



INVEST IN CIVIC COMPETENCIES

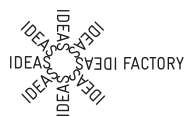
Why competency centred learning needs more promotion and what policy, school leadership and civil society can do to facilitate better learning conditions for youth in Europe.

INVEST IN CIVIC COMPETENCIES

**Why competency centred learning
needs more promotion and what policy,
school leadership and civil society
can do to facilitate better learning
conditions for youth in Europe.**

Reflections and recommendations from
the project COMPETENDO – "Unleashing
youth initiative and Involvement
through empowerment with key
competencies – developing tools and
disseminating best practice."

The recommendations are results of an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership collaboration on key-competency centered learning.



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CULTURES

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of these reflections and recommendations is to provide a proposal for strengthening competency oriented learning in the European systems and frameworks of education. Especially we broaden the perspective toward all kind of formal, non-formal and informal learning taking place in Europe and relevant for gaining the relevant competencies for acting as a successful citizen or professional, the so called key competencies. The Civic and social competences were the focus of our work.

In line with the Council of Europe we would see them as competencies for a democratic civic culture: “Competences for democratic culture enable citizens to participate effectively in a culture of democracy.”

Council of Europe¹

While exploring and exchanging with stakeholders in policymaking, training and youth and civil society organizations, five main focus areas were identified:

1. New role of teachers – a need of a transition from teaching to facilitating.
2. More competency awareness at the systemic and institutional levels.
3. Recognition of competency centred learning.
4. New key competencies extraordinarily needed nowadays that need focus and acknowledgement.
5. Special focus on shaping holistic learning spaces that foster acquirement of the key competences.

Target audience

The recommendations are addressed to four main groups:

- Policy makers in the field of education at the national and European level
- Managers and coordinators in the educational entities, in example university, school principals
- Teachers and educators, trainers, facilitators, community workers, social animators
- Leadership in civil society organizations, coordinators of programs in non-formal learning settings

Context

In an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership collaboration best practices from education and learning were identified. Ways how to strengthen the key competencies of individuals. A key issue in this process is empowering young people with different social background to act as responsible and active citizens. The outcomes of the collaboration is a series of handbooks created for anyone from the field of formal or non-formal education or active in local or global organizations and a website **competendo.net** with tools for facilitators.



What are the key competencies?

Competence-centered learning processes cover the broad set of skills, types of knowledge, and attitudes necessary for successful action in modern society. Thanks to key competencies, people can integrate what they've learned into their lives as active citizens and agents for social change. In this way, the result of a learning process is not only knowledge, but also practical skills and attitudes. They help individuals develop key competencies and an open attitude to lifelong learning. Achievement of goals and the feeling that learning is relevant occur when learners activate and apply knowledge and skills in concrete situations. This might take place at work, during free time, as part of a public engagement, or in the private sphere. When competencies are universal, they are called “transversal” or “key competencies.”

A key competency is more than just knowledge or a skill. It is an ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context.²

1. Council of Europe: Competences for Democratic Culture; Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies <https://rm.coe.int/16806ccco7>

2. OECD: The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies; Executive Summary <http://www.deseco.ch/>

Area 1

CHANGING ROLE OF THE TEACHERS – FROM TEACHING TO FACILITATING AND EMPOWERING

Traditionally, a teacher is a person who primarily disseminates knowledge. Facilitation, on the other hand, involves accompanying people during a learning process in which they develop competencies. Facilitators create the right conditions for individuals to form knowledge and skills in a self-directed way, according to their specific needs. This is one aspect of empowerment. Our profession is better understood with a new definition: a shift from teaching to facilitating, moderating, and encouraging.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a process of promoting skills in public social activity, cooperative organization, and involvement in public decision-making. It deals with questions like:

- How do you gain power?
- How do you use power?
- How do you shape power relations?
- How can you influence socially relevant conversations and decisions?

