



# QUALITY HISTORY EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

Guidelines

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**QUALITY HISTORY  
EDUCATION  
IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

PRINCIPLES  
AND GUIDELINES

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# Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC)

## Values

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

## Attitudes

- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

## Competence

- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

## Skills

- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

## Knowledge and critical understanding

# Introduction

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**H**istory education has an important role to play in confronting the current political, cultural and social challenges facing Europe; in particular, those posed by the increasingly diverse nature of societies, the integration of migrants and refugees into Europe, and by attacks on democracy and democratic values. The overall aim of these *Principles and guidelines*, therefore, is to enhance the expertise and capability needed if history education is to play that role successfully. They build on the Council of Europe's vision of history teaching as reflected in a number of key documents of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

■ The main input has come from four regional seminars held during the period 2016-2017 in the framework of the intergovernmental project *Educating for diversity and democracy: teaching history in contemporary Europe*. They brought together government officials and practitioners in history education from all member states. The seminars focused on three main themes: building diverse, inclusive and democratic societies; dealing with sensitive and controversial issues; and developing critical historical thinking in the digital age.

■ These *Principles and guidelines* are addressed primarily to those politicians, officials and others in each member state who are responsible for the development of the school history curriculum; but they are also for those teachers and teacher trainers whose role it is to deliver the curriculum to students. Ideally, however, it is hoped that all who have an interest in the nature, quality and impact of the history taught in schools – including students, their parents and the wider public – will find these *Principles and guidelines* useful. Although the *Principles and guidelines* are specific to the teaching and learning of history, they should be viewed in the context of the wider educational aims and commitment expressed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO.

■ In the Incheon Declaration, the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) Agenda offers a vision of education that goes beyond the utilitarian to be an approach that seeks to integrate 'the multiple dimensions of human existence'. It defines quality education as one which 'fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges ...'. Additionally, the signatories to the Declaration committed to developing 'more inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of children, youth and adults ... including internally displaced persons and refugees'.

■ The Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) was adopted by 184 UNESCO member states, and the global education community at the high-level meeting (Paris, November 2015) alongside the UNESCO 38th General Conference.

■ The study of history has a particular contribution to make in delivering that vision and commitment. It offers insights into the complexities and diversity of past human behaviour; it fosters the ability to interrogate differing, even conflicting, narratives; it requires that arguments are supported by an understanding of wide-ranging evidence. But history in schools can only make such a contribution if what is taught, how it is taught and the quality of the available resources enables it to do so.

# Including the Competences for Democratic Culture

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■ All subject matters allow for developing the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding of the RFCDC<sup>1</sup>. History is a specific subject as it provides the answers to critically understand the present, by teaching that any feature of the past must be interpreted in its historical context and by raising awareness that historical interpretation is a matter of debate. *The thinking processes acquired through the study of history constitute a standard of judgement that is transferable to any subject.* Hence, historical critical knowledge and understanding of political, social, cultural, and economic systems intersects with the democratic culture necessary for active citizenship.

■ The critical understanding of historical phenomena facilitates the process of acquiring the competences for democratic culture (CDC) and the intersection of school history and citizenship education is evident. History education can gain from including and adapting the CDC pedagogical approaches to create a classroom climate where young people can actively explore historical questions to experience and learn about, through and for democratic culture. This allows for the development of the abilities young people need to become active participants of a democratic culture, acquiring a set of behaviours that emphasise dialogue and co-operation, solving conflicts by peaceful means and active participation in public spaces.

■ Including and adapting CDC is the responsibility of policy makers and practitioners who have detailed knowledge and understanding of specific contexts, and how they vary in a subtle and important way that inevitably affects educational processes. The successful inclusion of learning and teaching activities that seek to consider values and develop attitudes, skills and knowledge, and critical understanding for a culture of democracy in education will ultimately depend on the ability of teachers to plan and develop educational activities in accordance with the needs of their students.

■ The acquisition of CDC is a lifelong process as individuals continually experience new and different contexts, and analyse and plan them; it is not a linear progression towards an ever-increasing competence in intercultural dialogue or democratic processes. Because competence is always obtained by the interaction of the different aspects of the four dimensions – values, attitudes, skills and knowledge and critical understanding –, the Framework requires a holistic approach.

