

REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (RFCDC)



**Guidance document
for higher education**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (RFCDC)

Competences for democratic
culture in higher education

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Photos: iStockphoto.com
Cover design and layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
<http://book.coe.int>

ISBN 978-92-871-9021-5
© Council of Europe, July 2020
Printed at the Council of Europe

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Chapter 1

Why competences for democratic culture are important for higher education

Education is to society what oxygen is to living beings: we cannot exist without it. But if society cannot thrive without education, nor can education exist meaningfully except in the context of society.

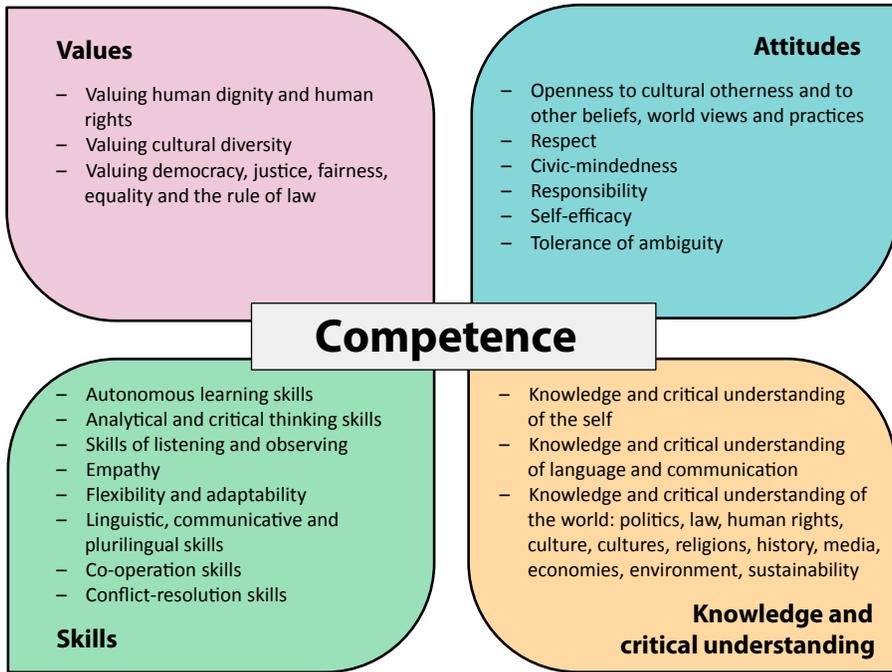
Education is essential for developing the kind of societies we want through the fulfilment of its multiple objectives listed in the box below.

- ▶ Preparation for sustainable employment.
- ▶ Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies.
- ▶ Personal development.
- ▶ Development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

Source: Council of Europe (2007)

Education, including higher education, is also essential for the development and preservation of democratic societies. Figure 1 shows the competence model of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), listing the 20 competences that individuals require in order to function as democratically and interculturally competent citizens. Often referred to as the “butterfly”, the model was developed by the ad hoc expert group for the RFCDC, starting in December 2013, and was adopted by European Ministers of Education in April 2016. The model, the descriptors of competences and the guidance for implementation together constitute the RFCDC (Council of Europe 2018a, b, c).

Figure 1: Competence model “butterfly”



Source: Council of Europe (2018a)

To fulfil the democratic mission of education, including higher education, we must be able to specify – in the form of learning outcomes of an education programme or course – what students should know, understand, be able and also willing to do, as both citizens and professionals. Deciding what we are willing to do and what we are not willing to do is crucial: democracy requires ethical reflection. The “butterfly” attempts to succinctly present these learning outcomes, which apply – with specificities – to all levels of education.

Democratic culture concerns higher education as much as any other level and strand of education. Higher education fosters a culture of democracy through the transversal competences it develops in all its students, the way in which institutions are run, how the members of the academic community interact, and how higher education institutions see themselves and behave as actors in society at large. Competences for democratic culture (CDC) cannot be developed, for any education level or setting, if they are taught for only a few hours a week and forgotten the rest of the time. CDC should not be taught in political science or law classes alone, only to be forgotten when it comes to linguistics or physics, campus life, or the way in which students and staff conduct themselves on and off campus.

The full implementation of the RFCDC (or “CDC Framework”) requires a whole-institution approach that makes the promotion and fostering of CDC an institutional priority for policy as well as practice. CDC are not an academic discipline in their own right, and are not specific to any discipline. Rather, a culture of democracy should permeate all aspects of an institution’s life. While the whole-institution approach is described in Chapter 7 of this document, aspects of CDC relating specifically to teaching and learning, research, the civic role of higher education and governance are described in Chapters 5 and 6, with indications of how CDC may be developed within each kind of activity.

Chapter 2

Who is this guidance document for?

This guidance document is intended for higher-education policy makers and practitioners: in other words, those involved in the development, provision and/or assessment of higher education and its role in furthering the values, attitudes, skills and critical knowledge and understanding required to develop and maintain a culture of democracy.

These include, first and foremost, teaching staff and students but also administrators and leaders in higher education institutions such as rectors, vice rectors, deans and heads of department. They further include policy makers such as ministry officials and other representatives of public authorities responsible for higher education, quality assurance agencies and other bodies with a public mandate, as well as stakeholder organisations such as those representing students, higher education staff, higher education institutions, or employers.

By its very nature, a culture of democracy should extend to all those present on campus regardless of their role, from ancillary staff to professional service staff, from academics to administrators, from students to members of the governing board.

CDC are relevant to – and can and should be implemented throughout – all strands and levels of education and training. Training is understood to focus on the provision of practical skills, while education is seen as a more comprehensive process aimed at equipping students with the skills and competences required to develop a considered view of the role of their own speciality in a broader societal and philosophical context. While CDC are therefore relevant to all parts of tertiary education, the present guidance document focuses on higher education, the specificities of which are described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3

Purpose and overview

This guidance document explores how the CDC Framework may be used in higher education at all levels, in all academic disciplines and within all study programmes, whether academically or professionally oriented. The CDC Framework builds on a whole-institution approach: it relates not only to courses and study programmes but also to all aspects of a higher education institution.

The document should be read in conjunction with, and may be complemented by, other CDC guidance documents, in particular those that take a transversal approach. These include the guidance on curriculum development, pedagogy and assessment (Council of Europe 2018c, Chapters 1, 2 and 3).

The CDC Framework is above all relevant to the development of CDC in and through higher education, at all levels and strands. This crucial mission of higher education is the focus of the present document, which considers the broader role of higher education in developing CDC in its students but also in teaching/research and technical and administrative staff. It addresses higher education institutions as a type of community, and looks at how democratic culture can be fostered through and within that community; it also looks at how the academic community could help develop CDC in the broader society of which it is a part.

The CDC Framework is also pertinent to higher education in more specialised contexts: through the pedagogical preparation of teachers in higher education and in teacher education, that is, through the role of higher education in the preparation of future primary and secondary school teachers and the in-service training of primary and secondary school teachers. Initial teacher education as provided at higher education institutions is addressed in a separate guidance document (*ibid.*, Chapter 4: 75-88) and will therefore not be dealt with here. The pedagogical preparation of higher education teaching and research staff is addressed by the present guidance document without being the focus of it.

The reasons for drawing up a specific guidance document for higher education are bound up with the specificities of higher education, which are explored in Chapter 4. These include the fundamental values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and student and staff participation in institutional governance, which are key features of higher education in Europe. These fundamental values were highlighted by the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) at their conference held in Paris on 24 and 25 May 2018. Other specificities include the fact that the vast majority of higher education students are legally adults and therefore have voting rights and the right to run for election in their country of citizenship, in some cases also in their country of residence if different. In addition, the significance of the powerful roles of different stakeholders applies more to higher education than to other areas and levels of education. Higher education is also characterised by a broad diversity of specialised study programmes and a high degree of institutional autonomy. Unlike in primary and secondary education, there are no national curricula in higher education; however, higher education qualifications are part of national qualifications frameworks and are subject to external quality assurance. Not least, higher education institutions and members of the higher education community also engage with broader society in ways that differ from primary and secondary education.

Chapter 5 deals with the acquisition of CDC in higher education and constitutes the central part of this guidance document. It considers the role of students in formal education – with separate consideration of professional higher education – and in extracurricular activities. It also discusses the role of teaching and research staff, with an emphasis on the pedagogical preparation of higher education teachers.

Chapter 6 considers how higher education governance can help develop CDC. This chapter examines the role of leadership in institutions, as well as other actors within the institution, including student unions and associations.

In Chapter 7, we explore how the life of higher education institutions more broadly can help develop the CDC not only of students – but also those of teaching and research and other staff. This is the higher education equivalent of the “whole-school” approach described in a separate guidance document (*ibid.*, Chapter 5: 89-100). While the latter document will also be of interest to higher education, it cannot be adopted wholesale but needs to be adapted to higher education. Taking a “whole-institution” approach, this chapter considers the role of student associations and governance. It also discusses the role of members of the academic community engaging as citizens of broader society. Not least, it considers the significance of fundamental academic values, such as academic freedom and institutional autonomy, in developing CDC.

