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Education Newsletter

Editorial

Human rights education – a lot remains to be done



Citizenship and human rights education is one of the Council of Europe's flagship projects. Our Organisation believes that appropriate educational experience can be as effective as a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights. Citizenship and human rights are not simply a matter for politicians and law professionals. They must be part of everyone's lifelong education, from the earliest years.

On 5 and 6 November 2007, more than 200 education experts and human rights specialists discussed the long-term effects of human rights education at the Regional European Meeting on the World Programme for Human Rights Education. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways of helping the Council of Europe and OSCE member states carry out their national action plans for human rights education, with the accent on primary and secondary education. Government officials, experts and policy makers had an opportunity to pool their experience of national practices, highlight the difficulties and propose solutions.

The meeting was held jointly by the Council of Europe, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). A meeting on this scale jointly organised by all these institutions is a sufficiently rare occurrence to be an event in itself. I hope this spirit of close co-operation will continue to prevail, both in human rights education and in other areas. We have a great deal of work to do together, in the short and medium term, to help bring about democratic forms of society, respectful of human rights, across the world. This is a major political project. It will not be achieved with legislation, regulations and administrative measures alone, although they are important; it depends chiefly on educating and training our children and young people.

I am pleased that the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education has been extended for a further two years. This will give us time to carry out the ideas that have been devised and consolidate the work done so far. The Council of Europe's work on citizenship and human rights education and its youth programme on human rights education will be pursued and will serve as a framework for this consolidation effort.

Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni

Director General,

Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DG IV)

Special issue "Regional European Meeting
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Education for human rights should be seen as a priority in the best interest of all nations

The international community is increasingly adopting inter-governmental frameworks at global level, such as the World Programme for Human Rights Education, or at regional level, such as the 2005, European Year of Citizenship through Education and the Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Programme, which aim at encouraging the development of sustainable national strategies and programmes in the area of education for democratic citizenship and human rights.

In the last few months, at the United Nations we have witnessed significant action in this area on the part of the Human Rights Council, the new subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly established in 2006 to replace the Commission on Human Rights. The General Assembly vested the Council with the promotion of human rights education and learning as one of its primary responsibilities.

At its sixth session, last September, the Council decided to extend the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, dedicated to the integration of HRE into primary and secondary school systems, until 2009. During the same session, the Council adopted a



resolution initiating the drafting process for an International Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. Finally, another resolution adopted by the Council calls upon the United Nations and its Member States, to increase our education and public information activities to promote human rights from 10 December 2007 until 10 December 2008, when we will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A similar resolution is being discussed at the General Assembly.

On the one hand, this trend highlights a consensus that the education system plays a vital role in fostering respect, participation, equality and non-discrimination – human rights standards to which all individuals are

entitled – in our societies. For the education system to play such a role, a comprehensive approach to implementing education for democratic citizenship and human rights, addressing not only educational policies, processes and tools but also the environment within which education takes place, is needed.

On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that international programmes can only support – and not replace – committed, vigorous and concerted national action. The development of education for democratic citizenship and human rights should be seen as a priority in the best interest of all nations.



Ibrahim Wani

Chief, Research and Right to Development Branch,
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Responding to human rights challenges through education

This regional meeting is a timely contribution as the international community prepares for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2008, in which UNESCO is actively participating.

I would like to emphasise that the resolution extending the first phase of the World Programme up to 2009, recently adopted by the Human Rights Council, is a call to bring a greater sense of commitment from all of us. It is worth noting that the international community has increasingly focused on making human rights education a part of the international agenda. More stakeholders are now proactively involved in setting up partnerships towards reinforced efforts to include human rights education in the school curricula. Progress has been made and we will continue to do more.

The objectives of this regional meeting are of paramount importance in our changing societies today. The constantly evolving



realities that hamper the full enjoyment of human rights especially in the school systems – violence, discrimination, intolerance – present an urgent need to re-examine the ways that we respond to these human rights challenges.

Many avenues are open for strengthening responsible and coordinated partnerships. Today, there is a strong call to build enhanced partnerships where each and everyone participates to bring a unique contribution to the cause of human rights education. It is about building trust, synergy and alliances where they have been absent or

weak. It means enlarging our vision well beyond the paradigm of teachers/students, governments/constituents, donor/recipient. It is about recognising the unique strengths of each stakeholder and creatively seeking to optimise them for the common goal towards uplifting human rights education.

A sense of common purpose binds us all. There are enough resources, energy and good will coming from this assembly to bring about a society where human rights are upheld for all its members and for the future generations. Let us make it happen.