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1. **The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC)** is a document of reference founded on the values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive resource to plan and implement teaching, learning and assessing of competences for democratic culture (CDC) and intercultural dialogue so that there is transparency and coherence for all concerned. It provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for implementing Education for Democratic Citizenship, Human Rights Education and Intercultural Education in formal education systems running from pre-school through primary and secondary education through to higher education. Download the RFCDC: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/home>

# Implications for assessment

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■ The key concepts embodied in the *Principles and guidelines* are – *democracy, diversity and inclusivity*. Such concepts entail the adoption of education processes and contexts that reflect the values of democracy and human rights. Furthermore, if they are to guide the way that lives are conducted, they require that people are willing to adopt a particular set of values, attitudes and behaviours – competences, that are essential for building a democratic society.

■ A major challenge for history teachers, therefore, is how they can determine whether or not they are being successful in meeting this requirement, the importance and relevance of which is that assessment has significant effects on the behaviour of learners and teachers, who attribute greater importance and pay more attention to areas of the curriculum that are assessed.

■ In what concerns assessment, RFCDC aims to contribute to the development of educational practices that empower learners. For this reason, the choice of appropriate approaches and assessment methods requires special attention. No degree of proficiency is considered insufficient and all competences have the potential to be developed further.

■ Some assessment methods, while useful for assessing students' outcomes in areas that are specific to the historical critical knowledge and understanding, are not necessarily in line with teaching and learning focused on democratic practices and respect for human rights. Some methods may also lack transparency, lack of respect for students (or be perceived as such), and may even have a negative impact on the learner's future prospects.

■ Assessment practices should be in agreement with the norms and values of an education that aims to strengthen and promote democratic values and respect for human dignity and human rights.

■ It is important to avoid improper use of descriptors for evaluation. The list of descriptors was not designed to be used as a checklist on which to mark the behaviours displayed by a learner, or to calculate an overall score on that basis. They aim at knowledge, development and improvement of the skills of democratic culture all the life.

■ Amongst the assessment issues that this poses are:

- ▶ values and attitudes are internally held, and consequently they have to be assessed primarily via the external behaviours that students exhibit;
- ▶ students' behaviour at different times commonly varies, even in similar contexts, and hence the values and attitudes they hold may well appear as erratic and incoherent;
- ▶ any progression in developing the desired values and attitudes might be uneven.



# Implications for teacher education and continuing professional development

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- The successful inclusion of learning and teaching activities that seek to consider values and develop attitudes, skills and knowledge, and critical understanding for a culture of democracy in education will ultimately depend on the ability of teachers to plan and develop educational activities in accordance with the needs of their students.
- Educating for democracy and diversity is necessarily an on-going task. It requires appropriate investment in schools and teachers both intellectually and in terms of resources.
- Building the capacity of teachers and teacher educators to help students acquire democratic values, enquiring mindsets and attitudes of respect for others needs to be given a high priority. It should be viewed as being as important as developing their capacity to convey subject knowledge and develop cognitive skills.
- The CDC approach should be applied in a transversal way in the initial training and the in-service training of teachers.
- Teacher education needs to include cultural diversity training to build awareness of 'otherness' and appropriate inclusion, and to build skills and resilience in dealing with insensitivity and inappropriate responses.
- In this digital age, the potential gains offered by a technology-supported history education can only be realised if teachers have the necessary knowledge, willingness and resources. This requires both adequate support from policy makers and appropriate professional development for teachers.

## Teaching and learning history in contemporary Europe

- Hereafter is the list of the *Principles and guidelines* for establishing diverse and inclusive curricula and pedagogy. Each principle is followed by the respective guidelines, which offer a rationale for understanding the different elements contained in the principle.
- After the guidelines there is a box listing the Competences for Democratic Culture that can be explored and developed by history education, thus linking the key principles with the RFCDC.
- The document ends with a table that operationalises all the elements that were explained, and allows for the quick overviewing of the different dimensions of the project – the principles, its key ideas, main curricular elements, pedagogical approaches and the links to RFCDC.