Chapter 8 presents a number of conclusions and recommendations concerning possible ways forward.

Chapter 4

The specificities of higher education

The development of CDC is relevant not only for compulsory education but also for higher education. The role of higher education institutions is not restricted to the preparation of scholars, researchers, advanced specialists and professionals. Higher education also contributes to the education of students as active citizens and to furthering CDC more generally. Higher education, however, presents a number of specificities that distinguish it in this regard from general or compulsory education.

In higher education, CDC are developed in the following three main ways:

- ▶ through the specialised training of teachers for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools (teacher education);
- ▶ through the pedagogic preparation of higher education instructors (training of academic staff who will teach in higher education);
- ▶ through the development of CDC in all other participants in higher education, including the students, the academic and administrative staff and groups involved in out-of-campus or outreach activities carried out by universities.

We shall now turn to summarising the specificities of CDC in higher education.

The main thrust of higher education in Europe is the preparation of scholars, researchers and advanced specialists and professionals. Competences for democratic culture are usually not the primary, immediate and most visible matter of concern in higher education. Higher education institutions, however, should also fulfil important functions with regard to CDC. Members of a university community – its students and staff – are members of society: they are citizens. University graduates (former students) are citizens as well, at the same time as being, or aspiring to be, advanced specialists and professionals. This speaks to the need to pay attention to CDC education and practice in universities just as much as in compulsory education.

There are significant differences in terms of participation and attainment rates between higher education on the one hand and primary and secondary education on the other. Attainment rates in higher education seldom exceed 50% and in some European countries are only around 30% (Eurostat 2019a). While the European Union (EU) was on track to meet its target of increasing the tertiary educational attainment in the age group 30-34 to at least 40% on average by 2020, close to 100% of children between the age of 4 and the age of entry into primary education attend school already (Eurostat 2019b). Also, the proportion of individuals aged 20-24 who have completed at least upper secondary education currently exceeds 90% in some European countries (Eurostat 2019a). Given these lower levels of higher education participation and attainment rates, a more limited number of individuals will benefit directly from what universities offer in terms of CDC education. Still, this number remains very significant.

Higher education institutions are also different from primary and secondary schools in that they focus on the preservation and transmission of advanced and specialised knowledge.

They also play a key role in the production of new knowledge through research, which is one of their distinguishing functions – with the rare exception of teaching-only institutions. University research can and must play a role in CDC education by:

- ▶ providing new knowledge required by students as future citizens (beyond their professional horizons), and also by society in general, in order to understand evolving economic, social and political structures, processes and behaviours;
- ▶ contributing to students' acquisition of critical thinking skills by exposing them to research, which – even for students who will not become researchers – allows future citizens to understand the virtues and limitations of how knowledge is produced, communicated, used and abused, or manipulated in various sectors of society;
- ▶ preparing future generations of researchers, since research education includes not only the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, research techniques and methods, but also learning about ethical and social aspects of research activities and their impact.

Higher education institutions are also different because they normally operate on the basis of the principles of university autonomy and academic freedom. As such, they enjoy various degrees of freedom in the design and delivery of their activities, more than in compulsory education. There are usually no national curricula in higher education to prescribe the substance of what universities are expected to teach, whether specific education for particular professionals or generic education for citizens. Universities have the freedom and also the responsibility to design their own activities within the limits of the applicable national regulations, and in accordance with specific disciplinary and professional standards such as qualifications frameworks and institutional, programme and professional accreditation guidelines and standards. In the absence of national curricula, CDC education is normally not prescribed centrally or externally in higher education. This means that each institution is responsible for deciding how best to promote CDC education in its specific institutional context, which may unsurprisingly result in approaches and practices that

differ significantly from institution to institution. However, all higher education institutions share a responsibility to engage in CDC education, albeit in different ways.

Higher education is organised in distinctive cycles and layers (e.g. bachelor, master's, PhD; degree or non-degree programmes; short or long) corresponding to the different levels of competences, skills or knowledge students are expected to acquire. Higher education activities target varying categories of students and beneficiaries. They can be geared towards more generic, or very specific, learning outcomes. We can distinguish, for example, between general education degrees explicitly embracing CDC education, such as liberal arts bachelor programmes (not usual in Europe but quite common in the United States), and programmes that do not embrace CDC education; between professional and research master's degrees; between professional doctorates and research doctorates; and between long degree programmes and short executive programmes. The organisation and substance of higher education activities is therefore not only specific in that it is different from general or compulsory education, it is also quite diverse within the higher education sector itself. Accordingly, it is important to distinguish between more general aspects of CDC education in higher education – such as, for example, professional ethics and integrity, which should be part of any programme, degree or activity in higher education – and those aspects that are related to specific education programmes and activities. It makes a difference, for example, whether we speak of CDC education in a three-year doctoral degree programme that prepares researchers in brain studies or a two-week in-service executive programme for regulators in the oil extraction industry. It is the responsibility of each institution, however, to ensure that no particular activity or programme in higher education disregards CDC education. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of each institution to ensure that CDC education is adapted to the level, type and objectives of that particular activity, programme or project.

Higher education is not restricted to on-campus or online teaching and learning and research. Higher education institutions undertake outreach activities carried out by students and teaching and research staff, which are intended to benefit external groups. These activities are also valuable for higher education communities. They have an important educational value, including in terms of CDC education. Civic engagement activities, for example, expose students to real-life issues and settings that are relevant for their learning in a given academic area, discipline or profession, and also for their learning about social circumstances, including problems and challenges associated with the exercise of a given profession or activity. Students can also acquire values, attitudes and a predisposition for particular actions through outreach or out-of-campus activities that bring them into contact with individuals and groups that are not regular members of their university communities.

The distinguishing characteristics of higher education give rise to specific challenges for higher education institutions in the area of CDC education, which are discussed throughout this document and are complemented by recommendations and guiding principles on how to address them. Some of these specific challenges are outlined below.

- ▶ How can we address the limited participation rates in higher education? Possible solutions include action to increase these rates, and the involvement of groups other than regular students in higher education activities. The concern for the social dimensions of higher education in the EHEA, based on the principle of achieving more inclusive higher education and better reflecting the diversity of European societies, is highly relevant here (Bologna Process 2012, 2015).
- ▶ How can universities serve society as a whole, including in the area of CDC education? This is a complex challenge. In addressing it, universities may start by conceiving of knowledge – including advanced knowledge – as a public good, and organising their activities in line with this principle. A particular issue here is how universities address new and emerging challenges in broader society that are relevant for CDC education. At present, one such challenge results from the increasingly pressing need for individuals – as professionals but also citizens – to deal with data overload or manipulation by mass media and social media (including “fake news”). Of a different order, another challenge has to do with the relative “civic recession” and disenchantment with democracy.
- ▶ How can we design and deliver CDC education in higher education, taking into account the principles of academic freedom and university autonomy on the one hand, and the moral obligation of universities to engage in CDC education on the other? Possible solutions here involve adapted institutional planning as well as a supportive external regulatory framework, for example through the inclusion and acknowledgement of CDC education in accreditation.
- ▶ How can we address the persisting trend towards commodification, and maintain and cultivate the democratic nature of higher education?

As summarised in this chapter, the contribution of higher education to CDC education is marked by a number of fundamental and distinguishing characteristics. At the same time, it is important to recognise that all higher education institutions have a responsibility to contribute to CDC education. For this, CDC education must be flexibly – but explicitly and systematically – integrated into the overall strategies and operation of higher education institutions.

Chapter 5

Developing and practising competences for democratic culture in higher education

5.1. Teaching and learning

Students

“Competence-based study programmes in higher education” have become a dominant approach in the EHEA. The most common understanding of this approach is that it increases graduates’ employability. This is important. However, in contrast to such a simplified but popular understanding, we need to draw attention to the full range of purposes of higher education.¹ In the relevant literature (e.g. Bergan and Damian 2010), it has often been noted that competence-based programmes also enable us to consider and articulate our values, moral attitudes and ethics – and to embed them in the curricula.

European policy documents repeatedly highlight this aspect of learning and teaching. Thus, the Yerevan Communiqué (Bologna Process 2015) stressed that study programmes should enable students to develop the competences that can best satisfy personal aspirations and societal needs through effective learning activities. The Paris Communiqué (Bologna Process 2018) emphasised that by providing students and other learners with opportunities for lifelong personal development, higher education enhances their prospects of employment and stimulates them to be active citizens in democratic societies. In this context, there is clear opportunity also for developing and practising CDC.

¹ As set out in Council of Europe (2007), paragraph. 5.

Although this dimension is not always at the forefront of designing new study programmes, many examples of good practice have emerged recently. Among the various initiatives that resulted from co-operation between European higher education institutions, the Tuning project was especially noticed by the academic world. One of the main objectives of the project was to “tune” diverse approaches to teaching, learning and assessment across European universities. The lists of subject-specific competences (in various fields of study, from architecture, economics or engineering via geology, law or mathematics to nursing, physics or tourism)² as well as generic competences (transversal, i.e. across all fields of studies) were harmonised. Several on the generic list, and some from the subject-specific lists, can be classified as CDC and are consistent with the competences as presented in our “butterfly” model (Figure 1), such as:

- ▶ the ability to be critical and self-critical;
- ▶ the ability to show awareness of equal opportunities and gender issues;
- ▶ the commitment to safety;
- ▶ the ability to act on the basis of ethical reasoning;
- ▶ the interpersonal and interaction skills;
- ▶ the ability to act with social responsibility and civic awareness;
- ▶ the appreciation of and respect for diversity and multiculturality.

