DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCES VIA DIGITAL CHANNEL

Acronyms

CCD = Competenze per una Cultura della Democrazia
CDC = Competences for Democratic Culture
COIL = Collaborative Online International Learning
DCDC = Democratic Competences via Digital Channel
DISCO = Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation
DM = Decreto Ministeriale
ICT = Information and Communication Technology
ISTAT = Istituto nazionale di Statistica
MIUR = Ministero dell'Istruzione, Università e Ricerca
NACU = Nuova Associazione Culturale Ulisse
POF = Piano dell'Offerta Formativa
QRCCD = Quadro di Riferimento delle Competenze per una Cultura della Democrazia
RFCDC = Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
SIS = Siena Italian Studies
SWOT = Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TRT = Teacher Self-Reflection Tool
USR = Ufficio Scolastico Regionale

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THE DCDC PROJECT: DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCES VIA DIGITAL CHANNEL

1. INTRODUCTION

The present article is the final output of the Project "DCDC: Democratic Competences via Digital Channel", co-financed by the European Union and the Council of Europe within the DISCO (Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation) Micro-Grants programme (as a dissemination of the results of a previous cycle) and granted to the Nuova Associazione Culturale Ulisse (NACU). The aim of the project is spreading knowledge among Italian teachers about the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) through the digital channel. The project lasted nine months, from March 5 to November 20, 2021, and it originated from a clear analysis of the Italian educational context and its needs regarding the implementation of the RFCDC and the status of digitalisation.

In Italy the actual applications of the RFCDC are still scarce: there are a few local initiatives and specific endeavours of single school institutions, but the very knowledge of the Framework and its practical implementation in educational curricula is still very limited, notwithstanding its fundamental role.

The RFCDC could be easily included in the curriculum of Citizenship Education, which has been acknowledged to be fundamental in the development of European citizens (as stated in the *Paris Declaration*[1] in 2015 and in the *Education Councils of the EU* 2016 and 2017, as well as by UNESCO in its *Global Citizenship Education Model*[2]) and has been re-included as mandatory in Italian schools from school year 2020-2021, according to the Law n. 92, August 2019.

Despite the evident connection between the Framework and the objectives of Citizenship Education, in the DM 35 (22 June 2020) and its Annexes A, B and C, that established the re-introduction of this discipline in Italian schools, there is still no explicit mention of the RFCDC in this official document. On the other hand, in a few educational publications and websites (*Orizzonte Scuola*[3], *Insegnare Online*[4], *Matmedia*[5], *Pearson*[6]), there are some random traces of an explicit connection between the RFCDC and Citizenship Education: its Executive Summary is mentioned and some useful links to the Council of Europe publications are provided. Nonetheless, the teaching of Citizenship Education has had and still has an ambiguous status, since it does not have clear borders: in Italy it is not a separate discipline but it is integrated in other subjects, no specific objectives or learning outcomes are defined but it is described only in its general aims, even if it is part of the entire scholastic educational path (*Citizenship Education at School in Europe*[7], 2017). This implies that it is often left to the willingness of teachers to introduce appropriate topics and the RFCDC is not usually included among them. Besides, there are no regulations or recommendations for teacher development and training (*ib*.).

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[1] *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*, Informal meeting of European Union Education Ministers, Paris, 17 March 2015.

[2] Available at https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced.

[3] https://www.orizzontescuola.it/nuova-educazione-civica-come-insegnarla-tutte-le-aree-di-formazione/

[4] http://www.insegnareonline.com/orizzonti/scuola-cittadinanza/quadro-normativo

[5] https://www.matmedia.it/educazione-civica-e-educazione-politica/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=educazione-civica-e-educazione-politica

[6] https://it.pearson.com/aree-disciplinari/english/sustainability/cittadinanza-democratica-centro-curricolo.html#

[7] Eurydice Report, 2017. Available at https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/citizenship-education-school-europe-%E2%80%93-2017_en

As for the level of digitalisation in Italy, according to data provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics ISTAT (*Cittadini e ICT*[8], 2019) on the use of internet and digital devices and Italians' digital competences, only one third of Italians have high digital competences, even if 67.9% of the population are internet users. The higher percentage of internet access is registered in the North, Centre and in urban areas, while the South suffers from a systematic lack of broadband connection. Among other discriminatory factors are the level of education, gender and age, as shown by the following data:

- access to broadband connection: 70.6% in North and Centre Italy vs. 62.5% in South Italy;
- level of education: 82.9% own a high school diploma vs. 51.9% own a middle school diploma;
- gender: 64.2% of women vs. 71.7% of men;
- age: beyond 90% for young people between 15-24 years, 72.4% for adults between 55-59, 41.9% for adults between 65-74.

According to the report *Educare Digitale*[9] (Agcom, 2019), 97% of Italian schools are provided with internet access, but only a limited percentage of this can count on fast and stable connections: 9% of primary schools, 11,2% of middle schools, and 23% of high schools. Other interesting data concern the number of computer devices per student: there is a clear divide between Italy and other European countries since the number of students per computer in Italy is twice as much (sometimes four times as much) when compared to the European average. Last but not least, according to the same report, only 47% of Italian teachers use digital devices daily: this might imply that half of Italian teachers do not use digital resources in class and have low digital competences.

The low level of digitalisation in Italy became evident during 2020 and happened to combine with education issues caused by the pandemic. The year 2020 was in many ways a crucial time for the transformation of the Italian school system: in fact, the pandemic emergency 'forced' Italian teachers to make extensive use of digital teaching and resources despite the fact that the digitalisation of the Italian education system was inconsistent: a part of Italian schools are very advanced and have trusted digitalisation equipping their institutions with updated materials and devices, while some other schools remained very suspicious towards new technologies, and many teachers, being digital immigrants and not digital natives[10], did not even have personal digital devices; partly, this divide was (and is) geographical, but not only. This digital divide appeared in different scenarios: North vs. South, countryside vs urban spaces, richer vs. poorer families, etc. (Seccia R., 2020[11]).

The pandemic situation made it very clear that these discrepancies were real and had consequences on digital didactics, despite the amount of financial resources provided by the Italian State to the school system (85 million euros) during the pandemic.

In the light of all this and in order to promote the spreading of the RFCDC, the DCDC project stated as its outputs:

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[8] Available at https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/236920

[9] Available at www.agcom.it

[10] "Digital immigrants" is a phrase that refers to people who were born and/or brought up before the widespread use of digital technology, while "digital natives" refers to people who were born in the digital era and are familiar with digital devices and technology from a very early age.

[11] "Dalla didattica a distanza alla Didattica Digitale Integrata", in *Scuola e Formazione: Dossier idee per una ripartenza intelligente*, 12 October 2020, pp. 51-60.

- Output 1 - "Developing Competences for Democratic Culture in the digital era Strategy Paper" (Council of Europe, October 2017) is translated to Italian and available, which was the required starting point for the Micro-grants application;
- Output 2 - RFCDC Volume 2 is translated and available[12];
- Output 3 - SWOT analysis for the Italian scenario is produced;
- Output 4 - Digital training course for Italian teachers;
- Output 5 - An article about the project and the analysis of the online training course is produced to disseminate the results.

2. THE SWOT ANALYSIS

In light of what is described above, the project's third output consisted in the elaboration of a SWOT analysis in order to have a clearer picture of the Italian context[13].

The results of the SWOT analysis gave NACU a deeper insight of teachers' needs and provided essential indications for the elaboration of the project's main output: a training course for teachers, delivered through the digital platform Zoom, about the Framework and its application in everyday teaching practice.

The SWOT questionnaire was elaborated in Italian in order to be accessible to teachers of different disciplines who may not be fluent in English, in line with the overall goal of the project to raise awareness and spread knowledge of European materials and documents in the teachers' mother tongue. The sample was chosen with the goal of including representatives from different categories of educators: primary school teachers, middle school teachers, high school teachers, school principals, and administrative officers of MIUR, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Education, University and Research).

The SWOT questionnaire was sent to 46 people in total, who were chosen among NACU's contacts because they had collaborated with NACU in previous projects. Only 14 out of them responded; in addition, no representative from the categories of middle school teachers and administrative officers of MIUR responded. The scarce responsiveness of the sample is a significant element and may be taken into account for future developments.

2.1 Methodology

The methodology included the following three phases:

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[12] At the time of the project application, the translation of RFCDC Volume 2 was one of the expected outputs. Since an official translation was in the process of being made, during the initial stages of the project this output was replaced with the translation of some parts of the draft Teacher Self-Reflection Tool.

[13] All the four questionnaires (SWOT questionnaire, Knowledge in- and out-questionnaires, Satisfaction questionnaire) used and administered for this project were originally written in Italian since they were addressed to Italian teachers who may not be fluent in English. Therefore, in this article charts copied and pasted from the Google forms are in Italian, but a suitable translation is provided for each and every question asked.

-   Phase 1: Country questionnaire in Italy
-   Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis
-   Phase 3: Synthesis of results

In the next paragraphs, the three phases will be described in detail.

2.2 Phase 1: Country questionnaire in Italy

A. Focus of the study:

The subject of this SWOT analysis is the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture: it specifically revolves around Italian educators' knowledge of it, their level of awareness, to what extent the Framework is included in their teaching practice, its visibility and feasibility through the digital channel.

B. Questionnaire Design:

A questionnaire was designed for Italian teachers, educators and stakeholders, from primary school to high school, to collect their opinions and to get information about the state of the art of democratic competences development in the Italian education system. The questionnaire also included questions about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of using the RFCDC in general and specifically via digital channel. The questionnaire was in Italian. All the questions were mandatory. Resulting data are both quantitative and qualitative.

C. Research sample:

The questionnaire was sent to 46 education practitioners, out of which 14 people responded, completed and submitted the SWOT questionnaire. The professional categories represented in the entire list of 46 educators were: administrative officers of MIUR (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca), school principals, primary school teachers, middle school teachers, high school teachers.