# Principles and guidelines for establishing democratic, diverse and inclusive history curricula and pedagogy

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1. Developing flexible curricula and interactive pedagogies which acknowledge cultural differences.
2. Teaching and learning about the complex history of democracy.
3. Reflecting the ways in which the activities of ordinary individuals and groups of people have shaped the history of societies.
4. Recognising that people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds have often been long established in societies.
5. Valuing the multiple identities of both 'the other' and ourselves.
6. Providing the tools for evaluating historical sources and combatting manipulative propaganda.
7. Addressing issues that might be sensitive or controversial.
8. Balancing the cognitive, the emotive and the ethical dimensions in history teaching and learning.



# 1. DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE CURRICULA AND INTERACTIVE PEDAGOGIES WHICH ACKNOWLEDGE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

” Flexible curricula and interactive pedagogies responsive to the socio-cultural diversity of students might convey different and possibly conflicting historical narratives. Though differing in terms of emphasis, significance, judgements or final conclusions, all narratives must be grounded in evidence of the historical record, and not ignore inconvenient evidence contrary to the view they support. They must respect such intellectual values as concern for truth, validity in argument and respect for evidence.

## Guidelines

- 1. Can teachers alter their deeply held beliefs about history? Flexibility on the part of the teacher is crucial.**
  - 1.1. Teachers should be aware and open about their own understanding of the past, their views, prejudices, stereotypes and biases, and promote inclusive environments where all students feel confident to voice their thoughts and disagreements where difficult dialogues might occur.
- 2. The curriculum should seek to be inclusive and include experiences of minority groups and migrants.**
  - 2.1. A curriculum reflecting only the history and culture of the dominant group in society constrains students outside that majority to engage with it. They may perceive it to be personally meaningless, irrelevant and at times offensive. The hidden practices and messages of the curriculum need to be addressed.
  - 2.2. A curriculum reflecting only the history and culture of the dominant group in society also denies the majority group from learning about others.
- 3. Inclusion is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies.**
  - 3.1. Recognising the identities and interpretive frameworks of students and teachers requires consciously and consistently drawing on and connecting with the first-hand and historical experiences, emotions and beliefs of students and their families, and consider how these connect to local, national and global historical themes.

#### **4. Teachers should consider selecting resources from an all-embracing and inclusive body of sources to avoid cultural domination, stereotypes and discrimination.**

- 4.1. Identifying overt stereotyping in history teaching materials is a relatively straightforward exercise. Conversely, covert stereotyping based on gender, ethnicity, language, social status, or as a consequence of being a recent arrival in the group presents problems that teachers and students should be able to reflect about through dialogue.

When developing flexible curricula and interactive pedagogies which acknowledge cultural differences, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs and world views
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history

## 2. TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE COMPLEX HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY

” At the heart of democratic societies is the requirement for individuals to make choices based upon reasoned and informed judgement. History education, in its subject matter, in the disciplinary skills it demands, and in its pedagogy, is well placed to make a significant contribution to preparing young people for democratic decision making.

### Guidelines

1. **When teaching about democracy the focus is the acquisition of knowledge and critical understanding.**
  - 1.1. In contributing to an understanding and development of democratic values, history education includes teaching and learning about historical struggles for democracy and freedom, or the development of democratic institutions and democratic processes.
2. **When students are learning through democracy, the focus is an experiential learning process that fosters the affective dimension of learning.**
  - 2.1. The teaching and learning of history occurs in classrooms where students participate in decision making, experience collaborative learning, express their views and interpretations, listen to contrasting views in a reasoned and respectful manner and regularly take part in classroom discussions.
  - 2.2. Thus, students acquire behaviours in a way that respects democratic values and attitudes.
3. **Learning that enables the historical and critical understanding of democracy and develops through democratic pedagogical processes is learning for democracy.<sup>2</sup>**
  - 3.1. Such learning prepares and empowers students to become active and autonomous participants in democracy, in intercultural dialogue and in society in general.

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

When teaching and learning about the complex history of democracy, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history

### 3. REFLECTING THE WAYS IN WHICH THE ACTIVITIES OF ORDINARY INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS OF PEOPLE HAVE SHAPED THE HISTORY OF SOCIETIES

” Social history has become an increasingly significant aspect of history education. Social history is important because of its focus on history which is inclusive and representative, and because familiarity with the recorded experiences of citizens in the past has a part to play in the development of active citizenship.

