# REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

## TEACHER REFLECTION TOOL

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

## Teacher reflection tool

### Self-reflection – A journey towards a democratic teacher ethos and a democratic culture in schools

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Competences
for
Democratic
Culture

# Introduction

## Who is the teacher reflection tool for?

No matter whether you are already experienced or are hearing about the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)[1] for the first time, this tool can become a companion for your professional life.

You can use it:

- in order to get familiar with reflection;
- from time to time as a stimulus for reflection;
- in a structured way in your daily work;
- as a "course" in your teacher training;
- for team reflection.

### If you are already familiar with the RFCDC

- You can start with personal reflections from Part II – "Warming up", or directly choose a thematic module that interests you.

### If you are just discovering the RFCDC

- Depending on your preferred learning and working style, you can choose one of the options described below (but you can also build a path through the tool in your own way).
  - If you prefer to have the concepts clear first, start with reading the RFCDC and then move to the other sections.
  - If you prefer to do something, explore something practical and get conceptual clarifications only when and if needed, then select any thematic module and, when you identify the need, go to Part I on the RFCDC in brief and clarify the relevant concepts.
  - If you prefer to reflect first on yourself and then think about concepts and/or practice, start with Part II – the warming-up section.

## How to use this tool

The purpose of this tool is to accompany teachers and other educators in this process and in their work with the Council of Europe's RFCDC.

- It can be used as a starter to get acquainted with the RFCDC.
- It can also be seen as a very general companion to self-reflection on teaching and democratic competences.[2]

This tool can guide you and structure your journey of exploring and developing your role and practice as a teacher, while allowing you to decide how much time and effort you wish to spend on it.

The teacher reflection tool addresses all teachers at all levels (in-service and pre-service; acquainted or not acquainted with RFCDC) and can be used on an individual basis, or for group or peer reflection.

1. You can download the three RFCDC volumes from the relevant website (Council of Europe 2018). For the purpose of the self-reflection tool, Volume 1, "Context, concepts and model", and Volume 3, "Guidance for implementation" (curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher education, whole-school approach, building resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism), are especially important.
2. As well as this printable version, an online tool with the same content is available, allowing users to store reflections in a confidential individual account: www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/-reflection-tool-for-teachers.

Education for democracy and inclusive education need both reflective practitioners and a reflective school culture. This tool aims to inspire teachers to self-reflect, which in turn forms the basis for a reflective school culture.

A school culture based on self-reflection can use many methods and tools, including observation, peer feedback, group reflection in a team of teachers, communities of practice, and similar. This tool can be combined with all of these methods and can easily be integrated in wider school development processes.

This material is published as one of the tools that support implementation of the RFCDC in schools. It also supports the Council of Europe's efforts to build a European network of democratic schools. By focusing on the teachers' competences and on their professional ethos, it acknowledges the importance of teachers for the whole-school system.

In order to enable the best possible synergies between the different Council of Europe initiatives, the tool was aligned with the six major themes of the Council of Europe's Free to Speak, Safe to Learn – Democratic Schools for All project. These themes represent central preconditions for democratic culture in education as well as challenges which need to be solved in democratic ways. You can select the topics which seem to be closest to your own interest or most relevant in your own context, or you can discover new aspects of democratic education while working through all the modules.

## Reasons for an RFCDC teacher reflection tool

- Do you experience challenges related to bullying, prejudice and discrimination in your school?
- Would you like to see your students co-operating more and competing less?
- Do you feel that you are not always reaching out to your students in classroom interaction?

If these questions sound familiar to you, this self-reflection tool might be the right companion for you.

- Are you interested in what democracy in school is actually about and what this has to do with yourself and with your professional teacher ethos?

We invite you to follow us on a journey to help the development of your own competences relating to democratic culture and to encourage self-reflection on them. Each encounter with students, colleagues or parents brings new opportunities for interaction, co-operation and learning, as well as new challenges and possible conflict.

The qualities we need that contribute to a democratic school culture are not something we learn once, but something which constantly needs to be developed, maintained and adjusted in new situations and contexts. It is demanding for a teacher to realise the potentials for learning, co-operation and personal growth and to solve the challenges in constructive and respectful ways. Often the way ahead is through trial and error, and failure is therefore a part of that process, a part of becoming and being a "good teacher" (Biesta 2015; Larivee 2000). And it is a part of what we call a democratic teacher ethos.

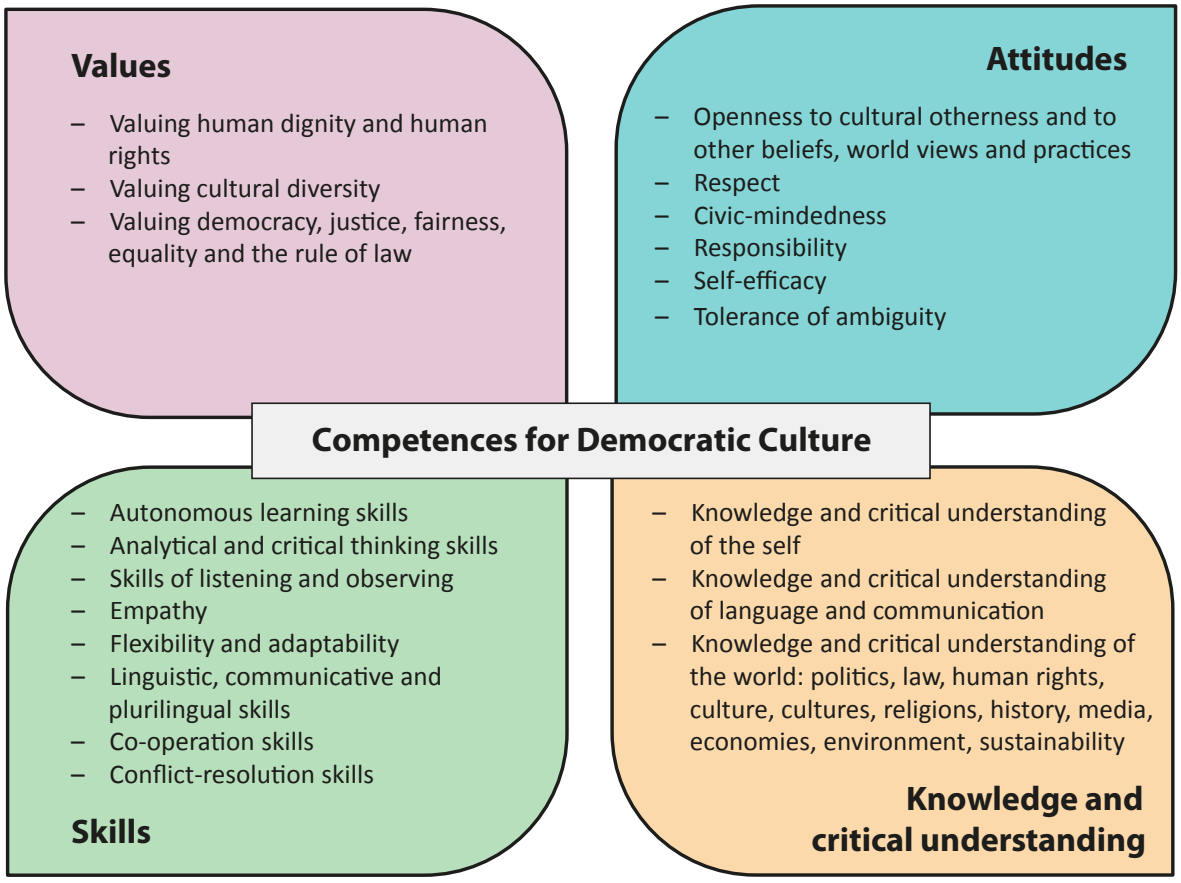
Democratic and intercultural knowledge, attitudes, skills and values as outlined in the model of the Council of Europe's RFCDC play an essential role in the development of a professional teacher ethos which builds on the values of democracy, human rights and intercultural dialogue. In order to be credible and sustainable, education for democracy, human rights and intercultural dialogue needs teaching environments based on democratic principles, including a democratic attitude of teachers, participation of the learners in the learning process and, not least, the ability to critically reflect on and adapt your own teaching activities.

Therefore, this tool is for you if you would like to develop your democratic professional ethos and competences on a continual basis, under conditions that are not always favourable.

It will help you structure your work according to democratic competences, using the reflective circle of planning, doing, reflecting, adapting. While this slows you down during the reflection phase, it ultimately increases your capacity to improve your teaching activities and your pedagogical practice in general.

## The 20 elements in the Competences for Democratic Culture model

Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC) are not only relevant for the education sector, but also democratic culture in general. The 20 competence elements in the CDC model and the related descriptors can help us to reflect on how we do things, how we interact with people, how we co-operate and how we solve conflict. Developing CDC is a personal development.




However, CDC are most relevant in the context of education. Teachers and other educators have a massive impact on learners as significant others, role models and facilitators of learning processes and are far more than transmitters of knowledge. Educators can support learners in becoming independent thinkers, good co-operators, and self-confident participants in dialogue, discussion and decision making. They can support learners in becoming active citizens.

As a "democratic teacher" you are required to be much more than just "good" in your subject. It requires a lot of what CDC are about: the ability to listen to learners, colleagues and parents; openness to the cultural affiliations and practices they bring into the educational process; empathy and a sense of responsibility for the well-being and empowerment of all learners, to name but a few competences.

A teacher's way of teaching and interacting has an important impact on the classroom climate and the individual learner's well-being and achievements. These aspects of professional practice can be learned and systematically developed.

Pedagogical professionalism is a matter of constant development and, thus, depends on the ability and willingness for self-observation and self-reflection (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan 2001; Schoen 1983). This is even more evident when it comes to the development of democratic and inclusive learning environments. Carr and Kemmis (Carr and Kemmis 1986) underline that democratic change can only be reached through continuous and collaborative reflection on practice. In this context, the teacher's professional development is at the same time a personal development. A democratic teacher wants to examine their own democratic attitudes; they want to question their own methods and learn from their interactions with the learners. The mental step back and the changing of perspectives enables us to analyse and change our own strengths and weaknesses and to further develop our professional democratic competences.

From this perspective, self-reflection can be understood as the intensive examination of one's own learning and teaching processes with regard to CDC. This directly links to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, which states that "teaching and learning practices and activities should follow and promote democratic and human rights values and principles" (Council of Europe 2010: 9; see also Council of Europe 2018: 17).

## A guide to the parts of the teacher reflection tool

Part I enables you to discover the model of competences for democratic culture and provides you with an introduction to the RFCDC.

For readers who are not yet familiar with the RFCDC we strongly recommend you begin with this section and then proceed to Part II, in order to familiarise yourself with observation and self-observation under the CDC.

Part I deals with each thematic element separately so that readers are able to directly choose issues that interest them or deepen their knowledge according to their level of familiarity with the RFCDC.

Part II is a warming up section which familiarises you with the exercise of observation and self-observation and how the CDC descriptors can support your personal and professional development. The section starts with exploring everyday situations in which you may use your competences for democratic culture. It continues with reflection on your strengths as a democratic teacher and how to develop them as an ongoing process. In a last step, the section turns to the "hot moments" in a teacher's life – situations you find challenging and in which you do not feel that you live up to your own standards as a pedagogue and person. With the help of CDC and the descriptors, the section will guide you through a reflection on how to solve such "hot moments" in more appropriate ways.

Before beginning the modules in Part III, we recommend you try one or all of the steps in Part II to familiarise yourself with observation and self-observation, but these activities can be done at any point.

Part III provides you with five reflective modules following the focus themes of the Council of Europe's project Free to Speak, Safe to Learn – Democratic Schools for All. The modules can be done in any order. Each module is a separate, independent unit.

1. Making children's and students' voices heard

2. Addressing controversial issues

3. Preventing violence and bullying

4. Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news

5. Tackling discrimination.

Each module follows the same structure which allows you to get familiar with the specific topic and come to conclusions as to how to improve your respective competences.

A brief introductory section to each topic shows the relevance of the issue in the school context, links to the field of CDC and starts with some guiding questions for reflection. A ready-made scenario that allows for analysis and comparison with your own teaching practices can be used as a warm-up and for becoming acquainted with the specific topic. In the next step, you will be guided through a reflection process on your own teaching activities and projects.

The tool can be used on an individual or peer-to-peer basis. It also enables collective reflection processes of the entire staff of a school. It can support and empower you under any conditions regardless of your experience or of how far you have come on your journey to create a democratic school.

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# PART I

# The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in brief

Education plays an essential role in building the future and reflects the type of world we want to prepare for the generations to come. Education should prepare learners to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and to live together with others in culturally diverse democratic societies.

The RFCDC offers a systematic approach to designing the teaching, learning and assessment of CDC, and introducing them into education systems in ways which are coherent, comprehensive and transparent for all concerned.

The RFCDC is intended for use in all sectors of education systems from pre-school through primary and secondary schooling to higher education, including adult and vocational education. The heart of the RFCDC is its model of the competences that need to be acquired by learners if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse democratic societies. The RFCDC also contains descriptors for all the competences in the model and offers guidance on how the RFCDC can be implemented in education systems.

This document is a summary but readers are encouraged to consult the full RFCDC (three volumes). Its primary aim is to help teachers and other education professionals get acquainted with the RFCDC. It emphasises three key aspects related to its use by teachers: pedagogy, assessment and a whole-school approach to promote the development of competences for democratic culture.

## Background to the RFCDC

The Council of Europe views education as fulfilling four major purposes:[3]

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

The four purposes are complementary and of equal value. The Council of Europe sees education as a process enabling individuals to make independent choices for their own lives, to recognise others as equals and to interact with them in meaningful ways. This view of education is linked to the ideals of democracy and human rights. Learning requires processes which engage the whole person: intellect, emotions and experiences. Experience-based and active learning complement learning based on theory for the competences that are needed for active democratic participation.

## The conceptual foundations of the RFCDC

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.

3. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring quality education.

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 processes which engage the learner's whole person: intellect, emotions and experiences.

### Attitudes and behaviours needed for a culture of democracy

A culture of democracy implies that, besides democratic institutions, laws and procedures (such as elections) genuine democracy relies on a set of attitudes and behaviours that are needed for these institutions, laws and procedures to function democratically in practice. These include:

- a commitment to public deliberation;
- a commitment to basing deliberations on facts and to avoiding irrelevant information, as far as possible;
- a willingness to express one's own opinions and to listen to the opinions of others;
- a conviction that differences of opinion and conflicts must be resolved peacefully;
- a commitment to decisions being made by those who have received the greatest share of the votes or seats in an election, with due regard to the protection of minorities and their rights;
- a commitment to the rule of law.

### Intercultural dialogue: an open exchange

A culture of democracy requires the will and ability to conduct intercultural dialogue, understood as an open exchange of views, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, between individuals or groups who perceive themselves as having different cultural affiliations. It fosters constructive engagement across these perceived cultural differences with a view to reducing intolerance, prejudice and stereotyping, enhancing the cohesion of democratic societies and helping to resolve conflicts. In culturally diverse societies, intercultural dialogue is crucial for ensuring that all citizens are equally able to participate in public discussion and decision making.

## The concepts of "identity" and "cultural groups"

In the context of intercultural dialogue, the concept of identity denotes a person's sense of who they are and the self-descriptions to which they attribute significance and value. Cultural groups of any size can have their own distinctive cultures. For this reason, all people belong simultaneously to and identify with many different groups and their associated cultures.

### Identity

- Personal identities are based on personal attributes (for example caring, tolerant, extroverted), interpersonal relationships and roles (for example mother, friend, colleague) and autobiographical narratives (for example born to working-class parents, educated at a state school).
- Social identities are based on memberships of social groups (for example a nation, an ethnic group, a religious group, a gender group, an age or generational group, an occupational group, an educational institution, a hobby club, a sports team, a virtual social media group).
- Cultural identities (that is, the identities that people construct on the basis of their membership of cultural groups) are a particular type of social identity and are central to the concerns of the RFCDC.

### Cultural groups

- Cultural groups are always internally heterogeneous. This means that there is diversity within each cultural group and members of the group do not all share the exact same characteristics, norms and practices.
- They often have fuzzy boundaries. Sometimes it may not be clear and obvious who is part of the group and who is not.

- They are dynamic and change over time as a result of political, economic and historical events and developments, and as a result of interactions with and influences from the cultures of other groups. They also change over time because of their members' internal contestation of the meanings, norms, values and practices of the group. Cultural affiliations are also fluid and dynamic, with different affiliations – or different clusters of intersecting affiliations – being highlighted depending on the social context or in relation to the shifts in people's interests, needs, goals and expectations.

## The two meanings of "competence"

The term "competence" has two meanings in the RFCDC: a global holistic meaning and a much more specific meaning. In its global meaning, competence is the ability to mobilise and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context.

In addition to this global use of the term "competence" (in the singular), the term "competences" (in the plural) is used to refer to the specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding that are mobilised and deployed in the production of competent behaviour. Hence, according to the RFCDC, competence consists of the mobilisation and deployment of specific competences to meet the demands and challenges of concrete situations.