Steps toward action, Empowerment for self-responsible initiative, Gawinek-Dagargulia, Skowron, Zimmermann

Policy in regard to schools	Policy in regard to other educators, facilitators, instructors, activists, etc.
<p>Promote a changing role of educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → campaign for a shift toward empowerer and partner. → include key competencies and facilitation in teachers education curricula → update the curricula for learners toward more competency-oriented → allow teachers to learn and try out the new role of facilitators <p>Prepare teachers for more social cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → consider external (from civic and social sphere) inputs in the curricula of teachers' trainings → enable shadowing, support civil engagement, joining networks with practitioners in the fields of their expertise → incentives (i.e. appreciation for teachers that develop cooperation with social and civic initiatives and invite them in the classroom) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Strengthen reflective skills among facilitators: raise awareness for quality criteria and learning process specifics and how they become relevant in social action, social work and civic engagement. → Create recognition of quality education in non-formal and informal education at the state level (state agencies and state grants) → Include the quality dimension and success in competency development of learners in the application criteria. Offer supervision, mentoring opportunities through programs and other support structures, like Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung – Best of Austria Award gained by Competendo publications. → Promote and support facilitators who take care of own development – update knowledge, forms of modern learning, current approaches → Make organizations aware of the competency frameworks and encourage to adjust to their field of work → Recognize non-formal activities reaching out for schools

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Measures relevant for school principals, coordinators in higher education or other coordinators in formal education

- Create a competency centered teacher training and curricula
- Promote democratic leadership: transparent and participatory decision-making at school including teachers, students, and parents.
- Promote participation: school meetings, diverse forms of decision-making
- Recognize and appreciate of learning outcomes gained outside the school
- Assess and appreciate the competencies of the learners and their talents
- Shape spaces in which students can bring their competences in: i. e. A fair of competences
- recognize and appreciate educational activities outside of the school and in cooperation with the school, like partnerships, access to the school leadership for social institutions and networks of citizens, service learning)

Measures relevant for CSO leadership or civil initiatives, coordinators in programs of non-formal education

- Perceive your educational activities as processes. Shape them and formalize them, i. e. introduce competency standards, application of existing competency frameworks
- Apply existing competency frameworks to your needs, reflect on their relevance
- Involve learners/members in decision-making on goals, methods and topics. Build your learning activities on the ground of evidence, i. e. by involving focus groups in planning, assessing needs and feedback
- Recognize the existing competencies of the learners and their potentials. Start with needs and qualities (resource orientation); name and appreciate competences gained in non-formal education.
- Shape spaces where learners can use the competences
- Learn to notice and describe competency of a learner. Teach learners how to notice and describe their competencies. Invest time in getting familiar with the existing and ready made methods for competency assessment and description of competencies.

Individual teacher and facilitator

- Reflect on how your methodology is coherent with the competency centered learning and what kind of methodology could complete your portfolio of method competences
- Involve learners in your assessment strategies, include the need analysis of the learners
- Look for other approaches in education – follow trends and innovation at school and outside schools
- Switch from competitive toward cooperative learning. The shift toward a cooperative learning and participation adds complexity to teachers work. Seek out for training and updated knowledge on cooperative learning, negotiation and moderation.
- Reflect on your attitude toward learners, as a factor shaping the class culture. Consider resource orientation, acceptance of learners as capable human beings. Include outside perspective and feedback from other colleagues as supporters. Be conscious about your power and how you could share it in order to empower others. Perceive your attitude development as a learning process, which includes uncertainty, trial and error, and prototypical experience.
- Balance the needs of curricula, learners and your own. Make dilemmas transparent and negotiate.
- Include attitudes students bring from their homes as a resource in learning process as relevant as the very knowledge.

Power is the ability to *influence* actively the decision-making of an individual, a group or of the whole society and the way how relevant socio-political topics are discussed among citizens.

Source: <http://competendo.net/en/Power>, Marta Gawinek-Dagargulia

Participation refers to the various mechanisms people use to express their opinions and exert influence on social decision-making – whether it's in politics, economics, social, or cultural life.

