

# Intercultural competence



VOCAL - Vocational Online Collaboration for Active Learning

KA2 Strategic Partnerships – 2016-1-HU01-KA202-022916



Erasmus+

# Intercultural Competence

What is Intercultural Competence?



# Intercultural Competence

Just like culture, Intercultural Competence is a very complex concept and we can find multiple definitions for it in literature.

We present some of the most popular definitions of Intercultural Competence to you in the following slides.



# Intercultural Competence

A publication for The Council of Europe defines Intercultural Competence as:

“a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to:

- understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself;
- respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people;
- establish positive and constructive relationships with such people; 17 What is intercultural competence?
- understand oneself and one’s own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural “difference”.”

Source: Barrett, M. D., Huber, J., & Reynolds, C. (2014). *Developing intercultural competence through education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.



# Intercultural Competence

Michael Byram calls it *Intercultural Communicative Competence* and defends that it is composed of ‘five savoirs’:

- knowledge (savoirs),
- skills (savoir comprendre and savoir apprendre/faire) and
- attitudes (savoir être)



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# Intercultural Competence

Alvino Fantini (2005) proposes a definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence as:

“the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 1).



# Intercultural Competence

Darla Deardoff (2004) defines Intercultural Competence as:

“the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 194).





# Intercultural Competence

Though there would be many other concepts to be presented, from such sample, we can learn that Intercultural Competence is...



# Intercultural Competence

- A manifold concept, meaning that it is composed of different elements and that holding only of of these elements does not ensure a high level of the competence since its elements are intertwined
- Knowledge of other cultures, awareness of oneself as a cultural being and of differences between cultures, attitudes (like openness, respect, creativity, etc) and skills (ability to interact with people from other cultures in practice) are elements which are recognized as components of Intercultural Competence by different models
- Intercultural Compentece needs to be supported by Critical Reflection and Emotional Intelligence

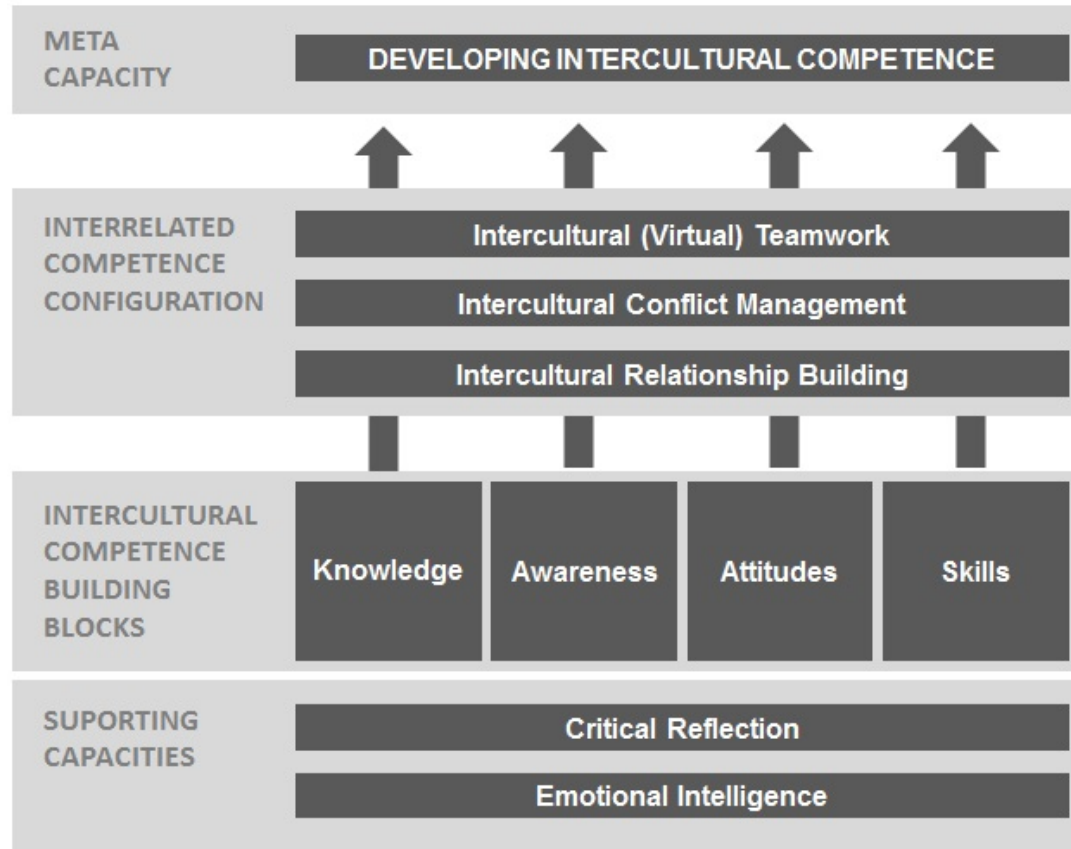


# Intercultural Competence

A very illustrative Intercultural Competence model is given by EMIC (2015). We like to use as reference because it includes all the Intercultural Competence dimensions mentioned before:



# The EMIC Model of Intercultural Competence



Source: EMIC, 2015.  
Available at  
<http://www.emic-project.org/emic-toolkit/>



# Intercultural Competence

So, given that Intercultural Competence is such a complex concept, how do you think one can develop it?

Think a little bit about it...



# Intercultural Competence

Well...we would be really happy to tell you that you will have the highest level of Intercultural Competence after completing this course, but, in fact, this is not true! ☹️



# Intercultural Competence

This is because Intercultural Competence development is a lifelong process!

It happens every time you have contact with people from other cultures, but not only...

It also happens every time you learn about new cultures, but not only...



# Intercultural Competence

Contact with and knowledge about other cultures are very good ways of developing Intercultural Competence. Still, such development can be boosted only if you have a positive attitude and hold a critical reflection towards each and every intercultural encounter.

Remember, without such 'mindfulness', one will probably not take full advantage of intercultural exchanges!





# Intercultural Competence

That's why there are some people who spend years abroad and still do not hold a high level of Intercultural Competence.

Why do you think it happens?

Probably because, despite being in contact with different cultures on a daily basis, those people are not aware of the cultural forces that are at play (including the forces from one's own culture), are not open for learning and adapting and do not hold a critical reflection about the process in question.



# Intercultural Competence

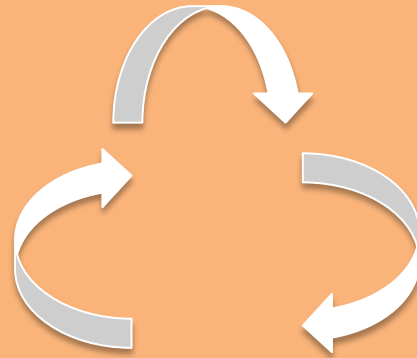
Take a visual look at the process of Intercultural Competence development in the next slide and, from now on, try to take advantage of every opportunity to develop your Intercultural Competence!



# Intercultural Competence development

Knowledge  
about the main  
concepts  
related to IC

Contact with  
people from  
different cultures



Reflection about  
oneself and others

