

# COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

Living together as equals  
in culturally diverse  
democratic societies



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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## About this document

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This document is a product of a Council of Europe project which is taking place in four phases during 2014-17. The first phase has been devoted to the development of a conceptual model of the competences which citizens require to participate effectively in a culture of democracy. This document describes the model and the methods that were used to develop it. The document is aimed at readers who wish to understand the underlying assumptions and technical details of the model.

Phase two of the project will be devoted to the development of descriptors (i.e. statements or descriptions of what a person is able to do if they have mastered the various competences that are specified by the model), phase three to ascertaining whether it is possible to assign the descriptors to levels of proficiency, and phase four to the production of supporting documentation. This documentation will be addressed to educational practitioners and policy makers, and will provide a less technical description of the current competence model. It will also explain how the model and the descriptors can be used to assist curriculum design, pedagogical design and the development of new forms of assessment (for use in either self-assessment or assessment by others).

All of the materials that are produced by the project will eventually be incorporated into a Council of Europe reference framework of competences for democratic culture.

Further information about the project is available from the project website: [www.coe.int/competences](http://www.coe.int/competences)



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# Preface

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**T**he Council of Europe has long been active in the fields of education for democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Our European Cultural Convention first entered into force in 1954. While the memory of war was still stalking the continent and new divisions were taking hold, Europe's nations states agreed, through this Treaty, to encourage the study of languages, history and civilisation for the sake of unity: to help "safeguard and realise the ideals and principles which are [our] common heritage".

Ever since, the Council of Europe has been able to play a leading role in re-establishing trust and understanding through education in many of the conflict situations which have arisen in Europe. Through education we have also been able to assist many newer member states in their transitions to democracy. Democracy is, of course, built on institutions and laws, but it lives through the actions and behaviour of its citizens. Democratic culture must therefore be taught and fostered too.

Today Europe's nations face new challenges which require our Organisation to step up our support in the classroom. Increased migration, growing diversity, the boom in information technology and globalisation are having a profound effect on people's identities. More than ever, within our communities we find people living side-by-side who hold different beliefs, backgrounds and outlooks. This enriching of European societies is to be celebrated, but it also requires us to think carefully about how we nurture a set of common values around which to organise. How do we resolve clashes between competing worldviews? What are the attitudes and behaviours we can and cannot accept?

Such dilemmas are not easy. The danger of avoiding these questions, however, has been brought sharply into focus by the recent surge in foreign terrorist fighters: young, radicalised Europeans who have been brainwashed into turning their back on democratic life and waging war on their fellow citizens. Such extremism can only take root when young minds have not been taught to understand diversity, rather than to fear it, and when young people struggle to think critically, for themselves.

The Council of Europe is therefore equipping the continent's educators with a ground-breaking set of competences to help teach pupils how to live together, as democratic citizens in diverse societies. As our nations continue to grow more mixed, such knowledge and skills will become ever more important. The aim is not to teach students what to think, but rather how to think, in order to navigate a world where not everyone holds their views, but we each have a duty to uphold the democratic principles which allow all cultures to co-exist.



The competences have been developed in such a way as to allow member states to adapt them to suit their own needs and the distinct cultural contours of their own societies. Through this framework, teachers will be able to instill in their pupils the values of tolerance and respect, as they grow to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to others. We will continue to educate for democracy by offering our member states advice on the implementation of this competence framework and help in training those who will make it work in practice. I hope that all member states will give this ambitious and timely initiative their full support.

**Thorbjørn Jagland**  
*Secretary General  
of the Council of Europe*

## Executive summary

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**T**his document describes a conceptual model of the competences which need to be acquired by learners if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse democratic societies. It is intended that the model will be used to inform educational decision making and planning, helping educational systems to be harnessed for the preparation of learners for life as competent democratic citizens.

The document is divided into seven chapters.

In Chapter 1, the educational purpose of the competence model is outlined. This section also explains why the phrase “culture of democracy” is used in the present context rather than “democracy”: this is to emphasise the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices. Chapter 1 also explains the interdependence between a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue in culturally diverse societies: in such societies, intercultural dialogue is vital to ensure the inclusion of all citizens in democratic discussion, debate and deliberation.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe some of the background assumptions underlying the model. Chapter 2 describes the assumption that, while it is necessary for citizens to acquire a range of competences in order to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, these competences are not sufficient for such participation to occur because democratic participation also requires appropriate institutional structures. In other words, both competences and democratic institutions are essential to sustain a culture of democracy. In addition, the democratic participation of all citizens within society requires measures to tackle social inequalities and structural disadvantages. In the absence of such measures, the members of disadvantaged groups will be marginalised in democratic processes, whatever their levels of democratic competence might be.

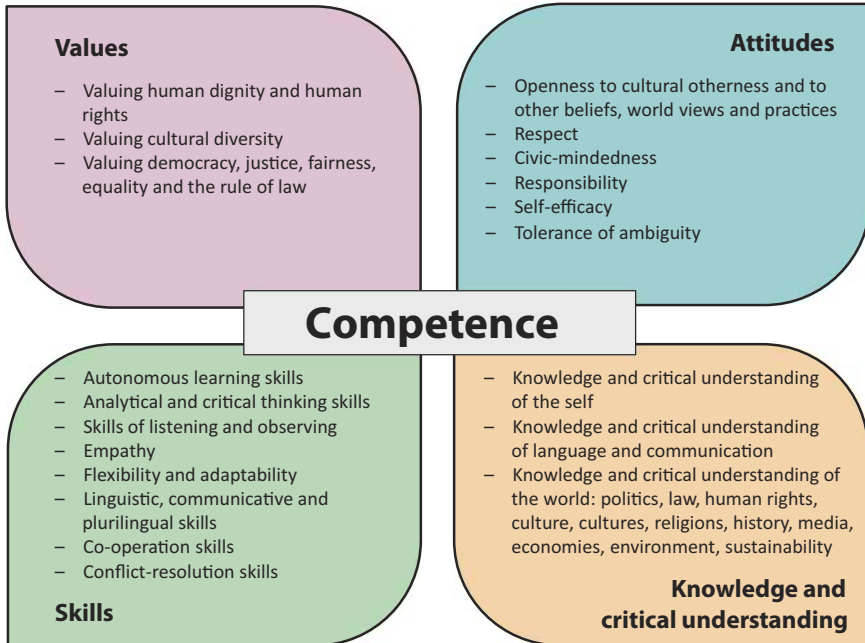
Chapter 3 describes the concept of “culture” that is assumed by the competence model. All cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly evolving, and all people inhabit multiple cultures that interact in complex ways. The concept of “intercultural” is also examined in this section. It is proposed that intercultural situations arise when an individual perceives another person or group as being culturally different from themselves. Intercultural dialogue is therefore defined as dialogue that takes place between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other. It is noted that, although intercultural dialogue is extremely important for fostering tolerance and enhancing social cohesion in culturally diverse societies, such dialogue can be extremely demanding and difficult in some circumstances.

Chapter 4 then unpacks the concept of “competence” that is employed by the model. Democratic and intercultural competence is defined as the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations. Competence is treated as a dynamic process in which a competent individual mobilises and deploys clusters of psychological resources in an active and adaptive manner in order to respond to new circumstances as these arise.

Chapter 4 also describes how, in addition to this global and holistic use of the term “competence” (in the singular), the term “competences” (in the plural) is used in the current document to refer to the specific individual resources (i.e. the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) that are mobilised and deployed in the production of competent behaviour. In other words, in the present account, competence consists of the selection, activation and organisation of competences and the application of these competences in a co-ordinated, adaptive and dynamic manner to concrete situations.

Chapter 5 describes the working method through which specific competences were identified for inclusion in the current model. A notable feature of the model is that it was not designed from scratch. Instead, it was grounded in a systematic analysis of existing conceptual schemes of democratic competence and intercultural competence. An audit was conducted through which 101 such schemes were identified. These 101 schemes were decomposed to identify all the individual competences which they contained, and these competences were then grouped into cognate sets. This led to the identification of 55 possible competences for inclusion in the model. In order to assist in reducing this list of competences to a more manageable and practical length, a set of principled criteria and pragmatic considerations was used to identify the key competences which needed to be included within the model. The application of these criteria and considerations led to the identification of 20 competences for inclusion in the model: 3 sets of values, 6 attitudes, 8 skills and 3 bodies of knowledge and critical understanding. These competences were used to construct the model. A draft document describing the model was then produced and circulated in an international consultation exercise involving academic experts, educational practitioners and policy makers. The responses received in the consultation strongly endorsed the model but also provided a range of useful feedback. The feedback was used to fine-tune the details of the model and to guide the writing of the current document.

## The 20 competences included in the model



Chapter 6 describes the resulting model in full, by listing and describing all of the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding which enable an individual to participate effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy. The model is summarised in the diagram above, while a full list of the 20 competences, together with a summary description of each competence, is provided in the box below.

Chapter 7 concludes the document by noting two hopes for the current model: that it will prove useful for educational decision making and planning, and that it will assist in the empowerment of young people as autonomous social agents capable of choosing and pursuing their own goals in life within the framework that is provided by democratic institutions and respect for human rights.

Appendix A provides a list of the sources of the 101 competence schemes that were audited by the project. Appendix B provides a list of the 55 possible competences that were identified across the 101 schemes. Appendix C provides some suggestions for further reading beyond the references that are listed in Appendix A.

## **A summary list of the competences which enable an individual to participate effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy**

### **Values**

#### **Valuing human dignity and human rights**

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This value is based on the general belief that every human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, is entitled to equal respect, and is entitled to the same set of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and ought to be treated accordingly.

#### **Valuing cultural diversity**

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This value is based on the general belief that other cultural affiliations, cultural variability and diversity, and pluralism of perspectives, views and practices ought to be positively regarded, appreciated and cherished.

#### **Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law**

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This set of values is based on the general belief that societies ought to operate and be governed through democratic processes which respect the principles of justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.

### **Attitudes**

#### **Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices**

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Openness is an attitude towards people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or towards beliefs, world views and practices which differ from one's own. It involves sensitivity towards, curiosity about and willingness to engage with other people and other perspectives on the world.

#### **Respect**

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Respect consists of positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgment that they have intrinsic importance, worth or value. Having respect for other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different beliefs, opinions or practices from one's own is vital for effective intercultural dialogue and a culture of democracy.

#### **Civic-mindedness**

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Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group to which one belongs that is larger than one's immediate circle of family and friends. It involves a sense of belonging to that community, an awareness of other people in the community, an awareness of the effects of one's actions on those people,

solidarity with other members of the community and a sense of civic duty towards the community.

