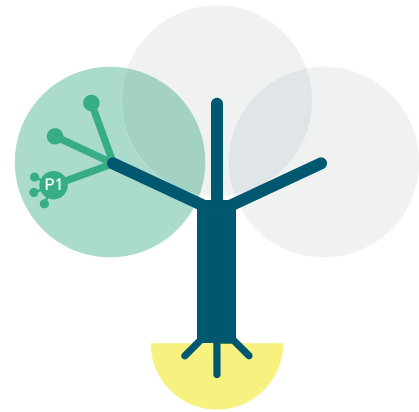


P1 Self-regulation



The awareness and management of emotions, thoughts and behaviour

Self-regulation is a **typically human capacity** which allows us to alter and regulate our responses so that they are not the result of an unconscious reaction to a stimulus²⁷. Self-regulation is a cyclical process carried out through three main steps: establishing a desired state, i.e. creating action plans, setting goals, and anticipating future outcomes; comparing the current state with the desired one, monitoring oneself, and cultivating self-awareness; and acting to modify the current state if it does not correspond to the desired one²⁸.

Self-regulation requires curbing one's tendency to react to stimuli with automatic responses (e.g. a learned habit, an innate response, or an impulse to act). In other words, Self-regulation requires controlling responses, and overriding unwanted reactions to an impulse, rather than eliminating the impulse itself²⁷.

Self-regulatory strength is a capacity that

everyone has to different extents, and which **increases with practice**. Stressful situations in which individuals face many different demands can temporarily deplete their self-regulatory strength, making it more challenging to continue to fight frustration, and to successfully control impulsive responses. A willingness to engage in self-regulation depends on the individual's beliefs regarding their self-regulatory strength²⁹. This, in turn, contributes to a sense of personal agency, i.e. the appreciation of our capacity to act on oneself and the environment³⁰. Self-regulation plays an important role in individuals' active engagement in their learning, and their engagement in learning how to learn, and it is necessary for developing other key competences. For instance, together with self-efficacy (the belief in one's capacity to achieve their goals), self-regulation is a key component of the Entrepreneurship competence, i.e. the capacity to create cultural, social, or economic value³¹.

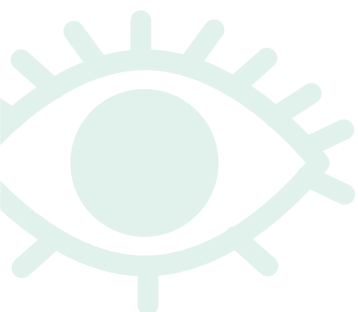
P1.1

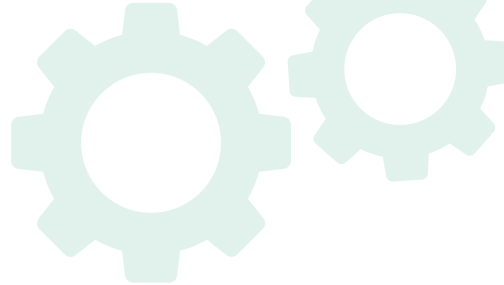
Awareness and expression of personal emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviour

Self-awareness is fundamental for self-regulation since it allows identifying promptly unwanted responses, making it easier to prevent and control undesired outcomes

Having an awareness of one's emotions, thoughts, and values plays a crucial role in personal development, disposing individuals to be open to learning and change. This descriptor focuses on individuals' self-awareness of their emotions, thoughts, and values, a key component of emotional intelligence³². Individuals need to be able to **perceive** and **recognise** their own **emotions** and **thoughts, bodily responses**, the values that drive them towards personal development, and how those factors influence their behaviour, and affect their performance in various areas of life.

Asking others for feedback, and adopting an **introspective attitude** to gain a realistic but compassionate³³ insight of oneself, can help individuals to develop self-awareness. This, in turn, facilitates an understanding of one's own strengths, virtues, and limitations. It enables the possibility of **cultivating** one's positive **qualities** and **addressing limitations**¹⁵, the development of a trustworthy representation of oneself, and the improvement of self-confidence. Possessing sound self-awareness is fundamental for self-regulation, since it allows us to promptly identify unwanted responses, making it easier to prevent and control undesired outcomes. Self-awareness is also needed to make sound decisions, to promote personal wellbeing, and to manage careers, as it helps to align one's values with appropriate occupational goals and civic engagement, resulting in more satisfactory learning and professional choices.