#### Guidelines

1. **Only history can provide insights into how people who lived in the past behaved and interacted and offer clues about people’s motivation, their adaptability and – for good or ill – what human beings are capable of doing.**
  - 1.1. The study of history should give students examples of how the actions of people in the past, individually or collectively, have made a difference to the world. As in contemporary society, the masses of people in the past were not merely passive and subject to the tide of historical forces or the actions of the powerful.
  - 1.2. There is also the risk of portraying particular groups of people and their experiences in terms of what was done to them, as victims rather than actors, largely ignoring what they did for themselves. Instances of this, for example, are in relation to the abolition of slavery, the emancipation of women or the extension of the franchise [right to vote].
2. **Students may find difficulty in identifying with people in the past en masse.**
  - 2.1. It is one thing to learn about slavery, the slaughter in the First World War or the extermination of millions of Jews in the Holocaust, it is another and more powerful learning experience to trace what happened to an individual enslaved person, a named soldier, or a single Jewish family.

When reflecting the ways in which the activities of ordinary individuals and groups of people have shaped the history of societies, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history



## 4. RECOGNISING THAT PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS HAVE OFTEN BEEN LONG ESTABLISHED IN SOCIETIES

” A characteristic of Europe is its ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. The presence of minority groups pre-dates the establishment of the modern territorial boundaries. Culturally, politically, socially and in other ways the history of most of Europe is one of long interaction between diverse groups of people. An inclusive approach goes beyond telling the story of the dominant majority groups in society.

### Guidelines

1. **The history of humankind is one of interculturalism where cultures have communicated when different communities have come into contact.**
  - 1.1. Cultures are internally heterogeneous, contested, dynamic and constantly changing, and individuals have complex affiliations to various cultures.
  - 1.2. Intercultural situations may involve people from different countries, people from different regional, linguistic, ethnic or faith groups, or people who differ from each other because of their lifestyle, gender, age or generation, social class, education, occupation, level of religious observance, sexual orientation, etc.
2. **The mono-cultural curriculum in history education was part of the cultural dominant model that viewed difference as dangerous and divisive.**
  - 2.1. History education should not overlook the existing diversity, nor be limited to the national narrative coinciding with the history of the largest or dominant linguistic and cultural community.
  - 2.2. History teaching should be inclusive by recognising that ‘All cultures are involved with one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and un-monolithic.’<sup>3</sup>
  - 2.3. Including the history of minorities and of indigenous cultures is important not just in classrooms where there are students with those backgrounds. All students should be helped to understand the various ways in which people from diverse cultures and communities have in the past contributed to developments at local, national and global levels.

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3. Said, E. (1995), *The politics of dispossession*. London: Vintage.

When recognising that people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds have often been long established in societies, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history

## 5. VALUING THE MULTIPLE IDENTITIES OF BOTH 'THE OTHER' AND OURSELVES

” History teaching should acknowledge diversity within as well as between groups. Cultural and other identities are not static and monolithic but dynamic and multi-faceted. This is not to deconstruct all traditions or forms of collective identity, but it is to aim at a curriculum and pedagogy that strike a balance between the histories of the individual and of the collective.

### Guidelines

#### 1. Studying historical processes of othering to help young people understand that:

- 1.1. Justifications for othering commonly employ myths and traditions about racial purity or national uniqueness regardless of their spurious validity.
- 1.2. Differences between peoples can become acute when one identity becomes dominant.
- 1.3. Othering is a form of stereotyping where we perceive ourselves as part of a united and undifferentiated group of people, as us or we; and those outside the group as fundamentally different – as them or ‘the other’ – inferior or weaker, even possibly dangerous, and hence we as stronger or better [e.g. othering for justifying colonialism or enslavement].

#### 2. Teaching with regard to people’s multiple identities:

- 2.1. The term identity denotes a person’s sense of who they are and the self-descriptions to which they attribute significance and value. Most people use a range of different identities to describe themselves, including both personal and social identities.
- 2.2. A growing number of individuals, especially young people, have multiple cultural affiliations to enjoy, but also to manage, on a daily basis. Their *composite identity* can no longer be restricted to a *collective identity* related to a particular ethnic or religious group.