### **Responsibility**

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Responsibility is an attitude towards one's own actions. It involves being reflective about one's actions, forming intentions about how to act in a morally appropriate way, conscientiously performing those actions and holding oneself accountable for the outcomes of those actions.

### **Self-efficacy**

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Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions that are required to achieve particular goals, and confidence that one can understand issues, select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, navigate obstacles successfully and make a difference in the world.

### **Tolerance of ambiguity**

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Tolerance of ambiguity is an attitude towards situations which are uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting interpretations. It involves evaluating these kinds of situations positively and dealing with them constructively.

## **Skills**

### **Autonomous learning skills**

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Autonomous learning skills are the skills required to pursue, organise and evaluate one's own learning in accordance with one's own needs, in a self-directed manner, without being prompted by others.

### **Analytical and critical thinking skills**

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Analytical and critical thinking skills are the skills required to analyse, evaluate and make judgments about materials of any kind (e.g. texts, arguments, interpretations, issues, events, experiences, etc.) in a systematic and logical manner.

### **Skills of listening and observing**

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Skills of listening and observing are the skills required to notice and understand what is being said and how it is being said, and to notice and understand other people's non-verbal behaviour.

### **Empathy**

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Empathy is the set of skills required to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and to see the world from other people's perspectives.

### **Flexibility and adaptability**

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Flexibility and adaptability are the skills required to adjust and regulate one's thoughts, feelings or behaviours so that one can respond effectively and appropriately to new contexts and situations.

### **Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills**

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Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills are the skills required to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who speak the same or another language, and to act as a mediator between speakers of different languages.

### **Co-operation skills**

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Co-operation skills are the skills required to participate successfully with others in shared activities, tasks and ventures and to encourage others to co-operate so that group goals may be achieved.

### **Conflict-resolution skills**

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Conflict-resolution skills are the skills required to address, manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way by guiding conflicting parties towards optimal solutions that are acceptable to all parties.

## **Knowledge and critical understanding**

### **Knowledge and critical understanding of the self**

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This includes knowledge and critical understanding of one's own thoughts, beliefs, feelings and motivations, and of one's own cultural affiliations and perspective on the world.

### **Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication**

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This includes knowledge and critical understanding of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions that operate in the language(s) which one speaks, of the effects that different communication styles can have on other people, and of how every language expresses culturally shared meanings in a unique way.

### **Knowledge and critical understanding of the world**

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This includes a large and complex body of knowledge and critical understanding in a variety of areas including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability.

# 1. Introduction

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**T**his document proposes a conceptual model of the competences which enable citizens to participate effectively in a culture of democracy. The purpose of the model is to describe the competences which need to be acquired by learners if they are to become effective participatory citizens and live peacefully together with others as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies. It is intended that the model outlined in this document will be used to inform educational decision making and planning, helping educational systems to be harnessed for the preparation of learners for life as competent democratic citizens.<sup>1</sup>

The term “culture of democracy” rather than “democracy” is used in the present context to emphasise the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices. Among other things, these include a commitment to the rule of law and human rights, a commitment to the public sphere, a conviction that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, acknowledgement of and respect for diversity, a willingness to express one’s own opinions, a willingness to listen to the opinions of others, a commitment to decisions being made by majorities, a commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights, and a willingness to engage in dialogue across cultural divides.

The model which is described in this document regards intercultural dialogue as being of central importance to democratic processes within culturally diverse societies. A fundamental principle of democracy is that the people who are affected by political decisions should be able to express their views when those decisions are being made and that decision makers should pay attention to those views. Intercultural dialogue is the single most important means through which citizens can express their opinions, aspirations, concerns and needs to those who have different cultural affiliations from themselves. This means that, in culturally diverse societies, intercultural dialogue is crucial for democratic discussion, debate and deliberation, and for enabling all citizens to contribute to political decision making on an equal footing. Likewise, democratic attitudes are crucial for intercultural dialogue because it is only when individuals regard each other as democratic equals that truly respectful communication and dialogue may take place between them. A culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue are inherently interdependent in culturally diverse societies.

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1. In this document, the term “citizens” is used to denote all individuals who are affected by democratic decision making and who can engage with democratic processes and institutions (rather than to denote only those who hold legal citizenship and the passport of a particular state).



As the Council of Europe's White Paper on intercultural dialogue (2008)<sup>2</sup> notes, the competences which citizens need to acquire if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy are not acquired automatically but instead need to be learned and practised. Education has a key role to play in this regard. Education has many purposes, including preparing individuals for the labour market, supporting personal development and providing a broad advanced knowledge base within society. However, in addition, education has a vital role to play in preparing individuals for life as active democratic citizens, and education is in a unique position to guide and support learners in acquiring the competences which they require to participate effectively in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue.

An education system which equips people with such competences empowers them, endowing them with the capacities which they need to become active participants in democratic processes, in intercultural dialogue and in society more generally. It also endows them with the ability to function as autonomous social agents capable of choosing and pursuing their own goals in life. The current competence model has been developed to assist educational planning towards this goal of empowering all learners.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Council of Europe (2008). *White Paper on intercultural dialogue: "Living together as equals in dignity"*. Strasbourg: Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe. Available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper\\_final\\_revised\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf), accessed 17 February 2016.
  3. It should be noted that the current framework is intended to apply not only to learners in mainstream education but also to learners with special educational needs. Learners with special educational needs (who may have physical, learning, emotional, behavioural or sensory disabilities or impairments, and may or may not be in mainstream education) are entitled to exactly the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as all other learners, including the right to education. The use of the current framework to support planning for such learners is vital for their empowerment to enable them to participate in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to their fullest potential.

## 2. A background assumption: competences are necessary but not sufficient

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**B**efore outlining the model, it is important to clarify two background assumptions that underlie the current approach. The first of these is that, while it is necessary for citizens to acquire a range of competences in order to participate effectively in democratic processes, these competences are not sufficient for such participation to occur. This is for the following reasons.

First, a culture of democracy requires, in addition to competent citizens, suitable political and legal structures and procedures to support citizens' exercise of their competences. This is because institutional structures and procedures, and the opportunities for active engagement which they make available or deny to citizens, can serve as significant enablers or inhibitors of the democratic and intercultural actions that citizens are able to undertake. To give a simple example, if a country denies the right to vote in national elections to first-generation migrants prior to their naturalisation, then no matter how democratically competent a first-generation migrant might be, they will be unable to exercise that competence in national elections unless they have been naturalised. A more complex example: citizens' opportunities for democratic activities and participation are limited if there are no or few institutional consultative channels or bodies through which citizens can communicate their views to politicians and policy makers. Where this occurs, citizens will need to pursue alternative forms of democratic action if they wish to make their voices heard. A third example: if there are no institutional arrangements or structures to support intercultural dialogue, then citizens are less likely to engage in such dialogue. However, if governments take active steps to establish or facilitate an abundance of places and spaces for dialogue (e.g. cultural and social centres, youth clubs, education centres, other leisure facilities or virtual spaces), and promote and encourage the use of these facilities for intercultural activities, then citizens are more likely to engage in intercultural dialogue. In other words, depending upon their configuration, institutional arrangements can enable, channel, constrain or inhibit the ways in which citizens exercise their democratic and intercultural competences. The exercise of competences is not solely dependent on whether or not they have been acquired. Thus, while democratic institutions are not self-sustaining (without an accompanying culture of democracy), it is also the case that a culture of democracy is not self-sustaining (in the absence of appropriate institutions).

The acquisition of democratic and intercultural competences may also not be sufficient to enable citizens to participate in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue for another reason. The presence of systematic patterns of disadvantage and discrimination, and differentials in the allocation of resources within societies, may effectively disempower many people from participating on an equal footing, irrespective of their levels of competence (e.g. by limiting their access to sources of information, or their access to the time or the financial resources which are needed to participate). These inequalities and disadvantages are often further compounded by disparities of power and by institutional biases which lead to democratic and intercultural settings and opportunities being dominated by those who occupy positions of privilege. Systematic marginalisation and exclusion from democratic processes and intercultural exchanges can lead to citizens' civic disengagement and alienation. For all of these reasons, special measures need to be adopted to ensure that members of disadvantaged groups enjoy genuine equality of condition. In other words, it is not sufficient only to equip citizens with the competences that are specified by the current model. It is also necessary to adopt measures to tackle inequalities and structural disadvantages.

Consequently, the current approach presupposes that the competences which are described in this document are necessary for participation in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue, but are not sufficient to ensure such participation. Although this document focuses only on the competences which citizens require, the need for appropriate institutional structures and for action on inequalities and structural disadvantages should be borne in mind throughout.

### 3. A further background assumption: all cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly evolving

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**A** second background assumption underlying the current approach concerns the concept of culture that it employs. “Culture” is a difficult term to define, largely because cultural groups are always internally heterogeneous and embrace a range of diverse practices and norms that are often disputed, change over time and are enacted by individuals in personalised ways. That said, any given culture may be construed as having three main aspects: the material resources that are used by members of the group (e.g. tools, foods, clothing), the socially shared resources of the group (e.g. the language, religion, rules of social conduct) and the subjective resources that are used by individual group members (e.g. the values, attitudes, beliefs and practices which group members commonly use as a frame of reference for making sense of and relating to the world). The culture of the group is a composite formed from all three aspects – it consists of a network of material, social and subjective resources. The total set of resources is distributed across the entire group, but each individual member of the group appropriates and uses only a subset of the total set of cultural resources potentially available to them.

Defining “culture” in this way means that groups of any size can have their own distinctive cultures. This includes nations, ethnic groups, religious groups, cities, neighbourhoods, work organisations, occupational groups, sexual orientation groups, disability groups, generational groups and families. For this reason, all people belong simultaneously to and identify with many different groups and their associated cultures.

There is usually considerable variability within cultural groups because the resources which are perceived to be associated with membership of the group are often resisted, challenged or rejected by different individuals and subgroups within it. In addition, even the boundaries of the group itself, and who is perceived to be within the group and who is perceived to be outside the group, may be disputed by different group members – cultural group boundaries are often very fuzzy.

This internal variability and contestation of cultures is, in part, a consequence of the fact that all people belong to multiple groups and their cultures but participate in different constellations of cultures, so that the ways in which they relate to any one culture depend, at least in part, on the points of view which are present in the other cultures in which they also participate. In other words, cultural affiliations intersect in such a way that each person occupies a unique cultural positioning. In addition, the meanings and feelings which people attach to particular cultures are personalised as a consequence of their own life histories, personal experiences and individual personalities.