## The model of competences for democratic culture

Building on these background concepts, the RFCDC offers a comprehensive conceptual model of the competences that individuals require in order to function as democratically and interculturally competent citizens. These are therefore the competences that need to be targeted by educators in order to empower learners to act as competent and effective democratic citizens.

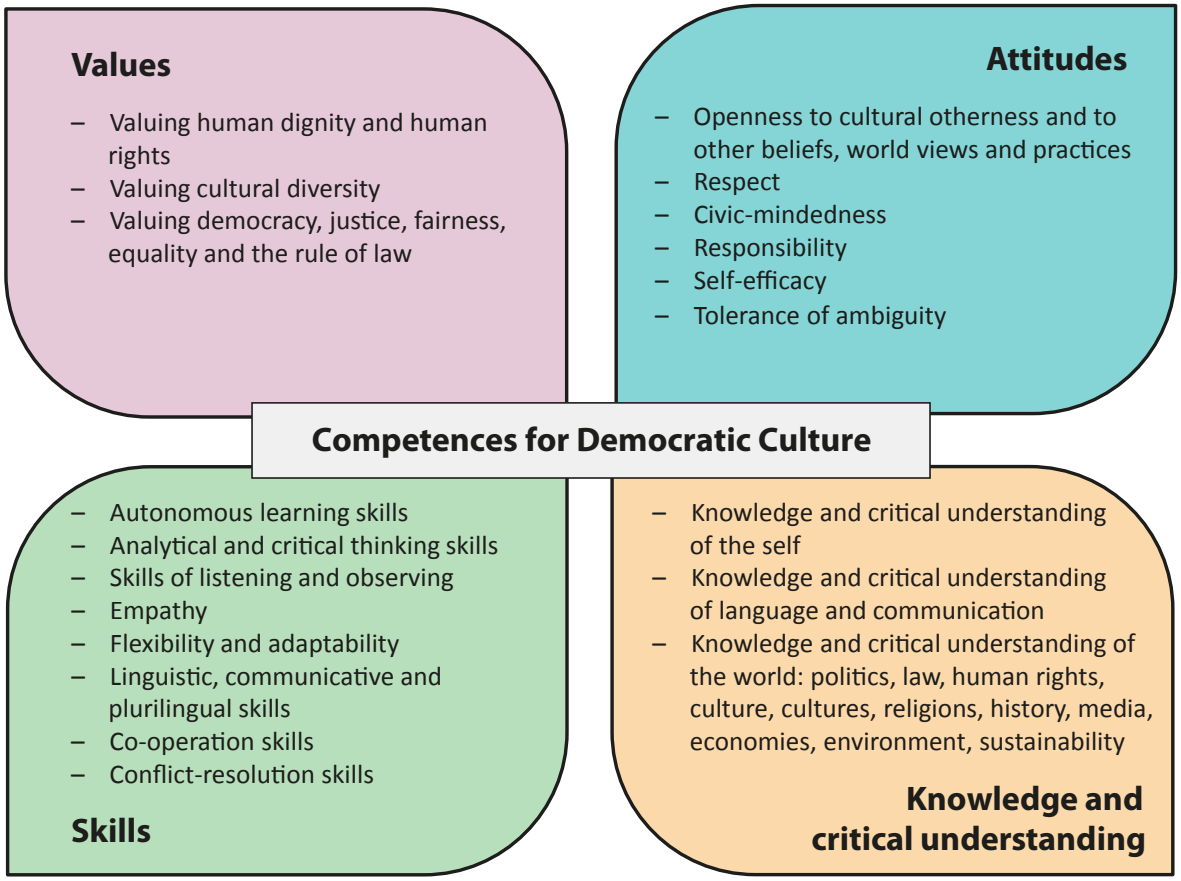


**Figure 1: The model of competences for democratic culture**

The model, summarised in Figure 1, includes 20 competences, grouped into values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding.

## Values

Values are general beliefs that individuals hold about the desirable goals that should be striven for in life. They motivate action and they also serve as guiding principles for deciding how to act. Values transcend specific actions and contexts, and they have a normative prescriptive quality about what ought to be done or thought across many different situations. Without a specification of the values that are important for a democratic and intercultural society, the other competence elements within the model could be used in the service of many other kinds of political order, including anti-democratic orders. For example, one could be a responsible and politically well-informed citizen, possessing good communication skills, within a totalitarian dictatorship, if a different set of values were to be employed as the foundation for one's judgments, decisions and actions. Thus, the values which the RFCDC model contains lie at the very heart of democratic competence and are essential for the characterisation of that competence.

### Valuing human dignity and human rights

This first set of values is based on the general belief that every individual human being is of equal worth, has equal dignity, is entitled to equal respect, and is entitled to the same set of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and ought to be treated accordingly. This belief assumes that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and apply to everyone without distinction. Human rights provide a minimum set of protections that are essential for human beings to live a life of dignity and provide an essential foundation for freedom, equality, justice and peace in the world.

### Valuing cultural diversity

This set of values is based on the general belief that other cultural affiliations, cultural variability and diversity and pluralism of perspectives, views and practices ought to be positively regarded, appreciated and cherished. This belief assumes that cultural diversity is an asset for society, that people can learn and benefit from other people's diverse perspectives and that cultural diversity should be promoted and protected. People should be encouraged to interact with one another irrespective of their perceived cultural differences and intercultural dialogue should be used to enable them to live together as equals in society. There is a potential tension between valuing human rights and valuing cultural diversity: in a society which has adopted human rights as its primary value foundation, valuing cultural diversity will have certain limits, set by the need to promote, respect and protect the human rights and freedoms of other people. Hence, the different cultural beliefs and practices should always be valued unless they undermine the human rights and freedoms of others.

### Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

The third set of values is based on a cluster of beliefs about how societies ought to operate and be governed. All citizens ought to be able to participate equally (either directly or indirectly through elected representatives) in the procedures through which the laws that are used to regulate society are formulated and established, and engage actively with the democratic procedures which operate within their society (this also includes not engaging on occasions for reasons of conscience or circumstance). Decisions ought to be made by majorities, while the just and fair treatment of minorities of all kinds ought to be ensured. Social justice, fairness and equality ought to operate at all levels of society. The rule of law implies that everyone in society is treated justly, fairly, impartially and equally in accordance with laws that are shared by all.

## Attitudes

Attitudes are overall mental orientation which an individual adopts towards someone or something (for example a person, a group, an institution, an issue, an event, a symbol). Attitudes usually consist of four components: a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object.

### Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices

Openness is an attitude towards either people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself or towards world views, beliefs, values and practices that differ from one's own. Openness involves sensitivity towards cultural diversity, curiosity about, and interest in discovering and learning about other cultural orientations and affiliations and other world views, beliefs, values and practices, as well as willingness to suspend judgment and disbelief of what is different and analyse one's own beliefs, values and practices.

Openness also involves emotional readiness to seek out or take up opportunities to relate to others who are perceived to be different from oneself.

### Respect

Respect is an attitude of consideration, positive regard and esteem towards someone or something (for example a person, a belief, a symbol, a principle, a practice). One type of respect that is especially important in the context of a culture of democracy is the respect that is accorded to other people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations or different beliefs, opinions or practices from one's own. This type of respect does not require minimising or ignoring the actual differences that might exist between the self and the other, which can sometimes be significant and profound, nor does it require agreement with, adoption of or conversion to that which is respected. It is instead an attitude that involves the positive appreciation of the dignity and the right of the other person to hold those affiliations, beliefs, opinions or practices, while nevertheless recognising and acknowledging the differences which exist between the self and the other. An attitude of respect is required to facilitate both democratic interaction and dialogue with other people. However, there are limits that need to be placed on respect: respect should not be accorded to the contents of beliefs and opinions, or to lifestyles and practices, which undermine or violate the dignity, human rights or freedoms of others.[4]

The concept of respect reflects better than the concept of tolerance the attitude that is required for a culture of democracy. Tolerance may, in some contexts, convey the connotation of simply enduring or putting up with difference, and a patronising attitude of tolerating something that one would prefer not to endure. Respect is based on recognition of the dignity, rights and freedoms of the other and a relationship of equality between the self and the other.

### Civic-mindedness

Civic-mindedness is an attitude of solidarity and duty towards a community or social group, beyond one's immediate circle of family and friends. Such groups include, for example, the people who live within a particular geographical area (such as a neighbourhood, a town or city, a country, a group of countries such as Europe or Africa, or indeed the world in the case of the "global community"), a group based on different belonging criteria (such as an ethnic group, faith group, leisure group, sexual orientation group), or any other kind of social or cultural group to which an individual feels a sense of belonging. Every individual belongs to multiple groups, and an attitude of civic-mindedness may be held towards any number of these.

### Responsibility

Responsibility is an attitude towards one's own actions. It arises when a person has an obligation to act in a particular way and deserves praise or blame for either performing that act or failing to act in that way. Responsible individuals are able to reflect on their own actions, are able to form intentions about how they will act, and are able to execute their chosen actions. Responsibility can require courage insofar as taking a principled stance may entail acting on one's own, taking action against the norms of a community or challenging a collective decision that is judged to be wrong. Thus, there can sometimes be a tension between civic-mindedness and moral responsibility.

### Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions which are required to achieve particular goals. This belief commonly entails the further beliefs that one can understand what is required, can make appropriate judgments, can select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, can navigate obstacles successfully, can influence what happens, and can make a difference to the events that affect one's own and other people's lives.

### Tolerance of ambiguity

Tolerance of ambiguity is an attitude towards situations which are perceived to be uncertain and subject to multiple, sometimes even conflicting or incompatible, interpretations. Hence, the term "tolerance" should be understood here in its positive sense of accepting and embracing ambiguity (rather than in its negative sense

4. From a human rights perspective, another person's right to freedom of beliefs should always be respected, but respect cannot be accorded to the contents of beliefs that seek to undermine or violate the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In the case of beliefs where the content cannot be respected, restrictions are placed not on the right to hold the beliefs but on the freedom to manifest those beliefs (Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights).

of enduring or putting up with ambiguity). Thus, tolerance of ambiguity involves recognition and acknowledgement that there can be multiple perspectives on and interpretations of any given situation or issue and that one's own perspective on a situation may be no better than other people's perspectives. It also involves acceptance of complexity, contradictions and lack of clarity, as well as willingness to undertake tasks when only incomplete or partial information is available and dealing with it constructively.

## Skills

A skill is the capacity for carrying out complex, well-organised patterns of either thinking or behaviour in an adaptive manner in order to achieve a particular end or goal.

### Autonomous learning skills

Autonomous learning skills are those skills that individuals require to pursue, organise and evaluate their own learning, in accordance with their own needs, in a self-directed and self-regulated manner, without being prompted by others. Autonomous learning skills are important for a culture of democracy because they enable individuals to learn for themselves about, and how to deal with, political, civic and cultural issues using multiple and diverse sources both far and near, rather than relying on agents in their immediate environment for the provision of information about these issues.

### Analytical and critical thinking skills

Analytical thinking skills are those skills that are required to analyse materials of any kind (for example texts, arguments, interpretations, issues, events, experiences) in a systematic and logical manner through actions such as: breaking down the materials that are under analysis into constituent elements; interpreting the meaning(s) of each element; examining the elements in relation to each other; identifying any discrepancies, inconsistencies or divergences between elements; drawing the results of the analysis together in an organised and coherent manner to construct logical and defensible conclusions about the whole.

Critical thinking skills consist of those skills that are required to evaluate and make judgments about materials of any kind, through actions such as: making evaluations on the basis of internal consistency and on the basis of consistency with available evidence and experience; making judgments about whether or not materials under analysis are valid, accurate, acceptable, reliable, appropriate, useful and/or persuasive; evaluating the preconceptions and motivation of those who created the materials; elaborating different alternative options; weighing up the pros and cons of the available options; and drawing the results of the evaluative process together in an organised and coherent manner.

### Skills of listening and observing

Skills of listening and observing are the skills that are required to understand what other people are saying and to learn from other people's behaviour. Understanding what other people are saying requires active listening – paying close attention not only to what is being said but also to how it is being said through the use of tone, pitch, loudness, rate and fluency of voice, and paying close attention to the person's accompanying body language, especially their eye movements, facial expressions and gestures.

### Empathy

Empathy is the set of skills required to understand and relate to other people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and to see the world from other people's perspectives. Empathy involves the ability to step outside one's own psychological frame of reference and the ability to imaginatively apprehend and understand the psychological frame of reference and perspective of another person. This skill is fundamental to imagining the cultural affiliations, world views, beliefs, interests, emotions, wishes and needs of other people.

### Flexibility and adaptability

Flexibility and adaptability enable individuals to adjust positively to novelty and change and to other people's social or cultural expectations, communication styles and behaviours. They also enable individuals to adjust their patterns of thinking, feeling or behaviour in response to new situational contingencies, experiences, encounters and information. Flexibility and adaptability, defined in this way, need to be distinguished from the unprincipled or opportunistic adjustment of behaviour for personal benefit or gain. They also need to be distinguished from externally coerced adaptation.

### Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills

Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills are those skills that are required to communicate effectively and appropriately with other people. They include, among others, the ability to express one's beliefs, opinions, interests and needs, explaining and clarifying ideas, advocating, promoting, arguing, reasoning, discussing, debating, persuading and negotiating; the ability to use more than one language or language variety; the ability to express oneself confidently and without aggression, in a manner that is respectful of the other persons' dignity and rights; the ability to recognise different communicative conventions (both verbal and non-verbal) and to adjust and modify one's communicative behaviour to the prevailing cultural setting; the ability to ask questions of clarification in an appropriate and sensitive manner and to manage breakdowns in communication, for example by requesting repetitions or reformulations from others, or providing restatements, revisions or simplifications of one's own misunderstood communications; as well as the ability to act as a linguistic mediator in intercultural exchanges.

### Co-operation skills

Co-operation skills are those skills that are required to participate successfully with others in shared activities, tasks and ventures and refer to expressing views and opinions in group settings and encouraging other group members to express their views and opinions in such settings; building consensus and compromise within a group; setting group goals and pursuing them; appreciating all group members' potential and contribution; encouraging and motivating other group members; and sharing relevant and useful knowledge, experience or expertise with the group.

### Conflict-resolution skills

Conflict-resolution skills are those skills required to address, manage and resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. They refer to skills for reducing or preventing aggression and negativity and creating an environment in which people feel free to express their differing opinions and concerns without fear of reprisal, while at the same time recognising differences in power and/or status of the conflicting parties and taking steps to reduce the possible impact of such differences on communication between them. They entail managing and regulating emotions effectively; listening to and understanding the different perspectives of the parties involved in conflicts; countering or reducing misperceptions held by the conflicting parties; identifying common ground on which agreement can be built; identifying options for resolving conflicts; and refining possible compromises or solutions.

## Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge is the body of information that is possessed by a person on a certain topic. The term "critical understanding" is used to emphasise the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to involve active reflection on and critical evaluation of what is being understood and interpreted.

### Knowledge and critical understanding of the self

Knowledge and critical understanding of the self implies knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural affiliations, of one's perspective on the world and the way in which these influence one's perceptions, judgments and reactions to other people. It includes knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one's perspective on the world; awareness of one's own emotions, feelings and motivations, especially in contexts involving communication and co-operation with other people; as well as knowledge and understanding of the limits of one's own competence and expertise.

### Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication

Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication refers to knowledge of the socially appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions of any given language, with an understanding that people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions from oneself, which are meaningful from their perspective. This is true even when they are using the same language as oneself, and requires an understanding that:

- people who have different cultural affiliations can perceive the meanings of communications in different ways;

- different communication styles will have a different social impact and effect on others, and different communication styles may clash or result in a breakdown of communication;
- one's own assumptions, preconceptions, perceptions, beliefs and judgments are related to the specific language(s) which one speaks.

### Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Knowledge and critical understanding of the world refers, within the model of competences for CDC, mainly to the following aspects: politics; law; human rights; culture; cultures; religions; history; media; economies; environment; sustainability.

## Clusters of competences

In real-life situations, competences are rarely mobilised and used individually. Instead, competent behaviour invariably involves the activation and application of an entire cluster of competences. Depending on the situation, and the specific demands, challenges and opportunities which that situation presents, and also the specific needs and goals of the individual within that situation, different subsets of competences will need to be activated and deployed.

For example, how can someone take a principled stand against hate speech on refugees or migrants on the internet? An entire cluster of competences may be mobilised. Such a stand is likely to be initiated through the activation of human dignity as a fundamental value and to be sustained through the activation of an attitude of civic-mindedness and a sense of responsibility. To challenge the contents of the hate speech, analytical and critical thinking skills will need to be applied. In addition, the formulation of an appropriate response requires knowledge of human rights as well as communicative skills in order to ensure that the stand that is taken is expressed appropriately and is targeted effectively at its intended audiences. In addition, the person will need to draw on knowledge and understanding of digital media in order to ensure that the response is posted in an appropriate manner and its impact maximised.

In other words, competent behaviour means responding appropriately and effectively to the various demands and challenges presented by democratic and intercultural situations. This is achieved through the use of varying subsets of psychological resources, drawn selectively from the individual's full repertoire of values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding.

