

The role of education in building inclusive and democratic societies through the democratic engagement and competences of children and young people: the Council of Europe approach

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STRENGTHENING JUSTICE SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN



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- ⦿ current socio-economic and tense political situation in Europe and elsewhere,
 - ⦿ intolerance and lack of ability to cope with diversity,
 - ⦿ violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism on the rise.

On the one hand:

schools are increasingly seen as being on the front-line of the battle to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism.

On the other hand:

the role and fundamental mission of schools, teachers, school managers need to be safeguarded.

- The CoE Secretary General, in his 3rd Annual Report's “proposed actions and recommendations”, declared his intention to:

“..develop a ‘safe spaces’ project around teaching controversial issues, with a view to drawing up guidelines for use in schools and other formal and non-formal education settings that allow teachers and pupils to address difficult and controversial issues relating to faith, culture and foreign affairs, while respect each other’s rights and upholding freedom of expression”.



STUDENTS AS SUSPECTS?

The challenges of counter-radicalisation policies in education in the Council of Europe member states

Francesco Ragazzi





Could policies designed to identify and prevent radicalisation inadvertently undermine the very social cohesion they aim to preserve?

What are the issues facing educators and students and their families?

Do counter-terrorism policies give rise to contradictory demands on educators, asking them to build social cohesion and resilience while at the same time requiring them to employ a logic of suspicion in spotting potential radicals?



**Can this contradictory mission challenge
key principles of human rights and
fundamental freedoms, as well as the
fundamental mission of education?**

Increasingly emerging need for a coherent discourse:

a school where students

- ⦿ will be prepared to step out of any existing comfort zones,
- ⦿ can deal with diverse and complex everyday realities,
- ⦿ can discuss sensitive and controversial issues,
- ⦿ can tolerate but also understand and accept individual and cultural differences.



Democratic Culture

We have used this term to emphasise the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions, these institutions themselves cannot work in practice unless citizens **hold democratic values and attitudes** and are willing to engage in **democratic practices**.



Democratic culture

In other words, our argument is that
a functioning democracy requires citizens to have:

- A commitment to democratic processes
- A willingness to express their own opinions
- A willingness to listen to the opinions of others
- A commitment to decisions being made by majorities
- A commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights
- A conviction that conflicts must be resolved peacefully

The three volumes of the RFCDC

REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE



Volume 1 Context, concepts and model



REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE



Volume 2 Descriptors of competences
for democratic culture



REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE



Volume 3 Guidance for implementation





The **CDC** conceptual model contains **20 competences** in total

- These are the competences that **young people need to acquire** if they are to function as effective democratic citizens and engage in intercultural dialogue.
- All 20 competences are **teachable, learnable and assessable.**
- The 20 competences fall into **four broad categories:**
 - **Values**
 - **Attitudes**
 - **Skills**
 - **Knowledge and critical understanding**



○ **Values**

- General beliefs or guiding principles that an individual holds about the desirable goals that should be striven for in life.

○ **Attitudes**

- The overall mental orientation which an individual adopts towards someone or something.

○ **Skills**

- The capacity for carrying out a complex, well-organised pattern of either thinking or behaviour in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end or goal.



- **Knowledge**

- The body of information that is possessed by a person.

- **Understanding**

- The comprehension and appreciation of meanings.

- The RFCDC uses the term '**critical understanding**' to emphasise the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue to involve **active reflection on and critical evaluation** of that which is being understood and interpreted (as opposed to automatic, habitual and unreflective interpretation).

Values

- ❖ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ❖ Valuing cultural diversity
- ❖ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

Attitudes

- ❖ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Civic-mindedness
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Self-efficacy
- ❖ Tolerance of ambiguity

Competence

- ❖ Autonomous learning skills
- ❖ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ❖ Skills of listening and observing
- ❖ Empathy
- ❖ Flexibility and adaptability
- ❖ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ❖ Cooperation skills
- ❖ Conflict-resolution skills

Skills

- ❖ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ❖ Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- ❖ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

Knowledge and critical understanding



- The Council of Europe has recognised the relevance of the RFCDC for combatting violent extremism and radicalisation.
- Immediately after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, the Council of Europe drew up an Action Plan for the Fight against Violent Extremism and Radicalisation leading to Terrorism.
- The RFCDC was made the centrepiece of the education strategy that is outlined in the Action Plan.



- So, there is now a political expectation that the RFCDC will be used by national education systems to equip young people
- not only with the competences that they need for democratic culture,
- but also with the competences that they need to recognise and deal with online propaganda (e.g., analytical and critical thinking skills), to recognise hate speech in the news media and online (e.g., knowledge and critical understanding of media), and to value human dignity, human rights and democratic processes.

