

28.12.2025

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**Title**

Higher education for modern societies : competences and values / Sjur Bergan and Radu Damian  
(eds)

**Publisher**

Strasbourg : Council of Europe Publ., 2010

**Collation**

175 S.

**Publication year**

2010

**Series**

(Council of Europe higher education series ; 15)

**ISBN**

978-92-871-6777-4

**Inventory number**

76536

**Keywords**

Hochschule und Staat : allgemein ; Hochschule und Gesellschaft ; Hochschule und Region ;  
Hochschule und Wirtschaft ; Bologna-Prozess ; Studienreform ; Lehre ; Globalisierung ;  
Internationalität ; Europarat : allgemein ; Ausland : Europa : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland :  
Montenegro : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Ausland : Rumänien : Hochschulwesen allgemein ;  
Ausland : USA : Hochschulwesen allgemein

**Abstract**

Developing learners' competence is an important part of the mission of higher education. The kind of competences that higher education should develop depend on what we see as the purposes of higher

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education. The term "converging competences" points to the need not only to train individuals for specific tasks, but to educate the whole person. Education is about acquiring skills, but also about acquiring values and attitudes. As education policies move from an emphasis on process to a stronger emphasis on the results of the education processes, learning outcomes have come to be seen as an essential feature of policies both in Europe and North America. This book explores the roles and purposes of higher education in modern, complex societies and the importance of competences in this respect. Although public debate in Europe could give the impression that the sole purpose of higher education is to prepare for the labour market, this important role is complemented by at least three others: preparation for democratic citizenship, personal development and the development of a broad and advanced knowledge base. This work draws on the experiences in both Europe and North America to underline that the discussion is not in fact about which of these different purposes is the "real" one; they are all important, and they coexist. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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