Source: the Tuning project, “generic competences”, available at <http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/competences/generic.html>.

Many institutions, both in Europe and around the world, have used the Tuning methodology in updating study programmes, and many of the programmes already promote teaching and learning that includes CDC.³

Generally speaking, CDC education might be incorporated into a study programme in at least three ways:

- ▶ in the form of a single subject or course;
- ▶ in different curriculum subjects;
- ▶ as a transversal theme incorporated into all or some disciplinary topics.

Which one to choose depends on the specific situation. The first method of incorporation is probably only for those programmes where competences for democratic culture are at the very heart of future professional practice (e.g. in specific areas of social sciences such as culture studies, peace studies or teacher education). It is usually stated that the limits of this approach are primarily connected to the risk that a single subject or course minimises or even “takes away” the responsibility for this field in other components of the curriculum. The development of CDC education

2. For more details, see <http://tuningacademy.org/subject-areas/?lang=en>. See also subject-specific competences listed in Tuning Project (n.d. a,b,c and d).

3. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld> and www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/.

is a complex process, which in most cases can be better supported by inter-subject and cross-curricular initiatives (see also Chapter 7). The various options include holding open workshops and events, attracting external stakeholders into different segments of courses organised in the context of lifelong learning or programmes such as those related to the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development or the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴ In these different ways, higher education institutions should endeavour to ensure that CDC education becomes a “philosophy” – a mental practice, and not a course that simply encourages students to duplicate what they have been taught in a clichéd and unthinking way.

The Tuning Academy website includes many examples of good practice. Among them is the Project Miquel Martí i Pol, which integrates several fields of university studies and includes various aspects of CDC education. The project involves occupational therapy students from the University of Vic, Spain. It deals with gardening and the restoration of natural spaces (reforestation), and includes in its activities clients who face problems such as those related to mental health, poverty and immigration. The project also aims to confront the social and ecological challenges of contemporary Europe. A key element of the project is to educate society in the value and potential of excluded people, showing that they are citizens who contribute to society. In this approach, universities must be schools for democracy and citizenship. Research is a key element of the project, studying the contribution of meaningful occupation to well-being and the construction of inclusive communities and citizenship, fighting against poverty. Research for the master’s and PhD degrees has been developed based on the project. The art of politics and partnerships is central to the process, linking the social-health sectors with the economic and educational sectors. The goal is to create a society based on the values of justice, equality, freedom, active respect and solidarity.

Source: ENOTHE (2010), pp. 109-112.

When the most appropriate way to integrate competences for democratic culture into a specific study programme has been chosen, the next key issue is which approaches to teaching, learning and assessment are most appropriate to developing and practising CDC. These approaches, as well as learning environments, have a great impact on the development of CDC, in particular by giving students opportunities to learn through experiencing democracy and human rights in action in the classroom and on campus. Here, with appropriate adaptation to the higher education context, the recommendations and suggestions set out in Chapters 2 and 3 of Council of Europe (2018c) might be followed. Below are just some of the approaches that could be used.

- ▶ Ensure that the classroom – including the virtual classroom – is a space where students can practise and enjoy academic freedom to openly discuss their views regarding not only their discipline and profession but also institutional and societal contexts, even when their views may be controversial. This can be done by creating an open, participative and respectful classroom environment

4. See United Nations University (n.d.).

that allows all class members to share their experiences and express their own opinions and emotions, and where the students participate in the setting and respecting of ground rules, such as listening to and respecting others.

- ▶ Create opportunities for students to participate in their own learning (students' learning communities) and facilitate forms of co-operative learning across the curriculum through the use of different forms of group and teamwork (e.g. paired, small and large group work); co-operative learning offers particularly good opportunities in relation to project-based learning.
- ▶ Find ways for teaching staff to work collaboratively to include CDC across study programmes and/or departments (teachers' learning communities), reflecting on how their practice may facilitate, or hinder, equity and equal access to learning; they could also engage in research to develop ownership of approaches for the inclusion of CDC in their teaching and assessment practices.
- ▶ Create a wide range of opportunities for students to acquire positive high-quality participation experiences through community-based and service-learning as well as through learning projects, including work-based or voluntary projects, in which the experiences are focused on issues that are of importance to the students themselves; in higher education, year-out professional placements on "sandwich" degree programmes might be useful in this regard.
- ▶ Provide students with the opportunity to find out about, and explore, alternative ways of perceiving issues; enable them to consider and discuss alternative perspectives with others; and enable them to participate in group and institutional decision making and take part in action aimed at producing change in the issues concerned.

Through democratic teaching and learning practices, clusters of competences (see the "butterfly" model in Figure 1) might come into play. For instance, a conversation on a sensitive or controversial issue, held in a safe atmosphere and giving voice to all arguments and perspectives, while encouraging perspective-taking, might:

- ▶ support the development of self-efficacy and empathy ("butterfly": attitudes, skills);
- ▶ foster analytical and critical thinking skills ("butterfly": skills);
- ▶ develop a tolerance of ambiguity ("butterfly": attitudes);
- ▶ contribute to valuing democracy and fairness ("butterfly": values);
- ▶ strengthen the knowledge and critical understanding of the topic discussed ("butterfly": knowledge and critical understanding).
- ▶ For more information, see Council of Europe (2018a).

However, these efforts are not limited to the classroom. Extracurricular activities are important arenas for developing and practising CDC, and for active engagement in institutional and societal issues. Teachers could, for example:

- ▶ plan and run a “whole-institution” or “part-institution” activity on an aspect of education for democratic citizenship and human rights (e.g. an outreach programme or a study of economic conditions in the neighbourhood);
- ▶ organise out-of-lesson groups, activities or projects relating to education for democratic citizenship and human rights (e.g. a discussion group, debating society or student citizens’ action group, film club, etc.).

In practice, extracurricular activities can be completely independent of the curriculum (e.g. activities within a student organisation or a club), but they may also be connected to it. In the latter case, this link should be made explicit and formal in a study programme (e.g. as an elective activity which in one way or another supports the programme aims and competences). The recognition of extracurricular activities is at the forefront of recent developments in the EHEA. It can take place in different ways, e.g. recognition through certification, in specific modules integrated into the curricula, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) recognition,⁵ documentation in the Diploma Supplement, etc. As the competences obtained through extracurricular activities are mostly transversal, they could be easily identified as CDC.

At Tampere University in Finland, students have the option of choosing extracurricular studies for which they receive credit points. One such option is the Tutoring module (2 ECTS credits). Student tutors act as peer supervisors for new students, helping them find their place as students and members of the student community. After completing the course unit, the student will understand the importance of peer support, will know how to describe the central features of university studies and will be familiar with the degree structure.

Source: Tampere University, Curricula Guides 2018–19, “JKKYTU01 Tutoring 2 ECTS” module.⁶

In this perspective, and within the EHEA context, the importance of the internationalisation of higher education and of mobility periods should be highlighted. Besides subject-specific learning outcomes, they indicate many learning outcomes important for CDC. Experiences at an internationalised campus, and mobility experiences in particular, challenge students to further develop their intercultural competences: openness to cultural otherness; respect; tolerance of ambiguity; knowledge and understanding of culture and cultures; linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills, etc. (see the “butterfly” model in Figure 1). Attention should be paid to both dimensions of internationalisation of higher education: internationalisation abroad as well as internationalisation at home. The latter is even more important because

⁵ See European Union (2015).

⁶ Available at www10.uta.fi/opas/opintojakso.htm?rid=13772&idx=7&uiLang=en&lang=en&lvv=2018.

it involves a significantly larger number of students and staff, and impacts on the whole institution. Just as it is important to equip students and staff with CDC before the mobility period, it is also important to value the competences they have developed after the mobility period and recognise them in an appropriate way. First-year students may have international experiences from primary and secondary education, from having lived abroad, from a student exchange, or by virtue of a pluri-cultural family background. Students who are refugees or come from a refugee background have international experience by definition. It is important that the institutions value and take account of such experiences as they can significantly consolidate intercultural dialogue and strengthen the CDC.

Last but not least, curricular and extracurricular activities should be considered in the context of a higher education institution as a whole (see Chapter 7) and should be seen as part of fulfilling the public mission of higher education institutions. In order to be successful in introducing CDC education, universities must be open to their communities. Relations between an institution and the wider community – including authorities, NGOs, other universities, businesses, media, etc. – can help to foster a culture of democracy in that institution. Community engagement can lead, for instance, to training opportunities, visiting experts, and project support; it can also help universities address relevant community issues.

The Science Shop at Queen's University Belfast has acted as a connecting point between local communities and the university for over 25 years. Community groups approach the Science Shop to suggest topics for research. These topics are then circulated around the university to identify students who could carry out the research as part of their coursework. The students get an opportunity to carry out research on real-life issues and the community groups get a copy of the final report, which they can use for their own lobbying or other purposes.