When valuing the multiple identities of both 'the other' and ourselves, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history

## 6. PROVIDING THE TOOLS FOR EVALUATING HISTORICAL SOURCES AND COMBATting MANIPULATIVE PROPAGANDA

” (...) while the historical impact of rumours and fabricated content have been well documented, (...) we are witnessing something new: information pollution at a global scale; a complex web of motivations for creating, disseminating and consuming these ‘polluted’ messages; a myriad of content types and techniques for amplifying content; innumerable platforms hosting and reproducing this content; and breakneck speeds of communication between trusted peers (...)

(...) visuals can be far more persuasive than other forms of communication, which can make them much more powerful vehicles for mis- and disinformation. There is also a need to educate people on the power of images to manipulate and persuade (...) the way we understand visuals is fundamentally different to how we think about text.”<sup>4</sup>

### Guidelines

- 1. History develops critical thinking and provides analytical tools for unpacking mechanisms of manipulation.**
  - 1.1. For navigating effectively through digital visual and written materials students make use of the historian’s analytical and critical thinking skills to interpret and evaluate sources. Students must find, comprehend, select and use key historical information, to make well informed judgements.
  - 1.2. Being able to assess and judge motive, utility, reliability, trustworthiness is an important step in building resilience and preventing manipulation when accessing historical sources and interpretations.
  - 1.3. The use of diverse and contradictory sources shows that historical interpretations are provisional and liable to reassessment, an essential safeguard against the misuse of history, as it works against too ready an acceptance of accounts seeking to promote intolerant and ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic or racist ideas.
  - 1.4. The greater accessibility of visual sources reinforces the need for students to be able to critically read a photograph, a documentary film or a broadcast video and distinguish between the ‘witting’ and the ‘unwitting’ testimony that the source offers – what the image(s) depict, and the message that the author of the image wishes to convey.

4. Information Disorder, Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking, Strasbourg: Council of Europe (2017) Claire Wardle, PhD and Hossein Derakhshan. With research support from Anne Burns and Nic Dias.

## 2. Raising awareness about the potential misuse of e-media.

- 2.1. Educators need to be aware that young people's use of social media and visual sources may be very different to the way they operate and need to develop strategies ensuring that students are watchful both of the benefits and the potential dangers of e-media.

When teaching for providing the tools for evaluating historical sources and combatting manipulative propaganda, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, history and media

## 7. ADDRESSING ISSUES THAT MIGHT BE SENSITIVE OR CONTROVERSIAL

” Often there is a reluctance to consider events that are perceived as being particularly painful, tragic, humiliating or divisive. There is a fear that reference to them might re-open old wounds, exacerbate divisions and generate friction both in the classroom and beyond. Alternatively, periods in a country’s history of conquest, glory and domination can also be problematic. They can define attitudes to neighbours in ways that may jeopardise the promotion of tolerance and peace. Nevertheless, there is a danger that omitting events that may be perceived as being controversial or sensitive results in students receiving a distorted and misleading account of the past. Such gaps may be filled by accounts of dubious validity acquired from sources outside the history classroom.

### Guidelines

- 1. Exploring controversial and sensitive issues allows for learning history as an open narrative rather than as a closed positivistic discipline.**
  - 1.1. The use of diverse and contradictory sources shows that the construction of knowledge is an on-going investigation, and events can be analysed from different perspectives.
  - 1.2. Approaching conflicting interpretations of past events in a critical and analytical way does not translate into adopting a similar approach to addressing present day events and issues.
- 2. Exploring sensitive and controversial issues helps students to have a better understanding not only of the past but also of the contemporary world.**
  - 2.1. Students learn how to debate matters in a rational and peaceful manner, with recourse to estrangement [disaffection/distancing] methodological approaches and hence be better prepared to engage constructively in democratic discussions and intercultural dialogue.
  - 2.2. Students gain an understanding of the nature and mechanisms of conflicts and think about ways of tackling them.

