

DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME on Education for Democratic citizenship, based on the rights and responsibilities of the citizens

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 May 1999 at its 104th Session)

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The Committee of Ministers,

1. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe,
2. Recalling the Council of Europe's mission to build a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a cultural heritage enriched by its diversity;
3. Reaffirming its attachment to the spiritual and moral values which are the true source of individual freedom, political pluralism and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of all genuine democracy;
4. Underlining the primary role of the European Convention on Human Rights and the other Council of Europe and United Nations fundamental instruments which guarantee to individuals the exercise of their inalienable rights;
5. Having regard to the Final Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe which emphasise the need to develop education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens;
6. Insisting on the urgency of strengthening individuals' awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities so that they develop a capacity to exercise these rights and respect the rights of others;
7. Stressing the fundamental role of education in promoting the active participation of all individuals in democratic life at all levels: local, regional and national;
8. Recognising the action of the Council of Europe in all areas that have a bearing on fostering responsible citizenship in democratic society;
9. Concerned by the development of violence, xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and religious intolerance, which constitutes a major threat to the reinforcement of peace and democracy both at national and international level;
10. Conscious of the responsibilities towards present and future generations to safeguard a natural and man-made healthy and high quality environment,
11. **DECLARES that EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP BASED ON THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS:**

- i. constitutes a lifelong learning experience and a participative process developed in various contexts: in the family, in educational institutions, in the workplace, through professional, political and non-governmental organisations, in local communities and through leisure and cultural activities and the media, as well as through activities for the protection and improvement of the natural and man-made environment;
- ii. equips men and women to play an active part in public life and to shape in a responsible way their own destiny and that of their society;
- iii. aims to instil a culture of human rights which will ensure full respect for those rights and understanding of responsibilities that flow from them;
- iv. prepares people to live in a multicultural society and to deal with difference knowledgeably, sensibly, tolerantly and morally;
- v. strengthens social cohesion, mutual understanding and solidarity;
- vi. must be inclusive of all age groups and sectors of society;

12. EMPHASISES the importance of the current activities on education for democratic citizenship carried out as part of the Strasbourg Summit Action Plan;

13. CONSIDERS that further action is necessary to implement education for democratic citizenship (on a sustainable basis) at all levels and in all areas;

14. CALLS on member States to:

- promote democratic citizenship based on the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- make education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens an essential component of all educational, training, cultural and youth policies and practices;

15. DECIDES to:

- give high priority to education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities in the Council of Europe work programme;
- adopt the Programme which is appended to this Declaration and agree to its co-ordinated implementation by the Council of Europe sectors concerned;
- adopt guidelines and recommendations to member States before the end of the year 2000 in the light of proposals made by relevant Conferences of Specialised Ministers.

PROGRAMME ON EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP BASED ON THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS

1. INTRODUCTION

The Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg for their Second Summit, expressed their "desire to develop education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the participation of young people in civil society" (Final Declaration).

2. OBJECTIVES

The Programme aims to implement the Final Declaration by providing a European framework for the strengthening of education for democratic citizenship at all levels. Based on its past and current activities, the Council of Europe, in the years to come, should step up its efforts to:

- 2.1 identify and develop novel and effective strategies, means and methods for the strengthening of the democratic fabric of society;
- 2.2 explore major issues regarding education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities;
- 2.3 exchange and disseminate knowledge, experience and good practice across Europe;
- 2.4 provide assistance for reforms of education and other relevant policies;
- 2.5 develop a platform for networking and partnerships;
- 2.6 foster public awareness of individuals' rights and understanding of their responsibilities.

3. KEY ISSUES

The following specific issues will be given attention within the Programme:

- 3.1 the evolving concept of democratic citizenship, in its political, legal, cultural and social dimensions;
- 3.2 human rights, including their social dimension and each person's obligation to respect the rights of others;
- 3.3 the relationships between rights and responsibilities as well as common responsibilities in combating social exclusion, marginalisation, civic apathy, intolerance and violence;
- 3.4 the core competencies for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities;

3.5 the development of active citizenship through different innovative methods of active and participative learning in a lifelong learning perspective;

3.6 learning democracy in school and university life, including participation in decision-making and the associated structures of pupils, students and teachers;

3.7 partnerships between educational institutions, local communities, non-governmental organisations, and political authorities;

3.8 the nature of and links between the various approaches to Education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities such as human rights education, civic education, intercultural education, history teaching, democratic leadership training, conflict resolution and confidence building;

3.9 the role of the media and new information technologies in Education for democratic citizenship based on citizen's rights and responsibilities;

3.10 changing patterns of work and their implications for processes of socialisation;

3.11 forms of voluntary work and participation in civil society, particularly at local level;

3.12 young peoples' lifestyles and the different forms of their involvement in society.

4. ACTIVITIES

The main activities of the programme will be:

4.1 Policy-making

4.1.1 Draw up guidelines and recommendations on education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities to be presented to the forthcoming Conference of European Ministers of Education (Cracow, 2000) as well as to other appropriate ministerial conferences;

4.1.2 Provide assistance in the establishment of national plans for human rights education as part of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education;

4.1.3 Encourage the establishment of national plans for education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities in member States;

4.1.4 Provide assistance to member States in the reforms of the educational and training systems (curriculum and textbook development, teacher training), so as to include education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights

and responsibilities in programmes at all levels;

4.1.5 Examine the setting up of instruments for the recognition of voluntary involvement in society and of informal learning periods as a means of promoting education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities.

4.2 *Research and data collection*

4.2.1 Explore the above-mentioned key issues in seminars, colloquies and through action research;

4.2.2 Survey, in the different countries, developments in education for democratic citizenship at national level in close co-operation with non-governmental organisations and civil society at large;

4.2.3 Provide expertise and information on available resources and projects in and outside the Council of Europe;

4.2.4 Collect and evaluate examples of good practice.

4.3 *Training and awareness-raising*

4.3.1 Produce training and educational tools in particular using audio-visual means and new technologies;

4.3.2 Develop a practitioners' forum through the Internet;

4.3.3 Increase and strengthen the organisation of and support for national, regional and local information and training workshops and seminars;

4.3.4 Relate existing Council of Europe training programmes to the above-mentioned key issues;

4.3.5 Prepare practical, action-oriented awareness-raising materials;

4.3.6 Make plans for the setting up of a European campaign for education for democratic citizenship based on citizens' rights and responsibilities.

5. WORKING METHODS

The activities should:

5.1 be both exploratory and operational, focusing on innovation, training and awareness-raising, and the transfer of knowledge and know-how;

5.2 be carried out through intersectorial and multidisciplinary co-ordination within the Council of Europe and in member States;

5.3 seek close co-operation and joint projects with other international

organisations active in democratic citizenship education, such as the European Union, the United Nations, Unesco and the OSCE as well as with non-governmental organisations and the private sector;

5.4 rely on an interacting network of “focal points” to be established in member States;

5.5 develop, whenever possible, an action-research process in member States so as to ensure the participation of the people concerned as well as the involvement of grassroots in the use of research results.