment and research excellence, indicators also include successful employment of graduates, employment in their field of study during and after completion of studies, employment in industry and/or in research, international recognition, e.g., research publication during and after studies, etc.

- **Spain**

Within higher education, each study program is composed of a didactic plan or guide. Within this guide, we can find the competencies that are associated with the training that will be received and the learning objectives that are intended to be achieved with the completion of the training. Both the list of competencies and the learning objectives will serve as indicators to evaluate the acquisition of knowledge in the training. There are different methods to know if the expected learning and knowledge have been achieved, for example through written or oral exams or practical activities.

In relation to the level of training, in Spain we have the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as a tool for boost the lifelong learning process by collecting all the learning validated in Spain. This framework allows comparing the qualifications recognized in Spain with those of the rest of Europe through EQF since it is also composed of eight levels of qualification. Specifically for higher education,

we have the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education (MECES), which covers vocational training and university education and is reflected in the EQF. In this case, the MECES is divided into 4 levels corresponding to the last 4 levels of the EQF.

- **Poland**

According to the 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science, studies are conducted based on a study programme that defines, among other things, learning outcomes (Law on Higher Education and Science, 2018). Learning outcomes are knowledge, skills and social competences acquired in the learning process. The condition for graduation and obtaining a diploma of graduation is obtaining the learning outcomes specified in the study programme, passing the diploma examination and a positive assessment of the diploma thesis. In the study programmes, the indicator of the student's workload necessary to achieve the learning outcomes is ECTS points. (Law on Integrated Qualification System).

Learning outcomes are defined not only for the educational programme (field of study), but also for individual subjects. Learning outcomes for subjects should be verifiable, measurable. The verification of learning outcomes in the context of a subject means checking the results of the student's work and determining whether he or she has achieved the learning outcomes defined for that subject. Examples of forms of verification of learning outcomes are oral and written examinations, colloquium/test, and project task, essay, etc. (Kraśniewski, 2011).

The learning outcomes are also related to the so-called Polish Qualification Framework. The Polish Qualification Framework (PQF) is a reference system for qualifications awarded in Poland. The Polish Qualifications Framework allows for referencing Polish qualifications to the levels of the European Qualifications Framework. There are eight levels in the PQF. Each is described by general characteristics of the scope and complexity of knowledge, skills and social competences required of holders of qualifications of a given level. Level characteristics typical for qualifications obtained in the framework of higher education have been defined for PQF levels 6 to 8. Full level qualifications (MEN, Polish Qualification Framework):

- 6 confirms a diploma of completion of first-degree level
- 7 confirms a diploma of completion of second-degree level and a diploma of completion of uniform master's degree level
- 8 confirms a doctoral diploma.

- **Greece**

The Higher Education Institutions Academic staff assess student performance. The student's grade is determined by the course tutor, who holds written and/or oral examinations, or organize laboratory or clinical exercises, as well as assignment through the semester.

To pass a course students must, as a rule, receive a pass mark of five (5) out of ten (10). This mark results either solely from the mark received on the written and/or oral exams at the end of each semester, or from a combination of the mark received on examinations and the mark resulting from

the participation of students in various educational activities (laboratory exercises, tutorials, writing of assignments, etc.). In certain cases, the dissertation grade may be multiplied by a specific coefficient.

As regards the postgraduate students' assessment and progress, this depends on their passing the written and/or oral examinations in the courses specified by the programme in question, taking into consideration their participation in overall research, writing and educational activities and obligations defined in the Programme and the regulation of operation of the Postgraduate course.

3. KEY COMPETENCES

The world is in continuous evolution and makes it necessary for people to possess broad skills and competencies that will enable them to develop throughout their lives. Key competencies are intended to lay the foundations for making societies more equitable and democratic.

Key competencies are understood as the combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a person must have to achieve personal development, improve employability, social integration, lifestyle, a healthy way of life and active citizenship. The development of these competencies is linked to lifelong learning, that which is developed throughout life in its different areas and modes of education.

