DESCRIPTORS OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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Council of Europe

Contents

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Introduction

This document introduces the descriptors of competences for democratic culture validated for work with children below 10 years of age. This set of descriptors is associated with the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC).

The model of competences for democratic culture includes values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding and is described in Volume 1 of the RFCDC and in the dedicated section of the RFCDC website. Readers of this document must first be acquainted with the competences for democratic culture (CDC) model and understand its use in relation to the other components of the RFCDC as well.

The RFCDC also includes descriptors of competence for each of the 20 elements of the CDC model, validated for learners of any age above 10. As indicated in Volume 1 of the RFCDC, the descriptors of competences have an essential role in supporting the development of CDC in learners. The descriptors provide:

- ▶ references for educators which can help them to design, implement and evaluate educational interventions, in formal and non-formal settings;
- ▶ references for the assessment of learners on each of the competences, with a view to identifying their learning needs and areas for further development.

Thus, descriptors help to operationalise the competences and provide important and useful tools for curriculum planning, teaching and learning, and assessment.

Competence descriptors are statements that describe observable behaviours which indicate that the person concerned has achieved a certain level of proficiency with regard to a competence. In order for descriptors to be relevant for curriculum planning, teaching and learning, and assessment, they are formulated using the language of learning outcomes.

The following criteria were used to formulate the descriptors for the RFCDC.

- ▶ **Wording** – Descriptors had to be formulated using the language of learning outcomes, starting with one unambiguous action verb and describing an observable behaviour connected with a learning achievement.
- ▶ **Brevity** – Descriptors had to be short rather than long, ideally no longer than about 25 words.

► **Positivity –** Each descriptor had to express ability in terms of a positive statement (e.g. can, expresses, supports), not a negative statement (e.g. cannot, fails to, has limited).

► **Clarity** – Each descriptor had to be transparent and not jargon-laden, and written using relatively simple grammar.

► **Independence** – Each descriptor had to be independent of all the other descriptors. In other words, each descriptor could not have meaning only relative to other descriptors in the set. For this reason, the descriptors avoided using the same statement multiple times to form a set by simply substituting a qualifying word or phrase across the statements (e.g. poor/moderate/good, a few/some/many/most, fairly broad/very broad) which would have meant that the items were not independent of each other.

► **Definiteness** – Each descriptor also needed to describe concrete behaviours or achievements which would indicate whether or not the relevant value/attitude/skill/knowledge/understanding had been mastered by an individual.

Using these criteria, based on a piloting process involving over 3 000 educational practitioners from across Europe, a set of 447 validated descriptors was identified, together with a smaller subset of 135 key descriptors that were judged to be especially useful for indexing the achievement of the 20 competences contained in the CDC model. However, for practical reasons related to the requirements of the statistical processing used to scale the descriptors, the piloting was done exclusively for learners over 10 years of age. Although there is obviously a high degree of variability among different age groups in terms of proficiency, there are also many similarities among learners over 10 years old, which differentiate them from younger learners. These refer, among others, to literacy, understanding of abstract concepts, or awareness and knowledge regarding society and the world in general.

A separate set of descriptors for younger children

The fact that the 447 descriptors have not been proven valid for younger learners does not mean that competences for democratic culture are not relevant for children under 10. On the contrary, there is rich scientific and practical evidence showing that children under 10 years of age can acquire and use such competences. It was therefore necessary to proceed with the identification of descriptors validated for children under 10.

Several aspects were taken as a starting point for this process.

► The same criteria as the ones used for developing the descriptors for older learners must also be used for developing the younger learners' descriptors.

► As in the case of the initial set of descriptors, both solid and up-to-date theoretical references and a consistent validation in practice are necessary.

► The specificity of the age needs to be taken into account, especially with regards to the fast evolution of competences and to the wide variability in terms of age and speed of new acquisitions.

Therefore, considering the above aspects, as well as practical reasons and reasons related to logical continuity, the process of identifying suitable descriptors for children under 10 started from the initial list of 447 validated descriptors. This also had the advantage that only descriptors clearly related to the competence they are associated with were included, taking into account the fact that the process which led to the validation of the descriptors already covered this aspect.

On this basis, a process in several stages was designed and implemented, including:

► identification of a preliminary list of potential descriptors by removing from the list of 447 descriptors any which obviously do not correspond to children under 10;

► consultation with a group of education practitioners in order to gather preliminary feedback on the relevance for children of these CDC descriptors and to encourage suggestions for developing further descriptors;

► consultation with a group of European experts, including researchers and specialists of various educational programmes addressing elements of CDC with children;

► based on the outcomes of the consultation, identification of a list of descriptors for younger children to be submitted for piloting;

► piloting of descriptors with the support of teachers from different countries;

► processing of the data from the piloting and defining the list of validated descriptors for younger children.

Details about each step of this process are provided in the appendix to this document.

This resulted in the validation of a set of 166 descriptors, covering all 20 competences of the CDC model and having both similarities and differences with regards to the set of descriptors for learners aged 10 and above.

Validated descriptors of competences for democratic culture for younger children

		Age of learners				
	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
Values						
No.	**Valuing human dignity and human rights**					
1	Expresses the view that people's rights should always be protected and respected					
2	Expresses the view that the rights of children should be respected and protected					
3	Defends the view that everyone should be treated in a humane manner and with dignity					
4	Expresses the view that all public institutions should respect, protect and implement human rights					
5	Expresses the view that those accused of wrongdoing should be allowed to defend themselves					
6	Defends the view that even if people are guilty of wrongdoings they should be treated with dignity, like everyone else					

		Age of learners				
	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
	Valuing cultural diversity					
7	Expresses the view that people should value and appreciate all the different languages that other people speak					
8	Expresses the view that people should value and appreciate the different festivals and holidays that other people celebrate					
9	Expresses the view that cultural diversity should be positively valued and appreciated					
10	Expresses the view that one should promote communication and dialogue between people from different cultural backgrounds					
	Valuing democracy, justice, equality, fairness and the rule of law					
11	Expresses the view that representatives should be designated through democratic, free and fair elections					
12	Expresses the view that representatives should be accountable to those they represent					
13	Expresses the view that all people should be treated equally and impartially according to rules and laws					
14	Expresses the view that fair and just laws should always be respected and obeyed					
15	Expresses the view that unfair and unjust laws should be challenged					
16	Expresses the view that public decisions should always be taken and enforced in accordance with rules and laws					
17	Expresses the view that information about the decisions and the work of public authorities should be made available to everyone					
18	Argues that schools should teach about democracy and how to act as a democratic citizen					
19	Expresses the view that there should be effective measures to prevent and combat all forms of corruption					
20	Argues that there should be effective remedies against the actions of public authorities which infringe the rights of citizens					

