UEAPME[1] reply to the 2017 Public Consultation Review of the 2006 Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

Key comments

- UEAPME has continuously supported the 2006 Key Competence Recommendation and supports also its current review to update the competence framework to fit to new requirements on the labour market and in society as a whole.

- UEAPME has concluded that even if the process of defining key competences at EU level has merits in itself in terms of coordination of education policies and addressing common challenges, the real impact has been limited. We consider that the picture is rather mixed: some national curricula have clearly been inspired by the EU Key Competence Framework, but others have hardly been impacted. It may have proven to be relevant for some policy makers, but teachers and trainers are hardly aware of the framework.

- To be relevant for the labour market, UEAPME believes that the update should focus on new requirements. Lifelong learning as a concept needs to become the new normal, and the key competences should be geared towards this. Critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, and social skills are important examples, but UEAPME strongly supports in particular the increased focus on entrepreneurship, digital skills, and (practical) STEM skills.

- To facilitate adaptation of the framework to these developments, focus should not be lost. UEAPME considers it important to rationalise the framework and prioritise within each of the key competences. In each of the competences there should be a clear distinction between basic and more advanced elements of these competences in order to prevent that it becomes a blurred list of all things a person is to learn throughout his/her life. The lack of basic skills – literacy, numeracy, and (basic) digital skills – among EU citizens is and should remain the highest priority in education and training and are of key concern for Crafts and SMEs in Europe. With the increased importance of transversal skills, acquiring solid levels of basic skills become even more important on which the others can often only build.

- One of the main reasons for the limited uptake of the EU Key Competence Framework is the mixed nature of the key competences. Some of them are concrete and measurable skills, whereas others are rather transversal; some of them refer to basic skills and others are to be taught on more advanced levels Through prioritising and distinguishing better, the necessary skills should get the attention they deserve, and it should be clearer for end-users where to put more focus. In addition, if desired by end-users, it would facilitate to better attach clear targets to these competences. UEAPME therefore also supports further development of tools for implementation.

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- **The Key Competence Framework should become more flexible, and cross-referencing should become possible**. The Key Competence Framework consists of many skills and competences that are cross-cutting. Some of them belong to more than one key competence. Even if it is recognised that the 8 key competences are interlinked, the relation between them is not clear.

Specific Comments

- **Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship**:

UEAPME believes that the 2006 definition is still relevant and asks for consistency. It is important to keep the currently used term "entrepreneurship" rather than "entrepreneurial". The European Reference Framework for Entrepreneurship (Entrecomp/JRC) is considered to be a very useful reference tool.

Innovation, creativity and risk-taking are essential dimensions of understanding of an entrepreneurial mind-set. Financial and economic literacy are essential elements of entrepreneurial competences and require therefore at least a cross reference here.

- **Digital competence**:

UEAPME supports the increased focus on digital skills and the need to update to reflect the language used in the sector. The DigCompFramework is considered to be a very useful reference tool.

At the same time, UEAPME would strongly support an attempt to distinguish better between basic digital skills (i.e. for example those to be taught in elementary schools) and more advanced. Even if interaction with digital tools in general has become a part of daily life, a distinction is still useful and even important in what is essential and what is job-specific, as also recognised in the Commission's Skills Agenda.

- **Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology (STEM)**:

UEAPME supports the increased focus on STEM skills, but feels that the practical, applied dimension of such skills is not sufficiently reflected. The current definition, including the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the competence, have a rather academic approach. There needs to be more focus on the practical, vocational skills, including safe and secure use.

Brussels, 18 May 2017