High level Education Forum on

Education Systems in Europe in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century

Kyiv, Ukraine

Thursday 22 – Friday 23 September 2011

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

The Council of Europe discussed the role of education in building a culture of living together at a Forum organised on 22 and 23 September in Kyiv under the Ukrainian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The guiding question of the Forum was whether education is doing everything it can to sustain open democratic societies in Europe. In the aftermath of the tragic events in Norway on 22 July 2011, we are even more aware of the pressing need to explore what education can do to help build a society respectful of democracy and human rights in which people can live peacefully together. There is a shared understanding of the need to continue and deepen our deliberation on what could be improved in our education systems to reduce threats and increase the commitment to democracy and tolerance, and to enhance our policies and actions in this area.

Democracy is perceived to be under stress – even under threat - today in Europe. Trust in, respect for, knowledge of, and interest in democratic institutions and political processes appear to be decreasing among citizens. The traditional norms and values concerning the individual’s obligation and responsibility to society have been weakening. There is a growing culture of individualism, a pre-eminence of self-interest and a preference for individual benefit over concerns for the common good, prioritising personal advancement and gratification over moral and social meanings and of giving priority to private over public space. The ethical awareness and disposition in our citizens seems to be weakening. Populism and radicalism are widespread in our societies and support for xenophobic and populist parties is on the rise. As European societies are becoming less cohesive, social bonds are weakening, and this weakens social capital development which is vital for vibrant democratic life. A final challenge to our educational system comes from a more positive development. European societies are experiencing increased democratisation of all spheres of society and new modes of democratic politics. All of these new modes of participation tend to be more demanding in terms of citizens’ know-how and expertise. They call for better-informed and better educated citizens.

In the times of rapid and profound changes in our societies, there is an increased need for education institutions – at all levels and in all areas – to systematically, intentionally and continuously develop their contribution to maintenance and advancement of democratic order and to culture of living together peacefully. Within notions of fragmented societies, the role played by education tout court may be seen as an integrative force. No other public service has such a durable, continuous and intense contact with the citizens. The argument in favour of a lifelong trajectory of education for democratic citizenship is that each life stage brings about specific political realities and in each stage one is able to reflect on these realities with more advanced levels of cognitive, practical and emotional maturity. Particular attention needs to be addressed to civic learning in the vocational training institutions, in which there are particularly many drop outs, many from immigrant families and where the curriculum per se is not ‘automatically’ programmed to civic learning. Another critical area is continuous teaching and learning of teachers in citizenship education, and linking teaching and learning to research in this area. Education for democratic citizenship needs to be continuously reviewed and revised to better address the emerging challenges to the democratic order, and to ensure sustainable development of democratic practice. A close and active cooperation of education institutions with the different stakeholders in the society - the family, school, the local community, the media, digital networks, local, regional and national authorities and civil society organisations – is paramount.

In order to manage and build on the increasing diversity of school and university environments, multiple competences that go beyond academic subjects need to be developed. Indeed, what we should be aiming at are new generations of citizens informed and competent in exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and who have developed the disposition to active participation for common good, i.e. citizens who will exercise their political liberties responsibly and use their leisure fruitfully. Particular attention needs to be directed to migrants or members of minorities, who often badly need appropriate education and language training to help them become more successful and more active participants in society. Teacher education is critical and needs to be continuous. It is needed not only to stimulate the development of civic competences, but also to be able to intervene in school incidents. Furthermore, in order to succeed, education for active citizenship requires a
democratic environment at education institutions. Student and pupil involvement in decision-making in any domain and at any level is a critical aspect of this and most conducive to citizenship education. Parents’ engagement in school governance and activities is of equal importance. An especially fruitful ground for citizenship education is in the ‘extracurricular’ activities, including volunteer work and community service and linking these to curricular work.

There is an emerging view that the present efforts of European wide cooperation should not be limited to higher education only. The different levels of formal education are intrinsically connected. One cannot achieve high quality higher education if the quality of secondary and primary and pre-primary schooling is poor. In other words, European-wide cooperation at lower educational levels is needed in order to make the European Higher Education Area fully operational. One of the central concerns of a European Education Area thus should be in encouraging and supporting mobility, transparency and comparability of at all levels of formal education. A possible measure to consider could be an extension of the European Qualifications Framework towards developing descriptions of different levels of competence for democratic culture and, in particular, intercultural competences linked to European Qualification Framework’s levels and/or levels of formal education, even if they should not be limited to these. Another one is overcoming language barriers by offering support and encouragement for foreign language learning. A European Education Area should have as the main aim reaching the full potential of European citizens, and – learning from the Bologna Process - this aim would need to be established defined from the very start of the initiative. European-wide cooperation in the area of democratic citizenship education is argued on the basis of the common principles underpinning democracy and rule of law and the international nature of human rights values and obligations. The role of regional cooperation in the area of education in general, and higher education in the context of implementation of European Higher Education Area, has also been emphasised, as exchanges between regional governments tend to be deeper and thus even more fruitful due to the shared histories and commonalities in terms of educational structures and practices, and thus also similar opportunities and challenges for reforms. One area where cooperation has already been particularly fruitful on regional level, and which continues to call for more exchanges and joint initiatives, is developing of national qualification frameworks.

The Council of Europe is a pivotal actor emphasising the role of education for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Through initiating communities of practice addressing the different questions within this area, it has yielded not only policy documents encouraging reform within national education systems, but has also supported and assisted in these reforms through developing methods and material to implement them in practice. The Council of Europe’s role in the area of education for living together peacefully in democratic societies is ever more important in times when education reforms across Europe are conducted under the prism of a global financial crisis and the purposes of education and education priorities tend to be eclipsed by these developments, and when further democratisation and the changes in democratic practices require more skills from citizens. It is therefore, that the participants of the Forum emphasised the need to further strengthen the education programme as a key element in the Council of Europe political mission.
Introduction

The Council of Europe discussed the role of education in building a culture of living together at a Forum organised on 22 and 23 September in Kyiv under the Ukrainian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The guiding question of the Forum was whether education is doing everything it can to sustain open democratic societies in Europe. The Council of Europe has a proven record of emphasising the role of education within its core mission to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In the aftermath of the tragic events in Norway on 22 July 2011, we are even more aware of the pressing need to explore what education can do to help build a society respectful of democracy and human rights in which people can live peacefully together. The person responsible for the killings - the bomb that devastated the government offices in Oslo and the shootings at the youth camp at Utøya - sympathised with extreme parties, with right-wing populism, a resurgent phenomenon that poses a threat to the democratic core of our societies. There is a shared understanding of the need to continue and deepen our deliberation on what could be improved in our education systems to reduce threats and increase the commitment to democracy and tolerance, and to enhance our policies and actions in this area. The Forum addressed three overarching – and interrelated – themes: (1) Education systems in multicultural societies: building a culture of living together; (2) Competences for life in democratic societies in the 21st century, and (3) School education and universities: constructing a common European education area. The point of emphasis was on the system level, i.e. on the policies, legislation and practices developed by public authorities.

