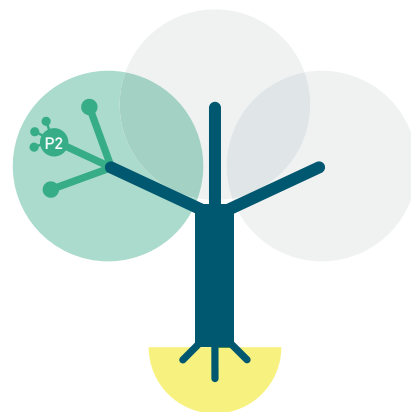


P2 Flexibility



The ability to manage transitions and uncertainty, and to face challenges

The contemporary global context is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous⁴⁶. Citizens need to **deal with ambiguity**⁴⁷, and to be able to change or persist in their behaviours in order to cope with ever-changing internal and external circumstances. Moreover, life itself is characterised by developmental changes and disruptive events, whether positive or negative, which individuals need to face, including changes in learning settings or the workplace (such as finishing primary school and entering secondary school, or getting a promotion at work), in the family (for example, the birth of a child, or the loss of a parent), and in the outside environment (such as a public health alert, or a natural disaster). Being flexible means having the capacity to **adapt to new situations**, and to make adjustments to accommodate changes. Moreover, it implies an attitude of accepting complexity, contradictions, and lack of clarity, and a willingness to tackle tasks even when only incomplete

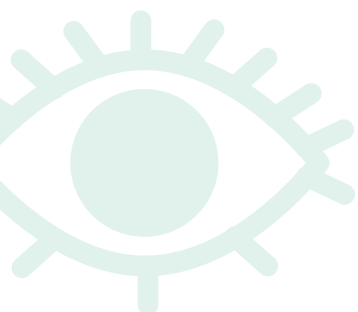
information is available⁴⁷.

In 2019, the **most requested skill** in online job advertisements was the ability to “adapt to change”, as employers are increasingly looking for individuals with the “*ability to modify one’s attitude or behaviour to accommodate modifications in the workplace*”⁴⁸. As such, it is critical that citizens develop these skills. The individual potential to manage transitions is tightly interlinked with self-regulation, specifically with the regulation of personal emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in changing circumstances. Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk, is also relevant within the **Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp)**, which describes flexibility as the competence to make decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, when the information available is partial or ambiguous, or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes³¹.

P2.1

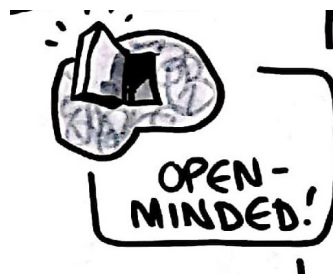
Readiness to review opinions and courses of action in the face of new evidence

Intellectual interest and curiosity are needed to be able to explore new situations with openness; so too are the capacities to negotiate and to weigh up different points of view



This descriptor stresses the relevance of being **aware of newly available data**, changing circumstances, and accordingly and promptly demonstrating a **willingness to modify one's actions**, opinions, or preferred way of doing things. It encompasses intellectual interest and **curiosity** to explore new situations with openness, as well as having the capacity to consider multiple aspects and to understand, negotiate, and **weigh up different points of view** on a specific topic.

For individuals to be ready to review opinions and courses of action, they must understand that there is no single strategy or behaviour which will always lead to positive outcomes. Rather, the usefulness of our intended approaches must be assessed according to the shifting situation. It is important to stress that reviewing one's opinion or a way of proceeding does not mean having a weak resolve; it indicates an ability to openly face changes, and to manage the fear of change, which requires a coherent and robust sense of self⁴⁹. This descriptor also focuses on individuals being able to **reflect on and react** adequately to positive and negative **feedback**, and to modify personal plans where necessary.

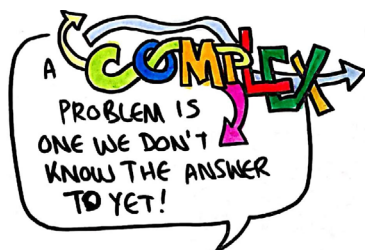




P2.2

Understanding and adopting new ideas, approaches, tools, and actions in response to changing contexts

Being flexible means having an attitude of openness to novel ideas, tools, or ways of doing things, and being able to deal with uncertainty



This descriptor focuses on the relevance of adopting an attitude of **openness** to novel ideas, tools, or ways of doing things, and the ability to **deal** with **uncertainty**. Individuals need to be open to generating alternative solutions, and to **abandoning strategies** which do not lead to a desired result, curbing the tendency to continue an initial course of action in situations which require a change⁵⁰.

The digital age is inherently **complex**. We are facing the spread of new digital tools, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), big data, etc., which are becoming omnipresent in almost all important areas of life, such as education, work, and research. Being flexible in today's society also means being able to foster and improve one's **digital skills**, and taking advantage of new possibilities for development that have been triggered by the spread of technology. However, to participate in "datafied" societies, citizens need to know how to manage the stream of personal data that they generate, whilst also being aware of possible threats to their privacy and civil liberties⁵¹. Climate change is also posing severe challenges to our society, introducing constraints that may dramatically alter our ways of living. To reduce its impact on human wellbeing, it is important that citizens can **anticipate** and respond to **changes**, while mitigating adverse consequences, and grasping new opportunities to change their lifestyles. Citizens need to become more conscious of the global dimension of today's challenges.

P2.3

Managing transitions in personal life, social participation, work and learning pathways, while making conscious choices and setting goals

The ability to proactively look for opportunities, learn continuously, understand and adapt to changes, will represent a competitive edge for citizens



Flexibility encompasses career management skills, continually pursuing further training to adapt to different employment contexts at any age, setting meaningful goals, and making effective career decisions towards successful transitions⁵². It entails the capacity to proactively visualise future options, and use relevant strategies for making **informed choices**, coping with the indecision and anxiety that may be experienced while making a choice⁵³. In the 21st Century, learning and career paths are becoming less and less linear. Citizens will frequently need to change their jobs, spot personal growth opportunities, and create individualised lifelong learning paths²⁶. A cross sectoral approach in career education, which includes different stakeholders who support individuals across sectors in continually learning these competences, could be beneficial for promoting the acquisition of career management skills.

Career development may be considered a cyclical process, which starts with the exploration and **awareness** of educational and occupational **opportunities**. It follows with the self-awareness to reflect on and understand **personal** values, interests, skills, needs, **abilities, limitations**, and **decision making** to make a plan and set goals. The last step would be planning transitions, understanding how to seek and secure jobs, or create opportunities⁵⁴. The ability to proactively look for opportunities, learning continuously, acquiring new skills, and understanding and adapting to changes will represent a competitive edge for citizens. It is therefore relevant that individuals are able to cope with ambiguity and to adapt to different roles, obligations, and contexts. This descriptor also stresses the importance of being able to set goals, plan and monitor the short and long-term progress towards their achievement, persisting in the face of hardship, and getting around obstacles.



JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

LifeComp

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

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