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Guidelines on the implementation of the 8 key competences

**Approved by the Joint Teaching Committee at its meeting on 13 and 14 February 2020 in Brussels**

**Immediate entry into force**

**Guidelines on the use of the document Framework for the key competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools**

# Introduction (aims)

In October 2018, the Joint Teaching Committee approved the *Framework for the key competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools* (2018-09-D-69) with the intention to support a coherent implementation of the eight key competences in the curriculum. The aim of this present document is to provide practical guidance to on the implementation of the Framework, as it was requested by the Joint Teaching Committee.

The initiative is in line with one of the pedagogical priorities of the Spanish Presidency, namely, Priority 2.1: **Reform of the European Schools Curriculum:** “embed and strengthen the key competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools Curriculum”.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The present document gives a summary of the areas where teachers and school leaders may reflect on, and based on these reflections, possibly define their own strategies to address the development of the key competences in schools and classrooms.

The “Pedagogical Reform” Working Group recommends using the Framework and this Guidelines document at staff meetings (e.g. at the beginning of the school year), during **Pedagogical Days**, and on other occasions such as **during the induction of new teachers or teachers’ planning[[2]](#footnote-3)**. The document as well as other resources will be available online on the Pedagogical Material SharePoint[[3]](#footnote-4) and on the Pedagogical Development Unit SharePoint[[4]](#footnote-5).

The Guidelines is considered to be a dynamic document, which could be revised and amended every year to time, following the experiences and feedback from schools.

The Working Group wants to emphasise that there should be a common understanding of competence-based teaching and learning among the staff, and hopes that this publication will be appreciated by all stakeholders.



Figure 1: 8 Key competences (picture from European Commission)

# Recent developments: implementation of the New Marking System and adoption of the Digital Educational Vision

With the adoption of the new syllabi and the recent introduction of the **New Marking System**, the European Schools have taken important steps towards a competence-based teaching and learning. A change of mind-set is apparently well under way; however, evaluators observe that there is room for improvement in the implementation of the syllabi and the new assessment system. The aim of the “*Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools”* (2018-09-D-69) was to help bridge this gap by giving an overview of the curriculum in the light of the Key Competences. The document received general acknowledgement, but the boards advised the Pedagogical Reform Working Group to set up an implementation plan to support schools in their efforts to follow a coherent approach.

Since the adoption and implementation of the New Marking System, some other measures have also been taken to reinforce the Key Competences. The **Digital Educational Vision** of the European Schools (2018-12-D-7) approved by the Board of Governors in April 2019, is a strategic mission statement, which necessitates several other actions to make it a live initiative. Based on the Vision, the Continuous Professional Development Framework has been amended[[5]](#footnote-6), and at the same time, schools were obliged to allocate a certain amount in their budgets to promote **digital pedagogical trainings**. Subject Inspectors (with the help of the Pedagogical Development Unit) are working on digital Annexes (i.e. concrete teaching activities that give examples how the digital competence can be strengthened in each subject) to the existing syllabi.

Other proposals are on the pipeline, including the introduction of the long-**awaited cross-curricular project** in the Baccalaureate cycle, and there has been a working group dedicated to defining common elements in teachers’ forward planning, also with the aim to address the Key Competences.

# Overview of the Framework ([2018-09-D-69](https://www.eursc.eu/BasicTexts/2018-09-D-69-en-1.pdf))

In this section, you will find a short summary of the Framework.

*Chapter 1 - Introduction*

This chapter gives a definition and explanation of the concept of the Key Competences emphasizing the importance of each competence and of a better balance of competences. It states, “*The European Schools already support a competence-based approach to the curriculum, but there is room for improvement in the coherence of our approach*. “The recommended strategy is a combination of syllabus-based and cross-curricular approaches.

