North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

3rd European Congress on Global Education

Education for a Global Citizenship: Unity in Diversity
26-28 November 2015, Zagreb

Workshop 1
Intercultural and interfaith dialogue

-Briefing note-

The 3rd European Congress on Global Education (GE) will bring together stakeholders from formal and non-formal education sectors, civil society platforms, governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and intergovernmental organisations from Europe and beyond, using the principle of "quadrilogue"[1] and of a holistic approach to global education.

Almost three years after the last European Congress on GE, the upcoming Congress seeks to take stock of the main achievements as well as the key issues to be tackled following the regional and national seminars organized by the NSC over the past three years. It also seeks to feed into the debate on the thread of consistency in terms of GE and explore new avenues of cooperation in the light of the post-2015 development agenda. The Congress shall approve recommendations that respond to the new challenges faced by educators when dealing with GE.

Global education and youth skills

Tapping into the potential of today's youth requires fostering key skills of a segment of our society that makes up 25% of the total working age population and 40 per cent of the unemployed. (ILO, FAO, 2015). There has been a continuous and growing interest on the part of the international community on youth skills meeting the needs of our societies and economies. This year, on 15th July the world has celebrated the first **World Youth Skills Day** (WYSD), inaugurated by the United Nations, at the UN Campus in Bonn. According to the UN, the WYSD seeks to '*raise awareness of the importance of investing in youth skills as a means of promoting employment and sustainable development'.*[2]

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[1] the "quadrilogue" is a unique North-South Centre concept coined to explain a partnership which brings together representatives of governments, national parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society to ensure good governance of the Centre representative of all the relevant stakeholders.

[2] http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=World%20Youth%20Skills%20Day%20at%20UNEVOC

Even though the main motivation for establishing this day was the high rate of youth unemployment worldwide, the WYSD sprouts at a propitious moment when there is a need to look at youth skills gap from a different angle.

Thus, the 3rd European Congress on GE seeks to go beyond the aforementioned motivation and look for other societal issues such as increasing inequalities, cultural ignorance, rising violence and extremism in Europe and beyond.

At EU level, youth are seen as the 'driving forces of the European Union'[3]. Equipping youth with the necessary skills represents a priority as a means to reach the main EU strategies and initiatives ('*including the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Digital Single Market initiative, the European Agenda on Security and the Investment Plan for Europe'*)[4]. Most importantly, beyond the market-driven skills, education has a role in '*fostering inclusion and equality, cultivating mutual respect and embedding fundamental values in an open and democratic society*' and '*promoting equity and non-discrimination and in imparting fundamental values, intercultural competences and active citizenship'*.[5] The Council of Europe has also a solid concern related to enhancing social competences and it is currently developing a framework of competences for democratic culture including: self-efficacy[6], autonomous learning skills[7] and knowledge and critical understanding of the self,[8] recognising the need for framing soft skills that are necessary for a sustainable society.

The objectives of the Congress are to:

1. **Contribute to a Global Education/Global Citizenship Education (GE/GCED) competence and methodological framework**, in particular key competences for intercultural and interreligious understanding, to be used in both formal and non-formal education sectors and which contribute to critical and active citizenship, aware of, and able to deal with global challenges and opportunities;
2. **Identify the priorities and mechanisms for further strengthening of GE/GCED**, given the existing needs and the achievements at the country level, within national strategy development, curricular reform, capacity-building, quality support, campaigning and outreach;
3. **Identify the integral contribution of GE/GCED to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs);
4. **Outline proposals to establish an oversight mechanism to support evaluation and implementation of GE/GCED in Europe** and propose an Action Plan for the next three years in terms of policy development, pedagogical support and training mechanisms, through a multistakeholder approach including policy-makers and practitioners.

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[3] http://www.cesci-net.eu/2015_youth

[4] Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) New priorities for European cooperation in education and training, COM(2015) 408 final, Brussels, 26.8.2015, p. 3

[5] Ibid 3, p.3

[6] Self-efficacy is an attitude towards the self. It involves a positive belief in one's own ability to undertake the actions which are required to achieve particular goals, and confidence that one can understand issues, select appropriate methods for accomplishing tasks, navigate obstacles successfully, influence what happens, and make a difference in the world.

[7] Autonomous learning skills are those skills which individuals require to organise and pursue their own learning, in accordance with their own needs, without being prompted by others. They include abilities in identifying, locating and accessing possible sources of the information, and the ability to judge the reliability of the various sources.

[8] Knowledge and critical understanding of the self has many different aspects, including knowledge and understanding of one's own cultural affiliations, knowledge and understanding of the assumptions and preconceptions which underlie one's perspective on the world, and knowledge and understanding of one's own thoughts, beliefs, emotions, feelings and motivations.