## Competence descriptors

The RFCDC provides descriptors for each of the 20 competences in the competence model. These descriptors help to operationalise the competences and provide tools for curriculum planning, teaching and learning, and assessment. Competence descriptors are positively formulated statements that describe observable behaviours which indicate that the person concerned has achieved a certain level of proficiency with regard to a competence.

Volume 2 of the RFCDC includes 447 validated descriptors, of which 135 are considered key descriptors and correspond to one of the three levels of proficiency (basic, intermediate and advanced). The statistical procedure used to scale the descriptors makes it highly probable that if a person displays the behaviour corresponding to a descriptor at the advanced level, this person will also be able to display the behaviours corresponding to the descriptors at the intermediate and basic levels for the same competence. Below are some examples of key descriptors (Table 1).

| | |
|---|---|
| Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law | |
| Basic | Expresses the view that all citizens should be treated equally and impartially under the law |
| Intermediate | Argues that democratic elections should always be conducted freely and fairly, according to international standards and national legislation, and without any fraud |
| Advanced | Argues that there should be effective remedies against the actions of public authorities which infringe civil rights |
| Tolerance of ambiguity | |
| Basic | Engages well with other people who have a variety of different points of view |
| Intermediate | Deals with uncertainty in a positive and constructive manner |
| Advanced | Expresses a desire to have his/her own ideas and values challenged |
| Co-operation skills | |
| Basic | When working as a member of a group, does his/her share of the group's work |
| Intermediate | Works to build consensus to achieve group goals |
| Advanced | When working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view |
| Knowledge and critical understanding of the world | |
| Basic | Can describe basic cultural practices (e.g. eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in one other culture |
| Intermediate | Can explain the dangers of generalising from individual behaviours to an entire culture |
| Advanced | Can explain why there are no cultural groups that have fixed inherent characteristics |

**Table 1: Examples of key descriptors**

Besides the list of scaled descriptors validated for learners above age 10, a separate list of descriptors validated for younger learners is also available.

The descriptors can be useful as reference points for curriculum development at different levels, from national to school-based curricula, as well as for the design, implementation and evaluation of learning activities.

## The use of descriptors

In order for descriptors to be relevant for curriculum planning, teaching and learning, and assessment, the descriptors are formulated using the language of learning outcomes.

Since competences are usually mobilised in clusters, educators can use the descriptors in designing learning activities to support the development of various competences. The bank of descriptors should be seen as a toolbox from which to identify and combine the most relevant elements considering the level of the learners and their specific context. When choosing the most relevant descriptors to set as expected learning outcomes, educators should consider that learning activities need to provide meaningful opportunities for all learners to move to higher levels of proficiency or to stabilise and consolidate proficiency for various competences.

Descriptors refer to a general level of proficiency and not just to performance in a single specific situation or learning activity. The use of descriptors, because they are formulated in positive terms, allows for the recognition of what learners can do, and the absence of behaviours should guide future educational interventions.

The descriptors are relevant for assessment, including peer-assessment and self-assessment, and support critical reflection on learning, whether this takes place in a formal, non-formal or informal educational setting. Learners can use the descriptors to consider how they have behaved in specific relevant situations in the past and what they could do in the future.

Users of the RFCDC are advised to pay special attention to avoiding the potential misuse of descriptors. The bank of validated descriptors provided by the RFCDC should not be seen as a "to-do list" or as a checklist. A rigid and inappropriate use of descriptors in assessment may also generate unwanted outcomes, such as categorising, labelling or demotivating learners. This is why one of the major principles of assessment, as outlined below, is respectfulness. Descriptors should always be used only in ways that respect learners and support the development of their competences for democratic culture.

## CDC in the curriculum

The CDC model can be used both for auditing existing curricula and their implementation, and for the design of different types of curricula.

This is valid regardless of the type of curriculum and it applies also for cross-curricular approaches. The following principles are to be considered in the planning of curricula for developing CDC.

- Relevance: the curriculum for all subjects or areas of study can contribute to developing CDC, integrated together in various clusters with the subject-specific competences.
- Avoiding curriculum overload: it is not a matter of adding more to the curriculum, but of including CDC in the design, considering what is realistic for the allocated time.
- Coherence and transparency: clusters of selected competences are coherently and transparently related to the overall aims of the curriculum. Both vertical (in time) and horizontal (across subjects) coherence of the selected components of the curriculum are crucial.
- Progression in CDC: a spiral curriculum can be envisaged, where some competences are revisited and others are gradually added.
- Language and the dialogic dimension: use of a precise vocabulary related to CDC and participatory processes of curriculum design are necessary.
- Contextualisation of CDC: CDC need to be interpreted by reference to national, cultural and institutional situations in which a curriculum is taught.
- Safe environments for learning CDC: addressing sensitive and controversial aspects related to CDC needs to include curriculum planning for a safe environment for discussion and debate.

## CDC in teacher education

To be able to educate children and young adults in ways that foster the development of CDC, teachers – including teachers of teachers – need to develop these competences themselves.

The CDC approach applies to the preparation of future teachers and the professional development of practising teachers, as well as to the education of pupils and students in schools. As part of pre- or in-service teacher education, teachers can reflect on how they develop their own CDC. This can, for example, take the form of learning diaries or logbooks, where the student teachers/teachers regularly reflect on which competences are being developed in a course, study programme or specific activity and on what they can do to further develop these competences.

Teacher education institutions are encouraged to review existing courses and identify which competences are already addressed, either through the content, the teaching methods or student activities and assignments, and also point out which elements are missing. In a second step, content can be added, teaching methods changed or assignments included, in order to address additional competence elements and envisage the whole range of competences in the CDC model.

## CDC and pedagogy

Competences for democratic culture can be developed as part of the main school activities and within all subject matters. There is no need for teachers to abandon what they are doing, but they are invited to consider enriching their current practice by including CDC in their teaching. Competences for active democratic citizenship can be developed through approaches centred on the learning process, as well as through approaches focused on the content of teaching.

The term "pedagogy" is used in the RFCDC in its broad sense, referring to the organisation of a learning process. The RFCDC encourages teachers to review their current practice, reflect on it, and identify ways in which they can proceed in order to support the development of CDC through activities which address learners as whole persons, engaging them cognitively, emotionally and through their experience (with their head, heart and hands). Often an educational activity develops CDC through a combination of elements related to both content and process. The RFCDC discusses how teachers, as facilitators of learning, can include opportunities for experience, comparison, analysis, reflection and action in the planning of their educational activities. The

RFCDC presents the following examples of methods and approaches recommended to teachers for contributing to the development of CDC.

Process-oriented methods and approaches:

- modelling attitudes and behaviours
- democratic processes in the classroom
- co-operative learning
- project-based learning
- service learning.

Content-based methods and approaches:

- using the existing curriculum – within subject areas
- team teaching and integrated curricular approaches
- addressing the "hidden curriculum".

## Process-oriented methods and approaches

### Modelling democratic attitudes and behaviours

The way teachers communicate and interact with students has a major influence on the values, attitudes and skills acquired by learners. Democratic values, attitudes and skills cannot be acquired through formal teaching about democracy alone but need to be practised.

#### *The implicit transmission of values*

Values are implicitly transmitted through the way teachers act and communicate. Educators can develop more awareness of the values they convey and mirror in their day-to-day practice, the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding one needs to develop. Choices made by educators can support – or hinder – the development of a democratic ethos among the learners. At classroom level the transmission of the Council of Europe values and principles that support sustainable democratic societies comes more from the relationships with teachers than from the power of the curriculum. Learning-by-doing approaches and experiential learning engage students in a process of experience, challenge and reflection that has important potential for the development of CDC. Through their attitudes, behaviours and practices teachers can create safe learning environments, address discrimination and support individualised learning of a broad base or core humanistic components.

#### *Everyone is important*

The planning and negotiating of aims, content, learning materials, assessment and programme evaluation by all participants involved in the learning process creates the conditions for transforming the roles of teachers and learners and transcending what those roles are in traditional classrooms. In this way learning for and through democracy occurs, educators demonstrating democratic behaviours and therefore contributing to the development of the CDC of learners.

When teachers embrace inclusive methods, for example, they send a meaningful message to learners: they say "you are all important and valuable", "we can all learn from each other". This is especially critical in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, where pedagogical approaches that value the specific cultural backgrounds of learners are required. On the other hand, when teachers spend most of the time standing in front of the classroom giving a lecture and writing on the board while learners listen and copy, they are also teaching a strong lesson: "I have the knowledge", "you will passively learn and follow" – a message that is ineffective for developing intercultural and democratic values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding.

#### *Creating open and safe learning spaces*

Learning environments have an influence on student engagement and learning. It is important to foster open safe spaces for inclusive and effective learning and for managing difficult dialogues or emotional exchanges, where learners feel confident to voice their thoughts and disagreements. Classroom management, conflict

prevention, shared decision making, shared responsibility for learning, respect in classroom communications and similar things are harnessed to teach the values, attitudes and skills included in the CDC model, in a holistic approach, transcending the function of organising the learning sequence. The holistic perspective is manifest in the coherence between teaching and assessment procedures.

## Democratic processes in the classroom

Experiencing democratic processes first hand is a very effective way of developing a wide range of CDC. This will also empower learners and stimulate them to use these competences in the classroom, in the school and in society.

Such experiences of democratic processes, which should be embedded in overall school life, can also take place in a classroom setting as part of classroom management and the teaching process. They can include democratic decision making, development and implementation of classroom rules, providing opportunities for learners to voice their opinions and suggestions, even in an anonymous way. In so doing, teachers contribute effectively to the development of students' CDC by establishing and using – at classroom level – procedures that ensure fairness, equality and non-discrimination, and inclusivity, providing opportunities for all children.

Democratic processes can also be applied as part of the teaching and learning methods used in a variety of subject matters. Educational activities can include simulations of elections, possibly accompanied by the simulation of a political campaign; mock parliaments or mock trials, defining and using fair procedures for making decisions to choose between various options; role-plays and simulations including testing positions of authority (a day as mayor); or the right to free speech (simulation of the work of journalists). All these methods can serve specific learning goals in the curriculum while also developing CDC.

## Co-operative learning

Co-operation is an important component of social cohesion: it develops connections between human beings. Increasing co-operation will allow personal growth and transformation, and promote tolerance and respect for the other.

Teachers develop students' co-operation skills, but also openness towards cultural otherness, respect, responsibility, tolerance of ambiguity, as well as listening and observation skills, communication skills and conflict-resolution skills, through learning processes and activities in the classroom based on co-operative learning principles.

By applying co-operative learning principles in their work, teachers deconstruct traditional classroom practices and dislodge inherited and deeply rooted ideas and beliefs about learning and learners, removing hierarchical, judgmental and anti-democratic systems and transforming classroom practices. Such structural changes will not only lead to changes in teachers' attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding but also to changes in learners' achievements and relationships, which, in turn, will help reach prosocial outcomes.

An effective co-operative learning process is structured according to four main principles:

- positive interdependence: everyone must contribute;
- individual accountability: no hiding;
- equal access: non-discriminatory participation;
- simultaneous interaction: all students engage in multiple interactions with their peers.

Educators adopting this approach claim that they not only help students to better master the academic content of the class, but also note that the method greatly attenuates hostile and intolerant attitudes in the classroom. Co-operative principles also contribute to improving learning in heterogeneous classrooms. When students work in small groups, they interact and serve as resources for one another. However, co-operative learning may produce situations in which students who are academically low achieving and/or who are socially isolated are excluded from the interactions in the group. Therefore, in such cases, co-operative learning needs to be consciously supported by the teacher in order to ensure equity and avoid the pitfall of reinforcing existing educational and social inequalities.

The following questions can help teachers check their planning of co-operative learning activities.

- Do learners need to co-operate with peers in order to accomplish their task and reach their goal?
- Are the learning activities meeting the needs and wishes of the learners?

- Is the learning process structured in a way that promotes equal participation for each learner?
- Can every learner participate/achieve their individual learning goals?

## Project-based learning

Project work, or learning through projects, is a pedagogical approach particularly appropriate for the development of CDC because it contributes to acquiring a combination of attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding, as well as to developing values. It can be used within a specific subject area but it is also very appropriate for a cross-curricular approach and for addressing cross-cutting issues.

Project-based learning offers its best potential when conducted in small groups and/or by a whole class. It is usually structured in a sequence of steps spread over several weeks:

- choice of a topic of study or of an open question and planning of the work;
- collection of information, organisation of the information collected and decision making (implying both individual responsibility, co-operation in a group and managing potential differences of views or disagreements);
- preparation of the product (which can take various forms, such as a poster, video, podcast, publication, website, portfolio, text, performance or event);
- presentation of the product;
- reflection on the learning experience.

Depending on the topic selected, the elements of knowledge and critical understanding of the world in the CDC model can also be developed. When the topic involves linguistic and cultural diversity, the process can also stimulate valuing diversity and openness to difference and otherness.

The role of the teacher in a project-based learning process is that of a facilitator of the learning process. Students follow the instructions given by the teacher concerning the steps to go through but, in terms of content, the decision should remain largely with the students. The teacher's main instrument is the question, not the answer. The principles described above still apply and the teacher monitors how the collaboration in the groups is taking place. The teacher should encourage students to co-operate, support each other, give each other feedback and reflect on what they discover as well as on their interactions.

## Service learning

Service learning is more than community service. It implies providing a community service in the context of a structured set of steps, in which the teacher plays an important role as organiser and facilitator, while keeping a strong learner-centred approach and empowering learners to make decisions and act on their own will in co-operation with peers.

Service learning is also an effective way to develop the full range of CDC because it gives learners opportunities to connect the knowledge and critical understanding and skills acquired in a classroom setting with meaningful action targeting a real-world issue. Through this connection, not only are knowledge, critical understanding and skills consolidated and further developed, but processes are put in place that stimulate the development and critical awareness of attitudes and values.

As service learning is a form of project-based learning, a similar sequence of steps will serve as a reference for the process:

- assessment of community needs and identification of the improvement or change to be envisaged;
- preparation of the task to be undertaken by collecting information, identifying and contacting key community stakeholders, analysing options to address the issue and planning the intervention;
- taking action by engaging in a community service activity which is meaningful for the learners and enhances learning and the development of values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. The action can be of several types, including:
  - direct support provided to a group of beneficiaries in need (for example visiting a centre for senior citizens, organising educational activities for smaller children in a disadvantaged area, giving gifts to citizens providing volunteer work);

- indirect support or change in the community (for example collecting toys for an NGO supporting disadvantaged children, painting a wall near a playground to make it more child friendly, setting up a web platform or application enabling senior citizens of the community to ask for support from volunteers, fundraising to support a local initiative);
- advocacy for change (for example advocating for public policies to be adopted by local authorities, warning local citizens of certain risks, or advocating for change in certain behaviours of citizens);

- presentation of the work and its outcomes to the community and celebration of the achievements;
- reflection on the learning experience, preferably throughout the whole process, and evaluation of the work done leading to conclusions and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future similar activities.

## Content-based methods and approaches

It is vital to give the children and young people of Europe today the values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding essential for steering their lives both individually and collectively in the generations to come and to avoid repeating the mistakes and disasters of history. Teachers can use a wide range of opportunities to include the topics important to developing CDC.

The development of CDC need not be perceived as being in competition with teaching the basic skills of language, mathematics, science, or all the other school subjects such as history, geography, physical education and modern languages, to name but a few.

### Using the existing curriculum – within subject areas

Taught in a conscious and purposeful way, all subjects within their existing curriculum can harbour learning activities that teach the values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding that the learners need to be able to contribute to a democratic culture. The temptation to "sprinkle" teaching for CDC here and there, with a few hours a year devoted to topics such as intercultural competence or democratic citizenship, can have the negative consequence of an inevitable superficiality that both obscures and scatters the fundamentally important messages. Instead, CDC should be envisaged throughout the curriculum and at the intersection of the subject-specific curricula. The RFCDC provides suggestions and examples on how elements of CDC can be connected within the existing curriculum in various subjects (see examples for language and literature, maths, geography and science in the RFCDC, Volume 3, p. 39).

### Team teaching and integrated curricular approaches

Besides what each teacher can do in the context of a specific subject, co-operation between teachers of several subjects can lead to valuable and effective additional outcomes for the development of CDC.

This co-operation can be between several teachers working with the same class, who co-ordinate their intervention to enhance CDC, but it can also be between teachers working with different classes, which are supported to engage in a partnership and co-operate in learning activities resulting in the development of CDC. Teachers working with the same class can plan their teaching together in order to ensure that they complement each other in covering all the elements of CDC, leading to gradual progress of the class in all aspects, so as to avoid overlapping and overlooking elements of CDC. They can also plan together larger project-based learning activities or cover, from the perspective of different disciplines over a longer period of time, transversal topics particularly relevant for CDC, such as human rights, gender equality, sustainable development, socio-cultural and linguistic diversity, or the prevention of discrimination and violence.

### Addressing the "hidden curriculum"

Nothing one teaches is free of social connotation. Gender bias, ethnic and racial bias, and cultural dominance are the most commonly found ills in the curriculum and in its use in schools.