D. Structure of the questionnaire:

The questionnaire was developed using Google Form. It was introduced by a short description of the RFCDC and its aims, as follows:

"Nel 2018 il Consiglio d'Europa ha pubblicato tre volumi dedicati al Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC): il Quadro di Riferimento delle Competenze per una Cultura Democratica (QRCCD). Il lavoro del Consiglio d'Europa ha infatti tra le sue priorità l'elaborazione di strumenti educativi che mirano a promuovere il dialogo interculturale ed una cultura della democrazia per una convivenza pacifica nelle nostre società culturalmente diverse ed eterogenee. Il Quadro, anticipato da una prima pubblicazione nel 2016, presenta 20 competenze fondamentali raggruppate in quattro categorie (valori, atteggiamenti, abilità e

conoscenze) ed è stato approvato all'unanimità dalla conferenza permanente dei Ministri dell'Istruzione tenutasi nell'aprile 2016 a Bruxelles.

Le 20 competenze per una cultura democratica (CCD) e il corpus dei relativi descrittori costituiscono il riferimento educativo comune per l'Europa, e non solo, per formare cittadini responsabili ed impegnati sia nel mondo reale sia in quello virtuale.

Tempo di compilazione: circa 40 minuti.

Grazie per la Sua collaborazione e disponibilità!" [14]

The first 7 questions were designed with the aim to get a clear picture of the sample in terms of nationality, age, gender, professional role, subjects taught, years of service, and foreign languages spoken. These first questions were either short-answer questions or closed questions. Questions 8 to 11 were designed to understand the level of knowledge of the RFCDC among respondents and were structured as open questions. Questions 12 to 15 concerned the extent to which the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge indicated in the RFCDC are foreseen in educational curricula even if not explicitly referring to or related to the Framework. They were all designed as double questions (*a* and *b*), being the first a closed (multiple choice) question and the second an open question. Questions 16 to 19 inquired about teaching practices and the role of democratic competences both in the real and the virtual environment. They were all designed and structured as open questions. Finally, questions 20 and 21 explicitly asked respondents to give their opinion about positive and negative sides of teaching and developing CDC respectively in presence (question 20) and via digital tools (question 21), and they were structured as open-ended questions. The choice to include both close-ended and open-ended questions ensured the collection of quantitative as well as qualitative data.

E. Ethical issues and confidentiality:

The participation of respondents was completely voluntary and carried out online, and no risks were present except for those encountered in everyday life. The participants' answers remain confidential and anonymous, and their identity remains protected. Data was only used for research purposes and was not shared with anyone except researchers of the DCDC Project.

2.3 Phase 2: Data Analysis - Research sample

The research sample consisted of 14 respondents. As for nationality, they were all Italian. The sample was composed of 12 female and 2 male respondents[15].

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[14] "In 2018, the Council of Europe published three volumes dedicated to the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC): il Quadro di Riferimento delle Competenze per una Cultura Democratica (QRCCD). The Council of Europe's work has, in fact, among its priorities the development of educational tools which aim at promoting intercultural dialogue and a culture of democracy in order to live together peacefully in our culturally diverse societies. The Framework, which was anticipated by a publication in 2016, presents the 20 fundamental competences, grouped in four categories (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) and was unanimously approved by the Standing Conference of Ministries of Education, held in Brussels in April 2016.

The 20 competences for democratic culture (CDC) and the related set of descriptors represent the common educational reference point for Europe, and not only, in order to shape responsible and engaged citizens both in the real and in the virtual world.

Time for completing the questionnaire: around 40 minutes.

Thanks for your collaboration!"

Chart 1

2. Genere
14 risposte

- Maschio
- Femmina

85,7%

14,3%
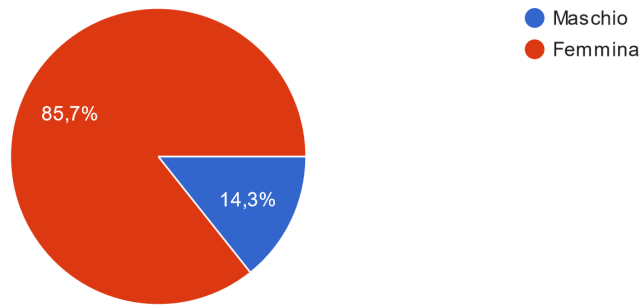
The number of participants in each age class can be seen in detail in the following table and chart.

Chart 2

Age Class	Number of participants	Percentage
40-45	2	14.3%
46-50	5	35.7%
51-55	4	28.6%
56-60	3	21.4%

Chart 3

3. Età
14 risposte
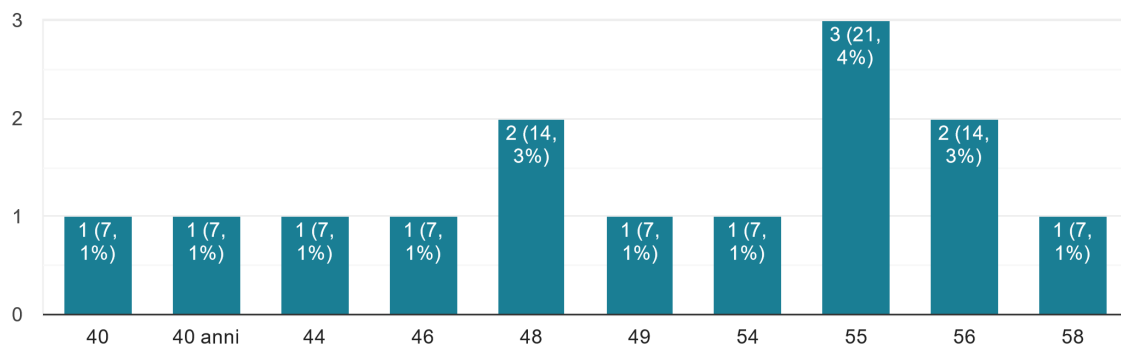
[15] The charts included in this report were automatically generated by Google Form, so they are in Italian, but for each of them an English translation or corresponding table is provided.

As for the professional roles covered by the respondents, the categories can be seen in the following table and chart.
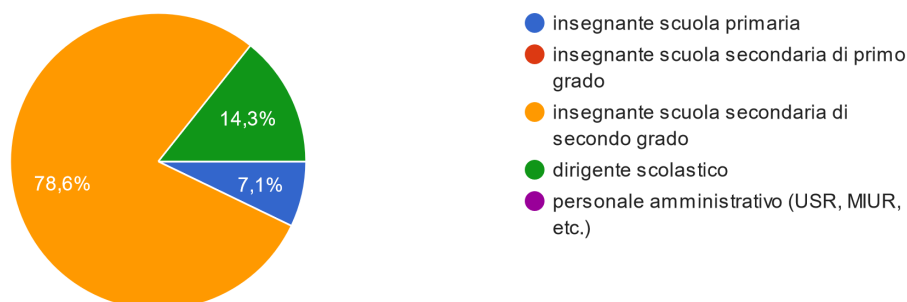
Chart 4

Categories of profession	Number of participants	Percentage
Administrative officers of MIUR	0	0%
School principals	2	14.3%
Primary school teachers	1	7.1%
Middle school teachers	0	0%
High school teachers	11	78.6%

Chart 5

4. Professione e ruolo svolto all'interno del sistema educativo
14 risposte

- insegnante scuola primaria
- insegnante scuola secondaria di primo grado
- insegnante scuola secondaria di secondo grado
- dirigente scolastico
- personale amministrativo (USR, MIUR, etc.)

As for the subjects taught[16], data is given in the following table and chart.

Chart 6

Subjects taught	Number of participants	Percentage
English as a foreign language	3	23.1%
Humanities (Italian Language, History and Geography)	5	38.5%
Mathematics and Physics	2	15.4%
Spanish as a foreign language	1	7.7%
Chemistry	1	7.7%

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[16] The column chart has been automatically generated by Google Form and it keeps different subjects separated when they are described by respondents with different words or spelt differently: for example, "Inglese" (capital *I*) and "inglese" (lowercase *i*) are separated and counted as two subjects, even if it is clear that it is the same one. Therefore, in the table we have divided the subjects more consistently and grouped the same disciplines in one row. In addition, in the Italian school system, teachers who can teach Italian Language and Literature can also teach History and Geography, so these three subjects have been put together in the "Humanities" category; the same is true for Mathematics and Physics.

Art and Art History	1	7.7%

Chart 7

5. Materia/e insegnata/e
13 risposte
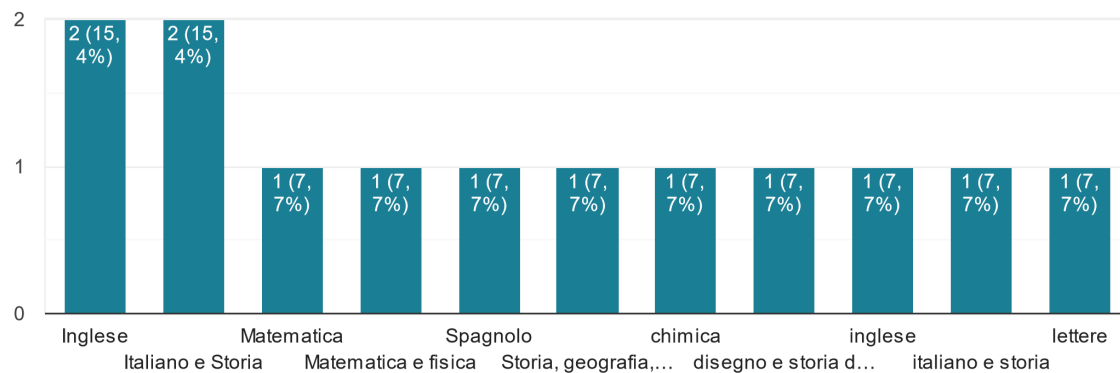
As for the years of service, data is collected in the following table and chart.