Democracy is perceived to be under stress – even under threat - today in Europe (and elsewhere in the Western world). Trust in, respect for, knowledge of, and interest in democratic institutions and political processes appear to be decreasing among citizens (including our students) of democratic societies. The reasons for this trend are multiple and interrelated. Globalisation in terms of worldwide circulation of information, capital, goods, services, and people, and the global interactions that result from these, is transforming every aspect of human activity. Some of the changes that result are exciting, as Professor Srbijanka Turajlić suggested, such as the advances in sciences and technology which make our practical lives easier and more comfortable: those that contribute to health preservation and those that make economic activities more efficient. Other changes are reason for concern and action.

The global interactions and exchanges that underlie globalisation appear to have in common as the predominant drive the pursuit of material well-being, as Srbijanka Turajlić proposed. The traditional norms and values concerning the individual’s obligation and responsibility to society, Turajlić

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1 The author of this report would like to thank to Katia Dolgova –Dreyer and Sjur Bergan for most helpful comments to the draft of this report. Sophie Ashmore’s assistance in obtaining all of the documents and translations has been – as always – impeccable and most helpful. Thanks go also to the workshop rapporteurs: John Hamer, Bernard Wicht and Ligia Deca for their briefing after the workshops.
suggests, have been weakening. There is a growing culture of individualism, a pre-eminence of self-interest and a preference for individual benefit over concerns for the common good, prioritising personal advancement and gratification over moral and social meanings. The ethical disposition in our citizens seems to be weakening. And this especially is an area where our education appears to be failing. Ólöf Ólafsdóttir, Director of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of Council of Europe reminded us that the financial crisis betrays deeper problems with our education – the education of those who wield financial powers, of those who wield political power and of the rest of us who elect the policy makers: ‘That education is – or at least should be – about much more than the technicalities of the stock market or currency policies. Education should be about how we do things, but equally about why we do things. [...] Our specialised programmes in economics are certainly deficient in ethics, in civics, in providing the competences needed to assess risks and to weigh long-term consequences against immediate gain’. Many of the decisions our students and pupils will make in their personal and professional lives will have ethical implications: choosing a political candidate to support; assessing public policies; and so forth. It is, hence, the role of education to help students to enhance their understanding of the ethical implications of their decisions and to fine tune their sense of and interest in the ethical dilemmas surrounding them. This is one way to nurture democratic culture which is essential to bring democratic processes alive. The ability to assess one’s inherited value systems, to deliberate in a principled way about concrete ethical dilemmas and to reflect on moral and political beliefs are critical for individuals’ effective civic agency.

In their lives – as global citizens or living in our increasingly diverse societies – students and pupils will encounter value systems that are very different from their own: from a different culture or a different religious tradition. Social and economic globalization makes such encounters ever more frequent. Our societies are becoming increasingly diverse, especially in terms of culture and religion. While we are ‘blessed with diversity enriching our cultures’, as Vesna Hrvoj-Sic from the Ministry of Science Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia stated in the workshop, such diversity brings about challenges. Ólöf Ólafsdóttir stressed that populism and radicalism are widespread in our societies and support for xenophobic and populist parties is on the rise. Professor Pavel Zgaga quoted from the Council of Europe report of the Group of Eminent Persons “Living together in 21st century Europe” that there are detrimental stereotypes of minorities in the media and public opinion and distorted perceptions of large-scale immigration. This European democracy is now under threat because of the resulting resurgence of intolerance and discrimination. Several speakers at the Forum referred to the financial crisis, and the concern that in dire times – especially with rising unemployment – radicalism and populism flourish. And, as Ólöf Ólafsdóttir reminded us in her address, populism is ‘about everything that education is not: superficiality, ignorance, the lack of will to go deeper than the most superficial and the belief that those who are not exactly like ourselves cannot possibly be as good as we are or have the same rights we do’.

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As European societies are becoming less cohesive, social bonds are weakening, Professor Julie Allen proposed. There is lowered trust, less solidarity, more individualism and this weakens social capital development which is vital for vibrant democratic life. Engaging with cultural diversity in multicultural societies is linked to several related challenges, such as ethnic conflicts and nationalism, the rise of terrorism and global insecurity, all of which pose additional threats and extra challenges to extending and deepening democratisation in Europe and globally.

A final challenge to our educational system comes from a more positive development. European societies are experiencing increased democratisation of all spheres of society and new modes of democratic politics. The processes of traditional representative democracy are complemented (or bypassed) by new types of direct democracy, such as referenda and citizens’ initiatives, that can be found in most polities and at all levels of government, from the local to the supranational. Furthermore, political participation through a new style of advocacy democracy, in which citizens participate in agenda-setting and policy formation directly or through interest groups, is on the rise. The developments in information and communication technologies in particular offer opportunities for innovations in democratic participation. All of these new modes of participation tend to be more demanding in terms of know-how and expertise. They call for better-informed and better educated citizens. Citizens that lack such competences for participation may be left behind thus exacerbating new political inequalities. Germain Dondelinger, Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) of the Council of Europe suggested that the more free a person is to participate in a society, the more autonomous and educated this person needs to be. Mady Delvaux-Stehres, Minister of Education and Vocational Training of Luxembourg likewise proposed that for our democracy to function it has to have informed citizens who are able to participate in debates about complex social issues. This is also an argument for why education is not only about knowledge but also about understanding and the ability to do and not least about developing attitudes. This creates further expectations to educational institutions to help citizens develop the knowledge and skills necessary for interacting with their ever-changing societal and political environments, i.e. there is a need for democratic citizenship education. Education for democratic citizenship acknowledges that democracy is not a finished project, but that it needs to be reconsidered and reformed continuously to respond to emerging challenges in the society.