**3. It is the potential of controversial issues to arouse strong emotions, inside and outside the classroom that is regarded as the greatest obstacle to teaching such issues.<sup>5</sup>**

- 3.1. Teachers express anxiety about their ability to deal with the emotional component of learning, and refer that initial training should focus the emotive aspects of learning rather than concentrating solely on the cognitive ones.
- 3.2. Learning environments have an influence on student engagement and learning, this is particularly important for managing difficult dialogues or emotional exchanges and for allowing students to feel confident to voice their thoughts and disagreements.

When addressing issues that might be sensitive or controversial, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Conflict resolution skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history

5. The Council of Europe has published a Training Pack for Teachers on Teaching controversial issues through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education: <https://rm.coe.int/16806948b6>



## 8. BALANCING THE COGNITIVE, THE EMOTIVE AND THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS IN HISTORY TEACHING AND LEARNING

” Understanding key concepts such as *diversity, inclusivity, and democracy* involves elements of knowledge and requires acknowledging students’ emotional attachment and responses, particularly when considering difficult history, otherwise students may come to see school history as irrelevant to and inconsistent with their lives. A dialogic interaction between the students and the historical past requires that the students understand themselves by understanding the needs and conditions of those who lived in the past. Empathy is important as a pedagogical strategy, as a necessary instrument in the historian’s toolkit and for enabling students to contribute to life in diverse democratic societies. To be relevant, history education should allow for learning experiences that are either directly applicable to the personal aspirations, interests, or cultural experiences of students (*personal relevance*) or that are connected in some way to real-world issues, problems, and contexts (*life relevance*).

### Guidelines

- 1. Recognising the force of the emotional, as well as the rational, is an essential element in generating students’ interest and motivation, and ultimately of their learning history.**
  - 1.1. This is of particular significance in the context of studying the more recent past and relating it to contemporary events and concerns.
  - 1.2. Teaching should incorporate a multiperspective approach to enable students to engage with different views to build a more informed understanding and to reflect critically.
- 2. Historical empathy is a complex concept to teach. It relates to connecting with and understanding the likely motivation and causal factors for historical events and people’s actions.**
  - 2.1. To do this, students need to engage with historical material and acquire a level of knowledge of the time.
  - 2.2. Historical empathy does not lead to identifying or sympathising with a position but supports understanding. The aim of teaching to develop historical empathy should not be to provoke emotional responses in students.
  - 2.3. Progress in teaching empathetic awareness is not necessarily linear, constant or straightforward.

### 3. Values and moral codes change over time.

- 3.1. People in different times and in different societies at the same time have had systems of values and distinct moral codes by which to judge individual actions.
- 3.2. Nonetheless, there have been crimes against humanity that go beyond the ethical limits not only of their own time but of all times. Despite the potential dangers of expressing ethical judgements on past actions, it is important for teachers to develop a coherent and multilayered framework of interpretations, and to facilitate classroom debates on the ethical and moral dimensions of history.

When balancing the cognitive, the emotive and the ethical dimensions in history teaching and learning, as per the suggested guidelines, the following cluster of competences can be developed:

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Conflict resolution skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history

# Overview of the project

Principle	Key idea	Curricular elements	Pedagogical approaches	Competences developed
1. Developing flexible curricula and interactive pedagogies which acknowledge cultural differences	The national narrative is responsive to socio-cultural diversity rather than being mono-cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Relevant to minority communities</li> <li>▶ The flexibility to adjust to the demands of a changing world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Show awareness of learners' differing cultural and other backgrounds</li> <li>▶ Combat stereotypical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs and world views</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>
2. Teaching and learning about the complex history of democracy	Furthering an understanding of democracy and of democratic values should guide both the content and the delivery of the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The history of democratic movements and institutions in a variety of contexts</li> <li>▶ Alternative concepts of democracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Teaching about, through and for democracy</li> <li>▶ Collaborative and experiential learning</li> <li>▶ Enabling learners to feel free to examine and express alternative views and to make choices based on reasoned and informed judgements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law</li> <li>▶ Respect</li> <li>▶ Civic-mindedness</li> <li>▶ Responsibility</li> <li>▶ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▶ Tolerance of ambiguity</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Skills of listening and observing</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>
3. Reflecting the ways in which the activities of ordinary individuals and groups of people have shaped the history of societies	History is more than the story of powerful individuals or the dominant group in society	Illustrate how freedoms (e.g. the abolition of slavery, the right to vote) were achieved by the actions of those who were denied	Personalise the past by, for example, focusing on the experience of the individual migrant rather than on the phenomenon of migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices</li> <li>▶ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▶ Tolerance of ambiguity</li> <li>▶ Autonomous learning skills</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>

