



EFFE Position Paper for the Review of the EU K-Competences Framework

EFFE welcomes EC's wise initiative to review the 2006 Framework of Key-Competences for Lifelong Learning, because major changes have occurred in European societies since that date. Two in particular are of deepest importance for the future of education : the adoption by most EU Member States of 1. the UN-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and 2. the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Both of them imply deep societal changes which need **new competences** in order to achieve 1. an *inclusive society*, and 2. a *sustainable society*. Leading European and international organisations (UNO, UNESCO, EU) repeatedly call for these changes and for the development of the related competences, while Member States are implementing politics accordingly.

But in both cases the very core of the needed changes remains still largely misunderstood.

In fact, a society where people have access to all facilities whatever their differences but not really as co-actors is not yet an inclusive society, only an integrative society. Likewise, a school where all pupils with differences are not mostly *taught together* with all other pupils is not inclusive, but at best integrative. In addition, an inclusive school *is centered on each child individually* and not the contrary (each child having to adapt to class), programs are attuned to each child's specific needs, and all pupils taught together, *to the full extent of their potentialities* (Salamanca Declaration 1994, Charter of Luxembourg 1996). And in fact, those three conditions and the skills, attitudes and knowledges they imply constitute the soundest basis and best preparation for the actual participation of everyone to the free society recommended by the UNCRPD, 2006.

On this basis, and compared to integration, inclusion appears to many researchers as a « reversal of perspective » (Benoit, 2008), a « radically different approach » (Vienneau, 2006), a « complete revolution » (Wilhem, 2006).

The competence needed for creating a successful inclusive school and society encompasses most of all cognitive, personal, social, and civic skills already stated in the 2006 Key competences, plus three fundamental new ones : *benevolence* (which is more than empathy, Gueguen; Ricard; Belin), *full development of human potential* (UNCRDP), and *ability to relate* (with oneself, with others, with environment and with society; Ebersold, Pain & Vulbeau): "Inclusion, fundamentally, is existential togetherness." (Eichholz)

A school that has become inclusive all over, up to its way of functioning and organising, up to the relations between adults themselves, is already in itself an example of an inclusive society, and children thus raised easily relate with all differences, and become most competent to build an inclusive society at large.

Experienced examples exist, for instance in towns like Velbert-Langenberg, Münster, Templin (see German Bibliography).¹ And a longtime researcher on inclusive school like Schnell (2015) states that inclusion has become "one of the most crucial tasks in educational politics, because of the change it promises".

As for sustainable development, "Education ... could well be the most conducive place to foster changes of mentalities, practices and representations related to sustainable development" (INRP). Although a host of comprehensive texts have been published on ESD (UNESCO, EU Council 2010, Rio+20, Ministries of education...) we can't but observe in practice a deep misunderstanding almost everywhere, in politics, education, training, business and society at large. Usually, actors consider they

¹See also Dorrance & Dannenbeck; Eichfeld & Schuppener; Schnell; Hinz, in ZfI (see Bibliography).

do sustainable development when they juxtapose one action for economy, one for environment and one for social benefit, doing a little bit of all three, instead of fully taking into account, in each action, the economical, the environmental and the social issues and needs intrinsically connected with that action – which often means the ability to find solutions that overcome tensions between those issues. (See e.g. Quebec sustainable development Law, I.I.2, 2006 : “Sustainable development is based on a long-term approach which takes into account the inextricable² nature of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of development activities”; see also EU Council, 2010 : “the 3 fundamental pillars... should be addressed in a balanced and integrated³ manner”).

The ability to deal with such issues needs special skills and attitudes, not yet mentioned in the “2006 Key competences”, including *complex thinking, grasping major issues, systems thinking, anticipation, prospective vision, normative competency, self-awareness, integrated problem solving, responsible approach* (to common goods, to the wealth of man and nature), *guidance for change, managing the unexpected and uncertainty* (Unesco, EU Council 2010, Darras, Diemer & Marquat, Gwet, Morin), and *ability to relate* (as for Inclusion, above).

Thus two unique key competences emerge quite obviously : Inclusion competency and Sustainability competency. And the special beauty of those two competences is that they not only support the building of an inclusive and sustainable society, but also provide for the appearance and development of new human potentialities (as can already be observed in some inclusive schools), and therefore for the sprouting of a serendipitous future life and society.

Both competencies are thus paramount for the needs of our present societies. We start to feel their fundamental necessity in all realms of life (individual, social and civic life, work and economy, administration, politics and governance, cultural and associative life). As they are crucial for the sustainable and inclusive society we need to build from now on, they should be better understood, practiced and taught at all stages of educational life, from early childhood to higher education, as well as through non formal and informal education all life long (e.g. EU Council 2010 recommends to address “ESD issues among the priorities of the Lifelong Learning program and other relevant existing or future programs”).

The 2006 key competences should be fully maintained (after revision), but could be reorganised differently. For example Communication, Digital and STM competencies could be gathered under “Cognitive competences”. And three more blocks of skills could be added: Personal competences (Learning to learn, Initiative & Entrepreneurship, Cultural awareness), Civic competences and Social competences. So we would have 6 key-competences altogether, that make sense without redundancies.

EU Council (2010) rightly and comprehensively outlines all aspects to be considered and implemented for ESD. Thus stakeholders whatever their specific field become conscious of their role. And Member States are passing laws on ESD, according to EU Council and UNESCO requirements. But promulgating laws is not enough to have them implemented. Structural changes, systemic changes, training, awareness raising, presentation of examples and regular evaluations are needed. For instance, EU Council (2010) rightly asserts: “a “whole-school” approach to ESD is actively promoted and supported, including by removing barriers to institutions which are pursuing the sustainable use of their resources” and this recommendation would be equally needed for education towards inclusion.

EU Council and Commission could remedy implementation shortcomings by inviting or recommending Member States to produce roadmaps, frameworks, and regular reports on their evaluations, on the obstacles they have to overcome, on solutions found, on the *allover strategy* they steadily implement in order to secure that all conditions for successful education towards inclusion, sustainable development, and acquirement of all cognitive, personal, social and civic competences are being fulfilled.

Finally, one Framework to develop and understand Inclusive Competence and one for Sustainable Development Competence would be very useful.

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²Underscored by the author of this Position paper

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