Cultural affiliations are fluid and dynamic, with the subjective salience of social and cultural identities fluctuating as individuals move from one situation to another, with different affiliations – or different clusters of intersecting affiliations – being highlighted depending on the particular social context encountered. Fluctuations in the salience of cultural affiliations are also linked to shifts in people’s interests, needs, goals and expectations as they move across situations and through time. Furthermore, all groups and their cultures are dynamic and change over time as a result of political, economic and historical events and developments, and as a result of interactions with and influences from the cultures of other groups. They also change over time because of their members’ internal contestation of the meanings, norms, values and practices of the group.

This underlying concept of culture which was used to develop the current model has implications for the concept of “intercultural”. If we all participate in multiple cultures, but we each participate in a unique constellation of cultures, then every interpersonal situation is potentially an intercultural situation. Often, when we encounter other people, we respond to them as individuals who have a range of physical, social and psychological attributes which serve to distinguish them from other people. However, sometimes we respond to them instead in terms of their cultural affiliations, and when this occurs we group them together with other people who share these affiliations with them. There are several factors which prompt us to shift our frame of reference from the individual and interpersonal to the intercultural. These include, *inter alia*, the presence of salient cultural emblems or practices that elicit or invoke the cultural category in the mind of the perceiver, the frequent use of cultural categories to think about other people so that these categories are primed and readily accessed when interacting with others, and the usefulness of a cultural category in helping to understand why another person is behaving in the way that they are.

Thus, intercultural situations arise when an individual perceives another person (or group of people) as being culturally different from themselves. When other people are perceived as members of a social group and its culture rather than as individuals, then the self is also usually categorised – and may present itself – as a cultural group member rather than in purely individual terms. Intercultural situations, identified in this way, may involve people from different countries, people from different regional, linguistic, ethnic or faith groups, or people who differ from each other because of their lifestyle, gender, age or generation, social class, education, occupation, level of religious observance, sexual orientation, etc. From this perspective, intercultural dialogue may be defined as “an open exchange of views, on the basis of mutual

understanding and respect, between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other”.

There is good scientific evidence that intercultural dialogue fosters constructive engagement across perceived cultural divides, reduces intolerance, prejudice and stereotyping, enhances the cohesion of democratic societies and helps to resolve conflicts. That said, intercultural dialogue can be a difficult process. This is particularly the case when the participants perceive each other as representatives of cultures that have an adversarial relationship with one another (e.g. as a consequence of past or present armed conflict) or when a participant believes that their own cultural group has experienced significant harm (e.g. blatant discrimination, material exploitation or genocide) at the hands of another group to which they perceive their interlocutor as belonging. Under such circumstances, intercultural dialogue can be extremely difficult, requiring a high level of intercultural competence and very considerable emotional and social sensitivity, commitment, perseverance and courage.

In short, the present approach assumes that cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly changing, and that intercultural situations arise due to the perception that there are cultural differences between people. Hence, the current model of competences makes frequent reference to “people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself” (rather than to, for example, “people from other cultures”). Intercultural dialogue is construed as an open exchange of views between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations from each other. Intercultural dialogue is extremely important for fostering constructive engagement across cultural divides and for enhancing the cohesion of democratic societies, although full openness may be very difficult to achieve under some circumstances.



## 4. The concept of competence employed in the current model

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**T**he term “competence” can be used in many ways, including its casual everyday use as a synonym for “ability”, its more technical use within vocational education and training, and its use to denote the ability to meet complex demands within a given context. For the purposes of the current model, the term “competence” is defined as “the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context”. Democratic situations are one such type of context. Thus, democratic competence is the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources (i.e. values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding) in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by democratic situations. Likewise, intercultural competence is the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant psychological resources in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by intercultural situations. In the case of citizens who live within culturally diverse democratic societies, intercultural competence is construed as being an integral aspect of democratic competence (for the reasons given in Chapter 1).

It is important to note that democratic and intercultural situations occur not only in the physical world but also in the digital online world. In other words, democratic debates and deliberations and intercultural encounters and interactions take place not only through face-to-face exchanges, traditional print and broadcast media, letters, petitions, etc., but also through computer-mediated communications, for example, through online social networks, forums, blogs, e-petitions and e-mails. The competence model which is described in the present document applies not only to democratic and intercultural situations in the physical world but also to such situations in the digital world. For this reason, the model has relevance not only to education for democratic citizenship, human rights education and intercultural education but also to digital citizenship education.



The present model treats competence as a dynamic process. This is because competence involves the selection, activation, organisation and co-ordination of relevant psychological resources which are then applied through behaviour in such a way that the individual adapts appropriately and effectively to a given situation. Appropriate and effective adaptation involves the constant monitoring of the results of behaviour and of the situation, and the adjustment and modification of behaviour (which may entail the mobilisation of further psychological resources) if this is required to meet the shifting needs and demands of the situation. In other words, a competent individual mobilises and deploys psychological resources in a dynamic manner according to situational contingencies.

In addition to this global and holistic use of the term “competence” (in the singular), the term “competences” (in the plural) is used in the current account to refer to the specific individual resources (i.e. the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) that are mobilised and deployed in the production of competent behaviour. Hence, on the present account, competence consists of the selection, activation and organisation of competences and the application of these competences in a co-ordinated, adaptive and dynamic manner to concrete situations.

It should be noted that, according to the current model, competences include not only skills, knowledge and understanding but also values and attitudes. Values and attitudes are regarded as essential for behaving appropriately and effectively in democratic and intercultural situations.

However, dispositions are excluded from the set of competences specified by the model. Dispositions are instead treated as being implicit in the definition of competence which underpins the entire model – that is, competence as the mobilisation and deployment of competences through behaviour. If competences are not mobilised and deployed (i.e. if there is no disposition to use them in behaviour), then an individual cannot be deemed to be competent. In other words, having the disposition to use one’s competences in behaviour is intrinsic to the very notion of competence – there is no competence without this disposition.

In real-life situations, competences are rarely mobilised and used individually. Instead, competent behaviour invariably involves the activation and application of an entire cluster of competences. Depending on the situation, and the specific demands, challenges and opportunities which that situation presents, and also the specific needs and goals of the individual within that situation, different subsets of competences will need to be activated and deployed.

One example of how an entire cluster of competences has to be mobilised is provided by intercultural dialogue. Such dialogue initially requires an attitude of openness towards another person who is perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one’s own. It may also require the ability to overcome anxieties or insecurities about meeting and interacting with someone with whom one feels one has little in common. However, once the dialogue commences, close listening skills and linguistic and communicative skills need to be mobilised and deployed to ensure that miscommunications do not occur and to ensure that the content of the dialogue remains sensitive to the communicative needs and cultural norms of the other person. Empathy is also likely to be required, along with analytical thinking skills, to

facilitate comprehension of the other person's point of view, especially when this is not immediately apparent from what he or she says. It may emerge during the course of the dialogue that there are irreconcilable differences in points of view between the self and the other. If this is the case, then tolerance of ambiguity will need to be deployed and the lack of a clear-cut resolution accepted. Thus, effective and appropriate behaviour in the context of intercultural dialogue requires the mobilisation, orchestration and sensitive application of a very large range of competences.

A further example is provided when a citizen takes a principled stand against hate speech that is being directed at refugees or migrants on the Internet. Such a stand is likely to be initiated through the activation of human dignity as a fundamental value and to be sustained through the activation of an attitude of civic-mindedness and a sense of responsibility. To challenge the contents of the hate speech, analytical and critical thinking skills will need to be applied. In addition, the formulation of an appropriate response requires knowledge of human rights as well as communicative skills in order to ensure that the stand that is taken is expressed appropriately and is targeted effectively at its intended audience(s). In addition, knowledge and understanding of digital media will need to be drawn upon to ensure that the response is posted in an appropriate manner and its impact maximised. Thus, effective behaviour in response to online hate speech also requires the mobilisation and orchestration of a wide range of competences.

A third example is provided by participation in political debate. In order to function effectively in debate, communications need to be adapted to both the medium of expression (e.g. speech, writing) and the intended audience. In addition, one needs to have a critical understanding of freedom of expression and its limits, and, in cases where communications involve people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself, an understanding of cultural appropriateness. Political debate also requires knowledge and understanding of politics, and the ability to critique the views of others and to evaluate the arguments which they deploy during the course of the debate. Political debate therefore requires all of the following competences: linguistic and communicative skills, knowledge and understanding of communication, knowledge and understanding of cultural norms, knowledge and understanding of politics, analytical and critical thinking skills, and the ability to adapt one's arguments appropriately as the debate proceeds. Thus, once again, several competences have to be mobilised, co-ordinated and deployed appropriately and sensitively according to the specific contingencies that arise as the debate proceeds.

In summary, democratically and intercultural competent behaviour is viewed by the present model as arising from a dynamic and adaptive process in which an individual responds appropriately and effectively to the constantly shifting demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations. This is achieved through the flexible mobilisation, orchestration and deployment of varying subsets of psychological resources, drawn selectively from the individual's full repertoire of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding.



## 5. The working method used to identify the competences to be included in the model

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**A**n important feature of the contents of the current competence model is that it has not been designed from scratch. Instead, it is grounded in an analysis of existing conceptual schemes of democratic competence and intercultural competence. Many such schemes have been formulated by the Council of Europe over the years, as well as by other international bodies (e.g. UNESCO, OECD, European Parliament) and by national governments and ministries of education. In addition, a large number of democratic and intercultural competence schemes have been formulated by academic researchers. These various schemes differ considerably in both structure and content. The proliferation of diverse models presents a dilemma to educational planners and policy makers who wish to find an authoritative model upon which to base their work. The model proposed in the present document is an attempt to provide an account which captures, synthesises and builds upon the optimal features of existing competence schemes.

### 5.1. Audit of existing competence schemes

The method used to identify the psychological resources to be included in the current model began with an audit of existing schemes of democratic competence and intercultural competence. For the purposes of the audit, democratic and intercultural competence schemes were defined as being those schemes that identify and describe relevant sets of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding that need to be mobilised and deployed in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by democratic and intercultural situations, respectively.

The audit only included competence schemes defined in this way within its purview. There are other types of framework that have been formulated to explain either democratic or intercultural behaviour but which do not have as their primary goal the identification and description of relevant sets of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding. These other frameworks are instead aimed at explaining either: (i) the social and/or psychological processes through which democratic or intercultural behaviour is generated; (ii) the factors that influence the democratic or intercultural behaviour of individuals; or (iii) the developmental sequence or stages through which individuals acquire democratic or intercultural behaviour. These process models, influence models and developmental models were excluded from the audit, unless they also provide an explicit description of relevant sets of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding.

The audit identified and collated a total number of 101 competence schemes which met the definition given above. References for these 101 schemes are given in Appendix A. There are several points to note about these various schemes.

First, some schemes are articulated as explicit lists of competences, whereas other schemes are articulated in much lengthier texts which required some work to extract the descriptions of specific competences from them.