See: www.qub.ac.uk/sites/ScienceShop/.

Community engagement can take many forms, such as:

- ▶ facilitating student projects designed to solve community problems or challenges, for example those relating to environmental challenges, transportation, public health, education, personal safety, youth crime, and old or vulnerable citizens; this can be realised very effectively through project-based, community-based and service-learning;
- ▶ encouraging local authorities to seek out the views of students on civic matters that are relevant to the lives of young people;
- ▶ developing partnerships with NGOs to enhance aspects of the programme of education for democratic citizenship and human rights, within and outside institutions, and in an international context when possible (e.g. mobility, international projects).

Curricular as well as extracurricular activities and programmes related to the wider community are particularly well suited to developing competence clusters, which combine the acquisition of new knowledge and critical understanding with the experience-based development of skills and attitudes. The encounter with unfamiliar people and phenomena is also a chance for self-reflection and attitude adjustment. For instance, student projects designed to solve community problems or challenges might:

- ▶ contribute to civic-mindedness, responsibility and self-efficacy (“butterfly”: attitudes);
- ▶ strengthen empathy (“butterfly”: skills);
- ▶ develop flexibility and adaptability as well as co-operation skills (“butterfly”: skills);
- ▶ foster knowledge and critical understanding of the self as well as culture, society and the environment (“butterfly”: knowledge and critical understanding).

For more information, see Figure 1 for the “butterfly” model, and Council of Europe (2018a), Chapter 7, p. 62.

Staff

Students should develop CDC, among other competences, in the chosen study programmes. Does this principle matter in any way for teaching staff?

Since the introduction of compulsory education there has been a criterion for assessing the individual’s ability to assume the role of a schoolteacher: this is referred to as the “pedagogical qualification”. Especially at lower levels of education, this has been more important than subject-specific qualification (disciplinary knowledge). Paradoxically, the pedagogical preparation of teachers in higher education has long been treated as a marginal issue. The key criterion for academic promotion was – and often still is – research activity and top expertise in a given area. Today, higher education institutions are facing, in one way or another, the need to enable and stimulate the pedagogical capacity of their staff. This is also due to the fact that higher education teachers are now entering diversified classrooms, which require pedagogical strategies and methods to be upgraded and teaching, learning and assessment to be improved. The diversity of higher education classrooms is, *inter alia*, connected with a whole series of issues that can be addressed by strengthening CDC education.

Today, a number of countries worldwide are developing and implementing policies to improve standards of teaching in higher education, requiring newly appointed staff to undergo pedagogical training. In some countries and/or institutions such policies are already a legal requirement, while others are preparing to introduce such requirements. More and more institutions offer optional forms of training, such as workshops and project work, mainly for junior staff. At European level, EHEA ministers meeting in May 2018 highlighted this aspect in particular by saying that now “it is time to add co-operation in innovative learning and teaching practices as another hallmark of the EHEA” (Bologna Process 2018). Developing and practising

CDC in higher education should be seen as an integral part of the planned endeavour. In these efforts, the leaders of higher education institutions have a very important role to play and a high degree of responsibility.

The European Learning & Teaching Forum, a European University Association (EUA) initiative, facilitates the exchange of experience on learning and teaching in higher education among EUA members and other interested stakeholders. In a special policy statement (see the box below) the EUA underlines the importance of learning and teaching (“L&T”) as a core mission and responsibility of universities. It emphasises the need to better recognise teaching as central to the academic profession, to institutionalise learning and teaching enhancement through a broad-based and clear institutional strategy, and to further explore European and international co-operation on the topic.

Core to higher education is research-based and informed L&T, designed to promote a creative and innovative learning environment and culture, and open to adapt to the changing needs of students and society.

Universities demonstrate their contribution to society by educating future experts and leaders, while promoting social inclusion and encompassing more diverse student bodies. This includes outreach activities that provide students with learning opportunities organised in collaboration with other societal actors. Equally important is the use of different pedagogies and teaching methods as well as support structures that accommodate different learning styles and needs, such as those of lifelong learners and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. All these elements should be incorporated in the design of study programmes.

Source: EUA (2018).

The current European trend in the promotion of quality learning and teaching in higher education, including upgrading the pedagogical competence of higher education staff, is an exceptional opportunity to enrich teaching and learning in higher education with CDC education. A number of key points in that regard are highlighted below.

- ▶ The strengthening of national and institutional policies to improve standards of teaching in higher education requires newly appointed staff to undergo training and experienced staff to be motivated to support and take part in these activities.
- ▶ In implementing these policies, an extensive range of approaches can be deployed, including workshops, seminars, peer reviews, small-group teaching, mentoring, portfolios, development projects, cross-disciplinary mirroring processes of studies/education, collegial supervision and mentoring; here again, with appropriate adaptation to the higher education context, the recommendations and suggestions developed in Council of Europe (2018c), Chapters 2 and 3, might be used.
- ▶ Higher education institutions have the advantage of being able to count on the potential of knowledge and experience of those staff members who are

systematically engaged in research and innovation work in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment.

- ▶ The guidance document for implementation of the CDC model includes a chapter that is primarily aimed at higher education institutions involved in training future teachers (Council of Europe 2018c, Chapter 4); the content of this chapter is also relevant for improving the pedagogical competences of higher education teaching staff.
- ▶ When implementing the CDC model, higher education institutions can refer to all RFCDC material prepared by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2018a, b and c), but must take into account the specificities of their level and field.
- ▶ Student assessment of teachers is an important aspect in this regard, which should not be overlooked.
- ▶ The very nature of higher education requires critical reflection about one's own work; therefore, the research behind and evaluation of the pedagogical preparation of staff and the strengthening of their competences, including in the field of CDC, should be planned.
- ▶ Last but not least, research-led teaching has long been regarded as a specific and important form of learning and teaching at universities, and this is particularly the case today. Therefore, the great potential of research-led teaching in developing CDC cannot be overlooked; the following chapter is specifically devoted to this issue, accordingly.

Public authorities responsible for the development of higher education, together with higher education institutions themselves, should find appropriate ways to ensure material conditions for the achievement of these objectives.

5.2. Research

Research is one of the core functions of most higher education institutions, which carry out, publish and disseminate their research findings. All higher education institutions, including those with teaching as their primary mission, incorporate the findings of research in their teaching. In order for them to carry out these functions successfully, research must be “morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power” (Magna Charta Universitatum (1988)). The Magna Charta Universitatum goes on to state that freedom in research is

the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and always open to dialogue, a university is an ideal meeting-group for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and well equipped to develop it by research and innovation and for students entitled, able and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge. (Magna Charta Universitatum (1988)).

In this chapter our interest lies in the role of CDC in helping to inform the broader processes involved in research. Every academic discipline and higher education institution will operate with codes of practice and ethical requirements. The research corpus is provided by the literature, which embodies peer-reviewed accepted knowledge, but a key task of research is to expand and extend this knowledge

through new evidence, new theoretical perspectives and methodological innovation.

There are methodological and technical standards by which the academic quality of research may be judged, and these will vary to some degree across different disciplines. Some research may be carried out as a search for knowledge for its own sake; research may be “applied” in that it seeks to address some pressing social, economic or technical problem; and research can involve the evaluation of some specific activity or intervention in order to inform or test practice. Research is not value-free and can never be entirely neutral in regard to society; the results of research can have profound consequences for people and communities, and researchers cannot shirk their responsibility for these consequences. Researchers require knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication in order to ensure their work is not subject to misunderstanding or abuse. They also require knowledge and critical understanding of the way knowledge may be used, or abused, by particular interests within society, and accept some degree of responsibility for challenging such misuse of research. Public trust requires some level of accountability and reassurance that higher education institutions are working to appropriate ethical standards and integrity when they support the carrying out or dissemination of research.

The framework of CDC principles provides a useful guide to the general approach to research within higher education institutions. The framework offers a set of standards which can influence the way research is carried out, the process through which research priorities are established, the way the findings or outcomes of research are reported and the way new researchers are trained.

The way we conduct research

Research should always be carried out to the highest ethical standards of the disciplines within which it is based, and these standards should not be compromised for political or economic ends, or as a consequence of the demands of funders of research. The CDC highlight standards in attitudes and values that apply across all fields of research, including the principles of respect, responsibility, fairness and the value of cultural diversity, which can be incorporated in the training of all those who intend to carry out research or use the findings of research. When research involves human participants, it should value human dignity and human rights. In particular, participants in research studies have certain rights which have to be respected at all times. For example, they have the right to be asked for informed consent regarding their participation. Also, evidence gathered from them, or related to them, should be subject to agreed levels of confidentiality. In addition, research subjects have the right to withdraw completely from participation in research, or to withdraw data that has already been collected about them, at any stage of the process.