		Age of learners				
	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
Attitudes						
	Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, worldviews and practices					
21	Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and worldviews					
22	Expresses curiosity about other beliefs and cultural affiliations					
23	Expresses interest in opportunities for encountering people with different values, customs and behaviours					
24	Expresses a willingness to relate to others who are perceived to be different from himself/herself					
25	Expresses interest in travelling to other countries					
	Respect					
26	Gives space to others to express themselves					
27	Expresses respectful attitudes towards other people who differ from himself/herself					
28	Expresses respect for religious differences					
29	Expresses respect for gender differences					
30	Expresses respect towards people who are of a different socio-economic status from himself/herself					
	Civic-mindedness					
31	Expresses acceptance of the obligations of belonging to a community					
32	Engages in activities aimed at protecting the environment					
33	Expresses willingness to volunteer to help people in the community					
34	Participates in decision-making processes regarding the affairs, concerns and common good of the community					
35	Expresses commitment to not being a bystander when the dignity and rights of others are violated					
36	Discusses what can be done to help make the community a better place					

		Age of learners				
	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
	Responsibility					
37	If he/she hurts someone's feelings, he/she apologises	■	■	■	■	■
38	Submits required work on time	■	■	■	■	■
39	Holds himself/herself accountable for his/her own behaviour	■	■	■	■	■
40	When working in a group, does his/her part of the work to the best of his/her ability	■	■	■	■	■
41	Demonstrates punctuality	■	■	■	■	■
42	Meets personal commitments to others on time	■	■	■	■	■
43	Does his/her chores the very best he/she knows how	■	■	■	■	■
44	Shows that he/she takes responsibility for own mistakes	■	■	■	■	■
	Self-efficacy					
45	Expresses the belief that he/she can carry out activities that he/she has planned	■	■	■	■	■
46	Expresses confidence in his/her own ability to understand issues	■	■	■	■	■
47	Shows confidence that he/she can solve most problems if he/she invests the necessary effort	■	■	■	■	■
48	Shows confidence about tackling new challenges			■	■	■
49	Shows that he/she is confident about making decisions			■	■	■
50	Remains calm when facing difficulties			■	■	■
51	Expresses the belief that he/she deals well with changing situations			■	■	■
52	If he/she wants to change, he/she expresses confidence that he/she can do it			■	■	■
53	Expresses a belief in his/her own ability to select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks			■	■	■
54	Remains confident in his/her own capabilities when challenged by others			■	■	■
	Tolerance of ambiguity					
55	Recognises ambiguous situations			■	■	■
56	Is comfortable encountering things that are unfamiliar to him/her			■	■	■

	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
				Age of learners		
57	Works well in unpredictable circumstances					
58	Is comfortable in new situations					
59	Accepts a task which requires dealing with unknown or unusual circumstances					
60	Deals with uncertainty in a positive and constructive manner					
61	Engages well with other people who have a variety of different points of view					
62	Is comfortable with different kinds of people					
Skills						
	Autonomous learning skills					
63	Accomplishes learning tasks independently					
64	Identifies what he/she knows already and what he/she does not know					
65	Seeks clarification of new information from other people when needed					
66	Can assess the quality of his/her own work					
67	Can integrate learning from various subjects/areas of learning					
68	Can learn about new topics with minimal supervision					
69	Can gather information effectively using a variety of techniques and sources					
70	Can select learning materials, resources and activities independently					
71	Uses appropriate tools and information technologies effectively to discover new information					
72	Manages own time effectively to achieve his/her own learning goals					
	Analytical and critical thinking skills					
73	Can distinguish between facts and opinions					
74	Can identify similarities and differences between new information and what is already known					
75	Can reflect critically on past experiences					
76	Can draw conclusions from the analysis of an argument					

	Descriptor	Age of learners				
		-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
77	Can make connections between arguments and information					
78	Can make evaluations on the basis of evidence and experience					
79	Can analyse alternative points of view					
80	Uses evidence to support his/her opinions					
81	Can analyse materials in a logical or systematic manner					
82	Can solve problems through the use of logic					
83	Can compare and contrast ideas and materials					
84	Can construct a logical argument for or against a particular interpretation					
85	Anticipates possible implications and consequences of actions					
86	Recognises preconceptions and assumptions in materials analysed					
	Listening and observing skills					
87	Listens carefully to differing opinions					
88	Pays attention not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said					
89	Indicates through body language that he/she is listening					
90	Can listen attentively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions					
91	Remembers details of the behaviour of other people					
92	Watches other people's body language to help him/her understand what they are trying to say					
	Empathy					
93	Can describe the emotions, feelings and needs of other people					
94	Shows ability to understand what other people are thinking in a certain situation					
95	Takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions					
96	Can recognise when a companion needs his/her help					
97	Can recognise when someone wants comfort and emotional support, even if that person does not overtly exhibit it					

		Age of learners				
	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
98	Expresses compassion for other people when they have problems, are hurt or upset, or are treated unfairly					
99	Gets upset when he/she sees someone being treated badly					
100	Expresses sympathy for people who are less fortunate than himself/herself					
101	Shows ability to put himself/herself in the shoes of those who are in discomfort					
102	Reacts when he/she sees someone being excluded from a group or taken advantage of					
	Flexibility and adaptability					
103	Accommodates to new people, places or situations					
104	Adjusts way of working when this is necessary					
105	Modifies his/her opinions if he/she is shown through rational argument that this is required					
106	Can modify own learning strategies when necessary					
107	Can change the decisions that he/she has made if the consequences of those decisions show that this is required					
108	Shows flexibility when facing obstacles					
109	Adjusts interaction style to interact more effectively with other people, when this is required					
110	Adjusts plans in response to changing circumstances					
	Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills					
111	Can adjust and modify his/her own linguistic and communicative behaviour to use the communicative conventions that are appropriate to his/her interlocutor					
112	Asks questions as a way to be involved in conversations					
113	Uses body language to help reinforce what he/she wants to say					
114	Rephrases what another person said, to make sure that he/she has understood them					
115	Achieves good interactions with others by making his/her own communications clear					

		Age of learners				
	Descriptor	-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
116	Asks questions that show his/her understanding of other people's positions					
117	Can recognise the different ways of speaking that are employed in at least one other social group or culture					
118	Makes sure that his/her own messages are understood in the way that they are meant					
119	Can manage breakdowns in communication by providing re-statements, revisions or simplifications of his/her own misunderstood communications					
120	Can ask questions of clarification in an appropriate and sensitive manner in cases where inconsistencies between the verbal and non-verbal messages produced by another person are detected					
	Co-operation skills					
121	When working as a member of a group, acts in accordance with team decisions or activities					
122	Can help someone new become part of a group					
123	Can work effectively and respectfully with other people					
124	Builds positive relationships with other people in a group					
125	Proactively shares useful information/knowledge with others					
126	Can help others with their work where appropriate					
127	Shares own ideas and resources with others					
128	When working as a member of a group, does his/her share of the group's work					
129	Works to build consensus to achieve group goals					
130	When working as a member of a group, encourages group members to express their views and opinions					
131	Accepts a variety of roles when working in groups					
132	When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view					

