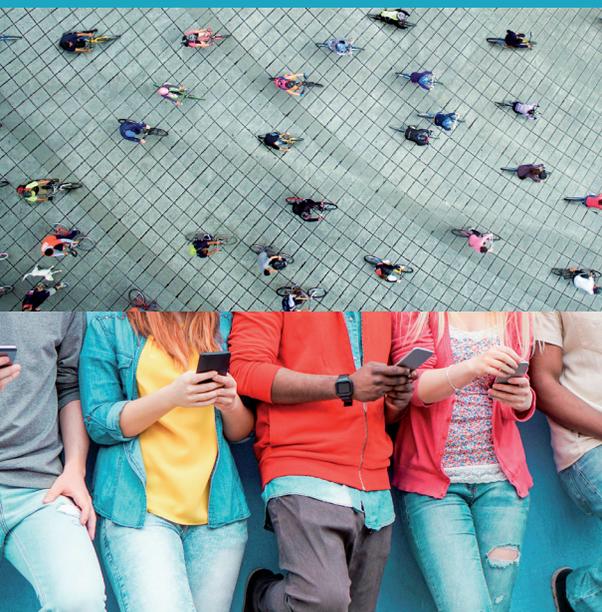


HIGHER EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY

A democratic imperative



**Council of Europe
Higher Education
Series No. 22**

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A democratic imperative

Sjur Bergan
and Ira Harkavy (eds)

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Contents

PREFACE	5
WORD FROM THE EDITORS	7
PART I – DEMOCRACY, KNOWLEDGE AND INCLUSION VERSUS POST-TRUTH POLITICS – REAFFIRMING THE PRINCIPLES OF HIGHER EDUCATION	13
Chapter 1 – Open science in open universities for an open society <i>Stefania Giannini</i>	15
Chapter 2 – Democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics – Reaffirming the principles of higher education <i>Sjur Bergan</i>	19
Chapter 3 – “The fierce urgency of now” – Advancing inclusion and democracy through higher education-community engagement <i>Ira Harkavy</i>	29
Chapter 4 – Leading in higher education in a post-truth era <i>Lynn Pasquerella</i>	39
Chapter 5 – The contribution of religious and faith-based higher education to today’s democratic societies <i>Friedrich Bechina</i>	45
PART II – INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE CAMPUSES	61
Chapter 6 – Access to success – Making campuses both diverse and inclusive <i>Jonathan R. Alger</i>	63
Chapter 7 – Building nests in another windy place – The diversity imperative in higher education in the United States <i>Johnnella E. Butler</i>	75
Chapter 8 – Can we make our campuses more diverse and inclusive? Lessons from the United Kingdom <i>Tony Gallagher</i>	87
Chapter 9 – Academic freedom, freedom of expression and the role of university leadership <i>Andrew J. Deeks</i>	103
PART III – REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES	115
Chapter 10 – Refugees in European higher education – Complex pathways in diversity <i>Gabriella Agrusti</i>	117
Chapter 11 – Refugees, immigrants and migrants in higher education – The perspective of an open-access institution <i>Brian Murphy</i>	131
Chapter 12 – Hospitality is not enough – Reflections on universities and the immigrant experience <i>Paul C. Pribbenow</i>	143

Chapter 13 – Higher education in Greece – Steps towards internationalisation	151
<i>Panagiota Dionysopoulou and Christos Michalakelis</i>	

PART IV – UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES	161
---	------------

Chapter 14 – Reimagining the social purpose of universities through engagement	163
<i>Ahmed Bawa</i>	

Chapter 15 – Universities and their communities in disruptive times	177
<i>Aleksa Bjeliš</i>	

Chapter 16 – Universities and their communities – Role as anchor institutions: European policy perspectives	193
<i>John H. Smith</i>	

Chapter 17 – Higher education’s promise and responsibility	201
<i>Nancy Cantor and Peter Englot</i>	

Chapter 18 – A possible world and the right to the university – Reflections on higher education in the United States	217
<i>Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., Gavin Luter and Pascal Buggs</i>	

PART V – TOWARDS THE FUTURE	233
------------------------------------	------------

Chapter 19 – Attending to the critical juncture in the higher education space	235
<i>Elene Jibladze</i>	

CONTRIBUTORS	245
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Preface

I am proud to present this new volume in the Council of Europe's Higher Education Series, focusing on the democratic mission of higher education.

Democracy and human rights rely on solid institutions and laws, but these cannot function in practice unless they are built on a culture of democracy. This is why the education programme of the Council of Europe is at the heart of our Organisation's efforts to build democratic culture, notably through the new Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights.

This volume collates important examples of how the Council of Europe puts into practice its commitment to the promotion of a culture of democracy through education. The first section presents our recommendations on the public responsibility for higher education and research, and on ensuring quality education, both of which are pertinent to the discussion of democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics. Inclusive and diverse campuses – presented in the second section – are a part of the work we have been doing with the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy for more than 15 years.

