

# **SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING (BACKGROUND PAPER)**

## **Introduction**

### **I. Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**

The main objective of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on “Human Rights Education and Training” is to discuss follow-up among OSCE participating States to the UN recommendation on the creation of national action plans on human rights education. Another objective of the meeting is to look at examples from the OSCE region on the integration of human rights education into school curricula, including the interrelation between human rights education and tolerance/non-discrimination and the preventive role of human rights education as an indispensable element in a long-term strategy to prevent hate crimes and phenomena like anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism, genocide, etc.

The meeting will focus on three main areas of human rights education and training:

- Formal human rights education, including school curricula;
- Human rights education and training for public officials; and
- Informal human rights education.

The meeting will also consider the role of international organizations and international support in the area of human rights education and training. What support can international organizations, including OSCE field operations and institutions, provide, and how do we make sure that such support is built on local ownership and ensures long-term sustainability?

To answer these questions, the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) conducted a survey among OSCE field missions, the results of which reflect the situation of human rights training and education in the OSCE region and also serve as a background paper for discussions during the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting.

### **II. The Importance of Education for the OSCE Chairmanship**

In his opening address to the OSCE Permanent Council on 15 January 2004, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Solomon Passy, presented the priorities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship, which include education:

*Education, in the widest sense of the word, will be one of the priorities of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. Education is a major tool for setting up democratic institutions and securing democratic governance, for generating respect for human rights and for promoting tolerance, for sustainable economic development and raising human resources for successful market economies. Education is vitally important for empowering individuals and groups and for developing their capacity for the peaceful resolution of conflicts within and*

*among nations. The Chairmanship is fully mindful of the OSCE limitations in providing direct assistance for education and training. At the same time we all know that the OSCE has immense political potential for enhancing awareness and mobilizing resources. In this context the Chairmanship will co-ordinate OSCE activities with other specialized international agencies (e.g. Council of Europe, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP) and financial institutions, as well as with bilateral donors.*

### **III. OSCE Commitments**

- The 1990 Copenhagen Document is the most important source of OSCE commitments regarding the human dimension. It established that the protection and promotion of human rights is one of the main purposes of government and that recognition of human rights constitutes the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace. OSCE standards relating to human rights education are contained in Articles 14 and 23.
- The 1991 Moscow Document, which also addresses the human dimension, says: “(...) Effective human rights education contributes to combating intolerance, religious, racial and ethnic prejudice and hatred, including against Roma, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. (...) encourage competent authorities responsible for education programs to design effective human rights related curricula and courses for students at all levels, particularly students of law, administration and social sciences as well as those attending military, police and public service schools. (...)”

### **IV. Other International Commitments**

- The Durban Declaration adopted at the UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001 says: “(...) education, development and the faithful implementation of all international human rights norms and obligations, including enactment of laws and political, social and economic policies, are crucial to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; (...)”

## **The ODIHR and Human Rights Education**

Although the ODIHR's work does not usually contain a specific component on human rights education, many of the institution's activities and projects are aimed at educating various categories of people on human rights and democratic values or at transferring know-how and sharing experiences.

Some projects are aimed at transmitting basic knowledge of human rights issues and fostering the integration of that knowledge into public values, such as through public-education awareness-raising campaigns. Other projects target professional groups whose activities involve human rights monitoring, protection, and/or advocacy. Such projects may include training programmes for lawyers, judges, prosecutors, and police officers on international human rights law and codes of conduct, among other things. The ODIHR also produces human rights publications that are aimed at both the general public and specific groups of professionals.

The activities of the ODIHR are designed and implemented in co-operation with OSCE missions, as well as with local and international NGOs, international organizations, and other partners.

For more information on specific projects, please see past ODIHR annual reports at <http://www.osce.org/odihr>.

### **A Survey Among OSCE Missions**

The ODIHR recently conducted a survey that requested OSCE field missions to specify their activities in the field of human rights education and training conducted in 2002 and 2003. The missions were also asked to identify problems, best practices, and lessons learnt; to provide examples of co-operation with initiatives launched by other international and national organizations; and to provide any other relevant comments and information.

