

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
WORKING SESSION 8: EDUCATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING IN THE
PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (3.10.2008)
STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION**

Human rights education in the Greek education system

Since the '90s, the large influx of immigration towards Greece has had an immediate effect on the demographic composition of the public primary and secondary school classes. The population in them has become increasingly heterogeneous, which made the setting of new priorities imperative. At the same time, there have been special educational provisions with regard to the education of the Muslim minority children in the region of Thrace as well as for Roma children throughout the country.

As result, a) ensuring high-quality educational services that are accessible to all (education for all), b) catering for every child's specific educational needs, while respecting their diversity and c) combating educational exclusion have constituted priorities in the national education policy, in which HRE has inevitably started to hold a special place. With a view to implicating students and teachers in human rights education, a line of measures has been taken by the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs and its related bodies. Hereafter will be given a brief description of only few of them.

To begin with, the key-concepts and principles of intercultural and HR education have been included in the new school curricula for primary and secondary education. The basic principles underlying them include among others:

- ensuring equal chances and learning opportunities for all students;
- reinforcing the cultural and linguistic diversity in the framework of a multicultural society;
- sensitizing students on issues of human rights, world peace, respect for diversity as well as on issues of democratic citizenship.

School books have been and continue to be revised to reinforce understanding and respect for the different, to enhance interest in other people's beliefs, religion, way of living and thinking.

Furthermore, in an ongoing effort to promote human rights education, at the beginning of this school year the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institute decided to distribute to all students of the 5th and 6th Grade of Elementary Schools a booklet on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which the Articles of the Convention are described and analysed. Teachers are encouraged and instructed to use the content of the booklet in many different ways with the aim of sensitizing students further on issues related to human rights in several places around the world and finally engage them in thematic HR projects in a cross-thematic, cross-curricular approach.

Additionally, the Pedagogical Institute has been running a successful teacher-training programme on "Managing Problems in the School Classroom". The aim of the programme is that teachers of both Primary and Secondary Education enrich their knowledge and improve their practices so that they become more effective in dealing with conflict and problems arising in the classroom.

Special emphasis is placed on experiential learning, on the practical use of methods to deal with problems, as well as on case studies. The thematic units of the programme include, among others, training on how to manage cultural diversity by following the latest pedagogical methods.

It is worth mentioning at this point that a Committee for Human Rights has been established in the Pedagogical Institute.

Moreover, since the school year 2006-2007 and with a view to promoting education on equality issues in society, the "Kallipateira" project has been put into practice in primary and secondary education. The aim of it is to encourage students to actively participate in thematic mini-projects dealing mainly with issues of:

- human rights
- diversity and multiculturalism
- gender equality in education and in society

- facing xenophobia and racism
- social solidarity

What is more, in the context of the Council of Europe the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs actively participates in the programme: Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights. In the framework of this programme a network of 50 participating schools has been established which have already produced through projects material related to human rights, social inclusion and intercultural understanding. Also, a considerable number of teaching tools has been translated and are available for use to schools.

All in all, Human Rights Education is increasingly gaining ground in the Greek education system and efforts will continue for it to become even more integrated in the curricula as well as throughout the education spectrum.