

North-South Centre

I. In brief

The North-South Centre (NSC) is an enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe. Its new statutory resolution¹ was adopted by the Committee on Ministers on 5 May 2011, confirming the NSC relevance and importance, as well as its priorities: global education, youth and intercultural dialogue. The Centre has more than 22 years of recognised expertise in these fields.

It advocates, beyond the European continent, the universality of values of democracy, human rights and rule of law. The NSC also acts as the “voice of the South” within the Council of Europe. To date, 22 States have joined the Centre as members, including two non-European States (Cape Verde and Morocco). The Centre has established strong partnerships and networks in the Southern Mediterranean and Africa and serves as a platform for regional co-operation at different levels (government, parliamentary, local and regional authorities, and civil society). The NSC 2011–2013 Strategy was endorsed by its Executive Committee on 2 November 2011.

The Centre conducts its activities within the framework of the Council of Europe's neighbourhood policy and benefits from a support of the European Union.

II. Background

Created in November 1989, the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (more commonly known as the "North-South Centre"), was set up in Lisbon in May 1990, as a follow-up to the European public campaign on North-South Interdependence and Solidarity in 1988 by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the European Community. The North-South Centre is often described as the Council of Europe's window to the world, because its purpose is to spread the universal values upheld by the Council – human rights, democracy and the rule of law - beyond the European continent.

¹ Resolution (2011)6 on the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity

The North-South Centre's work is based on the principles of dialogue, partnership and solidarity. *Dialogue* meaning a mutual learning process based on listening to others and acquiring new knowledge - the approach that makes the North-South Centre a platform for discussion between North and South and between the partners in its so-called “quadrilogue” - a dialogue involving governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society (unique feature in international relations). *Partnership* meaning that the Centre brings together players from different countries and walks of life who are concerned with common issues, and encourages them to set up networks so as to increase their impact. *Solidarity* meaning that the Centre promotes the idea that only globalisation based on solidarity will ensure universal respect for the Council of Europe's traditional values.

III. Comparative advantages and added value

The NSC is a valuable and unique tool of the Council of Europe and its Neighbourhood Policy. For more than 22 years, the NSC has been working to bring about changes in the South and Eastern Mediterranean and to improve dialogue, partnership and cooperation with the South, through an increased awareness and knowledge of the universal values of human rights and democracy, empowerment of youth and women, support of democratic citizenship, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue. These issues are addressed in a cost-effective, flexible, and responsive way. The success of the NSC action is supported by its reputation of neutrality and north-south balance. The NSC achieves tangible results with limited human resources. The volume of activities is 4 times higher than the ordinary budget's allocations. E-tools are increasingly used. An ever growing number of people send applications for on-line courses (400 applications received for the last course on intercultural dialogue).

The NSC deliveries are either unique or complementary to the ones of other CoE bodies or other international organisations and produce concrete results. Little overlap occurs because differences in mandates, memberships and working methods. It is a flexible instrument that works in the logic of complementarity and subsidiarity. “The Centre adds an important dimension to the international efforts aimed at the promotion of intercultural

learning, understanding and political dialogue within and between the different continents" (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue).

The NSC's action in Morocco and the membership of this country in the partial agreement, greatly contributed to an enhanced cooperation with the Council of Europe (award of PACE status "Partnership for Democracy", joining other partial agreements and an extensive bilateral cooperation programme).

Education

The Centre has a unique expertise in the field of Global Education. On 5 May 2011, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation on Education for Global Interdependence and Solidarity. This recommendation is the first legal reference in this field and provides a strong impulse and a clear framework for enhancing promotion of global education in Europe and beyond. The Recommendation serves as the foundation for the work of the NSC in the field of global education and is complementing the Council of Europe efforts to promote its Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in May 2010. The 2nd European Congress on Global Education, major milestone event in the field of global education will be held on 27-28 September 2012 in Lisbon. It will assess the progress for the past 10 years (since the 1st Congress in Maastricht) and set the agenda for global education in Europe for the period until 2015. Within the JMA activities, the NSC has supported global education in new EU Member States, by bringing it to the national policy agendas and by supporting civil society organisations active in the field of global education.

Youth

The NSC has a recognised experience in Africa-Europe Youth Cooperation. The NSC Euro-Africa Youth Programme is implemented in the framework of the EU-Africa Joint Strategy, adopted at the Lisbon Summit 2007. This programme includes an annual "African University on Youth and Development" and is supported not only by the European Union but by the African Union. Within this programme, the NSC has facilitated a process of transforming the political declaration adopted in the second Africa-Europe Youth Summit into an Action Plan for Africa-Europe Youth Co-operation for the period 2012-2015 and

the establishment of an Africa-Europe Youth Platform.