- *Detailed answers to questionnaires are available from the ODIHR upon request. They will be sent as they were received from the missions: no changes to content or format will have been made. OSCE missions and institutions contributed through their activities to all three areas highlighted in the agenda for the SHDM.*

Some general observations from the survey include:

- Human rights are not only about knowledge of a basic set of rules and principles but also about a change in attitude and behaviour. It is therefore important that every target audience understands how human rights are relevant to them.
- Human rights training should not focus on abstract concepts but should provide practical knowledge and skills. Projects that provide concrete practical assistance and enable people to exercise their rights have proven particularly effective. Examples of such projects include: support to legal-aid projects, ombudsman outreach projects, and development of a website for a constitutional court.

- Human rights education/training should focus on enforceable international treaties, conventions, and laws.
- Where relations between civil society and state institutions are non-existent, involvement of NGOs by the OSCE may subsequently result in better communication between those NGOs and national authorities and may lead to independent joint projects designed by state structures and NGOs that are implemented outside of the initial OSCE project.
- It is a good practice to designate several people in the mission to be responsible for internal training on human rights. Such trainers could also work on projects aimed at outside target groups. Having such teams of human rights teaching and training specialists has an enormous added value. It is important that such teams be comprised of international and national staff members.
- Mission staff should seek regular training on human rights issues for themselves. Such training should not be knowledge-based only but should also pertain to attitudes and include training and teaching skills.
- Publishing results of projects is often recommended as a useful way to disseminate information about achievements and to guarantee “institutional memory” and codification of best practices that can be utilized in the future not only internally by one mission but that could be also useful for other OSCE structures.

### **Best Practices and Lessons Learnt**

In general:

- It is essential to have access to the same target audience for a longer period of time for follow-up and to encourage changes in attitude and approach. The challenge is to find the optimum balance between reaching as many people as possible and having sufficient time with any one group.
- When planning and conducting short-term training sessions, it is important not to overestimate the results: the use of role-playing and concrete case studies, as well as successful models (and experts), is a good way of having participants re-think their way of working. One-off training sessions should be followed by further work by the state authorities or other organizations (NGOs, etc).
- Training is more effective when representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organizations participate and when the training includes practical sessions for participants to evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of the knowledge they have gained.
- Ministries of education should be seen as primary focal points and leading partners. Endorsement of project results by countries’ ministries guarantees faster and more-tangible output and impact. Involving relevant education officials at an early stage ensures ownership by the local education system.

- Follow-up activities and periodic assessment could be recommended in order to ensure sustainability of projects. For instance, if a textbook on human rights is adopted with support of the mission, training teachers on methodology and content is an indispensable follow-up plan.
- Training modules need to be flexible and take into account regional differences. Making a lasting impact requires long-term involvement and local partnerships to complete the adaptation, or translation, of human rights rules and concepts into practical and appropriate knowledge, skills, and methodologies. The local partners need to become well acquainted with the meaning of these standards. Local staff of OSCE missions play a crucial role in relaying this message.

### **Formal Human Rights Education**

- When working on human rights curricula in formal educational institutions, some missions have relied on a network of organizations actively involved in this topic in the country concerned. Having a network of organizations working towards the same goal allows for a more comprehensive strategy to be elaborated and more-targeted activities to be implemented. Working through networks provides for cohesion and coherence of implemented activities.
- Law schools, one of the primary targets for human rights education, have sometimes been reluctant to change curriculum and techniques. Reforming teaching methodology often is the first priority: making a shift from a knowledge-based learning process to one that also uses skills-based learning. Legal-aid clinics run by law students have been widely accepted as an excellent way to develop practical legal skills during student years.
- Programmes should be comprehensive, and support of the leadership of relevant institutions, even at the ministry level, is crucial. Otherwise, there is a danger of a split between the teachers who are involved in the programme and those who are not. This can put enormous pressure upon the teachers who are committed to changing the teaching style of their institution.

