

FINAL EFEE REPLY TO REVIEW OF KEY COMPETENCES FRAMEWORK

19 May 2017

With this paper, the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) wishes to provide further input to the public consultation on the review of the 2006 Framework of Key Competences for lifelong learning. EFEE is a dynamic organisation established in 2009 to represent the interests of employers in the strategic and highly diverse European education sector. We represent 31 education employer organisations from 16 European countries in all levels of education, from pre-school to higher education and research. This includes different national organisations, such as education councils and ministries of education, associations of VET colleges and universities and local and regional authority employers' organisations.

It is our aim as education employers to make sure that the skills of our teachers, our professors, our researchers and our school leaders are excellent, up-to date and modern. At the same time, we must ensure that those we educate have the competences required by a modern society. In a world where change is continuous, it is not possible to predict accurately what specific competences will be required in the future. Accordingly, the emphasis has to be switched to the provision of key competences. EFEE therefore actively promotes the Key Competences Framework in its activities.

As mentioned in the consultation strategy, society has changed significantly since the introduction of the Framework in 2006 including (on-going) political, social, economic, ecological and technological developments. Intercultural awareness has become a pivotal competence in our diverse society. The current key-competences acknowledge the use of the 'own culture' as a basis for respect for other cultures. Nowadays 'own culture' has for a lot of citizens become a multilayer concept incorporating several cultures. It would therefore be recommendable to broaden the definition from 'cultural awareness' to 'intercultural awareness'. Furthermore, in order to make the definition of digital competences fit for the 21st century, it would be important to include computational thinking, besides the current emphasise on basic ICT-skills, media literacy, and information processing.

However, EFEE would like to underline that we need to be prudent in order to not harm our education systems by quick changes to fix for the current societal problems. Education should instead provide key skills and competences that give all Europeans the capacity to go on learning for the whole of their lives so that they may be able to adapt effectively to the changes that will affect all aspects of their lives—in the family, in the community, and in the workplace.

Therefore, it is in our view essential that the primary focus of the Framework remains on the broad set of key competences, as it is today, and not to include too narrow definitions of specific competences. Furthermore, it is not desirable to develop descriptors or achieving levels against which the key competences are tested and measured. Otherwise the framework will soon become out-dated. Besides, it could conflict with the transversal character of the Key Competences, which means that they are not standalone competences, but they are an integrated part of the whole learning process. It is of outmost importance that the definitions allow room for adapting them to specific local, regional and national circumstances, all the more because curriculum design and assessment of educational attainments fall strictly under the competences of Member States.

As described in the KeyCoNet report¹, since the introduction of the Framework Member States have introduced new policies and curricular frameworks in order to integrate key competences in curricula, engaging stakeholders, and investing in teacher and school capacity. Although the pace of implementation of the Framework differs per country, it would be undesirable to hamper on-going developments by proposing many new elements. More could be done however on awareness raising in order to strengthen the current implementation processes.

Furthermore peer learning could be an effective tool for sharing good practices on implementing competence based learning and meeting current challenges in the education sector, caused by political, social, economic, ecological and technological developments. EFEE and its members are very much willing to strongly contribute to such activities, as shows our active participation in the ET2020 working groups. We also welcome the DigComp and EntreComp as useful tools for the education sector, which have been developed during these working group sessions. For transparency reasons, it would be useful to define the relation between the Framework of Key Competences and these specific competence frameworks.

With our reply to the consultation questionnaire and this paper, we hope to have made a valuable contribution to the consultation on the review of the 2006 Framework of Key Competences for lifelong learning.

¹ Key Competence Network on School Education, *KeyCoNet's Conclusions and Recommendations for Strengthening Key Competence Development in Policy and Practice*, European Schoolnet November 2014