*Chapter 2 – Key competences so far*

The document takes a comprehensive look at the presence of the Key competences in the current curriculum. The “*broad curriculum from P1 to S5 provides significant opportunities for the development of most of the key competences through the curriculum as it is at present*”. The analysis also suggests “*that the communication competences, mathematics and science, social and civic competences are well catered for. But there are also some gaps, for example a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship isn’t really featuring*”, and other cross-curricular competences, such as the digital competence is not addressed properly in the entire period of schooling.

*Chapter 3 – Key competences in our Curriculum*

This chapter gives an overview of how the eight key competences are, or will be, developed through the curriculum from early years to secondary, year 7 (S7). Some competences are clearly visible in subjects that are closely aligned to the competence. Others will be developed through a number of subjects and some will be an important part of all subjects.

The following chart gives an overview how the Key competences are represented in the curriculum, up through the levels, excluding the Baccalaureate cycle (S6 and S7).

Figure 2: 8 Key competences in the Curriculum (P1 to S5)

The vertical axis ranging from 1-10 represents the years from Primary 1 to Secondary 5. The horizontal axis indicates the 100% of the curriculum, while the coloured bars equal to the proportion of each Key Competence in the curriculum. An estimation was made to define the proportion of each key competence in every subject each year. To take one example, in P1, it is assumed that 25% of the total teaching time (curriculum content) is devoted to L1. The estimation is based on the proportion of all subjects that contribute to the development of L1 in a smaller or larger extent. This means that the Literacy competence is not only developed in the actual L1 courses, but also in the frame of other subjects such as mathematics or discovery of the world, since they are taught in L1. Similarly, the digital competence is taught through other subjects, therefore, it is estimated that e.g. in S5, approximately 5 % of the total content/teaching time is used for developing pupils’ digital skills. The blank (grey) bar is reserved for pupils’ elective optional subjects, not being broken down into competences. When estimating, the working group assumed that all syllabuses should address the eight key competences. In other words, each competence is reflected in each subject syllabus. For example, the digital competence is integrated in the learning objectives of each subject syllabus, and not only during the two years when ICT is a mandatory subject.

*Chapter 4 – Getting Deeper into the Competences*

This chapter takes us a little deeper into the eight key competences, presenting each one in terms of its essential knowledge, core skills and attitudes. This helps to clarify what each of the competences sets out to achieve for learners. The tables have been designed to support reflection on where the key competences are most appropriate to the different school stages and subject areas. Blank tables may be useful for schools and teachers to plan for the development of key competences in their schools and classrooms (see Appendix 2 of the Framework document).

*Chapter 5 – Supporting the Development of the key competences*

This chapter looks at what else needs to happen to ensure that learners benefit from the development of key competences. While making sure that the competences are covered in the curriculum is a very important first step, real change will only happen at school and classroom level.

# From framework to action

It is extremely important to make sure that all actors share a common understanding of what is meant by the competence-based approach. Actors who are responsible for trainings (inspectors, members of school management, teachers) are recommended to refer to the concept of the Key competences, while planning their training measures.

Experience shows that there is an immense potential of dedicated and highly professional teachers in the system, who would be willing to share their experiences with other colleagues, and at the same time would be ready to learn from others. The Office of the Secretary General, in liaison with the inspectors is setting up online tools[[6]](#footnote-7) to promote this culture of horizontal transfer of knowledge.

In the following table, you will find an overview of some of the latest pedagogical developments in system level. We encourage our readers to consider these initiatives and good practices, and then record ideas that could be further developed and shared.