Currently, following the proposal of key competences made by the European Commission in 2018 (European Commission, 2018), there are 8 key competences:

1. Literacy competence
2. Multilingual competence
3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering
4. Digital competence
5. Personal, social, and learning to learn competency
6. Citizenship competence
7. Entrepreneurial competence
8. Competence in cultural awareness and expression

All these competencies are considered equally important and can be applied in different life contexts. There is the possibility that they overlap as the criteria of one support the indicators of another. It should also be considered that these key competencies implicitly carry transversal competencies, understood as a set of skills that are not specific to a profession or environment and can be used in different activities and contexts.

4. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

Society needs respectful, responsible, and participatory citizens, oriented towards justice, solidarity and the common good above their particular interests. The university, in this sense, plays an important role in society. Its purpose should be to inculcate social responsibility among students. In addition, it can raise the level of civic culture, influencing coexistence and social cohesion. In relation to social commitment, it is responsible for preparing students for their incorporation into the world of work and for exercising active citizenship. Social commitment is understood as the attitude that leads the person to become involved in certain social issues, acting as a good citizen (Arbues et al., 2014)

It is necessary for the university to train citizens committed to active citizenship projects, who are willing to improve and transform social reality with democratic values and competencies. In view of this situation, the MENTORme project was created with the aim of fostering civic and social commitment at the university. To this end, higher education students will be trained to acquire competencies related to civic engagement, thus improving their engagement.

Taking as a reference the Council Recommendation of May 22, 2018 on key competences (European Commission, 2018), the key competences that are linked to civic and social engagement are going to be worked on, corresponding to the following:



1. Multilingual competence

This competence is defining for the European Commission as:

Ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication. It broadly shares the main skill dimensions of literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express, and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts according to one's wants or needs. Language's competences integrate a historical dimension and intercultural competences. It relies on the ability to mediate between different languages and media, as outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference. As appropriate, it can include maintaining and further developing mother tongue competences, as well as the acquisition of a country's official language(s) (European Commission, 2018).

Based on the definition provided by the European Commission, this competence was adapted on the needs and requirements of the MENTORme programme. The consortium believes that this competence developed in the MENTORme project will not be about foreign language acquisition, but about the cultural particularities and differences related to linguistics (body language, tone of the voice, details provided etc.) in order to make mentors more open minded and respectful to cultural differences.

Its link with civic and social commitment is related to communication with other people, considering their linguistic profile and respect for the cultural diversity that lies behind each language. It is necessary that people who develop this competence have the skills and knowledge to communicate with other people and appreciate cultural diversity and their interest in different languages.

- Competence indicators

Considering the description of the competency, the following indicator have been extracted:

- Be aware of one's own cultural worldview
- Understand and respect cultural differences and particularities
- Acknowledge different cultural practices and worldviews
- Develop cross-cultural skills
- Adapt to various culture particularities
- Reflect on stereotypes already well established in society
- Understand the advantages of being surrounded by culturally diverse environment

- Transversal competencies associated with the competence

In society, there are stereotypes that are extended to certain groups of people, related to their language, culture or nationality, and can become offensive to the people who receive them. To confront these stereotypes, it is necessary for people to have **critical thinking skills**. It is understood as the ability to think clearly and rationally, considering many opinions, and creating one's own through reflective and independent thinking. It helps to reflect and

evaluate the different stereotypes established in society and helps people to act without prejudice.

When we interact with other people, it is necessary for us to develop verbal communication. **Verbal communication** is human interaction that takes place face-to-face (oral communication), but it is also expressed through written communication and sign language. The way of relating changes from one culture to another. We must consider, when communicating, that there are different levels depending on the information they provide when communicating. On many occasions, humor is used in oral communication to break the ice and establish relationships. Care must be taken with its use, as many jokes, depending on the culture, can be offensive. It is therefore important for people to be aware of the fine line of humor and to be able to use it appropriately with students.

