

University Curriculum for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education in Croatia

2nd OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting

Education to promote Mutual Respect and Understanding and to Teach about the Holocaust
Dubrovnik, Croatia, 23-24 October 2006

Summary

The presentation is intended to be a brief overview of experiences gained through the implementation of a two-year project on the development and pilot-implementation of an interdisciplinary University Curriculum for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education in Croatia. The project was initiated and carried out from 2004-2006 by the Research and Training Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb (formerly Faculty of Philosophy) with the financial support of the Austrian Cooperation – Eastern Europe, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria. Its was actually a follow-up to the UNESCO and the Netherlands Government's sponsored project on Peace and Human Rights for Croatian Primary Schools which, in 1999, laid foundation for developing a comprehensive Croatian Government's supported National Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship Education Programme. Since the university dimension was absent from the National Programme, the key objective of the University Curriculum Project has been to contribute to the finalisation of the National Programme by designing and incorporating the missing part in the overall structure. In addition, in order to make the curriculum more feasible, its development has been twinned with the implementation of the research project sponsored by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, on the university students' knowledge and attitudes about a great number of issues, including democracy, human rights, pluralism, European integration and national wellbeing.

The University Curriculum is a unique joint effort of academic and civil society experts. Its core team consists of 15 scientists from 8 faculties belonging to 3 Croatian universities, 3 experts from research institutes, 3 NGOs representatives and 1 postgraduate student. It encompasses 16 courses that cover a wide range of human rights and democratic citizenship topics, including the philosophy and history of human rights; international, European and Croatian human rights systems; human rights of women, children and other vulnerable groups; the challenges of globalisation, new ICTs, collective rights and freedom of the media; medicine and human rights; the right to education and the rights in education; peace and conflict management; learning for human rights and democratic citizenship; and the monitoring, research and advocacy.

The pilot-implementation of the curriculum was carried out at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences from November 2005 to February 2006. It was attended by 38 graduate and postgraduate students of, *inter alia*, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, education, law, economy and political sciences selected on the basis of excellence, former experiences and motivation. They were assisted for 88 hours by 25 teachers/resource persons and 2 special guest lecturers. Each course was monitored, recorded and evaluated by participants. The evaluation questionnaire encompassed 12 dimensions of teaching, ranging from an overall impression to the application of multiple perspective. The evaluation results were later used for the finalisation of syllabuses and for the selection of teaching/learning materials. All of that has recently been put together on CDs with an aim to be disseminated to former students and other interested parties. The curriculum is now in preparation for the process of accreditation upon which it will be offered to education-related specialists as a one-year postgraduate specialisation course.

Depending on the administrative interest and support, including of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, the course might, as well, be offered to a wider range of specialists who are, according to research results, in need for a more systemic and thorough training in this field. Namely, the results of the sister-project on students' knowledge and attitudes about human-rights-related issues that was conducted at the University of Zagreb and the University of Rijeka in the beginning of this year demonstrate, in the one hand, a high level of conceptual knowledge among students and, in the other hand, a number of gaps in their knowledge about European integration, international human rights standards and national legal norms that regulate life at the university. These findings should be interpreted in lights of the figure of 36% of the 1200 surveyed students who claim they have not been taught in their study about the issues questioned. Consequently, 83% of all surveyed would like to learn more about human-rights-related topics; 35% would like to receive human-rights-related education at pre-graduate level, 27% prefer graduate level, 11% postgraduate level, while 23% think that it should be an integral part of an entire system of education.