Second, the schemes that were audited vary in terms of the methods that were used by their authors to construct them. For example, some are based on systematic reviews of the research literature; some are derived statistically from survey and other empirical data; some are based on information received from specialist informants such as teachers, academics, researchers, graduates or employers; some are based on reviews of previous conceptual schemes; some are based on the opinion of an expert group; and some are based on the opinion of an individual expert.

Third, the schemes are not always independent of one another. For example, some authors have been especially prolific and have produced multiple schemes that often display considerable overlap, and some authors have adopted and modified in only relatively minor ways the competence schemes proposed by other authors.

Fourth, while the majority of schemes provide descriptions of the competences required by citizens in general, a few of the schemes provide descriptions of the more specialised competences that are required by particular professional groups such as teachers or psychological counsellors.

Fifth, and perhaps most problematically, there are widespread mismatches across these various schemes in terms of: (i) the number of competences which they contain; (ii) the level of generality at which these competences are described; (iii) the particular competences which are included; and (iv) the ways in which the competences are grouped and classified.

## **5.2. Decomposition of existing competence schemes**

In the next step of the analysis, the 101 schemes were decomposed to identify all the individual competences which they contained, and these competences were then grouped into cognate sets. This process led to the identification of 55 possible

competences that are relevant to a culture of democracy across the 101 schemes. These 55 competences are listed in Appendix B. It should be noted that some competences were present across a relatively large number of schemes, whereas other competences were specific to just one or a very small number of schemes.

Not all of the competences could be placed into particular sets with full confidence. The difficulties in grouping the competences into sets occurred for several reasons. For example, some competences, in the form in which they are specified within their conceptual schemes, are inherently ambiguous or vague. Other competences are formulated within their schemes in a way which combines what would appear to be two or more distinct competences, with the result that it is difficult to know what the primary focus is intended to be. In cases where this kind of “competence” was detected, that particular “competence” was included multiple times in the sets listed in Appendix B under all of the headings that might possibly apply. However, in a few cases, exactly the same combinations of what could be construed as two or more distinct competences were found to be present in a large number of the audited schemes. Because of the apparent consensus about these particular combinations, some of the headings shown in Appendix B provisionally maintained these more complex units.

### **5.3. The identification of competences for inclusion in the model**

To assist in reducing this list of 55 possible competences to a more manageable and practical length and to systematise the contents of the list, a set of principled criteria was articulated for including a competence in the new model. It was decided that, for inclusion in the model, competences needed to match seven criteria.

#### **(i) Conceptually clear**

Only competences which were conceptually clear were included in the model. Competences which were vague, imprecise or of indeterminate meaning were excluded.

#### **(ii) Formulated at a general rather than at a specific level**

A second principle was that the competences should be captured at a general rather than specific level of description, so that the model would be as comprehensive as possible without being exhaustive on specific details. This would enable users to adapt the general description as appropriate to their own particular contexts and needs.

#### **(iii) Not tied to a particular professional role**

A corollary to the preceding point was that the competences in the model should not be tied specifically to one particular professional role (such as teacher or psychological counsellor). Nevertheless, the option should remain open for users to adapt the more general model to specific professional groups as appropriate, if this is required.

#### **(iv) Not idiosyncratic to just one or a very few of the audited competence schemes**

A fourth principle was that the competences in the model should not be idiosyncratic to just one or a very few of the audited competence schemes. Instead, the competences to be extracted for inclusion in the model should be those upon which there was a substantial degree of consensus across the audited schemes.

#### **(v) Not the behaviours through which competence is exhibited**

It was also decided to restrict the competences in the model to internal psychological resources (i.e. to values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding) and to exclude the behaviours through which these resources are exhibited. Behaviours themselves are the external outcomes of applying competences to meet the demands, challenges and opportunities presented by specific situations. Every competence has behavioural expressions, and all competent behaviours are a product of deploying one or more underlying competences. Behaviours are not separate competences in themselves, but are instead a means to assess whether or not individual competences have been acquired.<sup>4</sup>

#### **(vi) Conceptually distinct from other competences**

A further principle was that the competences included in the model should be conceptually distinct from one another. This principle was adopted to avoid problems in the development of descriptors for each competence, by minimising the likelihood of the same descriptors applying to multiple competences. In practice, this criterion was difficult to maintain consistently. It is therefore acknowledged that there are occasional cases of partial overlap between the competences which were eventually incorporated into the model (e.g. between co-operation skills and conflict-resolution skills). Conceptual distinctiveness nevertheless proved to be a useful general heuristic for guiding the development of the model.

#### **(vii) Not generic competences**

Finally, it was also decided that the competences to be included in the model should not include generic competences that apply across a wide range of domains of activity (in the way that, for example, literacy, numeracy and ICT skills apply across many domains). It was judged that this was necessary to enable the model to retain its core focus and to prevent it from overextending itself into an all-encompassing framework. However, once again, this criterion was difficult to maintain consistently in practice, and it is acknowledged that some of the competences that were extracted for inclusion in the model do have relevance to other domains in addition to democratic culture. These particular competences (e.g. analytical and critical thinking skills and autonomous learning skills) were included because they were deemed to be essential to a culture of democracy and it was judged that the model would clearly be incomplete if they were to be excluded.

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4. Behaviours are instead incorporated into the current framework through the descriptors. Descriptors have been developed for all of the competences specified in the model, and have been formulated using the language of learning outcomes (i.e. in terms of observable and assessable behaviours). Thus, the descriptors are able to serve as indicators of whether or not particular competences have been mastered by learners.

In addition to the preceding set of principled criteria, a set of pragmatic considerations was adopted to assist in reducing the number of competences for incorporation into the model. These pragmatic considerations were the same as those that were used to develop the Common European framework of reference for languages.<sup>5</sup> The considerations were that the model should be:

- ▶ **multi-purpose:** usable for the full variety of purposes required in educational planning and provision, including curriculum design, the development of programmes and methods of instruction, the development of methods of assessment, matching competences to levels of education, and matching competences (and possibly proficiency levels) to qualifications frameworks;
- ▶ **flexible:** adaptable for use in different circumstances, cultural settings and a variety of educational contexts;
- ▶ **open:** capable of further extension and refinement according to the needs of its users;
- ▶ **dynamic:** capable of being modified in response to feedback from its users;
- ▶ **non-dogmatic:** not exclusively attached to any one of a number of competing educational or social-scientific theories or practices;
- ▶ **user-friendly:** presented in a form that is readily understandable and usable by those to whom it is addressed, in particular educational practitioners and policy makers.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, because a core goal of the project was to construct a model for use in educational planning, it was also decided to ensure that all of the competences that were included in the model should be teachable, learnable and assessable (through either self-assessment or assessment by others). In practice, all potential competences that were identified for inclusion in the model were judged to meet these three criteria.

Applying the above criteria and considerations to the set of 55 possible competences listed in Appendix B led to the identification of 20 competences for inclusion in the model. These were as follows:

### Values

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

### Attitudes

- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Respect

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5. Council of Europe (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf), accessed 17 February 2016.

6. It is recognised that the current document, the aim of which is to describe the assumptions, rationale and technical details of the competence model, and the methods that were used to develop it, is not in a suitable format for use by practitioners and policy makers. More accessible documents describing the model will be produced at a later phase of the project.



- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity

### **Skills**

- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Conflict-resolution skills

### **Knowledge and critical understanding**

- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability)

The 20 competences contained in the model are summarised diagrammatically on page 35.

The 20 competences were then subjected to a further process of conceptual refinement and clarification in their formulation. In generating the descriptive details for each of the competences, constant reference was made back to the descriptions of the competences in the original 101 competence schemes from which they had been derived, to ensure that the most significant aspects of each competence as described in the audited schemes were being captured by the model. Many other sources of information were also drawn upon in formulating the descriptive details of the model and in writing the current document. Some of these additional sources are included as suggestions for further reading in Appendix C.

A first draft of the current document was then circulated in February 2015 in an international consultation exercise which involved academic experts, educational practitioners and policy makers, including experts nominated by the education ministries of the member states of the Council of Europe. These stakeholders were invited to provide feedback and comments, particularly concerning the conceptual soundness of the model, whether there were any significant omissions from the model, and the clarity of the text. The model was also presented at various conferences, workshops and meetings attended by academic experts, educational practitioners and policy makers during the first six months of 2015, where additional feedback and comments were gathered. It is noteworthy that, overall, the process of consultation

resulted in the strong endorsement of the model by the stakeholders. However, many useful suggestions were also received concerning technical details of the model and the precise wordings and mode of presentation used in the document. This feedback was used to fine-tune details of the model and to guide the writing of the present document.

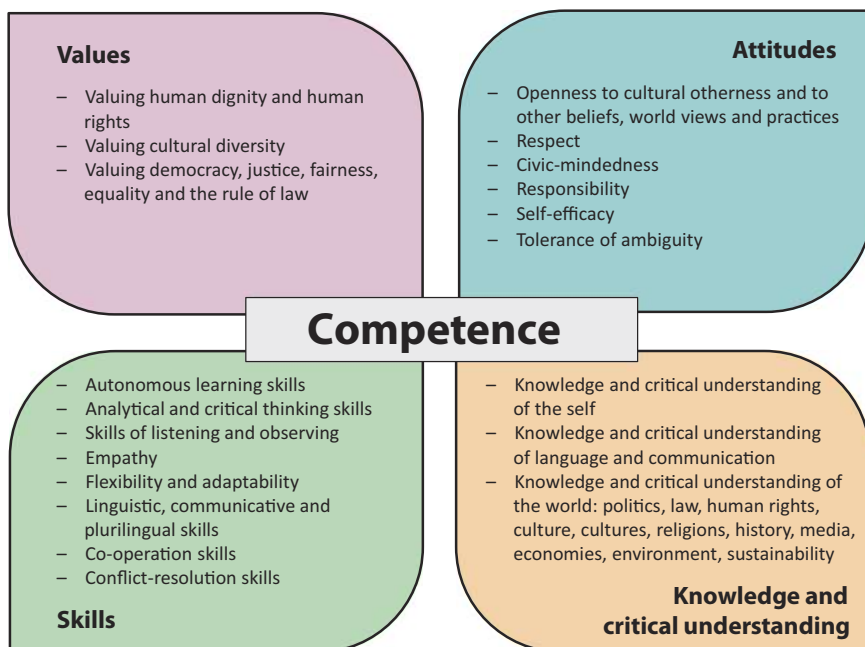
The following text describes the competence model that was constructed through the use of this working method.



