



Envision 4.7

Policy Paper: Competencies for SDG Target 4.7



What are the competencies linked to SDG Target 4.7?

Competencies linked to SDG Target 4.7 can be understood as a set of skills that comprise knowledge, attitudes and values for sustainable development, including dealing with uncertainty, building inclusive societies and democracy. Transformative competencies that can serve sustainable development cover a variety of areas, from intrapersonal (such as self-awareness and stress management), thinking about the future, to the normative area, for which ethical responsibility is key.¹ They relate to learning, engagement and critical reflection, and the use of cognitive, affective and behavioural skills and understanding to promote and achieve the components referred to in Target 4.7.

The [Envision 4.7 Roadmap](#) highlights the fundamental role that education – either formal, informal or non-formal – plays in developing competencies. An education which emphasises competencies for SDG Target 4.7 enables people to play active roles as citizens in democratic societies and to support the transformation of society towards more democratic and environmentally sustainable models at the global, national and local levels, in addition to their personal development.

How can the EU promote competencies for SDG 4.7?

Bridge 47 is committed to the recognition and implementation of competencies for 4.7 through all forms of life-long learning in the EU, including formal and non-formal education and informal learning. While education remains primarily controlled by national governments, the importance of establishing a common list of key competencies has been recognised through various policy documents. The 2015 Paris Declaration of EU education ministers² recognised the need for building ‘social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship.’ Other relevant frameworks to take note of include the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)³ and the OECD PISA global competence framework.⁴ Most recently at EU level, the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning⁵ stresses the importance of developing competences as a means of ‘harnessing the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as means to experience European identity in all its diversity.’ The Recommendation suggests that EU member states should foster ‘the development of citizenship competences with the aim of strengthening the awareness of common values.’ The Reference Framework established by the Council Recommendation lists the following competencies supportive of Target 4.7 among key competencies: personal, social and learning to learn competence, citizenship competence and cultural awareness and expression competence. This focus has been reinstated on several occasions, such as the Council Resolution on the European Education Area.⁶

In line with these commitments, competencies linked to Target 4.7 enable citizens’ agency to implement Agenda 2030.



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

¹Giangrande, N. et al, *A Competency Framework to Assess and Activate Education for Sustainable Development: Addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals 4.7 Challenge*, Sustainability, 2019, 11, 2832.

²*Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.*

³*Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)*, 2013.

⁴*OECD PISA global competence framework*, 2018.

⁵*Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning*, 22 May 2018.

⁶*Council Resolution on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems 2019/C 389/01.*



A European Green Deal

For the EU to successfully shift from a high- to low-carbon economy, while improving people's quality of life, it is key to ensure all individuals build capacities to jointly create systemic change. In this context, the European Commission committed to develop a European competence framework to promote knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable development. This offers a great platform to invest in those transformative competencies linked to Target 4.7.



A Europe fit for the digital age

EU's commitment to ensure that the digital transformation serves people, the economy and the environment, in full respect for the principles of sustainable development, requires new capacities and capabilities. The EU's flagship Horizon 2020 programme, and in particular its focus on 'Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective societies'⁷ has proven useful in advancing solutions for citizenship, digital democracy and the delivery of public goods. To ensure that these key areas continue to be addressed, a focus on promoting competencies for 4.7 must be mainstreamed throughout future initiatives.



An Economy that works for the people

For all Europeans to have the same opportunities to thrive, everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong – this is the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The new European Skills Agenda⁸ presents targets for education and integrates the SDGs into most of its actions to ensure that the right to training and lifelong learning becomes a reality all across Europe.



A stronger Europe in the World

With the new European Consensus on Development,⁹ the EU committed to guarantee that everyone 'has the knowledge, skills, capabilities and rights they need to enjoy a life in dignity, to be fully engaged in society'. Ensuring that people have the right competencies for achieving Target 4.7 is essential to ensure the promotion of the goals of Agenda 2030 as well as the EU's own development objectives beyond its borders.



Promoting our European Way of Life

The EU is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union) – all key elements which competencies for Target 4.7 aim to secure. The EU has committed to building competencies for promoting these values through initiatives such as the European Education Area.



A new push for European Democracy

The EU is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law. The EU recognises that citizens need a stronger role in the EU decision-making process and priority-setting – this realisation is central to the discussions on the Future of Europe. The Council of the EU reflections on Covid-19 highlight that the importance placed on active citizen participation must also be met with the recognition and promotion of competencies detailed in citizenship education.¹⁰ The EU has also committed to combatting disinformation through raising awareness and improving societal resistance.¹¹ For these efforts to bear fruit, promoting competencies that are conducive of citizen engagement and critical reflection will be crucial.

⁷Horizon 2020, *Europe in a changing world - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies*.

⁸European Commission, *European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience*, 2020.

⁹The New European Consensus on Development 'Our World, Our Dignity, our Future', 2017.

¹⁰<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/24/conference-on-the-future-of-europe-council-agrees-its-position/>.

¹¹European Commission, *Action Plan Against Disinformation*, 2018.

Recommendations

For the EU to successfully implement the SDGs while advancing its priorities, and in line with the recommendations of the Envision 4.7 Roadmap, **Bridge 47 calls on all actors to:**

1. Create a pan-European overarching strategy for Target 4.7, which includes a list of competencies serving the target, to be defined and implemented at all levels.
2. Raise awareness around what competencies for 4.7 are, how they can be furthered through formal and non-formal education and informal learning, who are the key players that can also encourage a division of labour and how they are linked to existing policy areas among EU member states, EU political leadership and services.
3. Further develop from existing, or prioritise in future, global and European competency frameworks those transformative competencies that are necessary to support sustainability.
4. Ensure a coherent approach to promoting competencies for 4.7 by integrating references to them into all relevant policy areas.

Bridge 47 further calls on EU member states to:

5. Recognise and implement competencies for 4.7 through all forms of life-long learning (including formal, non-formal education and informal learning).
6. Include competencies for 4.7 into pre- and in-service training for teachers and other formal and non-formal educators and develop formal sector curricula from primary school to higher education levels that include the teaching and learning of relevant competencies.

Bridge 47 further calls on the European Commission to:

7. Establish European-wide multi-stakeholder partnerships to identify and further develop from existing global and European competency frameworks, in line with recommendation 3.
8. Integrate transformative competencies linked to Target 4.7 in relevant programmes under its different policy priorities.

Bridge 47 further calls on the European Parliament to:

9. Monitor and promote the inclusion of references to competencies for 4.7 across EU policy.



The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the 15 project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.