Background to the Framework

Values and education

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on education as a central element in the Council of Europe's work to promote and protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Even though these principles have been cornerstones of European societies and political systems for decades, they need to be continuously maintained and fostered. In times of economic and political crisis, it becomes even more evident that citizens should be able and willing to engage actively in defence of these values and principles. Acquiring and maintaining the capacity to take part actively in democratic processes begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. The process of acquiring competences is dynamic and never complete. Circumstances change and people need to develop existing competences and acquire new ones in response to changes in the environments in which they live.

Education institutions play an important role in this lifelong process. Most children have their first encounter with the public realm in schools, and schools should be places where democratic education begins. Other education institutions, including further and other higher education institutions, should also take on this role in ways appropriate to the age and maturity of students.

Democratic education should be part of a comprehensive and coherent vision of education, of an education of the whole person. The Council of Europe, in Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6, provides a vision of education that includes four major purposes:

- ➢ preparation for the labour market;
- ➢ preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- ➢ personal development;
- ➢ the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

All four purposes are necessary to enable individuals to live independent lives and to take part as active citizens in all spheres of modern, rapidly changing societies. They are of equal value and complementary. For example, many of the competences people need to be employable – such as analytical ability, communication skills and the aptitude to work as part of a group – also help to make them active citizens in democratic societies and are fundamental to their personal development.

Because cultural, technological and demographic changes require the readiness to continuously learn, reflect and act upon new challenges and possibilities in work, in private and in public life, all four purposes must be pursued by individuals throughout their lives. Public authorities have a responsibility to help them to do so by providing an adequate system of lifelong learning.

In order to support education authorities in fulfilling this responsibility, the Council of Europe has already developed approaches and materials and supported their implementation in member states. The Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) defines the central conceptual foundations, objectives and areas for the implementation of EDC/HRE. The Charter defines education for democratic citizenship as:

education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law. (section 2.a)

The Charter also defines human rights education as:

education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (section 2.b)

In these definitions, the Charter points to competences (such as knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes) that learners need to develop in order to be empowered to act as active citizens. The EDC/HRE Charter provides a comprehensive account of the education objectives, principles and policies which are required to achieve the empowerment of learners.

Empowerment and the European tradition of education

The EDC/HRE Charter states that:

Teaching and learning practices and activities should follow and promote democratic and human rights values and principles. (section 5.e)

The Council of Europe's work in education reflects this principle and the traditions of European education processes. The corresponding pedagogy is not only instrumental but also educational. It reflects a long education tradition, based on humanistic ideas and reflected in the concept of *Bildung*: the lifelong process enabling people to make independent choices for their own lives, to recognise others as equals and to interact with them in meaningful ways. This means learners are considered to be actively responsible for their own learning, not mere receivers of knowledge or the objects of the transmission of values. Education systems and institutions and the educators who work within them are expected to place learners at the centre of their own learning processes, and to support them in developing independent thinking and judgment.

This kind of education is explicitly linked to the ideals of democracy and reflects the principles of human rights. These principles are of special importance with regard to the development of competences for active participation in democracy. This means that the focus should not only be on the transmission of knowledge. The focus should also be on creating meaningful conditions in which learners can develop their full potential, in ways and at a pace suitable for and influenced by themselves.

Moreover, learning is not only a matter of cognitive processes. Learning requires pro- cesses which engage the learner's whole person: intellect, emotions and experiences. Experience-based and active learning is of particular importance for the competences that are needed for active democratic participation. Co-operation skills can best be developed in interactive or collaborative learning situations. Critical thinking is enhanced by opportunities and encouragement to engage with the different aspects of a subject matter and different interpretations. The importance of valuing other people's rights is best understood through immersion in an educational environment in which the rights and responsibilities of everyone, adults and young people alike, are respected as a foundation for making judgments and taking action.

The Framework will help to create education which ensures that humanity flourishes, that the individual's human rights are protected and that democratic values are expressed through public bodies and other institutions that affect citizens. The competences specified by the Framework define a capacity to create or restructure institutions or processes in a peaceful manner, in order to generate and reinforce democratic societies. This includes citizens complying with existing practices and also actively engaging in practices judged to be in need of change.

CDC and the context of educational institutions

The EDC/HRE Charter further states that:

the governance of educational institutions, including schools, should reflect and promote human rights values and foster the empowerment and active participation of learners, educational staff and stakeholders, including parents. (section 5.e)

Education institutions can implement this principle and 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.