# Overview of the measures supporting the Key competences: actions, initiatives

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **System-level** | **Possible actions in the school** | **Reflections** |
| **Key competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools (2018-09-D-69)**Framework/background to promote the embedding of the Key Competences in the schools. | E.g. use the Framework when a new teacher joins the school (induction of new teachers)Use of tables/templates in Annex 2 of the Framework |  |
| **Competence-based syllabuses and assessment**Every ES syllabus follows the pattern/structure laid down in document ref. 2019-09-D-27 (Structure of all syllabi) to cover the 8 key competences.In the primary school, competence-based assessment system has been in use for several years.Attainment descriptors were adopted, and the introduction of the secondary school’s New Marking System took place in 2018-2019.In 2021, the New Marking System will be used in the European Baccalaureate examination. Matrices, sample Bac papers and marking schemes will be published after February 2020.Trainings linked with the New Marking SystemNew Science Syllabi with proposals for a wide range of teaching and assessment activities. Centralised and de-centralised trainings to facilitate the introduction of the new syllabi.Legal basis to nominate “subject referents” in each school to support the introduction of the new, competence-based syllabuses, and help school management in training etc. in the schools. A time reduction (*décharge*) is possible.Annexes to syllabuses will be developed as appropriate. | E.g. nomination of subject referents in the schoolAnalysing implementation of the NMSTraining measures in the school…  |  |
| **Development of the digital competence**Digital Educational Vision of the European Schools (DEVES) adopted by the Board of Governors in April 2019. Several policies related to DigComp in the pipeline.A Common Framework for the Digital Competence with short sample teaching activities to amend syllabuses with digital activities (in annexes)[[7]](#footnote-8) Obligation to earmark 50 Euros per teacher in each school when planning the budget of the school. | E.g. SELFIE tool[[8]](#footnote-9) to assess the level of competences (pupils, teachers, management)Directors can designate a coordinator for SELFIE |  |
| **Inter-School Events (ESS, FAMES, Eurosport etc.)**Handbooks approved and published. Harmonised budgeting and planning of the events are foreseen after February 2020. | E.g. similar events facilitating the acquisition of the 8 KCs |  |
| **Continuous Professional Development Framework**The platforms for sharing information has been set up:<https://eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/PedagogicalDevelopment> <https://eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/pedagogicalmaterial>  | E.g. teachers visiting each other’s’ classesEach school is supposed to plan 50 Euros in their budget for pedagogical digital training purposes |  |

# Teachers’ planning

Currently, there is no common template (used in all schools) for the yearly planning of teaching and learning, although written planning is a mandatory task of every teacher in every school[[9]](#footnote-10). Periodic and annual plans must be submitted to the directors, who make sure that the planning documents follow a uniform structure at school level. These school templates make it possible that the actual work done in class is aligned with the syllabus and in the case of the teacher’s absence, a colleague can back up his/her colleague. The regulations ensure that these aims are fulfilled, but they do not guarantee that all the competences are tackled. It is the teacher’s task, regardless of the subject he/she teaches, to reflect on how he/she would be addressing all the competences, be they closely related to the subject or a cross-curricular one such as the digital competence or entrepreneurship.

Planning should not tie teachers’ hands and certainly should not stop them from being flexible and creative. Teaching and learning in the classroom should take place by taking into account the actual needs and the pace of learning of the pupils. The Pedagogical Reform Working Group proposed a sub-group dedicated to work on teachers’ planning, and following the mandate received from the Joint Teaching Committee in October 2019, *as an interim measure, to add a short section on the Key competences* to the existing planning templates. In this section, teachers would reflect on how the cross-curricular (and other) competences are present in their activities in the forthcoming school year.[[10]](#footnote-11)

Annex 2 of the Framework document contains some templates to help teachers consider how they could make sure that *all* the key competences have at least a certain share in the classroom and during other activities.

Teachers can plan how they will integrate aspects of the key competences into classroom practice by reflecting on the links between their subjects and the knowledge, skills and attitudes that make up the key competences. The tables should prove useful in this respect, especially for annual planning. Blank templates are provided in the annex to aid teachers for short-term planning.

