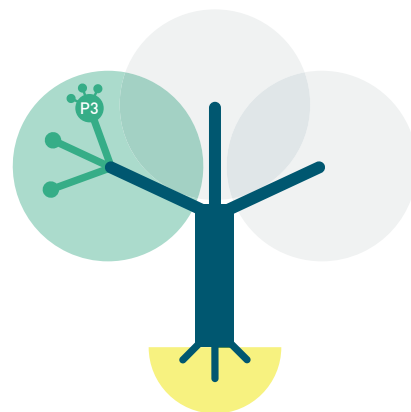


## P3 Wellbeing



The pursuit of life satisfaction, care of physical, mental and social health; and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle

This definition highlights the **interconnectedness** and **interdependence** of **physical, mental, social** and **environmental** aspects of **wellbeing**. It is widely accepted that human beings have three innate psychological needs which need to be satisfied for health and well-being<sup>55</sup>. These are: **autonomy**, the need to feel ownership of one's behaviour; **competence**, the need to produce a desired outcome and to experience mastery; and **relatedness**, the need to feel connected to others. The degree to which these psychological needs are satisfied is influenced not only by personal competence, but also by the demands, obstacles and affordances of the social, cultural, and economic context. The pursuit of life goals directly linked to the satisfaction of basic needs (for example affiliation, personal growth and community) is associated with wellbeing<sup>56</sup>. Positive psychology, a well-established branch of modern psychology<sup>57</sup>, can be appropriately applied to education on wellbeing, provided that the view on positive emotions is balanced with how people have to face up to painful emotions as part of personal growth and development in life and that motives relating to both immediate enjoyment and personal flourishing are considered as different aspects of wellbeing (see the description of P3.3).

By adopting a **systemic** understanding that takes account of the interaction of multiple factors, wellbeing can be characterised as emerging from the dynamic integration of and relationships between the *physical, cognitive, emotional, social, existential, and environmental factors*.

Individuals may improve their **physical wellbeing** by adopting good sleep hygiene practices, engaging in a variety of physical exercise adapted to their condition and ages, and developing healthy eating habits, among others. **Cognitive** wellbeing may be enhanced by stimulating creative activities, cultivating mental flexibility, personal growth and the curiosity and pleasure to keep learning throughout the lifespan. **Emotional** wellbeing can be fostered by developing autonomy, the capacity for self-determination<sup>58</sup>, awareness, understanding and regulating personal emotions, thoughts and behaviours, and nurturing a sense of self-worth and optimism. It is closely linked with Self-regulation. Individuals may also boost their **social** wellbeing by cultivating their empathy, caring for others and adopting altruistic behaviours, while devoting time to building interpersonal affective relationships, seeking help when needed and offering support to others in need. Citizens may also foster their

**existential** wellbeing by cultivating a sense of purpose in life, making conscious choices and seeking a work-life balance. **Environmental** wellbeing is also part of personal wellbeing. It can be promoted by adopting a sustainable lifestyle, acting responsibly to reduce our environmental impact<sup>59</sup> and collectively raising awareness and advocating for actions to combat climate change.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and actions taken to fight its spread are emphasising the interconnectedness between individual health

behaviour and **collective health** and wellbeing at all levels, from local to global. To overcome this challenge it is vital that we as societies strengthen our understanding of **co-shared responsibility** and **mutual care**, and our **sense of belonging** to a wider community. By protecting their own health, individuals protect that of others and are protected in turn. More than ever, active citizens need to be aware of their global interdependence and of the importance of protecting and promoting public healthcare systems.

## P3.1

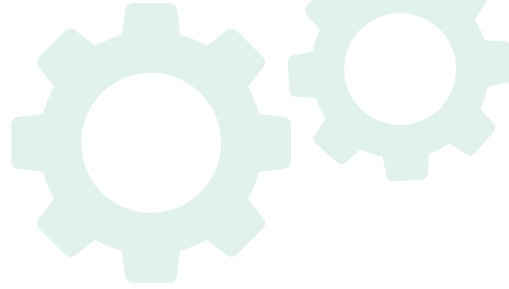
### Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics and social and environmental factors influence health and wellbeing

Individuals need to be aware of the impact that many different factors may have on personal health, wellbeing, and life satisfaction

This descriptor focuses on individuals' **awareness** of the **impact** that many **different factors** may have on personal **health, wellbeing** and **life satisfaction**. It means adopting a systemic view on the determinants of health and wellbeing: individual behaviour and genetics, social support networks and culture, physical environment, employment and working conditions, income and social status, health services, gender, and education level<sup>60</sup>.

