

The Council of Europe. Agora Building
Round Table: Friday, 16 April 2010

Exchange and Cooperation – the Role of EDC/HRE Coordinators

EDC/HRE network – a platform for exchange and cooperation...

Being a coordinator, first of all, has enriched my life. Besides gaining knowledge, I have met quite a number of interesting people who became my friends.

1. What qualities do you bring to the role of EDC/HRE coordinator?

I was already a well experienced teacher with a solid theoretical knowledge of ethics and human rights, as well as of pedagogy, psychology, methodic, which have helped me understand easily what were the needs of EDC/HRE teaching and practicing.

But regardless to that, I was delegated to be an EDC/HRE coordinator on the basis of my previous activities. I had a practical experience of training students, teachers, policy makers in DC and HR before becoming coordinator.

2. What are the main tasks/activities of an EDC/HRE coordinator (and any examples of how you have completed them)?

The role of an EDC/HRE coordinator would be to sustain development of EDC/HRE by coordinating activities of his country and CoE activities, by the way of communicating and sharing experiences, problems and challenges, sharing good practices, networking, developing shared visions, joint projects, looking for joint solutions, and so on.

An example of my activities:

During the celebration of the European Year of Citizenship, we have decided to do it through many activities involving both, students and teachers. So, I organized a local committee with the deputy minister of education as one of its members, and with a representative from all the levels of education. Basically, all of them were people of influence in their respective fields. And it is always good to involve policy makers from the highest level possible, and make them feel responsible, and act accordingly.

For the same reason, we have decided, some time earlier, to train all school principals prior or along with the teachers, and thus raise their awareness, and have them help and support teachers, rather than being an obstacle to our ideas.

I also find it important to act through the formal system of education as much as possible, as it is the best way to have the widest impact possible.

We have EDC as a principle of education, and a separate subject in schools in Montenegro.

3. What are the key challenges of being an EDC/HRE coordinator and how can they be overcome?

At the very beginning it was **the lack of general understanding of what EDC is.**

We have succeeded by persistently imposing it but that challenge has not been completely overcome yet. Cooperation and influencing policy makers...Changes of policy, and, sometimes, changes in the respective Ministries of education slow down the process. General policy of the Council of Europe could be very supportive...EDC/HRE as a precondition for joining EU...

Patience, this is a slow process, whose results cannot be seen overnight

Lack of financial support, is an everlasting challenge.

4. What are the benefits of being part of the EDC/HRE coordinators network?

A chance to learn from good examples, a chance to compare. Comparison is very important, since – all the values rise out of comparison, inspiration to act, feeling a part of a global community, learning from the others, wiping out boundaries in one's mind and in reality.

5. What role can regional and sub-regional groups play in the coordinators network (e.g. Nordic group, Black Sea Group, SE Europe Group, Five Nations Group)?

Exchange of experience, joint projects, influencing equal development of EDC/HRE teaching/learning process in the respective region. Our reports show clearly that EDC/HRE so far has not reached the same level of development in all the countries...

6. What are your aspirations for the role that coordinators can play in the 4th phase of the EDC/HRE Project - and how can these be achieved?

Since the stress would be on the grass-root level, itself, I see our role in further sustaining development of EDC/HRE policy, development of teaching materials and teacher trainings, solving the problem of EDC/HRE assessment. Raising awareness about method of teaching EDC, which cannot be the same as with the other subjects. Teachers should be living models of what they teach.

The Council of Europe and European Wergeland Centre should consider dealing with these activities in the fourth phase, in which they should keep the same role and be the central actors for few reasons. It could influence the local policy makers and thus enable the coordinators to be more effective and successful.

7. How do you see yourself, as a coordinator, working with the Council of Europe and European Wergeland Centre in the 4th Phase?

The Council of Europe has done a great job, so far, and with a newly established European Wergeland Centre, it should keep the same role and be the central actors for few reasons. They could, with a general European policy, influence the local policy makers and thus enable the coordinators to be more effective and successful...