

## Intercultural competence/cultural awareness

### 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).

For guidance on related Council of Europe resources, please refer to the full [Toolbox Entry](#)