This awareness may help individuals achieve a better understanding of their own and others' health. It also implies **appreciation** for the resources and **networks** that can support individual wellbeing (family, school, friends, etc.). Awareness of the interaction between the various factors that influence wellbeing may empower citizens to act, whether individually (e.g. by abandoning unhealthy personal behaviours) or collectively, by advocating for improved healthcare systems and social services, or policies to address climate change, among others<sup>61;62</sup>.





## P3.2

### Understanding potential risks for wellbeing, and using reliable information and services for health and social protection

Citizens need to understand the dangers of trusting and sharing false information on health, since it may undermine medical advice, publicise harmful therapies or cause unjustified alarm

This descriptor stresses the ability to **access, understand, appraise and apply reliable health information**, for decisions on disease prevention, healthcare and health promotion. Health literacy can work as a key promoter of resilience, fairness and inclusion<sup>63,64</sup>. This descriptor is closely linked to learning to learn, as the complexity of healthcare systems requires an attitude of lifelong learning to update the health-related knowledge and skills needed to be able to make informed health-related decisions.

Critical thinking is also relevant to being able to distinguish reliable and unreliable health information. Citizens need to understand the **dangers of trusting** and sharing **false information** on health, since it may undermine medical advice, publicise harmful therapies, or cause unjustified alarm. It also entails the capacity to identify and **use reliable services for health and social protection**, such as those intended to protect citizens against the risks associated with unemployment, invalidity, parental responsibilities, ageing, and inadequate housing, among others<sup>65</sup>.



### P3.3

#### Adoption of a sustainable lifestyle that respects the environment, and the physical and mental wellbeing of self and others, while seeking and offering social support

Adopting a systemic approach is needed to consider the interdependence of one's own and others' health and wellbeing, as well as safeguarding healthy environments



This descriptor highlights the relevance of adopting a lifestyle that contributes to **promoting health** and **preventing diseases**. At the same time, the promotion of wellbeing includes adopting a sustainable lifestyle that takes into account “*the dynamic relationship between natural resource use, environmental quality and health and wellbeing*”<sup>66</sup>. It underlines the need to adopt a systemic approach that considers the **interdependence** of one's own and others' health and wellbeing, as well as safeguarding **healthy environments**. It requires understanding that everyday choices can have an impact on the environment, and that adopting certain ways of life can allow individuals to reduce their carbon footprint.

This descriptor also stresses the importance and the benefits for health and wellbeing of engaging in **prosocial behaviours**<sup>67</sup>, offering help to others, and of being able to seek help. It is well known that receiving social support after a stressful experience reduces its negative emotional burden. At the same time, engaging in **affiliative behaviours**, those which create and reinforce cohesion in a group and social integration, and prosocial behaviours, that is, behaviours oriented towards benefitting others, such as helping, sharing and comforting<sup>68</sup>, may mitigate the negative effects of **daily stressors**<sup>69</sup>.

Both **hedonic motives**, those seeking pleasure, enjoyment, comfort and satisfaction, and **eudaimonic motives**, those seeking excellence, personal growth, meaning and authenticity, contribute to wellbeing in different ways. For example, hedonia relates to an immediate but short effect of freedom from concerns, feeling alive, relaxation and positive affect. On the contrary, eudaimonia leads in the medium and long-term to an increased sense of meaning, and an elevated experience of engagement and connection with a broader whole. Engaging in both hedonic and eudaimonic activities contribute to higher levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction<sup>v70</sup>.

v Some activities can produce both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. Among those are playing an instrument, practising arts, and practising sport.



JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

# LifeComp

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

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