The third section focuses on the tools and policies developed at the Council of Europe over the past few years to further education for refugees and immigrants, with particular attention dedicated to the Recommendation on the recognition of refugees' qualifications under the Lisbon Recognition Convention; the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, a practical tool to assess and describe refugees' qualifications even when they cannot be adequately documented; and an innovative language toolkit for volunteers who work with adult refugees and immigrants. Finally, the work on the relationship between higher education institutions and the local communities of which they are a part is covered by the fourth section.

In our view, higher education is not just well placed to further diversity, social inclusion and community. Higher education has a moral duty to do so, and we need not look far to see why this is a more important part of the mission of higher education than ever before. No matter where you read this book, you will be able to find examples of the importance of education for democracy in your neighbourhood.

European societies are faced with challenges that higher education needs to play a key role in meeting, and it is part of higher education's democratic mission to respond to these societies' expectations in this respect.

It is, as the book so eloquently argues, a democratic imperative.

Snežana Samardžić-Marković
Director General for Democracy
Council of Europe

Word from the editors

Sjur Bergan and Ira Harkavy

The Council of Europe, the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy and other partners have been working to further the democratic mission of higher education for more than 15 years. Yet, both editors feel that the role of higher education in developing the kind of societies in which we would like to live is not only as important as ever, but also more challenging – and challenged – than at any time over the past generation.

The past 30 years or so that constitute this generation have seen very significant changes in Europe, the United States and other parts of the world. A few days before we sat down to write these lines, the world marked the fact that the Berlin Wall has been history for exactly as long as it had existed as a dividing line between governments with very different conceptions of how societies should be organised and governed. The Berlin Wall was of course more than a dividing line between governments. It was a physical border that brutally divided people: families and friends as well as people who did not know each other but who nevertheless felt they shared a history and should share a destiny.

The optimism of the early 1990s has long since been replaced by a sense of pessimism. The walls that divide citizens are not all gone. One European capital – Nicosia – is still divided by a wall, and building one is a stated goal of the current US Administration. While neighbourhoods are in general not isolated by walls, some gated communities notwithstanding, there is in many countries less contact and daily interaction between people from different backgrounds and of different political views and beliefs than there was a generation ago. In both the United States and Europe, public debate seems to be increasingly polarised.

Walls are therefore not only physical but, perhaps even more importantly, mental. This has been even more evident in a new kind of wall that has been erected over the past few years: a wall to keep out and disparage facts. The old adage that “everybody is entitled to their own opinion but not to their own facts” is no longer considered self-evident in an age where terms like “post-truth” and “alternative facts” have become so well established that they are no longer seen as ironic and may not be used with quotation marks for much longer.

This presents a formidable challenge to higher education and research. Conclusions reached through serious research conducted in accordance with accepted research standards are questioned by attacking the agenda of the researchers. The role of higher education in advancing knowledge and developing critical thinking, as well as an understanding of research methods and a culture of democracy among its students, is being questioned and challenged.

This makes the democratic mission of higher education more important than ever, a belief that spurred the publication of this book as well as the organisation of the Global Forum held at LUMSA University in Rome in June 2017. The presentations at that Forum largely form the basis of the book.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first section – “Democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics – Reaffirming the principles of higher education” – makes a strong case for the continuing importance of higher education and research to modern society.

Stefania Giannini, who was recently the Italian Minister of Education and is currently a Senator, argues that to have open societies we need open research and open universities. This means that universities, while upholding the standards of research, must be receptive to the needs of society. Giannini also argues that successful research will be interdisciplinary, international and integrated.

Sjur Bergan considers how higher education should respond to the challenges of, among other things, populism and the closing of borders as well as of minds and attitudes to the Other, exemplified by the way in which we receive refugees. Higher education should help us distinguish between fact, fiction and opinion. It should also help us approach difficult issues with open minds and see different points of view, even views with which we may disagree strongly. Bergan maintains that the “post-truth”/“alternative facts” movement is deficient not only in facts but in reason and in compassion, whereas educators must inspire and guide, as well as teach students to reason and to value. We must not only train specialists but also educate intellectuals.

Ira Harkavy argues that colleges and universities are central institutions in modern societies, but that they are not sufficiently fulfilling their purpose of contributing to the advancement of knowledge for “the relief of man’s estate” (Francis Bacon). Drawing on the experience of the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy as well as his leading role in the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF), Harkavy argues that both international co-operation and local engagement are essential. He suggests that universities build on John Dewey’s claim that democracy’s home is “the neighborly community” and function as anchor institutions that focus on helping to solve locally manifested universal problems, such as poverty and poor schooling. At the same time, Harkavy calls on democratic-minded colleagues to create and sustain a global movement.

