“Learning and living democracy for all”
Council of Europe Programme promoting citizenship and human rights education
Yulia Pererva

Background

Education plays an important role in providing knowledge and developing skills required for life in a democratic society, as well as in promoting relevant values and attitudes. Since 1997, the Council of Europe, an intergovernmental organisation with 47 member States, has supported a Project on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (Edc/Hrc). The Council of Europe’s priority areas are protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in its member states, and the aim of this Programme was to complement its treaty related activities (such as the work of the European Court of Human Rights or the European Committee of Social Rights), with mainstreaming these core values in educational systems.

The Project was launched in 1997 by the Second Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states. The first phase (1997-2000) was devoted mainly to the clarification of concepts and development of strategies to promote Edc. The setting up of “Sites of citizenship” in schools and communities was also supported. The results of this phase were endorsed by the European Ministers of Education at the 20th session of their standing conference in Krakow (Poland, October 2000). The focus of the second phase (2001-2004) was on the dissemination of the results of the first phase through networking and communication activities. Recommendation (2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on Edc is one of the main outcomes of this phase. The network of Edc coordinators was developed and became the cornerstone of the project. The “All-European Study on Policies for Edc” conducted during this phase has become a reference document in this field, as it gave a clear account of the situation in the different regions of Europe and revealed the “compliance gap” between policy and practice in many countries. The aim of the 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education was to reach a broader public, and to draw attention to the vital role education plays in fostering citizenship and to
the need for citizen participation in any truly democratic society. The current Programme of Activities “Learning and Living Democracy for All” (2006-2009) is devoted to the following three Lines of Action: 1) Education policy development and implementation for democratic citizenship and social inclusion; 2) New roles and competences of teachers and other educational staff; and 3) Democratic governance of educational institutions. As human rights education features more prominently in this phase, this is reflected in extending the title to Edc/Hre.

**Decision making bodies**

The Council of Europe programme of activities in the field of education is developed by the Steering Committee for Education (Cded) whose members are mainly representatives of Ministries of Education and other similar bodies, and overseen by the Committee of Ministers, which brings together Ministers of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Ambassadors based in Strasbourg. This work is also developed in consultation and co-operation with other relevant bodies bringing together parliamentarians (Pace), local and regional authorities (Crlae) and civil society representatives (Ingos Conference). The work priorities and working methods are thus defined by the government representatives, in close liaison with other relevant partners.

**Platform for co-operation**

A network of Edc/Hre coordinators, officially nominated by the member States to liaise with the Council of Europe in this field, provide an essential and highly operational link between the European and country level. At their meetings (twice a year), the Edc/Hre coordinators exchange information on recent developments in their countries, discuss future projects and identify possible solutions to common challenges. The issues discussed vary from evaluation and assessment and the role of Edc/Hre in intercultural societies to Edc/Hre in the context of early childhood and adult education. The coordinators provide feedback on the tools and manuals developed by the Council of Europe, and contribute to the organisation of major events. Special guests, such as representatives of other inter-governmental institutions, addressed the network at various occasions. Increasingly, the coordinators also work in smaller groups on a regional or thematic basis. In particular, such regional networks have been active in the South East Europe, Black Sea and Baltic countries and Nordic countries.
Materials and publications

Based on the analysis of the needs in the member States, a high priority is given to the development of practical tools and materials. A series of manuals for various audiences on Ede/Hre related issues has been developed, and is now known as the “Ede/Hre Pack”. The Pack addresses a broad range of topics, from policy making and teacher training to democratic governance of educational institutions and quality assurance of education for democratic citizenship in schools. The authors of the Pack are prominent experts from the Council of Europe member states, who share their diverse perspectives, experiences and ideas in the framework of collaborative exercise.

The Tool on Quality Assurance in Ede (published jointly by Unesco, Council of Europe and Centre for Educational Policies – Ljubljana) explores how democratic school development can be encouraged with the help of self-evaluation and assessment. The German Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” promoted the use of the Tool in a number of countries, with the assistance of the German Institute for International Educational Research (Dipf). The results of this work were summed up in a book “Introducing Quality Assurance of Education for Democratic Citizenship in Schools – A comparative Study on 10 Countries” (2009). The project was also presented at the World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (Sarajevo, 2007). As a follow up to this initiative, the Council of Europe supports pilot projects in Ukraine (as of 2007) and in Romania (as of 2008).

The manual on “How all teachers can support citizenship and human rights education: a framework for the development of competences” was published at the beginning of 2009. This publication defines and exemplifies 15 core competences in Ede/Hre for the individual teacher at the classroom level in any subject area. This tool is meant to be used by teachers and teacher educators in all subjects in both pre- and in-service teacher training.

The Guide “Democratic Governance of Schools” (2007) aims at promoting school governance based on the principles of democracy and human rights. The authors (both of them are school directors) show in an accessible and convincing manner how such approach can help solving every day problems at school and benefit the society at large (e.g. through peaceful conflict resolution). The targeted public is mainly school heads, but it also concerns youth leaders, teachers, students, young people and their parents – i.e. all groups who are interested in shaping schools as a democratic community. The Council of Europe and the Network of European Foundations (Initiative for Learning Democracy – Ilde) have cooperated on the issue of democratic school governance since 2006. In 2007, a scoping study on progress in democratic school governance was prepared. This study focuses on a few
countries from different parts of Europe and looks into progress and failures with implementing democratic governance in schools in those countries. As part of the Ilde project, the participating foundations decided to prepare a “European Handbook of Democratic School Development”. The Handbook (2009), is aimed at foundations, Ngos, parents and other interested groups and individuals, and was conceived as being complementary to the Council of Europe Guide on Democratic Governance of Schools. “Tool on Democratic Governance in Higher Education” is also currently being developed, and should be ready in 2009.

A Tool on “Key Issues for Policy Makers in Edc/Hre” will be prepared in 2009. The Tool will provide a succinct overview of the most important challenges to policy development and implementation in this field and will identify possible solutions, including those already in place in various countries and those that could be envisaged in future.

A series of manuals for teachers (e.g. “Exploring children’s rights” and “Living in democracy”) is complimentary to the Edc/Hre Pack.

**Adopted texts and standard setting**

The constant practice of the Council of Europe in every field of common interest and action by its Member states (e.g. human rights, national minorities, social policy, counter-terrorism) has been to conclude framework policy documents in various forms, which provide a focus and spur for action at national level and a way of disseminating good practice and raising standards throughout Europe. The success of this practice in other fields argues strongly for its application to Edc/Hre.

A proposal for a Framework policy document on education for democratic citizenship and human rights (e.g. framework convention, charter) will be discussed by the Steering Committee for Education at their meeting in March 2009. Such document would help to consolidate the work done so far and to develop a systematic, consistent and sustainable approach to the Council of Europe work in the field of Edc/Hre.

Several bodies of the Council of Europe adopted texts on Edc/Hre addressed to various audiences, such as the Parliamentary Assembly of Recommendation 1849 (2008) “For the promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education”. The Congress of Regional and Local Authorities of Europe (Crlae) initiated work on a report on “Education for democratic citizenship: new tools for local authorities”. The Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner published a viewpoint on “Human Rights education is a priority – more concrete action is needed”. These texts
highlight the need for co-operation among a number of actors in the field of Edc/Hre, and provide an important reference point and guidance.

**Country specific programmes**

Bilateral programmes has been supported in a number of countries (e.g. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Russia), often in co-operation with the European Commission. For example, by the end of 2008, all teachers of the course human rights and democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina went through a certification process – part of the quality assurance mechanism – with the close support of the Council of Europe as well as Civitas. This was the final stage of Council of Europe support for this course in Bosnia and Herzegovina which also included curriculum and material development and teacher training.

**Partnership and networking**

The Council of Europe works in close co-operation with other regional and international institutions and organisations. In 2005-2009, it assists the Un with the monitoring of the First Phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education at the European level in a framework of a formal agreement. In 2007, a Regional European Meeting organised jointly with the Office of the Un High Commissioner for Human Rights (Ohchr), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Osce/Odirh) was hosted at the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg. The four institutions have also prepared a joint publication “Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: a Compendium of Good Practice” (2009), following the initiative of the Osce/Odirh.

An exploratory research project on “Active citizenship for democracy” (2005-2008) was organised in co-operation with the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning based on indicators and benchmarks (Crell) of the European Commission. The aim of this project was to contribute to the analysis of data needs, the development of the survey modules and the selection of indicators. On the basis of this work, an Active Citizenship Composite Indicator was developed, which was included in the 2008 “Report on Progress towards Lisbon objectives in education and training”.

The issue of partnerships between state and non-state actors is becoming increasingly important. In October 2008, a Forum on “Civic Partnerships for
Edc/Hre” organised in the framework of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, brought together representatives of governments, international and national NGOs and foundations and other relevant organisations with a view to explore the existing practice and to see how such partnerships could be further developed and supported. The participants adopted a declaration, and a report was prepared. A publication on this issue is foreseen in 2009. In future, it is envisaged to organise such fora on a regular basis. The possibility of developing a Council of Europe guide or criteria for partnerships for Edc/Hre will also be explored.

The Council of Europe is maintaining close working contacts with the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (Alesco), Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Isesco), Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (Fra), Alliance of Civilisations, Organization of American States (Oas), Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and International Committee of the Red Cross (Icrc). Co-operation with prominent NGOs, such as Human Rights Education Associates and Civitas, has also been supported.

Numerous individual visitors and groups both from the Council of Europe member States and from other parts of the world have had an opportunity to become familiar with the Organisation’s work in the field of Edc/Hre.

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

At the end of 2008, a European Resource Centre on Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship (“the European Wergeland Centre”) was set up in Oslo by Norwegian authorities, in cooperation with the Council of Europe. The Centre will build on and promote the work performed by the Council of Europe and Norway for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship. The Centre shall carry out and support research in these domains, provide in-service training and support for the professional development of teachers and teacher training professionals on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship. The Centre shall also disseminate information and serve as a platform and meeting place for researchers, teachers, teacher training professionals, policy-makers and other relevant actors.
Future trends

In 2009, the Programme of Activities “Learning and living democracy for All” will draw to a close. Its results will be evaluated and discussed by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, which will then have to discuss what follow up to give to this work.

Some preliminary conclusions can already be drawn on the basis of the mid-term evaluation, and recommendations can be made. In particular, it is felt that a closer link should be established between the Council of Europe treaty related work and its activities in the field of education. For example, teaching the case law of the European Court of Human Rights at school could be given more attention. Teaching of the rule of law and anti-corruption education could also be addressed. Another conclusion, linked to decisions of the 22nd session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education – “Building a more humane and inclusive Europe: role of education policies” (Istanbul, Turkey, 2007), is to look more closely at the right to education and quality education for all. Special emphasis could be given to equal opportunities of marginalised groups or groups with specific needs. The question of public responsibility, and its consequences for equal access to quality education should feature high on the future agenda.

In order to ensure the continuity of the Council of Europe work in Edc/Hre other priorities could include: support to policy development and implementation in the member States (e.g. by provision of expert advice, follow up to the framework policy document), supporting partnerships and co-operation (e.g. organisation of fora for various target groups, development of guidelines / criteria, support to professional networks), and assisting the implementation of Council of Europe tools and manuals (such as the Edc/Hre Pack). A closer link to research could be envisaged. The issues of evaluation and assessment would need to be further addressed.