P1.2

Understanding and regulating personal emotions, thoughts, and behaviour, including stress response

The deployment of strategies to attend and regulate emotions helps achieve better performance in personal, educational, and professional settings

This descriptor focuses on **self-management**, the capacity to understand how emotions, thoughts, and values influence behaviour, and how to modulate and regulate them. Individuals need to make a sustained effort to redirect their spontaneous flow of emotions, thoughts, verbal and bodily responses, and to be able to implement strategies for reducing the level of their emotional strains and impulses. This includes the ability to **label emotions**, **interpret** their contextual **meaning**, understand complex feelings (e.g. experiencing mixed feelings), and adopt an attitude of discernment and **self-acceptance** to deal with these constructively³³. Managing feelings and emotions plays a crucial role in personal development, disposing individuals to be open to learning and change³⁴.

Any emotions, be it those which cause positive or those which cause negative feelings, are adaptive mechanisms necessary for life. At the same time, the deployment of **strategies** to pay attention to and regulate emotions helps individuals to perform better in personal, educational, and professional settings^{35,36}. Both strategies of **down-regulation** (wilfully reducing the intensity of emotions which cause negative feelings), and **up-regulation** (intentionally amplifying and nurturing emotions which cause positive feelings), have **positive effects** on personal **wellbeing**³⁷. Both self-management and the ability to refrain from unwary behaviours are critical skills for coping with stressful situations and conflicts. Regulating emotions also contributes to creating relationships based on trust. The ability to delay gratification, undertaking a challenging task that requires postponing reward, represents another critical aspect of self-regulation, and can predict individuals' academic performance^{38,39}. Honing this ability requires the individual to train a sense of perspective, which allows for them to focus their attention beyond the immediate stimuli, and to consider the possible personal outcomes regarding their long-term concerns, values, and goals. There are several strategies to regulate our thoughts, emotions and behaviours; individuals need **to find those strategies which best suit** them, and adapt to tasks and specific situations.

P1.3

Nurturing optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and a sense of purpose to support learning and action

A sense of personal purpose enhances the motivation to actively pursue long-term goals

This descriptor stresses the importance of pursuing a positive perspective on life, and a sense of purpose. It focuses on cultivating hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy⁴⁰. *Hope* is the **motivational energy** to initiate and sustain progress in the pursuit of goals, and the ability to **imagine** and go through **alternative ways** to reach them⁴¹ (such as by having a “Plan B” to reach a goal). *Optimism* implies nurturing **positive expectations** about the possibility of succeeding in the present and the future. *Resilience* is the ability to **cope positively** and **bounce back** from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, as well as with positive changes such as promotions or increased responsibility.

Self-efficacy is the sense of one’s worth, and positive belief and **confidence** in one’s **own ability** to successfully complete a task, and to obtain a positive outcome in a specific situation. Self-efficacy positively correlates with performance, as it contributes to perseverance and trying harder to succeed³⁰. Conversely, a low level of self-efficacy is commonly followed by disengagement⁴². Self-efficacy also contributes to diminishing the level of emotional activation while facing a challenge⁴³.

The last element of this descriptor is “*nurturing a sense of purpose*”, which related to having long-term goals which are shaped by one’s beliefs and values. A sense of **personal purpose** enhances the motivation to actively pursue **long-term goals** which surpass the constraints of life, thus helping individuals to reflect on their existential questions and how to live a **meaningful life**. Individuals who engage in actions which display a clear sense of purpose are often those with the highest levels of life satisfaction^{44;45}. Nurturing a sense of purpose and coherence is closely intertwined with long-term levels of personal wellbeing.





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LifeComp

The European Framework for
Personal, Social and **Learning
to Learn** Key Competence

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