



SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

“HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING”

**25-26 March 2004
HOFBURG, VIENNA**

ANNOTATED AGENDA

OVERVIEW:

The meeting will focus on three main areas:

- **Formal Human Rights Education; Human Rights Education in School Curricula**
- **Human Rights Education and Training for Public Officials**
- **Informal Human Rights Education**

The meeting will seek to develop recommendations based on best practices across the OSCE region. Recommendations may be addressed to the OSCE participating States, the OSCE as a whole, its institutions including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and its field operations, or other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations.

SESSIONS:

Session I: Formal Human Rights Education; Human Rights Education in School Curricula

To include human rights education in school curricula from an early age is a vital step towards ensuring widespread knowledge and the emergence of a culture of human rights. Human rights education is ultimately about action for building human rights cultures in our own communities, leading in particular to tolerance and mutual respect.

There are a number of different models emerging on how to integrate human rights education into school curricula. Some countries opt to have it as a separate topic under headings such as ethics, other countries integrate it into already existing subjects such as political science and/or history. In this respect, attention should be given also to other cultures and religions, in the spirit of promoting better mutual understanding. The possibility of learning the language(s) of neighboring countries and/or adjacent communities is also a powerful instrument in promoting mutual understanding and respect. History can provide an eminent opportunity to study manifestations of collective violence and discrimination, through which students can make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. History can also be a powerful tool for strengthening mutual understanding and confidence between peoples through methodologies aimed at eliminating prejudice and emphasizing positive mutual influence between different countries, religions and cultures. Well-developed curricula can promote the development of a more human and informed citizenry also through an examination of intolerance, xenophobia, racism, discrimination, and anti-Semitism and their causes.

Issues that can be discussed in connection with this topic are:

- The follow up among OSCE participating States on the UN recommendation on the creation of the National Human Rights Education Action Plans. If such plans exist, how are they implemented, supervised and contributed to by intergovernmental organizations? How are such National Plans implemented in States with provincial and local control over education?
- Examples from the OSCE region. Looking at different models on including human rights and tolerance education; as a separate topic or mainstreamed; relationship to other topics; is it a separate course or included into other courses?
- 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. Lessons learned.
- What support can international organizations, including OSCE missions and institutions provide? How can international organizations advance human rights education in primary and secondary education in co—operation with local and provincial authorities?
- Teaching human rights in school cannot be done in a vacuum. How can principles of democracy, human rights and tolerance best be presented in textbooks if such concepts are ill-defined and not understood in popular culture,

in particular when such values are just beginning to be evidenced in social and political practice. (This issue links to the discussions under session 3).

**Session II: Human Rights Education and Training for
Public Officials**

An increasing number of institutions, including government agencies and intergovernmental organizations, are organizing human rights training programs for public officials. However, for training or educational programs to be consistent with human rights principles they should provide knowledge and information about human rights as well as seek to develop attitudes and behaviour respectful of those rights.

In order to be effective, the educational programs need to be sustained over a period of time, involve direct interaction between the trainer and the trainee, and include practical, hands-on learning. There should be a clear commitment to in-service training that includes human rights and tolerance issues, and field performance should be measured in accordance with human rights standards. In other words, the application of professional goals and ethics should be made consistent with human rights principles and theory.

Human rights training programs should also include the development of basic skills such as critical thinking, communication skills, problem-solving and negotiation, all of which are essential for the effective implementation of human rights standards. In some cases it might be necessary to implement separate human rights courses to compensate for the lack of any previous training on these issues, but ideally human rights concepts and values should be an integral part of all teaching practices and courses.

Problems arise when these programs lack serious prior analysis; use outdated training methodological approaches; lack solid integration with reform efforts or provide very little, if any, long-term follow up to ensure substantial improvements in the human rights situation.

Issues that can be discussed in connection with this topic are:

- Lessons learned from participating States
- Best practices from different international organizations, including OSCE institutions and field missions.
- How can we improve coordination and effectiveness of the undertaken initiatives?

- How does human rights and tolerance training for public officials improve the rule of law and good governance?

Session III: Informal Human Rights Education

Informal Education is a term that is used to describe non-formal grass-roots education, e.g. human rights education for the general public. It aims at educating adults who have finished school or those who never had the opportunity to attend: it is not limited to educated elites or developed countries. It is a key element in modern human rights teaching. It promotes the idea of human rights as a unifying moral force that transcends national boundaries and empowers ordinary people everywhere to demand that their governments be accountable for the protection and promotion of their human rights.

Discussion points that arise from these topics include:

- Examples of informal education programs from the OSCE region.
- Has any impact research and/or evaluation been conducted on on-going informal education projects? In the absence of reliable studies of informal education programs, how can their effectiveness be assessed?
- How can international organizations better reinforce each other's activities; conduct better needs assessment; prevent States from fully transferring responsibilities to the international community and ensure a balanced approach of States towards cooperation with civil society?