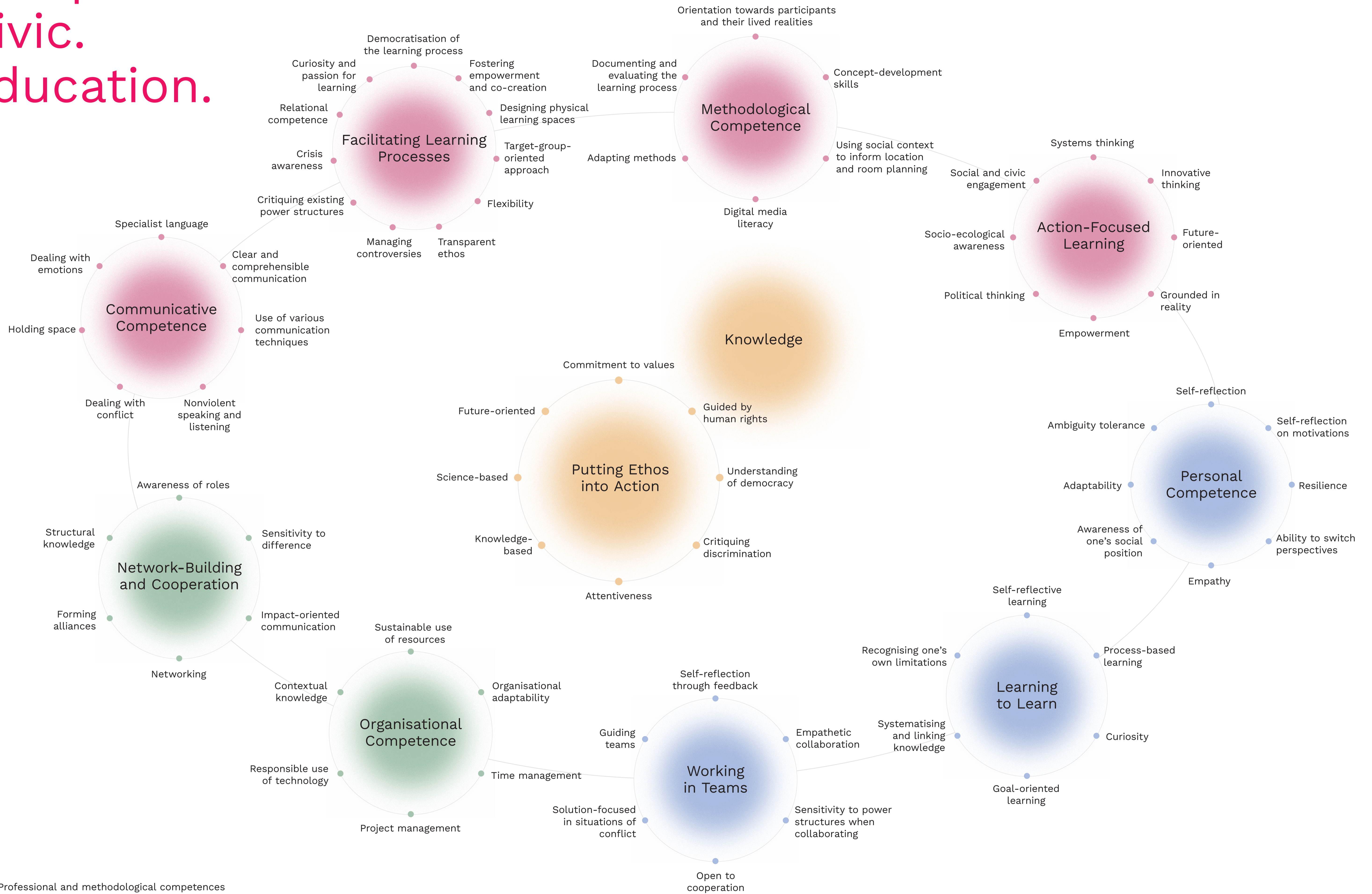


Competent. Civic. Education.



- Professional and methodological competences
- Personal and social competences
- Organisational and institutional competences

Competent. Civic. Education.

Competence Framework for Facilitators in Non-Formal Civic Education



This **competence framework for facilitators working in non-formal civic education** is conceived of as an orientation aid and an appeal to create professionalisation programmes for facilitators, educational institutions, directors of institutions, organisations, networks, and funding bodies across the various fields of civic education.