**An example from Annex 2[[11]](#footnote-12): Multilingual Competence**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   |  |
| *This competence defines the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication. It broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication of literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express, and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts according to one’s wants or needs. As appropriate, it can include maintaining and further developing mother tongue competences. A learner’s level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions and between the different languages.*   |  |
| Essential Knowledge*Students know about*  | **Where in our school/my classroom?**  |
| * An appropriate range of vocabulary
 |   |
| * Functional grammar
 |   |
| * The main types of verbal interaction
 |   |
| * Different styles and registers of language
 |   |
| * How language and culture vary in different contexts
 |   |
| * The role of language in their own and other cultures
 |   |
| * Societal conventions
 |   |
|   |   |
| Core skills*Students should be able to*   | **Where in our school/my classroom?**   |
| * Understand spoken messages in the foreign language
 |   |
| * Initiate, sustain, and conclude conversations
 |   |
| * Read, understand and produce texts, including digital texts, appropriate to their needs
 |   |
| * Use tools appropriately and engage with languages formally, non-formally and informally
 |   |
| * Monitor and adapt their own communication to the requirements of the situation
 |   |
| * Appreciate how cultural differences influence language use and communication
 |   |
|   |   |
| Attitudes*Students value*  | **Where in our school/my classroom?**  |
| * Learning new languages
 |   |
| * Cultural diversity
 |   |
| * The role of languages in learning about their own and other cultures
 |   |
| * Intercultural communication
 |   |
| * Respect for each person’s individual linguistic profile
 |   |
| * Respect for the mother tongue of persons belonging to minority groups and those with a migrant background
 |   |

**Interpretation and possible use of the table “Multilingual Competence”**

The European Schools as a multilingual education system places emphasis on the learning and use of languages for learning other subjects. It is commonly said that in the European Schools, “every teacher is a language teacher”, which refers to the special responsibility of our teachers, and the mission of the Schools to pursue a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. As an example, a teacher of a science subject pays special attention to pupils’ language skills besides the competences related to and embedded in the subject programmes. On the one hand, he or she adjusts the language level of teaching to the actual level of the pupils and also considers teaching the required vocabulary items and relevant sentence structures, which makes it possible for the pupils to fully understand the concepts, and to be able to apply what has been learnt in different contexts. It would be natural that a Language 2 teacher would find it much easier to fill in every single line of this table, and also understandable if in the case of science teachers, more focus would be given to the terminology of the subject, and the teaching of the construction of at least basic scientific written texts. The work with the template can support the teacher to reflect if the language he/she uses is appropriate or if the assessment tasks are in line with the linguistic level of the pupils.

Some questions that could lead the discussion of teachers (e.g. with other teachers of the same subject):

* Which of the competences fit best with our program/subject/project?
* What aspects of those competences can we incorporate into our annual/lesson/project plans?
* Looking at the descriptors of the Essential knowledge, Core skills and Attitudes for the relevant competences, what teaching and learning, and assessment approaches can we incorporate to support students to develop these competences?
* Are there any ways that we can bring a number of these aspects of the competences together to enrich students’ learning? For example, are there aspects of the Entrepreneurship competence, the Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Competence or the Digital Competence that could be incorporated into our subject or project planning?
* What assessment approaches could we take that will strengthen the competences we are focusing on?

**Teachers are not expected to cover each Key Competence in the same proportion, but it seems to be a realistic expectation that more than just the subject-specific competences should be covered.** The aim is to make planning transparent, therefore, inform school management and parents, while encouraging teachers to practice self-reflection.

# Some questions for directors and deputy directors to guide their planning

The following questions mainly focus on the possibilities of promoting the development of the Key Competences in the actual teaching and learning and in school life in general. These questions could be used in discussions, or during preparation for Whole School Inspection, for planning the coming school year or for multi-annual planning.