	Descriptor		Age of learners			
		-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
133	Can motivate other group members to co-operate and help each other in order to achieve group goals					
134	When working as a member of a group, solicits and utilises the skills, ideas and opinions of other group members					
	Conflict-resolution skills					
135	Can encourage active listening and open discussion as a means to resolve conflict					
136	Can identify options for resolving conflicts					
137	Finds solutions to conflicts that are mutually beneficial					
138	Can listen to conflicting parties to identify common interests					
139	Can assist others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options					
140	Can guide conflicting parties to agree on optimal and mutually acceptable solutions to their conflict					
Knowledge and critical understanding						
	Knowledge and critical understanding of the self					
141	Can describe his/her own values and beliefs					
142	Can describe how his/her judgments are influenced by his/her family					
143	Can explain how his/her personal characteristics influence his/her behaviour in different situations					
144	Can understand that he/she may have prejudices					
145	Can describe his/her own motivations					
146	Can describe the ways in which his/her thoughts and emotions influence his/her behaviour in different situations					
	Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication					
147	Can explain why the tone of voice, eye contact and body language can aid communication					
148	Can explain why different communication styles may result in misunderstandings					

	Descriptor	Age of learners				
		-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
149	Can describe ways of communicating usually employed in at least one other social group or culture			■	■	■
150	Can give examples of situations when people hear the same thing but understand it differently			■	■	■
151	Can describe some effects which different styles of language use can have in different situations			■	■	■
	Knowledge and critical understanding of the world					
152	Can explain the purposes of having rules	■	■	■	■	■
153	Can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others	■		■	■	■
154	Can explain that rights belong to everyone, everywhere	■		■	■	■
155	Can explain the concept of human rights			■	■	■
156	Can explain the dangers of generalising from individual behaviours to an entire culture		■	■	■	■
157	Can explain how some people in a group or community may act differently than the others			■	■	■
158	Can explain how people belonging to different groups or communities may act differently in similar situations			■	■	■
159	Can describe basic cultural practices (e.g. eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in one other culture			■	■	■
160	Can explain how discrimination harms people		■	■	■	■
161	Can explain why people may belong to different religions or may have no religious affiliation			■	■	■
162	Can describe key features of the beliefs, practices and experiences of individuals who practise particular religions			■	■	■
163	Can reflect on how advertising influences people's judgments and behaviours			■	■	■
164	Can explain why it is important to avoid sharing personal information publicly			■	■	■
165	Can explain why certain behaviours and lifestyles are required for a sustainable future			■	■	■
166	Can explain the need to protect nature and the environment	■	■	■	■	■

Comparing the two sets of descriptors

There are several important common elements between the sets of descriptors for learners aged 10 years and older and for learners aged under 10 years.

Both sets comply with the initially set criteria and resulted from a process of testing and validation involving education professionals from different countries of Europe. Moreover, most of the descriptors are common to the two sets, either in identical form or slightly rephrased, in order to apply better to the context of younger learners. There are descriptors for all 20 competences of the CDC model, but their number varies. In the case of the descriptors for younger learners, the number ranges from four descriptors for valuing cultural diversity, to 15 descriptors for knowledge and critical understanding of the world.

There are also some differences which need to be emphasised and explained. The most significant of these concern the fact that the data resulting from the piloting were used in the case of descriptors for learners of age 10 and above not only for checking the validity of the descriptor in relation to the competence, but also to scale the descriptors to three levels of proficiency: basic, intermediate and advanced. Some descriptors also resulted as falling between basic and intermediate or between intermediate and advanced levels. In the case of the descriptors for children under 10, experts consulted agreed that it is preferable to avoid classifying descriptors by level of proficiency. This decision was based primarily on the fact that children acquire competences with a variable pace at this age and the speed of development is very high. Therefore, there are no significant benefits that result from an opportunity to take a snapshot at a certain moment and specify a level of proficiency, while such an attempt could actually generate significant risks and damage the process of learning.

Instead, in the case of the descriptors for younger learners, the degree to which certain descriptors are likely to be relevant at different age levels has been checked. For this purpose, five age levels have been considered: (1) below 6, (2) 6-7, (3) 7-8, (4) 8-9 and (5) 9-10. Thus, there are many descriptors which are valid for all levels, while some have been validated only for some of the higher levels.

Overall, the number of validated descriptors for learners under 10 is lower than the number for learners aged 10 and above: 166 compared to 447. This is logical, considering that the second set of descriptors is derived from the first set, with only a few new descriptors added. In addition, in the case of the descriptors for younger learners, there are relatively few descriptors that were validated for certain competences at lower ages, including conflict-resolution skills, analytical and critical thinking skills and the whole of knowledge and critical understanding, and there were no validated descriptors for the youngest children in the case of tolerance of ambiguity.

In terms of the formulation of some descriptors, most of the changes that were made concerned the values and knowledge and critical understanding. More precisely, "argues" was replaced with "expresses the view", "human rights" was replaced, in some cases, with "people's rights", and "crime" with "wrongdoing". In the case of valuing cultural diversity, more specific elements like languages, festivals and holidays are included, while, in the case of valuing democracy, elections are referred to as

"designation of representatives", and in knowledge and critical understanding of the world, "laws" is replaced by "rules" and propaganda is addressed through a reference to advertising. Also, in knowledge and critical understanding of the self, the influence of cultural affiliations is replaced with the influence of the family. Knowledge and critical understanding of the world only includes aspects related to human rights, culture, cultures, religions, media, environment and sustainability.

Analysis of the validated descriptors for younger learners

An explanation about the meaning that is given by the RFCDC to each of the 20 competences for democratic culture is provided in Volume 1 of the RFCDC, as well as in the Reference Framework Competences for Democratic Culture in Brief. The descriptors of competences validated for use with younger learners can be seen as complementing these explanations and providing support in understanding these competences, in order to facilitate the design, implementation and evaluation of effective learning activities adapted to the needs of this age group. Teachers and other education practitioners, including teacher trainers and curriculum developers, can use the comments below in deciding how to combine and use the descriptors. These comments analyse the content of the descriptors in relation to the definition of each competence in the RFCDC, but also include some aspects based on the qualitative feedback provided by the teachers and experts who contributed to the development and piloting of the descriptors. Teachers should, in general, feel free to adapt and tailor the content of the descriptors to concrete and specific situations or examples that are relevant to the learners concerned.

Values

Valuing human dignity and human rights

> Expresses the view that people's rights should always be protected and respected
>
> Expresses the view that the rights of children should be respected and protected
>
> Defends the view that everyone should be treated in a humane manner and with dignity
>
> Expresses the view that all public institutions should respect, protect and implement human rights
>
> Expresses the view that those accused of wrongdoing should be allowed to defend themselves
>
> Defends the view that even if people are guilty of wrongdoings they should be treated with dignity, like everyone else

These descriptors cover two important characteristics of human rights: universality and inalienability. Reference is made to both rights of children and rights of all people in general. They emphasise that all people are rights holders, regardless of

circumstances and that respect for human dignity should be maintained even in cases where people are accused of wrongdoings. Formulations are adapted to the target age group, using "wrongdoing" instead of "criminal offence" and "humane manner" instead of "torture" and "inhuman or degrading treatment". The concept of "public institution" can be adapted also in practice to the understanding of children, making reference for the younger ones to the kindergarten or school, or to institutions they may know, such as the police or City Hall. It is unrealistic to expect that children will display such behaviours in a spontaneous manner but there are various types of learning strategies that can be used to stimulate their emergence. These can include discussions of challenging situations experienced by children, or discussions based on stories or videos presenting situations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and encouraging children, with open questions, to express their views and explain the reasons behind those views.

Valuing cultural diversity

> Expresses the view that people should value and appreciate all the different languages that other people speak
>
> Expresses the view that people should value and appreciate the different festivals and holidays that other people celebrate
>
> Expresses the view that cultural diversity should be positively valued and appreciated
>
> Expresses the view that one should promote communication and dialogue between people from different cultural backgrounds

Considering the target age group, there is a general reference to the appreciation of cultural diversity in general, as well as references to more specific differences regarding different languages, and different festivals and holidays. Here, the risk is that the focus is on the fact that children learn that there are different languages and that different people may have different holidays, rather than on valuing cultural diversity with children showing appreciation for this diversity. The last descriptor refers to the appreciation of the importance of intercultural dialogue, which can also be adapted to fit with the possibilities of the target age group. All of these descriptors can be useful both in cases where there is diversity in the classroom and the children can experience intercultural contact directly, and in cases of culturally homogeneous classrooms where diversity can be incorporated into the learning activities or online interactions can be arranged with children in other schools to ensure that the children acquire experience of cultural diversity.

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

> Expresses the view that representatives should be designated through democratic, free and fair elections
>
> Expresses the view that representatives should be accountable to those they represent

Expresses the view that all people should be treated equally and impartially according to rules and laws

Expresses the view that fair and just laws should always be respected and obeyed

Expresses the view that unfair and unjust laws should be challenged

Expresses the view that public decisions should always be taken and enforced in accordance with rules and laws

Expresses the view that information about the decisions and the work of public authorities should be made available to everyone

Argues that schools should teach about democracy and how to act as a democratic citizen

Expresses the view that there should be effective measures to prevent and combat all forms of corruption

Argues that there should be effective remedies against the actions of public authorities which infringe the rights of citizens

At this age, children have their first experiences of democratic processes, by making joint decisions and electing representatives. This is reflected in the first two descriptors. One descriptor refers to valuing equality, while several descriptors refer to different facets of valuing the rule of law. The mention of "rules and laws" facilitates the connection with experiences familiar to children, as even before understanding what laws are, they understand the concept of rules and the importance of respecting them, provided that they are fair and just. The responsibilities of public institutions to ensure transparency and accountability, as well as of the school to teach about democracy are also acknowledged. Two aspects may appear as not appropriate for the age group envisaged, but in fact they are. The first concerns corruption. Even if children may not know the concept, they can understand the phenomenon based on concrete examples. Also, if confronted with concrete situations, they can understand the second more difficult aspect covered in these descriptors: the need for protection of citizens against potential abuse of authorities.

Attitudes

Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, worldviews and practices

Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and worldviews

Expresses curiosity about other beliefs and cultural affiliations

Expresses interest in opportunities for encountering people with different values, customs and behaviours

Expresses a willingness to relate to others who are perceived to be different from himself/herself

Expresses interest in travelling to other countries

The first two descriptors can be seen as complementing both some of the descriptors of valuing cultural diversity and some descriptors of knowledge and critical understanding of the world that refer to the understanding of culture, in general, and of specific cultural groups and practices, in particular. Here, the focus is on interest and curiosity towards other beliefs and practices. Thus, when presented with information about what people from other cultural groups do in certain situations or consider important, children follow with attention and interest and express curiosity to learn more about such aspects. The last three descriptors refer to interest in various types of intercultural encounters. Such encounters can be direct, meeting and interacting with children or adults with different cultural affiliations, mediated through video materials or books, or imagined.

Respect

> Gives space to others to express themselves
>
> Expresses respectful attitudes towards other people who differ from himself/herself
>
> Expresses respect for religious differences
>
> Expresses respect for gender differences
>
> Expresses respect towards people who are of a different socio-economic status from himself/herself

The descriptors of this competence refer to the expression of a positive regard towards people perceived to be different in general and specifically towards differences related to religious affiliation, gender and socio-economic status. As mentioned in the definition of respect in the RFCDC, this is different from simply putting up with difference, or accepting someone or something different from a position of superiority, or as a burden. As in the case of the validated descriptors for older learners, a connection can be made here with some of the descriptors of valuing human dignity and human rights. However, while the descriptors for respect for older learners include explicit mentions that respect is due to different opinions, beliefs, practices and ways of life only as long as they do not violate human rights, considering the target age envisaged here, such specification is not made and the descriptors remain general. The first descriptor in this list is also more general, referring to the attitudes towards other people in general, regardless of any kind of perceived difference.

Civic-mindedness

> Expresses acceptance of the obligations of belonging to a community
>
> Engages in activities aimed at protecting the environment
>
> Expresses willingness to volunteer to help people in the community
>
> Participates in decision-making processes regarding the affairs, concerns and common good of the community
>
> Expresses commitment to not being a bystander when the dignity and rights of others are violated
>
> Discusses what can be done to help make the community a better place

While the first descriptor of this competence is more general, the others address different aspects of the relationship of individuals with the community. The term "community", used here, can be interpreted in various ways. It can refer to the local community, to some group or groups that children belong to, or to the school community. Some of these descriptors mention the expression of acceptance, willingness, commitment, while others refer to concrete actions. Such actions, of course, can take place only if appropriate opportunities are provided. The experiences during the piloting of these descriptors show that at this age children can very well engage in concrete actions regarding the environment, volunteer to help people in need, take an active stand if certain categories of people are not treated fairly, or engage in discussions about improvements that can be made in the community.

Responsibility

> If he/she hurts someone's feelings, he/she apologises
>
> Submits required work on time
>
> Holds himself/herself accountable for his/her own behaviour
>
> When working in a group, does his/her part of the work to the best of his/her ability
>
> Demonstrates punctuality
>
> Meets personal commitments to others on time
>
> Does his/her chores the very best he/she knows how
>
> Shows that he/she takes responsibility for own mistakes

The behaviours mentioned in these descriptors can usually be observed at a more general level, independently of a certain learning situation, both within the teaching and learning process and outside of it, during daily interactions with peers and adults. This shows that, on one side, teachers can and should consider observing in a systematic way the behaviour of children also beyond specific learning activities and, on the other side, that in order to make children aware and to stimulate them to develop responsibility, opportunities are necessary to analyse together and reflect on situations such as the ones mentioned in the descriptors.

Self-efficacy

> Expresses the belief that he/she can carry out activities that he/she has planned
>
> Expresses confidence in his/her own ability to understand issues
>
> Shows confidence that he/she can solve most problems if he/she invests the necessary effort
>
> Shows confidence about tackling new challenges
>
> Shows that he/she is confident about making decisions
>
> Remains calm when facing difficulties
>
> Expresses the belief that he/she deals well with changing situations
>
> If he/she wants to change, he/she expresses confidence that he/she can do it

> Expresses a belief in his/her own ability to select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks
>
> Remains confident in his/her own capabilities when challenged by others

Several of these descriptors refer to the attitudes observed in response to different kinds of tasks. Such tasks can be part of learning assignments, or more general. Learning assignments can be designed in such a way as to generate stimulating challenges, which enable students to use and develop their self-efficacy. They need to include elements of novelty and progress, while at the same time being achievable, and need to avoid generating a lower self-confidence and a lack of trust in students' own capacity to succeed. It should also be noted that, apart from the first three descriptors, the others are more commonly relevant for children aged 7 and above.

Tolerance of ambiguity

> Recognises ambiguous situations
>
> Is comfortable encountering things that are unfamiliar to him/her
>
> Works well in unpredictable circumstances
>
> Is comfortable in new situations
>
> Accepts a task which requires dealing with unknown or unusual circumstances
>
> Deals with uncertainty in a positive and constructive manner
>
> Engages well with other people who have a variety of different points of view
>
> Is comfortable with different kinds of people

The descriptors identified for tolerance of ambiguity can also be equally relevant for learning assignments and for other types of situations in school or outside of it. While teachers can observe such behaviours on different occasions, they can also design learning activities in such a way that they include elements of uncertainty, novelty, unpredictability, or ambiguity, as well as interactions within diverse groups, in order to stimulate students to develop their tolerance of ambiguity. Thus, the descriptors are relevant for observing responses to the content of an unfamiliar task, as well as interactions with others in relation to a task.

Skills

Autonomous learning skills

> Accomplishes learning tasks independently
>
> Identifies what he/she knows already and what he/she does not know
>
> Seeks clarification of new information from other people when needed
>
> Can assess the quality of his/her own work
>
> Can integrate learning from various subjects/areas of learning
>
> Can learn about new topics with minimal supervision

Can gather information effectively using a variety of techniques and sources

Can select learning materials, resources and activities independently

Uses appropriate tools and information technologies effectively to discover new information

Manages own time effectively to achieve his/her own learning goals

These descriptors refer to behaviours when responding to learning tasks. They cover the ability to learn independently or with minimal supervision, the interaction with various sources of information, the management of the time allocated to learning and the ability to assess learning outcomes. In order to observe such behaviours and stimulate the development of these skills, appropriate tasks need to be designed that require active and, to some extent, autonomous learning.

Analytical and critical thinking skills

Can distinguish between facts and opinions

Can identify similarities and differences between new information and what is already known

Can reflect critically on past experiences

Can draw conclusions from the analysis of an argument

Can make connections between arguments and information

Can make evaluations on the basis of evidence and experience

Can analyse alternative points of view

Uses evidence to support his/her opinions

Can analyse materials in a logical or systematic manner

Can solve problems through the use of logic

Can compare and contrast ideas and materials

Can construct a logical argument for or against a particular interpretation

Anticipates possible implications and consequences of actions

Recognises preconceptions and assumptions in materials analysed

The descriptors for analytical and critical thinking skills are a selection, with some simplifications, from the set of descriptors for the basic level and between the basic and intermediate levels for older learners. In order to be applied to children aged under 10, the tasks need to be formulated in such a way as to be understandable by this age group and related to something the children will find meaningful. Although such behaviours may not be displayed spontaneously by children, when presented with information, with specific and adapted guidance through open questions, they will be displayed, especially by children aged 7 and above. Thus, such behaviour can occur during discussions based on stories, video materials, games, etc. or during discussions on specific topics of interest for children.

Listening and observing skills

Listens carefully to differing opinions

Pays attention not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said

Indicates through body language that he/she is listening

Can listen attentively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions

Remembers details of the behaviour of other people

Watches other people's body language to help him/her understand what they are trying to say

The behaviour corresponding to the descriptors of listening and observing skills refers to both the content of communication and body language. The descriptors take into account what is being said, but also what is intended. Targeted open questions may be necessary when there are differences between intention and what appears to be communicated verbally or with body language. Such behaviours can be observed if children are asked to follow a presentation of the teacher or of a guest, as well as when watching video material. Some of the descriptors also apply to the interactions between children, during group learning, during play or free time.

Empathy

Can describe the emotions, feelings and needs of other people

Shows ability to understand what other people are thinking in a certain situation

Takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions

Can recognise when a companion needs his/her help

Can recognise when someone wants comfort and emotional support, even if that person does not overtly exhibit it

Expresses compassion for other people when they have problems, are hurt or upset, or are treated unfairly

Gets upset when he/she sees someone being treated badly

Expresses sympathy for people who are less fortunate than himself/herself

Shows ability to put himself/herself in the shoes of those who are in discomfort

Reacts when he/she sees someone being excluded from a group or taken advantage of

These descriptors cover the three facets of empathy specified by the RFCDC. Thus, they refer to the ability to understand emotions and thoughts, as well as to the ability to express concern for others based on apprehending their thoughts, feelings and needs in a specific situation. These behaviours can be visible in a variety of situations, during learning activities, as well as during other opportunities that children have to interact. It is also possible to observe these kinds of behaviours when following a story or watching a video. In both cases, besides observation, it may be necessary to ask open questions to allow children to realise and express what they feel or think.

Flexibility and adaptability

Accommodates to new people, places or situations

Adjusts way of working when this is necessary

Modifies his/her opinions if he/she is shown through rational argument that this is required

Can modify own learning strategies when necessary

Can change the decisions that he/she has made if the consequences of those decisions show that this is required

Shows flexibility when facing obstacles

Adjusts interaction style to interact more effectively with other people, when this is required

Adjusts plans in response to changing circumstances

The behaviours mentioned in the descriptors for flexibility and adaptability can be observed in various contexts, not only during learning activities. However, some learning activities can also be designed in such a way as to require adaptation and modification of current strategies of action. For most of these descriptors, observation by the teacher may be the best way to check if this competence is used by children, considering that they may not be aware of the fact that they adapt and adjust according to tasks, needs, or circumstances.

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Can adjust and modify his/her own linguistic and communicative behaviour to use the communicative conventions that are appropriate to his/her interlocutor

Asks questions as a way to be involved in conversations

Uses body language to help reinforce what he/she wants to say

Rephrases what another person said, to make sure that he/she has understood them

Achieves good interactions with others by making his/her own communications clear

Asks questions that show his/her understanding of other people's positions

Can recognise the different ways of speaking that are employed in at least one other social group or culture

Makes sure that his/her own messages are understood in the way that they are meant

Can manage breakdowns in communication by providing re-statements, revisions or simplifications of his/her own misunderstood communications

Can ask questions of clarification in an appropriate and sensitive manner in cases where inconsistencies between the verbal and non-verbal messages produced by another person are detected

Descriptors identified as valid for children aged under 10 refer to verbal and non-verbal communication, to the formulation of a message, as well as to participation in conversations and asking questions. They also include references to getting feedback and to plurilingualism, understood in a general manner, as referring to "ways of speaking" employed by people belonging to different social or cultural groups. In this way, they apply to a great diversity of contexts. Specific learning activities can be designed to develop and stimulate the use of these skills, including activities requiring participants to interact, communicate verbally or with body language, as well as games in which there is a need to ask the right questions or obtain feedback to solve a problem. The content of each of these descriptors can also provide concrete ideas for practical activities aimed at developing linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills. Practice is, indeed, especially in this case, a key requirement for increased proficiency.

Co-operation skills

When working as a member of a group, acts in accordance with team decisions or activities

Can help someone new become part of a group

Can work effectively and respectfully with other people

Builds positive relationships with other people in a group

Proactively shares useful information/knowledge with others

Can help others with their work where appropriate

Shares own ideas and resources with others

When working as a member of a group, does his/her share of the group's work

Works to build consensus to achieve group goals

When working as a member of a group, encourages group members to express their views and opinions

Accepts a variety of roles when working in groups

When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view

Can motivate other group members to co-operate and help each other in order to achieve group goals

When working as a member of a group, solicits and utilises the skills, ideas and opinions of other group members

The behaviours related to the descriptors of co-operation skills can be observed in various situations when children are involved in joint activities. This can refer, for example, to free play, structured play, or group work during learning activities in the classroom or during group assignments performed outside the classroom. In this case, descriptors can be easily used for assessing co-operative skills, but most of them are not directly useful for designing learning activities aimed at developing these skills. However, many simple activities can be organised to require co-operation, including tasks based on positive interdependence, co-operative

games or competitions between teams, where team members need to co-operate in order to succeed. As suggested in the RFCDC, co-operative learning is a valuable pedagogical approach, which can develop not just co-operation skills but also other competences for democratic culture.

Conflict-resolution skills

> Can encourage active listening and open discussion as a means to resolve conflict
>
> Can identify options for resolving conflicts
>
> Finds solutions to conflicts that are mutually beneficial
>
> Can listen to conflicting parties to identify common interests
>
> Can assist others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options
>
> Can guide conflicting parties to agree on optimal and mutually acceptable solutions to their conflict

The descriptors validated for conflict-resolution skills refer to two types of situations: direct involvement as a party in a conflict, and contribution to the management of a conflict situation as a third party. The focus is, in both types of situation, on the identification of mutually beneficial solutions for all those involved and on the consideration of their needs and interests. In practice, it can be expected that such behaviour will not emerge spontaneously, especially at an early age, but the piloting experiences proved that children under 10 can learn and use these skills, with appropriate support from teachers.

Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

> Can describe his/her own values and beliefs
>
> Can describe how his/her judgments are influenced by his/her family
>
> Can explain how his/her personal characteristics influence his/her behaviour in different situations
>
> Can understand that he/she may have prejudices
>
> Can describe his/her own motivations
>
> Can describe the ways in which his/her thoughts and emotions influence his/her behaviour in different situations

The behaviours listed in the descriptors of knowledge and critical understanding of the self may need appropriate questioning and support for teachers in order to be manifested by children. Such behaviours do not imply that children understand or define the concepts that are included in the formulation of the descriptors, such as values, prejudices or motivations, but that they can refer to their meaning with their

own words and in relation to specific familiar aspects. These descriptors can also be useful in supporting children to develop a critical understanding of the self by reflecting on how they compare with characters in stories, movies, theatre plays, etc.

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

Can explain why the tone of voice, eye contact and body language can aid communication

Can explain why different communication styles may result in misunderstandings

Can describe ways of communicating usually employed in at least one other social group or culture

Can give examples of situations when people hear the same thing but understand it differently

Can describe some effects which different styles of language use can have in different situations

All the descriptors of knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication apply mostly to children aged 7 and above. Children can respond as indicated in the descriptors if teachers organise adapted learning situations and ask the relevant questions in a way that is understandable and familiar. For example, such questions can be addressed when commenting on or discussing video materials. In general, children should be provided with examples of communicative behaviour, supported in analysing them by being given open questions and allowing them to respond in their own words.

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Can explain the purposes of having rules

Can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others

Can explain that rights belong to everyone, everywhere

Can explain the concept of human rights

Can explain the dangers of generalising from individual behaviours to an entire culture

Can explain how some people in a group or community may act differently than the others

Can explain how people belonging to different groups or communities may act differently in similar situations

Can describe basic cultural practices (e.g. eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in one other culture

Can explain how discrimination harms people

> Can explain why people may belong to different religions or may have no religious affiliation
>
> Can describe key features of the beliefs, practices and experiences of individuals who practise particular religions
>
> Can reflect on how advertising influences people's judgments and behaviours
>
> Can explain why it is important to avoid sharing personal information publicly
>
> Can explain why certain behaviours and lifestyles are required for a sustainable future
>
> Can explain the need to protect nature and the environment

As in the case of the descriptors for older learners, knowledge and critical understanding of the world has the largest number of descriptors also for younger learners. They cover almost all aspects included in the definition of this competence in the model of competences for democratic culture, except for knowledge and critical understanding of politics and of history. In some cases, formulations are adapted to fit with the possibilities available for children aged under 10. Thus, the descriptor for knowledge and critical understanding of the law is adapted so that it refers to rules rather than the law. Similarly, knowledge and critical understanding of the media is addressed with regard to the influence of advertisements and care for sharing personal data publicly, for example on social media.

Although the concept of human rights appears in three descriptors, children can explain the concept, its universality and the shared responsibility to protect human rights, in words that are familiar to them and based on examples.

Five descriptors refer to knowledge and critical understanding of culture and cultures, and two refer to knowledge and critical understanding of religions, topics that are often considered to be too complicated for children and avoided by their teachers. In fact, children can explain in their own words, based on examples, or in discussions about materials that present relevant situations, the dangers of generalisation, the internal variability of cultural groups and intercultural differences, as well as the effects of discrimination. They can also describe basic cultural or religious practices, based on what they already know, or based on materials presented to them.

Use and misuse of the descriptors of competences for democratic culture for younger children

As they are formulated using the language of the learning outcomes (each containing an action verb, the object of that verb and the description of an observable behaviour), there is already solid evidence from practice that the descriptors of competences for democratic culture are useful tools for education professionals in their work.

Considering also the fact that, in a given situation, a cluster of competences needs to be used, a set of descriptors of different competences is necessary to define learning outcomes for educational activities.

Despite the fact that the descriptors for younger learners are not scaled by levels of proficiency, they are useful in defining effective learning interventions for individual learners or for groups of learners, in order to support the gradual and age-appropriate development of the competences.

Descriptors are also a reference for the assessment of learners, based on the principles outlined in the chapter on assessment included in Volume 3 of the RFCDC, as well as for the evaluation of learning activities. In both cases, observation of the behaviour of learners is essential. The recommendations formulated with regard to observation for the older learners' descriptors remain valid also for the descriptors for younger learners.