## 6. The model

**W**ithin the context of democratic culture, an individual is deemed to be acting competently when he or she meets the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations appropriately and effectively by mobilising and deploying some or all of the following competences. The competences fall into four broad categories: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding.

### The 20 competences included in the model



## 6.1. Values

Values are general beliefs that individuals hold about the desirable goals that should be striven for in life. They motivate action and they also serve as guiding principles for deciding how to act. Values transcend specific actions and contexts, and they have a normative prescriptive quality about what ought to be done or thought across many different situations. Values offer standards or criteria for: evaluating actions, both one's own and those of other people; justifying opinions, attitudes and behaviours; deciding between alternatives; planning behaviour; and attempting to influence others.

Readers familiar with existing competence schemes may be surprised by the appearance of values as a distinct type of competence in the current model. However, it is important to bear in mind that the term "competence" is not being used here in its casual everyday sense as a synonym of "ability", but in a more technical sense to refer to the psychological resources (such as attitudes, skills and knowledge) which need to be mobilised and deployed to meet the demands and challenges of democratic and intercultural situations. Values are included in the model for two reasons. First, values do in fact appear (although often only implicitly) in many of the previous competence schemes which were audited. Thus, their omission from the current model would have meant that the model was only partially capturing the contents of those previous schemes. Values are not always obvious in previous schemes because they are usually included under the heading of attitudes (rather than under their own distinct heading). By contrast, the current model draws a clear conceptual distinction between values and attitudes, with only the former being characterised by their normative prescriptive quality. Second, values are essential in the context of conceptualising the competences which enable participation in a culture of democracy. This is because, without a specification of the particular values that underpin these competences, they would not be democratic competences but would instead be more general political competences which could be used in the service of many other kinds of political order, including anti-democratic orders. For example, one could be a responsible, self-efficacious and politically well-informed citizen within a totalitarian dictatorship if a different set of values were to be employed as the foundation for one's judgments, decisions and actions. Thus, the values which the current model contains lie at the very heart of democratic competence, and are essential for the characterisation of that competence.

There are three sets of values that are crucial for participating in a culture of democracy, as follows.

### Valuing human dignity and human rights

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This first set of values is based on the general belief that every individual human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, is entitled to equal respect, and is entitled to the same set of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and ought to be treated accordingly. This belief assumes: that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and apply to everyone without distinction; that human rights provide a minimum set of protections that are essential for human beings to live a life of

dignity; and that human rights provide an essential foundation for freedom, equality, justice and peace in the world. This set of values therefore involves:

1. recognition that all people share a common humanity and have equal dignity irrespective of their particular cultural affiliations, status, abilities or circumstances;
2. recognition of the universal, inalienable and indivisible nature of human rights;
3. recognition that human rights should always be promoted, respected and protected;
4. recognition that fundamental freedoms should always be defended unless they undermine or violate the human rights of others;
5. recognition that human rights provide the foundation for living together as equals in society and for freedom, justice and peace in the world.

## Valuing cultural diversity

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The second set of values is based on the general belief that other cultural affiliations, cultural variability and diversity, and pluralism of perspectives, views and practices ought to be positively regarded, appreciated and cherished. This belief assumes: that cultural diversity is an asset for society; that people can learn and benefit from other people's diverse perspectives; that cultural diversity should be promoted and protected; that people should be encouraged to interact with one another irrespective of their perceived cultural differences; and that intercultural dialogue should be used to develop a democratic culture of living together as equals in society.

Note that there is a tension between valuing human rights and valuing cultural diversity. In a society which has adopted human rights as its primary value foundation, valuing cultural diversity will have certain limits. These limits are set by the need to promote, respect and protect the human rights and freedoms of other people. Hence, it is assumed here that cultural diversity always ought to be valued unless it undermines the human rights and freedoms of others.

This second set of values therefore involves:

1. recognition that cultural diversity and pluralism of opinions, world views and practices is an asset for society and provides an opportunity for the enrichment of all members of society;
2. recognition that all people have the right to be different and the right to choose their own perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions;
3. recognition that people should always respect the perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions of other people, unless these are directed at undermining the human rights and freedoms of others;
4. recognition that people should always respect the lifestyles and practices of other people, unless they undermine or violate the human rights and freedoms of others;
5. recognition that people should listen to and engage in dialogue with those who are perceived to be different from themselves.

## Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

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The third set of values is based on a cluster of beliefs about how societies ought to operate and be governed, including the beliefs that: all citizens ought to be able to participate equally (either directly or indirectly through elected representatives) in the procedures through which the laws that are used to regulate society are formulated and established; all citizens ought to engage actively with the democratic procedures which operate within their society (allowing that this might also mean not engaging on occasions for reasons of conscience or circumstance); while decisions ought to be made by majorities, the just and fair treatment of minorities of all kinds ought to be ensured; social justice, fairness and equality ought to operate at all levels of society; and the rule of law ought to prevail so that everyone in society is treated justly, fairly, impartially and equally in accordance with laws that are shared by all. This set of values therefore involves:

1. support for democratic processes and procedures (while recognising that existing democratic procedures may not be optimal and that there may sometimes be a need to change or improve them through democratic means);
2. recognition of the importance of active citizenship (while recognising that non-participation may sometimes be justified for reasons of conscience or circumstance);
3. recognition of the importance of citizen engagement with political decision making;
4. recognition of the need for the protection of civil liberties, including the civil liberties of people who hold minority views;
5. support for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes;
6. a sense of social justice and social responsibility for the just and fair treatment of all members of society, including equal opportunities for all irrespective of national origins, ethnicity, race, religion, language, age, sex, gender, political opinion, birth, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status;
7. Support for the rule of law and the equal and impartial treatment of all citizens under the law as a means of ensuring justice.

## 6.2. Attitudes

An attitude is the overall mental orientation which an individual adopts towards someone or something (e.g. a person, a group, an institution, an issue, an event, a symbol). Attitudes usually consist of four components: a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object, and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object.

Six attitudes that are important for a culture of democracy are as follows.

### Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices

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Openness is an attitude either towards people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or towards world views, beliefs, values and practices that differ from one's own. The attitude of openness towards cultural otherness needs to be distinguished from the attitude of having an interest in collecting experiences of the "exotic" merely for one's own personal enjoyment or benefit. Openness instead involves:

1. sensitivity towards cultural diversity and to world views, beliefs, values and practices which differ from one's own;
2. curiosity about, and interest in discovering and learning about, other cultural orientations and affiliations and other world views, beliefs, values and practices;
3. willingness to suspend judgment and disbelief of other people's world views, beliefs, values and practices, and willingness to question the "naturalness" of one's own world view, beliefs, values and practices;
4. emotional readiness to relate to others who are perceived to be different from oneself;
5. willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage, co-operate and interact with those who are perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one's own, in a relationship of equality.

### Respect

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Respect is an attitude towards someone or something (e.g. a person, a belief, a symbol, a principle, a practice) where the object of that attitude is judged to have some kind of importance, worth or value which warrants positive regard and esteem.<sup>7</sup> Depending on the nature of the object that is respected, the respect may take on very different forms (cf. respect for a school rule v. respect for an elder's wisdom v. respect for nature).

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7. Notice that respect is closely linked to values in two ways: a value may be an object of respect (i.e. a value may be respected) and it can also function as a foundation for respect (i.e. one can respect someone or something because they exemplify or put into practice a particular value).



One type of respect that is especially important in the context of a culture of democracy is the respect that is accorded to other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different beliefs, opinions or practices from one's own. Such respect assumes the intrinsic dignity and equality of all human beings and their inalienable human right to choose their own affiliations, beliefs, opinions or practices. Importantly, this type of respect does not require minimising or ignoring the actual differences that might exist between the self and the other, which can sometimes be significant and profound, nor does it require agreement with, adoption of or conversion to that which is respected. It is instead an attitude that involves the positive appreciation of the dignity and the right of the other person to hold those affiliations, beliefs, opinions or practices, while nevertheless recognising and acknowledging the differences which exist between the self and the other. An attitude of respect is required to facilitate both democratic interaction and intercultural dialogue with other people. However, it should be noted that limits do need to be placed on respect – for example, respect should not be accorded to the contents of beliefs and opinions, or to lifestyles and practices which undermine or violate the dignity, human rights or freedoms of others.<sup>8</sup>

The concept of respect reflects better than the concept of tolerance the attitude that is required for a culture of democracy. Tolerance may, in some contexts, convey the connotation of simply enduring or putting up with difference and a patronising stance of tolerating something that one would prefer not to endure. Tolerance may also sometimes be construed as involving an act of power which allows the existence of difference by merely tolerating it, and through this act of tolerance enhancing the power and authority of the tolerating individual. Respect is a less ambiguous concept than tolerance, being based on recognition of the dignity, rights and freedoms of the other and a relationship of equality between the self and the other.

Respect therefore involves:

1. positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgment that they have intrinsic importance, worth or value;
2. positive regard and esteem for other people as equal human beings who share a common dignity and have exactly the same set of human rights and freedoms irrespective of their particular cultural affiliations, beliefs, opinions, lifestyles or practices;
3. positive regard and esteem for the beliefs, opinions, lifestyles and practices adopted by other people, as long as these do not undermine or violate the dignity, human rights or freedoms of others.

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8. From a human rights perspective, another person's right to freedom of beliefs should always be respected, but respect cannot be accorded to the contents of beliefs that seek to undermine or violate the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In the case of beliefs where the content cannot be respected, restrictions are placed not on the right to hold the beliefs but on the freedom to manifest those beliefs if such restrictions are necessary for public safety, the protection of public order, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others (see Article 9 of the *European Convention of Human Rights*: [www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)).

## Civic-mindedness

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Civic-mindedness is an attitude towards a community or social group. The term “community” is used here to denote a social or cultural group that is larger than one’s immediate circle of family and friends and to which one feels a sense of belonging. There are numerous types of group that might be relevant here, for example, the people who live within a particular geographical area (such as a neighbourhood, a town or city, a country, a group of countries such as Europe or Africa, or indeed the world in the case of the “global community”), a more geographically diffused group (such as an ethnic group, faith group, leisure group, sexual orientation group, etc.), or any other kind of social or cultural group to which an individual feels a sense of belonging. Every individual belongs to multiple groups, and an attitude of civic-mindedness may be held towards any number of these. Civic-mindedness involves:

1. a feeling of belonging to and identification with the community;
2. mindfulness of other people in the community, of the interconnectedness between those people, and of the effects of one’s actions on those people;
3. a sense of solidarity with other people in the community, including a willingness to co-operate and work with them, feelings of concern and care for their rights and welfare, and a willingness to defend those who might be disempowered and disadvantaged within the community;
4. an interest in, and attentiveness towards, the affairs and concerns of the community;
5. a sense of civic duty, a willingness to contribute actively to community life, a willingness to participate in decisions concerning the affairs, concerns and common good of the community, and a willingness to engage in dialogue with other members of the community regardless of their cultural affiliations;
6. a commitment to fulfil, to the best of one’s abilities, the responsibilities, duties or obligations that are attached to the roles or positions which one occupies within the community;
7. a sense of accountability to other people within the community and accepting that one is answerable to others for one’s decisions and actions.