Chart 8

Years of service	Number of participants	Percentage
0-10	6	42.9%
11-20	3	21.4%
21-30	5	35.7%

Chart 9

6. Anni di servizio
14 risposte
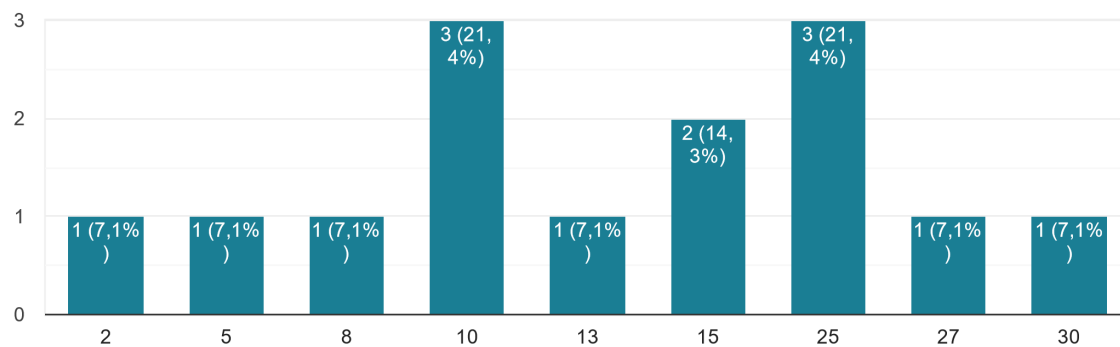
The respondents were also asked if they knew other languages besides Italian. Answers can be found in the following table and chart.

Chart 10

Languages spoken	Number of respondents	Percentage
English	12	85.7%
French	3	21.4%
Spanish	4	28.6%
German	1	7.1%

Chart 11

7. Lingue conosciute (oltre l'italiano)
14 risposte

2.4 Phase 3: Content and data analysis

The data obtained by the SWOT questionnaire was analysed in the following way.

Answers to question 21 were the starting point since they clearly addressed the focus of the study: on the base of these answers a first draft of the SWOT matrix 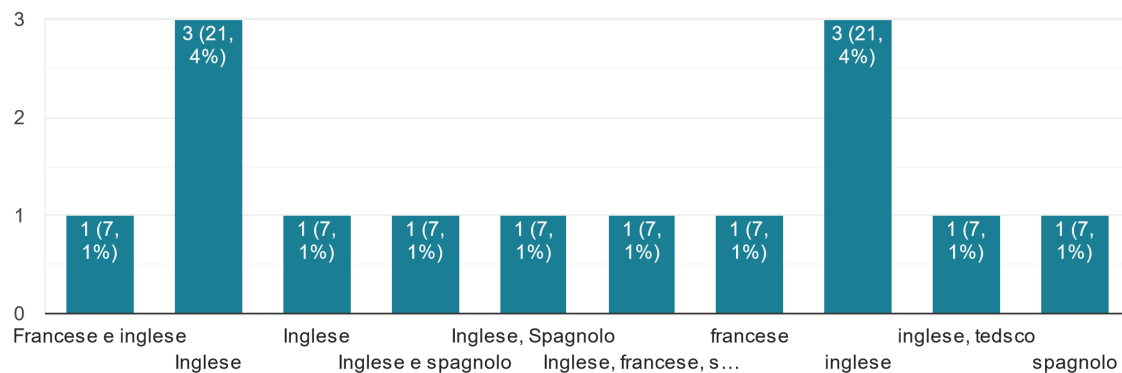was developed. In a second phase, answers to questions 8 to 20 were examined and they were found to provide further and significant information that was integrated in the matrix.

2.5 Results of the SWOT Analysis and matrix

One of the main strengths represented by the results of the SWOT questionnaire is the acknowledgement that, even if not explicitly related to the RFCDC, most of the democratic competences are already part of the educational curriculum of Citizenship Education, as a mandatory and transversal discipline, and partially known by educators. More in detail, values are widely included (90.5% on average) in the school curricula and extensively available in textbooks and other educational resources. Attitudes are also widely included (80.5% on average) in curricula with two significant exceptions: self-efficacy and tolerance for ambiguity. Both terms belong to the sectoral vocabulary of social sciences, which is not necessarily part of Italian teachers' background: while 'tolerance for ambiguity', even when

translated into Italian, is linguistically quite transparent and can be given a common sense meaning (which does not completely overlap with the technical one), the Italian equivalent for 'self-efficacy' (it. 'autoefficacia') is very obscure and hard to grasp. This may partly explain the less widespread use of these terms. As for the skills foreseen in the RFCDC, five of them are widely represented (87.1% on average) among the learning objectives in the Italian education system. These are autonomous learning, analytical and critical thinking, listening and observing, linguistic communicative and plurilingual skills, co-operation. On the other hand, empathy and conflict resolution skills are recognised as part of the curricula only by half of the respondents, while flexibility and adaptability by 57% of them. Last but not least, respondents state that the competences about knowledge and critical understanding envisaged in the Framework are basically fully included in the Italian school curricula, with the single exception of the knowledge and critical understanding of the Self: this result is meaningful and might be the focus of further investigation[17].

Other important strengths of the teaching of CDC via digital channel are found in its capacity of accelerating the learning process and of reducing physical and spatial distances, thus facilitating the connection between local issues and global issues: in this way the development of democratic competences through digital learning may enhance global competence and identity.

Interestingly, some strengths are linked to very practical aspects of the tool itself: using a digital platform for education allows teachers to record lessons, to keep track of them and to manage conversational turns in an easier way.

Finally, teaching CDC via digital channel may be better in terms of adapting teaching styles to students' needs and habits: for example, more reserved pupils may find the courage to express their opinion feeling more at ease behind a screen, and students in general can take advantage of a learning modality which is familiar to them as digital natives.

The results of the SWOT analysis also permitted to outline what weaknesses the digital teaching of democratic competences entail on a policy level, on a theoretical level and on a practical one. The main weakness that is evident from the reading of the data is the total lack of knowledge about the RFCDC on the part of teachers; not only, the Framework seems to be completely absent in the Italian Ministry of Education's official legislative documents, and training courses have not been offered either by formal or non-formal educational institutions, and no digital educational platform regarding the RFCDC is available; at least, this is what emerges from the data. This total lack of knowledge and awareness of the RFCDC is particularly meaningful in consideration of the fact that since the year 2000 Italian schools have been largely autonomous: this implies that educational institutions, while being part of the national school system, have their own administrative, educational and organisational autonomy. This also entails that, while operating in compliance with the general rules on education issued by the State, each school has its own Plan of Educational Offer (POF, Piano dell'Offerta Formativa), that can take into consideration the enhancement of the school as an active community, open to the local territory and able to develop and increase interaction with families and the local community, including third sector organisations and businesses. Therefore, there are several channels through which each school could include the RFCDC into its POF.

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[17] The Italian school system is still, for many reasons, anchored to a very traditional conceptualisation of education: the knowledge about the Self is emphasised on a pre-school and primary school level, but proceeding along the educational path it becomes more and more taken for granted, and best practices, such as reflective ones, still play a very marginal role.

On a more practical side, the combination of CDC development and the use of digital tools brings about a set of weak points that, at a first glance, can be considered as inherent to the digital means, but, at a deeper analysis, makes it clear that the channel and the content (of teaching democratic competences) are tightly linked. Teachers report the negative sides of digital learning such as reduced attention on the part of the students, total lack of non-verbal communication, reduced opportunities for a free and open discussion, lack of recreational and social moments, increase of competitive attitudes, difficulty to include all the students in the lesson, and reduced trust between educators and pupils. All these negative aspects hinder the full and serene development of democratic competences since they prevent students from experiencing first-hand, in a group with their peers, behaviours and attitudes which can lead to such a development.

The opportunities raised by the teaching and learning of democratic competences via digital channel that were indicated by respondents cover two main fields: on the one hand, the opportunities for teachers to be empowered and trained in order to become better educators, and, on the other, the impact that the development of those competences in students may have on the entire society and for future generations.

More in detail, the use of digital tools allows to spread knowledge about the RFCDC and related materials and methodologies to a much wider audience in the entire country. This historical moment seems to be particularly beneficial for it, since (as mentioned above) Citizenship Education has been re-introduced as a mandatory subject and textbooks are being updated to match teachers' and students' needs. It is the right time for training courses and European exchanges. In addition, the availability of good teaching practices that can be easily adapted to the teaching of democratic competences, both in presence and via digital channel, is surely a plus.

Teachers also believe that students' development of CDC may have a strong impact on the whole society and can shape better future citizens both in the real and in the virtual world.

Threats resulting from the SWOT questionnaire seem to be connected on one hand to teachers' 'digital fluency' and lack of technological devices provided by schools, and on the other to more cultural aspects of the Italian society, namely the persistence of a hierarchical relationship between teachers and pupils and a lack of shared and common goals between the family and school context[18]. Besides, educators also report a lack of an adequate curriculum and of official guidelines about the CDC.

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[18] The importance of shared goals between school and family and their collaboration in order to develop democratic competences has been also underlined in the last PISA Report: "In general, analyses of data from the parent questionnaire confirm the importance of parenting and the home environment in promoting global and intercultural interests, awareness and skills. Parents and teachers can play important and complementary roles in developing a positive intercultural and global outlook among adolescents. Parents can transmit knowledge about global issues and also act as role models in defining their children's behaviour. Parents who show interest in other people's culture, tolerance towards those who are different from them and awareness of global issues that affect us all are likely to raise children who share those attitudes. This, in turn, will help schools cultivate a climate that embraces those positive attitudes." (PISA 2018 Results "Are students ready to thrive in an interconnected world?", Volume VI, pp. 228-229).