The role of education, thus, also consists in the promulgation of a culture of democratic participation, which inevitably includes cultivating individuals’ emphatic, developed ethical sense and disposition to act for a greater good. Such a culture also entails a disposition to live together peacefully with those whose backgrounds and opinions are different from our own.
**Education systems in multicultural societies: building a culture of living together**

We are turning to formal education at all levels - the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to higher education – to do its share in the collective effort of revitalising democratic order and contributing to culture of living together peacefully. Every person living in European societies spends at least some years in formal education. Ever larger numbers of citizens spend ever longer periods of their lives enrolled in formal education as we are witnessing an encouraging trend in expansion of lifelong learning and increasing enrolment rates in higher education. No other public service has such a durable, continuous and intense contact with the citizens. In the nature of educational endeavour – learning as acquisition of knowledge and development of skills accompanied by advancing cognitive, practical and emotional maturity – lie ample opportunities for education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. The early years are particularly important for sensitising pupils to questions of tolerance and appreciation of diversity. This is the time when pupils – in preschool and early years in primary education - have not yet firmly developed basic preconceptions about themselves and others which are vital for our understandings and reactions later in life. It is precisely these preconceptions that are so difficult to change or unlearn later on. And higher education on the other end of the spectrum is characterised by more advanced levels of cognitive, practical and emotional maturity; thus, more opportunity for ‘higher learning’ and ‘higher reflection’ on the themes of social and political relevance. In general, years in formal education are those when individuals have more time at leisure to engage in various activities related to democratic citizenship; be that inside the context of their education establishments or outside, such as for example through volunteering. Education institutions have thus an ample, if not incomparable, opportunity to mobilise students towards this goal.

Formal education is a vital aspect of every nation as it serves (or is perceived) as an instrument of social and political socialisation. It is to address issues of nations’ history, culture and institutions, all of them considered significant in the development of citizenship. In many states the responsibility for and competences in formal schooling have been passed from central government to regional level. Even when conducted on subnational level, schooling policies tend to reinforce the shared conceptions of citizenship. These are also the reasons why national public authorities are reluctant to transfer their competences to initiate, implement and enforce common policies in the area of education to supranational institutions. While they do not pool and delegate sovereignty in this area, they often seek intergovernmental cooperation, as will be discussed in the section on the European education area.
Indeed, most government policies and programs for democratic citizenship education in Europe (and across the world) have focused on the school sector aiming to ensure that all young people receive some exposure to learning for democratic citizenship by the time they have finished school. The promotion of democratic citizenship, intercultural understanding and human rights features first of all as an educational objective in several European political systems. For example, the Hungarian Higher Education Act (Section 2(1)f) states as an objective to prepare students ‘to acquire and be advocates of national, European and universal values’ and ‘to be open to social and moral issues’. Similarly, the Finnish legal framework states as a mission of university ‘to educate students to serve their country and humanity’ (Finnish Universities Act 4(1)). Slovak legislation aims at ‘education of professionals with [...] civil and social responsibility’ and ‘in spirit of values of democracy, humanism and tolerance’ (Slovak Higher Education Act, Section 4(1)a and b). Furthermore, in some countries democratic citizenship education has been introduced as a statutory subject in the national secondary schools curricula. Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann shared that in Hungary education for active citizenship and democracy has been a National Core Curriculum priority development area since 1995. Since 2003, in accordance with the aim of developing key European competences at school, the development of civic and social competences has been the responsibility of the national education system. The new National Core Curriculum that has been drafted includes several instruments in the area of democracy education; for example it introduces community service in the school framework and voluntary work as compulsory in order to pass the Matura or final exam with the objective to develop solidarity and social trust.

The participants in the Forum restated the benefits of formal engagement with democratic citizenship education in all levels of formal education - pre-primary, primary and secondary school level as well as in general and vocational education and training to higher education. The argument in favour of a lifelong trajectory of education for democratic citizenship is that each life stage brings about specific political realities and in each stage one is able to reflect on these realities with more advanced levels of cognitive, practical and emotional maturity. As Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann, Hungarian Minister of State for Education stated: ‘We are not born into the world as active and responsible citizens: rather we become that way due to the influence of our education, first and foremost that which we receive from the community. Active citizenship cannot be learned and taught only at school, through the education system: it must be continuously developed as part of a life-long learning process’. Perhaps one area where particular attention should be paid, as Elin Ruud, Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research noted, is civic learning in the vocational training institutions, in which there are particularly many drop outs, many from immigrant families and where curriculum per se is not ‘automatically’ programmed to civic learning such as for example in humanities and social sciences. Another critical area is – as will be further discussed in the next section – the continuous education of teachers.
Democratic citizenship education is – in different ways at different education levels – first and foremost about encouraging students and pupils to engage with questions of democratic citizenship and think critically about them. It is about purposefully creating opportunities within formal educational settings to engage students in addressing the social and political realities that surround them, raise their concern about and interest in these realities, then to formulate their own views about them and to be able to deliberate about them. In a way, education for democratic citizenship should continuously accompany the practice of citizenship and offer a space for reflection, enhancing understanding, and contestation.

Education for democratic citizenship needs to be continuously reviewed and revised to better address the emerging challenges to the democratic order, and to ensure sustainable development of democratic practice. Over the past decades, there has been a growing interest in the concept of citizenship across European countries. The reasons for this lie especially in the implications of political globalisation, such as global migration flows and diversity of inhabitants – citizens and non-citizens – due to migrations. These developments brought forward the popular concern over the maintenance and development of a sustainable democratic order and culture when our societies are becoming increasingly diverse and fragmented. This concern, in turn, instigated interest in democratic citizenship education and - more broadly - in the role of education, which is called into service to help societies tackle the challenges posed by increased and increasing diversity.

