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 2
Active citizenship

-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.

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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.

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] 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;

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

[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.

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.

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 2: active citizenship

1. Workshop objectives

This workshop will focus on social competences and ways of contributing as a citizen to human dignity and equality through social undertaking and civic engagement. It will also address the issue of media, information and digital literacy, which simultaneously poses new challenges and opens new avenues for the enrichment and enlargement of active citizenship education. This workshop will in particular aim at:

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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.*

a. Deepening our understanding of the competences involved in active citizenship - and those related to media, information and digital literacy - as well as the methodological framework and the evaluation mechanisms linked to those skills;

b. Identifying the added value of active citizenship and media, information and digital literacy to GE through best practice and experience sharing;

c. Contributing to the Congress recommendations.

2. Global framework

2.1. Active Citizenship: educating for responsible participation.

In line with UNESCO reports and Council of Europe recommendations, active citizenship is key to education in the 21st century. As post-national forms of citizenship emerge through globalisation and global governance, education needs to stimulate civic engagement at the local, national and global levels.

"Regarding citizenship, the challenge for national education systems is to shape identities, and to promote awareness of and a sense of responsibility for others in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world"[10]. UNESCO notes that, contrary to the common meaning of the term "citizenship", *"[...] there is a common understanding that global citizenship does not imply a legal status. It refers more to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity"*[11]. It supposes an ability to connect global and local levels, macro and micro dimensions. Interestingly, the focus of "citizenship" often depends on the regional context: it might be peace and conflict resolution, good governance, or regional integration. However, there is always a common enabling factor: a *"political, societal, cultural or religious climate that is open to universal values (e.g. human rights and peace) is crucial"*[12].

The Council of Europe's *Recommendation on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights* proposes a definition of "active citizenship": *"The capacity for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. Young people learn about active citizenship through introduction to the concepts and values underpinning citizenship in a democracy (usually through some form of education, formal or non-formal), by being active and responsible members of their community (through the activities of civil society) and, once they have reached the relevant age, by practicing the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy (voting, standing for elected office, etc.). It is at one and the same time a human right and a responsibility. Active citizenship requires both opportunity and competence. Young people experiencing barriers to accessing social rights are also more likely to experience barriers to exercising active citizenship and participating responsibly in society"*[13].

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

[11] UNESCO, (2014). *Global Citizenship Education Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. Paris: UNESCO, p.14.

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

[13] 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*.

Beyond definitions, it is important to ask what competences the active global citizen needs. Education and learning should be underpinned by humanistic values such as the "*respect for life and human dignity, equal rights and social justice, cultural and social diversity, and a sense of human solidarity and shared responsibility for our common future*"[14], but it must also pass on the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to form global citizens. UNESCO notes that an active citizen needs critical thinking, independent judgement and debate skills[15].

Similarly, EU Education Ministers stated that the "*primary purpose of education is not only to develop knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes and to embed fundamental values, but also to help young people - in close cooperation with parents and families - to become active, responsible, open-minded members of society*"[16], while stressing the need to foster active citizenship, thereby ensuring the acquisition of social, civic and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy. The Paris Declaration made by EU Education Ministers 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.

The *Global Education Manual* lists some of the competences needed to become an active citizen on global issues, breaking them down into three categories: knowledge, attitudes and skills[17].

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is one of the means of fostering active citizenship. UNESCO describes GCED as a "*founding principle of education systems*"[18], which requires pedagogical reform, and entails promoting knowledge, but also skills, values, attitudes and behaviours. It can be acquired through formal and non-formal education, and implies the need for lifelong learning.

GCED requires a multi-stakeholder approach, thereby involving "*education stakeholders in the formal, non-formal and informal sector, such as learners, young people, teachers, families, communities, government and local authorities, civil society, the academia, private sector, religious leaders, the media and others*"[19].

According to UNESCO, "*GCED should strive to be a holistic and transformative experience. GCED is central to building peaceful and sustainable societies because it empowers learners to transform themselves and their communities in a constructive manner.*

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[14] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good ?*. Paris: UNESCO, p.38.

[15] *Ibid.*, p.38.

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

[17] For the complete list of competences, please refer to p.19 of Tudorache, A. (2015). *Global Education Manual*. [online] Bucharest. Available at: http://library.deeep.org/record/1103?ln=en [Accessed 22 Sep. 2015].

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

[19] *Ibid.*, p.13.

The transformative power of GCED lies in its ability to develop not only new understandings and knowledge but also skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaborative learning, and teamwork, and values and attitudes such as feelings of empathy, solidarity, respect, responsible and proactive behaviour and practices"[20].