## Responsibility

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The term “responsibility” has many meanings. Two meanings that are especially pertinent to a culture of democracy are role responsibility and moral responsibility. The former is an aspect of civic-mindedness (see above, point 6); here we are concerned with the latter. Moral responsibility is an attitude towards one’s own actions. It arises when a person has an obligation to act in a particular way and deserves praise or blame for either performing that act or failing to act in that way. Necessary conditions for individuals to be judged as being either praiseworthy or blameworthy are that they are able to reflect on their own actions, are able to form intentions about how they will act, and are able to execute their chosen actions (hence, when a lack of resources or structural conditions conspire to prevent a person from performing an action, it is inappropriate to ascribe either praise or blame to them). Responsibility can require courage insofar as taking a principled stance may entail acting on one’s

own, taking action against the norms of a community, or challenging a collective decision that is judged to be wrong. Thus, there can sometimes be a tension between civic-mindedness (construed as solidarity with and loyalty towards other people) and moral responsibility. An attitude of responsibility for one's own actions therefore involves:

1. the adoption of a reflective and thoughtful approach towards one's actions and the possible consequences of those actions;
2. the identification of one's duties and obligations and how one ought to act in relation to a particular situation, based on a value or set of values;<sup>9</sup>
3. making decisions about the actions to take (which in some cases might entail not taking action), given the circumstances which apply;
4. the taking of action (or the avoidance of action) accordingly as an autonomous agent;
5. willingness to hold oneself accountable for the nature or consequences of one's decisions and actions;
6. willingness to appraise and judge the self;
7. willingness to act courageously when this is judged to be necessary.

## Self-efficacy

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Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions which are required to achieve particular goals. This belief commonly entails the further beliefs that one can understand what is required, can make appropriate judgments, can select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, can navigate obstacles successfully, can influence what happens, and can make a difference to the events that affect one's own and other people's lives. Thus, self-efficacy is associated with feelings of self-confidence in one's own abilities. Low self-efficacy can discourage democratic and intercultural behaviour even when there is a high level of ability, while unrealistically high self-efficacy can lead to frustration and disappointment. An optimal attitude is relatively high self-efficacy coupled to a realistically estimated high level of ability, which encourages individuals to tackle new challenges and enables them to take action on issues of concern. Thus, self-efficacy involves:

1. belief in one's ability to understand issues, to make judgments and to select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks;
2. belief in one's ability to organise and execute the courses of action required to attain particular goals, and to navigate the obstacles that might arise;
3. a feeling of confidence about tackling new challenges;

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9. Hence, the deployment of the attitude of responsibility in democratic and intercultural situations requires the simultaneous deployment of one or more of the three sets of values specified by the current model (i.e. valuing human dignity and human rights, valuing cultural diversity, or valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law). In the absence of the simultaneous deployment of one or more of these sets of values, responsibility would not be a democratic competence but a more general political competence instead (cf. the introductory text on values, Chapter 6.1).

4. a feeling of confidence about democratic engagement and undertaking the actions judged to be necessary to achieve democratic goals (including challenging and holding to account those in positions of power and authority when their decisions or actions are judged to be unfair or unjust);
5. a feeling of confidence about engaging in intercultural dialogue with those who are perceived to have cultural affiliations that differ from one's own.

## Tolerance of ambiguity

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Tolerance of ambiguity is an attitude towards objects, events and situations which are perceived to be uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting or incompatible interpretations. People who have high tolerance of ambiguity evaluate these kinds of objects, events and situations in a positive manner, willingly accept their inherent lack of clarity, are willing to admit that other people's perspectives may be just as adequate as their own perspectives, and deal with the ambiguity constructively. Hence, the term "tolerance" should be understood here in its positive sense of accepting and embracing ambiguity (rather than in its negative sense of enduring or putting up with ambiguity). People who have low tolerance of ambiguity instead adopt a single perspective on unclear situations and issues, hold a closed attitude towards unfamiliar situations and issues, and use fixed and inflexible categories for thinking about the world. Thus, in the present context, tolerance of ambiguity involves:

1. recognition and acknowledgement that there can be multiple perspectives on and interpretations of any given situation or issue;
2. recognition and acknowledgement that one's own perspective on a situation may be no better than other people's perspectives;
3. acceptance of complexity, contradictions and lack of clarity;
4. willingness to undertake tasks when only incomplete or partial information is available;
5. willingness to tolerate uncertainty and to deal with it constructively.

## 6.3. Skills

A skill is the capacity for carrying out complex, well-organised patterns of either thinking or behaviour in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end or goal.

There are eight sets of skills that are important for a culture of democracy, as follows.

### Autonomous learning skills

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Autonomous learning skills are those skills that individuals require to pursue, organise and evaluate their own learning, in accordance with their own needs, in a self-directed and self-regulated manner, without being prompted by others. Autonomous learning skills are important for a culture of democracy because they enable individuals to learn for themselves about, and how to deal with, political, civic and cultural issues using multiple and diverse sources both far and near, rather than relying on agents in their immediate environment for the provision of information about these issues. Autonomous learning skills include abilities or skills in:

1. identifying one's own learning needs – these needs may stem from gaps in knowledge or understanding, from lack or poor mastery of skills, or from difficulties that have arisen as a consequence of current attitudes or values;
2. identifying, locating and accessing possible sources of the information, advice or guidance which is required to address these needs – these sources could include personal experiences, interactions and discussions with others, encounters with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own or who hold different beliefs, opinions or world views from one's own, and visual, print, broadcast and digital media sources;
3. judging the reliability of the various sources of information, advice or guidance, assessing them for possible bias or distortion, and selecting the most suitable sources from the range available;
4. processing and learning the information, using the most appropriate learning strategies and techniques, or adopting and following the advice or guidance, from the most reliable sources, making adjustments to one's existing repertoire of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes or values accordingly;
5. thinking about what has been learned, the progress that has been made, evaluating the learning strategies that have been used, and drawing conclusions about further learning that may still need to be undertaken and new learning strategies that may need to be acquired.

### Analytical and critical thinking skills

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Analytical and critical thinking skills consist of a large and complex cluster of inter-related skills. Analytical thinking skills are those skills that are required to analyse materials of any kind (e.g. texts, arguments, interpretations, issues, events, experiences) in a systematic and logical manner. They include abilities or skills in:

1. systematically breaking down the materials that are under analysis into constituent elements, and organising those elements in a logical manner;

2. identifying and interpreting the meaning(s) of each element, possibly by comparing and relating those elements to what is already known and identifying similarities and differences;
3. examining the elements in relationship to each other and identifying the connections that exist between them (logical, causal, temporal, etc.);
4. identifying any discrepancies, inconsistencies or divergences between elements;
5. identifying alternative possible meanings and relationships for individual elements, generating new elements that may be missing from the whole, systematically changing elements to determine effects on the whole, and generating new syntheses of the elements that have been examined – in other words, imagining and exploring novel possibilities and alternatives;
6. drawing the results of the analysis together in an organised and coherent manner to construct logical and defensible conclusions about the whole.

Critical thinking skills consist of those skills that are required to evaluate and make judgments about materials of any kind. They therefore include abilities or skills in:

1. making evaluations on the basis of internal consistency, and on the basis of consistency with available evidence and experience;
2. making judgments about whether or not materials under analysis are valid, accurate, acceptable, reliable, appropriate, useful and/or persuasive;
3. understanding and evaluating the preconceptions, assumptions and textual or communicative conventions upon which materials are based;
4. engaging not only with the literal meaning of materials, but also with their broader rhetorical purpose including the underlying motives, intentions and agendas of those who produced or created them (in the case of political communications, this includes the ability to identify propaganda and the ability to deconstruct the underlying motives, intentions and purposes of those who have produced the propaganda);
5. situating the materials within the historical context in which they have been produced in order to assist in making evaluative judgments about the materials;
6. generating and elaborating different alternative options, possibilities and solutions to those that are present within the materials under consideration;
7. weighing up the pros and cons of the available options – this can include cost-benefit analysis (incorporating both short-term and long-term perspectives), resource analysis (assessing whether the resources required for each option are available in practice) and risk analysis (understanding and assessing the risks associated with each option and how they might be managed);
8. drawing the results of the evaluative process together in an organised and coherent manner to construct a logical and defensible argument for or against a particular interpretation, conclusion or course of action, based on explicit and specifiable criteria, principles or values and/or compelling evidence;

9. recognising one's own assumptions and preconceptions that might have biased the evaluative process, and acknowledging that one's beliefs and judgments are always contingent and dependent upon one's own cultural affiliations and perspective.

Effective analytical thinking incorporates critical thinking (i.e. the evaluation of the materials under analysis), while effective critical thinking incorporates analytical thinking (i.e. drawing distinctions and making connections). For this reason, analytical and critical thinking skills are inherently linked together.

## Skills of listening and observing

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Skills of listening and observing are the skills that are required to understand what other people are saying and to learn from other people's behaviour. Understanding what other people are saying requires active listening – paying close attention not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said through the use of tone, pitch, loudness, rate and fluency of voice, and paying close attention to the person's accompanying body language, especially their eye movements, facial expressions and gestures. Close observational scrutiny of other people's behaviour can also be an important source of information about the behaviours that are most appropriate and effective in different social settings and cultural contexts, and can assist a learner in mastering those behaviours through the retention of that information and replicating the other person's behaviour in later similar situations. Thus, skills of listening and observing include abilities or skills in:

1. attending not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said and to the body language of the speaker;
2. attending to possible inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages;
3. attending to subtleties of meaning and to what might be only partially said or indeed left unsaid;
4. attending to the relationship between what is being said and the social context in which it is said;
5. paying close attention to the behaviour of other people and retaining information about that behaviour, particularly the behaviour of others who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own;
6. paying close attention to the similarities and the differences in how people react to the same situation, particularly people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one another.