Lynn Pasquerella points out that anti-intellectualism and the rejection of experts in the United States and much of Europe has been fuelled by a conviction among the white working poor that access to higher education, and status as an intellectual, is unattainable. Higher education is no longer seen as a guarantee of upward mobility and higher education is increasingly seen as a private commodity rather than a public good. Misinformation and incivility are on the rise, and leaders in higher education need to redouble their focus on world citizenship and redesign curricular content and structures to promote “a cosmopolitan education” (Martha Nussbaum).

Friedrich Bechina examines the contribution of religious and faith-based higher education to today's democratic societies. While his focus is on Catholic institutions, his considerations, in principle, encompass any religion. Bechina argues that religion and democratic societies can and should mutually enrich each other. Modern societies are composed of people coming from a broad variety of backgrounds and traditions. Religion may be a source of inspiration and motivation and may help to overcome reductionist views and attitudes in both politics and academia. The fundamental values of democratic societies draw on religious traditions; in turn, religions may be prevented from becoming closed, irrational, fundamentalist and prejudicial to peaceful co-existence in pluralistic communities through participation in open, public and critical discussion, such as that typically found in universities.

The second section focuses on higher education institutions and the need for inclusive and diverse campuses.

Based on his experience at James Madison University, Jonathan Alger argues that translating institutional commitments to access and diversity into genuinely inclusive campus environments requires an effort by the whole academic community, starting with its leadership. To be persuasive, institutional leaders need to understand how to adapt their arguments for diversity and inclusion to different audiences and contexts. Pathways of access and opportunity cannot be built and sustained by institutions of higher education acting alone; they must be developed in collaboration with schools at all levels and other societal partners to ensure long-term success. Alger also points to how the efforts of all members of the academic community may in different ways contribute to developing and maintaining genuinely inclusive institutions.

Johnnella E. Butler describes what she calls the diversity imperative in US higher education in the face of an exacerbation of racial, class, gender, religious and ability differences. These challenges have deep roots and go back to indentured service and slavery in colonial times. Butler describes the presidential election of 1968 as a watershed, with one of the national parties embracing what had largely been regional (Southern) political and social values. At the same time, the diversity imperative in democracy remains strong because the United States continues to transform into a diverse society, demographically and culturally. Higher education institutions must make efforts to support and encourage diversity, or, as the author describes it, build nests in the "windy places" of diversity.

Tony Gallagher draws on the experience in the United Kingdom to explore how campuses may be more diverse and inclusive. His chapter examines the overall empirical evidence and that for specific groups. The pattern is one of steadily rising participation rates overall as well as for all social groups previously under-represented in higher education. Massification has also meant that higher education institutions in the United Kingdom have become more engaged in society. This engagement has, however, focused on economic rather than on social and civic priorities and is more strongly embedded in policy frameworks. Thus, while UK universities have become diverse and inclusive, Gallagher argues that they have not yet become fully diverse and inclusive institutions, and that a more fundamental shift towards the social and civic mission will be necessary.

Andrew J. Deeks discusses academic freedom, institutional autonomy and the role of institutional leaders, who need to ensure that universities are safe and inclusive environments which promote diversity of thought and advancement of knowledge. Referring to the American Association of University Professors' 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, the author considers what may be reasonable restrictions on academic freedom, namely the need for accuracy, restraint and respect for the opinions of others. The need for accuracy in respecting the evidence base is discussed, and examples of scientific controversies are presented to demonstrate the need for that respect. Deeks also considers the role of university leadership in expressing views, either on behalf of the university or on a personal basis.

The third section considers opportunities to improve the inclusion of refugees and immigrants in higher education and the challenges involved. The wording here is important: whereas the focus in Europe is largely on refugees and to some extent immigrants, in the United States it is largely on immigrants, further accentuated by the current debate about the status of Dreamers: those who were brought to the United States as children and have grown up as Americans even if their legal status has not been clarified. The threat of expulsion has mobilised a large part of the US academic community.

Gabriella Agrusti addresses the complexity in cultural diversity that Europe faces with the increasing number of refugees since 2015, both between and within national contexts. Taking into consideration attitudes in society that range from outright rejection to an emphasis on integration, she describes and analyses the experience of several initiatives in higher education, including a project to develop online learning provision.

Brian Murphy describes how De Anza College, a large community college in California, offers opportunities to individuals and groups who would otherwise not have had access to higher education. These include students who are inadequately prepared for higher education, for example in mathematics or language, and include refugees as well as migrants. The United States has a rich history of open-access institutions for recent immigrants and refugees, and this role continues in spite of the US Government's recent anti-immigration rhetoric and policies. The stories of two students illustrate the importance of identifying and developing future potential rather than focusing solely on past achievements.