Teachers should become aware and take an active approach in spotting and avoiding the unintentional lessons that are taught in their setting. The selection of resources used in teaching and the types of tasks given to learners may reinforce social inequalities or cultural domination, as well as stereotypes and discrimination. They may also send other unintended messages, including the idea that the content of teaching is irrelevant to the lives of learners.

## CDC and assessment

"Assessment" here refers to the systematic description and/or measurement of a learner's level of proficiency or achievement, whereas "evaluation" refers to the systematic description and/or measurement of the effectiveness of an education system, institution or programme.

The RFCDC promotes a focus on the empowerment of learners as active democratic citizens and this has particular implications for the assessment of CDC. Assessment[5] should enable learners not only to become aware of their achievement or level of proficiency in CDC, but also to reflect on the learning process that resulted in this particular outcome. Assessment should determine what is needed in order to develop these competences further and enable learners to take appropriate action in relationship to their own learning. In other words, assessment should contribute to the learners' ownership of their learning process. During the assessment of learners' achievements, learners can help teachers to understand if and to what degree the teaching process actually supported them in developing the intended competences.

### Principles of assessment

In order for education assessments to be acceptable to learners and, in the case of young learners, their parents or caregivers, it is important that they meet a number of criteria. These criteria include validity, reliability, equity, transparency, practicality and respectfulness.

Validity: assessment accurately describes and/or measures a learner's level of proficiency or achievement of the intended learning outcomes, and not of some other unintended outcomes or extraneous factors.

Reliability: assessment produces results that are consistent and stable. Outcomes should be replicable if the same assessment procedure were to be administered again to the same learner and by a different assessor.

Equity: assessment is fair and does not favour or disadvantage any particular group or individual. An equitable assessment method ensures that all learners, regardless of their demographic or other characteristics, have an equal opportunity to display their level of competence.

Transparency: learners receive in advance explicit, accurate and clear information about the assessment, including the purpose of the assessment, the learning outcomes that are going to be assessed, the types of assessment procedures to be used, and the assessment criteria.

Practicality: assessment methods are feasible, given the resources, time and practical constraints that apply. A practical assessment procedure does not make unreasonable demands on the resources or time that are available to the learner or the assessor. The limitations that render a method impractical are also likely to render that method unreliable and invalid.

Respectfulness: assessment procedures respect the dignity and the rights of the learner who is being assessed. Learners' rights are defined by the European Convention on Human Rights[6] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,[7] and they include, *inter alia*, the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and freedom from discrimination. Assessment methods or procedures (and any other education practices) that violate one or more of these rights of learners should not be used. In its interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights explicitly allows freedom of expression even in cases where the views that are expressed are regarded as offensive, shocking or disturbing, because freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society. However, the Court also holds that, in the case of forms of expression that spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance, it may be necessary to sanction or even prevent such forms of expression. This is because tolerance and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings constitute a further essential foundation of a culturally diverse democratic society.[8] Assessment, if conducted in respectful ways, can turn a problematic behaviour into a turning point in the education process.

5. Assessment and evaluation are related because the results of assessments can be used as one element of an evaluation.
6. Available at: www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.
7. Available at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf.
8. See: European Court of Human Rights (2016), "Hate speech", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at: www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_speech_ENG.pdf.

## Respecting the dignity of learners

The principle of respectfulness does not only involve respecting the human rights of learners, it also involves respecting the dignity of learners. As such, assessments that are linked to the RFCDC should also observe the following general rules.

- Learners should not be placed under continual stress by being constantly assessed.
- Learners have a right to privacy and confidentiality, especially in relationship to their values and attitudes.
- There is a need for sensitivity when revealing assessment results to learners.
- Feedback to learners from assessments should focus on positive rather than negative outcomes, mainly on learners' achievements rather than their deficiencies.
- There may be cases and issues where assessments should not be conducted because the issues or topics are too sensitive for the learners concerned.
- Special precautions should also be taken where the outcomes of an assessment will be used to decide if a learner can continue to the next level of education.

In addition, users of the RFCDC may wish to consider whether, in order to respect the dignity of learners, learners have a right for the values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours which they have exhibited at earlier points in their development to be forgotten. It may be argued that there should be no permanent track record of learners' values, attitudes and beliefs, because this violates their right to privacy. Alternatively, it may be argued that only acceptable or positive values, attitudes and beliefs should be traceable through assessment records (and that these records should therefore not document any unacceptable speech or behaviours that have violated or aimed to violate other people's dignity or human rights, because this documentation could later harm the learner). A third possibility is that, if learners engage in behaviours or hold values, attitudes or beliefs that are democratically unacceptable, but then progress in their development, they should have the right for their previous behaviours, values, attitudes or beliefs to be removed from the records of their education. Users of the RFCDC will need to consider the range of possibilities and decide upon the course of action that is most suitable in their own education context, bearing in mind the need to ensure that assessment should always respect the dignity and rights of the learner who is being assessed.

Invalid, unreliable, inequitable or disrespectful conclusions about learners should never be drawn from an assessment that has been conducted in relationship to the RFCDC.

## Approaches to assessment

In addition to thinking through the implications of these six assessment principles, users of the RFCDC will need to consider the specific approach that they might use for assessing CDC. There are contrasting approaches to assessment, some of which form dichotomies and some continua. In general, types of assessment can be characterised using these dichotomies and continua (Table 2).

| | |
|---|---|
| High stakes (e.g. national examinations) | Low stakes (e.g. confidential portfolios) |
| Achievement (e.g. end-of-course test) | Proficiency (e.g. test in a real-world context outside the school) |
| Norm-referenced (e.g. examinations for selection to next stage of education) | Criterion-referenced (e.g. portfolio demonstrating a profile of competences) |
| Summative (e.g. end-of-course examination) | Formative (e.g. mid-course assessment) |
| Objective (e.g. computer-based test) | Subjective (e.g. observation of behaviour) |

**Table 2: Concepts and contrasts**

The RFCDC discusses how these different approaches to assessment can be used in relation to the competences for democratic culture. Users of the RFCDC are encouraged to consider the advantages and disadvantages, the opportunities and the risks associated with employing various approaches and make their choice of a certain type or of a mixed set of assessment types, taking into account their specific work context, as well as the principles of assessment mentioned above.

In addition, the distinction between achievement assessment and proficiency assessment is relevant here. Achievement assessment focuses on the performance of learners in relation to a specific education activity, task or programme, whereas proficiency assessment is an assessment reflecting the acquisition of competences

whatever the source of learning. While teachers are often more interested in achievement assessment, users of the RFCDC may wish to consider whether assessment should be focused instead on proficiency, because contexts in the wider social, civic or political world beyond the school are particularly important and relevant for assessment in relationship to the RFCDC.

Assessment needs to provide a picture of how proficient a learner is in mobilising and applying a cluster of relevant competences to a range of contexts, and also of how proficient he or she is in adapting these competences as the circumstances within those contexts change. This means that assessment methods that provide only a static description of a learner's competences at one moment in time are unlikely to be adequate. Users of the RFCDC will need to choose methods of assessment that are suitable for detecting the dynamic use of clusters of competences within and across contexts, and that can produce a profile of a learner's performance.

## Assessment methods

The RFCDC presents and discusses advantages and disadvantages of several assessment methods which can be used in relation to CDC, such as:

- open-ended diaries, reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections;
- observational assessment;
- dynamic assessment;
- project-based assessment;
- portfolio assessment.

### Open-ended diaries, reflective journals and structured autobiographical reflections

These methods require the learner to record and reflect on their own behaviour, learning and personal development. The record which is produced is usually a written text, but it could also include non-verbal self-expressions or art works. The reflections may be freely structured by the learner, or they may be structured through the use of a pre-specified format that has been designed to ensure that the reflections provide evidence of the specific learning outcomes that are being assessed. In using these methods to assess CDC, the format could therefore require learners to structure their narratives or reflections in such a way that they record and reflect on the full range of competences that they have deployed across a range of situations or contexts, and how they adapted or adjusted the competences that they were using as those situations developed.

### Observational assessment

Observational assessment involves a teacher or other assessor observing learners' behaviours in a range of different situations in order to ascertain the extent to which the learner is deploying clusters of competences appropriately and is actively adjusting those clusters according to the changing situational circumstances. Using such a method requires the assessor to develop a plan of the range of situations to which the learner is to be exposed, and to make a record of the learner's behaviour in those situations. This could be a written record using either a structured observation sheet or a more open-ended logbook in which a description of the learner's behaviour is captured. Alternatively, a direct record can be made of the behaviour that is being observed using an audio or video recording, so that the assessment can be made after the event.

### Dynamic assessment

Dynamic assessment involves the teacher or other assessor actively supporting the learner during the assessment process in order to enable the learner to reveal their maximum level of proficiency. This is accomplished by exposing the learner to a planned range of situations or contexts in which the teacher interacts with the learner.

### Project-based assessment

Project-based assessment is an integral part of project-based learning, allowing learners to engage in activity not only in the classroom but also in the wider social, civic or political world. A project normally leads to the creation of substantial products. Learners can also be required to provide documentation on the process of conducting the project and on the learning process, as well as critical self-reflections. Thus, products and the accompanying documentation provide information about how clusters of competences have been mobilised and deployed across contexts, and about how they have been adjusted over time according to the needs of the situations encountered during the project.

### Portfolio assessment

A portfolio is a systematic, cumulative and ongoing collection of materials that is produced by the learner as evidence of their learning, progress, performance, efforts and proficiency. The materials are selected for inclusion following a set of guidelines, and the learner has to explain and reflect on the contents of the portfolio. Portfolios can be tailored to the needs of particular learners, levels of education, education programmes and education contexts.

The RFCDC also recommends specific measures that can be taken to maximise the validity and reliability of assessments and draws attention to the risks and challenges related to the use of certain assessment approaches and methods. When considering appropriate assessments in the context of the RFCDC, educators need to bear in mind the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches and methods. Mixed-method approaches, including self- and peer-assessment, as well as co-assessment, might be most feasible in many cases.

## CDC and the whole-school approach

### The added value of a whole-school approach

For democracy and human rights to become a reality in daily life in a society, they should become a reality in daily life in schools. Competences for democratic culture are important for learners, but also for schools as an institution and for the community as a whole. If they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse democratic societies, citizens need to be able to recognise and practise democratic principles. Making democracy and human rights a reality in the daily life of schools is not only a question of classroom teaching. It is a function of all aspects of school life.

Schools are where young people often get their first opportunity outside the family to develop and practise the democratic competences that they need for active engagement and living together in diverse societies. A whole-school approach to CDC ensures that all aspects of school life – curricula, teaching methods and resources, leadership and decision-making structures and processes, policies and codes of behaviour, staff and staff-student relationships, extracurricular activities and links with the community – reflect democratic and human rights principles. In turn, this may create a safe learning environment where these principles can be explored, experienced and even challenged in a peaceful way. Engaging the whole school in creating a positive and safe learning environment might also influence student achievement positively and even increase their life satisfaction. Students who feel part of a school community and enjoy good relations with their parents and teachers are more likely to perform better academically and be happier with their lives. A whole-school approach implies the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders in a school, including school administration, teachers, students and parents as well as local community members.

At least three key areas need to be considered as part of a whole-school approach to develop a democratic culture at school and competences for democratic culture in learners: teaching and learning, school governance and culture, and co-operation with the community.

These three areas are not entirely separated from each other but overlap, which means that actions in one area will have an impact on the others. However, it is important to remember that creating a democratic functioning school, and thus integrating principles of democracy and human rights into all areas, is a gradual process and will take time.

### Teaching and learning

Some of the ways in which competences for democratic culture might be incorporated into the curriculum and lesson planning, as well as in teaching and learning methodologies, are described in the chapters on curriculum and pedagogy. This section underlines the importance of creating and maintaining an open, participative and respectful classroom environment and the fact that various extracurricular activities can complement classroom practice and contribute also to the development of CDC.

### School governance and culture

The organisational culture of a school, based on a democratic approach to school governance, as well as an inclusive school ethos which is safe and welcoming, where relations between staff, and between staff and students, are positive and everyone feels they have a part to play and their human rights are respected, will better facilitate development of competences for democratic culture. To this end, school administration,

teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders may join their efforts to make school governance and environment more democratic, including its approach to management and decision making, school policies, rules and procedures, student participation and general school environment.

### Leadership and school management (including school planning, evaluation and development)

- Develop a leadership style nurtured by respect for human rights, democratic principles, equal treatment, participatory decision making and responsible accountability.
- Encourage participation of all stakeholders in the review of the whole-school environment and its capacity to promote active democratic citizenship and respect for human rights – including programme coherence, extracurricular activities and school governance, for example through review meetings, observations, liaison with student representatives, school-wide surveys, and feedback from parents and community actors.

### Decision making

- Establish inclusive and participative decision-making structures and procedures, including powers for teachers, students and parents in setting agendas and participating in policy decisions, for example through representation on school boards and working parties, focus groups or consultations.

### Policies, rules and procedures

- Draw up and revise school policies to reflect the values and principles of democratic citizenship and human rights.
- Introduce functioning rules at school that guarantee equal treatment and equal access for all students, teachers and other members of staff regardless of their ethnicity, cultural identity, lifestyle or beliefs; establish procedures for peaceful and participatory resolution of conflicts and disputes.

### Student participation

- Develop opportunities for students to express their views on matters of concern to them, both in relation to school and to wider issues, and participate in decision making at school and in the community, for example through class discussion, student councils, surveys and suggestion boxes.
- Make sure that participative approaches that the students are involved in are authentic and avoid pseudo-participation or the notion of "just pretending".

## Co-operation with the community

A school's relations with the wider community – including parents, authorities, NGOs, universities, businesses, media, health workers and other schools – can help to foster a culture of democracy in the school. Schools can co-operate with the community in a number of ways.

### Parents and community participation

- Encourage parents or community members to contribute to school activities on a voluntary basis.
- Facilitate student projects designed to solve community problems or challenges.

### School-to-school partnership

- Set up or join a network of schools for sharing resources and experiences.
- In the case of culturally or religiously homogeneous schools, establish co-operative and learning links with other schools to enable students to have meaningful interactions and contact with students from other ethnic backgrounds and religions.
- Facilitate online dialogue with students in schools in other countries on issues that are of mutual concern to the students.

### Partnerships with community institutions

- Develop partnerships, for example with NGOs, youth organisations or higher education institutions.

- Develop partnerships with local authorities to encourage participation of students in formal governance structures representing young people, for example youth councils or local municipalities, and to encourage local authorities to proactively seek out the views of students on civic matters that have relevance to the lives of young people, in order to foster their active citizenship and political participation.
- Develop partnerships with religious and belief organisations, as well as with advocacy groups promoting human rights.

Applying a whole-school approach to developing competences for democratic culture in learners generates important benefits for individuals, for the school and for the local community.

## A whole-school approach to develop CDC in learners in practice

### Key principles

These include:

- respect for the local context and local ways of working;
- empowering all stakeholders to develop their own solutions to challenges based on situation assessment;
- encouraging learning by doing with the participation of all stakeholders;
- integrating capacity building into the school planning process;
- supporting local projects and initiatives over the long term.

### Five stages of application

Applying a whole-school approach to the development of a democratic school culture and the development of competences for democratic culture in learners can be done through a process structured in five stages (see Figure 2).

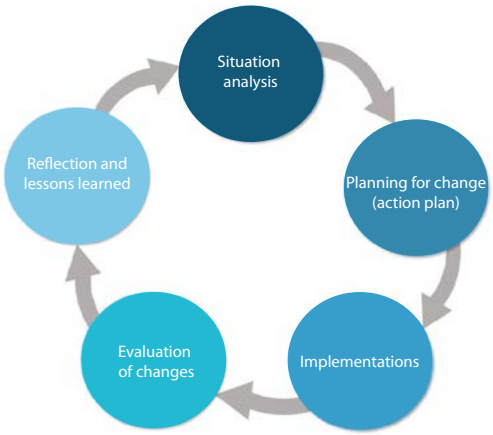


**Figure 2: The five stages of a whole-school approach**

1. Conduct a situation analysis to identify how principles of democracy and human rights are integrated into school life, including strengths and weaknesses, and with the participation of all stakeholders (for example whole-school assessments, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis).
2. Identify potential areas of change and develop an action plan with concrete activities to achieve these changes (for example CDC as an expected learning outcome).
3. Implement the action plan involving the school community.
4. Evaluate progress and assess the impact of your work.
5. Share lessons learned with all stakeholders involved, as well as with other schools, and plan further actions accordingly.

## CDC and building resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism

Education based on the RFCDC has a central role to play in the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism. These competences boost individuals' resilience to the conditions that can initiate radicalisation, and build resistance to dehumanising behaviour and to the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution. In addition, developing these competences endows individuals with the capacity and the disposition to contribute to an inclusive society and to effect change through peaceful democratic expression and action rather than through violence.

The RFCDC can help to build students' resilience to radicalisation by equipping them not only with the competences needed for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, but also with the competences needed for recognising and dealing with extremist and terrorist propaganda (for example analytical and critical thinking skills), for recognising misinformation, fake news and hate speech in broadcast, print and online news media (for example knowledge and critical understanding of media), and for valuing human dignity, human rights and democratic processes.