Linda King

Chief, Section for the Promotion of
Rights and Values in Education,
UNESCO

Human rights education is a powerful instrument for conflict prevention

Why is the OSCE, a security organisation, one of the co-organisers of the Meeting on Human Rights Education? The answer lies in the fact that the OSCE addresses security in a comprehensive way, linking the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions of security. It is our strong conviction that human rights education is a key means to promote and strengthen human rights, and a powerful instrument for conflict prevention and prevention of human rights violations.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) works bilaterally with governments which approach us with requests for support but also takes its own initiative to develop materials, curricula, and policy documents. For example this year we were invited by the Azerbaijani authorities to assess human rights and tolerance education in

schools and in teacher-training institutes. As a result, we have developed a report with our plans for improvement of human rights teaching in schools in this country. This project will now be undertaken partly in collaboration with the Council of Europe. This serves as a perfect example of how partnership among international organisations can be brought to fruition and stimulate concrete reform. I believe these activities also fit very well the spirit and concrete aims of the Plan of Action. In the area of education for mutual respect and understanding we continue our work on a comprehensive report with recommendations, based in part on the information that we received earlier from the participating States, regarding human rights and tolerance education. Here again, we now envision close co-operation with other international organisations, in this case with the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

I see the Meeting as a chance for us all to identify concrete opportunities for the promotion of human rights education. Allow me now to share my enthusiasm with you: human rights education is an area widely recognised and



accepted by governments and civil society as being instrumental to establishing and maintaining peaceful and democratic societies built on principles of respect for human rights.



Kirsten Mlacak

Head of the Human Rights Department,
OSCE/ODIHR

We all share a common objective

This meeting is the result of many months of discussions between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Council of Europe. I think we can all be satisfied with the way our co-operation has developed so far. We can ensure that there are no contradictions or overlap in the actions our member states undertake in the framework of different institutions. And, in spite of what may sometimes be a different perspective, at the end of the day, we all share a common objective – to promote human rights education. There is definitely enough work for everyone.



Left: Reinhold Otte, Chair of the Ad hoc Advisory Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (ED-EDCHR)

For its part, the Council of Europe is ideally placed to assist in the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action for the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which aims to make human rights and democratic citizenship education a priority in our educational policies. The protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law are the overall aim of our organisation. Since our mandate is to promote

these common values, it is clearly necessary to ensure that these values are properly understood and embraced – through education.

One of the questions that we need to address now is how to ensure that this work becomes sustainable, that it does not stop when the World Programme or other projects come to an end. In the Council of Europe, we are examining possible ways of moving further ahead. One possibility that is currently being discussed, would be to develop a European framework policy document on education for democratic citizenship and human rights. Such a document – which for the moment has only been the subject of a feasibility study - would include common objectives and orientation for policy development in the area, reflect the experiences of both formal and non-formal education practitioners, and include criteria for measuring progress within member states. It is not a secret that some countries would have strong objections against such a document, especially if it would take the form of a binding one. Others consider that they need a clear European framework for developing their policies in EDC/HRE. Whatever the outcome of this discussion will be, I am confident that some way to satisfy all those concerned will be found, through discussion and dialogue.

Sustainability will also be enhanced by the continued co-operation of

the organisations which are behind this meeting. This is not our last joint venture. We are already preparing a compendium of good practice. The Council of Europe will be organising an inter-institutional meeting in the beginning of next year to keep up the momentum, probably on the subject of teacher education.

In conclusion, I would like to remind us all that the work of international organisations, however important it may be, will bear no fruit if there is no action taken in the member states. To quote Louise Arbour and Koïchiro Matsuura in their foreword to the Plan of Action : “It is important to bear in mind, however, that international programmes can only support – and not substitute for – committed vigorous and concerted national action. Ultimately, United Nations programmes acquire real value only if national and local actors take responsibility for implementing them in their communities, and use them as mobilization and advocacy tools”.



Ólöf Ólafsdóttir

Deputy to the Director of Education
Directorate General IV,
Council of Europe

In brief...

Compendium of good practice

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the Council of Europe, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) jointly invited organisations and institutions from the OSCE area (Europe, Central Asia, North America) to submit examples of good practice for a compendium that is being compiled in order to further efforts in the area of human rights education, including citizenship education and education for mutual respect and understanding. Submissions were accepted for the primary and secondary level schooling sectors, including teacher-training institutions. The Compendium is being developed with the assistance of Human Rights Education Associates (HREA).

The Compendium was initiated by the ODIHR following the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision

No. 11/05 on the promotion of human rights education and training in the OSCE area, which tasked the ODIHR to "...produce a compendium of best practices for participating States on enhancing the promotion of human rights education and training, including the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, and non-discrimination in the OSCE area."

Further information:

<http://www.hrea.org/compendium>



Pavel Chacuk

Human Rights Adviser
OSCE/ODIHR

The Plan of Action brought us together

All day long we would have heated debates in the Council of Europe, and at night we would wander along narrow streets of a picturesque town – our Russian-speaking group strived to explore the capital of Alsace. This group, which had Russian as its working language at the Regional European Meeting on the World Programme for Human Rights Education, included Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Moldovans and Kyrgyz. Everyone was keen to share their experience of putting into practice the Plan of Action of the first phase of this Programme, adopted by the United Nations member states in July 2005. Two years ago, this document set out proposals for a concrete strategy and practical guidelines on implementing human rights education in primary and secondary schools. And now it has brought us together to ask to what extent it had been

possible to introduce the human rights education philosophy in different countries, and what guidance is required for the future.