Paul C. Pribbenow reflects on what it means for a university founded by immigrants to walk alongside the immigrants of today, how an immigrant sensibility can shape the academic mission and community engagement today, and how we can extend the boundaries of a university to engage our immigrant neighbours in mutually beneficial ways. Pribbenow writes as President of Augsburg College, an institution that was set up by and for an immigrant community from northern Europe, but whose immediate neighbours are now largely immigrants with a very different background, from Mexico and Somalia.

Panagiota Dionysopoulou and Christos Michalakelis describe the Greek experience of internationalising higher education. Internationalisation has been spurred by the globalisation of the economy, as has the agenda of higher education reforms more broadly. Student mobility has also developed from a similar rationale and has

been further boosted by the Bologna Process. Through its “Study in Greece” initiative, Greece is seeking to attract greater numbers of foreign students. At the same time, Greece is among the European countries that have received a high number of refugees since 2015. Many refugees have a higher education background, and the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs has been eager to give these refugees an opportunity to develop their competences further. In cooperation with the Council of Europe, the ministry has therefore organised a summer school for refugee students and conducted a project to facilitate the recognition of qualifications even when these cannot be fully documented, through the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees.¹

The fourth section considers universities and their communities. This has long been an important issue in US higher education, where institutions are often conscious of being part of their local communities and where many of the most committed individuals from these institutions have joined forces in the AITF. In Europe, the role of higher education institutions has been less prominent on the policy agenda but many institutions do work with their local communities. The Council of Europe and the AITF are now seeking to launch more systematic work on this topic at European level.

Ahmed Bawa argues that the increasing legitimacy gap and growing distrust in higher education, its scholarship and its intellectuals may be at the heart of what is driving the serious and diverse challenges experienced by universities in many parts of the world. Building on the South African experience, he argues that the sustainability of higher education–community engagement depends on its integration into the core functions of the university and in particular into its knowledge project. Bawa also discusses the nature of the intellectual, physical, social and policy architecture that will ensure the emergence of long-term and sustained engagement.

Aleksa Bjeliš describes the position of universities in transitional countries from central, eastern and south-eastern Europe following the political disruptions at the end of the 20th century. These disruptions marked the collapse of regimes based on the communist doctrine and the launch of a new phase of European integration. Particular emphasis is given to the current missions of universities in these countries as well as to the role of the academic community and intellectuals in the development of democratic societies.

John H. Smith analyses the role of universities as “anchor institutions” from the perspective of European policy and practice. He places the building and strengthening of partnerships in regions and localities where higher education institutions operate within the context of the ever-increasing demands for European universities to perform multiple tasks in society. Smith considers challenges and obstacles and also analyses European policy, particularly Smart Specialisation Strategies within the European Union’s regional structural and cohesion funds.

Nancy Cantor and Peter Englot argue that diversity brings about an opportunity to grow our economies and the social health and well-being of our communities, while expanding knowledge and innovation by drawing on the collective intelligence of a

1. See www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications, accessed 24 March 2018.

wider pool of talent. They recognise that diversity is perceived as a threat by people who fear displacement and/or cultural change. Against this backdrop, higher education has both a significant promise to fulfil and a strong responsibility to change this divisive landscape. Drawing on the experience of Newark, New Jersey, they demonstrate that higher education can be the lever for cultivating a broader talent pool and creating equitable growth in communities.

Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., Gavin Luter and Pascal Buggs explore how higher education can help the conversion of metropolitan cities into socially, economically, politically and culturally just urban centres. The concept of “neighbourly community” is central to their argument, in which they refer to inclusive cross-class neighbourhoods with strong institutions, where blacks, people of colour and low-income groups live in healthy, animated and prosperous enclaves, and where people earn a living wage and have access to a range of supportive services, including good schools, quality medical treatment and food security. In this context, higher education institutions need to develop their unique potential as a community resource: their staff and students, combined with libraries, academic departments, professional schools and extensive fiscal capacities, are unrivalled.

In the final chapter of this volume, Elene Jibladze, who was general rapporteur at the Global Forum, draws together the strands explored through this book and offers some thoughts for further action. She suggests that higher education institutions should create and co-create knowledge and build an understanding among the younger generation. This can be achieved through producing relevant research as an engaged university. She further suggests that higher education institutions themselves adhere to and practise the values of democracy and human rights, empathy and compassion, passion and dedication. Not least, Jibladze suggests that universities should abandon an elitist world view and move beyond their campuses to be embedded in the community and work with and for the community.

As editors, we hope the diverse chapters in this volume will inspire action as well as further discussion. We believe the university as an ivory tower is a myth. Had universities been ivory towers, they would not have survived for centuries. Like most myths, however, this particular myth may contain a grain of truth in that many institutions have traditionally hesitated to engage in the day-to-day development of society. We need higher education institutions that are willing and able to think in terms of principles and to take a longer-term perspective. But these institutions also need to do so while being committed to and engaged in broader society – locally, nationally and globally. These approaches are not contradictory. They are instead mutually supportive and reinforcing, resulting in more effective, creative and principled institutions. We hope this book will help policy makers and practitioners in higher education institutions and systems find inspiration and identify how this might be done in their own contexts.

