

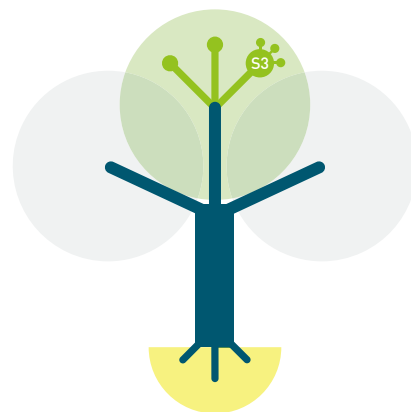
S3 Collaboration

Engagement in group activity and teamwork acknowledging and respecting others

The challenges that individuals need to face in the 21st century both personally and collectively are complex, resulting from the evolving interaction of many interrelated factors and agents that are not fully knowable, predictable or controllable¹¹⁰. To address them successfully and innovatively, effective collaboration among individuals, organisations, and networks must be fostered. A diversity of perspectives and backgrounds is likely to play a positive role in collaboration since it increases the level of novelty, while providing a greater variety of ideas and approaches to accomplishing shared tasks¹¹¹. Citizens need to develop their **capacity to co-participate in collective activities** and ventures, and to embolden others to collaborate, deploying collective agency³⁰, pooling their knowledge, competences and resources, so that a common goal may be accomplished⁴⁷. The sense of shared accomplishment in collaboration and the bonds among group members can help build caring relationships and to fight negative psychological states such as depression, anxiety or repressed anger, fear of failure, hopelessness and meaninglessness, which is especially relevant in the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. Positive interdependence (relying on each other's efforts) and promotive interaction (encouraging and facilitating each other's contributions) are key aspects of collaboration^{4;112}.

Individuals that are focused on maximising their own results and, at the same time, care about the needs of others, are in a better position to act as good negotiators and problem solvers. **People who are willing to collaborate** are likely to **find compromises** and **innovate**¹¹³. These individuals can more easily go beyond the dichotomous choices posed by social dilemmas like those situations in which, without communication and collaboration, individuals choose to protect themselves at the expenses of the others. Without collaboration, worse results can be produced as people tend to act in a way that produces an immediate benefit for them individually, but a long-term negative consequence for the group as a whole.

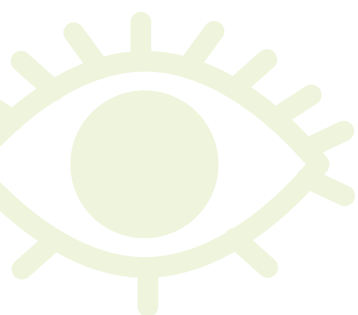
Digital technologies offer innovative ways of collaborating, such as online collaborative environments, and co-working on shared documents. Strategies for exploiting the affordances of digital technologies should be developed. **The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp)** also stresses the relevance of collaboration: *“To share data, information and digital content with others through appropriate digital technologies. To act as an intermediary, to know about referencing and attribution practices; and To use digital tools and technologies for collaborative processes, and for co-construction and co-creation of data, resources and knowledge”*¹⁰³.



S3.1

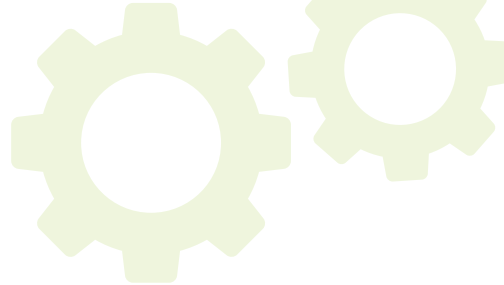
Intention to contribute to the common good and awareness that others may have different cultural affiliations, backgrounds, beliefs, values, opinions or personal circumstances

Individuals need to learn not only to cope with diversity but also to take advantage from it by collaborating and creating synergies



This descriptor stresses the need to construct **respectful interaction** with people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations, beliefs, opinions or practices from oneself, enabling one to build positive, constructive relationships and effective collaboration^{106,114}. It entails **sensitivity towards different worldviews** and willingness to cooperate in fair relationships. The more far-reaching a group objective is, the greater the need for a broad selection of diverse players and their ability to take diverse perspectives on a task. It is therefore key that individuals learn not only to cope with diversity but also to take advantage of it by collaborating and creating synergies. This descriptor also highlights the relevance of **willingness to contribute** actively to the common good, the interests, goals and facilities, whether material, cultural or institutional, that a group shares¹¹⁵.

