# Lifelong learning: key competences and access for all citizens

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PURPOSE: the adoption of **"Key Competences for lifelong learning – A European Reference Framework".**

PROPOSED ACT: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council (2006/0962/EC) on key competences for lifelong learning.

CONTENT: in 2000, the European Council meeting in Lisbon concluded that a European framework should be established in order to define the provision of new basic skills in the form of lifelong learning. As globalisation continues to confront the European Union with new challenges each citizen will need a wide range of key competences to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world. Since 2000 a number of Community initiatives have been adopted to help meet the needs outlined above.

The purpose of this Recommendation is to adopt "Key Competences for lifelong learning – A European Reference framework". The Recommendation and the Reference Framework define "competences" as: "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and the development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment."

The Recommendation, accompanied by the Reference Framework, should contribute towards the development of quality, future oriented education and training tailored to the needs of European society. It has been developed in order to support and supplement actions at a national level by ensuring that their initial education and training systems offer all young people the means to develop key skills to a level that equips them for adult life. It should also be able to allow adults to form a basis for further learning and working life. In essence, the framework, will act as a common European reference framework to be used by policy makers, education and training providers, the social partners and learners themselves.

**The Recommendation:**

Based on the above, the Recommendation invites the Member States to develop the provisions set out in the Reference Framework for all, or as part of, their lifelong learning strategies. By applying the Recommendation the Member States will endeavour to:

- offer all young people the means to develop skills that equips them for adult life and which forms a basis for further learning and working life;
- make the necessary provisions for those who, due to educational disadvantages caused by personal, social, cultural or economic circumstances, need particular support to fulfil their educational potential;
- help adults develop and update their key competences throughout their lives;
- offer an appropriate infrastructure for continuing education and adult training;
- achieve coherence in adult education and training for individual citizens and offering a close link with employment policy, social policy, cultural policy, innovation policy and other policies affecting young people.

**Key Competences for lifelong learning – a European reference framework:**

The main aims of the Reference Framework are to:

- identify and define the key competences necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social cohesion and employability in a knowledge society;
- support the work of the Member States to ensure that by the end of initial education and training young people have developed the key competences to a level that equips them for adult life and which forms a basis for further learning and working life. Adults should be able to develop and update their key competences throughout their lives;
- provide a European level reference tool for policy makers, education providers, employers and learners themselves to facilitate national and European level efforts towards commonly agreed objectives;
- provide a framework for further action at Community level both within the Education and Training 2010 work programme and within the Community Education and Training Programme.

The framework identifies eight key competences. They are:

**1) Communication in the mother tongue**: Defined as an ability to communicate in the mother tongue and to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinion in both oral and written form and to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in a full range of contexts.

**2) Communication in foreign languages**: Defined as an ability to communicate in a foreign language – broadly similar to that of communicating in the mother tongue. It is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form. It recognises that an individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions of listening, speaking, reading and writing and between the different languages.

**3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology**: Defined as the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions.

**4) Digital competence**: Defined as an ability to use the confident and critical use of Information Society technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT; the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.

**5) Learning to learn:** Defined as the ability to pursue and persist in learning and to organise one's own learning.

**6) Social and civic competences:** Defined as equipping individual to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life in increasingly diverse society. To encourage individuals to participate in civic life, based o n knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.

**7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship**: Defined as the ability to turn ideas into actions. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives.

**8) Cultural awareness and expression:** Defined as the ability to appreciate the importance of creative expression, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts.