

## LISBON FORUM 2009

“CREATING A CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH EDUCATION”

### **Working session II - Regional approaches to human rights education – challenges and best practices**

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It is my great pleasure to welcome you today on behalf of the Council of Europe to the 2009 Lisbon Forum. Lisbon, as you well know, is a city steeped in culture. It is therefore not a coincidence that the Council of Europe chose Lisbon to base its North-South Centre, a city which indeed can act as a bridge between the northern and southern hemispheres of our world.

While Lisbon is symbolically important in itself, how, you may ask, can we concretely build these bridges? Bridges are not constructed simply through grand words and declarations - this would indeed be an unstable bridge - but rather built through substantive co-operation and actions.

One powerful connecting structure for a robust bridge is human rights, a universal concept that is not restricted by borders or nationality. And while I think everyone in this room would agree on the universality of human rights, unfortunately, many people in both hemispheres are not able to exercise these rights nor are they even sometimes aware of them.

This is where human rights education comes into the picture and where the Council of Europe has been active for over three decades.

But first a bit of background. As you are aware, the CoE core values are democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Organisation aims to defend and promote these values by means of inter-governmental co-operation (including in the field of education) and through legal mechanisms, such as the European Convention on Human Rights. While the European Court of Human Rights is probably the best known part of the Council of Europe, I would contend that by focusing on **preventative** mechanisms - such as education and more broadly intercultural dialogue - we can create more tolerant citizens, capable of dialogue, of resolving conflicts in a peaceful way and therefore prevent human rights abuses from happening in the first place.

This is certainly one reason why our member states are paying increasing attention to intercultural dialogue. In particular, the White Paper on intercultural dialogue, which was launched by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 47 member states of the CoE at their 118th Ministerial Session (Strasbourg, 6-7 May 2008), provides a common frame of reference for the CoE member States. The White Paper acknowledges the importance of citizenship and human rights education for building free, tolerant, just and inclusive societies.

The CoE runs a variety of programmes in the field of human rights education. They are aimed at legal professionals, NGOs, youth organisations, especially youth leaders, law enforcement officials, media and education professionals. The Human Rights Commissioner plays an important role in raising awareness of human rights issues and in particular in highlighting the implementation gap between policy and practice. I am therefore delighted that Commissioner Hammarberg is here with us today.

The above-mentioned programmes resulted in numerous guidelines, publications and materials, which can be of interest for all those interested in human rights education in other parts of the world. We are always very happy to share our experience, achievements and lessons learned.

Our current programme in the education sector, entitled “Learning and Living Democracy for All” is focused on primary and secondary education and is considered one of the flagship projects of the CoE. The diversity of situations in European countries makes it impossible to apply a “one size fits all” approach, therefore the focus has been on providing opportunities for co-operation and on developing a broad common framework, while completing it with country-specific programmes whenever possible. Examples of this co-operation include:

- **Common definitions** have been agreed upon. Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education includes all forms of education that contribute to the promotion of democracy and human rights. This can be done through a specific subject, in a cross-curricula way, and through a whole school approach (ex. school governance, teaching methodology, education professionals as role models).
- The **network** of Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education coordinators - which includes one person from every member state - plays a key role in the Programme, by identifying priorities, providing feedback and disseminating the outcomes. A number of regional initiatives have also been developed in recent years (South East Europe, Nordic, Black Sea and Baltic networks).
- A wealth of **manuals** and **instruments** for various target audiences has been developed, including a strategic support manual for decision makers, a guide on competences for teachers of all subjects, a series of manuals on teaching democracy and human rights in classrooms and a tool on democratic governance of schools for school directors.
- In order to avoid overlap and to promote complementarity, we have actively supported **inter-institutional co-operation**. In particular, a Compendium of Good Practice”, which was jointly published and launched in 2009 by ODIHR, CoE, UNESCO and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, describes 101 examples of good practice from the OSCE member states. It is hoped that it will provide inspiration and practical guidance to education practitioners and decision makers in all parts of the world. The Council of Europe is assisting the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with the implementation of the World Programme on Human Rights Education, in the framework of a formal agreement. The CoE also hosts regular inter-institutional meetings on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

- On the political front, a very important common reference point for Europe and framework for action is being developed: a **draft Charter on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education**. We have ensured that it is complimentary to the draft Declaration on HR Education and Training, which is currently being prepared by the UN. The Charter will be submitted to the Committee of Ministers for the adoption early next year.
- At the end of 2008, the CoE and Norway set up a European Resource Centre on Education for Intercultural Understanding, HR and Democratic Citizenship (“the European Wergeland Centre”) in Oslo. The Centre carries out and supports research in these domains, provides in-service training and support education professionals. The Centre disseminates information and serves as a platform and meeting place for relevant actors. We hope that the Centre will quickly become a prominent actor in this field and will make a valuable contribution to the promotion of human rights education.
- I would also like to mention the Council of Europe PESTALOZZI Programme for the professional development of teachers and education actors. The Programme consists of short term trainings and seminars, which allow the participants to learn about the latest educational approaches and methodologies, share experience ‘with their colleagues from other countries, and improve their professional skills and competences. The programme plays an important role in dissemination and testing of the guidelines and manuals developed at the European level.

There are many **good examples from CoE member States** to share. To mention just a few:

- In Spain, in accordance with a new law of 2006, Education for democratic citizenship and human rights are important components of respective education programming.
- Slovenia: in 2008, the University of Ljubljana started a 3 year in-service teacher training programme in the area of social and civic competences including such topics as human rights, active citizenship and multicultural education. More than 5.000 teachers in Slovenia are taking part in this project.

In the near **future**, we are expecting to conclude a major joint EC/CoE programme in Turkey which will last for three years and focus uniquely on citizenship and human rights education.

And finally, I would like to mention the comprehensive Programme “Human Rights Education with Young People” which is addressed mainly to youth NGOs. The manuals Compass and Compasito have become established references for this work. Over the last ten years, annual European training courses for youth trainers were organised, as well as 60 national and seven regional training courses in 30 different countries. Until now, some 75 study sessions organised by different European non governmental organisations were supported, thus reaching over 2300 youth leaders. Through the European Youth Foundation (EYE) more than 270 local projects on HR issues were supported across 34 countries, reaching some 10,000 young people.

## **Challenges**

In spite of all these positive developments, the biggest challenge of all is the low priority given to human rights education in many member States. In particular, the current climate of recession can be used as an excuse not to give it sufficient attention because of other needs, which are seen as more urgent.

Rather, democratic citizenship and human rights education should be seen as part of a solution to crisis. It can help equip young people with knowledge, skills and attitudes required for life in modern society, both in terms of personal and collective well being.

For this to become a reality, a holistic approach is needed. Democratic citizenship and human rights education has to be integrated in the school curriculum, introduced as part of training of all education professionals, included in quality assurance mechanisms and promoted as a whole school approach. It has to be given sufficient resources, and all those concerned, from decision makers to education professionals to pupils and parents associations need to work together to make it a reality.

It is my hope that this Forum can help us to make progress in this respect. The Council of Europe remains committed to contributing to this process and to building with you solid, sustainable bridges across all communities.