Source: <http://competendo.net/en/Participation>

Area 2

COMPETENCY AWARE SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONS

Policy level in regard to schools, as well as non-formal /informal learning NGOs / civic institutions

- Foster more flexibility for schools in how to reach the goals of the curriculum
- Base the grades not only on knowledge or skills, but also on the competences (attitudes, skills and knowledge).
- Fund sustainable cooperation with outside-school partners (s. service learning)
- Encourage and implement learners participation in school governance (ladder of participation, student representation, class representatives), incl. how and what will be taught.
- Holistic learning should be part of the formal system (programmes, grants, incentives)
- Train and motivate school principals for holistic and participatory approaches
- Explain with reliable data the benefit in using CCL – competency-centred learning
- Offer tools and practices for gradual and evolutionary change through small changes as more acceptable for teachers
- Make schools and teachers aware of the bigger picture which competencies are important for the society nowadays
- Perceive civic competences as key competencies to equip learners with skills to prevent radicalization, marginalization, shaping positive and collaborative societal tendencies.
- Non-formal education trainers: find sustainable cooperation with school partners
- Involve participants in shaping the training and educational frame

Measures relevant for school principals, coordinators in higher education or other coordinators in formal education

- Create spaces for synergies and combining subjects and projects between teachers of different subjects, showing the transversal character of learning
- Reflect on combining unusual elements at your entity (unusual cooperation) to unleash creativity
- Give learners a chance to experiment
- Stimulate open mind: allow and include teachers with different teaching styles and personalities and different social backgrounds
- Support teachers that are different in case they are criticized for being different
- Cooperate with broader society, involve their knowledge and experience in the classroom. Shape sustainable cooperation. Shape new learning arrangements in the spirit of cooperation.
- Identify talents not only by means of cooperation, not only competition. Encourage self-organized activities of learners
- Focus on the cooperation between your staff.
- Support and motivate teachers to use competency based approaches: Show teachers, that the labour market needs and prefers people who went through competency based approaches
- Consider civic competences as key competences

Measures relevant for CSO leadership or civil initiatives, coordinators in programs of non-formal education

- For organisations cooperating with trainers in different fields of focus: combine subjects and projects between trainers of different subjects, show the transversal character of learning
- Stimulate open mind: allow and include trainers with different training styles, personalities and different social backgrounds.
- Support trainers that are different in case they are criticized for their difference.
- Focus on the cooperation between your staff.
- Support and motivate trainers to use competency based approaches: Show trainers, that the labour market needs and prefers participants who went through competency based approaches
- NGOs: Strive to cooperate with each other to complement your facilitation expertises
- NGOs: Be open and offer cooperation to schools. Cooperate as much as possible with political entities and/or the business sector for funding opportunities
- Include holistic approaches as parts of your guidelines and way of facilitation (programmes, grants)

Area 3

RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCY CENTRED LEARNING

Knowledge skills and competencies gained through non-formal and informal education needs to be recognized in the society. Or in other words: The learning outcome needs to be made visible for the learning person and its environment. Although a lot of outcomes and developments in terms of a gain of competences are not easily to be certified in a formal way, facilitators might use tools that document processes and personal developments.

Identification and Recognition of Competency development

- Explain the idea of Competency Centred Learning to educators and learners in a clear and consistent way and how it helps to track the learning processes
- Be able to explain how a description of a competency helps to track the learning process
- Present the added value of the competencies and their assessment for describing learners' abilities according to the needs of different contexts (school, labour market etc.)
- Focus on individualized credible, evidence based description rather than certification. The description shall be useful and clear, so future employers have a clear picture of the gained competences of the learner.
- Create precise description with examples
- Develop a system of recognition of the Competency Centred Learning
- Describe learners competencies in certificates, testimonies
- Describe competencies learners gained outside school
- Empower learners and educators for describing, and assessing competences and their development
- Include regular reflection practice within the learning process
- Shape learning processes that are customized to individual learners – or apply individualization more in learning processes – differentiation

Learning Outcome

“Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of learning.”¹

Learning outcome includes skills, knowledge and attitudes.

1. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2009: www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3054_en.pdf The shift to learning outcomes Policies and practices in Europe; p. 30

Area 4

TRANSVERSAL / KEY COMPETENCIES THAT NEED SPECIAL ATTENTION

Successful and relevant application of learning happens when individuals activate and apply knowledge, attitudes and skills in a specific situation. This ability can be described as competence. From a lifelong learning perspective it is a short time people spend in educational institutions. Outside of formal learning settings they continue self-development, gain new insights and shape their personalities. Lifelong learning is a natural state of mind of a modern citizen. Therefore, the personal competence of learning how to learn throughout the entire life is so important.

→ Foster personal competence of learners – prepare for lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is about a constantly narrowing your panic zone by widening your learning and comfort zones. One way of achieving this is to take part in various initiatives in your local community or support others in doing so.

- Develop reflective skills and ability to describe competencies
- Stress social competence: cooperation, working in diverse groups, co-deciding, communication, consistent communication of own ideas, functioning in diverse groups and environments, reaching out to other groups in society, communicating conflicting issues
- Foster systems thinking: connecting socio-political contexts to the concrete learning perceive yourself as part of a system and capable to have influence
- Make clear that gaining social/cultural capital not only for the labour market but for the upcoming societal changes

→ Foster cross-sectoral competence

Aspects of cross-sectoral competence

- Knowledge about systems languages and habits
- Linguistic creativity: an ability to describe new things or to describe things in a new way
- Knowledge of the different functions and operations at play within other parts of the system
- An openness toward the demands and needs of other actors and an ability to negotiate
- The ability to situate one's own action within the bigger picture and to organize oneself according to structural, or systematic logic
- An ability to deal with ambiguity and unexpected situations
- Reflecting on and and shaping power relations
- Ensuring fairness and trustworthiness

Source: Creativity handbook, Creativity's intersection with cross-sectoral competence, Nils Zimmermann

Area 5**THE FRAME – HOLISTIC
LEARNING SPACES**

Pedagogical approaches that encourage learners to become civically involved emphasize the active components of learning: discovery, reflective observation, trial and error, and growing with challenges or collaboration. The ability to act as autonomous, responsible individuals, and the skill known as “civic competence” are formed in broad-reaching, heterogeneous learning environments, and therefore are inherently composed of a variety of learning experiences. These experiences, in turn, need to be connected by means of a consciously designed learning process.

Policymakers:

- Give incentives for schools and non-formal education entities to create holistic learning spaces
- Connect learners with the experts in vocational fields and other learning fields
- Emotional learning: address emotions as a trigger for competency learning and as a resource for learning.
- Fund cooperation with schools.
- Foster and prioritize cross-sector cooperation in the educational sector – alliances between formal, non-formal, informal learning. Collaborate with actors that address lifelong learning.

Measures relevant for school principals, coordinators in higher education or other coordinators in formal education