Within notions of fragmented societies, the role played by education institutions may be seen as an integrative force. As Mady Delvaux-Stehres, Minister of Education and Vocational Training of Luxembourg, suggested, in the context of our societies consisting of individuals who come from different cultural, religious, linguistic backgrounds, who do not share a common history, yet need to build a future together, and who may belong to sub communities which refuse the "dominant culture", the school remains the single space where a common understanding of the world, of different cultures can be transmitted. Furthermore, with the emergence of multilevel governance from local to supranational levels, the conceptions of citizenship are also being transformed: from predominance of national citizenship, we are witnessing now a rise in global and European (and other supranational regional) citizenship on supranational level and regional and local on subnational levels. These emerging conceptions call for rethinking of traditional approaches to (national) citizenship education.

The important role of research in – especially - humanities and social sciences for the sustainable development of our democratic societies cannot be overstated. Relevance of arts and humanities, which define our civilisation and culture, and social sciences, which contribute to our understanding of the societies we live in and the people we are, is as high as ever, if not even gaining in importance in times of globalisation and the ever more diverse and fragmented societies in which we live. Research on curricula, pedagogy, monitoring and evaluation of democratic citizenship education is of equal importance. This Forum was not immune to the common tensions in the educational discourse on balancing between the different purposes of education. The discussions have moved, however,
beyond this ‘artificial tension’ to an understanding that the multiple purposes of education – and the development of the whole spectrum of competences – are not mutually exclusive or even conflicting, but are complementing and reinforcing each other.

Anton Dobart, Director General of the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture of Austria, asked a relevant question, however: ‘By being increasingly ambitious in terms of what we expect our kindergartens, schools and higher education institutions to do, are we not overtaxing them?’ He also suggested that in our diverse societies our educational institutions still tend to behave as if we lived in homogeneous societies. They are neither sufficiently approaching challenges nor taking advantages of opportunities that educating for living in diverse societies brings. So we want them to change. But does that mean taxing ever more resources from them? The implicit answer of this Forum was no. The institutions should employ and reemploy existing institutional resources towards this goal.

One key suggestion on how to do that is in collaboration. Ólöf Ólafsdóttir highlighted that although the development of education systems is a public responsibility incumbent upon public authorities, it cannot be exercised by public authorities alone: ‘The participation and contribution of civil society is an essential part of democracy, and the contributions of students, staff, institutional leaders, employers, NGOs and other members of civil society are vital to the development of education in Europe in the 21st century’. Equally, at the institutional level, the democratic citizenship education is not something that ought to be the sole responsibility of teachers. Likewise Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann submitted that individuals can only be educated for active and responsible citizenship ‘if there is close and active cooperation among the different stakeholders in the society: the family, school, the local community, the media, digital networks, local, regional and national authorities and civil society organisations’.

Several participants referred to the role of parents and their active involvement with schools not only by way of teacher-parent conferences, but also in taking an active role in classroom projects and initiatives. Speaking about the Luxembourguian education system, Mady Delvaux-Stehres also pointed out to the more difficult aspects of parent-school relationships. Pupils spend ever more time at school. Schools are places of learning, of social integration, and, given the resignation from family life of increasingly busy parents, also place of upbringing. Parents tend to be overwhelmed with professional and family matters; family breakups are frequent. Schools also need to make special effort to bring parents to schools, to establish a relationship of trust and mutual understanding. The pressure on teachers to adapt in their role to these new circumstances is particularly taxing.
Competences for life in democratic societies in the 21st century

As the Forum’s background document stated, in order to manage and build on the increasing diversity of school and university environments, multiple competences that go beyond academic subjects need to be developed. Indeed, what we should be aiming at are new generations of citizens that are informed and competent in exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and who have developed the disposition to active participation for common good, i.e. citizens who will exercise their political liberties responsibly and use their leisure fruitfully. In other words, we are hoping that education of the future will be able to reverse the trend towards a growing culture of individualism, a pre-eminence of self-interest, weakening ethical sensitivities and a lack of concern for the common good. In a democratic society competences should not only contribute to the preparation of young persons for entry into the labour market, but also for the preparation for life as active citizens in a democratic society and to their personal development.

Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann submitted that in recent decades the role of schools has fundamentally changed: ‘In addition to developing basic skills, schools now also exercise greater responsibility for education in the wider sense and for tasks linked with the socialisation process. Alongside the other traditional players in the field of education (the family, society, the media) schools also have a part to play in teaching children respect for the law, citizenship and private property, the notion of individual and collective responsibility and the norms of social behaviour, and instilling in them a social conscience and social awareness and a capacity for mature, independent and critical thought’. Hence, what is expected from schools and higher education institutions today is, according to Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann, openness to social change, flexibility and the ability to adapt to changes in the immediate or more general environment, and coming up with the right educational responses to the current challenges. According to the Council of Europe’s 2008 White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, “Living together as equals in dignity”, 3 in order to live together in peace ‘people need skills or “competences” which are not automatically acquired, but if they are to be maintained for life, they need to be taught and practised from an early age. School teachers obviously have a vital role to play in helping children develop these skills, but informal education and life-long educational programmes can also play an important role in sustaining them, as well as helping adults who have missed out on this aspect of full-time education’. Furthermore, according to the White Paper, it is particularly important for migrants or members of minorities and their families, who often badly need appropriate education and language training to help them become more successful and more active participants in society.

Equally important, as suggested already earlier is that pupils and students in natural sciences and engineering or medicine – if and as far as these fields tend to focus on ‘technocratic’ competence – do not remain unaffected by developing competences for democratic citizenship. Graduates in the ‘hard sciences’ or business will benefit the society and the economy more if they get a chance to develop some of the competences pursued by democratic citizenship education. Also, these

3 For more see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf.
competences will help them to be more effective in their respective fields – thus they will be more ‘employable’ – since their abilities to interact optimally with their societal and political environments determines to what extent they will be able to lead and to turn their specific subject-related endeavours into accepted practice in their respective communities.

The task is then to explore how to integrate into existing curricula those competences perceived as vital not only to the global workplace but also to the exercise of democratic civic responsibilities within an increasingly diverse European Union. Different methods need to be applied at different education stages, of course. The bottom line should be, however, that each education stage purposefully and systematically (rather than expecting that this will happen automatically) creates opportunities for students and pupils to encounter politically and socially relevant topics, and to do this is a way that will elicit further interest. Importantly, education for democratic citizenship is not about the reproduction of the existing political order; it is about deliberation about and contestation of different interpretations of democracy conducted suitably to different educational stages, of course. It is about encouraging students to engage with questions of democratic citizenship and think critically about them.