* How does the training strategy of our school support the development of key competences?
* How are we promoting sharing knowledge in the school?
* Is the role of subject referents clear? Does the school make use of this function?
* How does the school support differentiation in class?
* Does the physical environment encourage pupils’ cooperation? Are there spaces that facilitate cooperation/sharing information/innovation/educational support etc.?
* What do we do to promote the development of digital competence in teaching and learning? Are we running/planning to run a project to integrate digital tools and competences in teaching?
* When school trips, project days etc. are planned, how is it ensured that they aim to develop pupils’ competences in a way that is in line with the Framework of the Key Competences? Is it a criterion when accepting proposals for projects of this kind?

Directors and deputy directors are encouraged to continue this set of questions.

# Subject referents

The role of subject referent is a new one. This role was separated from the role of the subject coordinator as the latter role was overloaded and it would not be possible for the coordinators to do the work required from the subject referent to be delivered. Of course, the workload very much depends on the subject, and on the number of teachers who teach the subject in the school. The Director may decide whether to appoint a subject referent. This role had been created to ensure the harmonized introduction and roll out of new syllabi. In March 2017, the Budgetary Committee agreed on a roadmap that sets out the introduction of an updated syllabus in each subject area in every ten years, as a pedagogical decision with financial impact. The coordination of the introduction of the syllabus in each school is normally the role of the subject referent.

Syllabus-related **tasks** of the Subject Referent:

* to train/coach/accompany his/her (new) colleagues;
* to gather and communicate good practice, difficulties, training needs of teachers/staff for implementation of the syllabus;
* to contribute to a SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of implementation of the syllabus;
* to coordinate harmonised planning in the subject/area;
* to serve as a link:
	+ Internal: management-teachers-cycles, subject coordinators etc.
	+ External: network with other ES, Inspectors etc.
* to inform the management and colleagues.

Obviously, in the first 2-3 years following the introduction of the new syllabus, the focus is on the successful implementation of the curriculum, which is a considerable workload even in smaller schools with only 3 or 4 sections, let alone large schools, where the number of sections can be as high as 6-8. The time required would be 2-3 periods per week in the first 2-3 years and afterwards it could be reduced to 1 in the following 3-year period, and finally to none (or a few) in the last 4 years as the work would be minor by that time.

In order to facilitate the work of subject referents, they are encouraged to network across schools. Common digital platforms (O365 Teams) are in operation to ensure that this kind of collaboration takes place more and more frequently.

# Further steps: assessment of the competences

This dynamic document is intended to be regularly revised and completed, as indicated in the introduction. While generally supporting the approval of the document, the members of the Pedagogical Reform Working Group have considered that the some more areas should be explored in the near future, in order to more completely support teachers and all actors in the European Schools.

There was an agreement that besides providing teachers with background information on the Key Competences and the possible teaching and learning approaches, the Pedagogical Reform Working Group should also consider focusing on the assessment and validation of competences in the future. A comprehensive assessment system of the non-subject related Key Competences would help learners better understand their learning styles, their needs and development, and it would give feedback to teachers on the validity of their planning, their methodology and on the extra-curricular and other activities practised in the schools. Assessment approaches would help better understand where our pupils are in the process of acquiring the competences before entering the labour market or before beginning their higher education studies. Also, a suitable assessment system would have an influence on how competences are taught.

With the development of the ES-specific DigComp Framework, amended with the EntreComp Framework, the first step will be taken (to be completed by October 2020), but means of assessing other Key Competences should also be investigated, perhaps concluding in a more formal recognition (perhaps even a certificate) of the progress our pupils have made.

As it is made clear in this Guidelines, there are several plans for the future, but the Working Group deemed the current document mature enough to be used in schools in the induction of new teachers, in the planning activities, and also during evaluations and trainings.