Moreover, the role of youth and youth-led initiatives must be stressed. Young people are important drivers of change, and as such "*GCED must be an inter-generational experience, one which acknowledges that adults and young people can learn from each other, allowing generations to work together. Young people who are at school need to be empowered to become active contributors and agents of change within their communities*"[21].

The Council of Europe also notes that young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more vulnerable to exclusion, hence the importance of "*including education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in school curricula, particularly at primary and lower-secondary levels, and creating partnerships between teachers and youth workers for mutual support in their delivery*"[22]. Through GE / GCED, young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be better equipped to overcome exclusion, as they become more aware of their rights and obligations.

Lastly, it must be noted that other educational paradigms can be combined with GCED in order to promote active citizenship. At the World Education Forum, it was noted that the "*knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions, and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges, can be acquired through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED), which includes peace and human rights education as well as intercultural education and education for international understanding. While considerable progress has been made in recent years, only 50% of UNESCO's Member States indicate that they have, for example, integrated ESD into relevant policies*"[23]. At the Second UNESCO Forum on GCED, it was also observed that Peace and Human Rights Education and GCED were mutually reinforcing. One possible bridge between the two is addressing the gap between the HR discourse and its actual implementation in different realities through GCED.

2.2. ICTs: a means to foster active citizenship

The vast potential of information and communications technology (ICT) can be channelled towards fostering active citizenship: not only can ICTs facilitate access to education for active citizenship, they can also enable more participatory processes.

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[20] *Ibid.*, p.6.

[21] *Ibid.*, p.13.

[22] 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.*

[23] World Education Forum 2015, (2015). *Framework for Action Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all [Draft]*. p.11.

UNESCO notes that 40% of the world's population now uses the internet, and this number is growing fast. By all means, there are inequalities but *(1)* the number of houses with internet connectivity is now higher in the global South than in the global North, *(2)* over 70% of mobile telephone subscriptions are now in the global South[24].

Therefore, UNESCO sees great potential in digital technologies. These tools do not replace teachers and schooling remains crucial, but there is a move towards networks of learning spaces, in which technology plays a vital role: a move from classroom-centred learning "*[...] towards mixed, diverse and complex learning landscapes in which formal, non-formal and informal learning occur through a variety of educational institutions and third-party providers*"[25].

In this regard, mobile learning is transforming the nature of the educational process, as it is ubiquitous and can use low cost mobile telephones. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are promising, but still face various challenges: for instance, the lack of personal interactions and live discussion[26].

To understand more thoroughly how educational technologies can help develop certain skills, one can read with benefit a report issued by the World Economic Forum[27]. This document focuses on soft skills such as competencies and character qualities, which can be neglected in curricula. Indeed, beyond **foundational skills** such as literacy and numeracy, **competencies** (such as critical thinking, problem-solving) and **character qualities** (such as persistence, collaboration or curiosity) are critical components of education today, as changes in labour-markets (automation and digitization of routine work) have increased the need for soft skills to deal with non-routine problems. However, many students in a number of countries are unable to attain these skills. The report suggests ways to address these gaps through technology.

Pathways for GE / GCED have included the use of ICTs and social media to link locations and learners, teachers and techniques. Digital tools can also be instrumental in creating a transformative learning experience (pairing up schools, creating virtual field trips, etc.)[28].

The potential of the use of technology for GE / GCED purposes, and for active citizenship education in particular, can also be illustrated by the Global Education e-learning courses (on the Human Rights dimension, the Intercultural dimension, and the Democratic Citizenship dimension of GE), an initiative of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. These Online Training Courses exist since 2009, and each of them takes place twice a year[29]. Over the years, they have connected people from different backgrounds, to improve their skills and awareness of global issues.

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[24] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good ?*. Paris: UNESCO, p.26.

[25] *Ibid.*, p.48.

[26] *Ibid.*, p.49-50.

[27] World Economic Forum, (2015). *New Vision for Education: Unlocking the Potential of Technology*. Geneva: WEF.

[28] UNESCO, (2014). *Global Citizenship Education Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. Paris: UNESCO, p.28-30.

[29] For more information, please consult: http://nscglobaleducation.org/index.php/programme-activities .

Other examples worth mentioning are the HREA (Human Rights Education Associates) e-learning scheme[30], and Historiana[31]. In this context, it is important to stress the importance of discussion forums, in particular when involving different cultural backgrounds, to discuss / tackle different cultural perceptions.

On the usefulness of ICTs to global citizenship, it was concluded at the Second UNESCO Forum on GCED that "*Social media and ICT can be catalytic in the implementation of GCED in a number of ways as they can help reach out to a big numbers and diverse groups of people; empower people and provide them with opportunities to engage in public debate and enable interaction with decision-makers, also enhancing democratic participation, transparency and state accountability; facilitate communication and dialogue about sensitive or difficult subjects such as injustice, violence, sexuality or other. However, a major risk with ICT is widening the gap between those who have access to them and those that do not*"[32].