There was a strong appreciation in this Forum that civic competences are very difficult to integrate into learning approaches. I am purposefully saying learning approaches, because these competences, as Anton Dobart said, ‘you cannot teach, you must initiate’. Central to the idea of education for sustainable democratic societies is, as the Background document suggested, ‘the understanding that democratic values cannot be acquired through transmission/transfer of knowledge alone, but need to be practised. They are acquired through a holistic ‘learning by doing’ approach, based on experience’. We come back here to the point that citizenship education needs to accompany citizenship in practice.

There was a clear message from Professor Julie Allen’s presentation and from several participants at the Forum of the importance – and the need for overt government policy and targeted institutional action – towards education of educators at all levels in how to conduct education and stimulate learning in the area of democratic citizenship education. The focus here needs to be on the curricular designs, pedagogies and disciplinary expectations for students to improve their democratic capacities and dispositions. The vast majority of our educators actually want to be good teachers and help students develop in every possible aspect. The key is then to support them in their endeavours. One way is to connect education with research on learning. Research from education neuroscience and cognitive psychology informs us that student learning is enhanced when there is active involvement of students in their own learning, when they can monitor their own learning progress, have stronger emotional involvement in the material, but also that students preconceptions are very robust and difficult to unlearn. Technology is an ever more important aspect of our pupils’ and students’ lives, and necessarily needs to be integrated into the learning environment. Furthermore, as Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann suggested, it is important that next to educators, also institutional leaders and administrators obtain education for democratic citizenship.
Teacher education is needed not only to stimulate the development of civic competences, but also for teachers to become more capable of intervening in school incidents and conflicts, as Ellen Lange, Senior Adviser at the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research highlighted. In addition, she also suggested that Council of Europe’s counselling and contribution is needed in order to establish a strategy for approaching the social (media) arenas where extremists, and youth/young adults at risk of becoming extremists, are increasingly networking. Such arenas are becoming important channels of civic participation and we need to relate also to this type of dialogue. Both Vesna Hrvoj-Sic and Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann submitted that violence and bullying at schools pose a serious problem in many countries, and that the foremost attention of governments needs to be prevention. Unquestionably for quality of education in general, and enabling for democratic citizenship education, schools and higher education institutions need to be welcoming, democratic, safe and motivating environments.

Research on citizenship education is united in finding that the most significant “lessons” in citizenship actually are the result of what people learn from their participation in the communities and practices that make up their everyday life. As our children are spending more than half of their waking hours at one education institution or another, they will inevitably form their understandings and their normative systems within the confines of these education institutions. The school, the university is for pupils and students - as well as educators and administrators - a significant space of their life. These institutions are, in fact, 'sites of citizenship' – a term (and a project) introduced by Council of Europe. By being part of the lives of those who are part of these institutions – as students or as staff - they offer a range of practical opportunities in citizenship. Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann suggested from Hungarian experience that participation in voluntary work or community service are excellent tools as regards education for responsible and active citizenship as they enable students to learn from their own experience.

Furthermore, educational institutions through their internal processes, policies and governance also transmit norms, values and attitudes, i.e. the so-called ‘hidden curriculum’. Internal governing practices and processes, relationships with different stakeholders and communities – especially with parents – as Mady Delvaux-Stehres highlighted – all construct social meanings and transmit values. In terms of strategic engagement with democratic citizenship education, it is therefore important to re-evaluate these institutions as ‘sites of citizenship’, i.e. the impact of structures, internal practices and processes, relationships with different stakeholders and communities on the civic learning of students, staff and the wider community. One should expect that expect that principles of democracy, equity and diversity should permeate the entire institutional life, be explicitly included in institutional policies, embedded in structures and practices, and communicated to the stakeholders. As Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann proposed, ‘in order to succeed, education for active citizenship requires a democratic environment at education institutions: an institution that is managed and organised democratically provides a sound basis for a successful civic education’.

The main characteristic of enabling institutional environment for education for participatory democracy is the participation of pupils and students in decision making processes within governance
of educational institutions, as suggested by Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann and reinforced at several occasions at the Forum by Karina Ufert, Vice-chairperson of the European Students’ Union. This participation needs to extend from sub-institutional levels all the way to the national and European levels of education governance. The objective of such democratic participation is manifold. First, it contributes to upholding principles of democratic governance of higher education institutions, which is one of the foundational values in European educational systems. Students as the key constituency in educational establishments ought to participate in decisions that concern their education and learning. Such democratic governance models at institutions inculcate democratic values and norms in pupils and students as citizens.

Second, student participation also has purely educational benefits, for both the students involved and for the student body in general. As Dr. Rozsa Hoffmann described, the participation of pupils in school councils enables these young people to develop competences in how to govern their own communities, to take full measure of the responsibility that goes with their own decisions, the leadership of others and the exercise of choices, and about the use - as opposed to abuse - of rights. The theories of learning inform us that students that are actively involved in the decisions concerning their learning – at micro classroom level as much as in the institutional governance – have increased motivation to learning and improvements and a feeling of ownership to the institution. Furthermore, given student representatives’ first-hand experience as learners, their particular understanding of the realities within educational establishment can lead to helpful insights in the institutional effort towards improving the quality of decisions concerning educational provision. In other words, pupils and students have a unique expertise as participants in the learning process about the learning process which further justifies their involvement in decision making. Finally, student involvement in decision-making in any domain – governing, quality assurance, student experience, and student centred learning within the classroom – and at any level may also lead not only to a more democratic, more engaged and engaging educational environment, but also to a more peaceful one. When students and pupils have a voice in decision-making, this typically enables dialogue and deters protest and unrest.