The relevant guidance document explains in detail how the RFCDC can build students' resilience. It begins by examining the nature of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism. It also describes the predisposing conditions that can lead to radicalisation (for example difficulties with personal identity, simplistic thinking style, grievances and injustices, disillusionment with politicians and conventional politics), and the enabling conditions that can help to facilitate the transition into violent extremism and terrorism (for example exposure to violent extremist ideology, finding a sense of community, identity and belonging among the members of an extremist organisation). It is emphasised that different subsets of conditions operate in the case of different individuals, and that no single condition by itself is likely to lead to radicalisation. Even if a large subset of conditions applies, this will still not necessarily lead an individual into violent extremism and terrorism, especially if that individual is equipped with the competences that confer resilience to violent extremist and terrorist propaganda and rhetoric.

Research results indicate how resilience to radicalisation can be built. Actions that can be taken include:

- de-glamorising violent extremism and terrorism;
- deconstructing violent extremist narratives and providing counter-narratives;
- training students in the use of a more complex thinking style;
- providing education on the identification and deconstruction of propaganda;
- providing education in digital literacy;
- providing education in the use of democratic means for the expression of political views.

These various actions are based on fostering one or more of the specific competences that are included within the RFCDC. In other words, education based on the RFCDC provides a systematic, comprehensive and powerful method for building students' resilience to radicalisation, precisely because it equips students with all of the competences that are required to:

- understand the nature of violent extremism and terrorism;
- understand how violent extremist and terrorist narratives operate;
- understand how digital media are used to disseminate misinformation, fake news and hate speech;
- identify and deconstruct propaganda;
- use a complex and sophisticated reasoning style when thinking about the claims that are made by extremist and terrorist propaganda;
- use peaceful democratic means for the expression of political views.

Using a whole-school approach to foster the development of the 20 competences, which enables students to become knowledgeable, thoughtful, responsible, engaged and empowered democratic citizens can therefore also develop resilience to radicalisation.

The RFCDC also includes chapters on higher education and language learning. The complete content is available in several languages on the website.

Principles
Descriptors
Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture
Guidelines

# PART II

# Warming up – User guide

This section is designed to help you explore some of the crucial actions needed to engage in continuous professional development in order to become a (better) democratic teacher.

There are two important tools – observation and reflection.

Observation means taking a step back and looking at things from the perspective of an outsider.

Reflection means viewing something from a different perspective. As described in the introductory part of this document, teachers' professional competence is important for the building of democratic schools.

This section of the reflection tool will help you:

- relate CDC to your own reality and experience (everyday life and professional life);
- use CDC for self-observation and, consequently, for personal and professional development.

It includes different activities, which are presented as a sequence here but can be used in any order you find suitable:

- general observations related to everyday life;
- a reflection on your strengths as a democratic teacher;
- an activity focused on the "hot moments" one can experience as a teacher.

For example, for relationship building and dialogical practice with students, crucial competences are:

- respect;
- empathy;
- the skill of listening and observing.

When facilitating participatory learning processes and co-operation between students, it is important to use:

- tolerance of ambiguity;
- conflict-resolution skills.

In order to improve established practice and develop new ways of teaching and interacting with students, colleagues, parents and other stakeholders from the local community you need knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Professional development is an ongoing endeavour and reflection about one's own practice is part and parcel of this endeavour.

Developing into a self-aware practitioner means becoming your own critical friend – a critical, but loyal observer of your own behaviour and practice.

Before turning to your practice as a teacher, you might choose to explore the art of observation in everyday situations or related to a scenario we have prepared for you.

Good luck on the journey of observation.

## CDC in everyday situations

### 1. Choose and analyse an everyday situation

- a. Think about previous everyday situations in which you deployed some of the competences you find in the CDC "butterfly".

  Examples might include a family quarrel about where to go on your next holiday, during which you managed to suggest a compromise everyone could accept; a misunderstanding between colleagues that you helped to clarify; or a situation where you took responsibility when planning an activity with a group of friends. What is typical of these situations? What brings out the best in you?

- b. Are there times when you thought you could have acted differently or better, cases where you would like to have known more about them before things happened?

  Describe briefly the situation and the challenge/conflict involved. Use only persons and facts, and try to describe the situation in a way that you think everyone involved would agree with, no matter which side they were on.

  How was the challenge/conflict in this situation solved? Explain here how it ended rather than whether the issue was faced in the best way.

  How did the behaviour of the involved persons contribute to the solution? Include everyone involved – the main actors, the bystanders. How could this situation have been solved in a more constructive way? Note down your thoughts, your ideas of how things could have been resolved before the incident, who should have known, thought, acted differently.

### 2. Select competences and descriptors

Describe the more constructive way that you propose to solve this situation, using up to three competences. Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence. In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

### 3. Observe your behaviour

During the next few days, observe yourself during some of the "typical" situations in which you would use these competences. Identify other situations in which you demonstrated or did not demonstrate these competences. Describe your own behaviour in these situations, using the list of descriptors.

### 4. Reflect

What new insights did the activity give you? What was difficult about the activity? How do you want to proceed in order to further develop your CDC in everyday life?

## My strengths as a democratic teacher

In professional development processes, as in any other learning processes, we always build on previous experience. When developing our own CDC as teachers, it is important to be aware of our existing strengths and use them as a resource. In this section, you will be guided through some activities which will familiarise you with self-observation and help you to become aware of your strengths as a democratic teacher.

### 1. Select competences and descriptors

Identify up to three competences you think you are good at as a teacher. For each competence identify descriptors in which you feel you can recognise yourself most. In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

### 2. My strengths as a teacher

If you think about the descriptors you selected in step one, in which situations in the past did you display this behaviour? What is needed for you to act in this way in the form of:

- relationships;
- support;
- resources?

### 3. Self-observation in an educational context

Choose an upcoming situation in which you think you might show the selected competences. Observe yourself during the situation and describe your own behaviour in the language of the selected descriptors ("when xx happened, I xx"). What helped you/made it difficult to use the chosen competences? What would you do differently next time? If you wish, choose a new situation and start the process again.

### 4. Reflect

- How did it feel to observe yourself in your professional work as an educator?
- What elements made the situation you chose suitable for self-observation?
- What other aspects of your work as an educator could be suitable for observation?
- What new insights did the activity give you?
- How do you want to proceed in order to develop your CDC in your work?

## Managing "hot" situations in school

Every teacher has experienced difficult moments in their work. "Hot moments" are emotionally challenging situations in which the teacher lacks appropriate pedagogical responses, leaving them feeling unprepared and "unfit".

Hot moments are uncomfortable, but they are opportunities for self-development and improvement. The competence framework can help one to take a step back and reflect about the challenges and one's own way of handling them.

The following activity guides you, step-by-step, through the reflection about a hot moment, taken from a film. Such a "distant" example can make it easier to reflect about difficult issues than starting with one's own experiences.

The film *Entre les murs* is situated in a suburb of Paris, with a diverse group of students, many of them from "disadvantaged" backgrounds.

We follow Monsieur Marin as he begins as a teacher at this school, in the beginning full of enthusiasm and optimism for being able to make a difference. Soon the relationship between the teacher and his pupils gets tense and different kinds of conflict arise.

One of the students who develops a very negative attitude towards Monsieur Marin is Khoumba. One day, he keeps her back after school in order to talk to her.

## 1. Watch the film sequence[9]

(The bell rings. The students take their things and leave the class. Khoumba goes too. Monsieur Marin calls her back.)

Monsieur Marin (MM): Eh, eh, eh, Khoumba, you know I want to see you. Give me your report book.

Khoumba (K): Why?

MM: You know why.

(Khoumba throws the report book on Monsieur Marin*'s* desk.)

MM: No, give it to me. Politely. That's enough now.

(He gives the book back to Khoumba. She hands it back to Monsieur Marin. He opens it and starts writing.)

MM: Is it normal to refuse to read when a teacher asks you to? Is it normal?

K: There's others in the class!

MM: I can't turn a blind eye to this, can I?

(Khoumba nods.)

MM: What happened this summer? What happened during vacation?

K: I didn't see you.

MM: Yes. I am intrigued. At the end of the year, in June, we had gotten on pretty well together. You participated in class. Since September, since the start of this year, you are not co-operative. You keep sulking, you refuse to read. What happened?

K: I don't like reading now. Can you hurry please?

MM: No, I won't hurry! Explain. Why have things changed all of a sudden?

K: I can't stay a kid forever.

MM: So, it is a kid thing to co-operate? That's it?

K: There is others in the class ...

MM: Of course, when you work, it's ...

(Monsieur Marin closes the report book and holds it in his hand. Khoumba tries to take it. Monsieur Marin moves his hand back.)

MM: I haven't finished.

K: My mom is waiting for me.

MM: I want an apology first. An apology for what you did: "I apologise for being insolent, sir."

K: Sorry. OK?

MM: No, not "sorry", "I apologise for being insolent, sir." Go ahead.

K: I apologise sir.

9. You can also watch the scene of the film *Entre les murs* on the following link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDc4uvT03sY.

MM: No, no, no, "I apologise sir, for being insolent". Be sincere, I want a real apology.

K: Can you hurry up, please? My mom is waiting.

MM: Your mother is waiting for your apology. Let's deal with this. I want a sincere apology that will stand for the rest of the year. We won't go on like this.

K: I apologise for being insolent.

MM: More conviction.

K: I am not saying it 50 times!

(MM turns to two girls, friends of Khoumba who are waiting outside the classroom door.)

MM: You two, what are you up to?

Girls: We are waiting.

K: May I?

MM: Hurry, I am listening!

K: I apologise for being insolent. May I go now, please?

(Monsieur Marin gives Khoumba her book, she goes towards the door to meet her friends.)

K: I didn't mean it.

(The students go away together, laughing. Monsieur Marin stays in the classroom. He kicks the teacher's desk chair.)

How would you describe the conflict in this scene?

- Title:
- Description:
- Location:
- Monsieur Marin:
  - behaviour
  - feelings
  - thoughts
- Khoumba:
  - behaviour
  - feelings
  - thoughts
- Your feelings about the incident.

## 2. Reflect on the teacher's behaviour

At the beginning of the scene Monsieur Marin expresses the wish to re-establish the previously good relationship with Khoumba. Go through the dialogue once more and reflect on the following question: Which of Monsieur Marin's behaviours makes it difficult to re-establish a good relationship with Khoumba?

## 3. Select competences and descriptors

Which competences would have helped Monsieur Marin to re-establish the good relationship with Khoumba? Identify descriptors for these competences illustrating behaviours which would have helped Monsieur Marin to re-establish the good relationship with Khoumba.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

### 4. Rewrite the scene

If you were Monsieur Marin, how would you do it? Write the more desirable version of the encounter between Khoumba and Monsieur Marin, using the language of the descriptors.

### 5. Reflection

How did it feel to do the activity about the hot moment? Did the competences and descriptors help you to understand the conflict better? Did you recognise some of your own difficulties in Monsieur Marin? Do you feel you have learned from his mistakes? What do you take from the activity for your own practice?

## Further reading and resources

Soisson A. (2017), "Difficult dialogues and hot moments in the classroom", Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, available at: https://provost.tufts.edu/celt/teaching-resources/difficult-dialogues-hot-moments-classroom/.

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FREE
TO SPEAK
SAFE
TO LEARN

# PART III
## The modules

Module 1

# Making children's and students' voices heard

## Introduction

### What does children's and students' voice mean in the school context?

Students have a right to have a say in matters that affect them in their school and schools have the duty to take views and opinions of students seriously and to guarantee meaningful participation. Participation affects all aspects of school life and covers the whole spectrum from self-expression to leadership and decision making. It also includes transparency about the level of participation and clarity about the limits. Experiencing democratic processes first hand is a very effective way of developing a wide range of democratic competences. Participation is one of the four guiding principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which means that it is an underlying requirement for any and all rights to be realised.

### How is this linked to democratic culture and CDC?

Student participation has a great impact on the development of CDC. All values included in the model of competences for democratic culture are relevant in this context. Valuing human dignity and human rights is at the core of students' voice: Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to have a say in matters that affect them. This applies to all areas of life, thus also to school.

Valuing cultural diversity in this context needs sensitivity to equal participation for each learner. It is important to ensure that decision-making structures and learning processes are set up in an inclusive way. Meaningful participation means experiencing democratic processes in direct connectivity with the values of democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.

Participation creates a sense of citizenship and at the same time requires and fosters the development of skills such as co-operation and communication skills, and skills of listening and observing. Discussing and deciding about matters that affect the daily school life of students fosters conflict-resolution skills, because different opinions and points of view have to be taken into account.

Involving students in their own learning and shared responsibility for decision making strengthens their autonomous learning skills and their self-efficacy, and leads to more responsibility.

Tolerance of ambiguity might be needed when it comes to negotiation and decision-making processes or conflict resolution.

Students' voice goes hand in hand with a democratic school culture; therefore, the values, attitudes and skills apply to all school stakeholders.

### Guiding questions for the reflection process and beyond

#### Teaching

- Do learners have an active role in the classroom?
- Do learners set their own goals?
- Can learners make choices (content, methods and activities)?
- Do I listen to emerging issues and react to them?
- Does my teaching encourage and facilitate collaboration among the students?
- Is the learning process structured in a way that promotes equal participation for each learner?

### Classroom culture/school culture

- How can I foster democratic culture in the classroom that gives students a voice?
- How does decision making in the classroom and in the school as a whole take place?

### Own competences

- Which competences do I need in order to fulfil my role in a democratic classroom?
- What are my strengths?
- What would I like to know more about in order to develop my CDC and my role as a democratic teacher?

For more guiding questions for planning and reflecting about democratic learning processes see the RFCDC, Volume 3 (Council of Europe 2018, pp. 25-38) including chapters on "CDC and pedagogy" and "CDC and the whole-school approach".

## Further reading and resources

Council of Europe (n.d.), Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture.

Council of Europe (n.d.), "Making children's and students' voices heard", available at www.coe.int/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/making-children-and-students-voices-heard.

Council of Europe (2018), *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, Volume 3, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

## Reflecting on scenario 1 – Class council

Last year, your school decided to implement class councils. They are held on a weekly basis and are facilitated by students who are elected in a democratic process. At the end of the year all teachers collect feedback from the students and reflect on possibilities for improvement. Your colleagues talk about situations in which they felt uncomfortable and did not find good solutions. One situation is discussed very intensely.

The student facilitating the class council is a very smart and fast guy and not very inclusive in his way of letting all classmates talk about their problems. Some of the students never say a word and decisions are taken without knowing what they think. The teacher proposes to install a "letter box" where people who do not like to talk in public can put their thoughts in a written form. During the next class council, the facilitator opens the letter box with the words: "Now let's have a look at the brilliant thoughts of our sheepish members". One of the students starts to cry. The teacher gets very angry and shouts at the student. The class council is closed and the teacher announces that he wants to talk about the incident in the next lesson.

## Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

- What do you think about the teacher's attitude?
- Why did the situation escalate?
- Can you think about other ways of solving the problem?
- How could the scenario continue?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 5. respect;
- 7. responsibility;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 13. empathy;
- 16. co-operation skills;
- 17. conflict-resolution skills.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC with regard to making children's and students' voices heard?

## Reflecting on scenario 2 – Deciding about the date of an exam

A teacher has to fix the date for the next English exam. She puts two options to the vote. The first option is in two weeks, the second option in four weeks. A majority votes for the first option, so the date is fixed. When she comes to school the next day, she finds a little anonymous letter on her shelf. It says that she is very unfair because she always privileges those who have high marks and do not need much time for studying.

### Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

- What was the teacher's intention?
- What do you think is the teacher's understanding of participation?
- Do you have ideas as to how to solve this dilemma between the "majority vote" and consideration for the needs of other students in the classroom?
- How could the scenario continue?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 12. skills of listening and observing;
- 13. empathy;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;

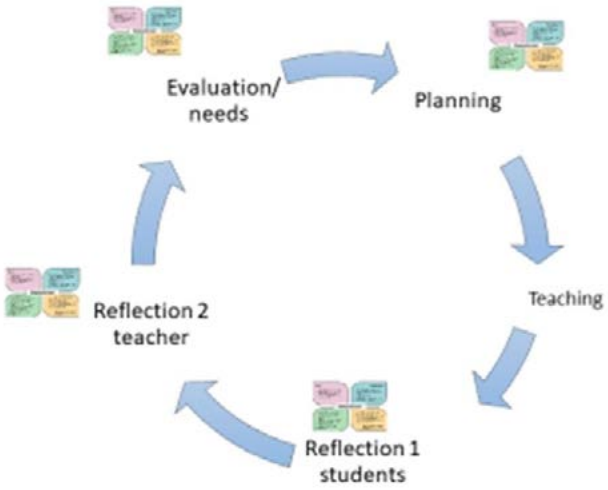
- 17. conflict-resolution skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Look ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC with regard to making children's and students' voices heard?

## Planning and evaluating an educational activity




### The reflective circle related to teaching

#### Planning

- What are my goals?
- Planning teaching (content, methods, process)
- What does it require from me? (See also questions in the introduction of this chapter.)
- Which CDC are relevant?