(The full text of the article was published in the Russian "Teachers' newspaper" (Uchitelskaya gazeta), N 49 of 4 December 2007 www.ug.ru)



Lora Zujeva,
"Teachers' newspaper",
Russian Federation

European Centre on Human Rights Education, Intercultural Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship

During the meeting, Norway presented the concept of the European Centre on Human Rights Education, Intercultural Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship. This centre will be established in Norway in co-operation with the Council of Europe. The training of educators and teachers is the main objective of the centre. In addition, documentation, research and networking will be other important activities. The centre will operate with an international staff. It is the policy of the Council of Europe on these topics that will be promoted by the centre. The centre will be established in Oslo and will be ready to operate in the autumn of 2008. The Norwegian Parliament has granted an

annual sum to finance the centre, but contributions from other countries are also welcome.



Gunnar Mandt

Deputy Director General
Ministry of Education and Research of Norway

Some conclusions

Participants attending the Regional European Meeting felt enriched by the experiences of peers who have been successfully engaging in human rights education (HRE) in schools. It is evident that there is a growing awareness of and support for HRE from policymakers, civil society organisations and professionals in both formal and non-formal education. Moreover there is an increasing demand for seeking and developing expertise in HRE. This awareness needs to be developed into practical strategies that can be used locally, but co-ordinated and supported nationally.

There are a number of creative tensions that need to be managed, including tensions between the formal and non-formal education sectors and between all stakeholders in HRE. There are conceptual tensions between HRE and Education for Democratic Citizenship in terms of umbrella frameworks, and whether HRE should be cross-curricular, integrated, or a separate subject altogether. There remains a need to have a common understanding of HRE within a set of initiatives that includes citizenship education, global education, and EDC – all of which are related but are not the same.

Evaluation and research was an area identified as requiring special attention, in addition to legislative

developments. The roles of teachers and school leaders also have to be recognised and directly supported.

The opportunity to participate in the Regional Meeting and the potential supports offered by the Council of Europe, the OHCHR, OSCE/ODIHR and UNESCO were very much appreciated by participants. The Council of Europe and the other co-sponsors of the Regional Meeting will continue to play an invaluable role in engaging and supporting member states' involvement in HRE. HRE that is national in scope, systematic and sustained can only come about through the fruitful co-operation of governmental and non-governmental actors. This will bring us several steps closer to creating a "human rights reality" in each of our communities and countries.

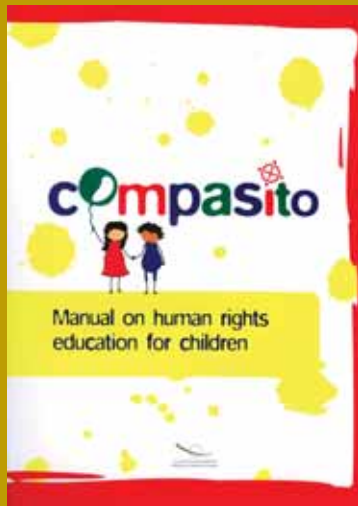
The full text of the meeting report is available in English, French and Russian at: www.coe.int/edc



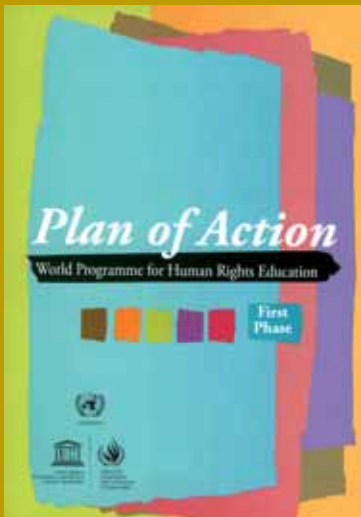
Felisa Tibbits

Executive Director,
Human Rights Education Associates (HREA)
General rapporteur of the meeting

Forum on
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 Strasbourg
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<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147853e.pdf>

Democratic Governance of Schools

by Elisabeth Bäckman and Bernard Trafford
 ISBN 978-92-871-6088-1



The manual Democratic Governance of Schools is part of a series of tools that make up the Council of Europe's "EDC/HRE Pack" to help educational institutions to promote and develop Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights. The publication can be used as a practical handbook for the daily work in schools and as a source of inspiration and personal/professional development for all involved in the governance of schools and wish to explore the possibilities, benefits and techniques of spreading democracy. The manual is available in Croatian, English, French, German, Hungarian, Portuguese and Russian (to order the book: <http://book.coe.int> <<http://book.coe.int>>).

Exploring Children's rights (Volume V)

by Rolf Gollob and Peter Krapf
 ISBN 978-92-871-6089-8

Exploring Children's rights (Volume V) is designed for teachers looking for tools to teach human rights to primary-school students. It contains 9 small projects with four lessons each and has been available in English since April 2007. The manual is now available in Russian, Azeri and French (to order the book: <http://book.coe.int> <<http://book.coe.int>>).



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