In order to cater to different use cases and demands, the competence framework is divided up into a total of ten different sections. The first section on professional ethos forms the basis for all of the nine areas of competence that follow. These areas are intertwined and in many instances refer directly to one another. In some cases, this is made visible in the text. The sections on communicative competence, facilitating learning processes, methodological competence, and action-focused

learning form the pedagogical core of this competence framework and are closely related with one another. The sections on personal competence, learning to learn, and working in teams make up the social and personal competences and are likewise closely interconnected. The competence areas of organisational competence and networking and cooperation cover the field of education management.

Each competence area is assigned to a chapter, meaning that each competence area can be used independently according to individual needs (e.g. for self-reflection, developing opportunities for further training, staff development, etc.). Not unlike a toolbox, the competence framework is designed to allow the individual areas to be put to use in whichever way is needed.

Putting Ethos into Action

Civic education cannot be reduced to conveying knowledge about political structures, decision-making, or events. Its mission is to highlight the connections between the living situations of the participants and broader societal conditions, by relating these to the potentials, interests, needs, experiences, and lived realities of the participants, so as to demonstrate the available opportunities for expressing their own political views and becoming politically active.

As such, the focus of civic education is civics and politics, framed not just as the actions of government or its politicians but referring to the ways in which people are interconnected in society and collectively negotiate and regulate their public affairs. Civic education understood in this way is not neutral. It is guided by democracy and by fundamental and human rights. One aspect of a civic educator's professional ethos is that they are guided in their work by values such as human dignity, equality, justice, liberty, the rule of law, solidarity, and diversity, and that they

translate these into their own professional activity.

In order to ensure that one's professional ethos does not remain frozen in time, continual self-reflection is required. Civic educators systematically reflect upon societal power structures and question their own forms of privilege. A critical interrogation of power relations at an individual, institutional, and structural level (such as racism, sexism, antisemitism, homophobia, ableism, classism, adultism) creates potentials for learning that can hone an educator's awareness for the complexity of social inequality. Reflexive questioning of one's own values and beliefs can help to expand our perception of these matters and allow us to consider them from different perspectives.

However, it is important to keep in mind that a reflexive attitude does not automatically protect us from discriminatory thinking, rather it is something that needs to be continually practised and refined.

Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is the capacity and willingness to engage in constructive dialogue based on mutual recognition with a range of target groups in various roles using multiple means of communication, such as spoken language, body language, writing, and images. One of the specific characteristics of civic education is to use communicative competence to create both agreement and disagreement. A central foundation of communicative competence is a respectful and appreciative mode of interaction. This includes a sensitivity to a range of communication forms (for example, sign language, posture, the use of different linguistic registers, clothing, etc.).

Communicative competence is relevant for all areas of interaction. In civic education, appropriate communication can create a good

atmosphere and a positive learning environment. Appropriate communicative behaviour can also involve an effort to understand the different lived experiences of the people with whom civic educators communicate – for example, in terms of their diversity, age, education levels – in order to develop appropriate educational formats. Another aspect is developing a genuine interest in one's conversation partners and actively listening to them. Important reference points for implementing successful, trusting communication can be found in things such as feedback from participants and colleagues, or the fact that education formats are well-received, that participants experience moments of realisation, or that they pluck up the courage to bring up their own issues and concerns.

Facilitating Learning Processes

Facilitating a learning process means enabling an individual or a group to achieve learning objectives within a transparent and methodologically founded framework. At the same time, this process involves sensitively catering to individual learning needs and assisting the participants in setting personal goals. To this end, educators play a role that is guided by a cooperative and needs-based approach to instruction. Their work is cooperative, process-oriented, and places a particular focus on participation and the needs of the group. They support the learning of the participants, facilitating and fostering this through the framework they create and through their way of

guiding the learning process. The overarching goal is to transfer the (shared) responsibility for the learning process to a group and its individual members, facilitating their learning success. Civic educators enable and motivate participants to take charge of their own learning and to assume an active role in the process. For civic educators, it is essential to define and inhabit one's own role in a pedagogically sound manner. The challenge consists in striking a balance between external expectations and demands and one's own expectations. This includes understanding and assessing learning processes and regularly updating these assessments.

Methodological Competence

Methodological competence refers to the well-founded, deliberate, and appropriate use of concepts and methods. Methods are the tools that facilitate the learning experiences of participants. The choice and configuration of methods is thus the final step when conceiving educational activities, affording a certain flexibility in terms of how they are deployed. This competence also involves the ability to prepare and put together materials and content, prepare

the use of supporting tools, adapt or create methods for the occasion, or to adjust and implement the methodological concept in response to relevant data.

