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## From Education for Democratic Culture to Education for Resilience. Are they Different in Building Competences to Combat Disinformation?

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**Abstract:** Building resilience is a complex process, starting from the definition that we may attribute to the concept. From one country to another, from one organization to another, the concept shifts its meaning from essential to minor aspects. From a particular security policy to an overarching policy, one may identify all range of approaches towards resilience. What is clear is that resilience should help communities to better respond to threats and to better recover in the aftermath of an event. Also, we know that education should set the scene for this process. In which way, it is not clear yet. This could be a consequence of the problems in definition and taxonomy, or a result of the constantly changing threats.

The article looks back to the way the concepts of education for peace, education for democratic citizenship and culture have evolved, trying to identify common grounds, if any, to a possible concept of education for resilience. The emphasis is put on the efforts to combat disinformation as it is a stringent need of the current security context.

**Key words:** EU, Security, resilience, disinformation, education, education for resilience

### FROM EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE TO RESILIENCE

**I**n the midst of the political changes that took place in 1990, the concept of education for peace took momentum within the international organization. Elaborated and developed at UNESCO level, the Education for peace concept was meant to foster mutual understanding and human rights in a post conflict world. The new education should be based on knowledge about conflict and peace and should also develop the skills for a non-violent culture<sup>2</sup>.

Five years later, through the Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy<sup>3</sup>, UNESCO established the link between education for peace and education for democracy in an international political context in which the world was reuniting, ideologically speaking, and the former communist states were set on the road towards democracy and reform. In the focus was the historical approach regarding the evolution of humankind, thus, in the new international context, history as a discipline should be revised to include the new evolutions and to serve as a peace building discipline.

Education for democratic citizenship is another concept developed in the '90s this time within the education framework of the Council of Europe. As landmarking initiatives are:

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, UNESCO'S Work on Education for Peace and Non-Violence, Building Peace Through Education, 2008, p.3, ED-2008/WS/38, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000160787>

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, 1995, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/12-integrated-framework-action-education-peace-human-rights-and-democracy-1995>

⇒ the “European Educational Cooperation for Peace, Stability and Democracy”<sup>4</sup> (1996) – a programme of cooperation with the new independent states that are transitioning towards democracy<sup>5</sup>.

⇒ the Enhanced Graz Process and Stability Pact (1998). Both documents focused on reforming the history curriculum, which previously focused on “forging a public sense of national identity and loyalty by selective use of the past, with a focus on conflict with others, conveying fear, distrust and hatred of all ‘outsiders’”<sup>6</sup>. History as a catalyst of peace was a concept already used but the reconceptualization of the way history is taught in the Central and Eastern European area had the potential to dismantle old rhetoric and ideologies that were well embedded in the collective mentalities and others that could be resuscitated and create risks for insecurities. Thus, history could teach about common values, regional identities, evolutions in the international relations system, and the European construct.

In the 2000s, the concept of education for democratic citizenship started to emerge and was developed in several documents:

⇒ Cracow Resolution (2000) adopted by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and the Recommendations issued two years later by the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship<sup>7</sup>, building on the previous concepts of education for democratic citizenship.

⇒ Declaration of the third Summit of Heads of States and Government (2005) – building on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, the declaration stresses the importance to promote these values and an active involvement of citizens and the society in general<sup>8</sup>. Education for Democratic Citizenship is considered to be at the center of democratic societies<sup>9</sup>, preventing conflict, promoting stability and facilitating economic and social progress<sup>10</sup>.

⇒ Action Plan<sup>11</sup> of the Declaration makes reference to the need to build a culture of democracy. The stress is on values and cultures as catalysts for democratic practices which will lead to fighting terrorism, corruption and organized crime, combating trafficking in human beings, combating violence against women including domestic violence, combating cybercrime and strengthening human rights in the information society, ensuring social cohesion, building a Europe for children<sup>12</sup>.