Lastly, we must not forget that ICTs are meant to play an important role in the fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). "*Innovation and information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more efficient service provision*"[33].

Digital literacy becomes part and parcel of youth daily lives. It brings global issues closer to them and at the same time it takes them closer to the decision-making processes. Digital tools are useful tools to make the decision-making processes more participatory. For instance, youth have participated in the drafting of the Sustainable Development Goals through their vision and priorities thanks to the Children and Youth Major Group[34].

2.3. Information and media literacy: core competences for active citizens

However promising technology is, one cannot forget that it also entails risks. On the tension between the potential of digital technology and some of its worst consequences, UNESCO notes the following "*while technological development contributes to greater interconnectedness and offers new avenues for exchange, cooperation and solidarity, we also see an increase in cultural and religious intolerance, identity-based political mobilization and conflict*"[35].

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[30] For more information, please consult: http://www.hrea.org/ .

[31] For more information, please consult: historiana.eu .

[32] UNESCO, (2015). *Final Report - Second UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: Building Peaceful and Sustainable Societies*. Paris: UNESCO, p.13.

[33] World Education Forum 2015, (2015). *Framework for Action Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all [Draft]*. p.4.

[34] Major group position paper, (2015)

[35] UNESCO, (2015). *Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good ?*. Paris: UNESCO, p.9-10.

This creates new challenges for education systems, and particularly a need to develop a critical approach to digital tools. "*In this new cyber-world, educators need to better prepare new generations of 'digital natives' to deal with the ethical and social dimensions of not only existing digital technologies but also those yet to be invented*"[36]. When confronted with the vast amounts of information they can find online, learners need to be able to make sense of it all, i.e. "[...] *identify credible sources, assess the reliability and validity of what they read, question the authenticity and accuracy of information, connect this new knowledge with prior learning and discern its significance in relation to information they already understand*"[37]. Hence the strong link between ICT and digital skills on the one hand, and information and media literacy on the other.

The Paris Declaration of EU Education Ministers of 17 March 2015 also underlined that media and information literacy is essential: "*Strengthening children's and young people's ability to think critically and exercise judgement so that, particularly in the context of the Internet and social media, they are able to grasp realities, to distinguish fact from opinion, to recognise propaganda and to resist all forms of indoctrination and hate speech*"[38].

Digital tools can promote certain skills, such as critical thinking and creativity, as they are empowering and solution oriented[39]. In this respect, we can gather from the *Global Education Manual* that critical thinking is a basic skill for information selection and information treatment. Critical thinking helps participants avoid generalisations, learn about relativism, and move towards a facts-based worldview[40].

Due to the overwhelming quantity of information we are exposed to every day, the international community seeks to promote information and media literacy through online courses such as the one promoted by UNESCO (Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID) Course)[41].

3. Outcomes of the surveys carried out by the NSC

The aforementioned need for active citizenship is further reinforced through the outcomes of two surveys carried out by the NSC.

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[36] *Ibid.*, p.26-27.

[37] *Ibid.*, p.41.

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

[39] UNESCO, (2014). *Global Citizenship Education Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*. Paris: UNESCO, p.28-30.

[40] Tudorache, A. (2015). *Global Education Manual*. [online] Bucharest. Available at: http://library.deeep.org/record/1103?ln=en [Accessed 22 Sep. 2015]. For information on activities on "Relativism and Critical Thinking", see p. 87-98.

[41] *Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID)* Course; http://elab.lms.athabascau.ca/ .

Following the GE survey, the main benefits of promoting GE consist of enhanced learners 'involvement in GE/DE/GCED civic activities (52.2 %) and 'changes in teaching methods and learning attitudes' (47.8%). This calls for enhanced efforts to promote active citizenship through GE activities both in the formal and non-formal education sectors *(see GE Survey).* Along with critical thinking, civic education encapsulate the most important global competence young people need to acquire as stated by young respondents in the Youth Global Skills survey carried by the NSC *(see Youth Global Skills).*

Still according to the Youth Global Skills survey, young people do not consider digital and technological skills as important as civic education and critical thinking in order to bring about change in their communities. They hold an essential place but not as much as one would probably expect in a growing interconnected world where Internet and the new technologies are playing a key role.

On the other hand, 70% of the respondents have stated that the non-formal education provides a fertile environment where they can develop their skills and acquire new competences. ICT, media and digital literacy are intimately linked with non-formal education which entails that they should play a greater role in promoting the skills one can acquire through non-formal education. Even though sometimes technology seems to estrange us, our society should look for spaces where technology and digital skills can bring us closer and make us collective actors for societal change.

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.