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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Learning to Live Together:  
a Shared Commitment to Democracy  
Conference on the Future of Citizenship  
and Human Rights Education in Europe  
Strasbourg, 20 – 22 June 2017

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CLOSING REMARKS

Snežana **SAMARDŽIĆ-MARKOVIĆ**

Director General  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF DEMOCRACY

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The conclusions and recommendations presented by Ana Perona-Fjeldstad will be very useful for the Council of Europe and for our partners in the planning and organisation of our work in the years to come. I also hope that they will be useful for all of you. We look forward to seeing the final report.

Over these two and a half days we have received much excellent feedback and recommendations for future activity and where it should focus. You have responded well to the challenge we posed to you on the first morning.

Many people have pointed out that while the conference provided great opportunities for sharing and debate, it is important to make sure that the positive energy from this event is captured and translated into very concrete action.

On the part of the Council of Europe I would like to share with you the main conclusions that I take away with me from this conference and how we will, in general terms, take action.

Over recent years there has been a welcome recognition amongst our member States of the growing relevance of the Council of Europe's education and youth programmes to the Organisation's – and member States' – political agendas.

Furthermore, that the education and youth programmes contribute to the Organisation's core values and across democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Indeed, the protection and promotion of human rights, the defence of democracy and adherence to the rule of law, for example through the democratic mission of education or the implementation of the Committee of Ministers recommendation on young people's access to rights, are the main focus of our work.

We can see from this conference that this work is needed and useful for member States. We will therefore continue to move in this direction.

We have heard much about the usefulness of the Charter and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. We will further strengthen the connection and complementarity between these

instruments. The new Framework should give greater substance to our wider efforts on citizenship and human rights education.

When we look at the conference conclusions through the prism of the Council of Europe and when we reflect on where the Council of Europe action can be of most help for the member states, I think there are the following actions that we should further strengthen in the years to come:

We need to reflect on how the standards set by the Charter can be further developed in different areas. The Framework of Competences is a good example of a potential new vehicle, as are the new Committee of Ministers' recommendations in the youth field. We need to develop this work, and to strengthen the countries' ownership of such instruments.

As we know, in terms of monitoring and evaluation, the Charter review takes place every five years. Between these fixed points, we need to improve the way we collect and analyse information and define quality. This could be an important contribution made by the CoE.

It would be important to involve the key actors from formal and non-formal education sector in this. Their confidence in the quality of our policies and action is very important for sustainability and impact.

For cooperation and support, we will continue to ensure that the principles behind EDC/HRE, and the practical measures required to support its integration into formal and non-formal education, are in turn integrated into our co-operation and capacity-building in the education and youth sectors, provided to public authorities or civil society, including in many cases directly to young people.

We will submit these proposals to our relevant committees, who will help us to translate them into action.

Let me conclude by recalling the Deputy Secretary General's questions at the opening session: how can we increase further the reach of citizenship and human rights education, how can we bridge the gap between government and civil society perceptions, and how can we iron out inconsistencies between policy and practice.

In the Council of Europe we are convinced that a systematic and standards-based dialogue with member states is the best way forward. And we are committed to further improve the quality of such dialogue in the years to come.

Likewise, we are aware that we have a role to play supporting the recognition and role of civil society in its multiple forms, including of course youth organisations. You are entitled to have high expectations from the Council of Europe.

To conclude, we wish you the best of success in your endeavours promoting education for democratic citizenship and human rights, and we look forward to working with you in the years to come.

Thank you!