

# COMPETENCES FOR MY DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

My/Our name(s):

VALUES

ATTITUDES

SKILLS

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

I/We want to...

VALUING DEMOCRACY, JUSTICE, FAIRNESS, EQUALITY AND THE RULE OF LAW

VALUING HUMAN DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

VALUING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

OPENNESS TO CULTURAL OTHERNESS

RESPECT

CIVIC MINDEDNESS

RESPONSIBILITY

SELF-EFFICACY

TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY

ANALYTICAL AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

AUTONOMOUS LEARNING SKILLS

CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

EMPATHY

SKILLS OF LISTENING AND OBSERVING

LINGUISTIC, COMMUNICATIVE AND PLURILINGUAL SKILLS

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SELF

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

STUDENT'S POSTER



What this poster is for

**FREE to SPEAK-SAFE to LEARN Democratic Schools for All** is the name of the Council of Europe's campaign to highlight and support the development of democratic culture in schools across Europe.

The first time most children encounter a public institution is when they start pre-school or primary school. This is where they learn democracy together with their peers by developing the values, skills, attitudes and knowledge and critical understanding they will need as active citizens in contemporary society.

Schools can also work to become more democratic, more participatory, more committed to an inclusive approach of learning and living together. In the words of the campaign: we want to strengthen democratic schools in which everybody feels free to speak and feels safe, so that all children can learn well and develop to their full potential.

How to work with this poster

There are two posters, one for schools as institutions, one for students as individuals or groups.

STUDENT'S POSTER

If you are a student or a group of students

- Make sure you have the right poster! There is also one for students. You can download the poster at the campaign website [www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn](http://www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn)
- Write your name(s) in the box under the title of the poster.
- In the centre there is a box for the title of the project you have completed or that you are planning to do. Find a catchy title and subtitle for it. Examples:
  - "We all take part!" Our football tournament for boys and girls organised by us.
  - "Professional learners' place." How we make sure all students get support from their peers with doing their homework.
  - "Clean and nice!" We take care of the school grounds ourselves.
- Now go through all the 20 competences and the 135 descriptors. Choose the ones you have used in your project (if you are describing what you have done) or decide which ones you want to concentrate on (if you are planning an action, a project or an initiative) by drawing circles around them on the back of the poster.
- Copy the most important ones onto the front of the poster.

Now you have a fine analysis that you can share with others in your school or Europe-wide! Inspire and get inspired!

It is hoped that this poster will encourage you to prepare new projects or practices or reflect on existing ones, to understand the profile of your school or yourself as student through the lens of the Democracy Competence Framework and become aware of the competences developed through practice: schools learning from schools! And remember nothing is too small or too difficult, you just need to give it a try!

Democracy and democratic behaviour are also very personal. Only if each student is listened to and listens to others, feels safe to learn and uses her or his time to do so, can the community also develop. Democracy is implemented everyday through projects and practice.

The aim of this Council of Europe campaign is to identify and share good practices and projects and to support schools and students in doing even more to promote democratic culture. The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) sets out 20 competences and 135 corresponding descriptors that provide a common language for evaluating what has already been done and what is going on in schools, or to plan future action. Schools and/or students might be surprised at how well they are already doing, but they can also find out about shortcomings or where there is potential for further improvement.

SCHOOLS POSTER

If you are a school

- Make sure you have the right poster! There is also one for students. You can download the poster at the campaign website [www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn](http://www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn)
- Write the name of your school in the box under the title of the poster.
- In the centre of the poster there is a box for the title of the project you have completed or that you are planning to do. Find a catchy title and subtitle for it. Examples:
  - "We all take part!" Our football tournament for boys and girls organised by us.
  - "Professional learners' place." How we make sure all students get support from their peers with doing their homework.
  - "Clean and nice!" We take care of the school grounds ourselves.
- Now go through all the 20 competences and the 135 descriptors. Choose the ones your school or your school project is strong in, or decide, which competences you want to concentrate on (if you are planning an action, a project or an initiative) by drawing circles around them on the back of the poster.
- Copy the most important ones onto the front of the poster.

Now you have a fine analysis that you can share with other schools Europe-wide to inspire and get inspired!

