

Interkulturní competence – definice SALTO ICC Work Group

Intercultural Competence: Intercultural Competence (ICC) developed and demonstrated within the framework of European youth work...

...are qualities* needed for a young person to live in contemporary and pluralistic Europe. It enables her/him to take an active role in confronting social injustice and discrimination and promote and protect human rights. ICC requires an understanding of culture as a dynamic multifaceted process. In addition, it requires an increased sense of solidarity in which individual fear of the other and insecurity are dealt with through critical thinking, empathy and tolerance of ambiguity.

The Intercultural Competence working definition assumes that multicultural society is already a fact all over Europe in big capitals and in small villages, in centralised and in decentralised areas, and is part of every European life even when not travelling abroad.

The identified key qualities necessary for acquiring Intercultural Competence can be in short described as follows:

1) Taking an active role in confronting social injustice and discrimination

This includes the awareness of possible situations (and reasons behind them) in which social injustice and discrimination appears, information about instruments (legal, social, political) as well as appropriate skills needed to enable a young person to actively confront them.

2) Promoting and protecting human rights

Includes the competence (based on knowledge, attitudes and skills) enabling a young person to exercise the right 'to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at national and international levels.'

3) Understanding culture as a dynamic multifaceted process

This quality relates to the ability to understand that culture is not a universally fixed and apolitical concept but a dynamic and interactive process that is subjected to a wide range of influences. This includes knowledge of the dynamism of one's own culture as well as willingness and skills in discovering information about other cultures in a critical manner while exploring the connectivity and complexity between identity, politics, society and history but also geographical aspects in a modest and sensitive way.

4) Creating a sense of solidarity

Increased social and personal awareness of one another as well as enhanced skills to exercise both as members of a democratic society and as a human being our right and duty to speak up against every abuse of power against oneself and others.

5) Dealing with insecurity

In this context dealing with insecurity is rather seen as an ability to overcome the feeling of insecurity and fear which may appear during international/ intercultural situations. In this regard various skills and tools can be of help to overcome those feelings such as enhanced communication skills and increased self-confidence as well as flexibility in cultural and communicative behaviour.

6) Fostering critical thinking

Supporting the ability to not take things for granted. Critical thinking is a disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/ or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication. It includes also the capacity to de-construct situations and last but not least the ability to, in obvious and justified cases, say no and being intolerant (e.g. when violation of rights is explained as a cultural habit). It is about seeing how the world can be different, being able to criticise a paradigm and not just solving a problem.

7) Creating empathy

Supporting the change of stagnant and stereotypic viewpoints over 'cultures' and the move towards a critical dialogue based on mutual curiosity with the aim to gain and to give. This requires among others willingness to suspend judgement and valuing cultural diversity.

8) Fostering tolerance of ambiguity

Fostering the ability to tolerate different interests, expectations and needs and make 'space' for them in situations of interaction and/or establishing an understanding. To accept that there are different mental structures even though one does not fully agree with nor fully understand them. It is about accepting the reasons of the other's actions/beliefs even when not fully understanding the reasons as they do not belong to my 'way of thinking'. This obviously requires empathy first.