

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS



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Cover design and layout:
Documents and Publications
Production Department
(SPDP), Council of Europe

Photo: Shutterstock

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
<http://book.coe.int>

ISBN 978-92-871-9299-8

© Council of Europe, October 2022
Printed at the Council of Europe

The first edition of the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters* (AIE) was developed by the Education Department of the Council of Europe. It was a concrete response to the recommendations of the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity", which recommended that new educational tools should be developed to encourage learners to reflect critically on their own responses and attitudes to experiences of other cultures.

The reference for the first edition is:

Byram M., Barrett M., Ipgrave J., Jackson R. and Méndez García M.C. (2009), *Autobiography of intercultural encounters*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, France.

The AIE has since been complemented by two further tools, the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters through visual media* (AIEVM) and the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters through the internet* (AIETI).

The current volume contains updated and revised versions of the two original versions of the AIE: the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters – Standard version* and the *Autobiography of intercultural encounters – Version for younger learners*. In this revision, both versions have been aligned with the Council of Europe's *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (www.coe.int/competences) which was published in 2018.

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***The authoring team would like to thank the following for
their input to the first draft version of the AIE:***

Jean-Claude Beacco, Gill Musk,
John Thorogood and Geneviève Zarate.

This revised second edition of the AIE was prepared by:

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Acknowledgements

The AIE draws some theoretical concepts and their operationalisation from the following:

Council of Europe (2018), *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (three volumes), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: www.coe.int/competences.

The Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA) Project, funded by the European Union's Leonardo da Vinci II Programme.

Byram M. (2021), *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence – Revisited (2nd edn)*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

Zarate G. and Gohard-Radenkovic A. (eds) (2004), *La reconnaissance des compétences interculturelles: de la grille à la carte*, Didier, Paris.

Piloting

Piloting of the AIE was conducted in two phases: preliminary piloting from January to April 2007, followed by a main phase from January to May 2008. The authoring team is grateful to all those who provided valuable feedback in the piloting process.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
STANDARD VERSION	9
What is the Autobiography of intercultural encounters?	9
Who I am (optional)	10
Encounter number Today's date	11
STANDARD VERSION NOTES FOR FACILITATORS	23
What is the AIE?	23
How and when to use the AIE	23
The rationale behind the AIE	24
The model of intercultural competence	25
What are the ethical issues?	27
Who can use the AIE?	28
What are the responsibilities of teachers and other facilitators?	28
Action	28
Practical matters	29
Autobiography of intercultural encounters (including theoretical indicators but excluding the "Who I am" task)	30
VERSION FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS	35
Introductory exercise	35
Autobiography of intercultural encounters Version for younger learners Oral format	36
Autobiography of intercultural encounters Version for younger learners Written format	40
VERSION FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS NOTES FOR FACILITATORS	43
What is the Autobiography of intercultural encounters?	43
How and when to use the AIE	43
What is the rationale behind the AIE?	45
The model of intercultural competence	46
What are the ethical issues?	48
Who can use the AIE?	48
What are the responsibilities of teachers and other facilitators?	49
Action	49
Autobiography of intercultural encounters Version for younger learners Oral format (including theoretical indicators)	50
Autobiography of intercultural encounters Version for younger learners Written format	54
PICTURE CARDS TO INTRODUCE YOUNGER LEARNERS TO THE IDEA OF AN ENCOUNTER WITH SOMEONE DIFFERENT	57
Verbal descriptions of pictures	57
TEXT CARDS TO STRUCTURE THE DISCUSSION WITH YOUNGER LEARNERS	63
Words displayed on the text cards	63

Introduction

It has become commonplace to say that the world has changed, that globalisation and internationalisation make everything different, that intercultural experience is the experience of everyone. This is indeed true for those – and there are many of them – who encounter people from other countries in their daily lives, as such encounters are obviously “intercultural” experiences. Freedom of movement in Europe particularly has grown in recent decades and the need for intercultural dialogue is well recognised.

On the other hand, there are many parts of Europe and beyond where such experiences are, in fact, not so common, where people may feel that change has not affected their immediate surroundings even if they see the effects of globalisation and internationalisation in the daily news.

These two views are based on the idea that “culture” is what is found in distant places, what might be experienced on a holiday in another country, for example, and that “intercultural” applies only to experiences with people from distant places and other countries. “Culture” is, however, a complex concept which is used – and sometimes over-used – to refer to many dimensions of our experience with other people. Indeed, “other people” is also a deceptively simple term used to refer to those who are “not like us”.

People who are “not like us” and who have a different “culture” may in fact be far more varied than just those from other countries, people we may or may not meet as a result of globalisation and internationalisation. Boys may say girls are “not like us” and have their own “culture”, and vice versa. People who live in the city may say the same of those who live in the countryside, and vice versa. People of one religion/age group/ethnicity/nationality, or other social category, may say it of those of another religion/age group/ethnicity/nationality, or other social category, and vice versa.

It soon becomes clear that intercultural encounters are part of our everyday lives with or without globalisation and internationalisation. Some encounters go unnoticed because they are so common and seem natural. Others stick out as special and sometimes demanding and difficult experiences because they are unusual and are the cause of joy or fear or both. Even the ordinary becomes unusual as a particular event or meeting suddenly causes us to stop and wonder.

Joy and fear – and other emotions in between – are often best understood through a little reflection and analysis, and can then be a better basis for future intercultural encounters. The *Autobiography of intercultural encounters* (AIE) is a means of helping us to think about our experiences of “other people” with other “cultures” whether they seem distant or near to us in time and place. It is also a means of helping us to decide how we can and should learn from an intercultural encounter, what we should do, what action we might take, how we can find out more about and benefit from the event which has been important to us, and how we can make it part of our understanding of “others” and their “cultures”.

The AIE is essentially a series of questions about a special intercultural experience which has been particularly important. The questions take us back over the encounter, over how we responded, how we think others in the encounter responded, how we thought and felt about it then and now, and what conclusions we can draw from it for the future. The questions follow a careful sequence which is based on scientific research but are written in a way which makes it easy for anyone to follow. In the “Standard version”, those who use the AIE can do it alone or with others – with the help of a friend or teacher for example – whereas the “Version for younger learners” is intended for children who need help from an adult in reading and writing and in thinking back over their encounter.

The AIE is accompanied by notes for facilitators in both versions, where a more detailed explanation of its purpose and origins is given.

There is also a text, "Context, concepts and theories", which deals in some depth with the concepts which underlie the AIE, such as what we mean by "culture" and many other concepts which help to clarify a complex area for facilitators. Finally, there is a shorter and simplified version of this explanatory text, entitled "Concepts for discussion", which can be used with people who complete the "Standard version" of the AIE and who themselves might want to understand more about how disciplines such as psychology and sociology help us to analyse intercultural encounters in a scientific way. These two texts may be found in a separate volume which accompanies the present one.

It is hoped that the AIE will be a means of helping anyone who has had a significant intercultural experience to benefit from it, make it part of their way of seeing the world around them and decide how to take a full part in the intercultural world to which they belong.

Autobiography of intercultural encounters

Standard version

What is the Autobiography of intercultural encounters?

This AIE has been designed to help you analyse a specific intercultural encounter which you have experienced. You do this by answering a sequence of questions about various aspects of that encounter.

An intercultural encounter can be an experience you had with someone from a different country, but it can also be an experience with someone from another cultural background in your country. It might be, for example, someone you met from another region, someone who speaks a different language, someone from a different religion or from a different ethnic group.

This focus is on just one event or experience which you have had with someone different to yourself. For example, avoid talking in general terms about a holiday which you have had and instead choose just one specific encounter or meeting which you have had with a particular person from another country or culture. It may be somebody you already know and have known for some time.

The event could be a visit to that person's house. It could be a meeting with someone from a foreign country or another region of your own country. It could be something that happened while on a trip abroad, and so on.

Here are some examples from other people.

- ▶ An English teenager met a foreigner for the first time in Turkey. She and her mother talked to him because they got lost in the town.
- ▶ A 10-year-old girl went for a holiday to Egypt. There she became acquainted with a local girl of 11. They met on the beach and first communicated with the help of gestures. She learnt that her parents worked at the hotel where her family were staying.
- ▶ A German boy went to stay at his friend's house. His friend's parents came to Germany from Japan but his friend was born in Germany.
- ▶ A young Bulgarian woman got to know a Hungarian and a Turkish guy at an international airport in the USA. She was intrigued by the different ways they responded to critically delayed flights.
- ▶ A university student arrived in France, frightened and tired, and was amazed at how friendly and caring the bus driver could be.
- ▶ A Bulgarian boy congratulated his Armenian friend on Christmas day and felt embarrassed when he realised that Armenian Christmas was on a different day.

Notice that the encounters can be in your own country, in your own neighbourhood, in your own home, in a foreign country or on a journey – in other words anywhere you happen to be.

Choose an experience which was important for you, which made you think, surprised you, that you enjoyed, found difficult, or similar, and give the experience a name or title, for example, "A South African visitor", "My Greek experience", "My first conversation in a foreign language", "Staying with a Japanese friend", "Delays at the airport", "Arrival in France", "The wrong day for Christmas".

This AIE helps you to think about the experience by asking you questions about it. Try to answer the questions as honestly as possible. It does not matter if the experience is positive or negative.

All experiences are important.

Who I am (optional)

In this first section of the AIE, you are asked to describe yourself.

You can either do this now, or after answering some or all of the following questions.

In describing yourself, think about things that are especially important to you in how you think about yourself and how you like others to see you.*

[illegible]

*Here are some elements you may wish to include if you find them to be an important part of your identity: your name, age, gender, nationality, ethnic group, country, region or community where you live or come from, religion, languages, and so forth. Or you could, for example, include being a son/daughter, brother/sister, school student, member of a sports team or member of any other type of club.

Encounter number **Today's date**

1. The encounter

Title

Give the encounter a name which says something about it.

Description

What happened when you met this person/these people?

Time

When did it happen?

Location

Where did it happen? What were you doing there?

Was it (please tick one or more):

- ▶ study
- ▶ leisure
- ▶ on holiday
- ▶ at work
- ▶ at school
- ▶ other?

Importance

Why have you chosen this experience?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Was it because (please tick one or more):

- ▶ it made me think about something I had not thought about before
- ▶ it was the first time I had had this kind of experience
- ▶ it was the most recent experience of that kind
- ▶ it surprised me
- ▶ it disappointed me
- ▶ it pleased me
- ▶ it angered me
- ▶ it changed me?

Add any other reactions in your own words and say what you think caused your reaction.

2. The other person or people

Who else was involved? Give the name of the person or people, if you know them.

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Write something about them. What was the first thing you noticed about them? What did they look like? What clothes were they wearing?

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Were they male/female, or older/younger than you, or did they belong to a different nationality or religion or region, or was there something else you think is important about them?

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3. Your feelings

Describe how you felt at the time by completing these sentences.

My feelings or emotions at the time were ...

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

My thoughts at the time were ...

[illegible]

What I did at the time was ... (For example, did you pretend you had not noticed something that was strange? Did you change the subject of the conversation which had become embarrassing? Did you ask questions about what you found strange?)

[illegible]

4. The other person's feelings

Imagine yourself in their position. How do you think the other people felt in the situation at the time? This can be difficult but try and imagine what they felt at the time. Happy or upset/stressed, or something else? How did you know?

What do you think they were thinking when all this happened? Do you think they found it strange, or interesting, or something else?

Choose one or more of the options below, or add your own suggestion and say why you have chosen it. For them it was an everyday experience/an unusual experience/a surprising experience/a shocking experience, because...

Choose one or more of the options below and complete the sentence or add your own ideas.

The other people involved in the experience appeared to have the following feelings – surprise/shock/delight/no particular feelings/...

I noticed this because of what they did/said and/or how they looked, for example they... (say what you noticed)

I am not sure because they seemed to hide their feelings.

5. Same and different

Think about the similarities and differences between the ways in which you thought and felt about the situation and the ways in which they thought and felt about it.

Were you aware at the time of any similarities and, if so, what were they?

Were you aware at the time of any differences and, if so, what were they?

Looking back at the situation ...

Are you aware now of any other similarities and, if so, what are they?

Are you aware now of any other differences and, if so, what are they?

How do you see your own thoughts, feelings and actions now?

First thoughts:

Choose one or more of the following and complete the sentence, or invent your own.

The way I acted in the experience was appropriate because what I did was

I think I could have acted differently by doing the following

I think the best reaction from me would have been

My reaction was good because

I hid my emotions by

6. Talking to each other

When you think about how you spoke to or communicated with the other people, do you remember that you made adjustments in how you talked or wrote to them?

First thoughts:

Further ideas – for example:

I was talking to them in my own language and I noticed I needed to make adjustments to help them understand me, for example ...

I was not speaking in my own language and I had to make adjustments to make myself understood – to simplify / to explain using gestures, by explaining a word, by ...

I noticed things about how they spoke – that they simplified, that they used gestures, that they spoke more slowly ...

Did you already have any knowledge or previous experience which helped you to communicate better?

First thoughts:

Further ideas – for example:

I already knew things about how people communicate and behave in other groups which helped me to understand the experience and communicate better. I knew, for example, that ...

I knew that other people involved in the experience thought and acted differently because of what they had learnt as children, for example ...

7. Finding out more

There may have been things in the experience which puzzled you and you tried to find out more at the time. If you did so, how did you do it?

[illegible]

If you have found out an answer since, how did you do it?

For example:

There were things I did not understand, so I tried to find out by asking questions at the time/reading about it/looking on the internet/asking questions ...

I used the following sources for information ...

When finding new information, I noticed the following similarities and differences with things I know from my own society ...

The following things still puzzle me ...

[illegible]

8. Using comparisons to understand

People often compare things in other groups or cultures with similar things in their own. Did you do this? Did it help you to understand what was happening?

For example:

The experience involved some things which were similar to what I know in my own group and these are the things I noticed ...

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

There were some things which were different from my own group ...

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

9. Thinking back and looking forward

If, when you look back, you draw conclusions about the experience, what are they?

Complete as many of these as you can.

I liked the experience for the following reasons ...

I disliked the experience for the following reasons ...

There were some things which I approve of and these are my reasons ...

There were some things which I disapprove of and these are my reasons ...

Try to imagine that you are telling someone you know well about all this. It could be your brother or sister, for example. Do you think they would have the same opinions as you? Would they approve and disapprove of the same things for the same reasons?

Try to think about why people you know well and who belong to the same group(s) as you (same family, same religion, same country, same region, etc.) might have the same reactions, and write your explanation here:

Did the experience change you? How?

Did you decide to do something as a result of this experience? What did you do?

Will you decide to do something as a result of doing this AIE? If so, what?

Autobiography of intercultural encounters

Standard version

Notes for facilitators

What is the AIE?

The AIE is a document for learners and normally should be their property to use as they wish. It guides learners to think critically about an intercultural experience, that is, an encounter with people from another social group. The group can be of any kind: people from another country, from another ethnic group, from another religion, from another region of the same country, from another level or class or stratum of the same society and so on. The AIE is to be completed in connection with one specific encounter. Each encounter needs a new copy of the AIE and can be numbered.

The AIE consists of a series of questions which learners answer about the specific encounter, but they only answer the questions they choose to answer. There is no obligation to answer them all.

There are two related purposes for the AIE:

- ▶ self-evaluation: the AIE guides learners to evaluate their own responses to a specific encounter; over time they can look back at different encounters and how they evaluated them and thus learn about themselves;
- ▶ teaching and learning: teachers can use the AIE as a means of stimulating reflection and analysis, and can thus facilitate learning in deliberate ways.

The two purposes are related but differ in the emphasis and also in the ways the AIE is used.

- ▶ The intercultural experience which some learners choose to talk about might be a relatively profound one which led to an awakening of their awareness of cultural difference. Some of the more complex questions in the AIE have been designed with this possibility in mind.
- ▶ Other learners may choose a much more mundane experience (such as buying a loaf of bread in a shop in a foreign country, or an occasion on which a foreigner asked them for directions in the street). With the latter type of experience, some questions in the AIE may be redundant and should simply be omitted if they are not relevant.

How and when to use the AIE

The AIE can be used formally in the classroom and also informally at a time and place of learners' own choice.

It can be used as a teaching instrument working with groups or individuals, led by a teacher – the teaching and learning option. It can be used privately by individuals – the self-evaluation option – as a kind of diary, which may remain confidential.

The use will depend on one or more factors:

- ▶ the intention of the teacher to introduce the AIE into a course of study;
- ▶ the wishes of the learner about confidentiality;
- ▶ the age of the learners and whether they need help with the AIE.

Here are some possible scenarios where the AIE might be used.

After a school holiday

After a school holiday, when students may have been away from home – perhaps to another country, to another region of their own country or at a school camp – the AIE can be used with primary/elementary school students to encourage them to reflect upon a specific experience which they have had while on holiday. In the case of these students, they may be interviewed individually either by their teacher or by a classroom assistant.

In vocational training placements in other countries

Younger and older people in vocational training may be offered the opportunity to take up a work experience placement in another country. This involves them in not only learning about and experiencing other ways of living on a daily basis but also other work practices and traditions. They might be encouraged by their managers to complete the AIE as a means of analysing their experience of the workplace and/or living in another country and not just being a visitor there.