Related to verbal communication is **nonverbal communication and body language**. It is defined as the use of physical behavior, expressions and gestures that help to express oneself non-verbally. This transversal competence is linked to multilingual competence in more than one sense. On the one hand, we have gestures; many people rely on gestures while speaking. We must be aware that these gestures are not common to all languages and a gesture can have a completely different meaning depending on the culture and can lead to misunderstanding or confusion. That is why we must adapt our non-verbal language according to the culture of the people and use it appropriately, adapting it to the situation. Another important aspect is personal space, which differs from one culture to another. It is the space that surrounds the person and that he/she considers as his/her own. When this space is "violated", people feel uncomfortable and intimidated, and this space differs from culture to culture. Therefore, when developing body language skills, we must be mindful of personal space and be cautious about moving away from or toward a person.

Finally, **open mindedness** has been considered important within this key competency. An open-minded person is willing to consider ideas, opinions and concepts that are new or different from their own beliefs. In this section, religion plays an important role and is a sensitive issue to address. Different beliefs, behaviors, ways of dressing and their particularities can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, or disrespect. People with an open mind can get to know other religions better, accepting and respecting them.

2. Personal, social, and learning to learn competence

Personal, social, and learning-to-learn competencies are understood to mean:

Personal, social, and learning to learn competence is the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one's physical and emotional well-being, to maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathize and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context (European Commission, 2018).

This competency is related to the commitment that higher education students must develop. We can define it as the ability to identify one's own capabilities, to respect the diversity of others and their needs, and to be willing to overcome prejudices as well as to compromise, codes of conduct and communication standards.

This competence enables people to participate fully in society and social relations. It is essential to know the codes of conduct and communication standards of different cultures, respecting diversity. Focusing attention on the personal sphere and learning to learn, the person must be aware of his or her continuous improvement and therefore must know how to identify his or her skills and the ways to improve them, knowing how to face the challenges and obstacles of life and identifying opportunities.

- Competence indicators

The indicators of this competency that are related to the development of civic and social engagement are:

- Understand the codes of the conduct and communication standards accepted in different societies and environments
- To know different learning strategies, to know the need to develop competences and how to improve them, looking for educational, training, and professional opportunities, as well as the guidance and help available
- Identify one's own capabilities, reflect critically and make decisions.
- Work collaboratively and autonomously
- Communicate knowledge clearly, using verbal and non-verbal communication consistently
- Be able to listen actively and respond with constructive feedback
- To be resilient and cope with uncertainty and stress
- Knowing how to communicate appropriately in different environments, being tolerant, understanding different points of view
- Work as a part of team
- Negotiate
- Empathetic
- Respect diversity

- Problem solving
- Transversal competencies associated with the competence

As people who are going to relate to others, we must have a personal balance that helps us to cope with the different situations that we may experience. That is why the **promotion of equanimity** in society will help people to maintain a balanced and constant attitude over time regardless of the circumstances that surround them.

Related to respect for diversity is **respect for values**. This is the consideration of the cultural and social values that define a citizenry. When we relate to other people, we must respect the values that characterize them.

Each culture has its own codes of conduct and communication. It is necessary that people know and respect them. That is why the transversal competence to **follow the rules** helps to continue with the established social guidelines that each group has.

Related to this competency is engagement. **Engagement** is understood as the process of interaction that implies responsibility with organizations and culture. Promoting commitment in citizens has benefits for citizens and their environment, always seeking continuous improvement.

Each person must perform different activities that allow him/her to manage his/her knowledge, being able to keep improving it. That is why it is considered necessary to work on knowledge management in this competence. **Knowledge management** is understood as the set of activities and processes that enhance the exchange of information and experience to improve.

The proper functioning of societies implies the collaboration of all the people who form it. Therefore, people must know and **foster a sense of teamwork**, understood as the ability of a person to help achieve a shared goal with others, for the benefit of their community.