Participation of stakeholders from the community in educational institutions’ governance and activities is seen vital in the context of education for active and responsible citizenship. Local, regional and national public authorities, civil society organisations, different social service organisations, media, and digital networks should all be involved. An especially fruitful ground can be in linking these stakeholders with the pupil and student groups that compose the vibrant ‘extracurricular’ activities and are an indispensable part of every school. Volunteer work and community service, as already mentioned, can be particularly beneficial instruments. A challenge persists in whether it is possible, and how, to link these extracurricular activities to curricular work in order to create opportunities for reflective learning in citizenship education. Finally, among the community stakeholders, parents and their engagement was highlighted as particularly vital.
School education and universities: constructing a common European education area

Over the past decades, the conception of education policy as conducted exclusively on national level has been challenged by globalization, Europeanization and the emergence of supranational education policy agendas. The common understanding today is that European and international developments must be taken into account when shaping a national education policy since the context in which education institutions operate is becoming increasingly globalised. Several key challenges faced by a single education system – such as education provision for an increasingly diverse body of pupils and students, wide-spread usage of information and communication technologies – are shared also by other systems. Similarly, European societies share the challenges to their democratic order, such as the spread of radicalism and populism, weakening social capital, a lack of trust in public institutions and democratic processes, etc. Professor Pavel Zgaga suggested that as our societies have been changing very fast there emerged an obvious need to renovate education systems and strengthen the role of education in society. Given the sheer complexity and speed of changes due to globalisation, undertaking such reforms for a better quality and efficiency of education systems is no easy task for any public authority, not even from a large country with significant resources to carefully prepare reforms.

The call for more European-wide cooperation to support national education reform processes is, hence, timely and justified. Professor Pavel Zgaga reflected on the various past initiatives to strengthen European cooperation in education and concretise it into policy context, which have occurred under various names, e.g. European space of education, European area of education, European common house of education etc. As the Background document informs us, the best known branch of these efforts has been a gradual development of the European Higher Education Area through the Bologna Process (1999-2010).

The Bologna Process leading to the European Higher Education Area has been experienced as an unprecedented European-level policy process. After the initiation of the Bologna Process, a new policy forum evolved providing a space for various policy initiatives to emerge, develop and possibly diffuse into the national and institutional context. Indeed, the Bologna Process transformed higher education policy making from an almost exclusively national affair with some international influences to one where national policy is systematically considered within a Europe-wide framework. Indeed, higher education had a fairly strong international streak even before Bologna Process. However, international dimension in higher education then focused on cooperation between individuals, institutions and systems rather than international cooperation on developing joint policies and devising similar reforms. As such it recognises that the factors influencing the governments’ and institutional choices regarding higher education policy and strategy are no longer bound to the

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4 There was a precursor meeting at the Sorbonne in 1998 leading to the signature of Sorbonne Joint Declaration: Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system by the four Ministers in charge for France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.
national context. The Process led to the formulation of joint policy recommendations for the structural convergence of higher education degree structures and convergence in terms of quality assurance systems. Both objectives have been seen to support mobility, transparency and quality of European higher education. Equal in importance, the Bologna Process has created opportunities for on-going and iterative interactions within various ‘communities of practice’, i.e. transnational networks of practitioners from public authorities, education institutions and stakeholder organisations, policy researchers and scholars who all have recognised expertise and competence in various thematic clusters or issue areas of higher education policy, and who share a goal of advancing European higher education. Interactions within these communities of practice instigated the development of joint policy recommendations informed by national experiences and exchange of best practices, by developing common understanding of challenges, and mutual learning; all exerting soft pressure for national reforms. At the same time, the Process offers opportunities for regular and continuous evaluation of the reform strategies and policies, and a space for reflection on their success and needs for adaptation. Given that within the communities of practice representatives from various stakeholders and from institutions also participate, and that institutions like the Council of Europe and the European Commission offer their support and assistance, contributes to the quality and depth of initiatives agreed upon.

At the same time, the Bologna Process is a voluntary process – with an open method of cooperation-like governance characteristics. National and regional public authorities responsible for higher education have not pooled sovereignty onto the European Higher Education Area. There is a clearly defined, though voluntary, set of objectives that members freely decide to pursue. Policy goals are agreed internationally but implemented nationally and locally. The joint communiqué by the Ministers contains a public expression of will that implies a degree of commitment to meeting them. At least some benchmarks are defined fairly clearly to measure national performance and progress towards common goals. For example: how many programs have already been translated into Bologna programs, which countries have independent quality assurance and accreditation agency included in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. National performance is assessed through monitoring. Examples of such monitoring reports include: Stocktaking reports, Eurydice studies, Trends reports by the European University Association, Bologna with Student eyes by the European Students’ Union. There is an iterative process of joint evaluation whether the objectives have been reached – through the Bologna Follow Up Group. These evaluations may create moments of self-reflection by public authorities as well as reactions from other national leaders and thus exert peer pressure. Benchmarking may exert influence through naming and shaming weak performers especially when such data reaches public opinion and mass media. The Bologna Process has thus relied on soft law instruments with the underlying expectation that these will lead to convergence of national policies albeit with certain degree of variation ‘coloured’ by particular national, regional and institutional contexts.

There is an emerging view that these efforts of European-wide cooperation should not be limited to higher education only. There have been already a number of joint European projects and actions in
school education which have perhaps not gained so much publicity but they have been equally important. And there is an idea of constructing a common European education area; i.e. extending the Europe-wide cooperation to all education levels. As suggested by Ligia Deca, Coordinator of the Bologna Secretariat, the debate on a possible European Education Area that would include more than higher education is a very relevant one, especially in light of the new decade of the Bologna Process. Indeed, two decades after profound changes in Europe and one and a half years after the European Higher Education Area was officially declared, we are faced with new challenges which are no less complex and demanding than those from two decades ago. The rationales for contemplating the European Education Area are several.

Different levels of formal education are intrinsically connected. One cannot achieve high quality higher education if the quality of secondary and primary and pre-primary schooling is poor. In other words, European-wide cooperation at lower educational levels is needed in order to make the European Higher Education Area fully operational, as suggested by Ligia Deca. She also submitted that it would be perhaps an idea to start the dialogue by looking at the secondary school level, as this would help in advancing the build-up of the European Higher Education Area, especially in the areas of mobility and recognition. There is already a lot of work done in building a dialogue in this level of education at the European level, so the discussion would start from a firm basis. At the same time, there are clear gaps in information on and transparency of credentials on the secondary education level across European Higher Education Area. One of the central concerns of the European Education Area thus should be in encouraging and supporting mobility, transparency and comparability of at all levels of formal education. A possible measure to consider could be an extension of the European Qualifications Framework towards developing descriptions of different levels of competence for democratic culture and, in particular, intercultural competences linked to European Qualification Framework’s levels and/or levels of formal education, even if they should not be limited to these. Another one is overcoming language barriers by offering support and encouragement for foreign language learning.