Part I

**Democracy, knowledge
and inclusion versus
post-truth politics –
Reaffirming the principles
of higher education**

Chapter 1

Open science in open universities for an open society

Stefania Giannini

Note from the editors: we are grateful to Senator Stefania Giannini for allowing us to reproduce her opening remarks to the Global Forum in this book.

First of all, let me thank the organisers very much for their invitation. It is a great pleasure to attend with you today this important Global Forum on higher education and its role in creating a better society.

It takes place at a very prestigious Italian university to which I am close and with which I have been familiar for many years, as a scholar, as a Rector and more recently and crucially as Italy's Minister for Education, Universities and Research for three years in the last Italian Government.

Then I also wish to thank my dear friend, Professor Francesco Bonini, the Rector of LUMSA, for hosting us so kindly and for his well-known interest in the needs, the challenges and the problems we are going to discuss today.

The main issue you put on the table today, dear friends, is quite relevant not only for this outstanding academic audience, but also for all European and international citizens.

Actually you are asking if, to what extent and eventually how, universities and the traditional system of knowledge, which has trained the European and Western establishment for more than 1000 years, can still contribute to the development of societies.

In my presentation I will try to demonstrate some good reasons to answer with three YESes:

- ▶ YES, universities remain the pillar of a science-based society, although many other institutions (spin-offs and technology giants, corporations, think tanks, the media) generate knowledge and they will do it more and more;
- ▶ YES, higher education remains the most effective tool for fostering sustainable economic growth, job creation and enhanced well-being, because of its first and main mission: to produce high-quality research;
- ▶ YES, we need to change the way universities work. Science and society need to strengthen their dialogue and face each other, because now more than ever science needs society and societies need science, an open science that can radically increase its impact by becoming more immediate and understandable for all.

This is the only way to overcome one of the most challenging paradoxes of post-modern society.

On the one hand, science (both blue-sky and applied) is producing more and more important results, making progress possible and available through innovation and technology. Huge progress has been made in such different and crucial sectors in the past 15 years, from medical science (for example digital surgery) to space exploration and physics. All of us can benefit from this progress in our daily life.

But on the other hand, the precious work of scientists, both senior professors and young researchers and, more broadly, experts, seems to be losing its reputation and authority outside laboratories and/or libraries. I would argue that there are two main historical processes which are at the same time challenging science and providing a fantastic opportunity to make its role even more important.

Firstly, a technology-driven revolution is changing how economic and social systems work and rendering obsolete the conceptual instruments we have used for the last two centuries to make sense of reality. Experts seem to be having a hard time understanding the nature of problems and, therefore, providing solutions. For instance, this has been evident for economists, who have repeatedly been unable to anticipate world crises.

Secondly, the internet and social networks have given everybody the possibility to express their opinions and this has challenged traditional media and universities who had something of a monopoly on opinion making. Cyber people in a cyber-world seem better able to navigate through massive amounts of information from a high number of sources and to form judgments without waiting for some holder of knowledge to tell them what to think.

Intellectual leaders seem increasingly unable to provide the solutions societies need; at the same time everybody can pretend to be an expert on Facebook. The two phenomena strengthen each other, creating a crisis of authority.

This is due to a technology (the internet) which is transforming our world by reducing by multiples of hundreds the costs of accessing, elaborating, storing and transmitting information, a development that most likely has only one precedent: when Gutenberg invented the printing press, making it possible to mass-produce books. Even more importantly, the internet is bridging not only digital divides (computers, iPhones, etc.) but also linking physical objects (from refrigerators to nano-particles) and living beings (animals and humans into whom sensors are being injected to monitor health conditions and heal bodies) to a global information system.

This merger of cognitive worlds that used to be separate creates a conceptual challenge that universities can only address by reorganising the way they generate knowledge.

In this context, new models of higher education and research are absolutely necessary.

“Open science” is the key factor and the inescapable precondition for facing the complexity of our world. Open science can radically increase the impact of scientific activities and results on society. The Web, in fact, has the potential to greatly improve not only access to scientific output (publications, data, software) by citizens,

civil society and industry, particularly small and medium-sized companies, but also the involvement of society in the scientific enterprise.

Science does need autonomy, but the dialogue between science and society is more and more important and that is what open science is all about.

In recent years, Italy has shown a strong commitment to open science by including the principle of access to publicly funded research into national law, and by introducing for the first time an open-access mandate – in line with the best practice of Horizon 2020² – in two recent national research calls. We must now go beyond that.

First of all, by making sure that the open-access mandate is included in all future research calls.