⇒ “Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture” meant at “preventing violent extremism and radicalization” and at establishing “common goals in citizenship education”<sup>13</sup> (2018). The framework is a recommendation and represents a support material for the states or institutions which want to develop or implement an education for democratic culture. The Guidelines

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, Stability pact, DG IV/EDU/HIST (2003)10, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680651409>

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe, "New initiative of the Secretary General", <https://www.coe.int/en/web/history-teaching/new-initiative-of-the-secretary-general>

<sup>6</sup> Council of Europe, Stability pact, DG IV/EDU/HIST (2003)10, p.3 <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680651409>

<sup>7</sup> Birzea, Cezar, Cecchini, Michela, Harrison, Cameron, Krek, Janez, Spajic-Vrkas, Vedrana, Tool for quality assurance of education for democratic citizenship in schools, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000140827>

<sup>8</sup> Art 1 and 2, Warsaw Declaration, 2005, Warsaw Political Declaration, Council of Europe Summit, 2005, [https://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517\\_decl\\_varsovie\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517_decl_varsovie_en.asp)

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Council of Europe Publishing, April 2018, p5

<sup>11</sup> Action Plan, CM(2005)80 final 17 May 2005, [https://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517\\_plan\\_action\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517_plan_action_en.asp)

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Council of Europe Publishing, April 2018, p5, <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008318-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-1-8573-co/16807bc66c>

come after 10 years from the Summit and in a moment when disinformation was already showing its effects over Europe. Moreover, in 2018 the frameworks on combating disinformation are developed as we will show in the following chapter, but the three-volume document has no emphasize on democratic culture for combating disinformation. However, the parts relating to media competences, critical thinking or communication skills represent the basis for strategies in education for combating disinformation<sup>14</sup>.

⇒ Porto Santo Charter (2021)<sup>15</sup> on education for a culture of democracy brings, among other the ideas, that cultural institutions, education institutions or NGOs should be involved in shaping a culture of democracy.

**Education for resilience** as a basic definition aims at developing the necessary skills so that the individual can better cope with the faced challenges and can recuperate faster. Even if the idea of educating the individual to be resilient was well established in psychology, little development can be identified in other related fields where resilience becomes a new standard in practice.

Education in the context of resilience can be found in different documents. Even if there is no clear view on how education for resilience should be shaped, it is clear that the two concepts intertwine in security documents:

⇒ Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy<sup>16</sup> – societal resilience is built through education.

⇒ Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council. A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action<sup>17</sup> - education in the context of migration.

⇒ Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats – A European Union response<sup>18</sup> - exercises for building resilience.

⇒ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach<sup>19</sup> - resilience, education and media literacy.

⇒ Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council - Increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats<sup>20</sup> - exercises for strengthening resilience in CBRN threats.

All these documents approach the concept of resilience and emphasize the education dimension needed to build resilient societies. Even if there is not a clear path towards how education for resilience should be built and there is a blended approach toward the education system and exercises, there is no clear set of skills that education for building resilience should encompass.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, pp. 34-35

<sup>15</sup> Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, 2021, <https://www.2021portugal.eu/en/events/?start-date=2021-01-01&end-date=2021-12-31>

<sup>16</sup> Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, June 2016, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action {SWD(2017) 226 final} {SWD(2017) 227 final}, p.3, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017JC0021>

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, *Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats – A European Union response* (06 Apr. 2016), JOIN (2016), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0018&from=EN>

<sup>19</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach, Brussels, 26.4.2018 COM (2018) 236 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0236>

<sup>20</sup> Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council. Increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to address hybrid threats JOIN, 16 final, European Commission, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018JC0016&from=GA>

## FIGHTING DISINFORMATION AND EDUCATION REFORM – A EUROPEAN APPROACH

The Digital Education Action Plan<sup>21</sup> sets forward measures to be adopted and implemented in the educational reforms at European level in the view of the digital transition. The document is correlated with the DESI index and sets measures and solutions from member states in the reform process. It is important to mention that the EU financing architecture developed sets for considerable funds to finance the digital transition, as the Digital education initiatives part of the Digital Education Action Plan show<sup>22</sup>. The process is ongoing and is supported by the 2021- 2027 financing period.

Acknowledging the dangers of disinformation and the ravaging effects it has online with little regulations, the European Commission adopted the Communication: “*Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach*”. Considering the Eurobarometer on Fake news and disinformation, the Communication sets directions for establishing a base for addressing this hybrid threat in the EU. In the light of the document “disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm”<sup>23</sup>. In this vein the document identifies as the causes of disinformation 4 intertwined causes: economic, technological, political, and ideological. The impact of the disinformation phenomenon is differentiated based on the: “education levels, democratic culture, trust in institutions, the inclusiveness of electoral systems, the role of money in political processes, and social and economic inequalities.”<sup>24</sup>

In the process of tackling disinformation on a long term the basis should be put on “collective resilience in support of our democratic bearings and European values”. Thus, the document situates at the core of combating disinformation the democratic values. The concept of resilience and the European values are added to them.