How we decide what to research

Four main groups influence the establishment of research priorities: members of the academic community; university administrators; policy makers and public authorities; and funders. Two principles are important in this context. First, research

priorities should not be the prerogative of powerful elites, or those with the economic power to commission or subsidise research. Second, the principle of academic freedom and the autonomy of individual academics should be respected. There are occasions when the publication of research findings is constrained by commercial or other considerations. In principle, such occasions should be limited and, in particular, academics should have a right to publish. Academics should not be placed under undue pressure by their institutions to publish simply as a response to competitive pressures, however, but should have autonomy over these decisions.

In addition, communities of people who will be affected by the outcomes of research may have a valuable perspective on research priorities. To this end, in recognition of the value of cultural diversity – and as a demonstration of a commitment to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices – higher education institutions could establish processes to engage with diverse publics within society, particularly those who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

In the United Kingdom the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) invites all higher education institutions to sign a Manifesto for Public Engagement, which commits them to “sharing our knowledge, resources and skills with the public, and to listening to and learning from the expertise and insight of the different communities with which we engage”.

Source: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support-engagement/strategy-and-planning/manifesto-public-engagement.

The CDC values of democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law mean that researchers and institutions have a level of responsibility for the social consequences of research. For this reason, they should remain alert to ways in which research findings may be manipulated for non-democratic ends, such as the manipulation of public opinion or the denigration of minorities.

How research is funded

We have already noted how the value of democracy and the quality of public debate on policy issues can be informed by high-quality research evidence and analysis. This has implications for how research is funded, as funders may try to influence the topics of research, and how it is studied, communicated and disseminated. Private funding may come with strings attached and restrictions regarding what can be communicated to the research community and the general public. Public and private funding can favour certain research areas and topics, ignoring others that are also potentially important but are not considered worth supporting because they are not perceived as being immediately relevant politically or economically. Funding can favour applied research over fundamental research, which becomes a problem when resources for fundamental research are severely reduced or even completely unavailable. In order to maintain academic freedom and democratic influence over research, it is important that the funding of research in higher education institutions remain primarily a public responsibility. In addition, when a diverse range of funders is available to support research activity there is less risk of research agendas being manipulated or narrowed.

The way we report research

The body of knowledge and understanding within any discipline is provided by the peer-reviewed literature, and members of the research community recognise the status of this body of knowledge. Higher education institutions should maintain a policy of openness regarding access to data and analysis. Secrecy is sometimes necessary in research for specific reasons, but this limits the extent to which the research can be appropriately peer-reviewed and critically challenged, and may lead to poor quality conclusions. Peer review, offering the opportunity for critical engagement with research claims, is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the body of knowledge and understanding, as well as public trust in the quality and value of research. It also recognises the contribution of members of the public who have consented to participate in the research. Given the high level of public funding for research, and the importance of access to information, it is important that efforts to enhance open access to research findings are maintained and expanded.

The way we train researchers

New researchers are trained through master's and doctoral programmes provided by higher education institutions. Early career researchers should be provided with additional support and training as they develop their academic and research expertise. All research programmes will provide training in the ethical standards of research and the codes of practice used within their disciplines and institutions. The CDC Framework serves to engage trainees with the wider social responsibility of researchers and institutions in the way research priorities are determined, research carried out and its findings disseminated. Core to this training should be the CDC principle of valuing human dignity and human rights in relation to the topics of research, the way human participants are treated within research projects and the way research findings are disseminated. These issues are important not just for those who are being trained to carry out research, but could form part of the training programme for those who will use the findings of research in their future careers

It is the responsibility of higher education institutions, and professional associations for academics, to maintain the ethical standards of research and to review these standards on a regular basis to ensure the spirit of respect is being maintained and enhanced.

The manner in which the hiring, retention, review, promotion and dismissal of researchers – especially early career researchers – is organised and conducted in higher education has a significant impact on the degree to which research is a democratic practice. It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to ensure that the procedures they use for the hiring, review, promotion and dismissal of researchers are transparent, fair and ethical, and that they are implemented in a proper manner. In particular, higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure that no arbitrary or unfair barriers exist to restrict the career opportunities of research staff or academics.

The CDC Framework highlights the importance of analytical and critical thinking skills, the skills of listening and observing, and the importance of autonomous learning skills. All of these skills are important for the training of new researchers,

or those who will use the findings of research, alongside the specific skill sets they will acquire in relation to their particular discipline. The CDC principles of co-operation, respect and responsibility will resonate with the way in which their own research community operates and, in particular, with the procedures used within that community to deal with challenge and resolve debate. They should recognise that existing interpretations are always subject to criticism and that the body of knowledge within disciplines is constantly evolving. The CDC Framework may encourage them to go further and use this same knowledge and skills in relation to the role of research within the wider society. It can help them to be aware of the wider social implications of research findings, interpretations or outcomes and the way these can be used or abused by particular interests. It can also serve to remind them that they should accept some degree of responsibility for engaging with the wider public on areas of research, or on topics of research interest, for which they have the experience and expertise.

The public role of research

While most higher education institutions engage in both research and teaching, there are some which have teaching as their primary purpose. In these institutions research findings will inform teaching programmes, and students will normally be expected to acquire a knowledge of the most recent findings in their disciplinary area. This is important also for the CDC principle of self-efficacy, particularly in relation to students' roles as citizens: students should learn and be able to understand basic concepts that are used in regular social, economic and political settings, and be able to understand the value of evidence analysis in public policy debates. In line with the CDC principle of analytical and critical thinking skills, students should understand research outcomes, including the limitations of research, for which some study of epistemology is needed (indeed, different epistemologies may be relevant within different disciplines). They should also understand how research outcomes can be abused. Forming values, such as respect for others and for different positions, requires attention to ethics in the education of researchers, through research, and in research practice more generally.

Research plays a key role in our societies, which are – at least nominally – knowledge-based. Accordingly, all students, not only those who are preparing for a research career, should be able to understand what academic research is and does, why it is needed and how it can be used, and perhaps abused. For this, all students need to be exposed to research, in line with the specific field, level and profile of their studies.

It is important that researchers speak up in defence of knowledge and understanding, and even of policy or actionable principles and practices that are grounded in research, in particular when they are contested by politicians and particular interest groups. When academics speak up on subjects that are not related to their own research fields, they should acknowledge that they do so as public intellectuals, not as researchers in the field concerned; in such cases, their taking a public position and expressing an opinion is not protected by academic freedom, but by the broader principle of freedom of speech.

Communities of researchers are collections of people – some working alone, some working in teams of different sizes – who draw from, and seek to extend, a range of methodological, epistemological and philosophical traditions, engage with evidence and analysis of various kinds, and are committed to the publication of research findings and conclusions. Communities of researchers work on the basis of shared values and processes that allow for the collection, evaluation and testing of claims, the resolution of disputes, and the expansion of knowledge and understanding. Members are entitled to the respect of others. The same CDC principles of respect, co-operation and the use of agreed mechanisms for resolving disputes should be reflected also in the social engagement of researchers with the wider public.

5.3. The civic role of higher education

From the earliest times, universities have prepared students for careers in the professions that played leading roles within society. Today, higher education represents a major civic institution in society, as a consequence of the impact of its research, its graduates, and its social, cultural and economic impact. Furthermore, many higher education institutions have a great impact, directly and indirectly, on their local and regional communities, from the very scale of their activities. With this impact comes a degree of civic responsibility. The implementation of the CDC Framework in higher education will, by promoting a culture of democracy, help shape and influence the relationships between members of the institutional community, and will continue to exert this influence on graduates as they go on to fulfil new roles as citizens and, for many, leaders of different sectors of society.

Higher education has a significant economic impact in that it provides a steady supply of highly qualified graduates; supports economic development through knowledge transfer partnerships with business and industry and the commercialisation of knowledge; is a direct and indirect provider of employment, at every level of activity; and contributes to the economy through the spending power of its staff and students. A focus on its economic impact should not, however, be the sole or predominant feature of higher education, as it also has a significant social and cultural impact. This can be seen through: the local impact of its teaching and research programmes; the quality and type of curricular and extracurricular experience it provides for its students, many of whom will go on to play leading roles within society; its role in supporting cultural activities and institutions; the extent to which it seeks to provide fairer access to its teaching programmes; the impact of its research on policy and practice; and its role in capacity building for governmental, economic and community organisations.

Students

Most students spend a relatively short time in higher education, but the experience often has a profound impact on the rest of their lives. Higher education institutions should recognise their responsibility in preparing their students and graduates to live their lives in an ethical and democratic manner. The curriculum students follow helps develop the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding that will inform their role as citizens in the wider society. Traditionally the curriculum

in higher education is focused on the specific knowledge and skills relevant to the discipline the students are studying, but higher education institutions should also ensure that they facilitate the development of transversal competences in all their students, reflecting the values and practices of democratic culture. Students should be taught about the importance of openness to other beliefs, world views and practices. They should be encouraged to develop critical thinking skills and the type of discernment that allows them to exercise independent judgement based on knowledge, analysis and evidence. Study programmes should help develop the skills of empathy and observation so that students are aware of the consequences of decisions on different groups of people and the need to take a holistic judgement regarding the appropriateness of different courses of action.

The programmes followed by all students should include material on ethical standards, based on the ethical codes developed by different disciplines and the wider responsibilities of citizens in broader society. This is particularly the case for students following professional programmes in which the ethics of engaging in their professional area, and its impact on wider society, should form a core component.

