

OECD Learning Compass 2030

Transformative Competencies

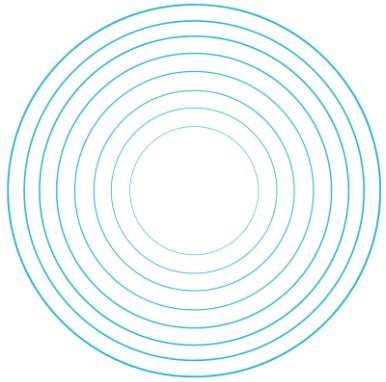
Alignment with OECD Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations (DeSeCo) Project

Dominique Simone Rychen
Former director of the DeSeCo project



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Transformative Competencies: Alignment with OECD
Definition and Selection of Competencies, Theoretical
and Conceptual Foundations (DeSeCo) Project



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The [**OECD Learning Compass 2030**](#) identifies “Transformative Competencies” as key competencies young people need to learn in order to thrive in and shape their future. The competencies of being able to create new value, to reconcile tensions and dilemmas, and learn how to be responsible are built upon the key competencies defined in DeSeCo Project.

The [Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations \(DeSeCo\) Project](#) was initiated in the late 90ies to provide a solid theoretical and conceptual basis for a comprehensive range of competencies needed to face the challenges of the present and the future and to complement and inform large scale assessments such as the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey and PISA.

DeSeCo’s overarching conceptual framework is the outcome of substantial interdisciplinary research involving psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, economists, an anthropologist, a historian, and education researchers; broad based consultations including policymakers, employers, unionists, and representatives of civil society; and synthesis work of the diversity of approaches and perspectives.²

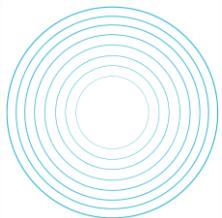
The demand- and action-oriented approach to competencies in DeSeCo resulted in the conceptualisation of the three categories of key competencies – *interacting in socially heterogeneous groups, acting autonomously, and using tools interactively* – with three key competencies in each category. While the three categories are based on the initial scholarly theorisations and subsequent interdisciplinary and multi- stakeholder exchanges the key competencies put forward within each of the three categories are the result of an examination according to established normative,

definitional, and conceptual criteria of the many lists received from experts and country reports.

Revisiting DeSeCo’s original work in light of global trends and challenges shows to what extent the underlying assumptions, main findings, and conclusions including the three categories of DeSeCo are still valid today. At the same time, it is necessary to re-conceptualise and further develop certain aspects to take account of new risks and opportunities related to the recent socio-economic and ecological paradigm shift.³

The process of creating, extending, and applying meaning, knowledge, rules, and values in a reflective manner is an underlying mental assumption of many complex demands. Many scholars and experts agree that dealing with novelty, change, diversity, ambiguity and uncertainty, and coping with important demands in life in a responsible way assumes that individuals as an expression of moral and intellectual maturity can ‘think for themselves’ and reflect upon and evaluate their actions. Furthermore, navigating through an uncertain fast changing world, thinking about the future, and developing a long-term vision will be an asset and necessity.

¹ **Dominique Simone Rychen** has a master's degree in political sciences. She was the director of the OECD DeSeCo project and co-editor and author of several books including *Defining and selecting key competencies* and *Key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society*. Since 2008 Dominique has been working for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Until 2016 she was responsible for the development and implementation of SDC's research policy. Since July 2016 she is SDC's Advisor for Education for Sustainable Development and most recently has coordinated the development of a new strategy for SDC's engagement with civil society organisations.



Based on the DeSeCo framework and inspired by the priorities and demands shaped by global trends three *transformative, cross-cutting competencies* have crystallised as relevant for the OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 project: dealing with dilemmas and trade-offs (thus going beyond either-or approaches); taking responsibility linked with ethics; and creating (economic, social, cultural) value linked to the enhancement of a spirit of entrepreneurship understood in a broad sense. The promotion of these three transformative competencies can be considered as an educational response to today's global challenges and ongoing transformation processes. Importantly, these competencies draw on foundation skills and also imply the mobilisation of key competencies as described in the three DeSeCo categories. They imply the development of a higher level of mental complexity or *reflective practice*, which is at the heart of DeSeCo's competence framework.

Reflective practice has been re-conceptualised resulting in the **OECD Learning Compass 2030** which seeks to provide an educational tool for supporting the transformation towards a more sustainable future that empowers learners – young people and adults – to navigate in time and social

space (in different spheres of life). Let me emphasise that these key and transformative competencies are relevant in a context in which democracy and respect for human rights and sustainable development are considered core values.

And finally, the acquisition of such future oriented competencies cannot be the responsibility only of the individual and cannot be reduced to a matter of personal effort, motivation, and learning skills. The development and actualisation of such competencies are contingent upon the existence of a favorable material, institutional and social environment. Economic and social policies, in particular, education policy, are challenged to provide adequate opportunities for both young people and adults not only to learn the necessary competencies but also to use them. In fact, and in terms of Keating D.P., one of the contributors to DeSeCo: «*If societies do not afford their citizens meaningful opportunities to use the competencies that they have and value, then erosion rather than enhancement of competencies is the more likely outcome*».

² Rychen, D. S., & Salganik, L. H. (Eds.). (2003). Key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society. Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe & Huber. (Final report); the executive summary can be downloaded under: <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/definitionandselectionofcompetenciesdeseco.htm>

³ Rychen, D.S. (2016). EDU/EDPC(2016)23/ANN1. Working paper. Education 2030: Key competencies for the future. OECD, Paris. <http://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030-CONCEPTUAL-FRAMEWORK-KEY-COMPETENCIES-FOR-2030.pdf>