Secondly, by finally giving Italy a platform on which anyone – citizens, companies, associations, public administrators – at national and international level – can easily find the publicly funded research output produced by Italian researchers. We have already started such a project, Progetto Science & Technology Digital Library, and I hope they will proceed swiftly in that direction.

Europe is doing the same.

Open science is not simply one of the most preferred aims of Commissioner Carlos Moedas;³ it represents the theoretical framework we need to ensure the benefits of open science for European citizens and companies. It is in the interest of European science, culture and competitiveness.

A mutual reliance that is based on openness and involvement should also inspire a new model of an open university system. I know, tradition is tradition. But a traditional higher education system is a value not a burden and it implies new responsibilities, new commitment and new duties. Once again, if, and only if, we are open to change.

University systems based on hierarchies and rigid curricula are outdated and unsuitable in these fast-changing and complex times.

Instead, university systems must be:

- ▶ interdisciplinary: 145 different disciplinary sectors are too many even for a very diverse country like Italy!;
- ▶ international: foreign students and visiting scholars and professors in Italian universities are much more numerous than 10 years ago, but current numbers are still not enough;
- ▶ integrated with the labour market and civil society, which now more than ever ask universities and research to find the right answers to the big challenges.

In other words, the more global issues such as migration, climate change, terrorism or ageing societies make the global village “smaller” and anxious – with some people seeing building walls as a solution – the more we need to be open: dramatically, absolutely open at all levels.

2. Horizon 2020 is the current European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, see <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020>, accessed 25 March 2018.

3. The European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science 2014-19.

In a sense, the internet pushes us towards a post-specialisation era where knowledge brokers will be the ultimate generators of knowledge that people will appreciate. In Italian style, the humanist tradition will be in pole position to educate and develop the intellectual leaders of the future, but to get there we need to change.

This new framework should start from new and coherent policies. That is what I tried to do as Minister of Education, Universities and Research.

But policies must be included in a broader dimension, otherwise they are simply work instruments.

To be long-term and effective factors of permanent change, policies need politics in the background.

To that effect, the international community launched its action plan – the OECD Daejeon Declaration⁴ – in the Republic of Korea in 2015, the main principles of which are:

- ▶ basic and applied research need adequate long-term funding, even in a context of budgetary constraint. Every advancement of knowledge starts from support for basic research. My efforts when I was in office were targeted at supporting basic research;
- ▶ education and training systems should nurture talent and supply the workforce with the broad range of skills required for generating and using innovation;
- ▶ a market-friendly, competitive environment is required for businesses to invest in education and research, and for entrepreneurship to flourish.

We integrated these principles into our political agenda, with:

- ▶ the National Plan for Research, paving the way to a better innovation ecosystem and selective funding of joint public-private initiatives (National Technological Clusters);
- ▶ research infrastructures, as they play an ever-growing role in aggregating worldwide resources and allow for many new and breakthrough research discoveries;
- ▶ some relevant international scientific co-operation initiatives, such as PRIMA, BLUEMED, ExoMars and so on.

This last development is, in some ways, the most challenging and promising. It is the domain of so-called science diplomacy, where developing and emerging countries should be encouraged to take part in processes and strengthen their innovation capacities. Science has no borders, but calls for dialogue. This is obvious.

Now more than ever, science can definitively contribute to the new geopolitical asset we need: a global, open world where democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere for everybody.

4. The Daejeon Declaration on Science, Technology and Innovation Policies for the Global and Digital Age, see www.oecd.org/fr/sti/daejeon-declaration-2015.htm, accessed 25 March 2018.

Chapter 2

Democracy, knowledge and inclusion versus post-truth politics – Reaffirming the principles of higher education

Sjur Bergan

INTRODUCTION

A book on higher education for diversity, social inclusion and community, with contributions from Europe and the United States as well as from other parts of the world, could hardly be published at a more appropriate time. Over the past few years developments in politics as well as broader societal developments have, to put it mildly, not been encouraging.

Let us talk straight among friends:⁵ many Europeans are concerned about tendencies in the United States and about the policies as well as the rhetoric of the Trump Administration. So, we know, are many of our US friends. The concerns started well before the 2016 election and, since they are only partly connected to what we perceive as the excesses of the current US President, they are likely to continue beyond the end of his current term in January 2021. When the Governor of New Jersey was photographed enjoying the solitude of beaches that were closed to the public because of a standoff in the negotiations on that state's budget, the photos were carried by newspapers all over the world. The Governor became an object of ire as well as ridicule, and people were genuinely and legitimately upset. Whether they were also genuinely surprised is a quite different issue.

THE CHALLENGE OF POPULISM

As Europeans, we are also concerned about many developments, many policies and much of the rhetoric in our own countries. Nationalism and populism are not

5. "Just a little straight talk among friends" was President Gerald Ford's first speech as President of the United States after President Nixon's resignation in August 1974, see <http://bit.ly/2HqfpUL>, accessed 25 March 2018.

the speciality of any one country. The simplistic language that incites us to keep to ourselves and to keep foreigners out is, ironically, something of a global lingua franca. The Council of Europe's Secretary General has now identified populism as one of the challenges to which Europe must rise (Council of Europe 2017). Populism was the topic of the 2017 edition of the World Forum on Democracy.