Especially given that civic education is an ongoing process that aims to facilitate the collaboration and participation of learners and to inspire self-directed learning, it is helpful to have a broad methodological repertoire that can be called upon when needed.

Action-Focused Learning

Action-focused learning is a foundational principle of civic education. It involves encouraging learners to put their knowledge into practice and become socially and politically active. Learners are motivated to take on an active role in society, to keep themselves informed, to engage, and to organise. As it enables reflection and also the shift from theory to practice, the overarching significance of action-focused learning means that it recurs at all levels of civic education.

The reference point for this capacity for independent action is democratic society, which

is also the sphere in which it is to be deployed. That means learning for the sake of democracy, learning about democracy, and learning with democracy – democracy as a form of society and government, and a way of life. It also means getting acquainted with it, helping to shape it, and getting involved in its continued evolution. Unpacking and understanding civic contexts thus lays the groundwork for being politically active. In order for the participants to be supported in this, educators must also themselves be able to explain how individual experience and action relate to the political sphere.

Personal Competence

Personal competence refers to the ability and willingness of a person to develop and shape their professional profile and practice independently and responsibly – while taking existing resources and social contexts into account. Personal competence allows educators to recognise their own strengths and areas for improvement, to deal with challenges in a professional manner, and to take on a high degree of personal responsibility within their professional practice.

The promotion of personal competence in the context of civic education takes place via various learning pathways. Experience-based learning processes are therefore key, so that participants' subject positions may be refined through being confronted by heterogeneous perspectives and controversial socio-political issues. An exploratory attitude helps civic educators critically analyse their own position in society and actively explore democratic decision-making processes.

Learning to Learn

Learning to learn describes the process of acquiring knowledge and skills, understood as being an interplay between knowledge, proficiencies, and attitudes/mindsets. It forms the basis of personal and professional development. Goal-oriented learning can lead (formally and non-formally) to developing competences, but also occurs in an unplanned fashion (informally). The ability to learn can be learnt, fostered over a lifetime, and further developed.

In order to produce emancipatory educational processes that are also oriented towards bolstering individual autonomy, it is fundamental that civic educators themselves possess learning competences. Being able to develop competences through learning is highly dependent on one's learning motivation (desire to learn) and learning conditions (ability to learn). For learners to autonomously organise their own learning process, this will mean harmonising motivation, possibilities or opportunities, and time to learn.

Working in Teams

Working in teams is a collaborative process that requires mutual solidarity. It allows educational goals, recruitment, or organisational development to be shouldered by many, so that competences can be aligned with professional roles and their specific demands, rather than with individuals. Working in (professional) teams can, for example, involve groups united by a shared function (e.g. colleagues), co-facilitators, or also a professional or subject-specific network of educators.

For individual civic educators, it could be helpful to make use of networks when examining

and refining how they position themselves professionally, meaning doing so in collaboration with colleagues. This serves as a resource for handling the burgeoning pressure to optimise – a pressure rooted in social complexity and dynamics – and makes it easier for individuals to react to constantly shifting role expectations and requirements. Reflecting upon how one's role connects with team processes helps us to see educational work as a group negotiation, one that will be enriched by diverse expertise and experiences.

Organisational Competence

Organisational competence is understood as the ability to achieve pedagogical goals through good planning and management, while considering aspects such as use of materials, location and room planning, logistics, how to allocate funds, the management of participants, how teamwork is planned out, and also the administrative tasks educators will be responsible for during the process.

Good planning and good management thus lead to good (civic) education. Organisational and management processes take into account the needs of participants and available resources, as well as the barriers and discrimination they may face, thus achieving a protective learning environment.

Network-Building and Cooperation

Network-building and cooperation refers to the ability to enter into a strategic dialogue or collaboration with other organisations or representatives. The objectives of this could be varied and overlapping: networking might be in pursuit of a common goal, or cooperation could help to achieve individual goals. It can involve initiating joint projects or boosting one's visibility. In a broader sense, it is about visibly standing up for democracy and understanding oneself as an ambassador for civic education. This is because civic education relies on a lively civil

society, a democratic public sphere, and a democratic political culture, while simultaneously having the goal of strengthening these and contributing to democratic development. This results in a further necessity: working to advocate for those who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the corrosion of democratic civil society (shrinking civic spaces), which is often accompanied by disparagement, attacks on their integrity, or even violent assaults.

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A more in-depth version of the collectively-developed
competence framework, with extensive explanations, can
be downloaded here:

