



European Analysis of KeyCoNet's Online Public Consultation of Stakeholders

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In early 2014, the European Key Competences Network (KeyCoNet) implemented a series of short informal stakeholder surveys on policies and practices for teaching and learning of key competences. More than 5,600 individuals responded to the surveys, including 3,451 teachers, 468 head teachers, 768 students, 652 parents and 276 other stakeholders (including for example representatives from ministries, universities, teacher training organizations, inspectorates, Non-Governmental Organizations etc.). The results of these surveys highlight views on the relevance of key competences for young learners, as well as opportunities and challenges for implementation.

This report summarizes the key findings from these surveys. The results of the surveys will feed into final recommendations to be made to the European Commission at the conclusion of this KeyCoNet project in December 2014.

A NOTE ON SURVEY METHODOLOGY

KeyCoNet and the European Institute of Education and Social Policy, a network partner, developed a first set of draft stakeholder surveys in January 2014. The survey questions were subsequently refined following an online consultation with other network partners.

The survey was disseminated online (using Survey Monkey) across Europe from March to June 2014. KeyCoNet partners and other stakeholders were asked to advertise the availability of the survey among the different stakeholder groups.

As this informal survey is not based on random sampling, the self-selection bias of respondents needs to be taken into account. The number of respondents across countries is also uneven, with significantly more representation from a few countries (Romania, Spain, Portugal, Poland and France). Nevertheless, the responses do highlight a range of stakeholder viewpoints and provide important input for policy and practice.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Communication and collaboration

- There is almost universal agreement among respondents in all stakeholder groups that key competences are important for helping young people to succeed in learning and life (98% of teachers, and head teachers, 97% of parents and 87% of students agree or strongly agree).
- A significant majority of teachers and head teachers at all levels and in most countries agree that in their national curriculum guidelines, key competences are defined and integrated. Nevertheless, many respondents indicated a need to improve communication on the aims of key competences and to improve stakeholder engagement as a priority action.
- Most respondents indicated a need for greater collaboration within and beyond schools. Teachers across countries also indicated their interest in working with peers in their own and in other schools. Teachers and parents alike want to improve cooperation between schools and families. These two stakeholder groups also indicated a clear interest in improving engagement with business and community leaders.

Teaching approaches

- Student respondents indicated that teaching that incorporates open class discussion and dialogue, project-work, games-based learning (particularly for primary school students), and other methods considered as more innovative were helpful for learning key competences.
- 96% of head teachers and 91% of teachers agree or strongly agree that even if it is not easy, it is necessary to teach and assess transversal skills. 85% of parents and 74% of students agree or strongly agree with this statement.

Implementation strategies

- Head teachers and teachers alike indicate that the main implementation strategies in the shift to key competences in school curriculum have included teacher professional development, key competences taken into account in school development plans, and ICT training.
- At the same time, survey responses also indicate much room for improvement.
 - Teachers indicate the need for more time to change mindsets regarding new key competences and new approaches to teaching and assessment. Across countries, the majority of teachers indicate the need for further investment in changing learning environments (timetabling, ICT, cooperation with stakeholders outside schools) and in

teacher training. Many teacher respondents reinforced these needs in open answers regarding priority actions to improve implementation of key competences.

- According to the survey results, assessment that is not effectively aligned with key competences or with high stakes for learners is a particularly important concern for stakeholders in France and Spain. Stakeholders (teachers, head teachers and parents) in Poland and Romania also indicated the need to rethink assessment in response to questions about priority actions to improve implementation.

FURTHER DETAIL FROM THE SURVEYS

Students

A total of 806 students from 18 countries responded. Countries with the highest representation include:

- Romania (N= 467)
- Spain (N = 133)
- Portugal (N = 62)
- France (N = 26)
- Belgium (N= 18)
- Lithuania (N = 15)
- Estonia (N = 11)
- Italy (N = 11)
- Ireland (N = 6)
- Countries with between 1 and 3 student respondents (Austria, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, International)

The majority of students responding were from upper secondary (N = 383) and lower secondary (N = 339) levels. Eighty-four primary students responded (73 of whom were from Romania).

- A majority students say they have heard of key competences as part of their school's curriculum (62%). 63% said they had heard about the purpose and goals of KCs from their school head or teachers, and 35% said their teachers had explained the KCs they should learn during the current school year.
- 31% of students say that they were invited to participate in discussions and debates about the objectives of KCs. However, this percentage is largely influenced by Romanian responses, where 40% of students responding "yes". The percentage responding yes in other countries with larger numbers of respondents were: Spain – 23%; Portugal – 16%, and at the lowest – France, Belgium and Poland, at 0%.

- A strong majority of students – 87% – agree or strongly agree that developing key competences are important to help them succeed in learning and life.
- 74% also believe that transversal competences such as team work and/creativity are necessary for their education.

- 50% of students agree or strongly agree that focusing on key competences may lead to a lack of time devoted to learning content featured in examinations. Nevertheless, a total of 40% of students disagree with this statement, and 9% say they do not know.

- These percentages are consistent across school levels (49% of lower secondary students and 52% of upper secondary students agree or strongly agree that focusing on key competences may lead to a lack of time devoted to learning content featured on exams; 36% of lower secondary and 37% of upper secondary students disagree or strongly disagree; 12% of lower secondary and 11% of upper secondary students do not know).

- The majority of students responded that all of their teachers had assessed their KCs (N= 476). A significant, but still relatively low, percentage of students said that some but not all of their teachers had assessed their KCs (38%)

- When teachers do assess key competences, students say that the methods include:
 - Assessment in the course of class discussion (57%);
 - Teacher-designed tests (56%)
 - Projects (55%)
 - Portfolio (43%)

- Lower and upper secondary students also noted their preferences for learning:
 - Open class discussion (65%) (67% low sec and 61% up sec)
 - Projects (63%) (68% low sec and 57% up sec)
 - Trips outside of school (60%) (63% low sec and 54% up sec)
 - Game-based learning (48%) (53% low sec and 36% up sec)
 - Guidance on how to improve their work (48%) (46% low sec and 48% up sec)
 - Feeling comfortable enough to make mistakes (43%)(40% low sec and 44% up sec)
 - Having a clear learning goal (41%)(41% low sec and 37% up sec)
 - Learning with ICT (40%)(39% for both lower and upper sec)
 - Visits from outside professionals or other community members (37% for both lower and upper sec)
 - Tracking their learning progress (33%) (36% of lower sec and 26% of up sec)
 - Small group discussions (32%)

- Combining more than one subject (*i.e.* interdisciplinary learning) (31%) (This was universally popular among students in France)
- Primary school students preferred:
 - Games-based learning (77%)
 - Trips outside school (67%)
 - Open class discussion (63%)
 - Working on projects (63%)
 - Having a clear learning goal (56%)
 - Guidance on how to improve work (54%)
 - Tracking learning progress (49%)
 - Learning with ICT (49%)
 - Visits from outside professionals (48%)
 - Discussing in small groups (45%)
 - Combining more than one subject (42%)
 - Feeling comfortable enough to make mistakes (36%)
- Students were invited to indicate the key competences they believe to be the most important and useful for their lives (open response). In many cases, learners indicated particular subject areas (mathematics, languages, and sciences). Some learners took a broader view, for example, indicating the importance of:
 - Understanding the essence of a larger whole
 - Social skills
 - Self-development (what do I stand for?)
 - Self-expression.

Parents

A total of 652 parents from 21 countries responded.

Countries with the highest representation include:

- Romania (N = 246)
- France (N = 175)
- Spain (N = 46)
- Estonia (N = 40)
- Portugal (N = 35)
- Poland (N = 21)
- Ireland (N = 15)
- Finland (N = 12)
- Countries with between 1 and 5 parent respondents included: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom)

The majority of parents have children in lower secondary school (N = 305), followed by primary school (251) and upper secondary school (N = 226)

- A majority of parents say they have heard of KCs (52%) in their child's curriculum, 14% say they have not, and 11% have a mixed response (i.e., parents with children in more than one level may want to respond affirmatively for one child and negatively for the other). 24% of parents don't know if they have heard of key competences in their child's curriculum or not.
- 39% parents said that they are satisfied with their child's learning outcomes, 17% are not, 12% have a mixed response for children at different levels, and 32% responded that they did not know one way or the other.
- 37% of parent respondents said that the information on the purpose and goals of KCs they received was well communicated and useful, while 36% said it was not. 6% had a mixed response and 21% did not know.
- 32% of parents responded that KCs have led to a change in teaching and learning at their child's school and 27% said that it had not. 6% had a mixed response and 21% did not know
- 32% of parents believe that KCs have had a positive influence on their child's attitude toward learning and 8% had a mixed response. 23% of parents do *not* believe that KCs have had a positive influence, and 37% do not know.
- Of those parents who responded that KCs are having a positive influence on their child's attitude toward learning, 53% believed that the influence is significant or somewhat significant. 10% said that it was not significant, and 37% said they did not know.
- 78% of parents responded that they were *not* invited to participate in discussions about the objectives of KCs.
- 39% of parents are concerned that focusing on KCs may lead to a lack of time to study content that will feature on examinations. 52% disagree or strongly disagree that KCs will have a negative effect on time devoted to examination content. 9% said they do not know.
- 97% of parents agree or strongly agree that developing KCs is important to help young people succeed
- 85% of parents agree or strongly agree that teaching of transversal competences is necessary.

Teachers

A total of 3,428 teachers from 29 countries and in the “international” and “other” categories responded to the survey.

Countries with the highest representation include:

- Romania (N = 855)
- France (N = 724)
- Spain (N = 435)
- Portugal (N = 284)
- Poland (N = 212)
- Italy (N = 184)
- Greece (N = 139)
- Lithuania (N = 124)
- Estonia (N = 75)
- Finland (N = 71)
- Ireland (N = 70)
- Belgium (N = 57)
- Croatia (N= 52)
- Norway (N = 32)
- United Kingdom (N = 19)
- Bulgaria (N = 14)
- International and Other (N = 14)

Countries with fewer than 10 responses include: Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden.

Of the 3,428 teachers, 820 teach primary school (of which 70 also teach lower secondary), 1,303 teach lower secondary school (of which 420 also teach upper secondary school) and 1305 teach upper secondary school (of which 59 also teach primary or all three levels).

- The breakdown of subjects taught by respondents is as follows:
 - 805 teach foreign language
 - 621 teach most subjects (e.g. primary school)
 - 353 teach literacy and mother tongue
 - 310 teach ICT

- 306 teach humanities
 - 203 teach in a transdisciplinary approach
 - 172 teach arts and culture
 - 153 teach citizenship
 - 127 teach STEM subjects (i.e., science, technology, mathematics)
 - 92 teach entrepreneurship
 - Other
- A large majority (86%) of respondents agree that KCs are defined in their national curriculum guidelines. 7% do not believe this to be the case and 6% say they do not know.
 - 66% of teachers say that KCs are also integrated in the national curriculum guidelines, while 21% say they are not. 12% say they do not know.

Teachers across countries noted the following strategies, to their knowledge, have been used to facilitate implementation:

58%	○ Teacher professional development focused on new teaching methods for key competences
50%	○ ICT training for teachers and students
49%	○ Teacher professional development focused on new approaches to assessment of students' key competences
39%	○ Key competences objectives explicitly taken into account in the school development plan
36%	○ Teacher collaboration and networking as a means of professional development
32%	○ Opportunities for main stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community and business leaders) to reflect on implications of key competences for learning and teaching approaches
20%	○ Adjustments in the school's implementation strategy based on feedback from teachers, students and parents
19%	○ Reorganisation of time schedules to support different kinds of learning activities
18%	○ Reorganisation of the learning environment and facilities within and beyond the school
18%	○ Engagement in the broader community (economic, social and cultural institutions) on how to enhance competence based learning through extra-curricular activities
17%	○ Action research on competence based learning, with teachers, teacher educators and other relevant authorities

15%	○ Use of external programme evaluations and data to develop evidence-informed teaching and to set school policy
12%	○ Networks engaging families and community stakeholders
8%	○ None

The most frequently cited strategies are fairly consistent across countries. For example:

- Teacher professional development focused on new teaching methods for key competences was cited as the most frequently used strategy in Romania (81%), Croatia (67%), Spain (58%), and Lithuania (33%) and the second most used strategy in France (40%).
- Teacher professional development focused on assessment of key competences was also cited as an important strategy in Romania (72%), Spain (58%), Lithuania (57%) and France (42%) (the only country where this is the most frequently cited strategy in France).
- Key competences explicitly taken into account in school development plans was cited as the most frequently used strategy in Ireland (59%) and as the second most used strategy in Estonia (65%).
- ICT training for teachers was cited as a frequently used strategy in several countries, including Estonia (77%), Greece (72%), Finland (68%), Croatia (61%), Poland (55%), Romania (55%), Lithuania (54%), Belgium (51%), Norway (50%), Italy (48%), Spain (48%) and France (38%).

There was also some consistency across the *least* frequently used strategies for different countries:

- Action research on competence-based learning, including Estonia (17%), Ireland (15%), Finland (4%) and Belgium (3%).
- Networks engaging families and community stakeholders, including Estonia (15%), Lithuania (15%), Belgium (10%), Finland (8%), Ireland (8%), Spain (7%) and Norway (3%).
- Use of external programme evaluations and data, including Norway (12%), Belgium (8%), Finland (7%), Estonia (4%), Greece, (5%), Romania (3%), Spain (5%) and Ireland (3%).

Teachers across countries cited the main obstacles to teaching key competences as:

51%	○ Time required for teachers, pupils and parents to change their way of thinking about and approaches to learning and teaching with key competences
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42%	○ Insufficient financial resources for teacher education and continuous professional development
42%	○ Insufficient financial resources for changing learning environments
32%	○ Insufficient guidelines and tools to support new approaches to teaching and assessment
26%	○ Difficulty of developing new assessment tools, particularly for transversal competences and skills
25%	○ Difficulty of articulating interdisciplinary and extra-curricular activities with subject syllabi
22%	○ Insufficient collaboration between teachers and families in regard to child/youth competence development
21%	○ Insufficient training of school leaders and inspectors to support changes required for effective implementation of key competences
19%	○ A lack of consensus and support for the fundamental goals and approaches of competence based learning and teaching
17%	○ Poor communication among stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community and business leaders)

- **Time required for various stakeholders to change their way of thinking** about approaches to learning and teaching was the most frequently cited obstacle in several different countries, including Estonia (68%), Belgium (58%), France (57%), Portugal (57%), Spain (57%), Lithuania (51%) and Greece (49%) and across countries at primary, lower and upper secondary levels.
- Insufficient financial resources for teacher education and continuous professional development was the most frequently cited obstacle in Croatia (73%), Finland (62%), Italy (59%), and Romania (52%). Although there is some variation, teachers at all school levels and across countries see this lack of investment in teacher development as a major obstacle.

The *least* frequently cited obstacles for teachers within different countries and across school levels were:

- A lack of consensus and support for the fundamental goals and approaches of competence-based learning and teaching, including Lithuania (18%), Finland (14%) and France (11%).
- Insufficient training for school leaders (21% of all teachers across countries and school levels cite this as a main obstacle).

- Insufficient collaboration between teachers and families, including Ireland (13%), Greece (12%) and Finland.
- 47% of teachers agree or strongly agree that focusing on KCs may lead to a lack of time to focus on important content for examinations, 48% disagree or strongly disagree with this, and 4% say they do not know.
- The need for new assessment tools is seen as a main obstacle for both lower and upper secondary teachers in France and Spain (and for upper secondary teachers in Croatia). Overall, however, only 26% of the teacher respondents see the need for new assessment tools as a main obstacle to integrating key competences.
- 95% of teacher agree or strongly agree that key competences are important for young people’s success in learning and life. 3% disagree or strongly disagree and 1% say they do not know.
- 91% of teachers agree or strongly agree that even though it is not easy to teach and assess transversal competences, it is necessary. 6% disagree or disagree strongly, and 3% say they do not know.
- 49% of teachers agree that research (including action research) has been very or somewhat important, 22% say that it has been neither important nor unimportant, and 15% say that it has not been important. 2% say they do not know.

Head teachers

A total of 468 head teachers from 21 countries and 1 in the “international” category responded to the survey.

Countries with the highest representation include:

- Romania (N = 146)
- France (N = 137)
- Spain (N = 61)
- Poland (N = 26)
- Lithuania (N = 16)
- Greece (N = 12)
- Ireland (N = 12)
- Portugal (N = 12)

Other countries had fewer than 10 respondents (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom, and International).

Of these, 162 reported that they are responsible for primary education, 258 for lower secondary and 182 for upper secondary. Some are responsible for more than one level of education.

- A large majority (91%) of respondents agree that KCs are defined in their national curriculum guidelines. 6% do not believe this to be the case and 3% say they do not know.
- 73% of head teachers say that KCs are also integrated in the national curriculum guidelines, while 23% say they are not. 5% say they do not know.

Head teachers across countries noted the following strategies, to their knowledge, have been used to facilitate implementation:

76%	○ Teacher professional development focused on new teaching methods for key competences
63%	○ Key competences objectives explicitly taken into account in the school development plan
62%	○ ICT training for teachers and students
60%	○ Teacher professional development focused on new approaches to assessment of students' key competences
53%	○ Opportunities for main stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community and business leaders) to reflect on implications of key competences for learning and teaching approaches
53%	○ Teacher collaboration and networking as a means of professional development
36%	○ Engagement in the broader community (economic, social and cultural institutions) on how to enhance competence based learning through extra-curricular activities
33%	○ Reorganisation of the learning environment and facilities within and beyond the school
32%	○ Adjustments in the school's implementation strategy based on feedback from teachers, students and parents
32%	○ Reorganisation of time schedules to support different kinds of learning activities
28%	○ Use of external programme evaluations and data to develop evidence-informed teaching and to set school policy
23%	○ Networks engaging families and community stakeholders
18%	○ Action research on competence based learning, with teachers, teacher educators and other relevant authorities

1%	○ None
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- In countries with the most significant number of respondents, teacher professional development focused on new teaching methods for key competences was the most frequently cited strategy, including Romania (90%), France (67%) and Spain (77%).

Head teachers across countries cited the three main obstacles as:

60%	○ Time required for teachers, pupils and parents to change their way of thinking about and approaches to learning and teaching with key competences
44%	○ Difficulty of developing new assessment tools, particularly for transversal competences and skills
39%	○ Insufficient financial resources for changing learning environments
34%	○ Insufficient financial resources for teacher education and continuous professional development
32%	○ Difficulty of articulating interdisciplinary and extra-curricular activities with subject syllabi
28%	○ A lack of consensus and support for the fundamental goals and approaches of competence based learning and teaching
27%	○ Insufficient training of school leaders and inspectors to support changes required for effective implementation of key competences
19%	○ Insufficient collaboration between teachers and families in regard to child/youth competence development
14%	○ Poor communication among stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community and business leaders)

- A particularly high percentage of head teachers in France (74%) see the issue of time required for teachers, pupils and parents to change their way of thinking about approaches to learning and teaching with key competences as a major obstacle. The difficulty of developing new assessment tools is the second biggest obstacle identified by head teachers in France (64%) and a lack of consensus and support for the fundamental goals and approaches of competences is the third most frequently identified obstacle (39%).
- In Romania, 62% of head teachers cited insufficient resources for changing learning environments as an important obstacle, 40% cited the difficulty of articulating interdisciplinary and extra-curricular activities with subject syllabi, and 37% cited insufficient collaboration among teachers as an important obstacle.

- In Spain, 47% of head teachers see the issue of time as a major obstacle, and 33% replied that insufficient financial resources for teacher education as well as insufficient training of school leaders and inspectors as major obstacles.
- 36% of head teachers agree or strongly agree that focusing on key competences may lead to a lack of time for focusing on content featured on examinations. 61% disagree or strongly disagree and 3% say they do not know.
- 98% of head teachers agree or strongly agree that developing key competences is important to help learners succeed in learning and life. 2% disagree or strongly disagree with this, and .04% say they do not know.
- 96% of head teachers agree or strongly agree that even if it is not easy, it is necessary to teach and assess transversal skills. 4% disagree or strongly disagree and .08% say they do not know.

Stakeholders

A total of 78 KeyCoNet partners and associate members from 21 countries and 1 responded to the survey. A total of 198 “other” stakeholders (i.e., stakeholders who are not partners or associates) from 23 countries responded.

- 83% of KCN partners and 74% believe that key competences are defined in the national curriculum guidelines, 6% say they are not, and 10% do not know. Among other stakeholders, 71% believe that key competences are defined in the national curriculum guidelines, 17% believe they are not, and 13% do not know.
- KCN partners see the main obstacles that will need to be addressed are: time required for teachers, pupils and parents to change their way of thinking about and approaches to learning and teaching with key competences (60%). The second most common obstacle is the difficulty of developing new assessment tools, particularly for transversal competences and skills (46%). The third most common obstacle is insufficient training of school leaders and inspectors to support changes required for effective implementation (42%).
- For other stakeholders, the three main obstacles are: time required for teachers, pupils and parents to change their way of thinking (50%), insufficient financial resources for teacher education (44%), and insufficient training of school leaders and inspectors (39%).

- 98% of KCN partners and 92% of other stakeholders agree or strongly that developing key competences is important to helping students succeed in learning and life.
- 32% of KCN partners and 30% of other stakeholders believe that focusing on key competences may lead to a lack of time to focus on content featured on examinations. 66% of KCN partners and 66% of other stakeholders disagree or disagree strongly with this statement.
- 90% of KCN partners and 88% of other stakeholders agree or strongly agree that even if it is not easy, it is necessary to teach transversal skills in schools.
- In open responses, KCN partners emphasised:
 - The importance of ensuring that education is a national priority and that sufficient funds are allocated to this dossier (for training, investments in technology, etc.). Clarity and consistent support are needed.
 - Reforms to initial teacher education and continuous professional development are needed.
 - It was also noted that policy makers need time to change mindsets regarding education approaches, as well.
 - KCN partners placed a strong emphasis on the importance of broad stakeholder engagement regarding educational aims and approaches.
 - School-based innovation.
 - Sharing of best practices and benchmarking among EU member states
- In their open responses, other stakeholders emphasised:
 - The need for new curricula and assessment frameworks
 - Ensuring that teachers have the resources and time to allow them to provide the care and support learners need.
 - Exchange of best practice
 - Opportunities for teachers to be heard