The impact of a higher education experience on students is often profound and enduring, but this impact is derived from much more than the classes and courses taken during their time at university: higher education institutions should consider the value of experiential learning, through, for example, internships, service learning or volunteering.

The curriculum should include opportunities for students to reflect on the diversity of society, and the rights and respect that should be accorded to all individuals. It should include material on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the importance of valuing democracy, justice and fairness. Teaching on professional ethics should be provided in programmes preparing students for specific professional roles in society, and can be linked to the wider notion of corporate or professional social responsibility and ethics in general. More general ethical standards for appropriate behaviour – relevant across a wider range of programmes – should be provided for all students. It is also possible to include themes related specifically to civic values and practices for all students.

Experiential learning can be used as a way of connecting the theoretical principles considered in the classroom with practice in everyday life. Community-based teaching programmes provide opportunities for students not only to learn in real-world contexts, but to reflect on the impact of measures on different communities and learn about the diverse priorities and interests of those communities. Traditionally these opportunities have largely been focused on employability, but their civic potential should be recognised and valued as well. Volunteering and service learning can be used as ways of broadening and enriching students' experience, giving them a better appreciation of the diversity of circumstances and conditions within society, and prompting them to consider social and ethical considerations relevant to their future careers. All universities encourage students to participate in clubs and societies, and institutional support should be provided for clubs and societies which seek to address pressing social issues and concerns, as a way of encouraging active citizenship. Extracurricular activity should be encouraged and recorded as part of

each student's higher education experience and accomplishment, when carried out by recognised associations.

Engagement between academics in Queen's University Belfast and community leaders, some of whom were former paramilitary figures, in a nearby disadvantaged Protestant community, led to a focus on how the university might provide support for school students in the community. The university's students' union got involved in the discussions and agreed to establish a volunteer "homework club" through which student volunteers would support young people from the local community in their school work. The homework club was very successful and continues to operate within the community. The students' union volunteer scheme has expanded and now supports homework clubs across the city of Belfast.

Source: McDonald et al. (2016).

Higher education institutions should encourage strong and effective students' unions, with democratic processes to elect representatives who are accorded a significant role in the decision-making processes of the institution at all levels. Students' unions should also be provided with sufficient resources, and support for capacity building, to ensure full independence from the institution.

Engagement with business

Many higher education institutions have relationships with business and industry, and the extent to which this is occurring may be rising due to the importance of STEM⁷ subjects. Many higher education institutions develop knowledge-exchange partnerships with business and industry for mutual benefit, and this in turn supports the commercialisation of knowledge, job creation and economic growth. Higher education institutions should always ensure that engagement with business and industry is carried out to the highest ethical standards and that appropriate consideration is given to social values in the decision to enter into knowledge-exchange arrangements. Higher education institutions should also consider ways in which productive exchange relationships can be developed with community and voluntary organisations in the not-for-profit sector, as a way of contributing to capacity growth in these sectors.

Engagement with society

The impact of higher education is most directly felt by the staff and students who work within the institutions, but their indirect impact on broader sectors of society is equally profound and needs to be part of the consideration of the institutions. Many higher education institutions meet the criteria of anchor institutions⁸ in that they have a commitment to place, a significant scale and play a role as local economic drivers. This local mission should be consistent with the global networks and

7. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

8. The Anchor Institutions Task Force defines anchor institutions as "enduring organizations that are rooted in their localities": see www.margainc.com/aitf/.

communities that higher education institutions and academics work with on a day-to-day basis, but there is a civic value in deploying global excellence for local impact. In most cases there will be partnerships between higher education institutions and a variety of social and economic actors within society, but the reality in many instances will be that relationships are generally stronger with civic actors who are more likely to be drawn from the elite sections of society. In promoting the principles of the CDC Framework, higher education institutions should develop strategies for engaging with communities from all sections of society and, through this, seek to establish their institutions as places within which all members of society can see themselves reflected, and from which all members of society see themselves as deriving some benefit.

Higher education institutions should monitor the social composition of their student body and establish strategies through which the opportunities for access by under-represented communities could be enhanced. Strategies for widening participation in entry to higher education should be matched by efforts to ensure retention and successful graduation. Higher education institutions should also be exemplary employers, and should monitor the social composition of their workforce to ensure that job opportunities are advertised in fair and open ways and consider targeting information on opportunities to disadvantaged communities. Many higher education institutions engage in capital development projects and should consider the use of social clauses to ensure fair access to employment opportunities. In all cases they have an obligation to obey anti-discrimination laws, but they should go beyond this purely legal imperative to act as leading exemplars of fairness and justice in the procedures they use and the social priorities they set and achieve.

Partnership models could move beyond the exchange of knowledge and expertise towards the co-creation of knowledge, in which higher education institutions take advantage of the diverse perspectives and circumstances of communities within society to inform and develop their research and teaching strategies. This type of engagement could enhance the positive impact of the institution on society and make it more likely that pressing social issues will become the focus of concern. Working in partnership must respect the principle of academic freedom and be carried out to the normal standards of rigour.

Higher education institutions are often large-scale organisations, with significant numbers of staff and students. In many cases the institutions provide accommodation for students. The presence of these large numbers of staff and students adds economic and cultural vibrancy to a city or district, and local communities gain direct and indirect benefits. Higher education institutions can promote a culture of civic-mindedness and respect in the relationships between their staff and students and local communities.

Higher education institutions often include lay members who represent different sectors of society on their governing bodies and it is recommended that careful consideration be given to drawing representatives from diverse sectors, not just those representing economic, social or business elites, in order to represent society as a whole. Consideration should be given to the establishment of community

councils or forums as a way of ensuring that discussions on institutional strategies are informed by a diversity of voices and perspectives.

The key impact that higher education institutions can have as civic institutions is to ensure their students and graduates have the knowledge, critical understanding, skills, attitudes and values of engaged and active citizens, and are aware of the importance of the principles of human dignity, human rights, equality, justice and fairness. Achieving this task will be immeasurably easier if the institutions themselves model these principles in the way they engage with organisations and individuals within society.

Chapter 6

Governance and competences for democratic culture

The CDC Framework recognises how education institutions can foster “learning democracy” by:

- ▶ the ways in which decision-making processes are organised and communicated;
- ▶ the opportunities for debate and active participation in the life of the institution;
- ▶ the degree to which relations between teachers, learners and parents are built on mutual respect and trust.

Source: Council of Europe (2018a), Chapter 2: 7

One cannot imagine the development of CDC without the appropriate institutional structures. As universities should lead the way and provide safe spaces for deliberation and imagining better societies, students should be acquiring values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding in order to create, contribute to and participate in those better societies.

There are two main levels of governance in higher education – system and institutional. Just as the teaching and learning of CDC would be difficult to imagine in a non-democratic society, it would be equally unimaginable for it to take place in a non-democratic environment. Governance plays a prominent role in the creation of a democratic environment and is built within the triangle delineated by academic aspirations, market forces and democratic culture (Zgaga 2006: 43).

So how do we define good governance and what does it mean? As in previous Council of Europe publications (see Kohler and Huber 2006), governance is understood as the means of agreeing on the fitness of purpose (objectives and orientations) and fitness for purpose (strategies and instruments) of higher education institutions, through negotiations involving multiple stakeholders, while serving the interests of the whole of society. These negotiations should serve as a model of – and preparation for – life as an active citizen in a democratic society, and as such be transparent and flexible.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy remain essential as values of higher education and for the implementation of CDC within higher education governance. Public authorities have the primary responsibility for providing the necessary environment and framework through balanced deliberations with higher education institutions, the academic community of staff and students and all other relevant stakeholders (Council of Europe 2007). For these principles to become a reality for the academic community, trust between all actors is crucial.

Understanding governance as a multidimensional concept requires us to take a look at all the stakeholders involved in the process. Recent developments – and even some not so recent – have shifted the structures of these stakeholders within the higher education community.

At the system level, massification and commodification of higher education have been accompanied by public budget cuts, demands for efficiency and efficacy and imposition of the mantra “doing more for less”. Such developments have led to the shift of power from academic staff to managers directly influencing the institutional governance schemes. These shifts have largely gone unnoticed and/or without proper debate, which in itself represents an issue of democracy.

Under the pressures of the marketisation of higher education, self-management concepts that previously guided the leadership of the academic community (elected by and within the community itself) were replaced by managerial approaches featuring institutional leaders recruited from the outside and employed on fixed terms. The fundamental values of higher education – academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education (Bologna Process 2018) – are increasingly challenged and even endangered by the newly introduced governance and management principles, which are based more on the experiences of New Public Management (NPM) and the business sectors. While academic freedom and institutional autonomy play an essential role for a democratic environment, they require democratic procedures within the institutions themselves. Critical thinking requires an open and safe space for the exchange of different beliefs, world views and practices. Just as public authorities have responsibility for providing system-level requirements, the executive leadership of higher education institutions has responsibility at the institutional level.