### **Public Officials**

- Human rights training should be accompanied by other forms of institution-building and technical co-operation activities. It is, for instance, important to recognize that a lack of technical and material facilities to conduct investigations, as well as limited understanding of a functioning justice system, can be major obstacles when fighting torture and ill-treatment.
- Human rights education should prioritize the bodies responsible for human rights protection, e.g., the judicial system, the police, or national human rights institutions.
- While conducting training or providing technical assistance to training institutions for public officials (judicial, prosecutorial, or police training centres), having an official written agreement with such institutions is helpful at later stages of project

implementation. Such an official commitment that has to be adhered to throughout the project provides a sense of stability and predictability to project activities.

- Setting up projects with several international governmental organizations or one or more respected international NGOs ensures diversity and greater financial input and provides for greater credibility of recommendations.
- Involvement of national NGOs that have prior working relations with state training facilities can accelerate the process of “building bridges” and creating trust between the OSCE and such state institutions.
- The expertise of national NGOs is indispensable when providing training on national standards and procedures is part of the training or assistance programme.
- Training activities with mixed groups of professionals (e.g., judges, prosecutors, police) should be encouraged as an excellent means of fostering information exchange and building closer co-operation between these different groups of legal practitioners.
- OSCE experience when working with law-enforcement training institutions is that a broad range of issues have to be tackled: teaching content, methodology, planning, and management. It is important to understand that all these aspects are interrelated and have to be dealt with as a complex.
- Another challenge regarding law-enforcement training is the fact that the training provided at these institutions is still quite militarized, which affects relations between teachers and students (usually very hierarchical). It is critical to change this, as well as to introduce a human rights course. Human rights teaching will have no impact in an environment where students and their needs and opinions do not count at all.

### **Informal Human Rights Education**

- Conducting a thorough needs assessment and collecting information about public attitudes and knowledge (based, for instance, on opinion polls) are essential prerequisites for designing effective programmes.
- Overtraining or overeducating must be avoided. When a pool of well-trained NGOs already exists, they should be supported and encouraged to use their training knowledge and to focus on coaching activities and capacity-building.
- Several methods can be used to ensure the sustainability of training, e.g., by training NGOs not only in substantive issues but also by delivering skills-based training and teaching critical thinking, analysis, and negotiation skills; by establishing contacts between NGOs and donors; and by supporting long-term projects by entrusting trained NGO representatives with training relevant national actors.
- Involvement of NGOs from rural areas has been noted as an important factor to ensure the sustainability of any training activity. There have been cases where NGOs in capitals

that have received more than sufficient training are reluctant to work with rural populations.

- Many missions refer to public campaigns as effective tools for reaching out to the wider public and passing on important messages. Public campaigns tackle two problems simultaneously: first, the need to raise awareness among the population about their rights and practical means to enforce such rights; second, educating journalists and increasing their sensitivity to the human rights agenda.
- A good way to reach out to university students and NGO members is to organize specialized schools or courses on human rights. If such programmes primarily target university students, they could be used to establish closer links with the administration of universities and lobby for longer-term co-operation at a more institutionalized level.
- If it is not feasible to organize the whole school independently, a possibility to provide active input into similar initiatives of other organizations should be explored (guest lectures, providing OSCE publications, co-funding, etc.).

### **Co-operation with Other International Organizations**

Co-operation with international organizations takes place in several forms:

- Long-term co-operation where all plans are jointly developed and activities are jointly implemented. Most missions have successful examples of such comprehensive co-operation.
- Rendering support by OSCE missions to initiatives of other organizations after initial planning and launching of the project has taken place. Such support can take the form of co-funding of some events, bringing in OSCE expertise, or adding political pressure.
- Inviting relevant organizations on board after all preparatory work has been done by an OSCE mission.
- The ultimate goal of such co-operation is to reinforce and enhance mutual results, to avoid duplication of efforts, to optimize the use of resources (financial and human), and to prevent forum shopping.