



Tackling today's challenges together: Disenchantment with democracy

” FACTS AND FIGURES

Voter turnout in national elections is falling in many European countries, down by around 10% overall since 1990.¹ Abstention levels are higher among young people and are rising.²

An estimated 6 800 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq come from Council of Europe member states.³

DISENCHANTMENT WITH DEMOCRACY

■ Apathy and distrust of politicians and democratic institutions are growing across Europe. Corruption, in particular, alienates voters.

■ Many people think voting makes no difference. They prefer to concentrate on private concerns and feel little commitment to society or the common good.

■ On the other hand, populist and authoritarian parties, who do not share democratic values, are gaining support.

■ Terrorist groups are succeeding in recruiting thousands of disillusioned young Europeans.

■ Although people are mobilised by single issues, single-issue politics does not make up an overall vision for society.

■ Austerity measures and the refugee crisis are putting Europe's democracies under strain



Sources:

1. Eurostat *Voter turnout in national elections (1990-2014)*
2. Eurobarometer *European Youth: Participation in Democratic Life*, 2013.
3. ICSR statistics on 26/1/2015

▶▶▶ <http://www.coe.int/education>

WHAT CAN WE DO?

■ It is vital to rebuild people's confidence in democracy and their ability and willingness to take part in democratic life.

■ This work starts in schools, because democracy cannot be built on ignorance and because education must prepare learners for life as active, responsible citizens.

■ Everyone living in Europe, of all ages and backgrounds, needs democratic attitudes, behaviour, skills, values, knowledge and understanding; competences which need to be learnt and taught.

■ The Council of Europe has already developed a framework of 20 Competences for Democratic Culture, which can be adapted for use in primary and secondary schools and higher education and vocational training institutions throughout Europe. Nothing so comprehensive has ever before been attempted at European level.

■ Migrants, refugees, the police and people in non-formal and adult education should also benefit.

■ The project is part of the Council of Europe's long-standing work on human rights and citizenship education, which aims to make such education available to every European.

■ This work helps create the strong, underlying democratic culture which is necessary for Europe's democratic institutions and laws to work and to ensure Europe's democratic security.

■ The Council of Europe provides programmes, tools and standards for its member states which cover a vast realm of issues concerning democracy, including: tackling corruption, ensuring institutions are democratically governed and supporting the participation of young people, women and minorities in political life.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROJECTS AND MATERIALS

■ **Competences for Democratic Culture** (2016) – comprises 20 competences, including empathy, responsibility and valuing human dignity.

■ **Curriculum Development and Review for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education** (2016)

■ **Democracy and Human Rights Start with Us: Charter for All** (2012).

■ **EDC/HRE Pack** – Tools to promote democracy and human rights through education, including publications for policy makers, teacher trainers, school directors, school inspectors, universities and civil society organisations.

■ Living Democracy manuals – fun, inter-active guides on citizenship and human rights education for trainee teachers.

■ **Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice** (2009)

■ **Student engagement in Europe: society, higher education and student governance** (Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 20) (2015)

Council of Europe key texts

■ The Council of Europe's action plans on *Building Inclusive Societies* (2016-2019) and *fighting violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism* (2015-2017) both include competences for democratic culture.

■ **White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: "living together as equals in dignity"** (2008).



COUNCIL OF EUROPE STANDARDS

Committee of Ministers recommendations

■ CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education requires such education to, among other things, "develop knowledge, personal and social skills and understanding that reduce conflict, increase appreciation and understanding of the differences between faith and ethnic groups, build mutual respect for human dignity and shared values, encourage dialogue and promote non-violence in the resolution of problems and disputes".

■ CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education requires that pupils and students are given the means to "develop appropriate competences, self-confidence and critical thinking to help them become responsible citizens and improve their employability".

■ CM/Rec(2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research defines the purposes of education as: preparation for "sustainable employment" and "life as active citizens in democratic societies", "personal development", and "the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base".

Parliamentary Assembly recommendations

■ Rec1849(2008) for the promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education.

■ Rec2084(2016) on foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq calls for "more priority" to be given to education for democratic citizenship.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE WEBSITES

■ Education
www.coe.int/education

■ Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights
<http://www.coe.int/edc>

■ Democracy
www.coe.int/democracy