Ligia Deca emphasised that a European Education Area should have as its main aim reaching the full potential of European citizens, and – learning from the Bologna Process, this aim would need to be established defined from the very start of the initiative. Europe-wide cooperation in the area of democratic citizenship education is argued on the basis of the common principles underpinning democracy and rule of law and the international nature of human rights values and obligations. Both Gvozden Flego, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and Dr Dmytro Tabachnyk, Minister of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine further elaborated on this point by suggesting that priority thematic areas for such an initiative should include: history, literature, civic education (human rights) and languages. Further goals of facilitating access to quality education has also been emphasised by Ólöf Ólafsdóttir.

Ligia Deca also submitted that an initiative towards a European Education Area should be based on common values, and would need to follow good practice from the Bologna Process. Professor Pavel
Zgaga suggested that we should start from the principles of democracy, democratic values and European diversity as stated already in the Bologna Declaration (1999): ‘The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount’. Further on, Professor Zgaga suggested a variation of the wording in the Prague Communiqué (2001); namely that we Europeans need ‘to benefit from the richness of the European [Higher] Education Area including its democratic values, diversity of cultures and languages and the diversity of the [higher] education systems’. ‘Denying these principles’, he said, ‘would seriously endanger our living together – not only in Europe but also in our country states and even on local levels’. Another principle to be observed is of full participation of all stakeholders, and especially pupils and students along with representatives of educators and education institutions. The contribution of stakeholders is essential for quality policy formulation, implementation as well as legitimisation of the policy process.

As the Bologna Process has demonstrated, the form of structured and iterative interactions, supported by common governing bodies is essential for enhancing exchange of experiences and learning opportunities. Representatives from public authorities, stakeholder organisations and education experts interact iteratively within communities of practice in specific thematic areas. Such modes of cooperation not only involve formal policy cooperation and formulation of joint instruments, but also encompass the processes of socialisation and mutual learning. In other words, such cooperation leads to formulation, contestation and the diffusion of ideas, discourses, practices, but also of values, policy paradigms, shared beliefs and norms of conduct within the joint policy space. These are then diffused further into national and institutional context and there further shaped through domestic political discourse and policies, and political and social circumstances and institutions.

**Regional cooperation**

The importance of regional cooperation in the field of education – such as was affirmed at this Forum between the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine - creates enabling circumstances for improved education reform policy making. At the Forum, these regional partners shared national experiences and good practices in the developments and implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area as well as the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. Karine Harutyunyan, Deputy Minister for Education of Armenia, reporting from the regional cooperation meeting submitted ‘all countries around the table had a common history, had and are still going through not easy transitional periods and obviously face similar issues and problems’. Furthermore, ‘although each country has adopted its own path of developing its education sector, [they] still face very similar challenges. The main common areas of difficulty experienced by the countries in the region associated with the European Higher Education Area reform process are not only national, but very often they are regional’. In line with presentation by Stephen Adam, Expert on Qualifications Frameworks of the Council of Europe, several
areas of possible cooperation were highlighted: curriculum development, learning outcomes and qualification types/structures; quality assurance; ECTS, modularity and flexible learning paths; structural, organization and management reforms of higher education; lifelong learning - linking VET and HE reform; mobility of staff, students, courses degrees; employability agenda; Bachelor and Master degrees in the labour market; doctoral degrees; recognition and institution/ministry relationship reform. National qualification frameworks is, hence, one area where cooperation has already been particularly fruitful, and which continues to call for more exchanges and joint initiatives.

Regional cooperation in the field of education is not without a precedent. Several other countries have cooperated – within different degrees of formalisation and different domains – over the years. Some examples include the Nordic cooperation, Franco-German, Benelux and Visegrád. The Nordic cooperation (between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) which takes place on an intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary level is known to be fruitful in the area of education and research. This cooperation has also been extended to the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - in the – so-called Nordplus Framework Programme. The Franco-German partnership also includes educational and research cooperation. In the blueprint for cooperation between the two countries from 2010 to 2020 entitled "Cooperation Agenda between France and Germany for 2020," they have set as goals for Franco-German education cooperation, including French-German bilingual teaching and increasing the number of students who receive joint training. The Benelux Union too has youth policy cooperation as part of the official arrangements of the three Benelux states. The International Visegrád Fund founded in 2000 by the four member states of the Visegrád Group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia has as its primary aim to promote the development of closer co-operation between the member states in the areas of culture, science and research, education, youth exchanges, tourism and cross-border co-operation, through its grant and scholarship programmes. There are several other examples among the Black Sea countries, within Eastern Partnership, and many others.

What is common to all of these examples of regional educational cooperation is that they typically have both political and administrative dimensions. On a political level the partners seek to consult each other on issues related to educational policy making within the EU and the Bologna Process, and coordinate their actions to the extent that this is possible in view of given national interests. They also may decide on joint policies and initiatives when this is mutually desirable. On the administrative level, regional partnerships the cooperation offer a framework for regular and structured interactions and that these relationships in most cases permeate different levels of public authority structures (and often extend also to inter-parliamentary cooperation) as well as within different domains of particular policy areas, such as, for example, higher education, or even on specific policy issues, such

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8 For more see [http://visegradfund.org/](http://visegradfund.org/).
as the above-mentioned national qualifications frameworks. These interactions enable the exchange of information and best practices through regular consultations and joint cooperation projects (funded by the partners or through joint bids for European funding). The emergence of supranational cooperation does not preclude the need for and advantages from regional cooperation. On the contrary, for European level policy making, consultations within regional platforms may be beneficial for the partners as they allow for early exchange of information in the process of formulating national preferences and positions. It is also viewed beneficial in terms of the efficiency of the policy making on the European level, since members come into the policy process better prepared.