Related to learning to learn and lifelong learning is the competence to **produce continuous improvement**. It is any activity aimed at identifying aspects or knowledge that improve our life in all its dimensions. For the continuous improvement of the individual, it is necessary that people are aware of the need to develop their competencies and the different ways to do it. The person must look for the opportunities that allow him/her to achieve these improvements.

People need to know different **problem-solving** and conflict management strategies to face the different circumstances that may arise throughout their lives. We have considered it important to work on problem-solving skills so that people are able to use different strategies to find solutions.

Related to problem solving is the competency of **decision making**. It is considered as the process by which one chooses between different options to solve different life situations. Decision-making is a very important crosscutting competency, since in the different contexts and situations that a person must face, he/she will have to choose one option among several. For this, the person must have tools and strategies to make the choice correctly.

Linked to the above-mentioned competencies, we also find it relevant to mention **interpersonal communication**. It is understood as the exchange of verbal and non-verbal messages between people, regardless of the relationship they share. Possessing this competence facilitates working with others effectively, communicating and negotiating, and facilitates success in interpersonal relationships and social participation.

3. Citizenship competence

Citizenship competence involves an understanding of the cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies, participation in the civic activities that take place, respect for human rights and support for social and cultural diversity. The European Commission defines this competence as:

citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal, and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability (European Commission, 2018).

Citizens must know the aspects related to groups, work, economy, and culture. It implies knowing European values, being aware of diversity and cultural and global identities. Citizens need to respect human rights. These rights must also be considered when we find ourselves participating in society, so that our intervention is democratic at all levels and activities.

- Competence indicators

When it comes to measuring civic competence, there are four domain indicators, including citizenship values, social justice values and attitudes, participatory attitudes, and cognitions about democratic institutions (Hoskins, et al., 2011:82).

A discussion on how IEA data could be used to monitor civic competence in Europe has led to the development of the Civic Competence Composite Indicator (CCCI) (Hoskins et al., 2011:83).

The following list has been adapted from Table 1 from the article of Hoskins, Saisana, and Villalba (2015):

- **Citizenship values**
 - Conventional citizenship
 - Social-movement related citizenship
- **Social justice**
 - Democratic values
 - Equal rights for all ethnic/racial groups
 - Equal rights for immigrants
 - Gender Equality
 - Value of participation at school
- **Participatory attitudes**
 - Political and Social issues
 - Internal political efficacy
 - Legal protest
 - Electoral participation
 - Political Participation
 - Informal Participation
 - Self-efficacy

- Transversal competencies associated with the competence

For the development of citizenship competence, **self-knowledge** is necessary. With this competence, people will be able to effectively interpret their underlying emotional and motivational states. This includes the ability to recognize and understand personal strengths, weaknesses, behaviors, and areas of development to improve. It will enable individuals to discover, through introspection, their own motivations and aspirations that drive them to become involved in public affairs.

Today's multicultural societies go hand in hand with plurality. Society is made up of many groups with different identities in terms of religious beliefs, ethnicities and backgrounds, sexual orientation, and gender identities, etc. It is therefore necessary to **support human diversity**, respecting individual identity and understanding the variety of cultures and people. Be tactful with other people, you collaborate and live with people from multiple backgrounds that may not be like your own.

When people cooperate, some friction and problems sometimes arise. **Problem solving** is a competency that helps an individual or team to overcome occasional obstacles and implement a solution to achieve the goal, unimpeded by interpersonal disagreements.

Within the citizenship competency, we cannot forget climate change and the environmental crisis. **Respect for the environment** is a key component within this competency as it functions as a driving force to act and implement plans to protect the environment by reducing pollutants, regulating urban waste and factory emissions. Citizens must develop the skills and knowledge necessary to understand the environment and the circumstances and conditions that affect it, especially as they relate to air, climate, land, food, energy, water, and ecosystems. It is necessary to support individual and collective actions to address environmental challenges.

