

Think Global – Act Local: Education for Democracy

A Joint Meeting of the Council of Europe Network of Coordinators for Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and of the Pedagogical Club of European Capitals

Agora Building, Room G01
Strasbourg, France

9.00, 21 October 2014

- I am delighted to welcome you to this meeting on behalf of the Council of Europe.
- First of all, I am very happy to have this opportunity to meet the members of the network of the EDC/HRE coordinators. I took up the duties of the Director of democratic citizenship and participation in July this year, and since then I have heard a lot about your network's role and contribution to the work of the Council of Europe. We look forward to discussing with you how to further strengthen your network and how to support it best in the years to come.
- I understand that this is a very special meeting, as we actually bring together two networks. And my thanks go to Mr Borys Zhebrovsky, President of the Pedagogical Club of European Capitals, who is one of the founders and the key driving force behind this network. I understand that it was Mr Zhebrovsky's proposal to hold on of the meetings of the Pedagogical Club in cooperation with the Council of Europe. We believe that this is an excellent opportunity to share information and to explore possibilities for future cooperation.
- I would like to thank the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to their support to this meeting, in the framework of the European Local Democracy Week. Ms Gaye Doganoglu presented this initiative at the 21st meeting of the Network in Baku in March and the outcomes of your discussions pointed out the very important role Local and regional authorities play in the area of education. It will be very interesting to discuss how various actors at local, regional, national and indeed international level can learn from each other and how they can cooperate and support each other.
- I am also very happy that our colleagues from the European Commission have been able to join us tomorrow. As you know we are now running a joint Pilot Projects Scheme "Human Rights and Democracy in Action", which aims to support cooperation and peer learning among the countries. This Pilot Projects Scheme has already delivered excellent results, thanks to the excellent cooperation with many of you present at the meeting today. We hope, with your support, to further develop and strengthen the Pilot Projects Scheme in the years to come.

- Allow me to say just a few words about the future priorities. The Secretary General in his report on “The state of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe” states very clearly the need for stronger commitment to the promotion of culture of democracy and human rights. For this, we as an intergovernmental institution rely on the Charter on education for democratic citizenship and human rights, which provides us with a clear framework and mandate for action. However, the Charter means nothing without your support and cooperation. We need to demonstrate – in a very tangible way – that international cooperation in this area does have an added value, and does have a real impact on the education policy and practice in our countries. And it is only together with all of you that we can achieve this goal.
- Today we face very critical challenges in Europe, be it the consequences of the economic crisis, or the rise of the extreme parties, or the events in Ukraine. I/We believe that Education for democracy plays an important role in addressing these challenges. But for this, it needs to be given the priority and support that it deserves, and we all have a role to play in this respect. I would like to invite you to be ambitious and innovative. We need to deliver tangible results, both in short and in the long term. And we need to make sure that this work is very visible, and that makes a positive and lasting change in our countries.
- I wish you a very successful meeting