2.6 SWOT Matrix

Strengths	Weaknesses
• several competences related to the RFCDC, even if not explicitly linked to it, are part of the curriculum of Citizenship Education, a mandatory and transversal discipline in Italian schools (DM 35, 2020) • although not explicitly related to the RFCDC, democratic values are widely included in school curricula (90.5% on average) • although not explicitly related to the RFCDC, democratic attitudes are included in school curricula (63.11% on average) • although not explicitly related to the RFCDC, democratic skills are included in school curricula(74.1% on average) • although not explicitly related to the RFCDC, democratic knowledge is included in school curricula (85.73% on average) • accelerating the learning process • reducing physical and spatial distances • connecting local issues to global issues thanks to the development of CDC • enhancing global competence and identity • lesson tracking and recording • managing conversational turns in an easier way • possibility for more reserved students to take part in the conversation and express their opinion • using a teaching modality that matches the learning strategies and skills of digital natives	• lack of knowledge about the RFCDC • lack of information and training courses about the RFCDC organised by both formal and non-formal educational institutions and providers (MIUR, USR, NGOs, etc.) • lack of explicit references to the RFCDC by educational authorities in legislative official documents • lack of digital platforms explicitly dedicated to the RFCDC • enhancing competitive attitudes and reducing collaborative attitudes, which are fundamental for the development of the CDC • risk of perpetuating one's mistakes due to the lack of discussion in person with peers • reduced attention • total lack of non-verbal communication • reduced possibility of a free and open discussion in a group • possibility of only tandem discussion • lack of social, recreational and playful moments between peers • reducing opportunities for inclusion and involvement of all students in the teaching of the CDC • increased lack of trust between teachers and students, which is detrimental to the development of CDC • reduced possibilities to have students understand the meaning of civic mindedness and respect for others
Opportunities	• **Threats**
• possibility of spreading knowledge about the CDC and teaching materials and methodologies to develop the CDC	• disconnect of goals between families and schools • resistance of a traditional, hierarchical

to a much wider audience in the entire Italian peninsula thanks to recording • due to the re-introduction of Citizenship Education textbooks have been/are being updated • training courses • European programmes (Erasmus Plus) • availability of good practices to develop CDC (peer learning, cooperative learning, service-learning, pair and group activities, inclusive education, interactive didactics, hands-on activities, flipped classroom) • students' development of CDC may have a strong impact on the whole society • the development of CDC can shape future responsible and engaged citizens both in the real and the virtual worlds	and asymmetric relationship between teacher and student • partial lack of technological devices and tools • teachers' lack of preparation and training to use digital tools • lack of an adequate curriculum and official guidelines about the CDC

The picture resulting from the SWOT matrix revealed that this is a crucial timing to include the RFCDC into the Italian education system, both through formal and non-formal channels. In fact, democratic competences are present as transversal elements in education, still what is lacking is the official reference to and institutional acknowledgement of European key documents which would give consistency to curricula across school levels in the entire country and would align Italian school systems to European policies and goals.

Both educators and third-sector stakeholders recognised the importance of developing democratic competences and they work in this direction on a local level. In addition, such competences have become essential both in the real and the virtual environments that more and more come to represent two interconnected and intertwining realities.

On the basis of the SWOT matrix, NACU worked on the elaboration of a digital training course in Italian for teachers with the aim of filling some of these gaps, making concepts and materials accessible, and setting a starting point for a sustainable RFCDC education.

3. DCDC TRAINING COURSE FOR ITALIAN TEACHERS

The other fundamental output of the project, as mentioned before, was the implementation of an online training course for Italian educators aimed at spreading knowledge about the RFCDC and other related European documents.

The main idea of the course was to have key European documents translated into Italian and thus easily accessible for Italian teachers and educators; in addition to that, the main results from the SWOT analysis informed the elaboration of the training with a clearer picture of the Italian context and its needs.

3.1 Advertisement and promotion of the course

A large amount of time and energy was dedicated to advertise and promote the course and to approach schools, institutions, associations and other Italian education stakeholders within Italian borders as well as Italian schools abroad.

Direct promotion was carried out through institutional email addresses, school websites and Facebook pages and profiles, emails, private phone calls and word of mouth throughout the Peninsula.

This capillary action of promotion allowed NACU to reach educators from various Italian regions and therefore go beyond Tuscan borders, as initially thought.

3.2 Preparation of materials

As foreseen in the project application, the first step in the preparation of materials concerned the translation of essential European documents, namely *Developing competences for democratic culture in the digital era - Strategy Paper*, volume 2 of the RFCDC, "*Descriptors of competences for Democratic Culture*", the *Introduction* and *Module 2* of the Teacher self-Reflection Tool (TRT).

After the translation phase, trainers were in charge of structuring and organising such materials into slides and activities for the course, and of completing them with an essential bibliography, a glossary and structured reflective activities.

3.3 Recruitment and description of trainees

Thanks to NACU's constant promotion efforts, 50 participants enrolled in the training course by using a Google registration form. Forms were sent from mid-August 2021 on, and there was no specific deadline for registration thanks to the online format.

The registered participants were 42 females and 8 males. The vast majority (70%) of teachers that enrolled belonged to secondary schools, 12% worked in primary schools and 12% in middle schools, the remaining checked the box "Other": SIS Intercultural Study Abroad (which is a partner institution of NACU), university, NGOs, kindergarten, Italian school for foreigners. The sample represented the majority of Italian school subjects with a certain prevalence of humanities and foreign languages.
The data is summarised in the following tables.

Chart 12

Scuola o Istituto presso cui lavora

50 risposte
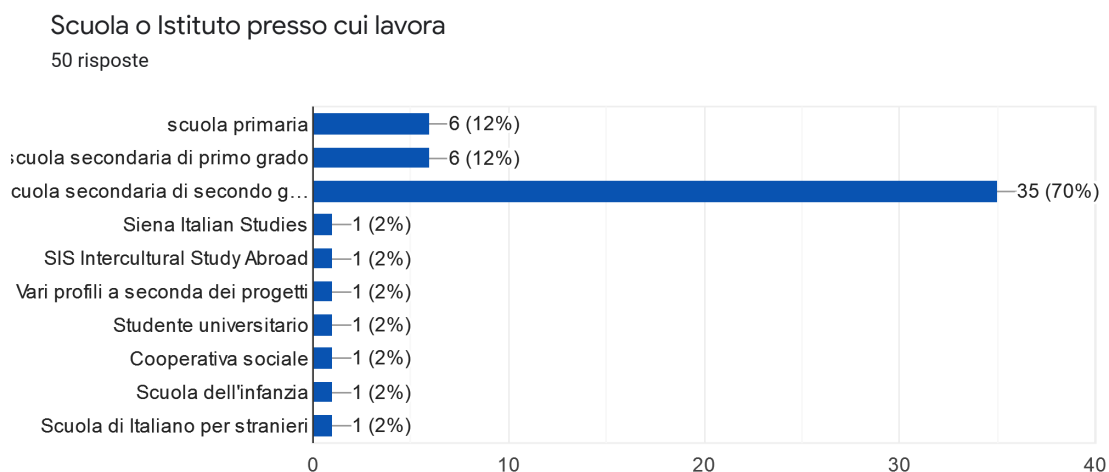
Chart 13

Subjects taught	Number of respondents	Percentage
Humanities (Italian Language, History and Geography)	13	26%
Foreign languages	10	20%
Law and Economics	8	16%
Mathematics	5	10%
Italian as a second language	4	8%
Special Education	4	8%
Other[19]	6	12%
	50	100%

3.4 Course implementation: description

The DCDC training course "Le competenze democratiche: come formare i cittadini del futuro" took place online on the Zoom platform in the week from Monday Sept. 27 to Friday Oct. 1 2021, in the afternoon (on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from 5 to 6.30 pm, on Friday from 4 to 5.30 pm). The course consisted of 12 hours of training: 8 were carried out online in sync and the remaining 4 were organised as asynchronous individual work for trainees.

All the sessions were recorded and shared with trainees through Google Drive in the week after the course, while selected extracts are available on the website of Nuova Associazione Culturale Ulisse, where they will remain for 5 years.

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[19] Subjects with only one occurrence were put in this category.

The course was held by Arianna Giorgi and Irene Grazi as main trainers, with the assistance of Lavinia Bracci as trainer and member of NACU, and of Fiora Biagi as external consultant and expert in the translation of the documents used for the course.

The course was specifically aimed at spreading knowledge about the RFCDC and disseminating the publication *Developing competences for democratic culture in the digital era - Strategy Paper* [20], by illustrating the activities included in it and targeted at teachers of different levels of school, and it was enriched with other materials taken from Volume 2 of the RFCDC publication, namely the list of key descriptors associated with the 20 democratic competences, from the draft Teacher self-Reflection Tool (TRT), namely the Introduction and *Module 2*, and other reflection activities created by the experts of the DCDC project. In addition, all sessions foresaw a time for plenary discussions that were facilitated by Lavinia Bracci and Fiora Biagi.

Materials were emailed day by day so that trainees could have all the documents available for the daily sessions.

On the first day of training, after a brief introduction of the Nuova Associazione Culturale Ulisse and of the DCDC project made by Lavinia Bracci, Arianna Giorgi presented several slides extensively describing the RFCDC, other tools produced by the Council of Europe (the TRT, the Portfolio and the most recent publication on the assessment of competences for democratic culture[21]), together with a reference to the concepts of intercultural competence and global competence which are most often intertwined and/or associated (if not confused) with the concept of democratic competence(s).

The second part of the session was dedicated to group work: trainees were randomly divided into five breakout rooms and were asked to read and reflect on some of the activities[22] of the Strategy Paper (each group was assigned one activity): the aim of this group work was to reflect on the utility and possible application of those activities in Italian educational contexts.

The final plenary session concerned trainees' comments on the activities assigned.

On the second day of training, Arianna Giorgi described more in detail the democratic competences of the RFCDC by going in depth into the presentation and analysis of the RFCDC key descriptors and their possible use in educational situations, also giving explanatory and clarifying examples.

The session continued in group work and trainees were randomly divided into five breakout rooms: each group was assigned one scenario taken from Module 2 of the TRT ("Addressing controversial issues") and was asked to follow the guiding questions given by the scenario and reflect on which descriptors could

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[20] This document, published in October 2017 by the Council of Europe, was the output of a previous DISCO project and was the starting point for the present project, as requested by the DISCO Microgrants Call 2020-2021.

[21] The Teacher Self-Reflection Tool is not available in its final version yet, but the Council of Europe kindly allowed us access to an online draft version. As for the Portfolio, please see *A portfolio of competences for democratic culture* (Council of Europe Publishing, March 2021), and for the Assessment volume please see *Assessing competences for democratic culture - Principles, methods examples* (Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, June 2021): they are both available online on the website of the Council of Europe.