**LINKS**  
**Council of Europe website** ▶ [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)  
**Campaign website** ▶ [www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn](http://www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn)

20 Competences – For Democratic Culture and their matching 135 Descriptors\*

VALUES

Competence 1:  
Valuing human dignity and human rights

1. Argues that human rights should always be protected and respected

2. Argues that specific rights of children should be respected and protected by society

3. Defends the view that no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

4. Argues that all public institutions should respect, protect and implement human rights

5. Defends the view that when people are imprisoned, although they are subject to restrictions, this does not mean that they are less deserving of respect and dignity than anyone else

6. Expresses the view that all laws should be consistent with international human rights norms and standards

Competence 2:  
Valuing cultural diversity

7. Promotes the view that we should be tolerant of the different beliefs that are held by others in society

8. Promotes the view that one should always strive for mutual understanding and meaningful dialogue between people and groups who are perceived to be "different" from one another

9. Expresses the view that the cultural diversity within a society should be positively valued and appreciated

10. Argues that intercultural dialogue should be used to help us recognise our different identities and cultural affiliations

11. Argues that intercultural dialogue should be used to develop respect and a culture of "living together"

Competence 3:  
Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

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

13. Expresses the view that all citizens should be treated equally and impartially under the law

14. Argues that laws should always be fairly applied and enforced

15. Argues that democratic elections should always be conducted freely and fairly, according to international standards and national legislation, and without any fraud

16. Expresses the view that, whenever a public official exercises power, he or she should not misuse that power and cross the boundaries of their legal authority

17. Expresses support for the view that courts of law should be accessible to everyone so that people are not denied the opportunity to take a case to court because it is too expensive, troublesome or complicated to do so

18. Expresses support for the view that those to whom legislative power is entrusted should be subject to the law and to appropriate constitutional oversight

19. Expresses the view that information on public policies and their implementation should be made available to the public

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

Competence 4:  
Openness to cultural otherness

21. Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and world views

22. Expresses interest in travelling to other countries

23. Expresses curiosity about other beliefs and interpretations and other cultural orientations and affiliations

24. Expresses an appreciation of the opportunity to have experiences of other cultures

25. Seeks and welcomes opportunities for encountering people with different values, customs and behaviours

26. Seeks contact with other people in order to learn about their culture

Competence 5:  
Respect

27. Gives space to others to express themselves

28. Expresses respect for other people as equal human beings

29. Treats all people with respect regardless of their cultural background

30. Expresses respect towards people who are of a different socio-economic status from himself/herself

31. Expresses respect for religious differences

32. Expresses respect for people who hold different political opinions from himself/herself

\* You can choose other descriptors from the full bank, available online in Volume II of the RFCDC: [www.coe.int/competences](http://www.coe.int/competences)

ATTITUDES

Competence 6:

Civic-mindedness

- Expresses a willingness to co-operate and work with others
- Collaborates with other people for common interest causes
- 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
- Exercises the obligations and responsibilities of active citizenship at either the local, national or global level
- Takes action to stay informed about civic issues

Competence 7:

Responsibility

- Shows that he/she accepts responsibility for his/her actions
- If he/she hurts someone's feelings, he/she apologises
- Submits required work on time
- Shows that he/she takes responsibility for own mistakes
- Consistently meets commitments to others

Competence 8:

Self-efficacy

- Expresses a belief in his/her own ability to understand issues
- Expresses the belief that he/she can carry out activities that he/she has planned
- Expresses a belief in his/her own ability to navigate obstacles when pursuing a goal
- If he/she wants to change, he/she expresses confidence that he/ she can do it
- Shows that he/she feels secure in his/her abilities to meet life's challenges
- Shows confidence that he/she knows how to handle unforeseen situations due to his/her resourcefulness

SKILLS

Competence 10:

Autonomous learning skills

- Shows ability to identify resources for learning (e.g. people, books, internet)
- Seeks clarification of new information from other people when needed
- Can learn about new topics with minimal supervision
- Can assess the quality of his/her own work
- Can select the most reliable sources of information or advice from the range available
- Shows ability to monitor, define, prioritise and complete tasks without direct oversight

Competence 11:

Analytical and critical thinking skills

- Can identify similarities and differences between new information and what is already known
- Uses evidence to support his/her opinions
- Can assess the risks associated with different options
- Shows that he/she thinks about whether the information he/she uses is correct
- Can identify any discrepancies or inconsistencies or divergences in materials being analysed
- Can use explicit and specifiable criteria, principles or values to make judgments

Competence 9:

Tolerance of ambiguity

- Engages well with other people who have a variety of different points of view
- Shows that he/she can suspend judgments about other people temporarily
- Is comfortable in unfamiliar situations
- Works well in unpredictable circumstances
- Expresses a desire to have his/her own ideas and values challenged
- Enjoys the challenge of tackling ambiguous problems
- Expresses enjoyment of tackling situations that are complicated