I know very well that populism may have a less negative connotation to US than to European ears, and not only because Bernie Sanders attracted a large following running on a left populist platform in the 2016 Democratic primaries. Nevertheless, I believe that populism, as we see it surge in so many countries today, is a joint challenge. Populism is often of the right but sometimes of the left and may even have no discernible place on the traditional right/left divide. Populists claim to represent the whole people, and those who are against them are not "genuinely" of the people (Müller 2016). Taken to its extreme, this "logic" would imply that elections are unnecessary. If a populist party or movement is by definition the representative of the genuine people or nation, why waste resources on elections that would, if they reflected genuine public opinion, only confirm the point? And if the elections were to give a different result, they would by definition be distorted. This of course recalls other political ideologies that claimed to represent the "genuine" people by being the only true representative of the working class and its "objective interests" or to represent the "genuine people" in its connotations with the *Volk*.

This is perhaps an indication that the traditional left/right divide in politics may need to be nuanced. The economic policies that traditionally divide left and right may still be important but political positions and voting patterns are also decided by other factors that are less easy to fit into the traditional pattern. What are often referred to as "cultural issues" arouse strong feelings in large parts of the electorate, and finding a compromise or intermediary solution is less easy for such issues than for classical economic issues. A claim for a wage increase or a reduction of working hours can be negotiated and compromises found. A halfway solution is much more difficult to imagine for issues such as abortion, gay marriage or school prayer.

ATTITUDES TO THE "OTHER"

Our attitudes to Europe, to the world, and to the Other are among these "cultural issues". Pope Francis, as we know, challenged all Catholic parishes to adopt a refugee family. I am ashamed to say that my own parish in a village on the periphery of Strasbourg was less than enthused by the idea. Many parishioners seemed to feel this would have been easier to do if it were not for the fact that the refugees were foreigners – and largely Middle Eastern and Muslim to boot. We just do not want others to come bother us in our daily lives. That is, alas, true even of the population of countries that only a couple of generations ago sent a large number of refugees abroad. 1956 and 1968 come to mind (Rankin 2017).

That said, the picture is not entirely bleak. Many parishes, associations and communities do mobilise to help refugees. Countries like Germany and Sweden have been generous in their welcome, in the face of opposition from populist parties like *Alternative für Deutschland* and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). In early September 2017, the European Court of Justice upheld

the European Commission's resettlement scheme when ruling on a legal challenge brought by Hungary and the Slovak Republic. Many European universities also assist refugees, as we saw during the Global Forum, where the Australian Catholic University and the Sant' Egidio Community gave participants an opportunity to meet with refugees. The European University Association provides an overview of measures through its web-based Refugees Welcome Map.⁶

The Council of Europe is working with national authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to assist with language education⁷ and to facilitate the recognition of refugees' qualifications even when they cannot be adequately documented. A recommendation under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, adopted by the Convention Committee on 14 November 2017,⁸ is supplemented by a project to develop a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR).⁹ The EQPR describes the qualifications that seasoned credentials evaluators consider it likely that refugees have, based on in-depth interviews, and does so in a format that makes it easy for other countries to use the assessment if refugees move on from the country that first hosted them. This saves resources for national authorities as well as time and frustration for refugees.

While providing recognition of refugees' qualifications may sound both technical and trivial, this is an important issue for individual refugees and for their host and home countries. The effects of long-term unemployment – which include demotivation and loss of acquired competences – are well known, and being a refugee is even more challenging. Refugees who are given the opportunity to use and develop their competences can find motivation in spite of their very difficult situation. They will maintain and further develop their competences, which is of advantage to their host countries, as it will be of great importance to rebuilding their home countries if and when they are able to return home. Refugees who are condemned to passivity, on the other hand, will eventually lose their competences, which need to be used to be maintained. They will be demotivated and frustrated, and the danger that some of them will turn to violent extremism is greatly increased. This is, of course, a danger to their host countries and also to their home countries, should they be able to return home.

Education may not solve every problem, but should help develop attitudes and allow us to see inconsistencies. It should also help us approach difficult issues with open minds and to see different points of view. Those of us who believe most European countries could and should do more to receive refugees need to understand why

6. See www.eua.be/activities-services/eua-campaigns/refugees-welcome-map, accessed 25 March 2018.

7. See www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants, accessed 25 March 2018.

8. See Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention: European Treaties Series 165), available at www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165, accessed 25 March 2018, and www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/new-recommendation-on-recognition-of-qualifications-held-by-refugees, accessed 25 March 2018.