#### Doing

- Observing

#### Reflecting

- What happened and how was I a part of it?

#### Adapting

- Identifying further needs

### Choose or develop an educational activity

This section provides you with some examples of activities that are closely linked to the principles and competences introduced earlier in this module. Choose one that you want to bring to the classroom. Of course, you can also adapt it or develop your own activities/projects.

Examples of learning activities focusing on children's and students' voice and participation in the classroom:

Council of Europe (2008), "Who should decide?", *Compasito – Manual on human rights for children*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/chapter_4/4_39.asp.

Council of Europe (2020), *Compass – Manual for human rights education with young people*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg:

- "Let every voice be heard", available at www.coe.int/en/web/compass/let-every-voice-be-heard.
- "On the ladder", available at www.coe.int/en/web/compass/on-the-ladder.
- "Children's rights", available at www.coe.int/en/web/compass/52.

Examples of participatory and inclusive projects:

- develop classroom rules together with the students;
- set up a class council.

For more inspiration see: Gollob R., Krapf P. and Weidinger W. (eds) (2010), *Educating for democracy – Background materials on democratic citizenship and human rights education for teachers*, EDC/HRE Volume I, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-1/. In particular, see Unit 1 – "Conditions of teaching and learning" and Unit 5 – "Assessment of students, teachers and schools".

Give a title to this reflection activity (this will help you get back to your notes later).

### Step 1: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify the three competences you consider the most important for you as a teacher when you run this activity/project and select relevant descriptors for these competences.
- You might also think about previous teaching situations where you already showed/needed these competences.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

### Step 2: Self-observation during the activity and reflection

- During the activity, pay attention to your language, including your body language.
- Reflect on the activity. How did you experience the activity? Include references to competences and descriptors (for example "when xx happened, it was useful that I reflected about xx before the activity; when yy happened I wasn't able to act due to attitude yy; when zz happened, I had the feeling that I acted pretty close to descriptor zz").
- What went well and what helped you to put into practice the chosen competences?
- What made it difficult to put into practice the chosen competences?
- What would you do in a different way next time?

### Step 3: Debriefing/meta-reflection

- What did you like about this reflection sequence?
- What was difficult?
- What did you learn?
- How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC?

### Step 4: Repeat the reflective circle

- Repeat the observation exercise with another activity by integrating the insights.
- When you implement a sustainable tool (class rules, evaluation tool, etc.), make sure that you reflect on the process on a regular basis.

Module 2

# Addressing controversial issues

## Introduction

### What does "addressing controversial issues" mean in the school context?

Learning how to engage in dialogue with people whose values are different from one's own and to respect them is central to the democratic process and essential for the protection and strengthening of democracy and fostering a culture of human rights. Yet in Europe young people do not often have an opportunity to discuss controversial issues in school because they are seen as too challenging to teach, for example issues to do with extremism, gender violence, climate change or sexual orientation. Unable to voice their concerns, unaware of how others feel or left to rely on friends and social media for their information, young people can be frustrated or confused about some of the major issues which affect their communities and European society today. In the absence of help from school, they might have no reliable means of dealing with these issues constructively and no one to guide them.

Controversial issues can arise in every phase of education, type of school and area of the curriculum and are thus relevant to teachers across all educational settings and in all subjects. The term "controversial issues" is used in different ways in different places. The definition that has proved most useful across European countries defines "controversial issues" as follows: "issues which arouse strong feelings and divide communities and society."[10]

It is important to increase the confidence and competences of teachers in addressing controversial issues in their classrooms and across their schools. Teachers should be encouraged to reflect on the way their personal beliefs and values affect their professional attitude towards and practice in the handling of contentious material.

Summed up, the challenges of teaching controversial issues come under five broad headings:

- teaching style;
- protecting student sensitivities;
- classroom climate and control;
- lack of expert knowledge ;
- dealing with spontaneous questions and remarks.

With regard to the "reflection tool", five respective scenarios will be provided (see below), as well as suggestions for possibly relevant competences that contribute to teachers reflecting on and strengthening the democratic culture within their classrooms and beyond.

### How is this linked to democratic culture and CDC?

There are competences and their matching descriptors that seem to be especially relevant for teachers when addressing controversial issues as "one of many ways of doing it". There is no right answer, however, and these competences need to be seen as possibly complementing each other. The development of some competences may appear more challenging than the development of others:

- skills of listening and observing, such as "can listen effectively in order to decipher another person's meanings and intentions" or "listens carefully to differing opinions";

10. Council of Europe (2015), *Living with controversy – Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights* (EDC/HRE), p.13.

- conflict-resolution skills, such as "can deal effectively with other people's emotional stress, anxiety and insecurity in situations involving conflicts";
- valuing human dignity and human rights, such as "expresses the view that all laws should be consistent with international human rights norms and standards";
- respect, such as "expresses respect for people who hold different political opinions from himself/herself";
- civic-mindedness, such as "takes action to stay informed about civic issues";
- self-efficacy, such as "shows confidence that he/she knows how to handle unforeseen situations due to his/her resourcefulness";
- tolerance of ambiguity, such as "shows that he/she can suspend judgments about other people temporarily", "expresses a desire to have his/her own ideas and values challenged" or "expresses enjoyment of tackling situations that are complicated";
- empathy, such as "accurately identifies the feelings of others even when they do not want to show them";
- linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills, such as "asks speakers to repeat what they have said if it wasn't clear to him/her";
- co-operation skills, such as "when working with others, supports other people despite differences in points of view";
- knowledge and critical understanding of the self, such as "can reflect critically on his/her own values and beliefs", "can reflect critically on his/her own prejudices and stereotypes and what lies behind them" or "can critically reflect on his/her emotions and feelings in a wide range of situations";
- knowledge and critical understanding of the world, such as "can explain why everybody has a responsibility to respect the human rights of others", "can reflect critically on how his/her own world view is just one of many world views" or "can explain the meaning of basic political concepts, including democracy, freedom, citizenship, rights and responsibilities".

## Guiding questions for the reflection process and beyond

Opening up the curriculum to these sorts of issues raises difficult pedagogical questions for teachers including: As a teacher, how do I:

- respond to conflicting truth claims among students, including whether to take sides on an issue – so that the teacher does not feel compromised or the students sense there is a "hidden agenda"?
- protect the sensitivities of students from different backgrounds and cultures and those with a personal or family involvement in the topic?
- defuse tension and prevent discussion from over-heating?
- encourage students to listen to other people's points of view?
- handle controversial issues even-handedly?
- respond to unexpected questions?

## Further reading and resources

This module is primarily based on the 2015 Council of Europe publication *Living with controversy. Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE)* which can be found at: https://edoc.coe.int/en/human-rights-democratic-citizenship-and-interculturalism/7738-teaching-controversial-issues.html

Please also see the Council of Europe fact sheet *Tackling today's challenges together – Teaching controversial issues*.

## Reflecting on scenario 1 – Teaching style

### Fortress Europe

A teacher teaches a course in European politics: "The crisis of the European asylum system – Putting solidarity to the test". Just before he starts a well-prepared but challenging discussion/debate on the question "Should the EU improve its external border protection?" one of his students asks him how he himself actually feels about this topic.

### Reflection

#### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

- How do you think the students experienced the scenario so far?
- How do you think the student who asked the question experienced the scenario so far?
- Why do you think the student could be asking such a question?
- How do you think students with refugee backgrounds could possibly experience this scenario?
- How do you yourself actually feel about the topic?
- How can teachers protect or empower students with sensitive positions?
- How could the scenario continue?

#### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

  In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

  Choose one of the options below:

  1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

  2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

  - 3. valuing democracy, justice, equality, fairness and the rule of law;
  - 8. self-efficacy;
  - 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
  - 10. autonomous learning skills;
  - 14. flexibility and adaptability;
  - 16. co-operation skills;
  - 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

#### Step 3: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC in order to address controversial issues more comfortably?

#### Step 4: A further possible activity

(Taken from the 2015 Council of Europe publication, *Living with controversy – Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE)*).

Activity 2.1. "Whose side are you on?" aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of different pedagogical approaches to diversity of opinion in the classroom.

### Summary

Teachers are entitled to their views like anyone else. However, this does not necessarily mean that they ought to share them with students, nor that they should favour the students who share their views. So how is a teacher meant to respond to conflicting opinions and arguments in class? Whose side should they take? This exercise is designed to present participants with a range of pedagogical approaches to this question and their respective advantages and disadvantages.

## Reflecting on scenario 2 – Protecting student sensitivities

### Gay parents adopting

A teacher plans to teach lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) topics in her class as part of the school curriculum. Having in mind the importance of introducing the topic in a non-missionary and pupil-oriented way she starts by openly asking: What is your attitude about gay couples adopting?

Most students remain silent. One student murmurs "I don't care", another, "It should be man and wife, shouldn't it?" This leads one more student to respond, "I am fine with that, why not?" All in all, there is hardly any discussion and the teacher is quite frustrated because she thought she was stimulating a productive and intense debate with that question.

### Reflection

#### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- What was the teacher's intention when planning this lesson?
- Do you have ideas why the respective students could have reacted the way they do?
- In what different ways could this issue be sensitive to students?
- What is your own attitude about gay couples adopting?
- How could this influence your lesson planning?
- How could the scenario continue?

#### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 7. responsibility;
- 8. self-efficacy;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 16. co-operation skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC in order to address controversial issues more comfortably?

### Step 4: A further possible activity

(Taken from the 2015 Council of Europe publication *Living with Controversy – Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE)*).

Activity 2.2. "Changing perspectives" aims to explore ways in which the personal sensitivities of students may be protected by "de-personalising" the language in which issues are discussed.

For example, you reframe the question "How do you see gay people adopting?" from personal to societal: "How does society view gay couples adopting?"

### Summary

One of the challenging aspects of teaching controversial issues is dealing with issues when students are personally involved, such as discussing immigration when immigrant children are in the class. It is made more challenging by not always knowing whether anyone in the class is involved or not. One way of reducing the risk of inadvertently offending personal sensitivities or alienating students is to frame discussion of the issue in societal rather than personal terms. This technique is not applicable in all circumstances.

## Reflecting on scenario 3 – Classroom climate and control

### Too much of a challenge

A teacher prepares a lesson on ways of how to deal with the challenges of climate change and environmental pollution in a constructive and democratically sustainable way. Although the original plan was to analyse the pros and cons of reducing individual consumption in a factual way, things get out of hand very quickly. Students start to reciprocally accuse each other of long-distance flights, parents' SUVs, meat-based diets, ignorance, useless "Fridays for future" demonstrations, lack of ambition, lack of responsibility, lack of enjoyment of life. When the first students start crying, she ends the lesson by saying that today's lesson will certainly not be part of the written exam next week and that there will be a less controversial topic coming afterwards.

### Reflection

#### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- What was the teacher's intention?
- Do you have ideas as to why the students could have reacted that way?
- Do you have ideas on why some of the students started to cry?
- How could the scenario continue?

#### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 7. responsibility;
- 8. self-efficacy;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 10. autonomous learning skills;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 16. co-operation skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC in order to address controversial issues more comfortably?

### Step 4: Further possible activities

(Taken from the 2015 Council of Europe publication *Living with controversy – Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE)*).

Activity 1.1. "Introduction" aims to introduce the concept of controversial issues and considers the arguments for teaching controversial issues in the classroom.

Activity 1.3. "Blob Tree" aims to help participants to reflect on and record their feelings when starting to focus on addressing controversial issues in the classroom.

Activity 2.4. "Other people's shoes" aims to explore ways in which students can be helped to see issues from a range of perspectives.

## Reflecting on scenario 4 – Lack of expert knowledge

### Do you think fracking for oil should be allowed in our region/country?

Located rather close to the city where this school is located and where most of the students and the teacher live, an oil company applies for approval to extract oil via fracking. The students demand time for a lengthy discussion in class. At first, the teacher thinks he knows the basic arguments from watching the news: cheaper energy, possibly more jobs and independence from foreign nations. Opponents fear earthquakes, water pollution and also argue that only green and sustainable sources of energy should be used in the 21st century. Suddenly he feels unsafe, however. The overall situation is rather unclear. He hardly knows anything about technical issues, legal issues or local politics. How and where can he get the right and most reliable information? He is certainly not an expert. On the one hand, he wants to plan the lessons according to the interest of his pupils. On the other hand, he does not want to appear as being uninformed and unable to handle a topic such as this, which is certainly difficult and complex.

## Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- Why would the students be so keen on discussing the topic in class?
- How could the teacher be empowered to gain more confidence when addressing complex controversial issues in class?
- How could the scenario then continue?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 7. responsibility;
- 8. self-efficacy;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 10. autonomous learning skills;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 16. co-operation skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC in order to address controversial issues more comfortably?

### Step 4: Further possible activities

(Taken from the 2015 Council of Europe publication *Living with controversy – Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE)*).

Activity 1.1. "Introduction" aims to introduce the concept of controversial issues and considers the arguments for teaching controversial issues in the classroom.

Activity 1.3. "Blob Tree" aims to help participants to reflect on and record their feelings when starting to focus on addressing controversial issues in the classroom.

Activity 2.5. "World Café" aims to explore how "collective problem-solving" can enable controversial issues to be introduced into the classroom and school even-handedly and fairly when there is little available background information.

## Reflecting on scenario 5 – Dealing with spontaneous questions and remarks

### Freedom of thought

A teacher teaches a course on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on the individual consequences for us as consumers, fellow citizens and politically engaged individuals. In the middle of a moderate classroom discussion, one normally cautious student suddenly interrupts and says: "Why are we spending so much time on this? Climate change is fake news anyway. This is what a lot of experts say and my father, too. Are you telling us what to think in this lesson?"

#### Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- What was the teacher's intention?
- Do you have ideas as to why the student could have reacted in this way?
- What different positions in a class could possibly be expected regarding this issue?
- How could the scenario continue?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:
1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;
2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 2. valuing cultural diversity;
- 8. self-efficacy;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 10. autonomous learning skills;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 16. co-operation skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC in order to address controversial issues more comfortably?

### Step 4: A further possible activity

(Taken from the 2015 Council of Europe publication *Living with controversy – Teaching controversial issues through education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE)*).

Activity 2.6. "Forum theatre" aims to consider ways of handling insensitive remarks made by students and the role of class rules and school policy in creating a climate which both reduces their incidence and helps teachers to deal with them when they occur.

## Practical suggestions and background information for teaching controversial issues

Summed up, the challenges of teaching controversial issues come under five broad headings:

- teaching style;
- protecting student sensitivities;
- classroom climate and control;
- lack of expert knowledge;
- dealing with spontaneous questions and remarks.

With regard to the "reflection tool" five respective scenarios have been provided as well as suggestions for possibly relevant competences that contribute to teachers reflecting on and strengthening the democratic culture within their classrooms and beyond.

### Personal teacher competences

- Awareness of one's own beliefs and values and how these have been shaped through personal experience and self-reflection, and the potential impact of these on one's teaching of controversial issues.
- Awareness of and self-reflection on the pros and cons of revealing one's own beliefs and values to students, and to have decided a personal policy on this on the basis of the benefits to students and one's sense of personal integrity.

### Theoretical teacher competences

- Understanding how controversy arises and the ways it is resolved in a democracy.
- Understanding the role of teaching about controversial issues in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

### Practical teacher competences

- Using a range of teaching roles.
- Managing controversial subject matter sensitively and safely.
- Presenting issues fairly.
- Handling spontaneous questions and remarks of a controversial nature with confidence.
- Co-operating with other stakeholders over the introduction and teaching of controversial issues.

### Practical suggestion on teacher personal awareness and self-reflection

Teachers should be aware of and sensitive to the way their own experience of issues is likely to affect the way they deal with them in the classroom. An element of personal self-reflection by teachers on their own beliefs and values, and how they influence the way they address and interact with students both individually and collectively, is seen as crucial to the sensitive teaching of controversial subject matter. An important part of this process is deciding how to balance which personal views and experiences to share with the public. While there may be some views on issues that teachers wish to remain private from their students, there can also be a place for teachers sometimes sharing their personal experiences. Sharing can add to the evidence on a topic, aid student understanding and deepen their perspective.

### Practical suggestion on awareness of the make-up of the class and school environment

Having a working knowledge of the range of potential sensitivities in each class, as well as in the school as a whole and the surrounding community, and also, potentially, the stance of official authorities, is seen as a prerequisite for understanding when an issue is likely to be controversial and how it might be dealt with sensitively.

### Practical suggestion on the ability to use and apply a range of teaching styles

The ability to use a range of general teaching approaches and to know when and how to apply them in practice is regarded as particularly important, both as a way of minimising the danger of bias and as a way of opening up students to the possibility of new ideas and values. Teachers need to become familiar with the relevant approaches, their respective advantages and disadvantages, and the circumstances in which they are best applied. It is also suggested that it is helpful for teachers to share with students the methods being used and the motives for their choice.

### Background information

#### Background information on teaching style

Teaching controversial issues can be different from initiating students into an agreed body of knowledge. Sometimes there is no standing outside a controversial issue and approaching it with the academic distance

that may be appropriate elsewhere. The teaching and learning process is always influenced by the attitudes and opinions teachers and students bring to the classroom; it can never be neutral as such.