Principle	Key idea	Curricular elements	Pedagogical approaches	Competences developed
4. Recognising that people of different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds have often been long established in societies	A significant characteristic of Europe is the long interaction between culturally and ethnically diverse peoples	Exemplify how the presence of minority communities pre-dates modern territorial boundaries	Present learners with an historical time-framework of appropriate length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices</li> <li>▶ Civic-mindedness</li> <li>▶ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▶ Tolerance of ambiguity</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Skills of listening and observing</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills</li> <li>▶ Co-operation skills</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>
5. Valuing the multiple identities of both 'the other' and ourselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cultural affiliation is only one aspect of an individual's identity</li> <li>▶ Members of a community have varied not homogeneous identities</li> </ul>	Address history education's role in forging the collective national identity without seeking to inculcate a sense either of national supremacy or of national victimisation	Teaching about 'the other' should guard against <i>othering</i> (the view that we are a united and undifferentiated group superior to the inferior, and potentially threatening, <i>them</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices</li> <li>▶ Respect</li> <li>▶ Civic-mindedness</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Skills of listening and observing</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>
6. Providing the tools for evaluating historical sources and combatting manipulative propaganda	History develops critical thinking and provides analytical tools for unpacking mechanisms of manipulation and countering ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic or racist narratives	Confirm that history education encompasses 'knowing that' (the historical record of activities and events); and 'knowing how' (the skills of analysis, interpretation and re-presentation of the record)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ School learners to look for evidence, to question and to apply tests for authenticity and reliability</li> <li>▶ Exploit the benefits and guard against the dangers of digital communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices</li> <li>▶ Tolerance of ambiguity</li> <li>▶ Autonomous learning skills</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Skills of listening and observing</li> <li>▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, history and media</li> </ul>

Principle	Key idea	Curricular elements	Pedagogical approaches	Competences developed
7. Addressing issues that might be sensitive or controversial	The necessity of balancing the potential dangers involved (distortion of the past) and the potential benefits (better understanding of the contemporary world and of the nature of conflict)	The non-inclusion of historical events is not determined solely on the basis that they are perceived as a source of national humiliation or potentially divisive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Take account of possible individual learners' anxieties and community concerns</li> <li>▶ Adopt appropriate teaching strategies (for example, multiperspectivity, empathetic learning)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices</li> <li>▶ Respect</li> <li>▶ Civic-mindedness</li> <li>▶ Responsibility</li> <li>▶ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▶ Tolerance of ambiguity</li> <li>▶ Autonomous learning skills</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Co-operation skills</li> <li>▶ Conflict resolution skills</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>
8. Balancing the cognitive, emotive and ethical dimensions of history teaching and learning	Understanding human activity in the past involves both a knowledge of events and an exploration of individuals' motives and attitudes	Recognise the force of the emotional as well as the rational in history education by providing opportunities to study topics that raise major moral questions (for example: religious persecution, genocide, war and peace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Educating for diversity and democracy includes the development of appropriate dispositions and values</li> <li>▶ Facilitate discussion on systems of values and moral codes over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights</li> <li>▶ Valuing cultural diversity</li> <li>▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law</li> <li>▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices</li> <li>▶ Civic-mindedness</li> <li>▶ Responsibility</li> <li>▶ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▶ Tolerance of ambiguity</li> <li>▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills</li> <li>▶ Empathy</li> <li>▶ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>▶ Co-operation skills</li> <li>▶ Conflict resolution skills</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self</li> <li>▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: human rights, cultures, religions, and history</li> </ul>

Principles and guidelines are available at the following address:  
**<http://www.coe.int/culture-of-cooperation>**

**[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)**

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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