An appropriate combination of democratic contexts, pedagogies and methodologies in education institutions are a prerequisite for the development of democratic competences. In contexts provided by such practices, three kinds of learning are encouraged. First, self-efficacy can develop when learners are given opportunities to solve tasks, being encouraged to persevere and acknowledged for even the smallest success. This experience-based and affective dimension of the learning process is "learning through" democracy. Second, the acquisition of knowledge and critical understanding is "learning about" democracy. Third, the ability to use one's cap- abilities in a given context or situation is "learning for" democracy[1]. All three kinds of learning are needed to pursue the overall education goal to prepare and empower learners for life as active citizens in democratic societies.

The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education underlines the principles of the EDC/HRE Charter by stating that:

"quality education" is understood as education which …

   d. promotes democracy, respect for human rights and social justice in a learning environment which recognises everyone's learning and social needs;
   e. enables pupils and students to develop appropriate competences, self-confidence and critical thinking to help them become responsible citizens.

The Framework, with its competence model and descriptors, provides a means of realising the principles of the EDC/HRE Charter and of the Council of Europe's call for quality education. It offers a comprehensive, coherent and transparent description of the competences required for active democratic participation.

Language and learning

Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)5 emphasises the importance of the language(s) of schooling. It states (paragraph 6b) that:

particular attention should be paid, right from the outset of schooling, to the acquisition of the language of schooling, which, as both a specific school subject and a medium of instruction in the other subjects, plays a crucial role in providing access to knowledge and cognitive development.

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[1] These distinctions are related to the distinctions between learning about, through and for human rights in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. See: www.ohchr.org/EN/ Issues/Education/Training/Pages/UNDHREducationTraining.aspx.

Learners who have language difficulties have problems in learning and in progressing through their education in a successful way.

In all disciplines, activities involving language competence include:

➢ reading and understanding expository texts, which are often different in structure depending on the disciplinary context;
➢ listening to explanations of complex issues by the teacher;
➢ answering questions orally and in a written mode;
➢ presenting results of investigation and study;
➢ participating in topic-oriented discussions.

Language learning is always part of subject learning, and the learning of subject-specific knowledge cannot happen without linguistic mediation. Language competence is an integral part of subject competence. Without adequate language competences, a learner can neither properly follow the content that is being taught, nor communicate with others about it. The Council of Europe has analysed and prepared materials to help educationists with ensuring learners' language competences are adequate for successful learning on its Platform of Resources and References for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education[2].

The acquisition of CDC is also dependent on language competences. It may take place as a specified part of a curriculum or through organising an education institution to encourage participation by learners. In either case, language competence is crucial and needs to be the focus of teachers' attention. Learners also become increasingly aware of language and the significance of their language competences in exercising their democratic and intercultural competences.

The Framework – What it is and what it is not

The Framework is a document of reference founded on the values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive resource to plan and implement teaching, learning and assessing of CDC and intercultural dialogue so that there is transparency and coherence for all concerned.

The Framework provides a shared language, including shared terminology, which enables all concerned to teach, learn or assess comprehensively, that is, in full awareness of the different kinds of competences – values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding – and the relations between them. Transparency is promoted through detailed statements and descriptions of competences and how such descriptions can be used in teaching, learning and assessment. Coherence is a matter of ensuring that there are no contradictions within or among the three elements: teaching, learning and assessment. Comprehensiveness, transparency and coherence facilitate mutual understanding both within and between formal, non-formal and informal education, and among the education systems of member states[3].

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[2] See: www.coe.int/EN/web/platform-plurilingual-intercultural-language-education/.

[3] "Formal education" is the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to university; it takes place, as a rule, at general or vocational educational institutions and leads to certification. "Non-formal education" is any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting. "Informal education" is the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the

The Framework is not a prescribed or even recommended European curriculum. It does not propose an exclusive pedagogy or teaching methodology or mode of assessment. It does, however, demonstrate how CDC can be introduced into a range of pedagogies, methodologies and assessments which are in harmony with Council of Europe values. It also identifies which kinds are more suitable for teaching, learning and/or assessing competences so that users of the Framework can evaluate their own approaches and whether other approaches are desirable and feasible in their own context.

The Framework is thus a tool for use in designing and developing curricula, pedagogies and assessments suitable for different contexts and education systems as determined by those responsible, for example, learners generally speaking, curriculum designers, teachers, examiners, teacher trainers and other stakeholders, all of whom are social actors. Empowerment is at the heart of the Framework.

