



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Working Session 9 – Education and awareness-raising in the promotion  
of human rights**

**Speech delivered by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education  
of the Republic of Serbia**

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## **Reflections on the experience of the Republic of Serbia in Human Rights Education in the school system, including citizenship education and education for mutual respect and understanding and non-discrimination**

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Serbia has started introducing HRE into the school system from the mid 90-s through civil society programs offered with the support of international organizations (at that time mostly as peace education and tolerance-building curricula), and continued from 2001 through the Ministry of Education with a nation-wide program framed as civic education, which is covering all schools and all grades in primary from 1-7 and in secondary education 1-4, as an elective subject. So our experience in this respect is a 13-14 years old civic engagement and a 7 years long government engagement experience. This was not an easy process, we all know, since HRE is calling for serious restructuring of parts of the education system. However, we now see Serbia moving from a “first generation approach” to a “second generation approach” regarding human rights education. In this approach evaluation, fine-tuning, mechanisms to sustain commitment and evidence-based policy making are the key words – so we very much welcome the topic and questions prepared for this afternoon session, and if you allow me, I would like to share some reflections on this based on our experience.

I would like to highlight the following lessons and recommendations:

1. Cooperation with the civil sector in the development, programming and teacher training is essential and invaluable also for governments.
  - Commitment and creativity comes from civil society (governments, ministries can never measure up in this respect with the NGOs)
  - In Serbia the curricula and the teacher training was a result of the joint cooperation of the civil sector and Ministry of Education - where the civil society had a leading role (many NGO based programs, developed during the 90-s have been included into the civic education curriculum) while the Ministry of Education had more a “packaging” and formatting role.
  - This is not an easy and comfortable cooperation, but it pays off
2. Early evaluation is essential and periodic evaluations are very useful
  - In Serbia the First evaluation study was conducted in 2003. The findings were used for the improvement of the existing curricula and creation of the curricula for the next grades. It was also not easy to accept the findings and incorporate the suggestions, but it was to the benefit of the quality of our work. Based on this evaluation the curricula started to incorporate human rights issues in a more articulated way. We are planning the next evaluation for 2009, with the aim to consolidate the entire approach to HRE.
3. Effective HRE in mainstream education calls for a multilayer approach integrated into the education development agenda, covering at least the curricula and teaching materials for the special subject, cross-curricular competencies, teacher education and training, school based activities. In addition to this, all the layers need to be monitored and evaluated, which is an overwhelming task unless it is structured in a manageable way. What we are looking for is at each layer:
  - the structure responsible for the layer (whether it is set, and whether it is set in a functional way, communicating with all other structures)

-the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation (is it set, is it functional, and is it part and parcel of the regular monitoring and evaluation systems).

Let me illustrate this with two examples:

**Teacher Training** - pre-service and in-service teacher education programs

- a. in Serbia HRE is integrated into the professional development scheme of the teachers through:
  - i. Courses for HRE teachers provided by the ministry in cooperation with NGOs
  - ii. Seminars for other teachers through accredited seminars provided by diverse providers (both aspects are regularly evaluated through a data collection system organized by the Center for professional development of teachers)
- b. Initial education of teachers
  - New interdisciplinary MA courses with the focus on human rights and child rights have been introduced recently (accreditation designed through the Bologna process)

The approach to teacher training and teacher education for HRE developed in Serbia can be seen as a good practice example.

**School culture and learning environment**

In Serbia there are several venues established for influencing the school learning environment and enriching it with HR values. These are:

- a) School self evaluation, as a regular practice, includes the aspects of the mutual respect and tolerance as one of the core areas of evaluation
- b) School development mechanisms include aspects of intercultural education, teaching methods, violence prevention
- c) Mechanisms to involve students and parents, especially the work of student parliaments creates opportunities for practicing student engagement and critical thinking.

All of these are required school level mechanisms, and their monitoring is part of the agenda for the regular school inspection as well. I am sure we need further upgrading, fine-tuning, and renewed commitment, nevertheless, the basic mechanisms are well set, and provide a sound basis for further development

We have a new very good example in this respect: a Roma human rights organization has been in the past two years working together with the state inspection to jointly develop approaches and indicators for monitoring discrimination and segregation of Roma children in the education system. This has resulted in a jointly written guidebook for the inspectorate, which is being published these days.

4. It is a huge asset to have wider inter-sectoral support for HRE.

In Serbia, during the last couple of years this support has started to be built and many helpful mechanisms have been developed.

- a) Developed Institutions& Mechanisms and Intersectoral cooperation:

Important state inter-ministerial bodies and mechanisms addressing HRE are in place which are also encouraging that human rights values are integrated into several aspects of the education system:

- Governmental Council of the Rights of the Child
- Governmental Council for Roma integration
- The newly established institute of the Ombudsman
- New Ministry of the Human and Minority Rights
- New Ministry for Youth and Sports, addressing non-formal education

- b) Rich strategic environment has evolved:

Human rights values and human rights education principles with its different aspects and mechanisms are integrated into different Serbian policy documents, regulating the right to education, access to education, equity measures, inclusive education, building friendly school environment, prevention of violence and discrimination and other principles. These are: The Poverty Reduction Strategy, National Plan of Action for Children, Action Plan for Roma education, The National Millennium Development Goals, Strategy for Sustainable Development and different sectoral policies (including a draft framework for education for democracy). All of these are a powerful asset for renewed commitment in HRE and we feel the synergy with Roma related policies particularly useful.

d) A culture of evidence based policy making is visibly emerging in Serbia, HRE will also benefit from this approach:

There is a constant improvement of the state mechanisms for policy planning, policy coordination, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting.

A Policy Impact Assessment of the state policies in the period 2003-2007 is in process - impact of the education policies are under evaluation as well. Two HRE relevant policies are included in this exercise (Affirmative action for vulnerable groups, Compulsory preschool)

Let me conclude with the statement that this road was not easy, but even more so challenging and reinforcing. Real development is never completely smooth.