Quality assurance, likewise, requires the accountability of multiple stakeholders. Public authorities bear responsibility for providing system-level quality frameworks in order to enhance the “quality culture” prevailing in higher education institutions, while institutional leaders play a key role in advancing quality assurance procedures and mechanisms within the institutions themselves. It would be impossible to imagine an environment focused on enhancing quality within a higher education institution without full implementation of CDC in that institution.

Higher education institutions are too often perceived primarily as expensive professional training facilities instead of sites for the development and sharing of knowledge and understanding. Under such pressures, competences for democratic culture are in danger of disappearing from what we see as the main missions of higher education.

The institutional leadership should make the civic and democratic agenda one of their guiding principles and ensure coherence with the institutional mission and vision. Unless the leadership makes democratic culture a priority, progress in developing a democratic institutional culture will be impossible.

The recruitment process for academic and non-academic staff should give weight to previous records of their active commitment to improving democratic culture within academia and society itself.

Academic staff need to be recognised for the role they play in preparing future citizens, as well as being responsible citizens who contribute to the community and to wider society. Valuing human dignity, human rights, cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law should be embedded not only in teaching and learning processes but also in all interactions between academic staff and other stakeholders. Accountability for the development of competences for democratic culture lies with academic staff across all disciplines, but should also govern their actions beyond their academic activities, throughout the life of the higher education institution.

Technical and administrative staff should receive the same respect and acknowledgement as academic staff, as their involvement in enhancing the democratic nature of higher education institutions is just as important. Administrative procedures need to be freed of any discriminatory practices, and any other practices that could jeopardise the enhancement of democratic culture at institutional level.

As has long been recognised within the EHEA, students are considered to be members of the academic community and partners in higher education (see in particular Bologna Process 2001, 2003). Education is a crucial determinant of “civic culture” and participation in democratic politics (Almond and Verba 1963). For students, higher education institutions are their key learning environment, not only during their classes and exams, but beyond.

Students, as partners in higher education and as full members of the academic community, should be enabled to exercise their right to participation in higher education governance. Student participation as a principle should be respected at all levels of decision making and in all issues of relevance.

The best way of acquiring and internalising democratic values is to participate in democratic processes. Participation in decision-making processes also needs to be enabled for all other relevant stakeholders – academic and non-academic staff and the local community. Institutional leaders are responsible for facilitating such participation at institutional level, just as relevant public authorities do at the national level.

Promoting a democratic culture within the institution itself is a prerequisite for further development of competences for democratic culture among students. Values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding cannot be nurtured in an atmosphere which prevents stakeholders’ participation in governance, discussion of topics relevant to the local community and wider society, and the active exercise of freedom of expression in line with respect for others’ human dignity and human

rights. The academic community itself should serve as an example and an inspiration for a society open to students.

In order for student participation in policy development and in all other decision-making processes to be fully possible, it is extremely important to provide structural conditions and institutional support for student organisations. Freedom of association should be a reality within higher education institutions. Freedom of association also needs to be ensured for all academic, technical and administrative staff.

Institutions should provide the necessary means – physical, administrative, financial and other – for student and staff organisations to act freely and in accordance with their missions and aims. Many elements of the CDC model can be encouraged and developed through these organisations, from co-operation skills to attitudes of responsibility. Providing an open and welcoming environment for student and staff engagement, not only within the governance structures of higher education institutions, is crucial in helping students to acquire CDC and put them into practice.

As the new governance principles enable the participation of a wider group of stakeholders – including the local community and society as a whole – it is increasingly important for the academic community to engage, as active citizens, in the local community and society. The links of mutual respect and trust are key to the creation of a university as a “site of citizenship”. A site of citizenship should encourage interaction through processes and environments of “openness, accountability, transparency, communication and feedback, critique and debate, dispute resolution, and the absence of idiosyncrasy, arbitrariness, and privilege.” (Council of Europe 2002: 4).

Ensuring the democratic participation of all relevant stakeholders through democratic procedures and governance principles and methods is the only safe way of ensuring a democratic university and a democratic higher education system. Knowledge lies at the centre of our contemporary societies, and education is the basis of all democratic progress. Higher education and thus its governance systems should be a solution to the problems of democracy.

Chapter 7

Whole-institution approach

Whole-institution approaches – which integrate democratic values and human rights principles into teaching and learning, research, governance and campus initiatives – contribute significantly to helping all stakeholders experience, develop and practise competences for democratic culture on campus and in their daily lives.

This chapter explores the key concepts at the heart of the whole-institution approach to CDC, namely: teaching and learning, research, governance and culture, and community engagement. It gives some examples of how clusters of competences from the CDC model can come into play in each area, and looks at possible benefits of applying a whole-institution approach to developing competences for democratic culture in students, with a view to fostering a democratic campus culture and ultimately a sustainable democratic and inclusive society for all.

7.1. The added value of a whole-institution approach to CDC

Competences for democratic culture are important for all stakeholders (students, teaching and research staff, technical and administrative staff, the institutional leadership and partner organisations), universities and other higher education institutions, and for society as a whole. All stakeholders should therefore be actively thinking about, and acting on, CDC. Higher education institutions play a key role in local and global society, and are generally expected to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and to foster peace for individuals to co-exist in culturally diverse democratic societies. All higher education stakeholders are first and foremost citizens who need to be able to recognise, practise and advance democratic principles. Higher education institutions are societies in themselves, in which the principles and values of democracy are to be nurtured. Whether on campus, in the classrooms, in the research laboratories, or in the administrative offices, all stakeholders should develop and practise the democratic competences that they need for active engagement and co-existence in diverse societies.

Developing a culture of democracy in higher education institutions is not only a matter of classroom teaching, but concerns all aspects of campus life. Participation in shared decision making and governance, for example, helps all actors, and in particular students, to gain practical knowledge of, and develop trust in, the democratic and participative processes. It encourages them to practise their own democratic competences with increased confidence.

A whole-institution approach to CDC ensures that all aspects of higher education – curricula, teaching methods and resources, research methods and collaborative work, leadership and decision-making structures and processes, policies and codes of behaviour, staff and staff-student relationships, extracurricular activities and links with the community – reflect democratic and human rights principles. A whole-institution approach to CDC may create a safe learning environment where these principles can be explored, experienced and even challenged in a peaceful way.

Engaging the whole institution in creating a positive and safe learning environment will also enhance students' achievements. Students who feel part of a higher education community, and enjoy good relations with their peers and academic staff, are more likely to perform better academically and become the innovative citizens society needs.

A whole-institution approach requires the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders. The joint effort and co-operation of administrative, teaching and research staff, other staff, students and local communities is essential. Institutional life is complex and multidimensional. At least four key areas need to be considered in a whole-institution approach to developing a democratic culture and fostering competences for democratic culture in students: teaching and learning; research; institutional governance and culture; and co-operation with the community. Developing a democratically functioning institution, which integrates principles of democracy and human rights in all areas, is a gradual process which takes time.

Likewise, it is important to reaffirm that competences for democratic culture are not practised independently of each other. Competent behaviour is likely to arise from the flexible use of clusters of competences to meet the particular demands of specific situations. This applies to all four key areas considered in a whole-institution approach. The need to embed CDC principles in teaching and learning, and in research methodologies and environments, is explained in Chapter 5. The other two key areas are described below.

7.2. Institutional governance and culture and co-operation with the community

The organisational culture of a higher education institution can help members of the higher education community play a role in the governance and management of the institution – through its approach to leadership, vision, governance system and decision-making processes, student participation and general working atmosphere. A democratic approach to institutional governance helps create a culture of openness and trust in the institution and improve relations between its members.

An inclusive institutional ethos which is safe and welcoming, where relations between teaching and research staff, technical and administrative staff, and students are

positive, and where everyone feels they have a role to play and their human rights are respected, will facilitate the development of competences for democratic culture. To this end, the teaching and research staff, the administrative and technical staff, and the students and other stakeholders should combine efforts to make the overall governance and environment more democratic and participative, including in the approach to management and decision making, institutional policies, rules and procedures, student participation and general campus life. Such efforts may include concrete actions as suggested below.

Leadership and university management (including planning, evaluation and development)

- ▶ Develop and maintain a leadership style nurtured by respect for human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision making and responsible accountability.
- ▶ Encourage participation of all stakeholders in the review of the whole-institution approach and its capacity to promote democratic citizenship and respect for human rights – including programme coherence, extracurricular activities and institutional governance, e.g. through open joint meetings, surveys, and liaison with student networks and their representatives.

Decision making

- ▶ Establish inclusive and participatory decision-making structures and procedures, including mechanisms for academic and administrative staff, researchers and students to take part in the agenda setting and the development of policy decisions, e.g., through representation on higher education boards and in focus groups and consultations.

Policies, rules and procedures

- ▶ Draw up and revise institutional policies to reflect the values and principles of democratic citizenship and human rights, including general policies on issues such as equality and inclusion.
- ▶ Introduce functioning rules that guarantee equal treatment and equal access for all students, teachers and other members of staff regardless of their gender, ethnicity, cultural identity, lifestyle or beliefs, and establish procedures for peaceful and participatory resolution of conflicts and disputes.
- ▶ Establish procedures and systems to protect people from harassment and unfair treatment, and ensure an inclusive and positive working environment.