- ❖ **Schools are faced with challenges.**
- ❖ **Not necessarily new challenges, but more intense challenges.**
- ❖ **At the same time, schools are seen as a key part of the response to challenges.**

“Free to Speak, Safe to Learn”

Democratic Schools for All



**➔ The voice of practice:
What really works in schools, and how?**

**➔ Actual need to maintain and/or develop
democratic schools which are inclusive.**



Schools

→ where students can express themselves without fear,

→ where students feel safe to engage in the different dimensions of the learning process,

→ where students are aware of both their rights and their responsibilities.



Council of Europe Education Campaign:

**“Free to Speak, Safe to Learn”
Democratic Schools for All**



**Making children
and students'
voices heard**

**Managing
controversial
issues**

**Preventing
bullying and
violence**

**Dealing with
propaganda,
misinformation
and fake news**

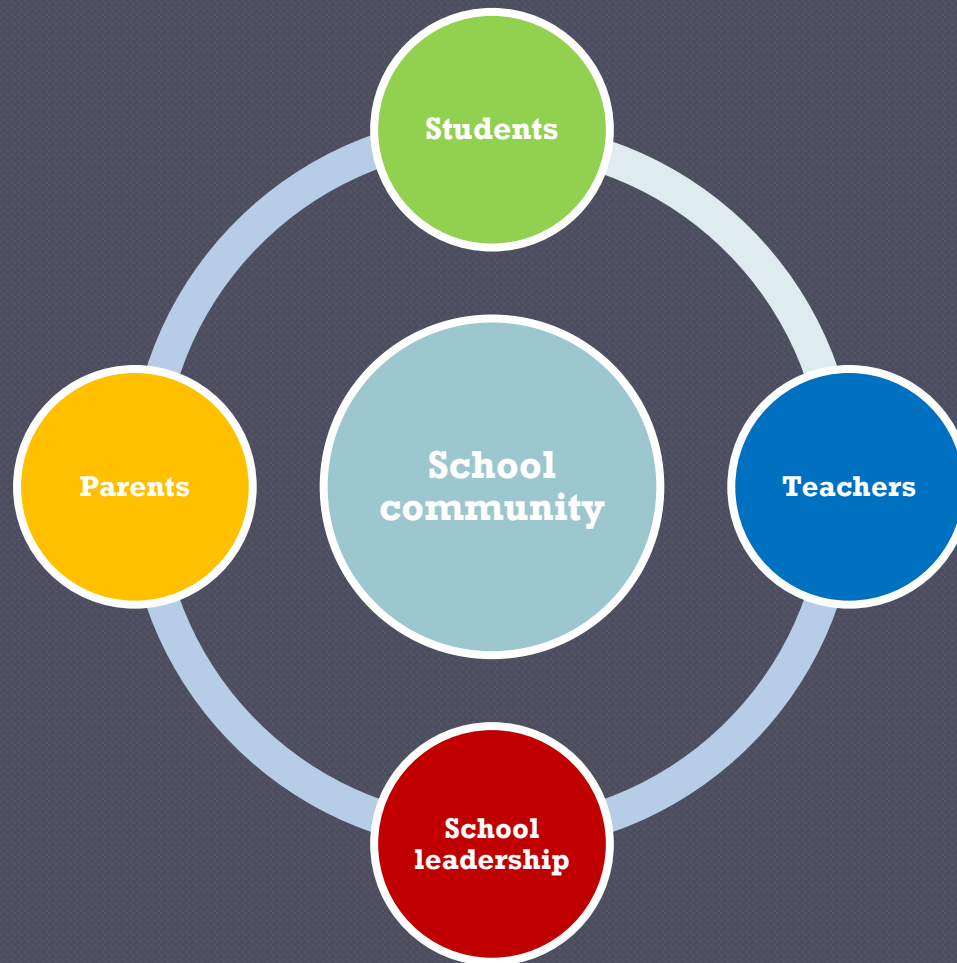
**Tackling
discrimination**

**Promoting
well-being
at school**

This campaign aims to:

- ◉ To empower education actors to address challenges at schools by making use of existing tools and expertise.
- ◉ To identify and highlight existing democratic practices at schools: what works and how.
- ◉ To inspire other schools, not yet active, to join the campaign and improve their practices.
- ◉ To develop new democratic practices at schools.

- ◉ To promote the sharing of expertise and networking opportunities for schools.
- ◉ To highlight the importance of EDC/HRE work in implementing democratic practices at schools.
- ◉ To encourage further commitment of authorities to implementing RFCDC as a means of addressing challenges and of maintaining/developing the democratic culture of schools.





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- ◉ **European level**
(CoE + campaign online platform)

 - ◉ **National and regional level**
(by involving central and local authorities – such as municipalities- responsible for education systems/schools in the member States).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

“Free to Speak, Safe to Learn” Democratic Schools for All