# Opinion of the Joint Board of Inspectors:

**The JBI expressed a favourable opinion on the *Guidelines on the implementation of the 8 Key Competences in the European Schools* and recommended that the Joint Teaching Committee should approve them, with immediate entry into force.**

# Decision of the Joint Teaching Committee:

**The JTC approved the *Guidelines on the implementation of the 8 Key Competences*, with immediate entry into force. The JTC also mandated the Pedagogical Reform Working Group to continue its work in the Key Competences area and to develop a comprehensive system for assessment of the non-subject-related Key Competences for the future. Annex 2, *Common elements of the school planning templates*, would be added to the final version of the document 'Introduction of the eight key competences into the pedagogical planning templates of the European Schools' (Ref. 2020-01-D-61).**

# Annex 1: examples of online resources on Entrepreneurship, and other competences

* Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1553162844939&uri=CELEX%3A32018H0604%2801%29>
* EntreComp into Action:<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/entrecomp-action-get-inspired-make-it-happen-user-guide-european-entrepreneurship-competence>
* [www.youthstart.eu](http://www.youthstart.eu)
* Learning toolkit for teachers: <https://www.i-linc.eu/web/portal/resources/articles-and-research/details?urlTitle=i-linc-entrepreneurial-learning-toolkit-for-educators-published&articleId=386879>
* Entrecomp Assessment: <http://entreassess.com/>

Please find below the link to the European Schools Pedagogical Development Unit SharePoint, where a collection of documents and other information regarding the Key Competences will be available: <https://eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/PedagogicalDevelopment> > 8 Key Competences.

# Annex 2: Common elements of the school planning templates

*The following section will be inserted into the final Guidelines if the JTC approves the proposal of the Harmonised Planning sub-working group on a common table applied as a temporary measure.*

Note on the common element:

The eight key competences for lifelong learning are now part of all syllabi and need to be considered when planning annual programmes and classes. All competences are relevant to all subjects/curriculum areas, but they do not all have to be addressed at the same time. Use the table below to reflect on which of the key competences you plan to focus on in your subject area during the year/semester and how you will incorporate aspects of the competences into your planning.

Use the Comment column to describe some of the activities that you plan in a number of the competences and select from the drop-down menu to indicate the level of engagement that your class is likely to experience (to a large extent, to some extent, not at all). It is very likely that you will focus more on some competences than others during a programme.

For more information on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of each of the competences, consult the planning templates in the Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018-09-D-69-en-3, annex , appendix 2; see [eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/PedagogicalDevelopment](https://eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/PedagogicalDevelopment/) > 8 key competences).

# …

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Competence** | **Approach taken/Examples/Comments** | **Level of engagement** |
| Not at all | To some extent | To a large extent |
| Literacy |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Languages |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Science, technological engineering and mathematical |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Digital |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Personal, social and learning |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Civic |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Entrepreneurship |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |
| Cultural awareness and expression |  | [ ]  | [ ]  | [ ]  |

1. **Priorities of the Spanish Presidency of the European Schools 2019/2020** Ref.: 2019-10-D-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. A dedicated Working Group has been mandated by the Boards of Inspectors to address the systematic induction of all new teachers, therefore, it is highly recommended that this Guidelines is considered as part of the induction package. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/pedagogicalmaterial> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://eursc.sharepoint.com/sites/PedagogicalDevelopment> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. With a specific chapter concerning the IT training policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. E.g. Pedagogical Material site (SharePoint) and 0365 Teams. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Foreseen for October 2020 and February 2021 for the Annexes. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://schools-go-digital.jrc.ec.europa.eu>, and support site for the European Schools [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The following documents should be mentioned here: *Quality assurance and development in the European schools (2000-D-264); Recommendations for a harmonized lesson planning (2001-D-54); Guidelines for planning in the nursery and primary school of ES (2008-D-5410) and the General rules regulation 2014-03-D-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The common section would basically be a **short statement** of the teacher **(reflection)** how he/she is planning to cover and incorporate the 8 KCs, and an indication of the weight of each competence. If the JTC approves the common element that should be included in each school’s planning document, it will then be inserted into the current chapter of this document. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Extracted from the “Framework for Key competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Schools (2018-09-D-69)” [↑](#footnote-ref-12)