To empower these social actors, the Framework provides the means of conceptualising and describing competences necessary to be an active member of a democratic culture within any social group, for example in an education institution, a workplace, a political system (local, national, international), a leisure organisation, or an NGO.

Furthermore, because the Framework is produced to empower and not to denigrate individuals, it should not serve as a means of excluding people from social groups of any kind, including membership of a state. To use the Framework to create a barrier to inclusion is to misuse it and to abuse its purpose. It is a crucial principle that the use of the Framework should do no harm, neither to individuals nor to groups.

Process, context and (present) scope

The acquisition of CDC is not a linear progression to ever-increasing competence in intercultural dialogue or democratic processes. Competence in one situation may transfer to others, but not necessarily, and the acquisition of CDC is a lifelong process. This means that teaching and learning must include acknowledgement of context, and assessment must include a means of recognition of all degrees of competence. No degree of competence is considered inadequate, and all competences are in potential growth.

The Framework does not determine which competences and/or levels of proficiency an individual might aspire to achieve throughout lifelong learning. It does not, for example, determine which competences and levels might be required for the award of citizenship of a state. Furthermore, the use of the Framework, and the strategy for its implementation in education, will always need to be adapted to the specific local, national and cultural contexts in which it is used, but it offers the means of ensuring comprehensiveness, transparency and coherence in any context.

Adaptation is necessarily the responsibility of policy makers and practitioners who have the detailed knowledge and understanding of specific contexts, and of how they vary in subtle and important ways that inevitably affect educational processes. Furthermore, contexts continuously respond to historic, economic, technological and cultural changes in ways that cannot be anticipated, and users of the Framework will need to review their teaching, learning and assessment practices as changes take

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educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, peer group, neighbours, encounters, library, mass media, work, play, etc.). These definitions are taken from the EDC/HRE Charter.

place. Decision making based on the Framework must always take place as near as possible to the level of implementation, such as the national, regional, municipal   or education institution, teacher or learner (as described in the guidance document in Volume 3 on the curriculum).

The acquisition of CDC is a lifelong process, as individuals continually experience new and different contexts, and analyse and plan for them. The Framework, and the competence model as a part of it, has the potential to help in this process in all kinds and stages of education – formal, informal and non-formal.

The need for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue

Democracy, as it is commonly interpreted, means a form of governance by or on behalf of the people. A principal feature of such governance is to be responsive to the views of the majority. For this reason, democracy cannot operate in the absence of institutions that ensure the inclusive enfranchisement of adult citizens, the organisation of regular, contested, free and fair elections, majority rule and government accountability.

However, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, these institutions themselves cannot function unless citizens practise a culture of democracy and hold democratic values and attitudes. Among other things, these include:

- ➢ commitment to public deliberation;
- ➢ willingness to express one's own opinions and to listen to the opinions of others;
- ➢ conviction that differences of opinion and conflicts must be resolved peacefully;
- ➢ commitment to decisions being made by majorities;
- ➢ commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights;
- ➢ recognition that majority rule cannot abolish minority rights;
- ➢ commitment to the rule of law.

Democracy also requires citizens' commitment to participate actively in the public realm. If citizens do not adhere to these values, attitudes and practices, then democratic institutions will not be able to function.

In culturally diverse societies, democratic processes and institutions require intercultural dialogue. A fundamental principle of democracy is that those affected by political decisions are able to express their views when decisions are being made, and that decision makers pay attention to their views. Intercultural dialogue is, first, the most important means through which citizens can express their views to other citizens with different cultural affiliations. It is, second, the means through which decision makers can understand the views of all citizens, taking account of their various self-ascribed cultural affiliations. In culturally diverse societies, intercultural dialogue is thus crucial for ensuring that all citizens are equally able to participate in public discussion and decision making. Democracy and intercultural dialogue are complementary in culturally diverse societies.

Intercultural dialogue requires respect for one's interlocutors. Without respect, communication with other people becomes either adversarial or coercive. In adversarial communication, the goal is to "defeat" the other person by trying to prove the "superiority" of one's own views over theirs. In coercive communication, the goal is to impose, force or pressurise the other person to abandon their

position and to adopt one's own position instead. The other person is not respected in either case and there is no attempt to engage with the views of other people.

In other words, without respect, dialogue loses its key characteristic as an open exchange of views, through which individuals who have differing cultural affiliations from one another can acquire an understanding of the perspectives, interests and needs of each other.