After a school trip

Schools often organise visits to other regions of the same country or to other countries. Often they prepare the students/pupils for this very carefully but it is just as important to facilitate their reflections after the event. Each student/pupil in a group will have had some particular experience or encounter even though they have all been on the same trip, and the AIE can help to individualise the follow-up and reflection. After each individual has completed the AIE, they may be willing to share their encounter with others in the group and, with the help of a teacher, think about the variety of experiences rather than over-generalise their individual experience.

In preparation for and during study abroad at university

In preparation for study abroad, students are introduced to the AIE and complete it for a specific encounter they have already had (perhaps with another student acting as mentor). They then complete the AIE for specific experiences they have during their period of study and residence abroad and afterwards when they reflect with hindsight.

After a major event

After a major event, such as learners witnessing an exchange of racial abuse, the AIE is used as a tool for analysis of learners' reactions. This may be in a classroom and led by a teacher or it may be private use encouraged by a teacher with the option of keeping it confidential or showing it to others.

But it can also be used in any other scenarios of intercultural encounters.

Above all, the AIE can be used and adapted flexibly to the circumstances. Users do not need to answer all the questions – it is not a questionnaire.

Teachers may wish to change the formulation of the questions under a heading, to make them more appropriate to an age group or to the previous experience of learners.

The only things which should not be changed are the headings and introductions for each section and the order in which the sections are presented. Users may, however, respond to the sections in any order they wish and may often decide to do some later sections first. Facilitators should not prevent them from doing this.

The rationale behind the AIE

There are three ideas behind the AIE:

- ▶ that a special or “rare” event in someone’s life can have a lasting effect on them;
- ▶ that a tool for helping people to think about their experiences, especially “rare events”, can make them more meaningful;
- ▶ that changes are not always “incremental” and people sometimes become more intercultural and sometimes less as a result of their experiences.

The make-up of the AIE – the particular questions and the order in which they are put – is derived from a definition or model of intercultural competence with a number of identifiable elements. Users of the AIE are encouraged to think about their intercultural competence in relation to these elements, but without any reference to the technical terms.

Teachers, however, will be able to help learners if they know what lies behind the questions and what the elements are. They are summarised here and, at the end of these notes, the AIE is presented with the links from each question to the elements made clear.

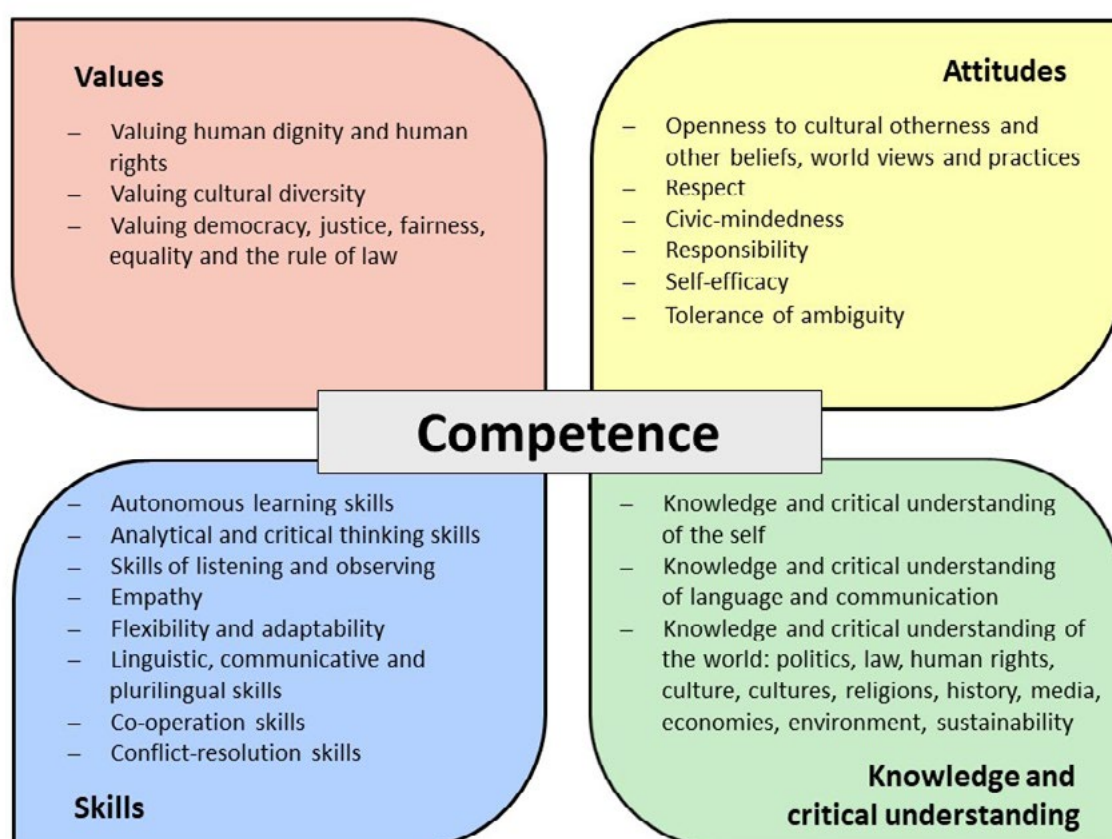
The model of intercultural competence¹

The Council of Europe's *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (RFCDC) provides a comprehensive description of the competences that an individual needs in order to:

- ▶ promote and protect human rights;
- ▶ act as a responsible democratic citizen;
- ▶ comprehend and appreciate the perspectives and world views of those who have different cultural affiliations from themselves;
- ▶ engage in respectful intercultural dialogue.

The third and fourth purposes are, of course, directly relevant to participating successfully in intercultural encounters. The full set of competences required for all four purposes are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The full set of competences specified by the RFCDC



Fifteen of the 20 competences in Figure 1 are required to engage appropriately, effectively and respectfully in intercultural encounters. These are as follows.

¹ Facilitators who are familiar with the first edition of the AIE should note that the terminology in this section has been amended.

Values

Valuing human dignity and human rights

This value is based on the 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.

Valuing cultural diversity

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

Attitudes

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

This attitude involves sensitivity towards, curiosity about and willingness to engage with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or with beliefs, world views and practices which differ from one's own.

Respect

Respect means positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgment that they have intrinsic importance, worth or value.

Civic-mindedness

This is an attitude towards a community to which one belongs that is larger than one's immediate circle of family and friends, involving a sense of belonging and solidarity, and a willingness to undertake action with the aim of making a contribution to the common good.

Tolerance of ambiguity

This is an attitude towards situations that are uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting interpretations, which involves evaluating such situations positively and dealing with them constructively.

Skills

Autonomous learning skills

These 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.

Analytical and critical thinking skills

These are the skills required to analyse and evaluate materials of any kind (e.g. texts, arguments, interpretations, issues, events, experiences) in a systematic and logical manner.

Skills of listening and observing

These 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

These are the 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

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

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

These are the skills required to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who speak the same or another language.

Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

This refers to 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

This is knowledge and critical understanding of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions that operate in the language(s) which one speaks, and of the effects that different communication styles can have on other people.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures)

This is knowledge and critical understanding of how people's cultural affiliations shape their world views, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours, of how all cultural groups are internally heterogeneous and contain individuals who dispute traditional cultural beliefs and practices, and of the specific beliefs, practices and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural affiliations.

What are the ethical issues?

The AIE follows the ideas in this model by encouraging learners to think about their attitudes, behaviour, knowledge/skills and the action they could take. In some circumstances (see possible scenarios in "How and when to use the AIE"), teachers may wish to use the questions to stimulate learners to think more deeply and critically about their experiences. They may, in particular, wish to stimulate learners to become involved with others in making changes in themselves and their environment.

Ethical issues may arise when the AIE is used, especially if the student expresses negativity or hostility towards the "other" in the encounter. Extreme negativity will need to be followed up at a later time. However, milder negative reactions may eventually assist someone to learn through the use of the AIE to welcome intercultural differences (or at least to accept them).

A detailed treatment of the ethical issues which could arise is beyond the scope of these notes. However, it may be useful for facilitators to be aware of the following resources for dealing with racism and intolerance towards others.

Byram M., Porto M. and Wagner M. (2021), "Ethical issues in teaching for intercultural citizenship in world/foreign language education", *TESOL Quarterly* 55 (1), 308-321, doi: 10.1002/tesq.3008.

Council of Europe (2004), *DOMINO – A manual to use peer group education as a means to fight racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance* (3rd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023ce>.

Council of Europe (2008), *Living in democracy: EDC/HRE lesson plans for lower secondary level* (EDC/HRE Volume III), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016802f7304>.

Council of Europe (2009), *COMPASITO – Manual on human rights education for children* (2nd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/pdf/Compasito%20EN.pdf>.

Council of Europe (2016), *All different, all equal – Education pack: Ideas, resources, methods and activities for informal intercultural education with young people and adults* (3rd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680700aac>.

Council of Europe (2020), *COMPASS – Manual for human rights education with young people* (2nd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/compass-eng-rev-2020-web/1680a08e40>.

