



# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CDP) 2021

## THEMATIC CDP BRIEFS 2

### Competences' frameworks



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP  
LE PARTENARIAT AFRIQUE-UE



## AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)

Capacity development programme (CDP) 2021



### Thematic CDP briefs 2 Competences' frameworks

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## 1 WHAT ARE COMPETENCES' FRAMEWORKS

There is growing consensus on the new prominent place of the notions of skills and competences in relation to: i) development of human capabilities in general, whereby the dissemination of skills and competence frameworks illustrate this dimension; ii) skills intelligence; iii) matching supply and demand in the labour market.

Although recognition of the competencies that are important for the workforce has long been endorsed, it is relatively recently that calls for their development have moved from a strongly vocational stance to an educational one, for both work, personal development and life perspective (UNESCO, 2016).

A number of competence frameworks have emerged in different regions of the world, as result of international cooperation on education and training. The EU, UNESCO (Asia Pacific) and Council of Europe have adopted competence frameworks targeting different domains, as for example:

- UNESCO Asia-Pacific (Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific): ERI-Net's **framework on transversal competencies** (UNESCO, 2016).
- Council of Europe: **Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC)**
- In the European Union (EU): **Key competences for lifelong learning (LLL)** (2006, revised in 2018); digital skills (2013); EntreComp - entrepreneurship competence (2016)



## 2 DEFINING SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

In-depth discussion of the definitions of "skills" and "competences" goes beyond the scope of this brief, but a succinct overview is nonetheless useful.

### ➤ Competence

Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. EQF Recommendation 2017. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1)



### ➤ Skills

A bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learnt and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning. <http://www.oecd.org/education/47769000.pdf>

'Skills' means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1)

The various skills / competence initiatives, international surveys, research and analysis refer to a range of related concepts: basic skills, vocational / technical skills, soft skills, transversal skills, behavioural skills, entrepreneurship competence, digital skills and their elements. Research highlights that soft skills are not less vital than technical skills for employment in a wide range of occupations.

"Skills / competences" can be used in the broad sense and covering different types, beyond technical skills for a job. For the purposes of the Europass Decision of 18/04/2018 (pg 9),

➤ "Skills are understood in a broad sense covering what a person knows, understands and can do. Skills refer to different types of learning outcomes, including knowledge and competences, as well as ability to apply knowledge and to use knowhow in order to complete tasks and solve problems. In addition to the acknowledged importance of professional skills, there is acknowledgement that transversal or soft skills, such as critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving and creativity, digital or language skills, are increasingly important and are essential prerequisites for personal and professional fulfilment and can be applied in different fields. Individuals could benefit from tools and guidance on assessing and describing those and other skills."

In the EU Recommendation of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (LLL) competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

➤ All key competences are equally important. Key competences are those, which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, employability, social inclusion, sustainable lifestyle, successful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active citizenship. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, analytical skills, creativity, and intercultural skills are embedded throughout the key competences.

The ERI-Net's framework on transversal competences (UNESCO) likewise takes a wide view combining skills, competencies, values and attitudes.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT SOME COMPETENCE FRAMEWORKS



There are many frameworks, which describe the skills or competencies that this 21st century world demands and they display strong commonalities. These include descriptions of how people think, act, use tools, and interact.

Let us start with the humankind's overarching framework for sustainable development adopted by the global community of countries at the United Nations – the "Sustainable Development Goals 2030". SDG 4, in its target 4.7 mentions the indispensable knowledge and skills that all learners need to develop by 2030, as follows:



“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

The SDG Knowledge Platform offers detailed information on progress of each of the seventeen SDG at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>.

### UNESCO – Asia-Pacific

The framework for transversal competencies is derived from the studies by the Asia-Pacific Education Research Institutes Network (ERI-Net), which is hosted by UNESCO Bangkok. Globally, there is increasing recognition of the relevance of transversal competencies development in education. This framework is structured in six vast domains:

TABLE 1: ERI-Net’s framework on transversal competencies (UNESCO, Asia-Pacific)

DOMAINS	EXAMPLES OF KEY SKILLS, COMPETENCIES, VALUES AND ATTITUDES
<b>Critical and innovative thinking</b>	Creativity, entrepreneurship, resourcefulness, application skills, reflective thinking, reasoned decision making
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	Communication skills, organisational skills, teamwork, collaboration, sociability, collegiality, empathy, compassion
<b>Intrapersonal skills</b>	Self-discipline, ability to learn independently, flexibility and adaptability, self-awareness, perseverance, self-motivation, compassion, integrity, self-respect
<b>Global citizenship</b>	Awareness, tolerance, openness, responsibility, respect for diversity, ethical understanding, intercultural understanding, ability to resolve conflicts, democratic participation, conflict resolution, respect for the environment, national identity, sense of belonging
<b>Media and information literacy</b>	Ability to obtain and analyse information through ICT, ability to critically evaluate information and media content, ethical use of ICT
<b>Other (physical health, religious values)</b>	Appreciation of healthy lifestyle, respect for religious values

Source: UNESCO (2016), pg 4

These examples of skills competencies, values and attitudes proposed by the ERI-Net’s framework on transversal competencies share many commonalities with the EU Key Competences Framework.

