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Forum on “Civic Partnerships for Citizenship and Human Rights Education”
Strasbourg, 9-10 October 2008

Final Declaration

The participants of the Forum on “Civic Partnerships for Citizenship and Human Rights Education” held in the framework of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- recall the decisions of the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 2005), which gave a clear mandate to the Organisation to continue and intensify the work on EDC/HRE;
- recall the Declaration adopted by the participants of the Conference on “The role of NGOs in Education for Democratic Citizenship” (Warsaw, 2005) organised in the framework of the Polish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which called, *inter alia*, for the development of partnerships, particularly between civil society NGOs, community-based groups and policy makers at all levels;
- welcome the holding of the Forum on “Civic Partnerships for Citizenship and Human Rights Education” in Strasbourg, in the framework of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, as a direct follow up to the Warsaw Conference, and in 2008, the year of the adoption of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue¹;
- recognise the fundamental importance of co-operation among international, regional and local institutions, governments, parliamentarians, human rights commissions, civil society organisations, media and education practitioners in the field of Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE);
- recognise the work done and results reached in processes on Development Education, Global Education, Peace Education and Education for Sustainable Development;

¹ White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living Together As Equals in Dignity” - Launched by the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs at their 118th Ministerial Session (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008)

- define “EDC/HRE partnerships” as any form of co-operation among state and non-states actors with a view to advancing sustainable EDC/HRE;
- recall the various commitments to EDC/HRE made by Council of Europe member states in the framework of related discussions at the United Nations (e.g. World Programme for Human Rights Education);
- recognise the ongoing partnership between the Council of Europe and INGOs;
- take note with satisfaction of the existing partnership between the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and the Council of Europe;
- welcome the setting up of the European Resource Centre on Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship in Oslo (the European Wergeland Centre).

Call on the Council of Europe to:

- continue to bring together international and regional government institutions, government representatives and civil society organisations with a view to promote EDC/HRE partnerships and exchange of experience, and in particular:
 - to organise an annual Forum on Citizenship and Human Rights Education;
 - to promote, in the framework of the Council of Europe’s “Quadrilogue”², a reinforced partnership on EDC/HRE between the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of INGOs ;
- develop guidelines / set of criteria on EDC/HRE partnerships, and support their implementation in the member states;
- support research, including documentation of good practices, on EDC/HRE partnerships;
- support EDC/HRE partnerships through the relevant policy documents;
- encourage and support co-operation between the EDC/HRE coordinators and civil society organisations;
- make use of the opportunities created by the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue and develop synergies with EDC/HRE;
- further reinforce co-operation with other international and regional governmental institutions, and in particular with UNESCO, OHCHR, OSCE/ODIHR, the European Commission, Fundamental Rights Agency, Alliance of Civilisations, the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF);
- include International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as an integral part of EDC/HRE;
- extend the good practice of co-management in the youth field in the area of education;
- develop partnerships through the existing global networks of the Council of Europe North South Centre and the forthcoming Wergeland Center for the promotion of global democratic citizenship.

² Council of Europe’s “Quadrilogue” includes the Committee of Ministers, Parliamentary Assembly, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and INGO Conference

Call on all international and regional governmental institutions to:

- further develop co-operation in the field of EDC/HRE, in particular by clarifying the links between their respective programmes and by further improving coordination of their contacts with member states;
- pool resources and expertise in order to find complementary ways of supporting EDC/HRE development in the member states;
- cooperate directly in the implementation of initiatives promoting EDC/HRE;
- continue to facilitate information sharing and to build bridges within and among member states;
- support partnerships among national actors through their field offices;
- call in particular on the European Union to make EDC/HRE one of the priorities of the new open method of cooperation on education in follow up to Education and Training 2010.