Competence 12:

Skills of listening and observing

- Listens carefully to differing opinions
- Listens attentively to other people
- Watches speakers' gestures and general body language to help himself/herself to figure out the meaning of what they are saying
- Can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions
- Pays attention to what other people imply but do not say
- Notifies how people with other cultural affiliations react in different ways to the same situation

Competence 13:

Empathy

- Can recognise when a companion needs his/her help
- Expresses sympathy for the bad things that he/she has seen happen to other people
- Tries to understand his/her friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective
- Takes other people's feelings into account when making decisions
- Expresses the view that, when he/she thinks about people in other countries, he/she shares their joys and sorrows
- Accurately identifies the feelings of others, even when they do not want to show them

Competence 14:

Flexibility and adaptability

- Modifies his/her opinions if he/she is shown through rational argument that this is required
- Can change the decisions that he/she has made if the consequences of those decisions show that this is required
- Adapts to new situations by using a new skill
- Adapts to new situations by applying knowledge in a different way
- Adopts the sociocultural conventions of other cultural target groups when interacting with members of those groups
- Can modify his/her own behaviour to make it appropriate to other cultures

Competence 15:

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

- Can express his/her thoughts on a problem
- Asks speakers to repeat what they have said if it wasn't clear to him/her
- Asks questions that show his/her understanding of other people's positions
- Can adopt different ways of expressing politeness in another language
- Can mediate linguistically in intercultural exchanges by translating, interpreting or explaining
- Can avoid successfully intercultural misunderstandings

Competence 16:

Co-operation skills

- Builds positive relationships with other people in a group
- 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, keeps others informed about any relevant or useful information
- Generates enthusiasm among group members for accomplishing shared goals
- When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view

Competence 17:

Conflict-resolution skills

- Can communicate with conflicting parties in a respectful manner
- Can identify options for resolving conflicts
- Can assist others to resolve conflicts by enhancing their understanding of the available options
- Can encourage the parties involved in conflicts to actively listen to each other and share their issues and concerns
- Regularly initiates communication to help solve interpersonal conflicts
- Can deal effectively with other people's emotional stress, anxiety and insecurity in situations involving conflict

KNOWLEDGE AND CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

Competence 18:

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

- Can describe his/her own motivations
- Can describe the ways in which his/her thoughts and emotions influence his/her behaviour
- Can reflect critically on his/her own values and beliefs
- Can reflect critically on himself/herself from a number of different perspectives
- Can reflect critically on his/her own prejudices and stereotypes and what lies behind them
- Can reflect critically on his/her own emotions and feelings in a wide range of situations

Competence 19:

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

- Can explain how tone of voice, eye contact and body language can aid communication
- Can describe the social impact and effects on others of different communication styles
- Can explain how social relationships are sometimes encoded in the linguistic forms that are used in conversations (e.g. in greetings, forms of address, use of expletives)
- Can explain why people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions which are meaningful from their perspective
- Can reflect critically on the different communicative conventions that are employed in at least one other social group or culture

Competence 20:

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

- Can explain the meaning of basic political concepts, including democracy, freedom, citizenship, rights and responsibilities

- Can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others
- Can describe basic cultural practices (e.g. eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in one other culture
- Can reflect critically on how his/her own world view is just one of many world views
- Can assess society's impact on the natural world, for example, in terms of population growth, population development, resource consumption
- Can reflect critically on the risks associated with environmental damage
- Can explain the universal, inalienable and indivisible nature of human rights
- Can reflect critically on the relationship between human rights, democracy, peace and security in a globalised world
- Can reflect critically on the root causes of human rights violations, including the role of stereotypes and prejudice in processes that lead to human rights abuses
- Can explain the dangers of generalising from individual behaviours to an entire culture
- Can reflect critically on religious symbols, religious rituals and the religious uses of language
- Can describe the effects that propaganda has in the contemporary world
- Can explain how people can guard and protect themselves against propaganda
- Can describe the diverse ways in which citizens can influence policy
- Can reflect critically on the evolving nature of the human rights framework and the ongoing development of human rights in different regions of the world
- Can explain why there are no cultural groups that have fixed inherent characteristics
- Can explain why all religious groups are constantly evolving and changing
- Can reflect critically on how histories are often presented and taught from an ethnocentric point of view
- Can explain national economies and how economic and financial processes affect the functioning of society

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