Life skills and skills for work

There is a global tendency to give predominance to skills for work over life skills due to a worldwide high unemployment rate as well as the corporate-driven approach towards education. However there is a need to develop life skills from an early age so as to prepare the future global citizens to tackle future global problems and look for sustainable and people-centred solutions through an informed manner with proper tools. Ignoring the development of these life skills at an early age will entail at a later stage tensions within our societies as well as widespread ignorance. Life skills have the potential to fill in ignorance gaps. They are first and foremost life and societal skills. They complement skills for work and represent essential tools that foster sustainable and people-centred societies. The international and European communities have been focusing on entrepreneurship and financial education as necessary skills for work to face youth unemployment and other societal issues. Thereupon, this Congress seeks to develop a common understanding of the necessary life skills for a better society as a complementary approach to the skills for work. As mentioned before it seeks to 'contribute to a competence and methodological framework' of skills for work and life skills to be utilised both in the formal and non-formal education. This debate will revolve around three identified workshop[9] topics:

- Intercultural and interfaith dialogue
- Active citizenship
- Education and sustainability

Workshop 1: Intercultural and interfaith dialogue

1. Workshop objectives

This workshop seeks to open the debate on the role of intercultural and interfaith dialogue to prevent radicalization, violent extremism. It also stirs the debate on the role of youth in creating interfaith communities and intercultural understanding. It will in particular aim at:

a. Deepening our understanding of the competences involved in intercultural and interfaith dialogue, as well as the methodological framework and the evaluation mechanisms linked to those skills;

b. Identifying the added value of intercultural and interfaith dialogue to GE through best practice and experience sharing;

c. Contributing to the Congress recommendations

2. Global framework

According to key institutions such as UNESCO or the Council of Europe, intercultural dialogue is a key 21st century skill. In today's world, the trends regarding the acceptance of diversity are paradoxical: "*Along with growing recognition of cultural diversity (whether historically inherent to nation-states or resulting from greater migration and mobility), we also note a dramatic increase in cultural and religious chauvinism and in identity-based political mobilization and violence*"[10].

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[9] *Entrepreneurship and financial education and Media, information and digital literacy are subsidiary topics up for discussion, integrated into the aforementioned workshop topics*

[10] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good?* Paris: UNESCO, p.16.

In this context, the role of education (and of GE / GCED in particular) is paramount. GE / GCED is crucial in fostering "*an attitude supported by an understanding of multiple levels of identity, and the potential for a 'collective identity' which transcends individual cultural, religious, ethnic or other differences*"[11].

UNESCO notes that "*The role of education in challenging the status quo or building skills for activism may be a concern for those who see this as a threat to the stability of the nation state [...]. [This] should be considered and presented as a positive challenge that can enrich and broaden cultural, local and national identities*"[12], and lead to a more participatory and responsible citizenship.

"*The more than one billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the world today are the most informed, active, connected and mobile generation the world has ever seen*"[13]. This entails that the young can and must play an active role in fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

Indeed, the role of youth and of non-formal education is central in making intercultural societies work, and this is acknowledged by the Council of Europe's *Recommendation on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights*[14]. The measures proposed in the Recommendation aim at increasing the recognition of the role of "*non-formal education and youth work, and those who deliver them, notably youth workers and youth organisations, for the prevention of discrimination, violence and exclusion and the promotion of active citizenship in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and provide support for their development.*[15]" Lastly, it should be pointed out that the need for intercultural and interfaith dialogue is deeply connected with the cross-cutting obligation of implementing inclusive policy-making (namely in curriculum-design) in multicultural societies.

The Council of Europe's *Recommendation on inter-cultural integration* addresses the issue from a different angle. It recognises that "*[...] a solid body of research both in Europe and worldwide has demonstrated the value of diversity for human and social development and cohesion, economic growth, productivity, creativity and innovation and that these benefits of diversity can only be realised on condition that adequate policies are in place to prevent conflict and foster equal opportunities and social cohesion*"[16]. It further notes that "*[...] migrant integration strategies are ineffective and unsustainable without appropriate diversity strategies*"[17]. Indeed, only if these strategies are in place can "*access to citizenship, education, public services, the labour market and cultural life*" be equitable[18].

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[11] UNESCO, (2014). *Global Citizenship Education Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. Paris: UNESCO, p. 9.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[13] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good ?*. Paris: UNESCO, p.28.

[14] "Non-formal education/learning and youth work have again and again proven effective in helping young people to find approaches and solutions to overcome the disadvantage they experience and to become active and constructive contributors to the development of their communities and society as a whole. Yet, youth work and non-formal education/learning as well as their providers, youth organisations and more generally youth workers tend to suffer from poor social and political recognition, and are often considered low-status professions" *in* Council of Europe, (2015). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights*.

[15] Council of Europe, (2015). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights*.