The document builds on the aspects of education set forward in the Digital Education Action Plan and emphasizes the need to implement measures to boost education and legal means to control the use of technology in scope of spreading disinformation.

In order to fight disinformation, an Independent High level Expert Group on fake news and online disinformation was established to identify principles and directions for combating disinformation. In March 2018 the final report was released “*A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation*” which identifies five pillars developed around “interconnected and mutually reinforcing responses”<sup>25</sup>: “enhance transparency of online news; promote media and information literacy to counter disinformation; develop tools for empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation; safeguard the diversity and sustainability of the European news media ecosystem; and promote continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe”. Education is in the center of the process as information literacy and media literacy are considered at the center of the process of combating disinformation. The document stressed the importance of media literacy and

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Digital Education Action Plan, Brussels, 17.1.2018 COM(2018) 22 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0022&from=EN>

<sup>22</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/about-digital-education>

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, Brussels, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach, 26.4.2018 com(2018) 236 final <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0236>

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 4

<sup>25</sup> Independent High level Group on fake news and online disinformation, Report A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation, March 2018, pp. 5-6 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>

information literacy as preventive actions to combat disinformation. The document mentions security literacy as a possible field to expand the means used in order to address disinformation.

The reform of the educational evaluation process across EU to include standards for information and media literacy in PISA evaluation system is a measure that could generate a harmonization in practices across EU with the mention that education policies rest on the member states competences; thus, a curriculum reform could be hard to coordinate.

EU Code of practice on disinformation makes no reference to education, but establishes rules and principles in combating disinformation at European level. The code offers clear conceptual definitions and taxonomies for what disinformation is or it is not, clear lines of measures and affirms the commitment of the of the signatories to implement them.

In table one, all the above-mentioned documents can be found and we tried to identify the difference in approaching education for democracy, for resilience or for combating disinformation.

No.	Institution	Document	Key concepts	Definitions	Competences
1.	UNESCO	UNESCO, Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, 1995	Education for peace, Education for Democracy	ultimate goal of education for peace, human rights and democracy is the development in every individual of a sense of universal values and types of behaviour on which a culture of peace is predicated.	<b>Abilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to define and value human rights,</li> <li>- to accept values which exist in multicultural societies</li> <li>- to strengthen personal identity</li> <li>- ability of non-violent conflict resolution</li> <li>- critical thinking</li> <li>- knowledge about the international dimension</li> <li>- knowledge about historical facts and interpretations and the role of international institutions</li> <li>- learning languages</li> <li>- should link the global interdependence of problems to local action</li> <li>- knowledge, understanding and respect for the culture of others at the national and global level</li> </ul>
	Council of Europe	Stability pact (1996) and Graz process (1998)	History, democracy, peace, mutual understanding	European Educational Cooperation for	<b>The Initial and In-Service Training of History Teachers:</b>

			and reconciliation	Peace, Stability and Democracy”.  “History education and history teaching were quickly identified as potentially an important area within education, in fostering mutual understanding and reconciliation in the area”	- developing teachers’ knowledge of their subject in a post-communist world, with a focus on histories of neighbouring countries, the histories of ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities. - teach comparatively, to introduce multiple perspectives on an event, how to tackle controversial and sensitive issues, - use varied kinds of historical sources in classrooms (critical thinking) <b>The Development of Teaching Resources for History Teachers Curriculum Development To support New Programmes in History Teaching in Higher Education</b> <sup>26</sup>
2.	Council of Europe	Summit declaration and Action plan (2005)	Culture of democracy, comprehensive security, and education		
3.	Council of Europe	Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (2018) <sup>27</sup>	Culture of democracy, and education	Culture of democracy meaning: ⇒ commitment to public deliberation; ⇒ willingness to express one’s	<b>Combating hate speech:</b> ⇒ knowledge of human rights ⇒ linguistic and communicative skills

<sup>26</sup> Council of Europe, Stability pact, DG IV/EDU/HIST (2003)10, p.3 <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680651409>

