

2nd OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting on Education to promote mutual respect and understanding and to teach about the holocaust

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**ASSESSMENT REPORT ON DIVERSITY EDUCATION
IN THE OSCE REGION**

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Global framework for the promotion of diversity education

Over the last two decades, social and political changes have had a considerable impact on the development of a democratic political culture in all OSCE participating States. In particular, these changes have to a significant extent influenced the area of human development and have forced experts and policy makers to reflect anew the meaning and role of diversity education and its influence on the formation and development of a democratic political culture based on the principles of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. The issue of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance has become one of the central points of discussion in terms of theory, research, policy and practice.

Policy developments in OSCE participating States and abroad are now emphasising diversity education together with education for tolerance and mutual respect as a mainstream and high profile education policy. The OSCE, the *Council of Europe*, UNESCO and other inter-governmental organization as well as many NGOs have a strong interest in being able to work effectively on these issues during the period of next 5 years. This has been clearly emphasized by the *UN Draft plan of action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the proposed programme for human rights education*, the *Council of Europe's Education for Democratic Citizenship* project and the Pestalozzi Programme for training trainers. In particular, this has been a priority also for OSCE who initiated the Diversity education project in 2006.

These developments have had a profound impact both on the normative theorizing about human development and on the work of major intergovernmental organizations in the area of diversity education and the education for tolerance and mutual respect. The OSCE has numerous commitments relating to human rights education and training and during this period it has significantly contributed to this area of human development. Its determination was confirmed in December 2003 in the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century:

»The OSCE's efforts will in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Their outlook and perspective of the future are key. Where appropriate, the OSCE will therefore take on a stronger role in the field of education. An area such as human rights education would deserve particular attention.«

Moreover, OSCE has emphasized the importance of education in a number of decisions taken by the Ministerial and Permanent Councils of the OSCE seeing education *»as a means for **preventing and responding** to all forms of **intolerance and discrimination**, as well as promoting integration and **respecting diversity**.«* (Cordoba Declaration, 2005). On those occasions, the OSCE has highlighted the need to promoting education for mutual respect and tolerance as well as highlighting positive contributions of diversity to society. These decisions aim in particular to

*»Promote and enhance, as appropriate, **educational programmes for fostering tolerance and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination** and encourage development of informal exchanges among experts in appropriate fora on best practise and experiences in law enforcement and education.«* (PC Decision No 607 and 621)

With the aim of implementing these commitments, particular attention to diversity education and education for tolerance and mutual respect has been paid recently both during the Slovenian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2005 and during the Belgian Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2006.

However, despite substantial differences in the national contexts, institutional structures, political factors and social and political conditions of the OSCE participating States, public education systems in this region face demands and specific challenges related to

the implementation of the basic principles of diversity education at various stages (primary and secondary education, pre- and in-service teacher training) and in different contexts (formal and informal learning).

Aims and objectives of the »Diversity education« project

The »Diversity education« project promotes key values and outcomes for formal education which should strive for equality, inclusiveness and diversity in its policies, programmes and practices. In embracing equality, schools should commit themselves to positive and equitable processes and education outcomes. Schools should be committed to prepare students for a society in which diversity is recognized, respected and valued.

Working definition of »diversity education«

The working definition for »diversity education« constituted the basis for analysis and action in the ODIHR's Tolerance and non-Discrimination programme and specifically for the »Diversity education« project.

Diversity education is based on the principles and values of human rights. It therefore encompasses all learning that values and promotes the equal dignity of all, equality, democratic participation, security, and, justice and peace in the world.

It is the goal of diversity education to challenge anti-democratic forces such as racism, xenophobia, and other discriminatory practises. It aims to promote 'living together' and an understanding of the ways in which people in the community, nation and global region are interdependent with other people around the world.