[22] The activities chosen were: "Essay writing", "We are different, but we are online", "Without words", "Self-portrait", "Safety on the internet".

be used and useful for that given situation. Trainees were also invited to comment and reflect on the usefulness of a reflection tool for teachers in order to become more democratic educators.

At the end of the second day of training, participants were given individual work to be completed: the first task was to reflect on their being a democratic teacher (guiding questions from the Introduction of the TRT were used) and the second task was to read other activities taken from the Strategy Paper uploaded on NACU website and give feedback on them the next day.

On the third day of training the theoretical presentation was conducted by Irene Grazi and was dedicated to innovative pedagogies to be used in teaching democratic competences: service-learning pedagogy, cooperative learning, project-based learning, flipped classroom, reflective education, and COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning).

Afterwards, detailed instructions were given for the final project of the course: participating teachers were asked to prepare an outline of a didactic activity or project which should include the following: a short description of local needs, at least one innovative pedagogy, one or more competences of the RFCDC, institutions and stakeholders involved, potential challenges and positive outcomes, assessment of students' competences, impact on the local community, possible contribution to the development of students' global competence.

Four breakout sessions were then opened, and trainees were asked to work in groups and reflect on the following topics: democracy and democratic action, the RFCDC, teaching about the RFCDC, teachers' work environment and the community they live in[23]. A plenary session followed.

The fourth day of training did not foresee any plenary presentation and was entirely dedicated to group work: trainees were divided into three breakout rooms and were invited to get familiar with activities from the Strategy Paper (each group was assigned a different activity) dedicated to trainers (but in fact addressed to teachers as well), and to read and comment on some other reflection input.

At the end of the group work, a plenary session was opened, and Lavinia Bracci invited participants to share their opinions, comments, reflections, and ideas *in plenum*.

As anticipated by the trainers, the last day of training was entirely dedicated to participants' interventions: they were asked to briefly outline and present the main idea of their final project. The last session of the course was supposed to last two hours, yet since a reduced number of trainees was present, it only lasted one hour and a half.

After the participants' presentations, an open discussion followed. Trainers warmly thanked the trainees for their active participation, sincere interest and enthusiasm. Final greetings and final recommendations for individual work submissions were given and the session ended.

Trainees were asked permission to upload on NACU's website their final assignments in order to give visibility to the project.

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[23] These reflection prompts were adapted for the "Journal questions" of the online course "Competences for Democratic Culture", developed by the Council of Europe and available in English and French on the LEMON platform (Learning Modules Online) at: (http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/course/view.php?id=3971#section-6).

All the trainees who completed the course received a certificate of participation, which can serve as an official document in order to have their professional development hours recognised.

3.5 Efficacy of the training: In- and Out-Knowledge Surveys and data analysis

In order to assess the improvement of trainees' knowledge about the RFCDC, two similar questionnaires were administered before and after the training course: in fact, the two questionnaires were identical except for the fact that the out-questionnaire included 4 extra questions that were added with the aim of evaluating to which extent the course helped teachers understand the RFCDC, its importance for pupils, and its support to didactic practice; in this way the out-questionnaire could be used for purposes of dissemination and sustainability of the project.

The two questionnaires were sent to all the 50 registered participants: the in-questionnaire was completed by 21 participants, while the out-questionnaire was filled out by 17 respondents.

Questions 1-5 were multiple choice questions with only one correct answer, while question 6 was a multiple-choice question with 8 answer options and 5 correct answers. Questions 7-10 were true-false questions.

In the out-questionnaire, the additional 3 questions were structured on a 5-point Likert scale; the out-questionnaire ended with a space for further comments.

On a general basis, data confirmed that there was an increase in the knowledge of the main features of the RFCDC, as shown in the table and pie charts below[24]:

Chart 14

| Questions	In-questionnaire percentage of correct answers	Out-questionnaire percentage of correct answers	Percentage point difference
1.Which are the three pillars of the Council of Europe?	85.7%	94.1%	8.4
2. How many are the member States of the Council of Europe?	47.6%	82.4%	34.8
3. The RFCDC includes four categories. What are they?	61.9%	88.2%	26.3
4. How many competences is the RFCDC composed of?	57.1%	82.4%	25.3
5.What are the three sets of values that are fundamental in order to participate in a democratic culture?	52.4%	70.6%	18.2

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[24] The table and pie charts regard questions 1-5 and 7-10, while question 6 required to be analysed independently.

7. For each of the RFCDC competence a set of descriptors has been identified that helps in the assessment of the acquired level of competence and works as a useful practical tool for teachers.	95.2%	100%	4.8
8. Is tolerance for ambiguity one of the RFCDC competences?	66.7%	94.1%	27.4
9. Self-efficacy is an attitude concerning one's own ability to overcome obstacles, reach envisioned objectives and resolve unexpected situations.	85.7%	94.1%	8.4
10. A democratic attitude envisions openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices.	100%	94.1%	5.9

Charts 15 and 16

1. Quali sono i tre pilastri/valori fondamentali del Consiglio d'Europa?
21 risposte
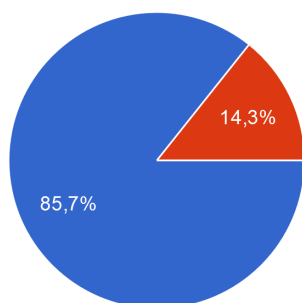
- diritti umani, democrazia, stato di diritto
- libertà di espressione, uguaglianza, democrazia
- democrazia, protezione delle minoranze, lotta al terrorismo

1. Quali sono i tre pilastri/valori fondamentali del Consiglio d'Europa?
17 risposte
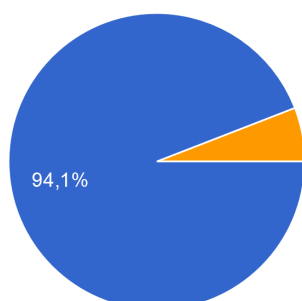
- diritti umani, democrazia, stato di diritto
- libertà di espressione, uguaglianza, democrazia
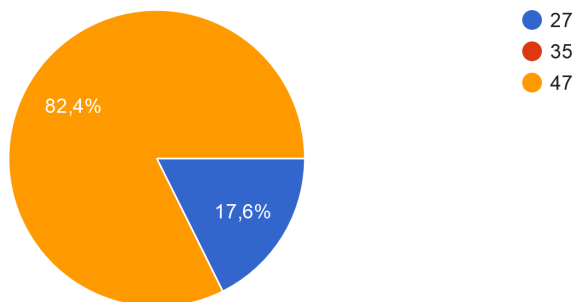- democrazia, protezione delle minoranze, lotta al terrorismo

Charts 17 and 18

2. Quanti sono gli Stati membri del Consiglio d'Europa?

21 risposte

- 🔵 27
- 🔴 35
- 🟠 47

47,6%

52,4%

2. Quanti sono gli Stati membri del Consiglio d'Europa?

17 risposte

- 🔵 27
- 🔴 35
- 🟠 47

82,4%

17,6%
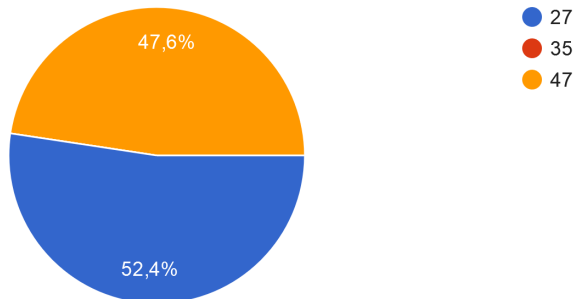
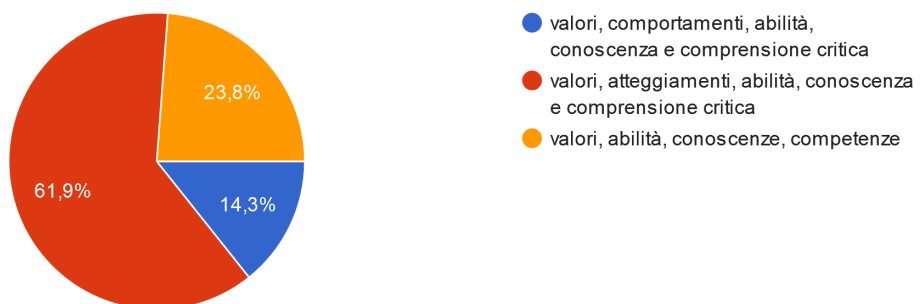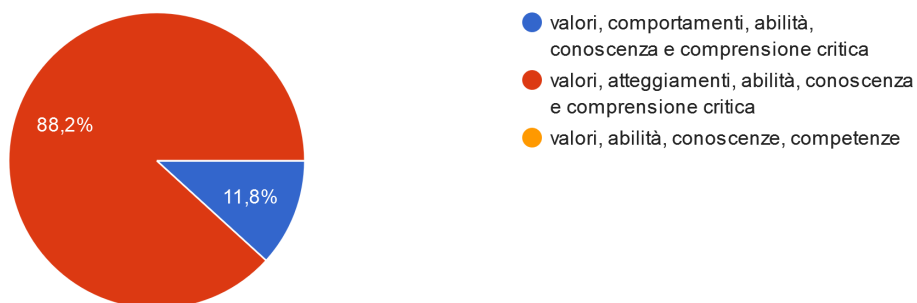**Charts 19 and 20**

3. Il Quadro di Riferimento delle Competenze per una Cultura Democratica (QRCCD), o "Fiore" delle competenze democratiche, è articolato in quattro categorie o "petali". Quali sono?
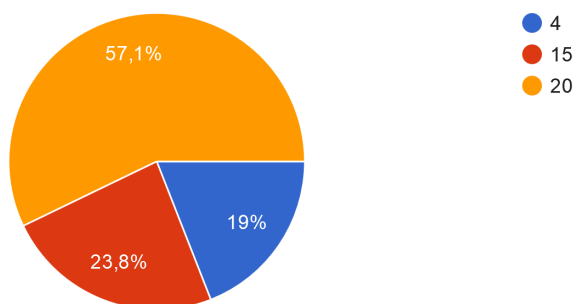
21 risposte

- 🔵 valori, comportamenti, abilità, conoscenza e comprensione critica
- 🔴 valori, atteggiamenti, abilità, conoscenza e comprensione critica
- 🟠 valori, abilità, conoscenze, competenze

23,8%

61,9%

14,3%

3. Il Quadro di Riferimento delle Competenze per una Cultura Democratica (QRCCD), o "Fiore" delle competenze democratiche, è articolato in quattro categorie o "petali". Quali sono?

