

**Directorate of education and  
languages  
Higher Education and Research  
Division**



**Invitational Forum on Converging  
Competences: Diversity, Higher  
Education, and Sustainable  
Democracy**

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An invitational Global Forum, organized by the Council of Europe and the US Steering Committee of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy will address the issue of converging competences for diversity and sustainable democracy and the role of higher education in developing these competences. The conference will be hosted at the Council of Europe on October 2-3, 2008.

Higher education has played a key role in shaping globalization, democratization and new technologies. The result of these developments is a complex, democratic world of diverse peoples with conflicting ways of seeing, knowing and understanding. Diversity is now a reality of everyday life in work, communities, and personal pursuits. Today, universities and colleges are called upon to move beyond the cultural base of a common religion, nationality and social class to provide knowledge and education for multiple and changing cultural contexts.

Higher education responded to changing expectations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by embracing education for application in complex organizations, democratic citizenship and innovation through research. Public debate often focuses on one or the other of these aspects of higher education, and from observing the debate, one can often get the impression that the competences needed to fulfill different roles in society – as citizens, economic actors or individuals pursuing personal development – are distinct rather than convergent. Therefore, in a dynamic, volatile, and interconnected world where diversity across many dimensions is the norm and inequality can destabilize democracy, higher education often finds itself caught at the crossroads of what seem like competing commitments. On the one hand it clearly embraces its educational mission to advance knowledge and understanding; on the other, its civic mission demands that it prepare students to contribute to the larger good. Meanwhile, students are driven to higher education in large part to obtain rewarding jobs when they graduate. How can colleges and universities negotiate these competing commitments? Are they in fact competing, or is this “simply” an impression

created by societies that seem to find it difficult to consider multiple purposes and to keep sustained attention?

The Forum on *Converging Competences: Diversity, Higher Education, and Sustainable Democracy* will explore where there are convergences across goals for higher education - learning and research, diversity literacies, civic-mindedness and preparation for work in a fast-changing, global environment. We propose that rather than competing, these four commitments can actually strengthen and illuminate one another. The Forum will highlight examples of how higher education has begun to understand and align these converging competences, while also providing the structures, teaching methods, curricula and opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in real world situations. We aim to explore how converging competences may be developed through curricula as and non curricula programs, governance, and other opportunities.

**Building a Global Network of Practice:  
Goals for the October 2008 Forum**

1. Increase higher education's leadership and commitment to preparing informed, engaged and socially responsible graduates to live, work and act productively in a global environment.
2. Compare practices across a range of cultural and country contexts.
3. Expand the practical vision of how higher education can promote education for citizenship and democracy as integral to higher education through research, teaching, student life and community engagement.
4. Explore how higher education can prepare learners for responsible citizenship in a world characterized by broad international contacts and cooperation and for greater expertise in intercultural communication and understanding.
5. Investigate and maximize the converging competences for knowledge and understanding, preparing for the modern workplace, sustaining the practice of democratic cultures and achieving social cohesion through and in the face of multiple differences.
6. Identify potential partners for future collaborations such as research, projects, student, faculty, or staff exchanges and for developing resources to further education for democracy and intercultural dialogue.



*The Council of Europe Higher Education Forums are intended to highlight and address particular issues of concern in a regular and flexible fashion, offering a major platform for high level policy debate in the area of higher education in Europe and beyond.*

7. Generate specific strategies to build a global network of practice such as:
- Developing comparative global research projects both to assess the impact of diversity on universities and to identify successful approaches that enhance multicultural understanding, learning and cooperation.
  - Supporting the development of student organizations dedicated to promoting democracy, human rights and the integration of diversity.
  - Encouraging activities on or around Human Rights Day that focus on the responsibility of universities to advance human rights, including tolerance and multicultural understanding.
  - Developing resources to facilitate ongoing common projects/actions and exchange of ideas and good practice.

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### Thursday, October 2

**08 15 - Registration of participants**  
Agora Building

**09 15 - Opening/ Setting the scene/  
background**  
Agora Building – Room G03

**Radu Damian**, Chair of the CDES  
**Henry Teune**, International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy  
**Gabriele Mazza**, Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe

### 10 00 - Converging Competences for Diversity and Democracy: a Higher Education Perspective

Speaker: **Derek Bok**, former President of Harvard University

10 40 - Questions and debate

11 00 - Coffee break

### 11 30 - Learning to Live Together: the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue

Speaker: **Ulrich Bunjes**, DGIV, Council of Europe

### 11 45 – Higher Education and Intercultural Dialogue

Speaker: **Gabriele Mazza**, Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe

### 12 00 – An Australian Perspective

Speaker: **Bruce Muirhead**, CEO, EIDOS

12 10 - Questions and debate to the two preceding presentations

12 30 - Lunch

### 14 30 - Competences, Learning Outcomes and Convergence: introduction to the afternoon session

Speaker: **Stephen Adam**, University of Westminster

### 14 45 - Examples – competences in practice

**Ding-Jo Currie**, President of Coastline Community College  
**Georgia Nugent**, President of Kenyon College  
**Zarko Nozica**, Prorector of University of Applied Sciences in Zagreb, EURASHE  
**Ayne Hyland**, former Vice-President of the Cork University College, EUA  
**Jeanine Bruun**, ESU

16 20 – Coffee break

### 16 50 – 17 30 Converging competences

Speaker: **Stephen Adam**

18 00 - Reception

### Friday, October 3

### 09 00 – Panel discussion: How to translate converging competences into the reality of teaching, learning and research and life at HEI

Panel Members:

**Nancy Cantor**, Chancellor, Syracuse University  
**Al Bowman**, President of Illinois State University  
**Ligia Deca**, ESU chairperson  
**Peter Ceretti**, Student at University of Pennsylvania College of Arts and Sciences  
**Aleksa Bjeliš**, Rector of the University of Zagreb

10 15 - Debate

10 45 – Coffee Break

### 11 15 - Converging competences in the European Higher Education Area Beyond 2010: Policies and Practice

**Lars Lynge Nielsen**, President of EURASHE  
**Slobodanka Koprivica**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro

12 00 - Lunch

13 30 - Report by the General Rapporteur

**Manja Klemenčič**, Slovenia, postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University and former Secretary General of ESIB

### 14 15 - Toward a Higher Education Partnership for Diversity and Democracy: Developing the Network and Plans for Further Cooperation

15 30 - Closing of the Forum