For this reason, the risk of bias has been seen as one of the major problems of teaching controversial issues. In some instances, it is not just the risk of bias but anxieties about allegations of bias that are seen as the problem. Such anxieties are often without foundation and some have proved to be entirely justified.

Is there a teaching style which will minimise the risk of bias and/or allegations of bias when introducing controversial issues? Of prime significance is how teachers deal with their own experiences and opinions, and, in particular, whether or not they choose to share them with their students. Allied to this is the question of how teachers deal with students' experiences and opinions, particularly where students and/or their families may be directly or indirectly involved in a controversial issue.

The following teaching styles can be distinguished:

- neutral chairperson approach: requires the teacher not to express any personal views or allegiances whatsoever, but to act only as a facilitator of discussion;
- balanced approach: requires the teacher to present students with a wide range of alternative views on an issue, as persuasively as possible, without revealing their own views;
- devil's advocate approach: requires the teacher to consciously take up the opposite position to the one expressed by students;
- stated commitment approach: requires teachers to make their own views known at some point in the exploration of the issue;
- ally approach: requires the teacher to take the side of a student or a group of students;
- official line approach: requires the teacher to promote the side dictated by public authorities;
- human rights approach: requires teachers to refer to human rights as the normative reference point.

### Background information on protecting student sensitivities

Another problem or challenge is the risk of controversial issues impacting negatively on students' emotions or sense of self-esteem. It is argued that the effect of allowing students the freedom to say what they think about an issue is that teachers give the "official" seal of approval to the expression of a whole range of extreme views and attitudes. This is likely to lead to other students feeling offended, harassed or marginalised, causing hostilities and divisions, either within or outside the classroom.

### Background information on classroom climate and control

Another challenge when teaching controversial issues is that of classroom climate and control and fear of discussion "over-heating". Where strong emotions are involved, classes can easily become polarised, causing hostility between students which threatens classroom climate and discipline. There is a fear that conflict between students might at any time escalate and get out of hand, undermining the teacher's authority and impacting negatively on future student–teacher relations. There is also the fear, in some instances, that it could lead to damage to the professional and personal standing of teachers.

### Background information on lack of expert knowledge

The problems of teaching controversial issues often seem to be compounded by the complexity and dynamic nature of many of these issues. They make demands on teacher knowledge not usually experienced in other areas of the curriculum. It has been said that to properly grasp the complexity of some of these issues would require at least some knowledge of the economic, sociological, political, historical and psychological factors involved. This is a particular challenge where controversial issues are very recent. Being current, such issues are in a state of constant flux, which makes it difficult for teachers to get a proper grasp of or to keep up to date with them, or predict their eventual outcomes.

This can be disconcerting for teachers who are used to playing the role of subject "expert" and being looked up to by students because of their knowledge and expertise.

## Background information on dealing with spontaneous questions and remarks

There is the problem of knowing how best to respond to spontaneous remarks or questions of a controversial nature made by the students. With students having constant access to the internet and social media on their mobile phones and laptops, it is impossible to predict what issues they will bring up next, when they will bring them up or what impact it will have on other students or the atmosphere in the classroom or the school.

Module 3

# Preventing violence and bullying

## Introduction

### What do we refer to when dealing with violence and bullying at school?

Violence is the threatened or actual use of physical force or power resulting in physical or psychological harm to others. Bullying is a form of violence. It can be defined as unwanted, aggressive behaviour which involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. It is behaviour that is repeated or carries the threat of being repeated over time.

Violent things happen at school. Some are noisy, so we become aware of them, some are underground and we may understand their after-effects, some happen at homes or in society and students consciously or unconsciously carry them to school. Some happen in the online world, in communities that are underground and present both outside and inside the school.

### The tip of an iceberg

Often, violence and (cyber)bullying, happening in school in all of its dimensions (physical, verbal, relational, sexual), have subtle or concealed expressions, and are therefore difficult to address for educators. Furthermore, what teachers perceive is simply the tip of the iceberg. In most cases, one has to decode facts and behaviours in order not to overlook them. Similarly, in very few cases can one intercede fast and effectively, and solve problems without using power or violence which could possibly create more problems.

Violence and (cyber)bullying are multifaceted issues that sometimes seem to be overwhelming school capabilities. When facing such complex challenges, a teacher may feel incompetent or helpless. It is easier just to punish the supposed perpetrator, and easier still to pass the perpetrator up the school hierarchy for a more senior member of staff to punish. It can also be easy to think that dealing with violence and bullying is simply a matter of stopping fights, giving punishments and imposing order, rather than questioning the wider culture of the school, the examples it sets and the sorts of behaviour it supports.

### Is it bullying or not?

An added difficulty can make dealing with violence and bullying at school a tough challenge. What is regarded as bullying or violence is sometimes thought of as a matter of subjective opinion. It can be difficult to build a common approach to eradicating from school something which a significant proportion of staff believe does not exist or is simply not important to them.

The prevailing culture in a school can sometimes work against attempts to reduce violence in its different forms. Rule by fear, overemphasis on punishment and the prioritisation of learning environments which support competitive behaviour all militate against the prevention of violence and bullying. So, too, does the holding of an ideology which accepts violence as a valid response in situations of fear, stress or frustration.

The effects of violence and bullying are not limited only to the students directly involved, but potentially impact on everyone at a school. Unchecked, incidents of violence and bullying lead to an atmosphere of anxiety and insecurity that is incompatible with learning.

Violence and bullying not only affect academic learning, they also impact negatively on the social development of young people. In an atmosphere of violence and bullying, students are more likely to have difficulties in developing self-esteem, trust and competences such as constructive conflict resolution.

### Nevertheless

There are ways that schools can prevent violence and bullying. The more schools are inspired to be places that nurture inclusion, equality, participation and human rights, the more they can create a community where

violence does not have a basis to grow. This needs the active participation of all school stakeholders in enhancing the capabilities of all its members to move towards a democratic school culture.

Democratic approaches to dealing with violence and bullying, such as restorative justice, conflict resolution or peer mediation, take time to learn and require the development of specific types of skills, knowledge and attitudes. They also take time to put into practice. It can be difficult for a teacher to find the time and motivation to deal with violence and bullying in a democratic and constructive way.

This module aims to enable teachers to move in this direction.

## How is this linked to democratic culture and CDC?

Several competences and behaviours as described in the CDC model can empower this process.

### Values

The values described in the CDC depict the fundamental basis of a democratic culture. There is no issue of choice, those values draw the red lines and describe the preconditions of democracy in action. A violence-free school community is unconditionally based on valuing human dignity and human rights, with people who not only believe that human rights, and especially the rights of children, should always be protected and respected, but who are also ready to argue for it.

### Attitudes

Attitudes, or how to act on what one believes, are the life breath of democratic culture. Respect describes the application of human rights, acknowledging the equality of all as human beings, regardless of their world views, cultural background, socio-economic status, religion, gender, opinions and ideas – unless they violate human rights. This is not a condition, but means giving space to others to express their different opinions and ideas. Self-efficacy empowers every member of the school community with the confidence needed to overcome difficult situations, tackle new challenges, and deal with changing situations and unexpected events. Putting it into practice is supported by the opportunities offered by tolerance of ambiguity, working towards feeling comfortable with positive interaction and engagement with people who have different points of view or cultural affiliations, not being blocked by ambiguity, uncertainty and unpredictability, and this enhances the sensitivity needed to understand violence and deal with it.

### Skills

Skills, or how to do something, are the tools of democratic culture. They are needed in order to understand situations, analyse them and decide about actions. Analytical and critical thinking skills are needed in order to be able to distinguish between statements of fact and opinion, arguments and information, evidence and experience, claims and beliefs. Acquiring those skills is also useful in better understanding the factors that produce violence, formulating arguments and being able to present them. Skills of listening and observing are needed in order to deal with violence at a deeper level, decoding not only the verbal but also the body language, the communication code of the individuals. Empathy is needed because it means the possibility of understanding what factors have led to each act of aggression. Co-operation and conflict-resolution skills open up new ways of fostering a democratic culture through a whole-school approach, while flexibility and adaptability make things more possible, not only enabling an understanding of what causes violence and how it is expressed, but also helping to find solutions that reflect a democratic culture at school.

### Knowledge and critical understanding

Knowledge and critical understanding form the basis for reasoned arguments and good practice. This confronts the isolation of a school community and facilitates the link to the global school system, as well as to the local and wider community. In particular, knowledge and critical understanding of oneself helps one to define personal characteristics, prejudices and stereotypes, as well as emotions and feelings that influence behaviour, enabling one to reflect critically, take them into account and make clear and conscious decisions.

## Guiding questions for the reflection process and beyond

### Teaching

- Do I give space to every student to express him/herself without exclusions?

- Do I model and nurture a culture of mutual acknowledgement and support?
- Am I interested and capable of understanding not only what is said, but the way it is said, the body language and the hidden messages conveyed?
- Am I aware of the violence that my teaching methods may include?
- Regardless of my special subject, do I include elements and competences of democratic culture that prevent and confront violence and (cyber)bullying in my expected learning outcomes?

### School culture

- Is violence and (cyber)bullying at school an issue of my concern?
- How sensitive am I to detecting violence at school in all its forms?
- How much am I aware of any kind of violence at school, wherever it may come from?
- Are my class rules non-violent or do they confront violence?
- How do I react when violent things happen at school?

### Own competences

- Am I ready to temporarily suspend judgment in order to understand aggressive behaviours?
- Do I show interest and empathy for the victim, the aggressor and the bystanders, allowing them to re-establish their self-esteem?
- Am I aware of my own prejudices and stereotypes that prevent me from understanding the reasons for violence?
- Am I interested in learning and being critical of myself and the world in order to understand what causes violence and to search for good practice?
- Am I clear about what violence is and how age plays a role?

## Further reading and resources


Bäckman E. and Trafford B. (2007), "Democratic governance of schools", Council of Europe, available at: https://rm.coe.int/16804952d0.

Council of Europe (n.d.), "Preventing bullying and violence", Free to Speak, Safe to Learn campaign, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/preventing-bullying-and-violence.

Council of Europe (2011-12), "Education for the prevention of violence in schools", Pestalozzi Training Units, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/pestalozzi/vio.

Council of Europe (2017), "Addressing violence in schools through education for democratic citizenship and human rights education", available at: https://rm.coe.int/16807004db.

Keen E. and Georgescu M. (ed.) (2020), *Bookmarks – A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education*, Council of Europe, available at: https://rm.coe.int/bookmarksen2020-web2/16809e5789.


## Reflecting on scenario 1 – Is it a game or is it bullying?

Mrs X, a primary school teacher, is on the way home after an ordinary day at school. Thinking of her day, she remembers something that happened in the morning. She was on the way to the teachers' office. She had just arrived at school, being late due to an unexpected traffic jam. It was break time; students were out in the school yard. As she hurried her way to the teachers' office, just for a few seconds some distance away from her, she saw some students playing. Here is the students' dialogue:

"Hey give me my book back, give it back."
"You want it? Why should we?"
"Give it me back."
"Yeah sure!"
"Give it me back."
"Too slow, too slow."

She entered the office just to leave her things with no time for coffee, she had to go straight to class.

## Reflection

### Step 1: Describe the situation

- What was possibly happening? Was it bullying or just students playing? Identify elements in the scenario to support your decision.
- There were eight students in this scene – the book owner, two boys and a girl throwing the book to one another, two girls and two boys watching. They act differently. Can you guess their possible thoughts and feelings?

Step 1.1. (optional): See footnote for a more in-depth reflection on the situation.[11]

Mrs X, as she tries to decide if what she saw was students playing or bullying, remembers the last time they had a discussion in teachers' council about similar issues. There were two main streams of thought: one that believed that every act that involves any kind of violence is bullying and another that stated that it is normal for kids that age to use what adults call violence. Limits are not so strict.

In order to form an opinion about what that incident was, she needs to analyse several factors (for example language used, body language, group relationships).

Mrs X thinks that she witnessed a bullying scene but in order to decide, she needs to take both sides' arguments into consideration.

Take notes using the following table. Before you form an opinion, try to depict both sides' views.

**Key elements and dimensions of an incident**

| **Story** | **If it is a game** | **If it is bullying** |
|---|---|---|
| Characteristics | | |
| **Elements** | | |
| Characters | | |
| Relationships | | |
| Context | | |
| Structure | | |
| Meaning | | |
| **Dimensions** | | |
| Spatial | | |
| Temporal | | |
| Emotion | | |

(Inspired by Council of Europe (2017), *We can! – Taking action against hate speech through counter and alternative narratives*, p. 73.)

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

11. The short film *Beat Bullying*, produced by the Council of Europe, demonstrates the harmful effects of bullying in a child-friendly manner and how citizenship education programmes can equip children with the necessary understanding and skills to stop bullying. You can watch it here www.coe.int/en/web/children/bullying or here www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5sB7mndfrQ&feature=emb_logo. You can find the scene that Mrs X recalled in the short film from 0.05 to 0.22.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 8. self-efficacy;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 11. analytical and critical thinking skills;
- 12. skills of listening and observing;
- 17. conflict-resolution skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Write a different possible reaction of Mrs X, with the inspiration of the descriptors. After working on CDC, how could Mrs X react differently to how she did?

## Reflecting on scenario 2 – Is cyberbullying a school issue?

### They have decided to report it

Four students have come to Mr Z, a maths teacher, reporting that one of them (they did not say who) has been a cyberbullying victim. Someone has uploaded pictures of her on social media and she has already received many nasty comments. They know that many students have seen them and some have started avoiding her, calling her names, whispering and gossiping about her. Mr Z told them that he will comment about cyberbullying in the classroom and he will bring the issue to the teachers' council. As the students left, they seemed empowered and relieved.[12]

### Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

Mr Z prepares to present the issue to the teachers' council meeting tomorrow. Having informally talked about social media at school, he knows that there are teachers that are of the opinion that once cell phones are forbidden at school, issues like this do not interest the teachers' council. He thinks about presenting the incident as an opportunity to work on fostering the democratic school culture.

Write down three basic arguments based on the idea that the school should deal with the issue.

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

12. In the short video *Beat Bullying* you can watch what the students have reported to Mr Z and how they reacted after talking to him, in the clip from 08.11 to 08.47.

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 12. skills of listening and observing;
- 13. empathy;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 17. conflict-resolution skills;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

### Step 3: Looking ahead

Mr Z promised the four students that he will comment about cyberbullying in the classroom and he will bring the issue to the teachers' council. Based on your selections of competences and their descriptors, propose up to three concrete ways that mastering your selected competences could change Mr Z's reactions to the students.

## Planning and evaluating an educational activity

### The reflective circle related to teaching

#### Planning

- What are my goals?
- Planning teaching (content, methods, process)
- What does it require from me? (See also questions in the introduction of this chapter.)
- Which CDC are relevant?

#### Doing

- Observing

#### Reflecting

- What happened and how was I a part of it?

#### Adapting

- Identifying further needs.

## Choose or develop an educational activity

This section provides you with some examples of activities that are closely linked to the principles and competences introduced in the first part of this module. Choose one that you want to bring to the classroom. Of course, you can also adapt it or develop your own activities/projects.

Examples of learning activities focusing on preventing violence and bullying:

Del Felice C. and Ettema M. (eds) (2017), *We can! – Taking action against hate speech through counter and alternative narratives*, Council of Europe, available at: https://rm.coe.int/wecan-eng-final-23052017-web/168071ba08.

- 7.1 – Phase 1: Assess the opposite narrative
- 7.2 – Phase 2: Design the counter narrative
- 7.3 – Phase 3: Implement the counter narrative
- 7.4 – Phase 4: Monitor and evaluate the counter narrative.

Keen E. and Georgescu M. (eds) (2020), *Bookmarks – A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education*, Council of Europe, available at: https://rm.coe.int/bookmarksen2020-web2/16809e5789.

- Confronting cyberbullying, p. 66
- Wear and share, p. 135.

Give a title to this reflection activity (this will help you return to your notes later).

### Step 1: Selecting competences and descriptors

- Identify the three competences you consider the most important for you as a teacher when you run this activity/project and select relevant descriptors for these competences.
- You might also think about previous teaching situations where you already showed/needed these competences.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

### Step 2: Self-observation during the activity and reflection

- During the activity, pay attention to your language, including your body language.
- Reflect on the activity – How did you experience the activity? Include references to competences and descriptors (for example "when xx happened, it was useful that I reflected about xx before the activity; when yy happened I wasn't able to act due to attitude yy; when abc happened, I had the feeling that I acted pretty close to descriptor abc").
- What went well, what helped you to put into practice the chosen competences?
- What made it difficult to put into practice the chosen competences?
- What would you do in a different way next time?

### Step 3: Debriefing/meta-reflection

- What did you like about this reflection sequence?
- What was difficult?
- What did you learn?
- How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC?

### Step 4: Repeat the reflective circle

- Repeat the observation exercise with another activity by integrating the insights.
- When you implement a sustainable tool (class rules, evaluation tool, etc.), make sure that you reflect on the process on a regular basis.

