

ENGLISH only

2nd OSCE Tolerance Implementation Meeting on Education to promote mutual respect and understanding and to teach about the holocaust

Dubrovnik, 23 – 24 October 2006

Session II – Sweden

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In Sweden, much of the work regarding the issues being discussed today are carried out by The Living History Forum. The Living History Forum is a government agency commissioned to promote efforts relating to democracy, tolerance and human rights, with the Holocaust as a point of departure.

By engaging in further training for teachers, activities to engage school children, and other activities, we strive to achieve greater tolerance in Sweden. We cooperate with a broad network of universities, schools and municipalities.

Of course there is no such thing as an easy solution to combat xenophobia, anti-Semitism, islamophobia or other types of intolerance. There is not one way or one solution to promote respect and understanding. There is no quick fix.

In our work with these issues, we've learned that each school and each teacher has their own particular needs. The differences between a big urban municipality with a large immigrant population and a small homogeneous agrarian municipality are vast. Not to mention differences between all the countries present here today.

Still there are things we can learn from another and knowledge we can share. And I guess that's why we meet here today.

One reason why we can learn from each other is the similarities between all kinds of group related intolerance; between anti-Semitism and islamophobia, between homophobia and xenophobia.

They are similar because the different intolerances share many characteristics. In a survey we've made on some 12.000 youngsters, we found that around half of the people classified as intolerant are intolerant towards Jews, Muslims **and** homosexuals at the same time. They are intolerant *in general*.

But there are also differences between the intolerances and phobias. The other half of the intolerant where only intolerant towards one or two of the groups mentioned. They were *very specific* in their intolerance. The figures come from a Swedish report, but probably a similar survey in another country would show similar results.

We don't think there is a quick fix to any intolerance, nor do we think there is **one** kind of teaching tools that will combat all intolerances, or suite all different teachers. We think the best way is to offer teachers and schools a broad range of different tools; facts, information, exercises, movies, pictures, teacher training, etc - material about the Holocaust, as well as material on other genocides and on contemporary issues.

When making surveys on teachers, they confirm our belief. Some schools and teachers want ready-made material, a national curriculum, etc, while others just want the hard facts so they can adapt it into a working didactics for their classroom, on their own. A third group asks for photos and texts that they can combine into their own educational material.

We need to be humble when approaching the teachers and the schools. We have to find the balance between their needs and our task.

I'd like to offer you an example from the work being done in Sweden at this very moment - the bystander project. In the bystander project, issues regarding respect and understanding are highlighted by putting focus on the persons that are not directly participating. Choosing to be passive is also a choice. But what happens when you don't speak up? How long does it take to move from protesting, to accepting, to encouraging or even participating? And when it comes to the crunch, what would you do? The bystander-project will deal with issues relating to personal responsibility, but also to how we are influenced by propaganda and indoctrination, and what our social norms are like. Is it normal to be a bystander? Can we practice how to move from passivity to participating more actively?

In fact, the majority chose to be bystanders during the Holocaust. Still we tend to talk about the victims, the perpetrators and the heroes. Maybe the students will find it easier to relate to the passive, to the bystander? At least, we think learning on the bystander-perspective will help them to identify the role next time they are faced with it.

We still don't know if the project will be a success or not. Right now the first 30 schools are going through a first evaluation phase of the project. In the next phase, schools from one third of the Swedish municipalities will take active part in the project.

The core of the project is a pedagogical material. The material is extremely interactive – both on the web and in the classroom. To address the problems lined out before, the material will be made available in the form of a toolkit. All parts will not be suitable for all students, all teachers or all schools. The teachers will go through training after which they are free to use the material in their own way, in a fashion they think will work well under their specific circumstances. That way, the participating teachers will also gain more ownership for the material, and in the long run – the project will probably get a larger impact.

This is only one example. At this point, the Living History Forum is engaged in between 20 and 30 simultaneous projects, ranging from surveys on islamophobia to teacher training. Some projects are just for evaluating didactic methods, others are full-scale exhibitions travelling around Sweden.

Thank you for your attention,