## Empathy

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Empathy is the set of skills required to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and to see the world from other people's perspectives. Empathy involves the ability to step outside one's own psychological frame of reference (i.e. to decentre from one's own perspective) and the ability to imaginatively apprehend and understand the psychological frame of reference and perspective

of another person. This skill is fundamental to imagining the cultural affiliations, world views, beliefs, interests, emotions, wishes and needs of other people. There are several different forms of empathy that can be distinguished, including:

1. cognitive perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the perceptions, thoughts and beliefs of other people;
2. affective perspective-taking – the ability to apprehend and understand the emotions, feelings and needs of other people;
3. sympathy, sometimes called “compassionate empathy” or “empathic concern” – the ability to experience feelings of compassion and concern for other people based on the apprehension of their cognitive or affective state or condition, or their material situation or circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

## Flexibility and adaptability

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Flexibility and adaptability are the skills that are required to adjust one’s thoughts, feelings or behaviours in a principled manner to new contexts and situations so that one can respond effectively and appropriately to their challenges, demands and opportunities. Flexibility and adaptability enable individuals to adjust positively to novelty and change and to other people’s social or cultural expectations, communication styles and behaviours. They also enable individuals to adjust their patterns of thinking, feeling or behaviour in response to new situational contingencies, experiences, encounters and information. Flexibility and adaptability, defined in this way, need to be distinguished from the unprincipled or opportunistic adjustment of behaviour for personal benefit or gain. They also need to be distinguished from externally coerced adaptation.<sup>11</sup> Thus, flexibility and adaptability include abilities or skills in:

1. adjusting one’s habitual way of thinking due to changing circumstances, or temporarily shifting into a different cognitive perspective in response to cultural cues;
2. reconsidering one’s own opinions in the light of new evidence and/or rational argument;

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10. Note the positioning of empathy as a skill in the current model. The term “empathy” is of course also used in many other ways in everyday discourse. For example, it is sometimes used when a person experiences the same emotion that another person is feeling (the phenomenon of “emotional contagion”, where a person “catches” and shares another person’s joy, panic, fear, etc.), sometimes to refer to a sense of emotional connectedness or identification with another person (e.g. “I had a lot of empathy for the leading character in the book”) and sometimes to refer to the compassion or concern for another person that results from sympathy (e.g. “I feel empathy for you in your current predicament”). The term “empathy” is also sometimes used to refer to a much larger cluster of responses that one may have to another person in which openness to the other, respect for the other, cognitive and emotional engagement with the other, and feelings of emotional connection to the other are co-mingled. The present model instead uses the term “empathy” in a more specific and focused manner to denote the set of skills that are required to understand and relate to other people’s thoughts, beliefs and feelings, this being a crucial set of skills for participating in a culture of democracy. This definition is not intended to preclude the possible simultaneous mobilisation and deployment of empathy, openness, respect, etc., as an entire cluster of competences or capacities in some situations.

11. For example, the enforced assimilation of cultural minorities to a majority culture should never be condoned. All individuals have a fundamental right to choose their own cultural affiliations, beliefs and lifestyle (see footnote 8).



3. controlling and regulating one's own emotions and feelings in order to facilitate more effective and appropriate communication and co-operation with others;
4. overcoming anxieties, worries and insecurities about meeting and interacting with other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from one's own;
5. regulating and reducing negative feelings towards members of another group with which one's own group has historically been in conflict;
6. adjusting one's behaviour in a socially appropriate way according to the prevailing cultural environment;
7. adapting to different communication styles and behaviours, and switching to appropriate communication styles and behaviours to avoid violating the cultural norms of others and to communicate with them through means which they are able to understand.

### Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills<sup>12</sup>

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Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills are those skills that are required to communicate effectively and appropriately with other people. They include the following abilities and skills, among others:<sup>13</sup>

1. the ability to communicate clearly in a range of situations – this includes expressing one's beliefs, opinions, interests and needs, explaining and clarifying ideas, advocating, promoting, arguing, reasoning, discussing, debating, persuading and negotiating;
2. the ability to meet the communicative demands of intercultural situations by using more than one language or language variety or by using a shared language or lingua franca to understand another language;
3. the ability to express oneself confidently and without aggression, even in situations where one is disadvantaged through a disparity of power, and to express a fundamental disagreement with another person in a manner that is nevertheless respectful of that person's dignity and rights;
4. the ability to recognise the different forms of expression and the different communicative conventions (both verbal and non-verbal) in the communications employed by other social groups and their cultures;

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12. The term "language" is used in this document to denote all linguistic systems, whether recognised as languages or considered to be varieties of recognised languages, irrespective of modality. It includes spoken and signed language and all other forms of non-spoken language. The terms "verbal" and "non-verbal" communication in this context therefore mean, respectively, "communication effected by means of language" and "communication effected by means other than language".

13. First and foremost, of course, effective and appropriate communication requires linguistic skills (to produce and comprehend spoken and written sentences and utterances), sociolinguistic skills (to process accent, dialect, register and the linguistic markers of social relations between speakers) and discourse skills (to construct longer coherent stretches of language through the use of appropriate communicative conventions, and to deploy spoken discourse and written texts for particular communicative purposes). However, these are considered to be generic skills in the present context and are therefore omitted from the model. Readers who are interested in a detailed account of these particular skills should instead consult the *Common European framework of reference for languages* (see footnote 5), where they are described at length.

5. the ability to adjust and modify one's communicative behaviour so that one uses the communicative conventions (both verbal and non-verbal) that are appropriate to one's interlocutor(s) and to the prevailing cultural setting;
6. the ability to ask questions of clarification in an appropriate and sensitive manner in cases where the meanings being expressed by another person are unclear or where inconsistencies between the verbal and non-verbal messages produced by another person are detected;
7. the ability to manage breakdowns in communication, for example by requesting repetitions or reformulations from others, or providing restatements, revisions or simplifications of one's own misunderstood communications;
8. the ability to act as a linguistic mediator in intercultural exchanges, including skills in translating, interpreting and explaining, and to act as an intercultural mediator by assisting others to understand and appreciate the characteristics of someone or something that is perceived to have a different cultural affiliation from their own.

## Co-operation skills

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Co-operation skills are those skills that are required to participate successfully with others on shared activities, tasks and ventures. They include abilities or skills in:

1. expressing views and opinions in group settings, and encouraging other group members to express their views and opinions in such settings;
2. building consensus and compromise within a group;
3. taking action together with others in a reciprocal and co-ordinated manner;
4. identifying and setting group goals;
5. pursuing the goals of a group and adapting one's own behaviour for the purpose of achieving these goals;
6. appreciating all group members' talents and strengths, and helping others to develop in areas where they need to and want to improve;
7. encouraging and motivating other group members to co-operate and help each other in order to achieve group goals;
8. helping others with their work where appropriate;
9. sharing relevant and useful knowledge, experience or expertise with the group and persuading other group members to do so;
10. recognising conflict in group settings, including identifying emotional signs of conflict in the self and in others, and responding appropriately using peaceful means and dialogue.

## Conflict-resolution skills

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Conflict-resolution skills are those skills that are required to address, manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. They include abilities or skills in:

1. reducing or preventing aggression and negativity, and creating a neutral environment in which people feel free to express their differing opinions and concerns without fear of reprisal;
2. encouraging and enhancing receptivity, mutual understanding and trust between conflicting parties;
3. recognising differences in the power and/or status of the conflicting parties, and taking steps to reduce the possible impact of such differentials on communications between them;
4. effectively managing and regulating emotions – the ability to interpret one's own underlying emotional and motivational states as well as those of others, and to deal with emotional stress, anxiety and insecurity both in oneself and in others;
5. listening to and understanding the different perspectives of the parties involved in conflicts;
6. expressing and summarising the different points of view held by conflicting parties;
7. countering or reducing misperceptions held by conflicting parties;
8. recognising that sometimes there may be a need for a period of silence, a truce or a period of inaction, to allow the conflicting parties to reflect on the perspectives that are held by others;
9. identifying, analysing, relating and contextualising the causes and other aspects of conflicts;
10. identifying common ground on which agreement between conflicting parties can be built, identifying options for resolving conflicts, and refining possible compromises or solutions;
11. assisting others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options;
12. assisting and guiding the parties involved to agree on an optimal and acceptable solution to the conflict.

## 6.4. Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge is the body of information that is possessed by a person, while understanding is the comprehension and appreciation of meanings. The term “critical understanding” is used in the present context to emphasise the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to involve active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is being understood and interpreted (as opposed to automatic, habitual and unreflective interpretation).

The various forms of knowledge and critical understanding that are required for a culture of democracy fall into three main sets, as follows.

### Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

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Self-awareness and self-understanding are vital for participating effectively and appropriately in a culture of democracy. Knowledge and critical understanding of the self has many different aspects, including:

1. knowledge and understanding of one’s own cultural affiliations;
2. knowledge and understanding of one’s perspective on the world and of its cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects and biases;
3. knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one’s perspective on the world;
4. understanding how one’s perspective on the world, and one’s assumptions and preconceptions, are contingent and dependent upon one’s cultural affiliations and experiences, and in turn affect one’s perceptions, judgments and reactions to other people;
5. awareness of one’s own emotions, feelings and motivations, especially in contexts involving communication and co-operation with other people;
6. knowledge and understanding of the limits of one’s own competence and expertise.

### Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

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Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication have many different aspects, and include:

1. knowledge of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions which operate in the language(s) which one uses;
2. understanding that people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions from oneself, which are meaningful from their perspective, even when they are using the same language as oneself;
3. understanding that people who have different cultural affiliations can perceive the meanings of communications in different ways;

4. understanding that there are multiple ways of speaking in any given language and a variety of ways of using the same language;
5. understanding how the use of language is a cultural practice which operates as a carrier of information, meanings and identities which circulate in the culture in which that language is embedded;
6. understanding of the fact that languages may express culturally shared ideas in a unique way or express unique ideas which may be difficult to access through another language;
7. understanding the social impact and effects on others of different communication styles, including understanding how different communication styles may clash or result in a breakdown of communication;
8. understanding how one's own assumptions, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs and judgments are related to the specific language(s) which one speaks.

### **Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (including politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment and sustainability)**

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Knowledge and critical understanding of the world subsumes a large and complex range of knowledge and understanding in a variety of domains, including all of the following.

#### **(a) Knowledge and critical understanding of politics and law, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding of political and legal concepts, including democracy, freedom, justice, equality, citizenship, rights and responsibilities, the necessity of laws and regulations, and the rule of law;
2. knowledge and understanding of democratic processes, of how democratic institutions work, including the roles of political parties, election processes and voting;
3. knowledge and understanding of the diverse ways in which citizens can participate in public deliberations and decision making and can influence policy and society, including understanding of the role that civil society and NGOs can play in this regard;
4. understanding power relations, political disagreement and conflict of opinion in democratic societies, and of how such disagreements and conflicts can be peacefully resolved;
5. knowledge and understanding of current affairs, contemporary social and political problems, and the political views of others;
6. knowledge and understanding of contemporary threats to democracy.