Module 4

# Dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news

## Introduction

### What does dealing with propaganda, misinformation and fake news mean in the school context?

As part of their mission to prepare young people to exercise their role as citizens effectively, schools have the responsibility to support the development of the competences that are needed to access, understand and use information about public issues. This also includes developing resilience to manipulation through propaganda and misinformation.

### How is this linked to democratic culture and CDC?

Analytical and critical thinking skills are essential for being able to identify propaganda, misinformation and fake news, to deconstruct the respective messages and identify the actual motives of those initiating or transmitting the messages, as well as to check information and identify alternative information about the issue. In certain cases, this should also be closely associated with listening and observing skills. As propaganda and misinformation is often circulated via mass media, critical understanding of the media, as well as critical understanding of the topic of the specific messages, are needed.

All three categories of values included in the model of competences for democratic culture are relevant, especially in the case of messages focusing on sensitive topics involving threats to the human dignity and human rights of certain groups, cultural diversity in society or controversial situations related to democratic practices, justice or the rule of law. Also, messages deliberately communicating false information may raise the issue of valuing fairness.

Civic-mindedness is needed to respond appropriately when encountering propaganda and misinformation, by revealing manipulation attempts or reporting as abusive any messages which contain hate speech. Tolerance of ambiguity is also needed when various perspectives on the same situation or content are considered or when incomplete, ambiguous or inconsistent information is given. Openness to other beliefs and perspectives on the world is important to avoid labelling certain messages wrongly as false where they simply relate to a different worldview.

Autonomous learning skills and self-efficacy may also be necessary to organise the process of gathering information to check the suspected fake news, to believe in one's own capacity to distinguish misinformation and to not fall into the trap of believing propaganda messages. Knowledge and critical understanding of the self, of language and communication are also important in this context.

Empathy is essential for understanding the reasons and effects of messages analysed from at least two points of view, understanding how things look from the perspective of authors of propaganda messages in order to uncover their real motives and goals, and seeing the content of the message from the perspective of the members of groups that are portrayed in a negative way in order to understand the consequences of prejudiced and discriminatory messages.

### Guiding questions for the reflection process and beyond

#### Teaching

- Are there opportunities during classes to discuss current public issues?
- Are there activities planned explicitly to focus on media, news, propaganda and misinformation?

- Do I focus on offering pupils opportunities to reflect on their values and develop the attitudes, skills and critical understanding needed to understand, identify and respond appropriately to propaganda, misinformation and fake news?

### School culture/classroom culture

- How can I contribute to having the school recognise the importance of critical understanding of current public issues?
- Is there a way in which pupils can use their competences and express their views in a critical but respectful way, such as a school blog, website or social media page?

### Own competences

- What competences do I need in order to support pupils to develop their competences?
- What are my strengths?
- What would I like to know more about?

## Further reading and resources

Council of Europe (n.d.), "Making children's and students' voices heard", Free to Speak – Safe to Learn, Democratic Schools for All project, available at www.coe.int/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/making-children-and-students-voices-heard.

Council of Europe (n.d.), "Media and information literacy", Digital citizenship education, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/media-and-information-literacy.

Council of Europe (n.d.), "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture", available at: www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture.

Council of Europe (2018), "CDC and building resilience to radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism" in *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture – Guidance for Implementation*, Volume 3, available at https://rm.coe.int/guidance-document-6-cdc-and-building-resilience-to-radicalisation-lead/1680993aa9.

Conceptual clarifications connected with research references are also provided in the study commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs: European Parliament (2019), "Disinformation and propaganda – impact on the functioning of the rule of law in the EU and its Member States", available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608864/IPOL_STU(2019)608864_EN.pdf.

## Reflecting on scenario 1 – Students convinced by misinformation

During a geography lesson, where the issue of human-generated climate change is briefly addressed, three of the pupils, all friends, react by affirming that they do not believe it is true, stating that there is evidence they have seen on social media that this is all a manipulation by a group of influential people who control or want to control the world. They also say that they believe this idea because some high-level politicians in different countries, who received the votes of many people, also believe this is true.

The teacher responds by saying that there is solid scientific evidence to support the impact of humans on climate change but that there is not enough time to address this issue during the lesson because there are many more issues to cover. She also encourages pupils to verify the information by doing research online on their own. The three pupils smile and whisper among themselves that the teacher has fallen for the climate change propaganda.

During the following lesson, the three pupils confirm in front of the whole class that they have done further online research and have found extensive and strong evidence in favour of their initial opinion, that climate change is a hoax. The teacher is taken by surprise but thanks the pupils and says that the issue will be addressed during the next lesson.

## Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- How can you explain the attitude of the three students?
- Can you think about how these kinds of messages, denying aspects of reality or promoting conspiracy theories, can reach out to people and convince them?
- What do you think about the reaction of the teacher?
- What else could the teacher have done?
- How could the situation continue?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 5. respect;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 11. analytical and critical thinking skills;
- 13. empathy;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 19. knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

**Possible continuation of the scenario**

During the next lesson, the teacher informs the class that they will work for several hours on the issue raised by the three colleagues and, at the same time, touch upon other related topics. All pupils are expected to take an active role, do individual and group research, just as their colleagues have already started to do. The teacher organises a series of activities where people study different sources of information together and learn to check the validity of various sources and identify the possible hidden intentions behind some statements and publications.

### Step 3: Reflect on the situation

- How did the teacher resolve the situation?
- Which CDC did this situation require from the teacher?
- Does this solution resemble the alternative scenario you have outlined in step 2 of this activity? If not, what are the differences?
- Under what conditions can such a solution be implemented? What can be done in your work context?
- Would this approach work on other messages denying reality (e.g. the existence of Covid-19) or on other conspiracy theories?

### Step 4: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC with regard to tackling propaganda, misinformation and fake news?

## Reflecting on scenario 2 – Deconstructing fake news about migration

At the start of the first lesson of the day, when entering the classroom, the English language teacher notices that a group of students were engaged in a heated debate and could hardly stop to pay attention to what the teacher wants to say. The teacher asks what the issue was and two students share that they were talking about some news they saw in the morning on their social media accounts related to the imminent danger represented by a large number of immigrants attempting to enter the country illegally and most likely carrying the coronavirus, putting all the population at risk of facing a new Covid-19 outbreak.

The teacher hesitates between telling students to stop their discussions and focus on the lesson or addressing the issue directly.

Finally, the teacher decides to dedicate the lesson to addressing the news that the students were talking about.

### Reflection

#### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario:

- What do you think about the reaction of the teacher?
- What else could the teacher have done?
- What aspects of the subject of the news generated such a heated response from the students?
- What risks can be associated with avoiding the topic or with addressing it openly?
- How could the situation continue?

#### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 2. valuing cultural diversity;
- 9. tolerance of ambiguity;
- 11. analytical and critical thinking skills;
- 12. skills of listening and observing;
- 19. knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication;
- 20. knowledge and critical understanding of the world (media, law and migration).

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

**Possible continuation of the scenario**

The teacher combines an important learning outcome envisaged in the curriculum, related to developing a critical understanding of language and communication, with the need to address the hot issue of some fake news about migration. The teacher asks the students who saw the news to share it with their other colleagues, and students work in groups to analyse the text of the news, by considering questions like: how can we verify the source of the news? Is it a credible source? What elements of the text make the news seem authentic? How can the aspects reported be verified from alternative credible sources? The teacher is careful to avoid putting in a negative light the students who initially saw the fake news and to underline their contribution to the process of deconstructing the message and understanding that it was fake news. The teacher can encourage students to check the news they see and may refer to various fact-checking websites.

### Step 3: Reflect on the situation

- How did the teacher resolve the situation?
- Which CDC did this situation require from the teacher?
- Does this solution resemble the alternative scenario you have outlined in step 2 of this activity? If not, what are the differences?
- Under what conditions can such a solution be implemented? What can be done in your work context?

### Step 4: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC with regard to tackling propaganda, misinformation and fake news?

Module 5

# Tackling discrimination

## Introduction

### What does "tackling discrimination" mean?

Stereotypes, prejudice and ideologies of inequality violate the dignity and integrity of the targeted individual or group. They also legitimise discrimination and, at times, oppression and violence. It is, therefore, a major task of the school to counteract and prevent prejudice and discrimination.

Discrimination and prejudice can take open and hidden forms; they can be expressed through stereotyping and prejudiced language or aggressive actions. Students, teachers and parents can be targets of prejudice and discrimination, but they also can be bearers of biased views. If a majority of teachers and students hold prejudiced views about minorities, this most likely results in discriminatory practice and bullying.

Discriminatory practices and structures in education harm the marginalised learners. Teachers and school leaders need the competence to uncover, reflect upon and counteract all forms of expression of prejudice. Building fully inclusive school environments which empower all children regardless of background and identity requires a systematic reflection about teaching practice in the classroom and the school's institutional culture.

Tackling discrimination appropriately also requires the ability of teachers to address an important dilemma: teaching about discrimination and promoting non-discrimination can lead to discrimination. For example, when talking about victims of racism, students belonging to certain groups can feel stigmatised as victims.

### How is this linked to democratic culture and CDC?

An element of personal as well as professional reflection is essential to the tackling of discrimination in schools. In particular, it is important for school staff to be able to consider their own beliefs and values with regard to discrimination, including their own unconscious biases and prejudices.

At the same time, schools can then turn to the longer-term aspiration of creating a culture of non-discrimination. Central to this process is the challenge of negative stereotyping and discriminatory practice, both in classrooms and around the school.

In the context of developing non-discriminatory teaching and school culture, a number of CDC are relevant.

The teacher's awareness of the value of cultural diversity and openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices is crucial for recognising and acknowledging all students' capabilities and resources.

Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and equality is the basis for anti-discriminatory engagement, including the will to constantly make one's practice fairer.

Maintaining respect is very important in the interactions with students about these topics.

In order to uncover all forms of prejudice and discrimination, teachers need knowledge and critical understanding of prejudice and discrimination. Becoming aware of one's own biases and prejudice requires analytical and critical thinking skills.

The teacher's capacity to engage in acknowledging relationships and to create inclusive learning environments is strengthened by developing skills of listening and observing, respect and empathy.

Also, teachers need to be aware of their own prejudices and the ways in which their own social and cultural affiliations influence their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, all these being important aspects of knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

## Guiding questions for the reflection process and beyond

Challenging stereotypes and discrimination goes along with the promotion of inclusion and an appreciation of the benefits of diversity in school life. The following questions provide you with perspectives for the reflection on and development of teaching and school practice.

### Teaching

As a teacher, do I:

- recognise prejudiced views and discriminatory behaviour among students and colleagues?
- use inclusive language?
- make students critically reflect on issues related to prejudice and discrimination?
- identify and challenge stereotypes and biases in textbooks and the curriculum?

### Classroom culture/school culture

As a teacher, how can I:

- establish human rights, equality and respect as a value base in the classroom?
- establish relations of trust and mutual acknowledgement with students, colleagues and parents?
- foster empathy and mutual support among students?
- empower marginalised students?

### Own competences

- Which competences do I need in order to prevent prejudice and create inclusive learning environments?
- What are my strengths?
- What would I like to know more about in order to develop my CDC and my role as an inclusive and democratic teacher?

## Further reading and resources

Council of Europe (n.d.), "Tackling discrimination", Free to Speak – Safe to Learn, Democratic Schools for All project, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/tackling-discrimination.

Council of Europe (2016), *All different all equal – Education pack*, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/-/all-different-all-equal-2016-education-pack.

Keen E. and Georgescu M. (ed.) (2020), *Bookmarks – A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education*, Council of Europe, available at: https://rm.coe.int/bookmarksen2020-web2/16809e5789.

## Reflecting on scenario 1 – The new student

During a break, the teacher observes how a student, who started at this school just the day before, stands alone in the school yard, while all the other students stand and sit in small groups. In one of the groups, students start giggling and pointing at the new student. The teacher hears the word "gypsy" being whispered. The new student lives in a poorer neighbourhood in the city and her clothes are old-fashioned and worn down. This is what the jokes seem to be about. The new student obviously feels very uncomfortable.

The teacher watches the scene from a distance and is very unsure as to what to do. As the break is soon over, he tells the students to go back to their classrooms.

## Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- What do you think about the teacher's attitude?
- How could you improve the scenario in a way that is supportive for the new student?
- How could the teacher address the other students' attitude?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 2. valuing cultural diversity;
- 4. openness to cultural otherness;
- 5. respect;
- 12. skills of listening and observing;
- 13. empathy;
- 19. knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

**Possible continuation of the scenario**

In the next social studies lesson, the teacher shows the film *All that we share*[13] followed by group work on "putting others and oneself in boxes".

During the assignment, the students get engaged in intense discussions about which kind of "boxes" of people exist in our minds and experiences with being put into boxes one does not feel comfortable with.

At some point the teacher asks the students to write down encounters with co-students or other people which made them reconsider the "boxes" they had placed these persons in.

### Step 3: Reflect on the situation

- How did the teacher resolve the situation?
- Which CDC did this situation require from the teacher?
- Does this solution resemble the alternative scenario you have outlined in step 2 of this activity? If not, what are the differences?
- What are your insights after reflecting on this scenario and comparing it to your own practice?

### Step 4: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC with regard to tackling discrimination?

## Reflecting on scenario 2 – A teacher compromising a minority student

In a social science lesson, the topic of making immigration work is on the lesson plan. The teacher lectures about the challenges immigrants can meet in their new country. At one point she turns to Ali, who came to

13. You can watch it here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc.

this country together with his parents a year ago, and asks him: "How was it when you arrived and did not know our language and all our cultural habits?"

Some of the other students start to giggle as the student who has been addressed by the teacher flushes red in the face and does not say a word.

## Reflection

### Step 1: Reflect on the situation

Take notes about the scenario.

- What do you think about the teacher's attitude?
- How could you improve the scenario in a way that is supportive for the new student?
- How could the teacher address the other students' attitude?

### Step 2: Select competences and descriptors

- Identify up to three competences you think are most important for the teacher in such a situation.
- Identify relevant descriptors for each selected competence.

In order to choose competences and their descriptors, use the following link: https://trt.intercultural.ro/descriptors.

Choose one of the options below:

1. select from the whole list of 20 competences;

2. select from a list of seven suggested competences:

- 1. valuing human dignity and human rights;
- 5. respect;
- 7. responsibility;
- 12. skills of listening and observing;
- 13. empathy;
- 14. flexibility and adaptability;
- 18. knowledge and critical understanding of the self.

Rewrite the improved scenario with the inspiration of the descriptors for the selected competences.

**Possible continuation of the scenario**

As the teacher realises that she has put the new student in an uncomfortable position, she tells all students to write down ideas on how everyone can help newcomers to be welcomed in society on to small pieces of paper. All the papers are collected in a box and each student picks one paper, which they read out loud in the class. All ideas are noted down on the black/whiteboard. Afterwards, the students discuss in groups how the school community can be more welcoming for newcomers.

### Step 3: Reflect on the situation

- How did the teacher resolve the situation?
- Which CDC did this situation require from the teacher?
- Does this solution resemble the alternative scenario you have outlined in step 2 of this activity? If not, what are the differences?

### Step 4: Looking ahead

Take your findings and the guiding questions in the introduction of this module as a starting point for a reflection about the next steps. How do you want to proceed in order to develop your practice and your own CDC with regard to tackling discrimination?

## Planning and evaluating an educational activity

## The reflective circle related to teaching

### Planning

- What are my goals?
- Planning teaching (content, methods, process)
- What does it require from me? (Also see questions in the introduction of this module.)
- Which CDC are relevant?

### Doing

- Observing

### Reflecting

- What happened and how was I a part of it?

### Adapting

- Identifying further needs

## Choose or develop an educational activity

This section provides you with some examples of activities that are closely linked to the principles and competences introduced in the first part of this module. Of course, you can adapt these activities or choose any other activity or project:

Examples of learning activities focusing on tackling discrimination:

Dembra (n.d.), "Identity map", available at: https://dembra.no/en/blog/opplegg/identitetskart/.

Council of Europe (2020), *Compass – Manual for human rights education with young people*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg:

- "Take a step forward", pp. 283-287, available at: www.coe.int/en/web/compass/take-a-step-forward.

Keen E. and Georgescu M. (ed.) (2020), *Bookmarks – A manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education*, Council of Europe, available at: https://rm.coe.int/bookmarksen2020-web2/16809e5789.

- "Roots and branches", pp. 108-111.
- "Saying it worse", pp. 112-116.

Being a "democratic teacher" requires more than just being good at one's subject. Among other things, it requires the ability to listen to learners, colleagues and parents and openness to the cultural affiliations and practices they bring to the educational process, empathy and a sense of responsibility for the well-being and empowerment of all learners.

The teacher self-reflection tool aims to support teachers and other educators to develop their own competences relating to democratic culture and a "democratic professional ethos", which builds on the values of democracy, human rights and intercultural dialogue. It offers guidance throughout this development process and on working with the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). The tool can be used as a means of getting acquainted with the RFCDC, but it can also be used as a companion to self-reflection on teaching and democratic competences.

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