



EXPLORING MEASURES AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

15. Creativity and key competences

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I am very pleased to be here today and to open today's discussion on creativity skills, their link to key competences, and, in particular, how the creativity of individuals can be supported and measured. As we all know, there is no doubt about the need for creativity and key competences in today's working life: globalisation brings both opportunities and challenges that education and training systems cannot ignore. Young people, indeed, need to learn how to use their full potential of creativity, to be able to turn challenges into opportunities and to see learning as a lifetime task for their personal, social and professional development.

The **European Framework of Key Competences** for lifelong learning, which describes the eight key competences, has proved to be a valuable tool for European cooperation in education and training, and as a reference point for national reforms of curricula and teaching, for both school students and adults. I am convinced that this European Framework can also be a useful tool for thinking about how creativity and innovation can best be promoted.

Let me start by raising three things that, in my view, link creativity and innovation to key competences. First, the innovation of the Framework of key competences is that it does not look at existing school systems and how learning is organised around subjects, but instead looks at the *desired outcomes* of schooling — what young people are *able* and *willing* to do after their initial education and training, in order to be prepared for adult life. This idea of competences as *learning outcomes* — the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes — helps us to look at the systems in a wider perspective, including their lifelong and life-wide aspects, as well as their quality. I think this perspective — which goes far beyond a static body of knowledge and involves the whole person — is both very helpful and very challenging for policymaking.

Secondly — and I think it is essential to keep this in mind — the key competences serve: personal fulfilment, social inclusion and active citizenship, and employability and professional development. In our post-industrial, ever more networked society, creativity is increasingly central to all these three areas of life. Almost gone are the days of repetitive industrial work and the fixed competences needed to perform it. Our societies are becoming ever more diverse and less traditionally-structured. The way we communicate is evolving at a dizzying speed, and is changing personal, social and work relationships and structures faster than anyone would have imagined even five years ago. This puts increasing demands on personal competences, not just knowledge, and in particular brings the need to adapt creatively.

Therefore the eight key competences include not only the ‘*traditional*’ competences like mother tongue, foreign languages, basic competences in maths and science, and digital competence, but also the more *transversal* ones such as learning to learn, social and civic competence, initiative taking and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression. The recommendation also makes it clear that creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the management of feelings, for instance, underpin all of these eight key competences.

Creativity as an integrated aspect of key competences

There are many definitions of creativity, but most of them refer to creativity being an *everyday activity for all people*, helping them to adapt to new situations and bringing something *new* and *useful*. Is this not, after all, one of the characteristics that makes us human? Creativity is required for our personal fulfilment, but also for the interpersonal or social dimension of our lives.

I think the framework of key competences enables us to look at creativity from all of these aspects. Creativity is an essential dimension of a ‘package’ of competences that prepares people to take their place in the knowledge society as active learners, citizens and contributors to economy. But if we look at each of the eight competences we can see clearly how creativity is embedded in each and every one of them. Some might think that only the competences ‘Initiative taking and entrepreneurship’ and ‘cultural expression and awareness’ are relevant for creativity and innovation. Yes, turning ideas into action, and expressing oneself through various forms or artistic and culture are indeed about creativity. But this is, I think, much too narrow a point of view. Creativity is an essential element of *each key competence*, and, on the other hand, creativity itself can be enhanced through the development of these competences.

Let me give you some examples:

- Creativity is an essential part of *mother tongue and languages*; we need only think of poetry and theatre ... Also, creativity is certainly a key in learning languages and getting acquainted with other cultures.
- Maths, science and technological competence, or the digital competences: without the dimension of creativity these would not lead to any innovation; creativity is an essential for innovations in these areas.
- Learning to learn, the very important competence for developing one's learning skills is about becoming aware of one's own learning style, gaining, processing, and assimilating new knowledge and skills autonomously and in groups. Creativity obviously enriches the learning process, and should be an aspect of any teaching activity.
- But we cannot ignore the role of creativity in the 'Social and civic' competence either. Creativity is a part of active citizenship, and can be enriched through interaction with others. In fact, the social aspect of creativity is at the heart of European diversity!

I think these examples show that creativity is an essential element of all key competences, and, in turn, possessing these competences help individuals to make full use of their creative potential.

Implementation and assessment of key competences

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me now say a few words on the implementation and assessment of the eight key competences and their creativity dimension. Obviously, the teaching of those competences that follow the division of knowledge and skills into traditional subjects is much easier for schools to organise, and it is much easier to measure students' progress in developing them. However, we still tend to assess mainly the knowledge part of competences, while the skills and attitudes that are essential for the creative use of knowledge are much more difficult to test in traditional ways. There are some good examples around, however, to which we should pay more attention; and the European project on an indicators for Learning to Learning is indeed a promising one.

But even more challenging are those competences — such as social and civic, entrepreneurship and cultural competences — that should be developed both within and across subjects and as a whole school project. I see here two main challenges.

First, the development of these competences calls for a whole school approach: a common vision on how the competences are best nurtured, more collaboration both

within schools and with the outside world, plus new kinds of leadership that encourages this to happen. In short, this calls for attention to the *creativity and innovation of schools as learning communities*.

The second challenge brings me to the topic of the day: assessment and evaluation. We tend to place more value on things that can be measured as this helps us to justify that what we do is useful and serves a purpose. This poses a major challenge for competences that are hard to measure, multidimensional and often qualitative in nature: they risk being left aside as they are not part of the formal testing system. And yet they are the *foundations* for lifelong learning. Creativity, for sure, belongs in this category.

Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, whilst I think the European Framework of key competences for lifelong learning provides a useful starting point for thinking about creativity and innovation, I am not at all sure it will give a straightforward answer on how to measure them. However, I think the framework well reflects the many dimensions of creativity in human nature and interaction as it gives equal importance to knowledge, skills and attitudes on the one hand, and on the use of competences for personal development, social inclusion and adaptation, and in the word of work, on the other. It allows us to examine competences and creativity as an underpinning quality both from the individual's point of view and from a systemic perspective — that is the kind of environment that nurtures creativity and work in that way.

I hope it will provide you with a useful starting point for today's discussions and I would like to encourage you to use it in a most creative way in our discussions today.