

OSCE conference on Racism,
Xenophobia and Discrimination

ENGLISH only

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Statement by the Norwegian Delegation

Session 3. Education

Mr. Chairman

The Norwegian society has always been a culturally diverse society. For centuries, Norway has been the home of national minorities such as Jews, the Finnish speaking people of northern Norway, Roma, Romani, in addition to the Sami people and Norwegians.

However, Norway today is in many ways different from Norway ten or twenty years ago. Our immigrant population has increased from 3 to 6,6 percent during the last 15 years. A new population structure requires adjustment of policies so that the needs of all the various groups are addressed in the best possible way. Racism, xenophobia and discrimination are particularly important to overcome.

The Norwegian government has therefore adopted a National Plan of Action to Combat Racism and Discrimination. This action plan is based on the assumption that cultural pluralism enriches our lives and benefits the community. Everyone living in Norway, regardless of their background, shall have equal opportunities, equal rights and equal obligations to participate in society and make use of their resources. This will benefit both individuals and the community as a whole. The action plan is a rolling plan, and as such part of a long term effort.

Among the measures, education is given priority.

- The last ten years the number of minority pupils in Norwegian primary schools have increased by 100 percent. Today, every five children in Oslo have minority background.
- The situation is that pupils with minority background encounter racist attitudes, and there are serious barriers, for instance language barriers, in the transition from education to working life.
- A research report shows that, in spite of various integration measures in schools, young people in the immigration population lose out in the

competiton for qualification and higher education while the? are still in upper secondar? education.

What has and will be done?

- New teaching tools will be prepared to use as part of the general efforts to raise awareness, with a special focus on racism and discrimination. These da?s an e-learning project called Mix-cit? is to be launched. It consists of three online games, where pupils can try to handle and manage ethnic, cultural and religious diversit?. The Internet site also gives teachers background material on the topic of racism, xenophobia and discrimination.
- A Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January, is commemorated in schools every year, and a special prize is given to a school that has made a particular contribution to combat discrimination.
- Measures will be implemented to improve the way in which the subject "Norwegian as second language" is taught. The subject is available to pupils whose native language is not Norwegian and who therefore require Norwegian lessons that are adapted to their needs.

The fight against racism and discrimination demands continuos, focused and long-term effort. The role of education in promoting tolerance to young people is very important in this context. Our recommendation is that:

- Every OSCE participating state should elaborate a National Plan of Action to Combat Racism and Discrimination.
- The plan should consist of target areas, such as educatio n, working life, public services, the judicial system, the Internet, local community and strengthening of the legal protection.

Thank you