9. See www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications, accessed 25 March 2018. See also the documentary video available at www.coe.int/en/web/education/documentary-on-project-european-qualifications-passport-for-refugees, accessed 25 March 2018.

many – too many – of our fellow citizens believe borders should be closed and those who are different from us should stay away.

Multi-perspectivity is a hallmark of the Council of Europe history education programme.¹⁰ My history is not only mine – it is also yours. You may well have a different view of my history. My heroes may not be heroes to you. Think back to the Global Forum held at Queen’s University Belfast in June 2014,¹¹ where participants had the opportunity to visit community centres that, with Queen’s, work across societal divides. The people who work there are committed to dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts. They do not all have the same view on the conflict in Northern Ireland but they do their best to understand the motivation of those whose views differ significantly from their own.

Multi-perspectivity is difficult not only because it obliges us to understand the views of others and the reasons behind them (Bergan 2016). It is difficult not least because we must realise that understanding and accepting are not one and the same. To take an obvious example: if we do not understand what led to the Holocaust and other genocides, how can we hope to prevent similar crimes against humanity in the future? At the same time, it can never be legitimate to deny the Holocaust or accept genocide. If it were, how could we prevent similar crimes in the future?

The distinction between understanding and accepting is crucial but it is also difficult because it is so easy to confound the two – inadvertently or on purpose. The arguments are too complex to be conveyed in sound bites or tweets. It is easy for someone trying to explain the Holocaust to be accused of diminishing or even supporting it. Multi-perspectivity does not mean accepting all views as valid or legitimate but it does mean we need to try to understand the motivations behind views with which we disagree strongly or that we even find morally reprehensible. Multi-perspectivity also means that, in less extreme cases, we may be convinced by the arguments of others.

“POST-TRUTH” AND “ALTERNATIVE FACTS”

This brings me to the issue of “post-truth” and “alternative facts”. These are oxymorons but now seem to have become part of everyday language. The fact that they are often associated with politics and the way we elect those who represent us is deeply troubling. It is also a challenge to higher education.

We seem less and less able to distinguish between fact and fiction, and between opinion and the facts on which our opinions should be based. What is worse, we seem less and less willing to do so.

The consequences are potentially dire, in the short as well as the long term. If we cannot identify what the facts, duly established through methodologically sound

10. Recommendation Rec(2001)15 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe, available at https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805e2c31, accessed 25 March 2018.

11. The programme and presentations delivered at the 2014 Global Forum are available at www.qub.ac.uk/sites/HigherEducationforDemocraticInnovationConference, accessed 25 March 2018.

and peer-reviewed research, tell us about climate change from a perhaps understandable desire to continue acting as if nothing had happened, how can we try to make the Earth fit for our great-grandchildren?

Wishful thinking may have its attractions but has not generally been considered the winning argument in a debate. Presenting wishful thinking as “alternative facts” should not be either. Higher education must be in the frontline of putting facts back at the centre of the debate – not as an important element of debate but as the basis of it. The days may be gone when a news anchor could end by telling his audience “and that’s the way it is”.¹² The days should not be gone when higher education teachers and researchers engage in public debate to explain the facts and distinguish the conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from them from arguments that fly in the face of the established fact. A commitment to presenting facts and to improving our collective knowledge and understanding should also be seen as the best funding argument any public authority would ever need.

Higher education needs to take clear action when members of its community transgress. In some cases, bona fide researchers lend their names and reputation to distortions of research results for economic benefit, and not always in their main areas of competence (Oreskes and Conway 2010). In other cases, plagiarism and falsification of research results make big headlines – not least when prominent politicians claim qualifications they do not have or it turns out that substantial parts of their theses were copied from other works without due acknowledgement of the sources. Regardless of whether they make headlines or not, falsification, plagiarism and wilful distortion of research results are harmful and need to be sanctioned by the academic community.

The Council of Europe has launched a project to encourage transparency and combat corruption in education – Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED).¹³ Even if the ETINED Platform addresses all levels and strands of education, the challenges are particularly severe in higher education, possibly in part because the stakes of earning a qualification are higher and in part because there are serious ethics issues also in research. Many higher education institutions have ethical guidelines for students and staff, and the International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory have issued guidelines for an institutional code of ethics (IAU/MCO 2012).¹⁴

THE ROLE AND PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education needs to make it clear that “post-truth” is not a notion but a nonsense. If we accept the term, we accept there may be something beyond truth, something better than truth. There may be limits to how far higher education should engage in the nitty-gritty of politics – but there should be even clearer limits to its disengagement.

12. This was CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite’s legendary sign-off.

13. See www.coe.int/en/web/ethics-transparency-integrity-in-education, accessed 25 March 2018.

14. See https://iau-aiu.net/IMG/pdf/ethics_guidelines_finaldef_08.02.13.pdf, accessed 25 March 2018.