Recognising intercultural competence

What shows that I am interculturally competent?

The Pestalozzi Programme
European Wergeland Centre
Intercultural Cities Programme

For further reading

Council of Europe (2008), White paper on intercultural dialogue: "living together as equals in dignity"
UNESCO (2007), *UNESCO Guidelines on intercultural education*, Paris.
European Commission (2007) on *a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world (Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of theRegions)*

What shows that I am interculturally competent?

Being interculturally competent has widely been recognised for decades as essential for peaceful coexistence in a diverse world. Numerous recent policy papers and recommendations of international organisations, such as *The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (Council of Europe, 2008) have also expressed this need very clearly. Intercultural competence is a key competence that every individual should work on for the development and maintenance of sustainable democratic societies. The present tool wishes to support you on the way to a fuller understanding of yourself in the context of diversity.

In what follows, the main components which make up intercultural competence - attitudes, skills and knowledge - are described in the form of I-statements describing observable behaviour that can be associated with specific aspects of the components. Naturally, the components are interconnected since the knowledge we have about the world and about human interaction as well as our attitudes towards these can only be made visible and observable through our behaviour. Moreover, skills development and knowledge acquisition can only increase intercultural competence if we have the right attitudes and use the knowledge and skills we have acquired accordingly. It is precisely for this reason, because of the importance of attitudes, that these sub-components outnumber those of the skills and the knowledge described in our list of indicators.

The present tool was developed by a group of 30 teachers, school heads and experts from all over Europe in a three-day Think Tank, drawing on the shared expertise of the participants and on the recent results of research and project work within the Council of Europe and other international organisations. The work was co-organized by the Pestalozzi Programme and the Intercultural Cities project of the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre. The tool was then tested by 50 teachers and school heads in 14 countries and it was then finalized taking into account the rich feedback received during the testing period.

What shows that you are interculturally competent? The tool is intended to help you look at yourself, at your intercultural competence, and recognise your strong points as well as areas which need further development. When you have a quiet 20 or 30 minutes, sit back and reflect on the list of I-statements describing observable behaviour. Think of yourself in the context of the people surrounding you, people who are close or not close at all, people from different socio-cultural, regional, socio-economic or linguistic backgrounds. Think of intercultural encounters you have had or of any situation involving others. Try to recall how you felt, what you knew and what you did, and mark the appropriate box next to each statement. You can use the tool on your own or you can try it out together with colleagues or peers in a team. When you have finished, it is probably time to reflect about the steps you can take to help your development. You can come back to the tool at any time and go through it, or through parts of it, again to find out what has changed.
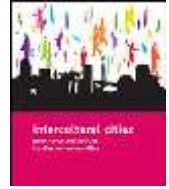
Attitudes

1 Respect	😃	🙂	☹️
I show respect to the other person as an equal human being.			
I give space to others to express themselves and I listen and react to their arguments.			
I suspend judgement based on first impressions.			

2 Tolerance of ambiguity	😃	🙂	☹️
I am willing to put my values and norms aside temporarily.			
I show patience when confronted with what is unknown or unfamiliar.			
I interact positively without certainty of what the other thinks and feels.			
I show awareness of the fact that my way of thinking and acting is influenced by a set of values and norms.			

3 Open mindedness and curiosity	😃	🙂	☹️
I show a friendly interest in people and things I encounter (adapted from Betrand Russell).			
I use arising opportunities to meet new people.			
I ask others about their views and actions.			

4 Empathy	😃	🙂	☹️
I am willing to pay attention to other people's feelings.			
I show that I can share other people's feelings.			

5 Self-awareness	😃	🙂	☹️
I show that I am comfortable with describing my strengths and weaknesses.			
I accept the fact that I can make mistakes.			
I take responsibility for my mistakes.			
I ask others for help when I need it.			
I adjust my behaviour when I feel it is helpful.			

6 Confidence to challenge and be challenged	😃	🙂	☹️
I show that I am not afraid to disagree with others.			
I suggest alternative ways of seeing or doing things.			
I show that I accept being challenged.			

Skills

1 Interaction	😃	🙂	☹️
I listen attentively to other people.			
I make sure that my message is understood the way I mean it.			
I encourage people to express their needs and opinions.			
I react supportively to emotions I see around me.			
I look for and clarify shared needs and expectations.			

2 Multiperspectivity	😃	🙂	☹️
I look for information in a variety of sources.			
I explain my thoughts and actions also considering outside perspectives.			
I express my point of view in connection with both conflicting and complementary opinions.			
I use my imagination to offer different perspectives.			
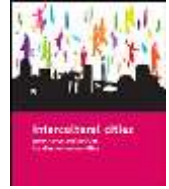
3 Critical thinking	😃	🙂	🙁
I use all available information and my analytical skills to verify my interpretations.			
I question the interpretations offered by others including authority figures or authoritative sources.			
I offer different ways of interpreting the ideas and actions of people.			
I give clear arguments to explain my thoughts and choices.			

4 Problem solving and collaboration	😃	🙂	🙁
I identify issues or problems that need to be solved.			
I offer different perspectives on the problem to solve.			
I initiate attempts to solve the problem.			
I support other people's attempts to solve the problem.			
I actively search for a solution together with the other people concerned.			
I make others feel comfortable in the group when faced with a problem.			

5 Ability to grow	😃	🙂	🙁
I explore new things and situations			
I reflect on and analyse my motives, needs and goals.			
I change my ways of doing things in the light of new insights.			

Knowledge

1 Knowledge about interaction	😃	🙂	🙁
I take into consideration both verbal and non-verbal messages.			
I show awareness that words and body language may have different meanings in different contexts.			
I clarify meanings to avoid misunderstandings.			
I address the influence of power relations in interaction.			
I show that I understand that different forms of interaction have different aims and rules.			

2 Knowledge about social practices	😃	🙂	🙁
I show awareness of the fact that other people might think, behave and feel differently.			
I actively explore the reasons behind different practices and reactions.			

3 Knowledge about the role of social and political actors *(individuals or institutions)*	😃	🙂	🙁
I recognise the social and political implications of diversity.			
I turn to the appropriate social, cultural or political actors when I need information or support.			
I initiate action with the appropriate group of social or political actors when a problem occurs.			

4 Knowledge about world views and belief systems	😃	🙂	🙁
I recognise that spiritual and existential questions are important aspects of life.			
I recognise differences in world views and belief systems when interacting.			
I learn about other belief systems and world views by active exploration.			
I show understanding of the fact that world views and beliefs people hold are not static.			
I recognise that world views and belief systems influence but do not determine a person's or a group's identity.			

And now? Where do I stand? Which way to go?