► Observation needs to be done in a way which does not disrupt the learning process or put the learner in an uncomfortable situation.

► Observation needs to encompass a variety of situations, for example the response of the learner to specific tasks, the interactions with the teacher and with peers during various activities, including during the time dedicated to free play, and behaviour during breaks, extracurricular activities and other daily activities.

► A limited set of descriptors, corresponding to a cluster of competences, will be used to observe the behaviours of learners in a given situation and teachers will focus on those and not on the entire range of behaviours in the full list of descriptors, but also usually not on a single descriptor.

► The use of descriptors facilitates not just the observation, but also the recording of the observed behaviour: it is much easier to make a note on the number of the relevant descriptors than to write the full description of the behaviour observed.

► Observation should focus on verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal behaviour and consider, besides what is being said and done, aspects such as eye contact, attitudes and expression of emotions.

► The observation of the behaviour reflected in a certain descriptor should be done in a consistent way, over a period of time and not rely simply on the first impression, on the personal beliefs, expectations and biases of the observer, or on a specific moment or activity. A certain display of behaviour can also be accidental or generated by factors of which the observer is not aware, while the lack of display of behaviour may be the result of the fact that the learner was not given the proper opportunity to display the respective behaviour.

There are several risks related to the potential misuse of the descriptors of competences for democratic culture mentioned in the RFCDC and they also remain valid in the case of the descriptors for younger learners. Thus, education professionals willing to use the descriptors for younger learners for curriculum development, teaching, assessment, for promoting a whole-school approach based on the RFCDC or for designing teacher education programmes, are strongly advised to not limit themselves to reading the section about the model of competences and this document, but to go through all the content of the RFCDC, or at least the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in brief*.

In addition to the general risks, there are some specific risks related to the use of descriptors for younger learners which are described below.

One potential misunderstanding can result from the fact that some of the descriptors for younger learners are marked as validated only for certain age levels. While this, indeed, is based on the data collected from the piloting process, it is important to mention that, for all the descriptors validated, the respective behaviour was observed for children of all age groups, but a lower percentage of children in the lower age groups were able to display it. This means that in the case of all descriptors, the behaviour should not be by default considered inaccessible to younger learners. The age indicated in the table of descriptors should be taken as indicative of the most probable effective learning outcome. However, the decision on whether a certain learning outcome is appropriate should be made by the teacher considering the situation of the learners. As mentioned, the development of the competences in general at this age does not advance with the same pace and depth for all children and the planning of learning activities should be done in such a way as to respond to the actual needs and take into account the actual possibilities of the learners.

The data from the piloting process also confirmed the fact that the acquisition of competences is not a linear process. For several competences, two consistent tendencies have been identified. The first is a significant drop in self-efficacy and, with regards to some descriptors, in autonomous learning skills around age 6, with

scores higher for children below 6 and growing again from the age of 7. In most of the countries where the piloting was done, this is the age of moving from kindergarten to school and the drop in self-efficacy and autonomous learning skills could be related to the adjustment to this new situation.

The second trend is more general and can be noticed in relation to all descriptors for all 20 competences: there is a lower score at the age level 9-10 than for the previous level 8-9. Again, this could be related to another important change which concerns the majority of the children involved in the piloting: moving from primary to lower secondary school, with a change from working mostly with one single teacher to interaction with different subject teachers. Of course, these trends need further investigation but they are mentioned here to illustrate the idea that there can be fluctuations in the development of competences which may be associated with both individual development and changes in the learning environment.

Another potential misconception which was identified in the interactions aimed at preparing teachers involved in the piloting relates to the language used in the descriptors. As mentioned already, compared to the descriptors used for older learners, several changes were made to increase the relevance of the behaviours envisaged for younger learners. However, this does not mean that children need to understand the words used in the descriptors. In many cases, if a teacher asks a question or gives an instruction directly based on the wording of a descriptor, there will be no reaction from the children because they may not understand the meaning of those words. On the contrary, if the same idea is communicated in an adapted language that children can understand, the behaviour might be observed. Of course, the adaptation needs to be done differently at different age levels and teachers are the only ones able to identify concretely how to communicate the ideas behind various descriptors. Descriptors are formulated for educators and may apply even if the child does not understand the precise language used.

It should also be noted that some of the potential misuses of descriptors, as highlighted by the RFCDC, may have even more adverse effects with younger children and special attention is needed to avoid any use of descriptors which could generate or enhance a perception of labelling or categorising children. On the contrary, descriptors are to be used, especially by teachers, as tools for organising learning processes which support and encourage learners to advance in acquiring the competences, emphasising achievement and progress.

Appendix –
The process leading
to the set of descriptors
for younger learners

As mentioned in the introduction, a process consisting of six main stages was used to generate the set of 166 descriptors for younger learners. These stages are described briefly below, for readers interested in better understanding the way in which the descriptors were identified. Further details and the data obtained at each stage are available upon request.

1.   Identification of a preliminary list of potential descriptors based on the list of 447 descriptors validated for learners aged 10 and over

As mentioned, the choice was made to start from the already validated descriptors, both for practical reasons, to avoid repeating the complex validation process performed on the descriptors for learners aged 10 and over, and for reasons related to continuity between the two sets of descriptors.

Therefore, the first stage consisted in analysing the set of 447 descriptors and removing from the list the descriptors which obviously are unsuitable for children aged under 10. The descriptors taken out were strictly descriptors which imply knowledge of certain concepts not yet accessible to younger learners, many of them referring to the section of the CDC model on knowledge and critical understanding.

Thus, 383 descriptors were retained and used as a basis for the following two phases.

2.   Consultation with a group of education practitioners

The aim was to gather preliminary feedback on the relevance for younger children of the 383 CDC descriptors and to collect suggestions for developing further descriptors from practitioners working directly with children aged under 10.

a.   Defining the target group

The envisaged target group consisted of teachers working with children between 3 and 9 years old. Considering the fact that within this age range there is very rapid cognitive and emotional development, this age group cannot be considered as homogeneous and has been divided into three subgroups:

–   children aged between 3 and 5 (kindergarten);

–   children aged between 5 and 7 (acquiring literacy);

–   children aged between 7 and 9 (literate, in primary school).

b.	Preparing the consultation and the questionnaires

The six questionnaires used in the piloting of the older learners' descriptors were also used for gathering feedback from teachers on the 383 preselected descriptors. They organise the 20 competences into six groups:

–	Q1. Democracy and human rights – 43 descriptors

–	Q2. Intercultural – 60 descriptors

–	Q3. Communication – 53 descriptors

–	Q4. Self – 78 descriptors

–	Q5. Interpersonal – 81 descriptors

–	Q6. Cognitive – 68 descriptors.

c.	Initial consultation with teachers

Based on a public call, a group of 30 teachers from the west of Romania were selected for the first round of consultation. The criteria for selection were defined in such a way as to ensure the inclusion of teachers working with children in each of the three age subgroups. Instructions and additional materials were prepared in Romanian for the consultation. A workshop was organised in May 2018 to prepare the teachers for the procedure. Out of the total 30 teachers initially selected, 23 participated in the workshop, enough to ensure the coverage of all age levels.

d.	Monitoring the implementation of the tasks by teachers

Each participant chose one or two questionnaires. Their task was to organise relevant educational activities over a period of six weeks and to observe the behaviour of the children and indicate which descriptors were appropriate. They were also asked to identify ways in which the descriptors could be used for younger children: what specific types of behaviour could be observed and in what ways such behaviours could be stimulated. Teachers were also encouraged to formulate additional descriptors for the various elements of the CDC model.

