



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

Workshop I

Learning to be – challenges to learners

Social and civic competences allow individuals to participate in social and working life in increasingly diverse societies; they include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence. Ability to communicate in foreign languages widens individual's horizons and increases awareness and understanding of other cultures.

The workshop will focus on the development of communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences:

- to stimulate the participants to share their experience with other practitioners, experts and policy-makers;
- to raise awareness on the topic and strengthen mutual learning;
- to explore and discuss examples of good policies and practices identified during the study visits.

The outcomes of the seminar will provide a better understanding of the policy and practice in this area, will be included in a publication and used to prepare study visits in the future.

The discussion should be structured on the following key points:

1. Why we need to develop key competences? What is the value of communication in foreign languages and social and civic competences for personal fulfilment, active citizenship and employability of European citizens?
2. How is the development of these competences integrated in the curricula in your countries?
3. Which pedagogical approaches, methods and materials that are used in your institutions/countries prove to better support the development of communication in foreign languages and social and civic competences? What support is provided to teachers in your countries?
4. Based on the discussions and on your own experience, which competences should most teachers acquire in order to develop key competences of students?

Summary of discussion

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1. In order to find out what the value of communication in foreign languages and social and civic competences is for personal fulfillment, active citizenship and employability of European citizens, the participants were asked to consider the following statements and to respond to one of them:
 - Students should learn foreign languages because...
 - Students should develop their social and civic competences because...

As a result of this exercise, the participants concluded that learning a foreign language:

- promotes co-existence, the key to social and democratic processes, opening minds and ways of thinking so that there is no such notion as a foreigner;
- supports holistic development enhancing soft/social skills;
- builds new approaches to life;
- supports mobility and contributes to the notion of the world as a global village.

Civic and social competencies:

- help inclusion and reduce disaffection;
- are essential for learners to become part of society;
- enhance effective contribution to society, formally, informally or through the world of work;
- promote active citizenship;
- help learners to be better members of society; to live alongside one another, enhance social integration and promote peace.

2. The second area for discussion was: *How is the development of these competences integrated in the curricula in your countries?* (for more detailed descriptions of the initiatives please see the [workshop booklet](#)):

Poland, Spain, Hungary, Portugal and Iceland gave examples of curriculum reform which reflected European recommendations to develop the key competences of communicating in foreign languages and social and civic competences.

From the Portuguese experience we learnt that it was important to train and support teachers in curriculum change because without this it is difficult to implement it.

In Poland, trainers have been trained to support the latest reform. They are subject specialists and are available for consultation to teachers in each province.

Hungary has four pillars for supporting reform: research and development, support system for training and for teachers, building leadership and management skills, communicating reasons for change.

In Iceland, they have given learners an active role in the decision-making process in schools, changing legislation to appoint two students to each school board; thus helping young people develop and apply social and civic skills in real life situations.

Portugal gave an example of school governance where the subject “Civics” is now the Environmental and Civic Council bringing together students, staff and the local community to change attitudes, working conditions and improve the school.

Spain showed how learners from isolated rural communities are brought together at residential centres to enable them to learn social skills. We also heard of the work of intercultural mediators who work with migrant families.

3. The next session focused on pedagogical approaches, methods and materials that prove to better support the development of communication in foreign languages and social and civic competences and on support provided to teachers (for more detailed descriptions of the initiatives please see the [workshop booklet](#)):

The development of foreign language competence

Cyprus showed us the use of **language rooms**; Poland gave us an example of **CLIL (content and language integrated learning)** through a Comenius project, and through the programme **Science in English**; Turkey developed motivation by **taking learners out of the classroom** for language classes; Italy used foreign languages to produce poems inspired by peace as part of the Comenius project “**Friendship and Universal Peace**”; Poland showed how **language** is introduced in **early years** education.

The development of social and civic competences

Italy focused on **fostering EU citizenship** through an award winning website, publications of poems, a study visit and the development of a school of peace. Spain and Portugal offered creative solutions to local problems of **rural isolation** and serious disaffection amongst young learners in their local school. Linked to this Hungary offered insight into the essential terms of engagement needed if young people are to have any meaningful influence on their learning environment. Poland and Latvia illustrated how they supported young learners from difficult backgrounds, by developing self-awareness in relation to others and through personal and life skills development. Some of this work is recognised by UNESCO.

4. The final point to discuss was *competences that teachers should acquire in order to develop key competences of students.*

Participants devised training programmes on school and guidance counselling; team building; intercultural communication and conflict management in order to identify and develop key competencies. These were agreed as:

critical thinking, critical reflection, communication skills (especially listening and language), mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution, openness to others and to

change, self awareness, reflection, the ability to learn from experience and to be able to work with the learner at the same level, leadership and team building skills.

Concluding thoughts about the learning environment were:

- school is part of a wider context that includes the community and the world of work;
- an effective school comes from teachers and learners working together;
- schools need to be forward looking as everything we do is an investment for the future;
- learners also have a lot to offer, teachers should learn from them too;
- all the partners in the learning/teaching process need to be involved at all levels;
- research needs to be integrated into policy making and help improve everyday life in school.