Positive interdependence, that is, relying on each other's efforts, and promotive interaction, that is, encouraging and facilitating each other's contributions, are key aspects of collaboration^{4,112}. To facilitate promotive interactions, individuals in a group should be willing to: **providing** each other with efficient and **effective help** and assistance; **exchanging resources** and processing information efficiently and effectively; **providing** each other with **feedback** to improve performance in tasks and responsibilities; **challenging** each other's **conclusions** and reasoning in order to promote higher quality decision-making and greater insight into the problems; **advocating** the exertion of effort to achieve **mutual goals**; **influencing** each other's efforts to achieve the group's goals; **acting in trusting** and trustworthy **ways**; and being motivated to **strive for mutual benefit**^{112,116,117}.



S3.2

Understanding the importance of trust, respect for human dignity and equality, coping with conflicts and negotiating disagreements to build and sustain fair and respectful relationships

To cope with conflicts, individuals need to learn how to gather and exchange information to identify underlying problems, look for alternatives, evaluate their implications and be open about one's preference to select solutions



This descriptor stresses the importance of developing attitudes which recognise the dignity, rights and freedoms of others and fair relationships⁴⁷. One of the key factors for the effectiveness of collaboration is the level of **psychological safety** that participants experience in a group¹¹⁰. Psychological safety is the feeling that the members of a group will not neglect, despise or undermine someone for expressing opinions, asking for clarification or proposing solutions. A feeling of trust together with an attitude of respect within the group is critical for learning in work teams since it allows members to seek feedback and further information, discuss errors and innovate, thus facilitating appropriate actions to accomplish a task^{118; 119; 120}.

Since collaborating with people holding different points of view, perspective or background may be challenging, managing conflicts, preventing, containing, transforming and solving disputes, are essential skills for effective interaction in teams, communities and organisations both in physical and in virtual interactions¹²¹. Conflicts are part of human relations and occur in every domain of life. It is therefore important that citizens learn how to cope effectively by learning strategies to manage conflicts constructively and to resolve them¹²¹. **Conflict management** requires intentional actions to deal with conflict situations. This does not necessarily imply avoiding or reducing the conflict. For conflict management it is necessary to gather and exchange information to identify underlying problems, look for alternatives, evaluate their implications and be open about one's preference in selecting solutions¹²². **Conflict resolution** is a process aimed at reducing, terminating, or eliminating a dispute. Strategies to terminate the conflict include: negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration¹²³.

S3.3

Fair sharing of tasks, resources and responsibility within a group taking into account its specific aim; eliciting the expression of different views and adopting a systemic approach

The greater the capacity of the group's members of understanding others' feelings and perspectives is, the greater the group's collective intelligence and its capacity to successfully accomplish tasks will be



This descriptor stresses the relevance of structuring teamwork fairly. Teamwork occurs in all spheres of life (e.g. an event, a party, an excursion, etc.), and at different levels (e.g. in the family, the community, or at a global scale) and thus not only in working or learning environments. When team members have clear roles, plans and goals, the work dynamics improve and the team as a whole obtains better results¹¹⁸. A **collective intelligence** emerges from the collaboration in a group, harnessing its power to solve problems or achieve goals. Collective intelligence is an emergent property of a group of individuals working for **a common goal**¹²⁴, which strongly correlates with the average empathy of their members and the fairness in the distribution of turn-taking in a conversation¹²⁵. This means that the greater the capacity of the group's members to understand others' feelings and perspectives is, the greater the group's collective intelligence and its capacity to successfully accomplish tasks will be. Eliciting the input of all the participants and preventing a few people from dominating the communication process is highly beneficial too. It also encourages group members to feel **entitled to express** their own opinions constructively even when it goes against what has been collectively decided by a group, thus contributing to avoiding the *Abilene Paradox*, where individuals in a group support a decision, even if this is counter to their preference, to conform to what they believe is a group consensus¹²⁶.

This descriptor also stresses the need to adopt a **systemic approach**, i.e. handling teamwork with a global point of view to seamlessly combine awareness and action. A systemic approach requires one to understand how the different and interconnected aspects of a group task, as well as external factors, influence its outcomes. It entails focusing on the dynamic, complex and **evolving relations among components**, and how it contributes to the stability of the system. In other words, it implies looking at the task and adopting a perspective that allows us to see how it fits in the broader context. For collaboration to be successful, a group needs to take advantage of the different capabilities and complementarities of its members, so that everyone can contribute with their skills, knowledge and attitudes to the outcomes of the group's work.



JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

LifeComp

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

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