### European Union (EU) competences frameworks – information for citizens

#### EU Key Competences Framework

Key competences for LLL	<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en">https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en</a>
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As a result of EU cooperation on education and training, the Council of the European Union adopted the Recommendation on Key Competences for LLL. The first Recommendation (2006) was revised in 2018, as one of the 10 actions of the new Skills Agenda for Europe.

Reaching out to the wider public, including learners, is one of the central objective of this framework. It wants to “provide a European reference tool for policy makers, education and training providers, educational staff, guidance practitioners, employers, public employment services and learners themselves”.

Detailed information for the public is disseminated at [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en).

The EU identified eight key competences needed for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.

The eight Key Competences of this framework are wide-ranging. They include many of the competences of the UNESCO (Asia-Pacific) transversal competences framework. In addition, the EU Key competences framework comprises basic competences (literacy, mathematical, science, technology, engineering).

TABLE 2: EU Key competences for LLL

➤ 1	Literacy competence
➤ 2	Multilingual Competence
➤ 3	Mathematical, science, technology, engineering
➤ 4	Digital
➤ 5	Personal, social and learning to learn
➤ 6	Citizenship
➤ 7	Entrepreneurship
➤ 8	Cultural awareness and expression

### Other EU competence frameworks

Among the competence frameworks developed by the EU and its Member States, the Digital Skills Framework, and the Entrepreneurship Competences Framework have significant public visibility. Online information platforms for different publics, and user guidance and tools for self-assessment support both frameworks. A pick of resources available on these platforms show a focus to deliver information to citizens and encourage application and use of these tools.



TABLE 3: Other EU competence frameworks

DIGITAL SKILLS	
Digital Skills Framework for Citizens	<p><a href="https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp">https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp</a></p> <p><b>DigComp into Action: Get inspired, make it happen. A user guide to the European Digital Competence Framework</b></p> <p><b>DigComp 2.0: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. Update Phase 1: the Conceptual Reference Model.</b></p> <p><b>DigComp 2.1: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use</b></p>
Digital skills framework for educators	<p><a href="https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcompedu">https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcompedu</a></p> <p>DigCompEdu details 22 competences organised in six Areas. The focus is not on technical skills. Rather, the framework aims to detail how digital technologies can be used to enhance and innovate education and training.</p>
Digital skills framework for organisations	<p><a href="https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomporg">https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomporg</a></p>
COMPASS – digital skills	<p><a href="https://www.compassdigitalskills.eu/">https://www.compassdigitalskills.eu/</a></p>
COMPASS – Dashboard to the digital self-assessment and learning tool	<p><a href="https://www.compassdigitalskills.eu/competency-select/create">https://www.compassdigitalskills.eu/competency-select/create</a></p>
Entrepreneurship competence framework	<p><a href="https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp">https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp</a></p>



## SOURCES

European Union. 2017. EQF Recommendation 2017. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615\(01\)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=EN#d1e32-20-1)

European Union. 2018. DECISION (EU) 2018/646 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) and repealing Decision No 2241/2004/EC. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D0646&rid=9>

UNESCO. 2016. Assessment of transversal competencies – Policy and practice in the Asia-Pacific region, 2016. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246590>

UNESCO Institute of Statistics. 2013. ISCED Fields of Education and Training (ISCED-F 2013). Available at: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>



## COMPETENCES FRAMEWORKS

### A. Key competences

EU- Key competences for lifelong learning

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&rid=7](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7)

UNESCO: transversal competencies

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246590>

### Competences for Democratic Culture

Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008318-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-1-8573-co/16807bc66c>

### B. Digital competences frameworks

#### 1. Digital skills framework for citizens

- <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp>
- DigComp into Action: Get inspired, make it happen. A user guide to the European Digital Competence Framework
- DigComp 2.1: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens with eight proficiency levels and examples of use
- Background Review for Developing the Digital

#### Competence Framework for Consumers:

A snapshot of hot-button issues and recent literature

- The Digital Competence Framework for Consumers
- DigComp 2.0: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens. Update Phase 1: the Conceptual Reference Model.

#### 2. Digital skills framework for educators <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcompedu>

#### 3. Digital skills framework for organisations <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomporg>

#### 4. Digital education policies <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digital-education-policies>

#### 5. Recommendations to opening up education <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/open-education>

#### 6. COMPASS - digital skills (new tool and platform): <https://www.compassdigitalskills.eu/>

Dashboard to the digital self-assessment and learning tool:

<https://www.compassdigitalskills.eu/competency-select/create>

### C. Entrepreneurship competence Framework

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/entrecomp>

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Send us your questions and suggestions!  
CONTACT ACQF at: <https://www.acqf.africa>

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