Participating in society or with a group of people allows us to develop a sense of belonging. Related to this is **teamwork**, understood as helping a person or group to achieve its objectives thanks to the support of the community. By working as a team, social and political changes that benefit society can be achieved. To work in a team, it is necessary to develop skills such as the ability to negotiate, to follow the rules or make decisions together.

Decision-making is linked to citizenship competence. It is considered a crosscutting competency since people throughout their lives must make many decisions in an informed, reasonable, and rational manner. Decision-making is understood as the ability to use different types of reasoning depending on the situation, to effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, or beliefs to make judgments and decisions.

Related to decision making, we can find **critical thinking**. It is the ability to analyze and evaluate existing information on a subject, trying to clarify the veracity of such information and arrive at a justified idea about it, ignoring possible external biases. In society, there is a large amount of information to which we are exposed, especially in recent years with the development of the media and social networks, which can become misleading and misleading. Therefore, a person with civic competence must be able to extract information from multiple sources, comparing data and critically assessing the credibility of the sources, before providing their own opinion.

4. Cultural awareness and expression competence

Competence in cultural awareness and expression is related to the idea that people possess an open attitude towards diversity.

Considering, the definition provided by the European Commission (2018) involves understanding and respect for how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and through a range of arts and other cultural forms. It involves being engaged in understanding, developing, and expressing one's own ideas and sense of place or role in society in a variety of ways and contexts (European Commission, 2018).

The specific competence refers to the understanding of ideas and meanings that are creatively expressed in different cultures and how they are communicated. In fact, this is one of key competences for EU Member States according to the EU Skills Agenda for EU Education and Youth Policy.

The cultural awareness and expression competence, considers various aspects:

- Creative expression of ideas
- Experience and emotion in a range of media
- Cultural knowledge and understanding
- Respect of diversity of cultural expression

A list of indicators for the specific competence is identified, especially tailored to be used in the elaboration of didactic material.

- Competence indicators

The indicators are listed next to the corresponding aspect:

- Creative expression of ideas: Access to media outlets that offer opportunities (e.g., digital/physical spaces); Policies/Protocols to promote social and economic opportunities for cultural expression
- Experience and emotion in a range of media: Trainings for art/music appreciation online
- Cultural knowledge and understanding: System to allow for exchange of knowledge and dialogue between cultures; Culturally immersive education opportunities
- Respect of diversity of cultural expression: percentage of vulnerable people (and corresponding policies) to be included in relevant initiatives

For all indicators, we must consider different media, different art forms and art categories, focusing focus both on heritage aspects and on contemporary arts; we must consider the differences between local, EU, and global perspectives and be able to support and promote relevant ideas and experiences.

Looking back specifically at how we may assess cultural competence, and considering the definitions and indicators discussed previously, we next provide some more insight into the aspects of cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, and cultural sensitivity.

Cultural knowledge refers to *knowing* about some cultural characteristics, history, values, beliefs, and behaviors of another ethnic or cultural group. *Cultural awareness* is the next stage of understanding other groups -- being open to the idea of changing cultural attitudes. *Cultural sensitivity* is knowing that differences exist between cultures, but not assigning values to the differences (better or worse, right or wrong). Clashes on this point can easily occur, especially if a custom or belief in question goes against the idea of multiculturalism. Internal conflict (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational) is likely to occur at times over this issue. Conflict will not always be easy to manage, but it can be made easier if everyone is mindful of the goals that must be achieved.

In fact, *Cultural competence* brings together the aspects of knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity — and adds operational effectiveness. A culturally competent human has the capacity to put into practice many different behaviors, attitudes, and work effectively in cross-cultural settings to produce better outcomes.

