

## Intercultural competence/cultural awareness

[Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec \(2022\)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture](#)

Measures

- b. xii. support the creation of teaching and learning resources designed to help the development of plurilingual repertoires and intercultural awareness and competences.
- b. xiv. encourage pedagogical approaches that develop learners' language and cultural awareness and equip them to engage in intercultural dialogue.
- c. iii. developing student teachers' and teachers' own plurilingual and intercultural competences as an essential dimension of their pedagogical competences.

### What is it about?

“Intercultural competence” is the complex set of attitudes, knowledge, skills and values on which we draw when we engage in intercultural dialogue; and intercultural dialogue is how culturally diverse societies create and maintain social cohesion. The learning and teaching of intercultural competence are essential for democratic culture.

As an educational goal, intercultural competence is closely linked to plurilingualism because it enables plurilingual individuals to engage with the cultural diversity they encounter when they use the different languages in their repertoire. Intercultural competence allows them to respond to cultural diversity with respect, argue for and justify their own point of view responsibly and sensitively, and subject to critical scrutiny aspects of their own culture that are commonly taken for granted. (CM Rec (2022)1, Explanatory Memorandum, 3.d)

### Why is this important and what can be done?

Plurilingual and intercultural education prepares the individual to be an active participant in democratic society by promoting their personal development, while combining social responsibility with growing self-awareness, self-confidence, independence of thought, and critical cultural and language awareness.

Education should provide space for learners and teachers to develop this competence, engage in intercultural encounters and dialogues – both in person and virtually – and interact with respect and understanding of cultural similarities and differences, locally and globally. In

intercultural education, cultural diversity within the classroom, school, and community should be used as a resource that benefits everyone involved in the educational process (Rec. 2022, p. 26).

See also Toolbox Entry on [Plurilingual repertoires](#).

## Council of Europe resources for policy/decision makers

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### Resource 1: [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCDC\)](#)

The RFCDC provides a systematic approach to designing the teaching, learning, and assessment of competences in a democratic culture. [Volume one: Context, concepts and model](#) of the Reference Framework contains the model of competences for democratic culture that was unanimously approved by European ministers of education at their standing conference in Brussels in April 2016. [Volume two: Descriptors of competences for democratic culture](#) lists the descriptors of the competences for democratic culture that are intended to help educators identify learning outcomes, achieved proficiency after a period of learning, and areas for further development. [Volume three: Guidance for implementation](#) offers guidance on how the model of competences and the corresponding descriptors may be used in six education contexts.

See especially [Chapter 1](#) in *Volume three: Guidance for implementation*, which explores how the competences for democratic culture (CDC) model can be used by those in charge of designing and developing curricula and curriculum reform in education, and the section “Curriculum” on the subpage [Guidance for implementation](#).

### Resource 2: [Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education](#)

The Guide serves as a resource for shaping plurilingual and intercultural language education policies and for embedding such approaches across curricula. It presents key issues and principles of curriculum design from a plurilingual and intercultural perspective and explains how to identify, integrate, and sequence relevant content and goals throughout the different stages of education.

Intercultural competence is addressed in the [design of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education](#), see especially [Chapter 1.5](#) “Ways of bringing plurilingual and intercultural education into the curriculum” (p. 26-28), and in [the curriculum scenarios for plurilingual and intercultural education](#).

Resource 3: [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume](#)

The CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR-CV) updates and extends the 2001 CEFR, which provided a common basis for developing language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks, supporting the alignment of curriculum, teaching, and assessment. It includes the complete set of updated and extended CEFR descriptors, replacing those from 2001. These now also cover areas such as mediation, online interaction, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and sign language competences. The CEFR-CV offers a vision of language learning and use in which learners are viewed as active, responsible participants in society, using language to achieve real-life goals and engage meaningfully with others.

See especially the understanding of pluricultural competence, which is developed in [Section 2.3](#), and the descriptor scales for plurilingual and pluricultural competence in [Chapter 4](#), in particular the section "[Building on pluricultural repertoire](#)" (p. 124f). The descriptor scales can be used to develop and review the design of language curricula.

Council of Europe resources for teacher educators/ pedagogical advisors

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Resource 1: [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCDC\)](#)

See above

See especially [Chapter 4](#) in *Volume three: Guidance for implementation*, focusing on the role and tasks of teacher education in promoting and implementing education based on the RFCDC, and the section "Teacher Education and Training" on the subpage [Guidance for implementation](#).

Resource 2: [The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters. Online self-study course for educators](#)

Complementing the [Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters \(AIE\)](#), the [Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters for Younger Learners](#), and [Images of Others: An Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media \(AIEVM\)](#), targeted for learners, this resource represents a self-study online course for teacher educators and teachers who seek support in working with the AIE. The course contains activities based on the key concepts and theory underpinning the AIE to help teacher educators and teachers explore the potential of this pedagogical tool for learning through reflection on personal intercultural experiences.

Resource 3: [Developing teacher competences for pluralistic approaches. Tools for teacher education](#)

Building on the ECML projects [Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to languages and cultures \(FREPA/CARAP\)](#) and [A guide to teacher competences for languages in education](#), this ECML resource website offers two types of tools to aid the development of teacher education programmes and courses: a [Reference framework of teacher competences for pluralistic approaches \(FTC-PA\)](#) and [sequences of tasks for the development of these competences](#). The tools proposed on the resource website aim to complement the FREPA by helping teacher educators develop teacher competences that facilitate the integration of pluralistic approaches in language education, as well as address the linguistic aspects of other subjects in the curriculum.

The following teacher education materials may be especially relevant to the topics of intercultural competence/cultural awareness: [Awareness of and reflection on the plurilingual and multicultural profiles of learners](#) in 'Commitment to values and principles', and [Helping learners to build informed knowledge and representations of linguistic and cultural diversity](#) in 'Didactic and pedagogical competences'.

## Further resources

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[Plurilingual and intercultural learning through mobility. Practical resources for teachers and teacher trainers](#)

This ECML resource offers activities and materials to support learners' intercultural learning before, during and after a mobility activity. The subpage [Mobility in teacher education](#) provides lesson plans for initial and in-service teacher education.