Diversity education encourages the exploration of commonalities, the debating of differences and the non-violent resolution of conflicts arising from issues related to culture, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, among others. It seeks to present history from multiple points of view including those of excluded groups. It promotes a safe, inclusive and democratic ethos in the learning environment, and involves practitioners and students at all levels in actively promoting respect for diversity. It offers appropriate strategies to deal effectively with expression of discrimination such as bullying, name calling, hate speech, and other forms of disrespect and exclusion.

Structure targeted by the Diversity education project

The ODIHR's project on diversity education mainly focused on formal education at the levels of primary and secondary school. Additionally, the project looked on university education specifically with regard to training of future teachers.

Information collection on diversity education

An electronic questionnaire was developed to collect information on diversity education in formal education covering the following areas:

- Diversity education curricula
- School material
- Strategic planning of diversity education
- Quality standards and evaluation
- Pre-service teacher training and diversity education
- Diversity education in in-service teacher training
- Diversity education initiatives

A small experts group gathered in June and September to discuss and develop recommendations on diversity education.

Assessment report on diversity education

- An English and Russian version of the assessment report will be produced
- The report will contain:
 - Recommendations and rationale of the project
 - Country reports
 - Overview of responses received from participating
- Report will be finalised in February/March 2007

Recommendations

The recommendations presented are meant for decision makers within the formal education sector and provide a comprehensive set of key points that should receive particular attention if diversity education is to be implemented. Furthermore, numerous

recommendations are directly addressed to professional practitioners in formal education, such as principals, teachers as well as trainers and teaching staff of teacher training institutions. The main aim of the recommendations is therefore to provide guidance for efforts to strengthen diversity education in the formal school sector within the OSCE participating states educational system. The recommendations are primarily aimed to improve the **relevance, effectiveness, utility** and **sustainability** of diversity education at the various stages of education (primary, secondary, higher education) and in different contexts (formal, informal and non-formal learning). They have been grouped in 8 major groups:

1. *General recommendations on diversity education* (focusing primarily on the school-level factors, e.g. school climate, the relationship between diversity education and human rights);
2. *Curriculum development* (focusing primarily at the curricular framework that provides the direction to diversity education, on the role of diversity education in the school curriculum, curriculum development,
3. *School material (textbooks and materials for teachers* (providing recommendations in the area of using existing materials, strengthen co-operation in material development);
4. *Teacher pre-service training* (focusing on the *structural aspects of teacher pre-service training* and the *aspects of content in pre-service teacher training*);
5. *Teacher in-service training* (raising of the relevance of in-service TT to reflect new curricular frameworks into training, identifying the obstacles to training, promoting diversity education in specialised management courses for headteachers and other teaching staff);
6. *Co-operation with non-state actors*
7. *Quality standards, indicators and evaluation* (e.g., developing national quality standards and indicators in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance, designing goals for the evaluation of diversity education);
8. and finally, *National/local strategies for diversity education*.

Aim and objectives of OSCE's future assistance and initiatives in diversity education

By considering the principal findings and conclusions of the »Diversity education« project, the recommendations for future OSCE assistance and initiatives in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance should in particular:

1. strengthen the role and effectiveness of OSCE assistance in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance in participating States;
2. support the development of in-country expertise in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance;
3. assist participating States to integrate diversity education and education for non-discrimination and tolerance as a permanent cross-cutting theme into the school curriculum at the level of primary and secondary education;
4. improve information exchange and strengthen the development of intra-country and inter-country partnership among NGOs, governmental institutions and educational practitioners in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance;
5. work to promote the development and implementation of policy-oriented and curriculum level initiatives and improvements within both pre-service and in-service teacher training courses;
6. provide support for the development of new institutional structures and encourage the use of existing mechanisms for the exchange of teachers and experts in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance;
7. support the implementation of project-based activities in the area of diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance in all OSCE participating States;

8. finally, cooperate with other international and non-governmental organizations in information exchange and designing a method of sustainable implementation for diversity education and the teaching for mutual respect and tolerance of students and their teachers as well as other target groups.