**Conclusion**

Let us return again to the question with which we started: Are we doing everything and enough to sustain open democratic societies in Europe? The answer that emerges clearly from this Forum is negative. There is work that remains to be done. The tragic events in Norway this summer are a sad reminder of this; and so are the riots in Britain to mention only a few examples. Dr. Dmytro Tabachnyk stated at several points that the goal should be to move swiftly beyond the declarative statements to concrete objectives and strategies and identify most appropriate instruments.

There is work to be done in raising the political will for adequate investment in education; this is a difficult task in any time, but especially in the dire times of a global financial crisis. There is work to be done to keep the different purposes of education in balance. As Professor Pavel Zgaga reminded us, the European education discourse has become preoccupied with the education’s service to the ailing European economy; thus eclipsing other purposes of education, which – as Ólöf Ólafsdóttir emphasised - must be equally fulfilled: preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society; personal development; and the development and maintenance of a broad and advanced knowledge base. Finally, there is work to be done in creating access to quality education for all. This was the point iterated by several participants and brought forward by Dr. Dmytro Tabachnyk and Ólöf Ólafsdóttir. Our efforts to enhance the role of education in the maintenance and advancement of democratic societies cannot be successful, if significant parts of our citizens do not have access to quality education.

The Council of Europe has over the years contributed immensely to the above tasks. It has argued powerfully and convincingly on issues of education as a public good, of the equal importance and convergence of the four purposes of education, and it is now undertaking work on the right to quality education. Among all the important input to the education policies and education discussions in Europe, the Council of Europe’s contribution in emphasising the role of education in sustaining and advancing democratic societies in Europe has been pivotal to say the least. Within its core mission to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the Council of Europe has acted as a ‘norm entrepreneur’ in bringing forwards the attention to preservation of democracies and highlighting the role of education in this vital task. It has also been successful in raising support for this task from its member states, as well as within the framework of the Bologna Process and when collaborating in the
field of education with other international organisations, such as especially the European Union institutions and UNESCO, and with representatives of stakeholder organisations, such as the European University Association (EUA), the International Association of Universities (IAU), the European Students’ Union (ESU), the Organising Bureau of European School Students Unions (OBESSU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), Education International Pan-European Structure, BUSINESSEUROPE, etc.

The Council of Europe has a proven record of expanding and deepening policies and concrete policy instruments in the field of education – at all levels – supporting sustainable development of European democratic societies. In 1997, at the Second Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe the decision was taken to 'launch an initiative for education for democratic citizenship with a view to promoting citizens’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society'. This decision was reinforced by Recommendation Rec(2001)15 on history teaching in 20th century Europe; Recommendation Rec(2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers on education for democratic citizenship, Recommendation Rec(2003)8 of the Committee of Ministers on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people and Recommendation Rec(2004)4 on the European Convention on Human Rights in university education and professional training. In 2004, the Parliamentary Assembly issued Recommendation 1682 calling for a European framework convention on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education to be drafted. The concept of democratic culture was introduced by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at their Third Summit in Warsaw in May 2005. As a follow-up, the role of education for democratic culture is emphasised in the Action Plan adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at their Third Summit in Warsaw in May 2005. Recommendation Rec (2007) 6 by the Committee of Ministers on the public responsibility for Higher Education and Research outlined four main purposes for education: preparation for sustainable employment; preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies; personal development and the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad and advanced knowledge base, with all four purposes equal in importance. In 2007, in Istanbul, the European Ministers of Education focused on inclusive education. The Declaration calls on the Council of Europe "to analyse and develop the skills essential to a democratic culture and social cohesion, such as the ability to behave as responsible citizens, the ability to live in a cultural and multilingual, social engagement, a solidarity and the ability to perceive problems from many different perspectives". In 2008, the White Paper on intercultural dialogue: living together in equal dignity was developed and approved by the Committee of Ministers. The White Paper identifies education as one of the key areas for the success of intercultural dialogue. In May 2010 the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7). The Charter was developed over a period of several years as a result of wide-ranging consultations and is non-binding. It serves as an important reference point for all those dealing with citizenship and human rights education, aiming to provide a focus and act as a catalyst for action in the member states, as well as a way of disseminating good practice and raising standards throughout Europe and beyond. At their meeting in
Ljubljana on 4 and 5 June 2010, the Ministers of Education of the 50 states parties to the European Cultural Convention examined the role of teachers in enhancing sustainable democratic societies in Europe. These policy initiatives are supported by a series of publications offering practical advice on education for human rights and intercultural education, such as “Educating for democracy - Background materials on democratic citizenship and human rights education for teachers” (EDC/HRE Volume I: 2011); “Growing up in democracy - Lesson plans for primary level on democratic citizenship and human rights” (EDC/HRE Volume II: 2010); “Taking part in democracy - Lesson plans for upper secondary level on democratic citizenship and human rights education” (EDC/HRE Volume IV: 2010), etc.9 Furthermore, the Council of Europe Higher Education Series includes publications on the public responsibility for higher education and research, intercultural dialogue, higher education governance and the purposes of higher education. Among the most recent works are: “Not by bread alone” (Bergan, 2010); “Speaking across borders: the role of higher education in furthering intercultural dialogue” (Bergan and van't Land, 2010); “Higher education for modern societies: competences and values” (Bergan and Damian 2010); “Advancing democratic practice: A self-assessment guide for higher education” (Barrera and Meira Soares, 2010); “Intercultural dialogue on Campus” (Bergan and Restoueix, 2009); etc.10

In summary, Council of Europe is a pivotal actor in Europe in emphasising the role of education for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Through initiating communities of practice in this area, it has brought together public authorities from all levels of governance, educational institutions, educators, and student representatives, policy experts and scholars. These communities of practices have yielded not only policy documents encouraging reform within national education systems, but also supporting and assisting in these reforms through developing methods and material to implement them in practice. The Council of Europe’s role in this area is ever more important in view of the threats to the democratic order experienced nowadays in Europe. It is also ever more important in view of the present emphasis on the role of education in catering for economic competitiveness that is at present capturing European educational discourse. It is therefore, that the participants of the Forum acknowledged the Council of Europe’s most valuable contribution in the field of education for living together peacefully in democratic societies and emphasised the need to further strengthen the education programme as a key element in the Council of Europe political mission.

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10 For a complete list see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/resources/heseries_en.asp.