[16] Council of Europe, (2015). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on intercultural integration*.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

The Recommendation reminds the "*Importance of creating spaces for cross-cultural exchange and debate, facilitating access to and exercise of citizenship and fostering intercultural competence, particularly at the local level*", underscoring the role played by cities in this regard, as they are key in "*in managing diversity, fostering a pluralistic identity and creating open societies by bringing members of different groups into close and constructive contact*"[19]. Inter-cultural education could therefore adopt a holistic approach, integrating municipal authorities and other stakeholders at the local level.

Regarding the EU, it is well known that education plays a key-role in promoting its fundamental values[20]. The Paris Declaration of EU Education Ministers of 17 March 2015 underlined the need to promote the acquisition of social and civic competences, critical thinking and media literacy, and intercultural dialogue. Education lays the foundations of more inclusive societies, if it can "*prevent and tackle marginalisation, intolerance, racism and radicalisation and [...] preserve a framework of equal opportunities for all*"[21]. In the view of the EU Education Ministers, in order to make inter-cultural societies work, we must: reduce educational inequalities; foster dialogue and cooperation among all education stakeholders; empower teachers, so they can take a stand against forms of racism and discrimination. These efforts can by all means complement and be complemented by intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

The Paris Declaration is in line with the *Framework for Action Education 2030* adopted at the World Education Forum in 2015 and to a broader extent with the Goal 4 of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 4.7 in particular promotes inter-cultural education[22].

The Paris Declaration is an important milestone, insofar as a multistakeholder approach is essential. This naturally entails including local authorities, but the role of Ministries and Parliamentarians is also central for the development, adaptation and monitoring of any innovative policy. These institutions are irreplaceable providers of democratic accountability. However, the lack of continuity in power, and a certain lack of responsiveness by decision-makers may hinder the development of innovative education policies in this field.

In addition to this, from the Second UNESCO Forum on GCED held in Paris at the beginning of 2015, we can gather that: "*Interreligious education of good quality can promote dialogue and direct contact among diverse people and communities in order to enhance understanding the religions and cultures of 'others' - as they would wish to be understood and represented - offering opportunities for authentic dialogue on religion, including all religious communities and identities, and those who do not have a religion.*

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[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *i.e.* the "respect for human dignity, freedom (including freedom of expression), democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, [...] pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men [...]" *in* Informal Meeting of EU Education Ministers, (2015). *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*.

[21] Informal Meeting of EU Education Ministers, (2015). *Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*.

[22] "Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development" *in* World Education Forum 2015, (2015). *Framework for Action Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all [Draft]*. p.11.

Interreligious education should also include the practice of analysing difficult, ambiguous or violent passages of certain religious texts, so that they can be openly discussed in the safe environment of the classroom. It is also important that cultural and religious diversity respects legal limits set by the international standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms"[23].

In the Final Report of the Forum, it is also noted that dialogue is very much connected with creativity and problem-solving: "*When a safe space is created through the practice of an inclusive dialogue, it becomes possible to not only expand our understanding of an issue, but also to be more creative as to its potential solutions*"[24].

3. Outcomes of the surveys carried out by the NSC

The aforementioned need for interfaith and intercultural dialogue is further reinforced through the outcomes of two surveys carried out by the NSC.

According to the outcomes of the Global Education Survey carried out by the NSC, the respondents detected interfaith dialogue as the main competence or dimension to the included in the next edition of the Global Education Guidelines. The respondents also identified peace education and global citizenship education as prioritised topics in the light of the post-2015 development agenda. As for their expectations, most of the respondents count on more European and international support for GE, greater coordination as well as new directions and strategic recommendations on how to reinforce the impact of GE actions. (See GE Survey)

Moreover, according to the Youth Global Skills survey carried out by the NSC, interfaith dialogue has been considered as the least competence to be acquired by youth in those respective countries. Yet, intercultural literacy is placed in a better place than interfaith dialogue. It seems that youth do not consider interfaith dialogue an important skill to be acquired. They give priority to other life skills such as critical thinking, global solidarity, conflict resolution and so forth. (See Youth Global Skills)

4. Paving the way for the 3rd Congress Recommendations

The Congress facilitates a peer-learning process leading towards a growing commitment to GE/GCED and to a set of strategic recommendations that foster GE/GCED policy and practice at local and national levels and within the European and international institutions for the coming period.

The following key areas have been identified for the future-oriented discussions that will guide the strategic recommendation development:

o **National strategy development and implementation**
o **Curricular reform and education at the national and local levels**
o **Capacity-building**
o **Quality support and monitoring**
o **Campaigning and outreach**

Workshop conclusions may feed/complement the draft congress recommendations which will be circulated prior to the event.

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[23] UNESCO, (2015). *Final Report - Second UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: Building Peaceful and Sustainable Societies*. Paris: UNESCO, p.8.
[24] *Ibid.*, p.7.