Call on governments to:

- ensure access to quality education for all;
- actively promote EDC/HRE in all government functions, as well as in teacher pre- and in-service training;
- acknowledge the role of NGOs in EDC/HRE and give high priority to co-operation between government and civil society organisations;
- strengthen their support to the Council of Europe's EDC/HRE coordinators as the main liaison persons at the national and European levels;
- examine the possibility to set up or further develop inter-institutional commissions on EDC/HRE or other similar bodies, with participation of civil society organisations;
- adopt a Council of Europe framework policy document on EDC/HRE, including a provision on supporting EDC/HRE partnerships, and providing for a follow up mechanism;
- report systematically and through a broad consultative processes on EDC/HRE activities – including information on partnerships - in reports submitted to international governmental institutions;
- share with other governments exemplary Plans of Actions, examples of good practice, policies and regulations promoting EDC/HRE;
- encourage civic participation of parents, students and community leaders and other civil groups in school life and in the democratic governance of schools;
- coordinate their EDC/HRE action in the framework of intergovernmental programmes (e.g. UN, UNESCO, Council of Europe, OSCE, EU);
- translate and disseminate as broadly as possible practical tools and manuals developed by the Council of Europe;
- reinforce the liaison among national, regional and local authorities in order to raise awareness of the need for EDC/HRE.

Call on parliamentarians to:

- reinforce their engagement in favour of citizenship and human rights education (including partnerships, finances and legislation);
- bring EDC/HRE matters to the fore in all their dealings with national curriculum, and in all their contacts with voters and pupils during their daily work.

Call on national human rights commissions to:

- continue to engage in partnerships for EDC/HRE;
- draw attention to the importance of partnerships for EDC/HRE.

Call on all civil society organisations to:

- act on opportunities provided by policies and resources coming from international and regional government institutions to carry out EDC/HRE activities in cooperation with governments, and in particular:
 - make use of the participatory status of INGOs in the Council of Europe for promoting and supporting partnerships in EDC/HRE³;
 - make use of United Nations instruments, mechanisms and initiatives to pursue EDC/HRE and of their consultative status with UN/ECOSOC and UNDP (Department of Public Information);
- work with governmental and non-governmental partners in bringing experience from the field to bear upon the development of standards of good practice for EDC/HRE;
- bring the perspectives of individual citizens, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalized, to the work of all agencies engaged in EDC/HRE;
- seek out partnerships with other civil society organisations in order to pool resources and expertise for supporting EDC/HRE;
- cooperate directly with other civil society organisations in the implementation of initiatives promoting EDC/HRE.

Call on media to:

- give permanent attention to EDC/HRE by regularly demonstrating their importance and positive consequences on social cohesion, by promoting examples of good practice and by underlining the role of associative media.

Call on education providers and practitioners to:

- as formal educational institutions, open their doors to cooperation with NGOs, such as youth organisations;
- as higher education and research institutions, conduct more research on the effectiveness of EDC/HRE, in partnership with educators;
- exchange knowledge, practices and experiences at local and regional forums to mirror the practice of working in partnerships;
- integrate EDC/HRE in their educational practice and call on relevant authorities to include EDC/HRE in initial and in-service training of education professionals.

³ Resolution (2003)8 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 November 2003, replaces “consultative status” for NGOs with “participatory status”. When NGOs are granted this status, the steering committees, committees of governmental experts and other bodies of the Committee of Ministers, may involve the INGOs enjoying participatory status in the definition of Council of Europe policies, programmes and actions in particular by granting observer status to the Liaison Committee and to the INGO thematic groupings. The committees of the Parliamentary Assembly and of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe are invited to study ways of intensifying co-operation with and facilitating INGO participation in their work, for example by granting observer status or by inviting the Liaison Committee or INGO thematic groupings to provide their expertise. The Commissioner for Human Rights is also encouraged to maintain close co-operation with the INGOs enjoying participatory status. Additionally, considering their role as advisers in questions concerning civil society, the Secretary General may consult the INGOs, the Liaison Committee or the INGO thematic groupings, in writing or by means of a hearing, on questions of mutual interest.