The University on Youth and Development in Mollina is a NSC flagship activity, which has become a major reference in the field of youth cooperation (many actual decision-makers from Europe and Africa were trained in Mollina). The NSC supports a Network of Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship, including Mollina University on Youth & Development as well as the sister universities: the African University on Youth & Development and the Latin American University of Participation and Citizenship.

The creation of ADYNE - African Diaspora Youth Network in Europe – is the result of a process initiated through the activities within the Africa-Europe Youth Programme. Currently, ADYNE is present in 22 European countries.

Intercultural dialogue

The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "recognises the contribution of the North-South Centre", which "has developed into an important place of dialogue between cultures and a bridge between Europe and its neighbouring regions". The Living Together Report (where the Centre's role with regard to education and history teaching is underlined) confirms that education, civil society and local authorities (in the core of NSC action) are among the main actors of change. Both documents remain major reference texts for the NSC action.

The Centre's activities have a strong multiplying effect. Following the Rome conference on "Women as agents of change in the Southern Mediterranean" organised in October 2011 (250 participants from 40 countries), the NSC succeeded, in short period of time with limited resources, to create an extensive Euromed Women Network, currently composed of 500 members. The related activities of the North-South Process for the Empowerment of Women, in particular its annual international conferences and technical cooperation activities are gaining recognition.

History teaching and intercultural learning is an important dimension of the NSC activities on Intercultural Dialogue and Global Education. The Council of Europe and its North-South Centre have

developed a joint action in the field of history teaching in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean. The NSC contributes to bringing the CoE expertise, a multiperspective approach and interactive working methods in the field of history teaching beyond Europe and specifically to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. The NSC will actively contribute to the future EUROCLIO project promoting innovative and responsible history, citizenship and heritage education in North Africa and the Middle East. In addition, the NSC is streamlining its activities with the Anna Lindh Foundation and the League of Arab States.

Lisbon Forum is a unique Council of Europe platform for dialogue and for sharing experiences, expertise and good practices between Europe and the other continents. The Forum has been held by the North-South Centre since 1994, focusing on human rights, democracy, and the Rule of law. The 2012 Forum on the topic “The Arab Season: from change to challenges” will be a follow-up to the 2011 edition, analysing challenges in the Arab region (focusing on Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt) since the Arab Spring and formulating recommendations on matters which are at the heart of the Council of Europe mandate. Workshops will cover in particular the issues of constitutional and political reforms, democratisation and promotion of a culture of human rights, diversity and freedom of expression.

The **North-South Prize** awarded annually since 1995 to two candidates who have stood out for their exceptional commitment to promoting North-South solidarity and human rights is another CoE and NSC flagship activity which has gained a particular recognition.

A very important resource of the Centre is its **‘networking assets’**. The Centre has established theme-specific networks in the areas of global education, youth, gender equality, history teaching and religious freedom. It has outreach to youth organisations and NGOs in Africa and the Mediterranean region. The strength of the Centre’s networks is based on its perceived neutrality and balance.

Partnership is a key principle of the North-South Centre’s working methods. The Centre has developed synergy, partnership and cooperation

with a wide ranging relevant actors, including the UN Alliance of Civilisations, Anna Lindh Foundation, League of Arab States, African Union, UNESCO, Swedish Institute of Alexandria, Georg Eckert Institute (Brunswick, Germany), European Wergeland Centre (Oslo), Euroclio (European Association of History Educators), IRCICA (Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture) and the Aga Khan Development Network. Long standing partnerships exist with civil society networks (Global Education Week Network, CONCORD, DEEEP, GENE, the European Youth Forum, Pan-African Youth Union, African Diaspora Youth Network Europe and other regional youth platforms). The Centre also maintains its co-operation with the parliamentary (PA-UfM) and local and regional authorities (ARLEM) dimensions of the Union for the Mediterranean.

III. Geographic contextualisation

The successful implementation of the NSC/EC joint programmes contributed to an increased political and financial support of the EU. The EC/NSC Joint Management Agreement (JMA) has been extended until the end of 2012. A new JMA for 2013-2015 is under development and will be signed in the end of September 2012. The NSC has been included as an implementing actor in the EU/CoE Programme “Strengthening democratic reform in the southern Neighbourhood”.

Geographically, priority has been given to the new member states of the European Union, acceding and candidate countries and to the Balkans within Europe, and outside Europe to the Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-African regions.

IV. Contacts

Roman Chlapak,
Deputy to the Executive Director of the NSC,
Email : roman.chlapak@coe.int