Who can use the AIE?

The AIE is the property of the learner and can be used in a number of ways with or without the help of a teacher. Here are some possibilities.

- ▶ A school as a whole decides to offer the AIE to learners and all teachers may help and encourage learners to use it, for example after a class excursion with a geography or history teacher or during/after a trip with a languages teacher.
- ▶ One particular teacher – the learners' class teacher or tutor – helps and encourages a class to use the AIE.
- ▶ A university language centre decides to introduce the AIE as part of a dossier that students keep of their language learning, perhaps linked to the European Language Portfolio.
- ▶ In a youth centre, youth workers suggest that the AIE should be used by young people if there is a clash of ideas and experiences among them.
- ▶ Learners are left to use the AIE whenever they wish, perhaps with help and encouragement from parents (who will need some explanation, such as these "Notes for facilitators").
- ▶ A group of teachers (for example foreign language teachers, teachers of citizenship education, or history or geography specialists) co-ordinate to use the AIE for the exploitation of cross-curricular themes.

There are two versions of the AIE:

- ▶ the "Version for younger learners" for those approximately up to the age range 10 to 12, where the language has been simplified and some complex issues have been omitted;
- ▶ the "Standard version" for all others but, here too, learners are encouraged to make their own choice of which questions they should answer.

The decision about which one to offer to learners in the 10-12 age range is a matter of teachers' judgment of their learners.

What are the responsibilities of teachers and other facilitators?

The AIE is the property of the learner and can be a very private document. This creates some special conditions for teachers who might wish to consider the following options.

- ▶ Teachers only encourage learners to use the AIE as a private diary. They do not see the AIE, unless invited by learners, and they do not oblige learners to use it.
- ▶ Teachers act as "mentors", reading and discussing the AIE with individuals (and the record in this case need not be written; it could be an audio-recording which the learner keeps).
- ▶ Teachers encourage pairs of learners to act as "mentors" for each other. One may be older than the other.
- ▶ The AIE is completed by a whole class of learners in connection with a specific event (such as a class excursion) or it is completed only when the learner wishes.

In all of these and many other circumstances, it is important to assure confidentiality if learners wish.

If teachers intend that learners share their experiences and what they write in their AIE, then learners need to be told this in advance.

Action

The questions which ask learners about actions they have taken or might take as a consequence of the intercultural experience are particularly important. Teachers and other facilitators need to consider whether and how they actively encourage learners to engage in some activity. There are ethical issues here, about whether teachers should take this responsibility or not.

The decision will be for each teacher/facilitator, or group of these, or may be an institutional policy as a whole. The decision will vary from teacher to teacher, from institution to institution and from one education system to another, depending on the traditions and responsibilities which teachers and others usually take.

Practical matters

How to interpret the AIE

If facilitators are acting as mentors helping learners to complete the AIE, they should not treat it as a questionnaire.

- ▶ The questions need not all be used – only those which are useful.
- ▶ Facilitators can interpret/explain/paraphrase the questions, using them as a framework for discussion of an intercultural experience.

How to record the experience

There are two main approaches (but others can be used)

- ▶ Learners write – by hand or computer – in their own words what they want to say (either completely privately or during/after discussion with a teacher or other mentor).
- ▶ Learners and mentors (a facilitator/teacher or another learner – who may be of the same age or older) discuss their experience and make an audio-recording of the conversation, or make an audio-recording at home (perhaps with the help of parents).

Autobiography of intercultural encounters (including theoretical indicators but excluding the “Who I am” task)

The theoretical indicators are the competences which may be required for answering the questions and which may be promoted through answering them.

1. The encounter

Title

Give the encounter a name which says something about it.

Description

What happened when you met this person/these people?

Time

When did it happen?

Location

Where did it happen? What were you doing there?

Was it (please tick one or more):

- ▶ study
- ▶ leisure
- ▶ on holiday
- ▶ at work
- ▶ at school
- ▶ other?

Importance

Competences: openness; analytical and critical thinking skills; knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Why have you chosen this experience?

Was it because (please tick one or more):

- ▶ it made me think about something I had not thought about before
- ▶ it was the first time I had had this kind of experience
- ▶ it was the most recent experience of that kind
- ▶ it surprised me
- ▶ it disappointed me
- ▶ it pleased me
- ▶ it angered me
- ▶ it changed me?

Add any other reactions in your own words and say what you think caused your reaction.

2. The other person or people

Competences: skills of listening and observing; respect

Who else was involved? Give the name of the person or people if you know them.

Write something about them. What was the first thing you noticed about them? What did they look like? What clothes were they wearing?

Competences: skills of listening and observing; respect; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures)

Were they male/female, or older/younger than you, or did they belong to a different nationality or religion or region, or was there something else you think is important about them?

3. Your feelings

Competences: openness; respect; knowledge and critical understanding of the self; analytical and critical thinking skills

Describe how you felt at the time by completing these sentences.

- ▶ My feelings or emotions at the time were ...
- ▶ My thoughts at the time were ...
- ▶ What I did at the time was (For example, did you pretend you had not noticed something that was strange? Did you change the subject of the conversation which had become embarrassing? Did you ask questions about what you found strange?)

4. The other person's feelings

Competences: empathy

Imagine yourself in their position. How do you think the other people felt in the situation at the time? This can be difficult but try and imagine what they felt. Happy or upset/stressed, or something else? How did you know? What do you think they were thinking when all this happened? Do you think they found it strange, or interesting, or something else?

Choose one or more of the options below, or add your own suggestion and say why you have chosen it.

For them it was an everyday experience/an unusual experience/a surprising experience/a shocking experience, because...

Choose one or more of the options below and complete the sentence or add your own ideas.

The other people involved in the experience appeared to have the following feelings – surprise/shock/delight/no particular feelings/...

Competences: skills of listening and observing

I noticed this because of what they did/said and/or how they looked, for example they... (say what you noticed)

I am not sure because they seemed to hide their feelings.

5. Same and different

Competences: empathy; analytical and critical thinking skills; tolerance of ambiguity

Think about the similarities and differences between the ways in which you thought and felt about the situation and the ways in which they thought and felt about it.

Were you aware at the time of any similarities and, if so, what were they?

Were you aware at the time of any differences and, if so, what were they?

Looking back at the situation...

Are you aware now of any other similarities and, if so, what are they?

Are you aware now of any other differences and, if so, what are they?

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self; analytical and critical thinking skills

How do you see your own thoughts, feelings and actions now?

First thoughts:

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures); analytical and critical thinking skills

Choose one or more of the following and complete the sentence, or invent your own.

- ▶ The way I acted in the experience was appropriate because what I did was ...
- ▶ I think I could have acted differently by doing the following ...
- ▶ I think the best reaction from me would have been ...
- ▶ My reaction was good because ...
- ▶ I hid my emotions by ...

6. Talking to each other

Competences: linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; flexibility and adaptability

When you think about how you spoke to or communicated with the other people, do you remember that you made adjustments in how you talked or wrote to them?

First thoughts:

Competences: linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; skills of listening and observing; flexibility and adaptability

For example:

- ▶ I was talking to them in my own language and I noticed I needed to make adjustments to help them understand me, for example ...
- ▶ I was not speaking in my own language and I had to make adjustments to make myself understood – to simplify/to explain using gestures, by explaining a word, by ...
- ▶ I noticed things about how they spoke – that they simplified, that they used gestures, that they spoke more slowly ...

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self; knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

Did you already have any knowledge or previous experience which helped you to communicate better?

First thoughts:

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures)

Further ideas – for example:

- ▶ I already knew things about how people communicate and behave in other groups which helped me to understand the experience and communicate better. I knew, for example, that ...
- ▶ I knew that other people involved in the experience thought and acted differently because of what they had learnt as children, for example ...

7. Finding out more

Competences: autonomous learning skills

There may have been things in the experience which puzzled you and you tried to find out more at the time. If you did so, how did you do it?

If you have found out an answer since, how did you do it?

For example:

- ▶ There were things I did not understand, so I tried to find out by asking questions at the time/reading about it/looking on the internet/asking questions ...
- ▶ I used the following sources for information ...
- ▶ When finding new information, I noticed the following similarities and differences with things I know from my own society ...
- ▶ The following things still puzzle me ...

8. Using comparisons to understand

Competences: analytical and critical thinking skills; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures)

People often compare things in other groups or cultures with similar things in their own. Did you do this? Did it help you to understand what was happening?

For example:

- ▶ The experience involved some things which were similar to what I know in my own group and these are the things I noticed ...
- ▶ There were some things which were different from my own group ...

9. Thinking back and looking forward

Competences: analytical and critical thinking skills; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures); knowledge and critical understanding of the self

If, when you look back, you draw conclusions about the experience, what are they?

Competences: valuing human dignity and human rights; valuing cultural diversity; analytical and critical thinking skills

Complete as many of these as you can.

- ▶ I liked the experience for the following reasons ...
- ▶ I disliked the experience for the following reasons ...
- ▶ There were some things which I approve of and these are my reasons ...
- ▶ There were some things which I disapprove of and these are my reasons ...

Competences: empathy; tolerance of ambiguity

Try to imagine that you are telling someone you know well about all this. It could be your brother or sister, for example. Do you think they would have the same opinions as you? Would they approve and disapprove of the same things for the same reasons?

Competences: empathy; tolerance of ambiguity; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures)

Try to think about why people you know well and who belong to the same group(s) as you (same family, same religion, same country, same region, etc.) might have the same reactions, and write your explanation here.

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Did the experience change you? How?

Competences: civic-mindedness

Did you decide to do something as a result of this experience? What did you do?

Will you decide to do something as a result of doing this AIE? If so, what?

Autobiography of intercultural encounters

Version for younger learners

Introductory exercise

The following exercise can be used to explain the notion of an intercultural encounter to a child before the AIE is used for the first time. However, this exercise does not have to be used if the teacher has alternative ways of explaining this notion to them, or if the child has completed the AIE on a previous occasion and already understands what is involved.

In addition, this introductory exercise could be used:

- ▶ in a session with the whole class before individual children are then interviewed;
- ▶ on its own as a self-contained activity, if the teacher judges that this would be useful.

The following text can be paraphrased rather than read verbatim.

How many people have you met and spoken to today? Were you meeting any of these people for the first time? If you haven't met anyone new today, you probably will tomorrow because, if you think about it, you are meeting new people all the time. These people may be adults, a new teacher, a friend of your parents or someone serving you in a shop. Or they may be children like yourself, a new child in the class, someone you meet in a playground or a friend you make on holiday.

When you meet new people you probably start to notice things about them straightaway. What do they look like? What do they sound like? Where do they come from? Do you like them or not? Are they people you can trust or are you afraid of them? Are they like you or different from you? Are they like anyone else you know? Are they easy to talk to? Would you like to get to know them better or not? These people will also start to notice things about you.

Here are some examples of people meeting for the first time.

Show the child the pictures which are provided with the younger learners' version of the Autobiography. If these pictures are either unclear or inappropriate for use in your own country or local area, please feel free to choose or create your own pictures instead that are more relevant to your own local context. Any text which is included in the pictures which are used should be translated into the language which is spoken by the child.

Choose one or two of these pictures and think about the following questions.

- ▶ What do you think will be the first thing they notice about each other?
- ▶ Do you think they will notice something different about each other or something the same?
- ▶ Do you think they are happy to meet each other or not? Why do you think that?
- ▶ Are they going to find each other easy to talk to? What might they talk about?
- ▶ Do you think they will make friends or not? Why do you think that?

If this introductory exercise is being used to explain the notion of an intercultural encounter to a child before the AIE is used for the first time, finish the exercise with the following text.

Now it's your turn to remember a time when you met someone who was different from yourself in some way. Think carefully about the meeting, where you met, what happened, what you thought and what your feelings were.

OK, have you thought of a time when you met someone who was different from yourself?

Autobiography of intercultural encounters

Version for younger learners

Oral format

For use with children who need help from an adult in thinking back over their encounter.

The theoretical indicators are the competences which may be required for answering the questions and which may be promoted through answering them.

If the introductory exercise explaining the idea of an intercultural encounter to the child is not used, this opening text can be used instead.

Can you remember a time when you met someone who was different from yourself in some way? This could be someone from another country or someone from another place in [the child's country], or it could be someone who has a different religion from you or someone who speaks a different language. Think carefully about the meeting, where you met and what happened.

OK, have you thought of a time when you met someone who was different from yourself?

1. Description of the encounter

Display text card – “The meeting”

Competences: skills of listening and observing; openness; respect

I'm really interested in hearing all about what happened when you met this person/these people. Tell me everything that happened.

If the child only gives a short answer or gets stuck, encourage her/him by using one or more of the following prompts.

- ▶ What else can you tell me?
- ▶ Tell me a little bit more.
- ▶ And then what happened?

2. Location of the encounter

Where did this happen?

What were you doing there?

3. Description of the other person

Display text card – “The other person”

Competences: skills of listening and observing; respect

Can you tell me more about [the other person/people]? Who were they?

What was the first thing you noticed about them?

What else did you notice about them?

Can you tell me anything else about them?

What was her name?/What was his name?/What were their names?

What did they look like?

What clothes were they wearing?

Were they wearing anything else like jewellery?

If yes: What sort of things?

Have you seen other people like her/him/them before?

If yes: Where?

If yes: In what ways were they like her/him/them?

4. Communicative aspects of the encounter

Display text card – “Talking to each other”

Competences: skills of listening and observing; linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

How did they talk to you?

Was it easy for you to understand them?

If yes: How come?

If no: Why not?

How did you talk to them?

Was it easy for them to understand you?

If yes: How come?

If no: Why not?

Competences: linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; flexibility and adaptability

Did you have to change the way you usually talk?

If yes: How did you change the way you talk?

Did you find any other way, like signing to them with your hands, to help them understand you?

If yes: What did you do?

Did they do any signing to you with their hands, to help you understand them?

If yes: What did they do?

5. The child's own reactions

Display text card – “Your feelings”

Competences: openness; respect; knowledge and critical understanding of the self; valuing human dignity and human rights; valuing cultural diversity

What did you think when all this happened?

Prompt if necessary: Did you find it strange or interesting or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

How did you feel at the time?

Prompt if necessary: Did you enjoy it or feel at all upset or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

How did you feel about [the other person/people]?

Prompt if necessary: Did you like them or not like them or feel something else towards them?

Why?/What makes you say that?

Would you like to see [the other person/people] again?

If yes: Why would you like to see them again?

If no: Why wouldn't you like to see them again?

6. The child's perceptions of the other person's reactions

Display text card – "The other person's feelings"

Competences: empathy

How do you think [the other person/people] felt at the time?

Prompt if necessary: Do you think she/he/they felt happy or at all upset or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

What do you think they were thinking when all this happened?

Prompt if necessary: Do you think they found it strange or interesting or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

What do you think they felt about you?

Prompt if necessary: Do you think they liked you or didn't like you or felt something else towards you?

Why?/What makes you say that?

Do you think they would ever like to see you again?

Why?/Why not?

7. Comparing perspectives of self and other

Display text card – "Same and different"

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self; empathy; analytical and critical thinking skills; respect; tolerance of ambiguity; valuing cultural diversity

[Omit this question if the answer is obvious from preceding questions] Do you think that you and [the other person/people] felt the same way when you met?

Why?/What makes you say that?

[Omit this question if the answer is obvious from preceding questions] Do you think that you and [the other person/people] felt differently about anything when you met?

Why?/What makes you say that?

Do you think there is anything that you could learn from them?

If yes: What sort of things?

Prompt if necessary: What about the way they speak, the way they dress or something else about them?

Do you think there is anything that they could learn from you?

If yes: What sort of things?

Prompt if necessary: What about the way you speak, the things you do or something else about you?

8. Reflecting on the experience of the meeting as a whole

Display text card – "Thinking a bit more"

Competences: analytical and critical thinking skills; knowledge and critical understanding of the self; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures); valuing cultural diversity

If you had to tell a friend about your meeting with [the other person/people], what would you say?

What do you think you have learnt or discovered from meeting [the other person/people]?

If you met them again and you had to spend an afternoon together, what sort of things do you think you would do together?

If you met them again, is there anything that you would like to tell them about yourself?

Competences: flexibility and adaptability

If you met them again, would you do anything different from last time?

If yes: What sort of things would you do differently?

If no: Why wouldn't you do anything differently?

Competences: autonomous learning skills

If you met them again, is there anything you would like to ask them?

If yes: What sort of things would you like to ask them?

If you wanted to find out more about them in the meantime, what would you do?

[If they say they would ask someone for information] Who would you ask? What sort of questions would you ask?

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Do you think meeting [the other person/people] has changed you in any way?

If yes: How has it changed you?

If no: Are you sure?

Competences: civic-mindedness

Do you think meeting [the other person/people] has made you do anything which you wouldn't have done if you hadn't met them?

If yes: What did it make you do?

If no: Are you sure?

Competences: civic-mindedness

Do you think you will do anything as a result of you and me having this talk?

Autobiography of intercultural encounters
Version for younger learners
Written format

This version is for use with older children who may wish or prefer to write about their intercultural experience. In this case, the following list of questions may be used. It is important to remind the children that they do not have to answer every question.

Name:

Title: Encounter with.....

What can you remember about the place where you met this person and what happened when you met?

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Write down everything you can remember about the person you met, what they looked like and what they were wearing?

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Was it easy for you and the other person to understand each other? How did you communicate with each other?

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How did you feel about meeting this other person at the time?