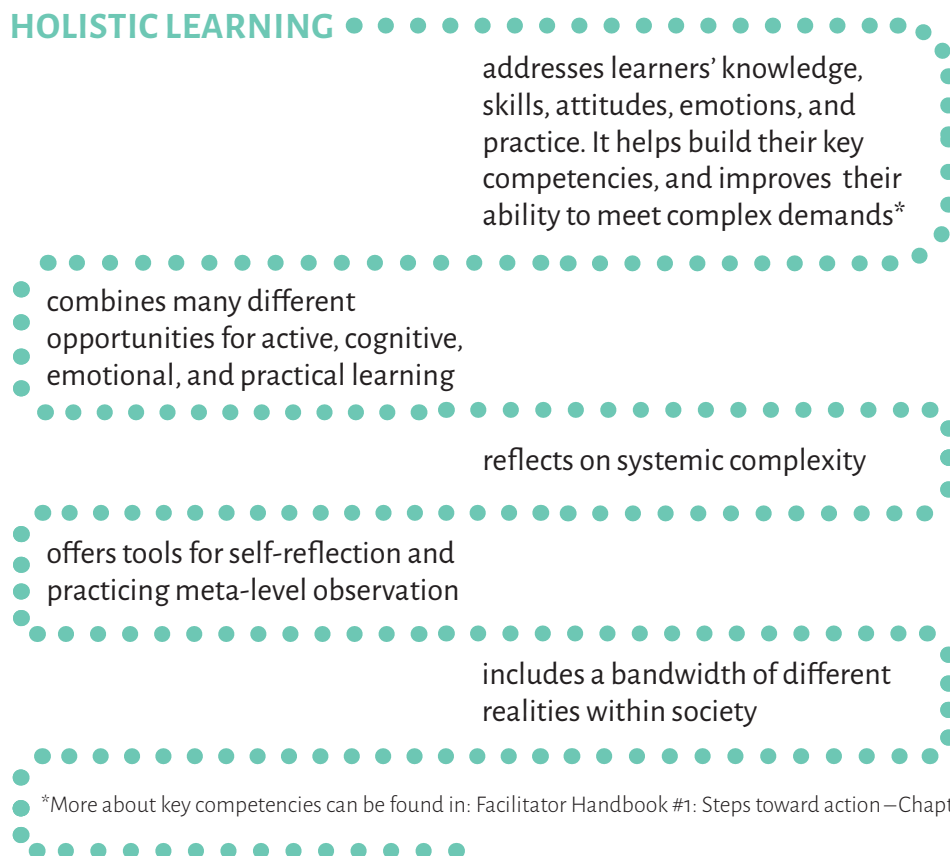
School principals, coordinators of civic initiatives, heads of NGOs

- Motivate teachers to perceive themselves as lifelong learners to widen their scope of teaching styles and knowledge of methods and approaches
- Cooperate with other educational institutions
- Accept mistakes and encourage experiential learning, including prototyping, making mistakes, learning by doing
- Check stereotypes about schools and teachers that are possibly limiting you in seeing, why and how cooperation with schools could help you in gaining more impact with your activities.
- Assess quality of formal institutions for broadening your activities to more holistic and more lifelong learning activities

Individual teacher and facilitator:

- Foster mutual learning: organise peer reviews in reflection groups, collegial advice, reflection among teachers on teaching styles and approaches, switch from competition to cooperation in order to learn from each other's experiences
- Create space for different learning needs and styles of learners individualization
- Prepare for working at cognitive, emotional and experiential levels with learners
- Plan time for deep reflection of experience made – emotional, cognitive and factual level and how it relates to the reality.

Our working definition of holistic learning





EPILOGUE

Facing the rapid changes in our societies requires consolidated efforts of different actors and new competencies, understood as the sum of in broad life context relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers, trainers, community workers, facilitators, play an important role in empowering and equipping learners with the necessary skills and space for gaining experience.

The authors of these recommendations perceive civic competences as key competencies to equip learners with skills needed in nowadays society to prevent radicalization and marginalization and to shape positive and collaborative societal tendencies. The key civic competences gain also more and more importance on the labour market of the future.

With the competendo.net website and publications we hope to have empowered the readers with knowledge, sharing experience and practices with those who share a belief in democratic participation based on the freedom of active individuals and communities who shape their societies and involve others in the process.

We hope the recommendations serve genuine empowerment, and will contribute to more resilient individuals and communities. We invite you to share them in your networks and welcome your feedback.

How this new learning might look like in practice, shows our online toolbox Competendo. It is providing diverse good practices from the educational fields for competency centered learning. It gives insight in theoretical backgrounds and inspires trainers, teachers, facilitators, and all other educators interested in Education for Democratic Citizenship and competency-centered learning.

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