During this period progress was monitored and clarification and support were provided where necessary. The allocation of the questionnaires was based on teachers' choice but also took into consideration the need for each questionnaire to be applied to each age group and, in most cases, be completed by two teachers.

Before the evaluation workshop, 21 of the teachers had filled in the allocated questionnaires, some of them having also filled in other questionnaires that had not been allocated to them, which allowed for a full coverage of the age levels and the questionnaires.

e.	Evaluation workshop to review and discuss results

A follow-up workshop was organised in June 2018 to discuss the results obtained. To prepare for the workshop, an analysis of the responses received in the questionnaires was carried out. For the preparation of the analysis, the

responses were ordered by age group for each questionnaire and also, within each age group, responses were ordered from younger to older, as regards the age of the pupils being observed.

Descriptors were marked in colours indicating:

- 0 (red) – the descriptor is never observable, for any of the age groups;
- 1 (green) – the descriptor is always observable, for all age groups;
- 2 (blue) – the descriptor is observable only from the second age group on (5-7 and above);
- 3 (purple) – the descriptor is observable only for the third age group (7-9 years old);
- 4 (orange) – it is unclear whether the descriptor is observable, either because different teachers observing the same age groups had different experiences, or because the descriptor seems to be observable at younger ages and then not at older ages.

Marking the descriptors with colours made it easier to identify the most problematic ones (code orange) and to discuss them with the teachers during the evaluation workshop.

The focus at the evaluation workshop was particularly on the descriptors for which the feedback was unclear or contradictory, in order to get additional clarification and also obtain the opinion of the other teachers on each problematic descriptor.

f. Formulating conclusions to submit to the consultation with experts during the following phase

A large number of descriptors were considered as valid for children, while a significant number of them become relevant at a certain age, between 3 and 9.

Participants noticed that the possibility to observe certain behaviours is largely dependent on the general climate of the school or kindergarten and on the ability of teachers to "translate" the complex concepts into a language accessible to children and provide examples that they understand.

Teachers involved indicated a need for specific guidelines for teachers working with children of this age range on the use of the descriptors, once they had been identified.

3. Consultation with a group of European experts

A group of experts including researchers and specialists from various educational programmes addressing elements of CDC with children was convened by the Council of Europe in a workshop in Timisoara in September 2018, in order to further refine the list of descriptors to decide on the main aspects for the continuation of the process.

This group had a good balance in terms of:

- ▶ experience in research and practical education experience
- ▶ coverage of the components of the CDC model

- ► geographical coverage of main European areas
- ► involvement in some of the major networks and organisations focusing on children.

With the exception of the three participants involved in the development of the RFCDC, all other participants were asked to read the three volumes of the RFCDC prior to the meeting and reflect on how their experience could support the work on descriptors for children.

The group analysed the set of 383 descriptors and the feedback received about them from the teachers and proposed a selection of descriptors, adjustments to some descriptors and some new descriptors to be added. The group also made some important decisions regarding the next stages of the process, including the decision not to envisage scaling of the descriptors by levels of proficiency but to design a piloting process allowing for connecting descriptors with the age of learners.

4. Identification of a list of descriptors for younger children to be submitted for piloting

As a result of the workshop and of the follow-up exchanges among participants, a list of 185 descriptors was defined for piloting: 20 for values, 43 for attitudes, 96 for skills and 26 for knowledge and critical understanding. This gave an average of over nine descriptors per competence, ranging from four descriptors for valuing cultural diversity to around 20 for some skills.

5. Piloting of descriptors with the support of teachers from different countries

The piloting aimed to validate the descriptors and identify at what age they could be used.

Considering the smaller number of descriptors, compared to the piloting of the descriptors for older learners, it was not necessary to divide the descriptors into groups (there were six groups and therefore six questionnaires for the older learners).

Thus, participating teachers were asked to observe the behaviour of all the children in the class during:

- ► ordinary educational activities, adapted as needed to include stimuli related to the descriptors;
- ► additional educational activities specially designed to stimulate the display of the behaviour in the descriptors;
- ► play time, breaks and extracurricular activities.

They were asked to record on the online questionnaire for each descriptor the number of children in the class that display the corresponding behaviour. They were able to adjust the number at any time before submitting the questionnaire. General data, contact and the number of children in the class were also collected. Contributing teachers were allowed to choose to enter data for any number of descriptors, preferably for all, but not necessarily.

Prior to initiating the process, teachers went through a preparation process, aimed at ensuring their understanding of the CDC model and the procedures for piloting.

This preparation was done via face-to-face workshops or by following the instructions on an online support platform. At the end of the preparatory process, teachers were asked to take a test to check that they were ready for the piloting.

The online support for piloting was developed for this stage in English and French but a Romanian version of the online questionnaire was also made available. A complete online support programme in English, French and Romanian was developed in order to complete the piloting process. The online questionnaires for collecting the data from piloting were also made available in multiple languages. Several members of the Council of Europe Education Policy Advisors Network provided information and support to teachers in their countries and they were able to fill in the questionnaires in a language familiar to them.

As a result, 310 valid responses were received throughout the school year 2018-19, enough to draw conclusions about the descriptors.

6.   Processing of the data from piloting and defining the list of validated descriptors for younger children

The data collected were processed, with scores calculated for each descriptor by age level: under 6, 6-7, 7-8, 8-9 and 9-10. Although there were important differences among the 20 competences, many descriptors got high scores for all age levels, while others were validated only for some age levels. Nineteen descriptors did not score above the threshold for any age level or had inconsistent data and therefore were eliminated, generating the list of 166 validated descriptors presented above.

One of the major strengths of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) is the fact that, for each of the 20 elements of the model of competences that represents the core of the RFCDC, a set of validated descriptors of competence is provided. The descriptors of competence included in the second volume of the RFCDC were validated for learners over 10 years of age.

This publication complements the initial content of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture by proposing a set of 166 descriptors validated for younger learners, under 10.

Unlike the initial set of validated descriptors included in the second volume of the RFCDC, these descriptors for younger learners are not scaled by levels of proficiency but indications are provided about the relevance of these descriptors at different age levels, based on tests done with the support of over 300 teachers from nine European countries.

Teachers and other education practitioners, including teacher trainers and curriculum developers, can use this publication for the design, implementation and evaluation of effective curricula and learning activities for younger learners.

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