<sup>27</sup> Council of Europe, Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, Council of Europe Publishing, April 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/prems-008318-gbr-2508-reference-framework-of-competences-vol-1-8573-co/16807bc66c>

				<p>own opinions and to listen to the opinions of others;</p> <p>⇒ conviction that differences of opinion and conflicts must be resolved peacefully;</p> <p>⇒ commitment to decisions being made by majorities;</p> <p>⇒ commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights;</p> <p>⇒ recognition that majority rule cannot abolish minority rights;</p> <p>⇒ commitment to the rule of law.</p>	<p>⇒ knowledge and understanding of digital media</p> <p><b>Political debate</b></p> <p>⇒ understanding of freedom of expression and its limits</p> <p>⇒ understanding of cultural appropriateness</p> <p>⇒ knowledge and critical understanding of politics,</p> <p>⇒ linguistic and communicative skills,</p> <p>⇒ knowledge and understanding of communication,</p> <p>⇒ knowledge and understanding of cultural norms,</p> <p>⇒ analytical and critical thinking skills</p> <p><b>Combating propaganda advocating violent extremism</b></p> <p>⇒ analytical and critical thinking skills</p> <p>⇒ Autonomous learning skills</p> <p>⇒ knowledge and critical understanding of media</p> <p>⇒ values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding</p>
4.	European Commission	Digital education action plan <sup>28</sup>	Digital, education	Making better use of digital technology for	⇒ ensuring equity and quality of

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Digital Education Action Plan, Brussels,

			Digital transition	teaching and learning Developing relevant digital competences and skills for the digital transformation Improving education through better data analysis and foresight	access and infrastructure. ⇒ Connecting educators ⇒ Mobility in education ⇒ Digital competences: information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content and creation, safety and well-being, problem solving
5.	European Commission	“Tackling online disinformation: a European approach” <sup>29</sup>	Disinformation	collective resilience in support of democratic bearings and European values	⇒ life-long development of critical and digital competences; ⇒ quality journalism as an essential element of a democratic society ⇒ education and media literacy ⇒ dissemination of good practices to boost resilience ⇒ strategic communication to combat disinformation to fight disinformation about the EU
6	High Level Expert Group	Final report of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation <sup>30</sup>	Fake News Online Disinformation Media Literacy Information Literacy	Media and information literacy- “the capacity to exert critical thinking as to the productions, representations,	⇒ media and information literacy ⇒ critical thinking skills

17.1.2018 COM(2018) 22 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0022&from=EN>

<sup>29</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0236>

<sup>30</sup> Independent High level Group on fake news and online disinformation, Report A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation, March 2018 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>



				languages (visuals, texts, sounds), audiences and communities characteristic of mainstream and social media” <sup>31</sup>	
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## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

If we look back in history in the 1990s and if we imagine the use of the concept of resilience in that context, building strong democracies and changing collective mentalities must have been at the core of post-Cold War resilience. Even if the terminology used at that time was not resilience, the concept of using education to increase stability and security of the society is certainly envisaged as a pillar for the new world.

Considering this, we must retain two directions: history as a catalyst for peace, education for democratic citizenship – including political education. In the first case, the accent was placed on information, namely which information is useful for building peaceful societies? Not debating the success of the policy, one must retain that no skills can be built in lack of knowledge. The main concern when thinking about education for resilience should be what kind of knowledge is mandatory for further developing skills and competences. In the case of disinformation, the lack of knowledge is an impeding aspect in the line on critical thinking and media literacy. For example, it is debatable what kind of knowledge a high school pupil has about the EU so that the pupil could differentiate between false or true news. In many countries, there is no specific discipline about the EU and how it functions, leaving this information to a few lessons in the history books.

And here step in the aspects regarding education for democratic citizenship. In order to build stronger democracies, disciplines were inserted in the curricula to teach pupils about the democratic political system. This led to an increase in democratic participation and understanding of the democratic system. This should be done in the case of disinformation. While understanding the main directions of disinformation, a curriculum should be build addressing key concepts that are barely debated in other subjects.

One aspect when addressing disinformation is that, apart from media literacy and information literacy, no clear skills, competences or education strategy could be identified. Strategies, communications, codes and other documents must find their way into practice and soon, as the phenomenon will not cease to exist in the near future.

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