#### **(b) Knowledge and critical understanding of human rights, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding that human rights are grounded in the dignity that is inherent in all human beings;

2. knowledge and understanding that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible, and that everyone does not only have human rights but also has a responsibility to respect the rights of others, irrespective of their national origins, ethnicity, race, religion, language, age, sex, gender, political opinion, birth, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status;
3. knowledge and understanding of the obligations of states and governments in relation to human rights;
4. knowledge and understanding of the history of human rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
5. knowledge and understanding of the relationship between human rights, democracy, freedom, justice, peace and security;
6. knowledge and understanding that there may be different ways of interpreting and experiencing human rights in different societies and cultures but that the possible variations are framed by internationally agreed legal instruments which set out minimum standards for human rights irrespective of cultural context;
7. knowledge and understanding of how human rights principles are applied in practice to specific situations, how violations of human rights can arise, how violations of human rights can be addressed, and how possible conflicts between human rights can be resolved;
8. knowledge and understanding of critical human rights challenges in the world today.

**(c) Knowledge and critical understanding of culture and cultures, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding of how people's cultural affiliations shape their world views, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs, values, behaviours and interactions with others;
2. knowledge and understanding that all cultural groups are internally variable and heterogeneous, do not have fixed inherent characteristics, contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional cultural meanings, and are constantly evolving and changing;
3. knowledge and understanding of how power structures, discriminatory practices and institutional barriers within and between cultural groups operate to restrict opportunities for disempowered individuals;
4. knowledge and understanding of the specific beliefs, values, norms, practices, discourses and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural affiliations, especially those used by people with whom one interacts and communicates and who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself.

**(d) Knowledge and critical understanding of religions, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of the history of particular religious traditions, of the key texts and key doctrines of particular religious traditions, and of the commonalities and differences which exist between different religious traditions;
2. knowledge and understanding of religious symbols, religious rituals and the religious uses of language;
3. knowledge and understanding of the key features of the beliefs, values, practices and experiences of individuals who practise particular religions;
4. understanding of the fact that the subjective experience and personal expressions of religions are likely to differ in various ways from the standard textbook representations of those religions;
5. knowledge and understanding of the internal diversity of beliefs and practices which exists within individual religions;
6. knowledge and understanding of the fact that all religious groups contain individuals who contest and challenge traditional religious meanings, and that religious groups do not have fixed inherent characteristics, but are constantly evolving and changing.

**(e) Knowledge and critical understanding of history, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding of the fluid nature of history and of how interpretations of the past vary over time and across cultures;
2. knowledge and understanding of particular narratives from different perspectives about the historical forces and factors that have shaped the contemporary world;
3. understanding of the processes of historical investigation, in particular of how facts are selected and constructed, and how they become evidence in the production of historical narratives, explanations and arguments;
4. understanding of the need to access alternative sources of information about history because the contributions of marginalised groups (e.g. cultural minorities and women) are often excluded from standard historical narratives;
5. knowledge and understanding of how histories are often presented and taught from an ethnocentric point of view;
6. knowledge and understanding of how the concepts of democracy and citizenship have evolved in different ways in different cultures over time;
7. knowledge and understanding of how stereotyping is a form of discrimination that has been used to deny individuality and diversity to human beings and to undermine human rights, and in some cases has led to crimes against humanity;
8. understanding and interpreting the past in the light of the present with a view to the future, and understanding the relevance of the past to concerns and issues in the contemporary world.

**(f) Knowledge and critical understanding of the media, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding of the processes through which the mass media select, interpret and edit information before transmitting it for public consumption;
2. knowledge and understanding of the mass media as commodities that involve producers and consumers, and of the possible motives, intentions and purposes that the producers of content, images, messages and advertisements for the mass media may have;
3. knowledge and understanding of digital media, of how digital media content, images, messages and advertisements are produced, and of the various possible motives, intentions and purposes of those who create or reproduce them;
4. knowledge and understanding of the effects that mass media and digital media content can have on individuals' judgments and behaviours;
5. knowledge and understanding of how political messages, propaganda and hate speech in the mass media and digital media are produced, how these forms of communication can be identified, and how individuals can guard and protect themselves against the effects of these communications.

**(g) Knowledge and critical understanding of economies, the environment and sustainability, which includes:**

1. knowledge and understanding of economies and of the economic and financial processes that affect the functioning of society, including the relationship between employment, earnings, profit, taxation and government expenditure;
2. knowledge and understanding of the relationship between income and expenditure, the nature and consequences of debt, the real cost of loans, and the risk of loans beyond repayment capacity;
3. knowledge and understanding of the economic interdependence of the global community and of the impact that personal choices and patterns of consumption may have in other parts of the world;
4. knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, the factors that can impact on it, the risks associated with environmental damage, current environmental challenges, and the need for responsible consumption and environmental protection and sustainability;
5. knowledge and understanding of the connections between economic, social, political and environmental processes, especially when viewed from a global perspective;
6. knowledge and understanding of the ethical issues associated with globalisation.





## 7. Conclusion

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**A**s stated at the outset of this document, the model that is presented here is an attempt to provide a description of the competences that need to be acquired by learners if they are to become effective engaged citizens and live peacefully together with others as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies. It is hoped that the current model will prove useful for educational decision making and planning and will assist in the harnessing of educational systems for the purpose of preparing learners for life as democratically and interculturally competent citizens.

It is also hoped that this model will enable educational systems to empower learners as autonomous social agents who are capable of choosing and pursuing their own goals in life within the framework that is provided by democratic institutions and respect for human rights. Several competences in the model are especially pertinent to this goal. For example, if learners develop an attitude of openness towards other cultures, beliefs, world views and practices, they will be willing to explore and investigate other perspectives and modes of life that lie beyond the traditional ones with which they have grown up, expanding the range of their experiences and their horizons; if they acquire autonomous learning skills, they will be able to learn independently about these new perspectives and modes of life and not be dependent solely upon information provided by others in their immediate environment; and if they acquire analytical and critical thinking skills, they will be able to subject to detailed scrutiny alternative perspectives and modes of life, and new information and ideas, and will be able to make their own evaluative judgments about whether or not they are acceptable or desirable. In addition, if young people learn to value human dignity and human rights, cultural diversity and democracy, then these values will be used as the foundation for all of their choices and actions, and they will willingly pursue their lives in a manner that respects the dignity and human rights of other people and the principles of democracy.

In short, equipping learners with the competences specified by the current model is an essential step which needs to be taken to empower them to choose and pursue their own goals within the framework that is provided by respect for human rights and democratic processes. Equipping them with these competences through the educational system, alongside taking action to tackle structural disadvantages and inequalities, is crucial to ensure the future health of our culturally diverse democratic societies and the empowerment and flourishing of all young people who live within them.



## Appendix A

# The sources of the competence schemes that were audited by the project

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**T**his appendix contains the sources of all the competence schemes that were audited by the project. Some of the sources listed below contain more than a single competence scheme, while others duplicate competence schemes contained in other sources. For this reason, the number of documents in this list (102) differs from the total number of schemes that were audited (101). Unless otherwise stated, all websites were accessed on 17 February 2016.

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## Appendix B

# The 55 possible competences that were identified across the 101 competence schemes

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**N**ote that this list includes only competences in the 101 schemes which were judged to be relevant to a culture of democracy. It excludes other competences in the schemes which are relevant to other contexts instead (e.g. employability).

1. Valuing/respect for other human beings
2. Valuing/respect for cultural difference and diversity
3. Valuing/respect for human rights
4. Valuing/respect for democracy
5. Valuing/respect for justice, equity, fairness, equality and the rule of law
6. Valuing/respect for other cultures/cultural otherness, including attitudinal openness towards other cultures
7. Tolerance
8. Civic-mindedness
9. Responsibility
10. Self-efficacy and self-confidence
11. Autonomy and initiative
12. Tolerance of ambiguity
13. Capacity for co-operation and collaboration
14. Capacity to resolve conflict
15. Empathy and decentring
16. Multiperspectivity
17. Self-awareness and self-knowledge
18. Communicative awareness
19. Linguistic knowledge
20. Linguistic and communicative skills
21. Skills of listening and observing
22. Emotional awareness

23. Emotions and motivations to participate civically and politically
24. Stress-management, emotional regulation, self-regulation
25. Political and civic interest
26. Political and civic opinions and beliefs
27. Knowledge and understanding of politics and the law
28. Knowledge and understanding of financial matters and economies
29. Knowledge and understanding of human rights
30. Knowledge and understanding of specific cultures
31. Knowledge and understanding of culture in general
32. Knowledge and understanding of religions
33. Knowledge and understanding of the natural world and environmental sustainability
34. Knowledge and understanding of history
35. Knowledge and understanding of the present world
36. Media knowledge and skills (both traditional and new media)
37. Skills of knowledge discovery and of learning through interaction
38. Skills of interpreting and relating
39. Skills of general reasoning and analysis
40. The ability to differentiate between and assess long-term v. short-term benefits, advantages or goals
41. Critical thinking
42. Critical cultural awareness
43. Ethical/moral reasoning, judgment and integrity
44. Problem-solving
45. Decision making
46. Creativity
47. Flexibility and adaptability
48. Perseverance
49. Cognitive orientation or style
50. Attitudes to learning
51. Practical skills
52. Intercultural behaviour
53. Political participation
54. Civic participation
55. Specialised professional competences (e.g. of teachers, psychological counsellors)

## Appendix C

# Suggestions for further reading beyond the references listed in Appendix A<sup>14</sup>

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## Appendix D

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Contemporary societies within Europe face many challenges, including declining levels of voter turnout in elections, increased distrust of politicians, high levels of hate crime, intolerance and prejudice towards minority ethnic and religious groups, and increasing levels of support for violent extremism. These challenges threaten the legitimacy of democratic institutions and peaceful co-existence within Europe.

Formal education is a vital tool that can be used to tackle these challenges. Appropriate educational input and practices can boost democratic engagement, reduce intolerance and prejudice, and decrease support for violent extremism. However, to achieve these goals, educationists need a clear understanding of the democratic competences that should be targeted by the curriculum.

This book presents a new conceptual model of the competences which citizens require to participate in democratic culture and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies. The model is the product of intensive work over a two-year period, and has been strongly endorsed in an international consultation with leading educational experts. The book describes the competence model in detail, together with the methods used to develop it. The model provides a robust conceptual foundation for the future development of curricula, pedagogies and assessments in democratic citizenship and human rights education. Its application will enable educational systems to be harnessed effectively for the preparation of students for life as engaged and tolerant democratic citizens. The book forms the first component of a new Council of Europe reference framework of competences for democratic culture. It is vital reading for all educational policy makers and practitioners who work in the fields of education for democratic citizenship, human rights education and intercultural education.

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