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How do you think the other person felt about meeting with you?

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Do you think there is anything you and the other person could learn from each other?

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What do you think you learnt or discovered from the meeting?

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If you met the person again is there anything more you would like to ask them or anything else you would tell them about yourself?

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Autobiography of intercultural encounters

Version for younger learners

Notes for facilitators

What is the Autobiography of intercultural encounters?

The AIE has been designed to help children analyse a specific intercultural encounter which they themselves have experienced, by answering a sequence of questions about various aspects of that encounter.

An intercultural encounter is an experience in which individuals from different cultural backgrounds meet. The experience which a child talks about could be one where he or she met a person from a different country, a person from a different region within the same country or a person who speaks a different language from themselves. Or it could be an experience in which the child met someone from a different ethnic group or someone with a different religion from their own.

The intercultural experience which some children choose to talk about might be a relatively profound one which led to an awakening of their awareness of cultural difference. Some of the more complex questions in the AIE have been designed with this possibility in mind. However, other learners may choose a much more mundane experience (such as buying a loaf of bread in a shop in a foreign country or an occasion on which a foreigner asked them for directions in the street). With the latter type of experience, some questions in the AIE may be redundant and should simply be omitted if they are not relevant.

There are two versions of the AIE:

- ▶ the present version for younger learners, where the language has been simplified and some of the more complex issues have been omitted;
- ▶ the standard version, which is intended for use by older learners.

The decision about which one to offer to learners is a matter of teachers' judgment of their learners.

There are two related purposes for the AIE:

- ▶ self-evaluation, which means that it can be used to guide learners to evaluate their own responses to a specific encounter; if used repeatedly over time, they can look back at different encounters and how they evaluated them and thus learn about themselves;
- ▶ teaching and learning, which means teachers can use the AIE as a means of stimulating reflection and analysis, and can thus facilitate learning in deliberate ways.

How and when to use the AIE

There are no fixed rules about how the AIE should be used. It can be used formally in the classroom and also informally at a time and place of the learner's own choice.

It can be used as a teaching instrument working with groups or individuals, led by a teacher – the teaching and learning option. With older children, it can also be used privately as a kind of diary which may remain confidential – the self-evaluation option.

It can also be used by the teacher, a classroom assistant or another responsible adult to interview children individually about a specific intercultural encounter which they have experienced – again, as a teaching and learning option.

The use will depend on one or more factors:

- ▶ whether and how the AIE is being incorporated into a course of study;
- ▶ the wishes of the learner about confidentiality;
- ▶ the age of the learners and whether they need an adult's help to understand the phrasing and concepts of the AIE;
- ▶ the literacy level of the learners – whether they are able to write their answers for themselves or whether it is more appropriate for them to give their answers in an interview with an adult, either one-to-one or in groups.

Young learners may use the AIE differently over time. They may initially share their responses to the current AIE in an interview with an adult, use the response sheets provided with the younger learners' version as they develop their reading and writing skills, and eventually progress to the standard version as they grow in maturity.

Using the AIE in a flexible way

It is important to note that the AIE can be adapted and used in whatever way is judged to be the most helpful and appropriate for the learners who are going to use it, as the following examples suggest.

- ▶ It is not always necessary to ask all of the questions and suggestions which have been included in the AIE. Only those questions and suggestions which are helpful or relevant to the particular encounter which is being discussed need be asked.
- ▶ In addition, the precise wording of individual questions can be varied and adapted in order to make the questions sound natural in the language which is being used.
- ▶ The style of the questions can also be adjusted to make them sound closer to the spontaneous language of the child who is being interviewed.
- ▶ Additional follow-up questions can also be asked if they are appropriate for the particular encounter which is being discussed.

The most important feature of the AIE is the sequencing of the section headings and of the main questions within each section, rather than the precise wording of any individual questions.

Here are some possible scenarios where the AIE might be used:

After a school holiday

After a school holiday, when learners may have been away from home – perhaps to another country, to another region of their own country or at a school camp – the AIE can be used with primary/elementary school learners to encourage them to reflect upon a specific experience which they have had while on holiday. In the case of these learners, they may be interviewed individually either by their teacher or by a classroom assistant.

After a school trip

Schools often organise visits to other regions of the same country or to other countries. Often they prepare the learners for this very carefully, but it is just as important to facilitate their reflections after the event. Each learner in a group will have had some particular experience or encounter even though they have all been on the same trip, and the AIE can help to individualise the follow-up and reflection. After each individual has completed the AIE, they may be willing to share their encounter with others in the group and, with the help of a teacher, think about the variety of experience rather than over-generalise their individual experience.

After a major event

After a major event such as learners witnessing an exchange of racial abuse, the AIE can be used as a tool for analysis of learners' reactions. This may be in a classroom and led by a teacher or it may be private use encouraged by a teacher with the option of keeping it confidential or showing it to others.

After an encounter with another cultural group

There may be occasions (such as a school visit to a place of worship or a shared activity between schools in a twinning arrangement) where the intercultural meeting was between groups rather than individuals. In such a situation, a group discussion involving the entire class might be a useful forum for talking about the experience and for articulating and sharing ideas.

But it can also be used in any other scenarios of intercultural encounters.

In the case of younger learners, an adult (either a teacher or a classroom assistant) can use the present version of the AIE to interview the child individually on a one-to-one basis. The person interviewing the child could take notes on what the child says during the interview or could record the interview for transcription later. When the AIE is used in this way, it is recommended that:

- ▶ the interview should not be hurried;
- ▶ silences and long pauses in the child's reporting should be tolerated to give the child time to think about the encounter which is being described;
- ▶ questions should be omitted if the information has already been given or if the question is irrelevant to the encounter;
- ▶ questions may be paraphrased as appropriate for the encounter;
- ▶ the interviewer should follow up anything of interest which the child reports;
- ▶ the text cards which are provided with the younger learners' version of the AIE (displaying the words that describe the successive sections of the AIE) may be used to structure the conversation into its various parts for the child;
- ▶ the pictures which are provided with the younger learners' version of the AIE may be used together with the introductory text for explaining the idea of an intercultural encounter to the child, if it is judged that this would be useful for helping the child understand what is required in the AIE;
- ▶ alternatively, the facilitator may use other pictures not provided with the AIE to explain the idea of an intercultural encounter and to stimulate discussion with younger learners about these encounters.

Some of the questions in the AIE may be difficult for young children to answer. This is particularly the case with the questions which ask children to talk about their own feelings and about the thoughts and feelings of the person or people they have met. The interviewer should not worry if a child, even with the suggested prompting, finds it difficult to articulate responses to these questions. The challenge presented by these questions is intended to encourage the development of the child's thinking.

In addition to one-to-one interviewing, the younger learners' version of the AIE can be used in a variety of other ways. For example:

- ▶ children could discuss their answers to the various questions with each other in pairs;
- ▶ the AIE could be used collectively with the whole class in a group discussion;
- ▶ if children find it difficult to express their feelings using language, they could be given additional materials (such as drawings, coloured pencils or puppets) to help them express the way that either they or the other people felt during the encounter;
- ▶ children who have acquired the necessary reading and writing skills could complete the AIE on their own, using the response sheets which are provided with the younger learners' version.

Teachers should feel free to use the AIE in whichever way they feel works best.

What is the rationale behind the AIE?

There are three ideas behind the AIE:

- ▶ that a special or "rare" event in someone's life can have a lasting effect on them;
- ▶ that a tool for helping people to think about their experiences, especially "rare events", can make them more meaningful;
- ▶ that changes are not always "incremental" and people sometimes become more intercultural and sometimes less as a result of their experiences.

The make-up of the AIE – the particular questions and the order in which they are put – is derived from a model of intercultural competence with a number of identifiable elements. The younger learners' version of the AIE encourages children to think about their intercultural competence in relation to these elements, but without any reference to the technical terms.

Teachers, however, will be able to help learners if they know what lies behind the questions and what the elements are. They are summarised here and, at the end of these notes, the younger learners' version of the AIE is presented with the links from each question to the elements made clear.

