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Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Adopted in the framework of Recommendation
CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers

Introduction

Education plays an essential role in the promotion of the core values of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as in the prevention of human rights violations. More generally, education is increasingly seen as a defence against the rise of violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance. This growing awareness is reflected in the adoption of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (“EDC/HRE”) by the Organisation’s 47 member states in the framework of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7. The Charter was developed over a period of several years as a result of wide-ranging consultations and is non-binding. It will be an important reference point for all those dealing with citizenship and human rights education. It will hopefully provide a focus and catalyst for action in the member states, as well as a way of disseminating good practice and raising standards throughout Europe and beyond.

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Section I – General provisions

1. Scope

The present Charter is concerned with education for democratic citizenship and human rights education as defined in paragraph 2. It does not deal explicitly with related areas such as intercultural education, equality education, education for sustainable development and peace education, except where they overlap and interact with education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of the present Charter:

a. “Education for democratic citizenship” means education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with

knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law.

b. “Human rights education” means education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

c. “Formal education” means the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to university. It takes place, as a rule, at general or vocational educational institutions and leads to certification.

d. “Non-formal education” means any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting.

e. “Informal education” means the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and

knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, peer group, neighbours, encounters, library, mass media, work, play, etc.).

3. Relationship between education for democratic citizenship and human rights education

Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society, while human rights education is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives.

4. Constitutional structures and member state priorities

The objectives, principles and policies set out below are to be applied:

a. with due respect for the constitutional structures of each member state, using means appropriate to those structures.

b. having regard to the priorities and needs of each member state.

Section II – Objectives and principles

5. Objectives and principles

The following objectives and principles should guide member states in the framing of their policies, legislation and practice.

a. The aim of providing every person within their territory with the opportunity of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

b. Learning in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is a lifelong process. Effective learning in this area involves a wide range of stakeholders including policy makers, educational professionals, learners, parents, educational institutions, educational authorities, civil servants, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations, media and the general public.

c. All means of education and training, whether formal, non-formal or informal, have a part to play in this learning process and are valuable in promoting its principles and achieving its objectives.

d. Non-governmental organisations and youth organisations have a valuable contribution to make to education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, particularly through non-formal and informal education, and accordingly need opportunities and support in order to make this contribution.

e. Teaching and learning practices and activities should follow and promote democratic and human rights values and principles; in particular, the governance of educational institutions, including schools, should reflect and promote human rights values and foster the empowerment and active participation of learners, educational staff and stakeholders, including parents.

f. An essential element of all education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is the promotion of social cohesion and intercultural dialogue and the valuing of diversity and equality, including gender equality; to this end, it is essential to develop knowledge, personal and social skills and understanding that reduce conflict, increase appreciation and understanding of the differences between faith and ethnic groups, build mutual respect for human dignity and shared values, encourage dialogue and promote non-violence in the resolution of problems and disputes.

g. One of the fundamental goals of all education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is not just equipping learners with knowledge, understanding and skills, but also empowering them with the readiness to take action in society in the defence and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

h. Ongoing training and development for education professionals and youth leaders, as well as for trainers themselves, in the principles and practices of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are a vital part of the delivery and sustainability of effective education in this area and should accordingly be adequately planned and resourced.

i. Partnership and collaboration should be encouraged among the wide range of stakeholders involved in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education at state, regional and local level so as to make the most of their contributions, including among policy makers, educational professionals, learners, parents, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations, media and the general public.

j. Given the international nature of human rights values and obligations and the common principles underpinning democracy and the rule of law, it is important for

member states to pursue and encourage international and regional co-operation in the activities covered by the present Charter and the identification and exchange of good practice.

Section III – Policies

6. Formal general and vocational education

Member states should include education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in the curricula for formal education at pre-primary, primary and secondary school level as well as in general and vocational education and training. Member states should also continue to support, review and update education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in these curricula in order to ensure their relevance and encourage the sustainability of this area.

7. Higher education

Member states should promote, with due respect for the principle of academic freedom, the inclusion of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in higher education institutions, in particular for future education professionals.

8. Democratic governance

Member states should promote democratic governance in all educational institutions both as a desirable and beneficial method of governance in its own right and as a practical means of learning and experiencing democracy and respect for human rights. They should encourage and facilitate, by appropriate means, the active participation of learners, educational staff and stakeholders, including parents, in the governance of educational institutions.

9. Training

Member states should provide teachers, other educational staff, youth leaders and trainers with the necessary initial and ongoing training and development in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. This should ensure that they have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the discipline's objectives and principles and of appropriate teaching and learning methods, as well as other key skills appropriate to their area of education.

10. Role of non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and other stakeholders

Member states should foster the role of non-governmental organisations and youth organisations in education for

democratic citizenship and human rights education, especially in non-formal education. They should recognise these organisations and their activities as a valued part of the educational system, provide them where possible with the support they need and make full use of the expertise they can contribute to all forms of education. Member states should also promote and publicise education for democratic citizenship and human rights education to other stakeholders, notably the media and general public, in order to maximise the contribution that they can make to this area.

11. Criteria for evaluation

Member states should develop criteria for the evaluation of the effectiveness of programmes on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Feedback from learners should form an integral part of all such evaluations.

12. Research

Member states should initiate and promote research on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education to take stock of the current situation in the area and to provide stakeholders including policy

makers, educational institutions, school leaders, teachers, learners, non-governmental organisations and youth organisations with comparative information to help them measure and increase their effectiveness and efficiency and improve their practices. This research could include, *inter alia*, research on curricula, innovative practices, teaching methods and development of evaluation systems, including evaluation criteria and indicators. Member states should share the results of their research with other member states and stakeholders where appropriate.

13. Skills for promoting social cohesion, valuing diversity and handling differences and conflict

In all areas of education, member states should promote educational approaches and teaching methods which aim at learning to live together in a democratic and multicultural society and at enabling learners to acquire the knowledge and skills to promote social cohesion, value diversity and equality, appreciate differences – particularly between different faith and ethnic groups – and settle disagreements and conflicts in a non-violent manner with respect for each others' rights, as well as to combat all forms of discrimination and violence, especially bullying and harassment.

Section IV – Evaluation and co-operation

14. Evaluation and review

Member states should regularly evaluate the strategies and policies they have undertaken with respect to the present Charter and adapt these strategies and policies as appropriate. They may do so in co-operation with other member states, for example on a regional basis. Any member state may also request assistance from the Council of Europe.

15. Co-operation in follow-up activities

Member states should, where appropriate, co-operate with each other and through the Council of Europe in pursuing the aims and principles of the present Charter by:

- a.* pursuing the topics of common interest and priorities identified;
- b.* fostering multilateral and transfrontier activities, including the existing network of co-ordinators on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education;
- c.* exchanging, developing, codifying and assuring the dissemination of good practices;

d. informing all stakeholders, including the public, about the aims and implementation of the Charter;

e. supporting European networks of non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and education professionals and co-operation among them.

16. International co-operation

Member states should share the results of their work on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in the framework of the Council of Europe with other international organisations.



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