In terms of education, and according to the Cultural Awareness and Expression Handbook (European Agenda for Culture: *Work Plans for Culture 2015-2018/2011-2014*) published in December of 2015, there are four areas to focus on, for culturally immersive education:

- Education in the Arts and Culture, e.g. artistic skills, cultural heritage, etc.
- Education through the arts and culture, e.g. creative learning supporting multiple learning styles
- Social Cohesion through cultural diversity, intercultural awareness, and dialogue
- Impact of Arts and Culture (professional trainings for innovative societies)

An educational method aimed at increasing cultural knowledge and sensitivity is cultural immersion, which creates opportunities for transformational learning through direct interactions with culturally diverse populations. Next, we will focus on the diversity aspect.

Respect of diversity of cultural expression

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from 3 to 21 October 2005 at its 33rd session, highlighted that:

- Affirming that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity,
- Conscious that cultural diversity forms a common heritage of humanity and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all,
- Being aware that cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples, and nations,
- Recalling that cultural diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national, and international levels,

- Celebrating the importance of cultural diversity for the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognized instruments,
- Emphasizing the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and international development policies, as well as in international development cooperation, also considering the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) with its special emphasis on poverty eradication,
- Considering that culture takes diverse forms across time and space and that this diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities and cultural expressions of the peoples and societies making up humanity,
- Recognizing the need to take measures to protect the diversity of cultural expressions, including their contents, especially in situations where cultural expressions may be threatened by the possibility of extinction or serious impairment,
- Reaffirming that freedom of thought, expression, and information, as well as diversity of the media, enable cultural expressions to flourish within societies,
- Emphasizing the importance of culture for social cohesion in general, and its potential for the enhancement of the status and role of women in society, being aware that cultural diversity is strengthened by the free flow of ideas, and that it is nurtured by constant exchanges and interaction between cultures,
- Recognizing that the diversity of cultural expressions, including traditional cultural expressions, is an important factor that allows individuals and peoples to express and to share with others their ideas and values,
- Recalling that linguistic diversity is a fundamental element of cultural diversity, and reaffirming the fundamental role that education plays in the protection and promotion of cultural expressions,
- Being convinced that cultural activities, goods, and services have both an economic and a cultural nature, because they convey identities, values, and meanings, and must therefore not be treated as solely having commercial value,
- Emphasizing the vital role of cultural interaction and creativity, which nurture and renew cultural expressions and enhance the role played by those involved in the development of culture for the progress of society at large,
- Considering the importance of the vitality of cultures, including for persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples, as manifested in their freedom to create, disseminate, and distribute their traditional cultural expressions and to have access thereto, to benefit them for their own development.

Finally, transversal competencies associated with the cultural competence are listed below.

- Transversal competencies associated with the competence

It is important for people belonging to minority cultures and indigenous peoples to express their freedom to create, disseminate, distribute, and have access to their traditional cultural expressions for the benefit of their own development. **Engaging in self-development** is one of the vital skills of self-management. It allows the improvement of self-knowledge, skills and learn others and build or renew one's own identity.

Cultural diversity means adapting a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect among peoples and cultures, being indispensable for peace and security at local, national, and international levels. That is why the transversal competence of **showing respect and consideration for others** as a civic life skill is considered important. It means learning to tolerate, not discriminating against anyone, and avoiding actions that may offend others.

In the competence of cultural awareness and expression, it is necessary to highlight the importance of culture for social cohesion, understood as a close collaboration. Cultural diversity is enhanced by the free flow of ideas and is nurtured by constant exchanges and interactions between cultures. **Teamwork** is a civic life skill. Team collaboration takes a communication approach that emphasizes teamwork, innovative thinking, and equal participation to achieve goals.

It is necessary to recognize the diversity of cultural expressions, including traditions, as an important factor that allows people and places to express and share their ideas and values with others. Moreover, freedom of thought, expression, and information, as well as the diversity of the media, allow cultural expressions to flourish within societies, thus sharing some points of view on certain issues, also taking into account the vulnerable groups that are attacked or affected by those who hate them. In our daily lives, we deal with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, which is why **supporting others** is considered necessary. Supporting others is understood as the act of helping by giving encouragement, attention, and consideration.

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