

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS OF ODIHR DIRECTOR,
AMBASSADOR JANEZ LENARČIČ
AT THE HDIM, WORKING SESSION 8&9, 2 October 2009
*Specifically selected topic: Human Rights Education***

The fact that Human Rights Education (HRE) is a specially selected topic for a second year in a row is an indication of the importance of it to the participating States and its relevance to the OSCE comprehensive concept of security.

When I refer today to “human rights education”, I mean it in a broad sense, to also include:

- education for democratic citizenship,
- education for mutual respect and understanding,
- education for conflict prevention and reconciliation,
- education for development and others,

because all these types of education are embedded in respect for human rights and human dignity. HRE has three primary goals: learning about human rights & mechanisms for their protection, developing values and behaviour which uphold human rights, and taking action to defend and promote human rights.

Human rights education also has a preventive aim -- as means to prevent human rights violations and conflict. It is only when individuals have knowledge, skills and commitment; when learning involves information, action, and reflection; then education for human rights brings effects.

This day is also ‘special’ for us for another reason – we are proud to present to you today the result of our 2-year-long joint work with the Council of Europe, UNESCO and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – the educational resource ***“Human Rights Education in the School Systems of Europe, Central Asia and North America: A Compendium of Good Practice”***.

ODIHR was tasked to develop this tool by the 2005 Ljubljana MC Decision, and we were happy that our colleagues from intergovernmental organizations, who are with us today, joined ODIHR in this endeavour. The joint work of four intergovernmental organizations on the Compendium is unprecedented and is surely a very good practice itself. And the results of this work have exceptional value for educators and policy makers who will be able to use these 101 good practices from the Compendium in schools, teacher training institutions, in non-formal education as well as in policy planning.

Today we will be discussing what make practices good, and what key elements make human rights education successful.

I would like to mention now to you several key elements or components of human rights education which the Compendium addresses and give you a few concrete examples of practices which were selected for Compendium:

1. Participating States should have *appropriate laws, guidelines and standards*: Human rights education should be stated explicitly in objectives of educational policy development and reform, as well as in quality standards of education. (Compendium features the “Act Prohibiting Discrimination and other Degrading Treatment” of **Sweden**, that can serve as an example for countries where non-discrimination legislation promoting equal treatment, particularly in educational institutions, is not yet developed).
2. It is essential to ensure that human rights teaching and learning happen in a human rights-based *learning environment*: educational objectives, practices and the organization of the schools should be consistent with human rights values and principles. An example is a practice from Compendium “Stop Bullying: A School-Wide Campaign” from **Lithuania**, which involves all members of the school community – students, teachers, administrators and parents – in the promotion of a friendly and co-operative school atmosphere based on mutual respect.
3. There should exist high quality *teaching and learning tools*, which support the key processes of human rights education. An example: “Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting: 11 Scenarios for Extra-Curricular Training” from the **Russian Federation** which aims to raise awareness about human rights violations that take place in everyday life providing learners with skills for identifying, analysing and responding to such violations.
4. The school becomes a model of human rights learning and practice and within the school community, teachers play a key role in reaching this aim. Therefore *professional development for educators* is a must in a system which aims to build effective HRE. An example is a practice “INTER Guide: A Practical Guide to Implement Intercultural Education at Schools” from **Spain**. *INTER Guide* has eight modules that address inter-cultural education, including the topics of homogeneity and diversity, the role of schooling, school structure and organization, teaching and

learning strategies, educational policies, and school, home and community.

5. Last but not least, *evaluation* as a basic tool to assess methods and relevance of content, to determine the sustainability of the process, methods, results, as well as to measure changes in behaviour, attitudes, skills, knowledge and action. An example is a practice “A Human Rights-Based Textbook Analysis” from **Turkey**, which provides tools to assess the main characteristics of curriculum and textbooks according to human rights principles.

Our discussion however, will not only be devoted to HRE in schools, and I want to stress that we realize well the importance and relevance of the life-long learning process and adult education, which is part of it. Therefore I hope that the presentations will address the whole spectrum of issues related to HRE.

The afternoon session has an additional special emphasis on education for conflict prevention and reconciliation. This is not a new thematic area for the OSCE, and we consider it to be a logical extension of the human rights education discussion which is consistent with the good practices outlined in the Compendium prepared as a result of previous OSCE decisions, and definitely an area where the OSCE as a security organization has been and should remain active.

Respect for human rights is a prerequisite for security. Only societies where human rights are respected and promoted have the courage to look back critically at all aspects of their past and to look forward to build trustful relations within communities and with their neighbours. A human rights-based education facilitates the healing of wounds and brings people and nations closer.

Professor Lynn Davies from the Centre for International Education and Research, at the School of Education of the University of Birmingham who is our introducer for the afternoon session, will particularly address the link between the rights-based approach to education and conflict prevention. I believe that this day is a good occasion for us to review how the existing commitments in the area of human rights education and education for conflict prevention and reconciliation are implemented and discuss ways to address the current challenges by means of education and in particular how the OSCE and ODIHR can be helpful in that regard.

I am very pleased also to announce that we shall have a side event during the lunch break where you will be able to learn more about the Compendium but also meet educators from the Netherlands, Turkey,

Russia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Norway whose practices were included in the Compendium. I would also like to mention that both our moderators today, Mr Siarhei Salei from Belarus who is moderating the morning session and Mr Barry Van Driel from the Netherlands who will moderate the afternoon session, were actively involved in the development of the Compendium.