17 risposte

- valori, comportamenti, abilità, conoscenza e comprensione critica
- valori, atteggiamenti, abilità, conoscenza e comprensione critica
- valori, abilità, conoscenze, competenze

88,2%

11,8%

Charts 21 and 22

4. Quante competenze in totale sono previste dal QRCCD?

21 risposte

- 4
- 15
- 20

57,1%

19%

23,8%

4. Quante competenze in totale sono previste dal QRCCD?

17 risposte

- 4
- 15
- 20

82,4%

11,8%

24
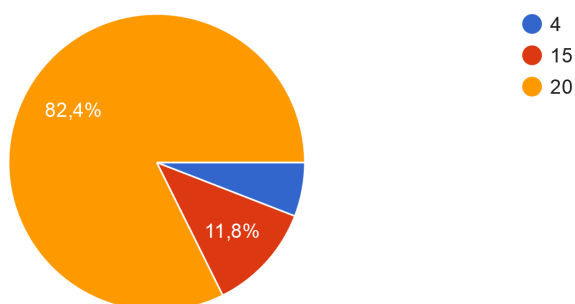
Charts 23 and 24

5. Quali sono i tre insiemi di valori fondamentali per partecipare ad una cultura della democrazia?
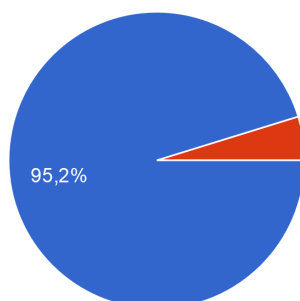21 risposte
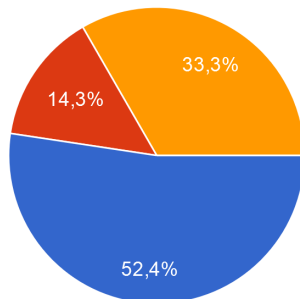
- 🔵 Valorizzazione della dignità umana e dei diritti umani; Valorizzazione della diversità culturale; Valorizzazione della democrazia, della giustizia, dell'equità,…
- 🔴 Valorizzazione della dignità umana e dei diritti umani; Valorizzazione della diversità culturale; Valorizzazione delle minoranze etniche
- 🟠 Valorizzazione della dignità umana e dei diritti umani; Valorizzazione del dialogo interculturale; Valorizzazione della dem…

5. Quali sono i tre insiemi di valori fondamentali per partecipare ad una cultura della democrazia?
17 risposte
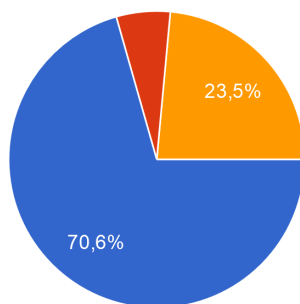
- 🔵 Valorizzazione della dignità umana e dei diritti umani; Valorizzazione della diversità culturale; Valorizzazione della democrazia, della giustizia, dell'equità,…
- 🔴 Valorizzazione della dignità umana e dei diritti umani; Valorizzazione della diversità culturale; Valorizzazione delle minoranze etniche
- 🟠 Valorizzazione della dignità umana e dei diritti umani; Valorizzazione del dialogo interculturale; Valorizzazione della dem…

Charts 25 and 26

7. Per ognuna delle competenze del QRCCD sono stati individuati dei descrittori che aiutano nella valutazione del livello di competenza raggiunto e f…riferimento e strumento pratico per gli insegnanti.
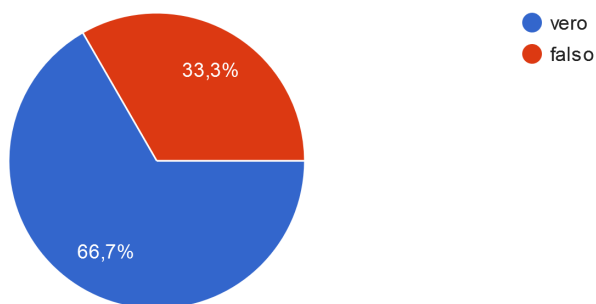21 risposte

- 🔵 vero
- 🔴 falso

7. Per ognuna delle competenze del QRCCD sono stati individuati dei descrittori che aiutano nella valutazione del livello di competenza raggiunto e f...riferimento e strumento pratico per gli insegnanti.
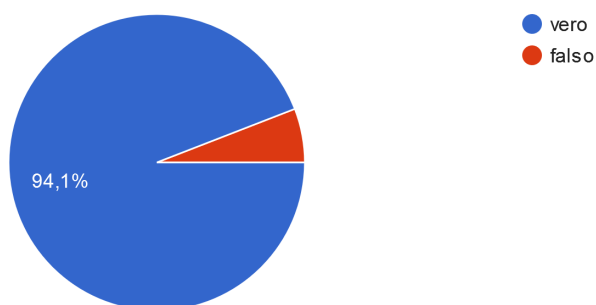17 risposte
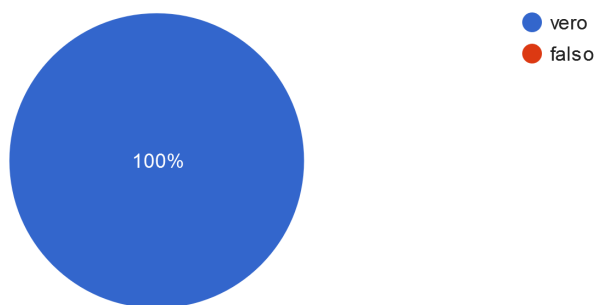
Charts 27 and 28

8. La tolleranza all'ambiguità è una delle competenze previste dal QRCCD.
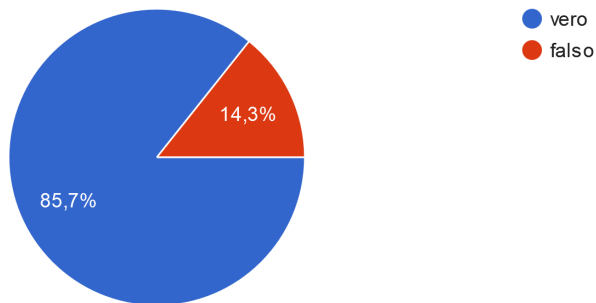21 risposte

8. La tolleranza all'ambiguità è una delle competenze previste dal QRCCD.
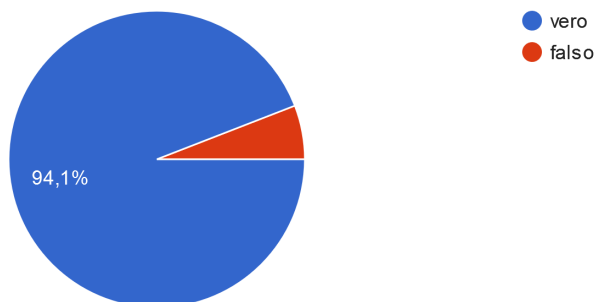17 risposte

Charts 29 and 30

9. L'autoefficacia è un atteggiamento che riguarda la propria capacità di superare gli ostacoli, raggiungere gli obiettivi prefissati e risolvere le situazioni impreviste.
21 risposte

9. L'autoefficacia è un atteggiamento che riguarda la propria capacità di superare gli ostacoli, raggiungere gli obiettivi prefissati e risolvere le situazioni impreviste.
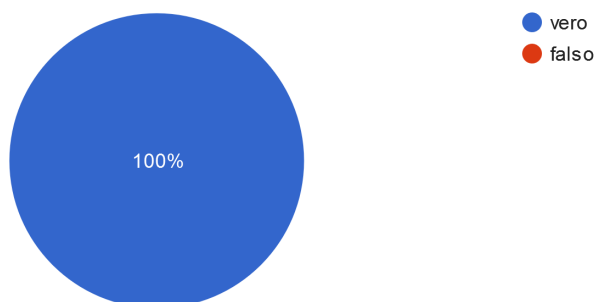17 risposte

Charts 31 and 32

10. Un atteggiamento democratico prevede l'apertura alla diversità culturale e il rispetto verso convinzioni, valori, tradizioni e visioni del mondo altrui.
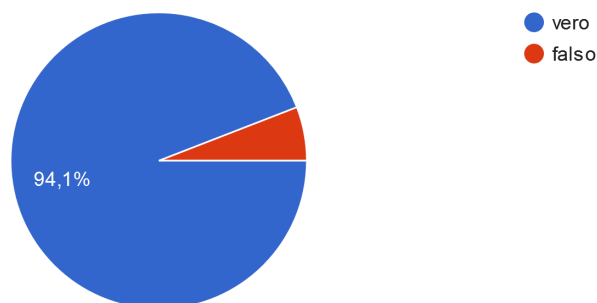21 risposte

10. Un atteggiamento democratico prevede l'apertura alla diversità culturale e il rispetto verso convinzioni, valori, tradizioni e visioni del mondo altrui.

17 risposte

As mentioned before, question 6 was the only multiple-choice question with more than one correct answer and therefore it needed to be analysed separately; in addition to this, the data collected appeared inconsistent at a first glance and not matching the researchers' expectations. Results are shown in the following table:

Chart 33

Question 6: Which of the following are NOT included in the RFCDC?	In-questionnaire	Out-questionnaire	Results
1-Responsibility	0%	0%	
2-Relational skills	19.4%	29.4%	training efficacy
3-Resilience	52.4%	47.1%	training inefficacy
4-Civic mindedness	0%	0%	
5-Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication	9.5%	11.8%	training inefficacy
6-Flexibility and adaptability	4.8%	0%	training efficacy
7-Knowledge and critical understanding of the self	9.5%	11.8%	training inefficacy
8-Competition	90.5%	82.4%	training inefficacy

In the table, the options in green font show the correct answers (since relational skills, resilience and competition are not included in the RFCDC), and the options in red font show the wrong answers to this question (since options 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 are included in the RFCDC).