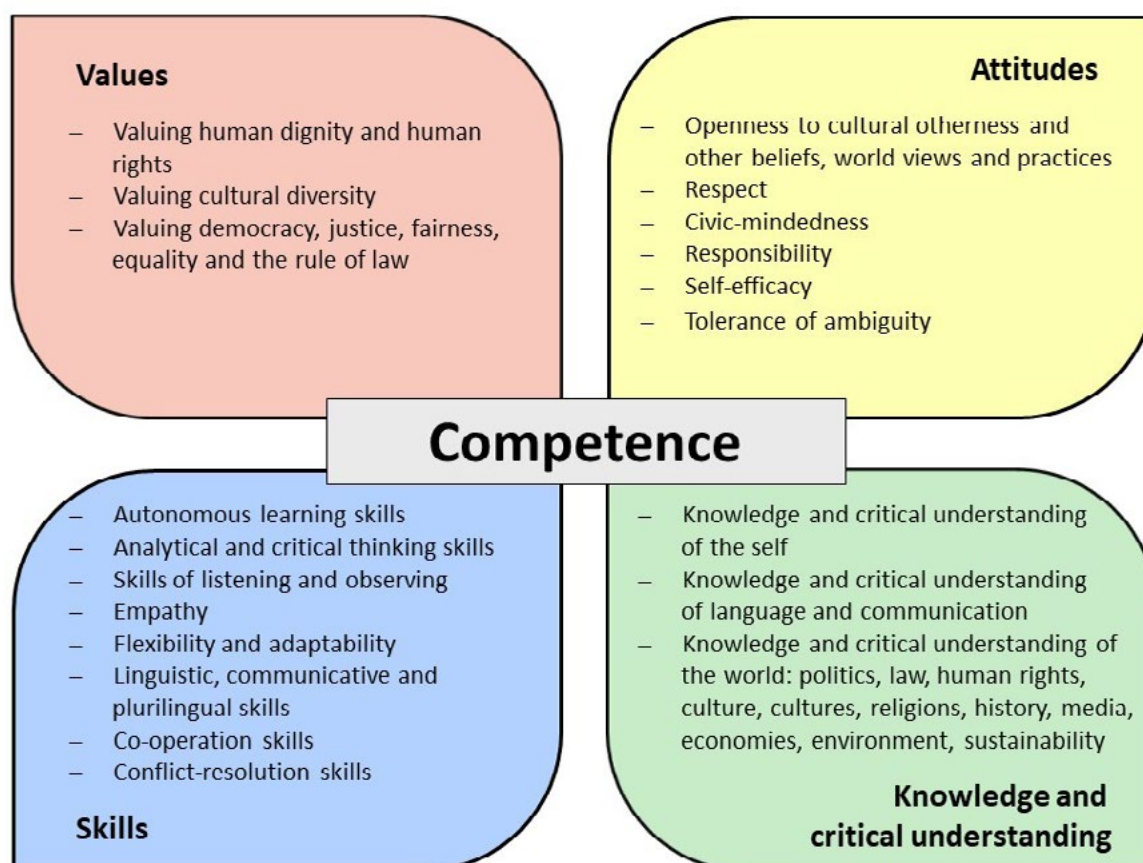
The model of intercultural competence²

The RFCDC provides a comprehensive description of the competences that an individual needs in order to:

- ▶ promote and protect human rights;
- ▶ act as a responsible democratic citizen;
- ▶ comprehend and appreciate the perspectives and world views of those who have different cultural affiliations from themselves;
- ▶ engage in respectful intercultural dialogue.

The third and fourth purposes are, of course, directly relevant to participating successfully in intercultural encounters. The full set of competences required for all four purposes are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The full set of competences specified by the RFCDC



Fifteen of the 20 competences in Figure 1 are required to engage appropriately, effectively and respectfully in intercultural encounters. These are as follows.

². Facilitators who are familiar with the first edition of the AIE should note that the terminology in this section has been amended.

Values

Valuing human dignity and human rights

This value is based on the 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.

Valuing cultural diversity

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

Attitudes

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

This attitude involves sensitivity towards, curiosity about and willingness to engage with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or with beliefs, world views and practices which differ from one's own.

Respect

Respect means positive regard and esteem for someone or something based on the judgment that they have intrinsic importance, worth or value.

Civic-mindedness

This is an attitude towards a community to which one belongs that is larger than one's immediate circle of family and friends, involving a sense of belonging and solidarity, and a willingness to undertake action with the aim of making a contribution to the common good.

Tolerance of ambiguity

This is an attitude towards situations that are uncertain and subject to multiple conflicting interpretations, which involves evaluating such situations positively and dealing with them constructively.

Skills

Autonomous learning skills

These 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.

Analytical and critical thinking skills

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

Skills of listening and observing

These 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

These are the 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

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

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

These are the skills required to communicate effectively and appropriately with people who speak the same or another language.

Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

This refers to 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

This is knowledge and critical understanding of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions that operate in the language(s) which one speaks and of the effects that different communication styles can have on other people.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures)

This is knowledge and critical understanding of how people's cultural affiliations shape their world views, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours, of how all cultural groups are internally heterogeneous and contain individuals who dispute traditional cultural beliefs and practices, and of the specific beliefs, practices and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural affiliations.

What are the ethical issues?

The AIE follows the ideas in this model by encouraging learners to think about their attitudes, behaviour, knowledge/skills and the action they could take. In some circumstances (see possible scenarios in "How and when to use the AIE"), teachers may wish to use the questions to stimulate learners to think more deeply and critically about their experiences. They may, in particular, wish to stimulate learners to become involved with others in making changes in themselves and their environment.

Ethical issues may also arise when the AIE is used, especially if the learner expresses negativity or hostility towards the "other" in the encounter, or reports an encounter that was upsetting for him or her personally. Extreme negativity will need to be followed up at a later time. However, milder negative reactions may eventually assist the child to learn through the use of the AIE to welcome intercultural differences (or at least to accept them).

A detailed treatment of the ethical issues which could arise is beyond the scope of these notes. However, it may be useful for facilitators to be aware of the following resources for dealing with racism and intolerance towards others.

Byram M., Porto M. and Wagner M. (2021), "Ethical issues in teaching for intercultural citizenship in world/foreign language education", *TESOL Quarterly* 55 (1), 308-321, doi: 10.1002/tesq.3008.

Council of Europe (2004), *DOMINO – A manual to use peer group education as a means to fight racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance* (3rd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16807023ce>.

Council of Europe (2009), *COMPASITO – Manual on human rights education for children* (2nd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/pdf/Compasito%20EN.pdf>.

Council of Europe (2010), *Growing up in democracy: Lesson plans for primary level on democratic citizenship and human rights* (EDC/HRE Volume II), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

Council of Europe (2016), *All different, all equal – Education pack: Ideas, resources, methods and activities for informal intercultural education with young people and adults* (3rd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680700aac>.

Council of Europe (2020), *COMPASS – Manual for human rights education with young people* (2nd edn), Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/compass-eng-rev-2020-web/1680a08e40>.

Who can use the AIE?

The AIE can be used in a number of ways, with or without the help of a teacher. Here are some possibilities.

- ▶ A school as a whole decides to offer the AIE to learners and all teachers may help and encourage learners to use it, for example after a class excursion with a geography or history teacher, or during/after a trip with a languages teacher.
- ▶ One particular teacher – the learners' class teacher or tutor – helps and encourages a class to use the AIE.

- ▶ Older learners are left to use the AIE whenever they wish, perhaps with help and encouragement from parents (who will need some explanation such as these “Notes for facilitators”).
- ▶ A group of teachers (for example, foreign language, education for citizenship, history and geography specialists) co-ordinate to use the AIE for the exploitation of cross-curricular themes.

What are the responsibilities of teachers and other facilitators?

When it is completed by a learner working on their own, the AIE is the property of the learner and can be a very private document. This creates some special conditions for teachers who might wish to consider the following options.

- ▶ Teachers only encourage older learners to use the AIE as a private diary. They do not see the AIE, unless invited by learners, and they do not oblige learners to use it.
- ▶ Teachers act as “mentors”, reading and discussing the AIE with individuals (and the record in this case need not be written – it could be an audio-recording which the learner keeps).
- ▶ Teachers encourage pairs of older learners to act as “mentors” for each other.
- ▶ The AIE is completed by a whole class of learners in connection with a specific event (such as a class excursion) or it is completed only when the learner wishes.

In all of these and many other circumstances, it is important to assure confidentiality if learners wish. If teachers intend that learners should share their experiences and what they write in their AIE, then learners need to be told this in advance.

Action

The questions which ask learners about actions they have taken or might take as a consequence of the inter-cultural experience are particularly important. Teachers and other facilitators need to consider whether and how they actively encourage learners to engage in some activity. There are further ethical issues here, about whether teachers should take this responsibility or not.

The decision will be for each teacher/facilitator, or group of these, or may be an institutional policy as a whole. The decision will vary from teacher to teacher, from institution to institution and from one education system to another, depending on the traditions and responsibilities which teachers and others usually take.

It is recommended that teachers complete the “Standard version” of the AIE themselves before using the “Version for younger learners” with their class.

Autobiography of intercultural encounters
Version for younger learners
Oral format
(including theoretical indicators)

For use with children who need help from an adult in thinking back over their encounter.

The theoretical indicators are the competences which may be required for answering the questions and which may be promoted through answering them.

If the introductory exercise explaining the idea of an intercultural encounter to the child is not used, this opening text can be used.

Can you remember a time when you met someone who was different from yourself in some way? This could be someone from another country or someone from another place in [the child's country]. Or it could be someone who has a different religion from you or someone who speaks a different language. Think carefully about the meeting, where you met and what happened.