Respect itself is based on the judgment that the other person has an inherent importance and value and is worthy of one's attention and interest. It involves recognising the dignity of other people and affirming other people's rights to choose and to advocate for their own views and way of life. In short, intercultural dialogue requires respect for the dignity, the equality and the human rights of other people. It also requires critical reflection on the relationship between the cultural groups to which those involved in the intercultural dialogue belong, and respect for the cultural affiliations of others. In order to participate in intercultural dialogue, citizens require intercultural competence, and respect is a vital component of that competence.

Finally, democracy requires institutions to uphold the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens. Those who hold minority views need to be shielded from actions by the majority which might jeopardise their human rights and freedoms. Minority views can enrich debate and should never be marginalised or excluded. This means that, in a democracy, institutions must establish limits on the actions that can be taken by the majority. Such limits are normally implemented either through a constitution or through legislation which specifies and safeguards the human rights and freedoms of all citizens, both majority and minority.

In summary, in culturally diverse societies, a flourishing democracy requires: a government and institutions that are responsive to the views of the majority while recognising and protecting minority rights, a culture of democracy, intercultural dialogue, respect for the dignity and rights of others, and institutions to protect the human rights and freedoms of all citizens. The Framework has been developed to assist educators to contribute to the goal of achieving and consolidating three of these five conditions: a culture of democracy, intercultural dialogue, and respect for the dignity and rights of others.

The Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008)[4] points out that democratic and intercultural competences are not acquired automatically but instead need to be learned and practised. Education is in a unique position to guide and support learners in this, and by doing so, empowers them. They acquire the capacities which they need to become active and autonomous participants in democracy, in intercultural dialogue and in society more generally. It gives them the ability to choose and pursue their own goals while respecting human rights, the dignity of others and democratic processes.

The Framework assists educational planning towards this goal of empowering all learners to become autonomous and respectful democratic citizens by equipping them with the competences needed for democracy and intercultural dialogue.

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[4] Council of Europe (2008), White Paper on intercultural dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity", Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/ source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf

The importance of institutional structures

While it is vital to equip learners with the competences they require to participate in a culture of democracy, this alone is not sufficient to ensure that a democracy functions well, for the following reasons.

First, in addition to democratically and interculturally competent citizens, a democracy needs democratic political and legal institutions. Such institutions must make available to citizens opportunities for active engagement. Institutions which deny such opportunities are not democratic. For example, citizens' opportunities for democratic activities and participation are denied if there are no institutional consultative bodies through which citizens can communicate their views to politicians. Where this occurs, citizens need to use alternative forms of democratic action if they wish to make their voices heard. Similarly, if there are no institutional structures to sup- port intercultural dialogue, then citizens are less likely to engage in such dialogue. However, if governments provide appropriate places and spaces (for example cultural and social centres, youth clubs, education centres, other leisure facilities or virtual spaces) and promote the use of these facilities for intercultural activities, then citizens are more likely to engage in intercultural dialogue.

In other words, while democratic institutions are not self-sustaining without an accompanying culture of democracy, it is also the case that democratic culture and intercultural dialogue are not self-sustaining in the absence of appropriately configured institutions. Institutions and citizens' competences and actions are interdependent.

Furthermore, where there are systematic patterns of disadvantage and discrimination, and where there are differences in the allocation of resources within societies, people may be disempowered from participation on an equal basis. For example, if citizens do not have sufficient material or financial resources to access information about societal or political issues or to participate in civic actions, they will be disempowered in comparison with people who do have such resources. In this case, their competences for participation are irrelevant because there is no opportunity to use them.

These inequalities and disadvantages are often increased by institutional biases and differences of power which lead to democratic and intercultural settings and opportunities being dominated by those who occupy positions of privilege. Disadvantaged citizens can be excluded from participating as equals through the language and actions of those who have the privileges associated with, for example, a high level of education, high status through their occupation or networks of powerful connections. There is a danger that people who are marginalised or excluded from democratic processes and intercultural exchanges become disengaged from civic life and alienated from participation and deliberation.

For these reasons, special measures need to be adopted to ensure that members of disadvantaged groups enjoy genuine equality of opportunity to engage in democratic action. It is not sufficient only to equip citizens with the competences that are specified by the Framework. It is also necessary to change structural inequalities and disadvantages.

Consequently, the Framework presupposes that democratic and intercultural competences are necessary for participation in democratic processes and intercultural dialogue but are not sufficient to ensure such participation. The need for appropriate institutional structures, and for action where inequalities and disadvantages exist, should be borne in mind throughout.