Generally speaking, for red options if percentages decrease this implies that the course has had a certain efficacy (and vice versa, when percentages increase, this implies a non-efficient impact of the course),

while for green options if percentages decrease this implies that the training was not efficient (and vice versa, when percentages increase, this implies a successful impact of the course).

As for the red options 1 and 4, all respondents recognised that they are included in the RFCDC, so they do not add any important information to the efficacy of the training. Results for options 2 and 6 imply that the course has been successful, while options 3, 5, 7 and 8 would entail an inefficacy of the training. Reflecting *a posteriori*, this question resulted somewhat contradictory and confusing; possible explanations for this may regard the fact that the question was phrased in a negative way and the terminology is partly misleading since some terms have a common sense meaning other than a sectoral one.

As mentioned above, questions 11-14 were added only in the out-questionnaire and were useful to evaluate the goodness and utility of the training more in depth on a Likert scale from 0 to 5 (not at all, a little, quite enough, a lot, extremely).

Question 11 enquired to what extent the training course helped teachers to get familiar with democratic competences: 17.6% said that the course helped them quite enough, for 47.1% the training helped them a lot, and for 35.3% it helped them extremely.

Chart 34

11. In che misura il corso di formazione vi ha aiutato a familiarizzare/conoscere con le competenze democratiche?
17 risposte
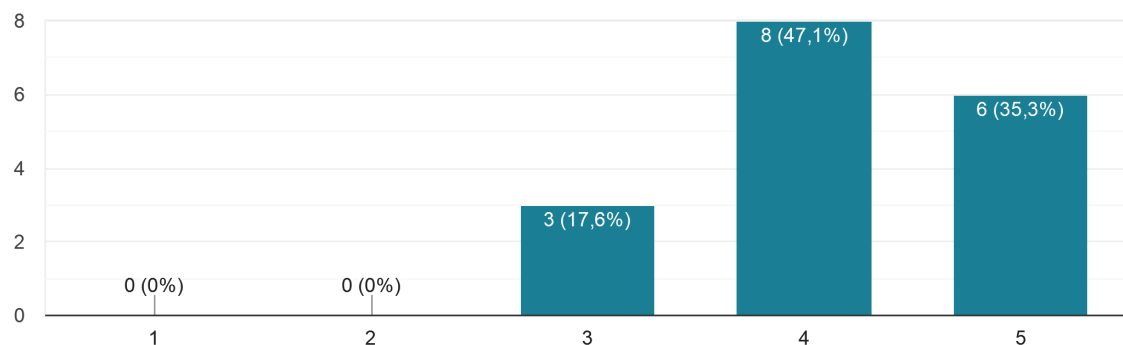
Question 12 asked teachers to what extent the training helped them understand the importance of the RFCDC for their pupils: in this case the vast majority gave the most positive evaluation (64.7%), while the rest was equally divided between those who were quite satisfied or very satisfied (17.6% each).

Chart 35

12. In che misura il corso di formazione vi ha aiutato a capire l'importanza delle competenze democratiche per i vostri alunni?
17 risposte
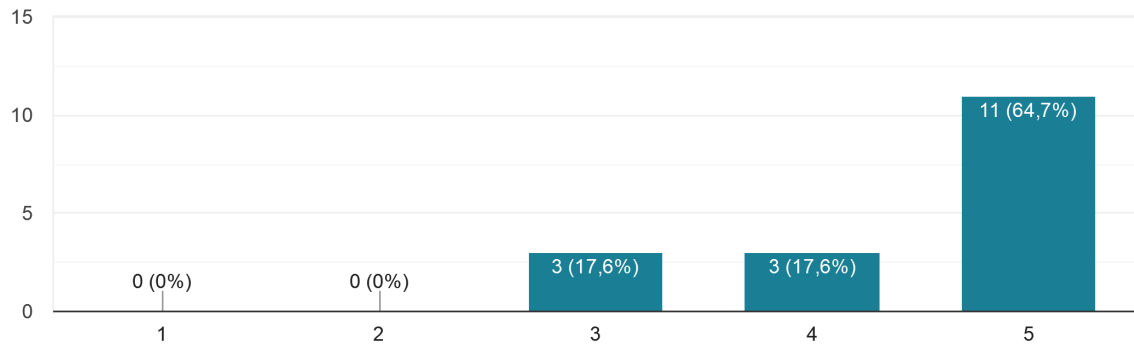
Question 13 focused on the relevance of the training course in order to understand to what extent the RFCDC can facilitate and support everyday teaching practice. Half the respondents (52.9%) stated that the Framework can extremely support their teaching, roughly one third (35.3%) stated that it can be very useful, and 11.8% considered it quite useful.

Chart 36

13. In che misura il corso di formazione vi ha aiutato a capire quanto il Quadro di Riferimento delle Competenze per una Cultura Democratica possa facilitare e supportare la vostra attività didattica?
17 risposte
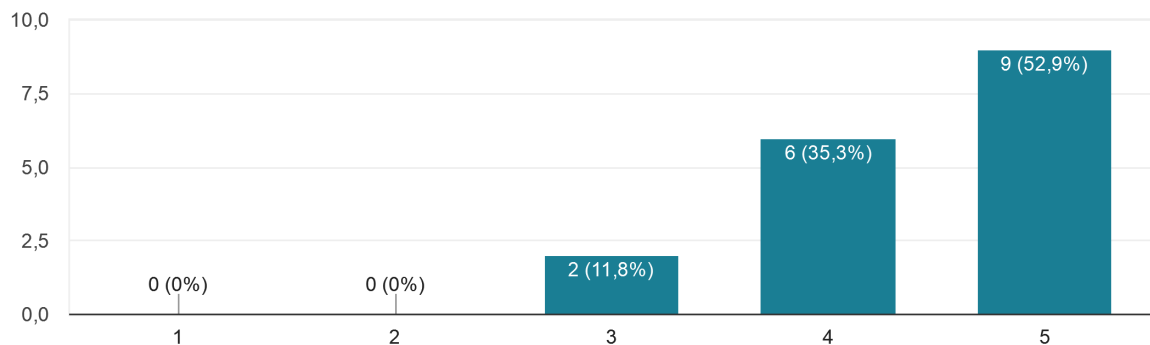
Question 14, in fact, offered some space for further comments, but the feedback provided was not relevant.

3.6 Strengths and weaknesses of the training course: Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Satisfaction Questionnaire was sent to those trainees who took part in at least one session in the training course: in total there were 37 participants, among whom 16 filled in the questionnaire and returned it. Therefore, the following analysis was based on the 16 answers received.

Section A of the questionnaire concerned demographics: data collected included gender, school level where participants teach, professional role in the education system, subjects taught, and years of experience.

The respondents were 81.3% female and 18.8% male: the evident disproportion reflects the actual gender composition of educators in Italy.
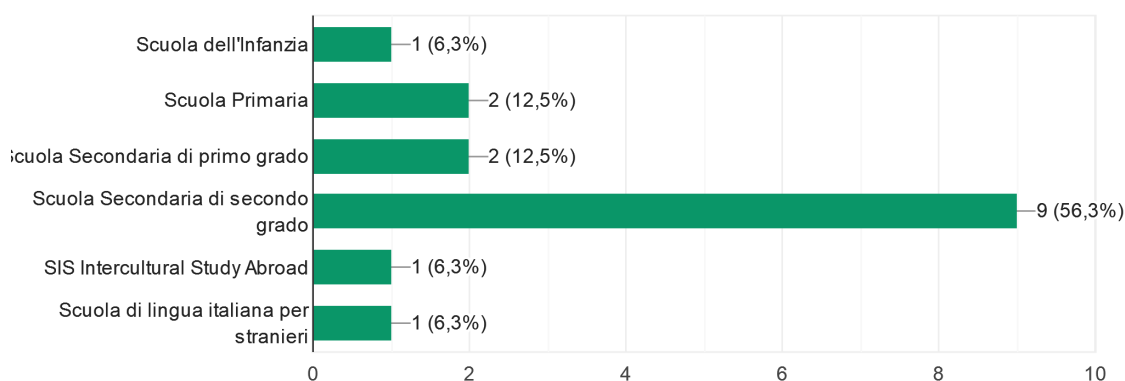
Chart 37

Genere:
16 risposte
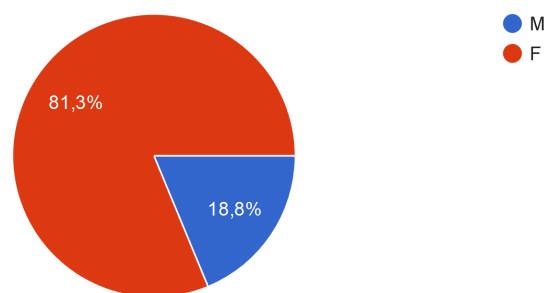
The vast majority of respondents teaches in secondary school (56.3%), followed by middle school and primary school (both 12.5%); the remaining part was composed of teachers of Italian as a second language (12.6%) and of kindergarten teachers (6.3%).

Chart 38

Livello di scuola in cui lavora:
16 risposte

Only one out of the 16 respondents was a school principal, the others being all teachers; moreover, perhaps because the training course was clearly addressed to teachers, there was no request of participation on the side of technical and administrative personnel.

Chart 39

Professione e ruolo svolto all'interno del sistema educativo:
16 risposte

- Insegnante
- Dirigente scolastico
- Personale tecnico-amministrativo
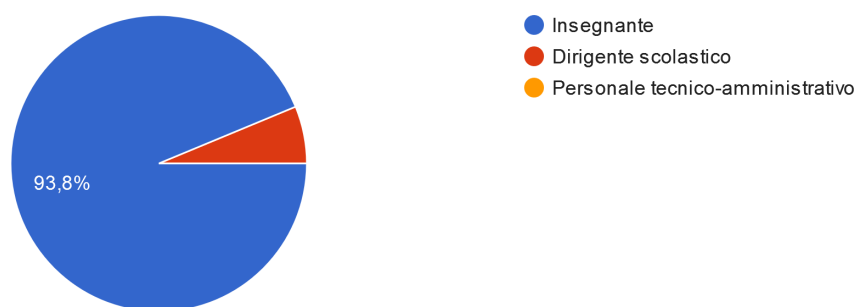
As far as subjects taught are concerned, more than one third of the participants teach humanities, followed by Foreign Languages and Law and Economics; the remaining teach Maths, Chemistry, Italian as a second language and Fields of experience.