OK, have you thought of a time when you met someone who was different from yourself?

1. Description of the encounter

Display text card – “The meeting”

Competences: skills of listening and observing; openness; respect

I'm really interested in hearing all about what happened when you met this person/these people. Tell me everything that happened.

If the child only gives a short answer or gets stuck, encourage her/him by using one or more of the following prompts.

What else can you tell me?

Tell me a little bit more.

And then what happened?

2. Location of the encounter

Where did this happen?

What were you doing there?

3. Description of the other person

Display text card – “The other person”

Competences: skills of listening and observing; respect

Can you tell me more about [the other person/people]? Who were they?

What was the first thing you noticed about them?

What else did you notice about them?

Can you tell me anything else about them?

What was her name?/What was his name?/What were their names?

What did they look like?

What clothes were they wearing?

Were they wearing anything else like jewellery?

If yes: What sort of things?

Have you seen other people like her/him/them before?

If yes: Where?

If yes: In what ways were they like her/him/them?

4. Communicative aspects of the encounter

Display text card – “Talking to each other”

Competences: skills of listening and observing; linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

How did they talk to you?

Was it easy for you to understand them?

If yes: How come?

If no: Why not?

How did you talk to them?

Was it easy for them to understand you?

If yes: How come?

If no: Why not?

Competences: linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills; flexibility and adaptability

Did you have to change the way you usually talk?

If yes: How did you change the way you talk?

Did you find any other way, like signing to them with your hands, to help them understand you?

If yes: What did you do?

Did they do any signing to you with their hands, to help you understand them?

If yes: What did they do?

5. The child's own reactions

Display text card – “Your feelings”

Competences: openness; respect; knowledge and critical understanding of the self; valuing human dignity and human rights; valuing cultural diversity

What did you think when all this happened?

Prompt if necessary: Did you find it strange or interesting or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

How did you feel at the time?

Prompt if necessary: Did you enjoy it or feel at all upset or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

How did you feel about [the other person/people]?

Prompt if necessary: Did you like them or not like them or feel something else towards them?

Why?/What makes you say that?

Would you like to see [the other person/people] again?

If yes: Why would you like to see them again?

If no: Why wouldn't you like to see them again?

6. The child's perceptions of the other person's reactions

Display text card – "The other person's feelings"

Competences: empathy

How do you think [the other person/people] felt at the time?

Prompt if necessary: Do you think she/he/they felt happy, or at all upset or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

What do you think they were thinking when all this happened?

Prompt if necessary: Do you think they found it strange, or interesting or something else?

Why?/What makes you say that?

What do you think they felt about you?

Prompt if necessary: Do you think they liked you or didn't like you or felt something else towards you?

Why?/What makes you say that?

Do you think they would ever like to see you again?

Why?/Why not?

7. Comparing perspectives of self and other

Display text card – "Same and different"

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self; empathy; analytical and critical thinking skills; respect; tolerance of ambiguity; valuing cultural diversity

[Omit this question if answer is obvious from preceding questions] Do you think that you and [the other person/people] felt the same way when you met?

Why?/What makes you say that?

[Omit this question if answer is obvious from preceding questions] Do you think that you and [the other person/people] felt differently about anything when you met?

Why?/What makes you say that?

Do you think there is anything that you could learn from them?

If yes: What sort of things?

Prompt if necessary: What about the way they speak, the way they dress or something else about them?

Do you think there is anything that they could learn from you?

If yes: What sort of things?

Prompt if necessary: What about the way you speak, the things you do or something else about yourself?

8. Reflecting on the experience of the meeting as a whole

Display text card – "Thinking a bit more"

Competences: analytical and critical thinking skills; knowledge and critical understanding of the self; knowledge and critical understanding of the world (culture and cultures); valuing cultural diversity

If you had to tell a friend about your meeting with [the other person/people], what would you say?

What do you think you have learnt or discovered from meeting [the other person/people]?

If you met them again and you had to spend an afternoon together, what sort of things do you think you would do together?

If you met them again, is there anything that you would like to tell them about yourself?

Competences: flexibility and adaptability

If you met them again, would you do anything different from last time?

If yes: What sort of things would you do differently?

If no: Why wouldn't you do anything differently?

Competences: autonomous learning skills

If you met them again, is there anything you would like to ask them?

If yes: What sort of things would you like to ask them?

If you wanted to find out more about them in the meantime, what would you do?

If they say they would ask someone for information: Who would you ask? What sort of questions would you ask?

Competences: knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Do you think meeting [the other person/people] has changed you in any way?

If yes: How has it changed you?

If no: Are you sure?

Competences: civic-mindedness

Do you think meeting [the other person/people] has made you do anything which you wouldn't have done if you hadn't met them?

If yes: What did it make you do?

If no: Are you sure?

Competences: civic-mindedness

Do you think you will do anything as a result of you and me having this talk?

Autobiography of intercultural encounters
Version for younger learners
Written format

For use with older children who may wish or prefer to write about their intercultural experience. In this case, the following list of questions may be used. It is important to remind the children that they do not have to answer every question.

Name:

Title: Encounter with.....

What can you remember about the place where you met this person and what happened when you met?

.....

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.....

Write down everything you can remember about the person you met, what they looked like and what they were wearing?

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Was it easy for you and the other person to understand each other? How did you communicate with each other?

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How did you feel about meeting this other person at the time?

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How do you think the other person felt about meeting with you?

Do you think there is anything you and the other person could learn from each other?

What do you think you learnt or discovered from the meeting?

If you met the person again is there anything more you would like to ask them or anything else you would tell them about yourself?

Picture cards to introduce younger learners to the idea of an encounter with someone different

Verbal descriptions of pictures

Park (differences depicted: clothes; ethnicity)

Children's playground – two girls (aged about 7) on a swing, one in traditional Somali dress and one in western clothes.

Waiting room (differences depicted: clothes; religion; gender; children/adults; children/parents)

Doctor's waiting room – mother in niqab with a small child (aged about 4) sitting next to western-dressed father with a small child of same age.

Holiday beach (differences depicted: nationality; interests)

Two boys (aged about 10) on a holiday beach both holding a ball – one with a thought bubble including a couple of scenes from his Scandinavian home life (including winter sport); the other with a thought bubble including scenes from Mediterranean home life (including water sport).

Front door (differences depicted: ethnicity; adult)

A boy (aged about 7) of African origin opening a door to a (white) plumber.

Computer conversation in two homes (differences depicted: urban/rural; gender)

A split image – on one side a girl (aged about 10) in front of a computer with a view of a city scene through the window as background, on the other a boy of the same age with view of a rural scene through the window.

Living room (differences depicted: clothes; religion; ethnicity)

A white girl in western dress with a Hindu friend (both aged about 10) in the living room of the Hindu friend eating Indian food – Hindu family shrine in the corner.

Street (differences depicted: clothes; religion)

A white Jewish boy wearing a skull cap, smart white shirt and trousers, with long curling side-locks of hair and with tzitzit (tassels) hanging from underneath his shirt at the sides of his waist, talking to a white boy wearing casual clothes and trainers (both aged about 7).



Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters
for younger learners • Picture cards



Illustration: Yves Hildemann

park



Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters
for younger learners • Picture cards



Illustration: Yves Hildemann

waiting room



holiday beach



front door



Illustration: Nina Madsen

computer conversation in two homes



Illustration: Nina Madsen

living room



street

Text cards to structure the discussion with younger learners

Words displayed on the text cards

- ▶ the meeting
- ▶ the other person
- ▶ talking to each other
- ▶ your feelings
- ▶ the other person's feelings
- ▶ same and different
- ▶ thinking a bit more



Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters
for younger learners • text cards

the meeting



Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters
for younger learners • text cards

the other person





talking to
each other



your feelings





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the other person's feelings



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same and different





thinking
a bit more

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In the contemporary world, encounters with people from other cultural backgrounds have become part of our everyday lives. These intercultural encounters may be used as an opportunity to learn about other cultures, to develop our capacities for effective and respectful communication, to think about our own cultural affiliations and to reflect on ways in which we might take action for the common good.

The *Autobiography of intercultural encounters* (AIE) is an educational resource that can be used by learners to achieve all of these outcomes. It supports learners in thinking about and learning from intercultural encounters that they have experienced either face to face, through visual media (such as television, films, magazines), or through the internet.

The present volume contains an updated and revised edition of the original AIE, which supports learners' reflections on face-to-face intercultural encounters. There are two versions of the AIE: a standard version for those who can complete it and a younger learners' version for use by children who need support from an adult in thinking about intercultural encounters. Both versions are accompanied by notes for facilitators which explain in detail how the AIE may be used. These new editions have been fully updated and aligned with the Council of Europe's *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* and may be used by educators and learners in primary, secondary and higher education and in non-formal and informal education.

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978-92-871-9205-9
€32/US\$64