Student participation

- ▶ Develop opportunities for students to express their views on matters of concern to them, both in relation to the institution and to wider issues, and participate in decision making at the institution and in the community, e.g. through class discussion, student councils and organisations/associations, surveys and suggestion boxes, representation in working and policy groups, presentations to governing boards and debating clubs.

- ▶ Encourage student unions to flourish and involve them in the CDC processes.
- ▶ Make sure that participative approaches that the students are involved in are authentic; in other words, ensure participation as an exercise of power and a means of taking over responsibility, while clarifying conditions and limitations of participation to avoid pseudo-participation.

Student participation and inclusive forms of decision making have a great impact on the development of CDC, as they allow for experience-based learning. This dimension of university life helps to develop several competence clusters, including:

- ▶ civic-mindedness, responsibility and self-efficacy;
- ▶ analytical and critical thinking skills and communicative skills;
- ▶ knowledge and critical understanding of politics (decision-making mechanisms);
- ▶ valuing democracy and fairness.

Community engagement

An institution's relationship with the wider community – including authorities, NGOs, other universities, schools, businesses and the media – can help foster a culture of democracy in the institution. Community engagement can lead to training opportunities, project support and the involvement of visiting experts, for example, and can also help universities address relevant community issues. Community engagement can take many forms, some of which are listed below.

- ▶ Facilitating student projects designed to solve community problems or challenges, e.g. relating to personal safety, youth crime, or old or vulnerable citizens.
- ▶ Internationalisation, including internationalisation at home.
- ▶ Peer-to-peer learning; sharing of (good) practices.
- ▶ Developing partnerships with NGOs to enhance aspects of the institution's curriculum for democratic citizenship and human rights in and out of the institution.
- ▶ Developing partnerships with local authorities to encourage participation of students in formal governance structures representing young people, e.g. youth councils or local municipalities, and to encourage local authorities to seek out the views of students on civic matters relevant to the lives of young people, in order to foster their active citizenship and political participation.
- ▶ Developing partnerships with religious and belief organisations in their local community, to facilitate student visits to religious institutions and places of worship, and visits by members of faith communities to the institution.
- ▶ Working to further the integration of refugees and other migrants in their host communities by deploying the specific expertise of the higher education institution.
- ▶ Developing partnerships for action with advocacy groups promoting human rights, e.g. groups working on LGBTQ issues, anti-racism, women's rights and children's rights, and on other issues that interest students.

Activities and programmes related to the wider community are particularly well suited to developing competence clusters, which combine the acquisition of new knowledge and critical understanding with the experience-based development of skills, attitudes and values. An encounter with unfamiliar people and phenomena is also an opportunity for self-reflection and adjustments of values and attitudes. For instance, student projects designed to solve community problems or challenges might:

- ▶ contribute to valuing justice and fairness, civic-mindedness, responsibility and self-efficacy;
- ▶ strengthen empathy;
- ▶ develop flexibility and adaptability as well as co-operation skills;
- ▶ foster knowledge and critical understanding of the self as well as culture, society and environment.

Below are some examples of the possible benefits of applying a whole-institution approach to developing competences for democratic culture in academic and administrative staff, students, researchers and surrounding communities.

Individuals

- ▶ Increase in valuing diversity among members of the academic community.
- ▶ Improved empathy and co-operation among students and between students and teachers.
- ▶ Members of the academic community listen more to each other.
- ▶ Stronger sense of responsibility (for own learning and institution environment).
- ▶ Increase in civic-mindedness (all stakeholders show a stronger interest in community issues).
- ▶ Greater commitment to and engagement in public space.
- ▶ Members of the academic community value other people's dignity and rights and show more respect towards each other and their teachers.

Campus/classroom

- ▶ Teaching and research staff feel more confident about teaching democratic citizenship and human rights education.
- ▶ Courses which include democratic citizenship and human rights education components tend to use interactive methodology for teaching and learning more often.
- ▶ More positive learning environment on campus based on openness and trust.
- ▶ Improved collaboration between all stakeholders.
- ▶ Acquisition of CDC develops realisation of the importance of valuing cultural diversity and co-operation.

Community

- ▶ Partnership with NGOs and local authorities enables students to experience how democracy works in practice.
- ▶ Partnerships with actors in the local communities result in more training opportunities when implementing democratic and human rights-based initiatives.

7.3. How to apply a whole-institution approach to developing CDC in practice

At an operational level, applying a whole-institution approach to CDC shifts the focus from developing purely individual competences to building a democratic learning environment where clusters of democratic competences can be learned and practised.

While the whole-institution approach to developing CDC provides a valuable opportunity for institutions wishing to become more democratic, it also meets a societal need.

There are many ways of applying a whole-institution approach in higher education institutions. Below are some key principles and five possible stages of application.

Key principles

- ▶ Respecting the local context and local ways of working. A democratic culture cannot be imposed on a society from the outside but needs to be built by citizens themselves; likewise, a democratic institutional culture cannot be imposed from outside but needs to be created by involving all stakeholders. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the basic principles of democracy and human rights must be respected and implemented, whatever the local traditions may be; traditions cannot be invoked to dispense with key aspects of democracy.
- ▶ Empowering all stakeholders to develop their own solutions to challenges, based on situation assessment. There is no one master solution to the challenges faced by individuals across different institutions and countries. Through assessment of the current situation at an institution, including its needs and capacities, key stakeholders gain a better understanding of specific challenges and are empowered to develop their own tailor-made solutions. This in turn increases the sense of ownership and of motivation for change.
- ▶ Encouraging learning by doing, with the participation of all stakeholders. Democratic competences are best developed through daily practice, including through participatory decision making, respectful and equal relations, and democratic teaching and learning methods. This requires the committed partnership of all stakeholders – ranging from students, teachers, institutional leaders and parents to local authorities and other community actors – which explains the importance of approaching education institutions as a whole in learning and promoting the culture of democracy.

- ▶ Integrating capacity building into the institution's strategic planning process. Changes in institutional culture are more sustainable when they are built into the institution's strategic planning process.
- ▶ Supporting local projects and initiatives over the long term. It takes both time and effort to overcome resistance to change and to transform relations and practices in universities. Systemic change cannot be achieved by a one-off effort; long-term support is crucial for tangible outcomes and sustainable impact.

Five stages of application

Below are five steps an institution can take to become more democratic by applying a whole-institution approach to building a democratic institutional culture and developing CDC in students.⁹

- ▶ Conduct a situation analysis to identify how principles of democracy, human rights and intercultural dialogue are integrated into institutional life, with the participation of all stakeholders (e.g. whole-institution assessments and SWOT analysis to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).
- ▶ Identify potential areas of change and develop an action plan with concrete activities that will be undertaken to achieve these changes (e.g. CDC as expected learning outcomes).
- ▶ Implement the action plan, involving all higher education communities.
- ▶ Evaluate progress and assess the impact of actions carried out.
- ▶ Share lessons learned with all stakeholders involved, and with other institutions, and plan further actions accordingly.

A whole-institution approach is an intentional process that requires dedication and care, motivation and the engagement of all stakeholders. It requires quality time from start to finish, but can bring about the real shift required to develop CDC in society. Ultimately, this shift can lead to better living conditions for all.

9. See also Council of Europe (2018c): 98.

Chapter 8

Ways forward

It is recommended that all stakeholders in higher education institutions consider the benefit of a whole-institution approach to developing a democratic institutional culture and CDC in students.

Much research evidence, such as Covell (2013) and Sebba and Robinson (2010), shows that when students experience a safe learning environment in which democratic and human rights values and principles can be explored, understood and experienced, they are more likely to:

- ▶ have higher levels of civic knowledge;
- ▶ support democratic values;
- ▶ develop an understanding of their own rights as well as their responsibilities towards other people;
- ▶ become supportive of the rights of others;
- ▶ develop higher-order critical thinking and reasoning skills;
- ▶ develop positive and socially responsible identities;
- ▶ develop positive and co-operative relationships with their peers based on listening, respect and empathy;
- ▶ accept responsibility for their own decisions;
- ▶ develop positive attitudes towards inclusivity and diversity in society;
- ▶ become engaged with political and social issues;
- ▶ feel empowered as citizens who can challenge injustice, inequality and poverty in the world;
- ▶ engage in democratic activities in the future.

In conclusion, taking a whole-institution approach to developing a democratic institutional culture and CDC has significant potential for helping students become knowledgeable, thoughtful, responsible, engaged and empowered citizens.

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The Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) sets out 20 competences our education system should develop in students to prepare them for lives as active citizens in democratic societies. The competences included are organised in four clusters: values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding.

This publication explores how the RFCDC can be used in higher education. As much as any other level of education, higher education fosters a culture of democracy through the transversal competences it develops in all its students, the way in which institutions are run, how the members of the academic community interact, and how higher education institutions see themselves and behave as actors in society at large. The full implementation of the RFCDC (or “CDC Framework”) requires a whole-institution approach that makes the promotion and fostering of competences for democratic culture an institutional priority for policy as well as practice. This guidance document offers suggestions for teaching, learning and institutional policy.

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