Chart 40

Subjects taught	Number of respondents	Percentage
Humanities (Italian Language, History and Geography)	6	37.5%
Foreign languages	3	18.75%
Law and Economics	3	18.75%

Mathematics	1	6.25%
Chemistry	1	6.25%
Italian as a second language	1	6.25%
Fields of experience (Kindergarten)	1	6.25%

Chart 41

Years of experience	Number of participants	Percentage
0-10	11	68.75%
11-20	2	12.5%
more than 20	3	18.75%

More than two thirds (68.75%) of participants are teachers with short in-service experience (1-10 years of experience), followed by long-experienced (more than 20 years of experience) teachers and teachers in the middle of their career (11-20 years of experience).

Chart 42

Anni di esperienza di insegnamento o di lavoro nella scuola:
16 risposte
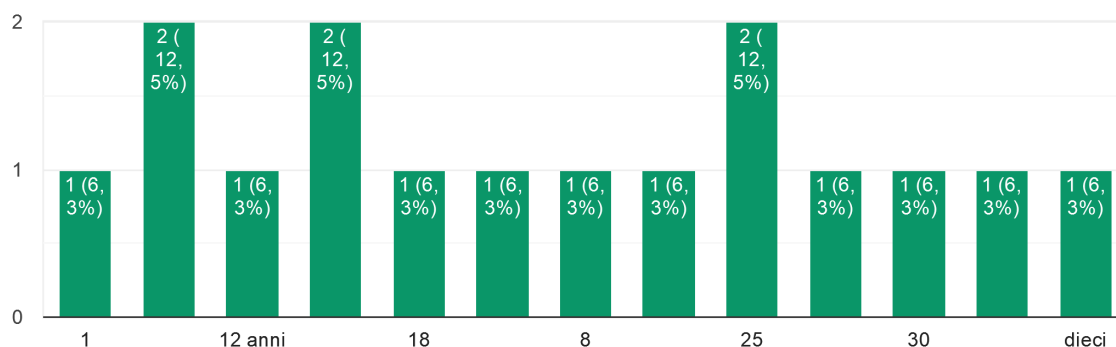
Section B, C and D regarded an evaluation of the training course in its several aspects: these sections included both close-ended ones and open-ended ones and also space for further comments, thus ensuring a quantitative as well as a qualitative evaluation of the course itself.

Section B concerned the organisation of the training, in details: online platform accessibility, appropriateness of the online platform for course purposes, clarity of information received about course organisation, organisers' availability and kindness, organisers' efficiency. At the end of section B, as well as in the following sections, space for further comments and suggestions was provided.

Participants were invited to give an evaluation on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (= not satisfactory at all) to 5 (= extremely satisfactory).

Chart 43

Section B - Organisation of the training course	1	2	3	4	5	Average score per item
1.online platform accessibility	0%	0%	6.3%	31.3%	62.5%	4.56
2.appropriateness of the online platform for course purposes	0%	0%	6.3%	25%	68.8%	4.62
3.clarity of information received about course organisation	0%	0%	6.3%	31.3%	62.5%	4.56
4.organisers' availability and kindness	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	5
5.organisers' efficiency	0%	0%	0%	12.5%	87.5%	4.87
Section B average score						4.72

In the space for further comments and suggestions, contributions were overall positive, and the most important feedback regarded the fact that the training would have been less challenging if the theoretical part was divided into more than three meetings and expanded into a longer timeframe.

Section C concerned an evaluation of the trainers and included: time management, mastery of contents and clarity, management of course materials, coordination with other trainers, and communicative skills. Also here participants were invited to give an evaluation on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (= not satisfactory at all) to 5 (= extremely satisfactory).

Chart 44

Section C - Evaluation of trainers	1	2	3	4	5	Average score per item
6.time management	0%	0%	6.3%	37.5%	56.3%	4.5
7.mastery of contents and clarity	0%	0%	6.3%	25%	68.8%	4.62
8.management	0%	0%	6.3%	25%	68.8%	4.62

of course materials						
9.coordination with other trainers	0%	0%	6.3%	50%	43.8%	4.37
10.communicative skills	0%	0%	6.3%	25%	68.8%	4.62
Section C average score						4.55

Further comments confirmed a general satisfaction for the training environment and management, including the establishment of empathic relationships, for trainers' competence and knowledge, and for the fact that work groups, randomly sorted, allowed a deeper exchange of experiences and good practices.

Section D concerned an evaluation of the training course contents and their utility for the trainees, and included: quality of contents and materials offered, matching between stated objectives and actual contents offered, matching between course contents and participants' expectations, matching between course contents and participants' professional needs, adaptability of course contents and materials to participants' professional needs.

Chart 45

Section D - Course contents and their utility	1	2	3	4	5	Average score per item
11.quality of contents and materials offered	0%	0%	12.5%	25%	62.5%	4.5
12.matching between stated objectives and actual contents offered	0%	0%	12.5%	31.3%	56.3%	4.44
13.matching between course contents and participants' expectations	0%	0%	12.5%	25%	62.5%	4.5
14.matching between course contents and participants' professional	0%	6.3%	6.3%	25%	62.5%	4.44

needs						
15.adaptability of course contents and materials to participants' professional needs	0%	0%	12.5%	31.3%	56.3%	4.44
Section D average score						4.46

Section D continued with other four yes/no questions that were useful to widen trainees' perspectives on the evaluation of the course. In particular, question 16 asked whether the course met trainees' expectations in a concrete and useful way: 93.8% answered positively.

Question 17 concerned the possibility to advise a similar course to colleagues: 93.8% of respondents agreed and there was an additional interesting comment highlighting that such a training could be very useful also for other educational stakeholders, such as families and technical/administrative personnel.

Question 18 enquired about the usefulness of the knowledge and competences acquired in the course and 100% of respondents gave a positive answer.

Question 19 focused on the possibility of transferring the acquired knowledge and competences into everyday teaching practice and 93.8% responded affirmatively.

Lastly, participants were asked a comprehensive evaluation of the training course in all its components choosing from a 1-5 Likert scale; results are summarised in the following table:

Chart 46

	1	2	3	4	5	Final evaluation score
20. Overall evaluation of the training	0%	0%	12.5%	37.5%	50%	4.37

On a general level, the training course proved to be successful and the choice of holding it online revealed to be appropriate for several reasons: it allowed a wider participation of teachers going beyond local borders, it permitted a more heterogeneous composition of teachers involved since they came from different schools and institutions, it was at the same time a training in content and in channel (somewhat "obliging" teachers to deal with digital tools), it strengthened the green dimension of the project by avoiding useless printing and waste of paper. As far as trainees' comments are concerned, no

downside about the digital format was expressed; therefore, the digital channel, initially chosen as a privileged tool during the pandemic, went beyond NACU's expectations and proved to be very efficient and appreciated, which "allowed a collaborative and fruitful interaction among participants[25]".

4. FINAL REFLECTIONS

The DCDC project generally proved to be appropriate to the time and place for which it was elaborated and implemented. Due to the pandemic, trainers and trainees acquired higher levels of digital skills that allowed a smooth use of technology and a serene atmosphere that was much appreciated by trainees. In addition to the comments and evaluation of the satisfaction questionnaire, participants expressed their appreciation in several verbal comments in the final session of the course and afterwards through different channels. In some cases, trainees' will to establish a solid and long-lasting relation with NACU stood out and the bases for future collaborations were set.

On a different note, on many parts the project highlighted the necessity of trying to adopt a whole-school approach and to involve all the different actors of the educational scenario in order to have knowledge and implementation of the RFCDC spread out. As widely discussed in Chapter 5 of the RFCDC Volume 3, and reiterated in the Portfolio for competences for democratic culture:

> "*A whole-school approach to the RFCDC ensures that all aspects of school life – curricula, teaching methods, teaching resources, leadership, decision-making structures and processes, policies, codes of behaviour, teacher–teacher, teacher–learner and learner–learner relationships, extracurricular activities, and links with the community – reflect democratic, intercultural and human rights principles (see RFCDC, Volume 3, Chapter 5). A whole-school approach requires the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders in the school, and the joint effort and co-operation of school principals, teachers, learners, parents, administrative and support staff, and members of the local community with whom the school has links.*" (Portfolio, p. 36)

In order to guarantee the future sustainability of this project and a wider implementation of the RFCDC in the Italian context, further developments should take into consideration this inclusive and comprehensive approach and plan practical trainings addressed to families, other education stakeholders and the entire community.

In addition to that, future trainings should be planned with a less intensive timetable and they should be scheduled over a longer time span. According to some trainees' feedback, in fact, due to the amount and density of the theoretical content, trainees found the content hard to grasp and retain over the course of a week.

As a final reflection, given the reintroduction of Citizenship Education as a mandatory transversal subject in the Italian school system, all teachers are expected to be prepared for the challenges of present diverse societies, to be interculturally competent and therefore to promote intercultural dialogue, and to foster global citizenship in their daily teaching practice. Feedback during the training reflection sessions shed light on the privileged role of foreign language teachers in this regard, who tend to face diversity

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[25] This quote is taken from one of the trainees' comments, in Italian: "ha permesso l'interazione tra i partecipanti in modo proficuo e collaborativo".

with a more open, curious and appreciative attitude probably thanks to their professional background. Moreover, another category of teachers that deserves attention is the one of Law and Economics teachers, who are usually very knowledgeable in terms of European matters: in this case, participants' comments during the interactive sessions revealed a strong focus on norms and notions, while neglecting the democratic competences needed to live peacefully in contemporary diverse societies.

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