

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

Council of Europe report
on the state of citizenship
and human rights education in Europe



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Council of Europe report
on the state of citizenship
and human rights education in Europe

In accordance with the objectives
and principles of the Council of Europe Charter
on Education for Democratic Citizenship
and Human Rights Education

Council of Europe

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FOREWORD

FOREWORD

This report looks at the ways in which democracy and human rights are promoted through education in Europe today and puts forward priorities for action.

It shows that across Council of Europe member states, education is increasingly recognised as a tool for tackling radicalisation leading to terrorism, for successfully integrating migrants and refugees and for tackling disenchantment with democracy and the rise of populism. International co-operation in the area of education for democratic citizenship and human rights is growing, supporting national approaches by raising standards and allowing states to learn from each other's experiences.

But despite this growing understanding of the relationship between education and Europe's overall democratic health, challenges remain. In many countries, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are not sufficiently mainstreamed. In some areas of learning, such as vocational training, they are often absent. Where they are present, in many cases not enough is being done to monitor their impact, meaning that they do not receive sufficient priority, with resources geared instead towards areas of education that are evaluated and ranked.

Concerted action is therefore needed on the part of politicians, government officials, education professionals and civil society, including young people, to support and embrace democratic citizenship and human rights within national education systems. To achieve this, we need to demonstrate the value of this education for our societies, whether for promoting democratic participation, helping young people learn to resolve conflicts respectfully or creating spaces in which controversial topics can be openly discussed. More needs to be done to share and learn from examples of existing practice. We need to develop reliable methods for evaluating what works in order to make best use of successful methods and approaches.

I hope that this report will inform the current debate around the role of education in our democracies and will encourage stronger take up of the models that have a positive impact. The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education provides a solid basis for action and co-operation among member states, and the Council of Europe remains committed to helping Europe's nations build education systems that support and strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Thorbjørn Jagland
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council of Europe supports the promotion of human rights and democracy through education, as a means of building peaceful societies where the human dignity of all people is respected. With the adoption of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7) the member states committed themselves to the aim of providing every person within their territory with the opportunity of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Although the Charter is a non-binding legal instrument, it provides a unique common European framework of reference and is a focus and catalyst for action in the member states (Council of Europe 2010).

The present overview sums up the conclusions of the “Report on the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe”, which takes stock of the achievements and gaps in this area and recommends priorities for action. This review exercise is part of the follow-up to the conclusions of the 25th Session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Brussels, 2016), which supported the development of a long-term strategy for a more coherent and comprehensive approach to education for democratic citizenship and human rights at European level and requested the Council of Europe to consider ways of increasing the impact of the Charter.

The full text of the report is available at www.coe.int/edchre, together with the results of the governmental and civil society surveys.

The review of the Charter is also part of the Council of Europe’s contribution towards the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education and the Education 2030 Agenda (Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7) and the Paris Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, which was adopted by European Union member states in 2015.

Key conclusions

Between 2012 and 2016, substantial progress was made in the 40 countries that responded to the survey: education for democratic citizenship and human rights gained more importance around Europe. In particular, education is increasingly recognised as an essential response to the challenges that our societies are facing. At the same time, feedback from civil society shows that relevant policies need to be supported more effectively, that co-operation between governments and civil society needs to be further developed, and that recognition of the work done by civil society needs to be improved. Other concerns and issues raised include the following:

1. Inconsistencies between policies and their implementation were reported by 66% of government respondents in 2016 compared with 20% in 2012.
2. Over 80% of government respondents felt that greater awareness of the relevance of citizenship and human rights education for addressing the current challenges in our societies is needed in order for such education to receive a greater priority in their countries.
3. Over a third of government respondents stated there are scarce or non-existent references to education for democratic citizenship and human rights in laws, policies and strategic objectives, in vocational education and training, and higher education (14 out of 40 respondents).

4. In almost two thirds of the countries, no criteria have been developed to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes in the area of education for democratic citizenship and human rights.
5. Only over half of government respondents stated that evaluations of strategies and policies undertaken in accordance with the aims and principles of the Charter have been done or foreseen.
6. An overwhelming majority of government respondents felt that the Council of Europe provides encouragement or motivation for stronger action and higher quality, as well as opportunities for sharing and co-operation with other countries. More needs to be done to take into account the specific needs and priorities of countries.
7. The Charter is a useful tool for non-governmental organisations both as a guideline for their internal policies and programmes and as a tool for advocacy directed at national and local authorities. However, the Charter is little known to young people. The manuals on human rights education with young people and children, *Compass* and *Compasito*, remain central to the citizenship and human rights education work done by civil society.
8. The Charter needs to be further developed as a shared framework for policy dialogue among and within countries.

Key recommendations

1. Include education for democratic citizenship and human rights education among the priority areas of education, youth and child policy and back it up with sufficient resources.
2. Ensure balanced provision of citizenship and human rights education in different areas and types of education, with particular focus on vocational education and training.
3. Strengthen the recognition both of the work done in this area by education professionals and by civil society, including youth organisations.
4. Make full use of the data available and support systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of education programmes, including public debates and broad consultations.
5. Give citizenship and human rights education a solid position in the curricula and develop appropriate assessment tools, with a view to reinforcing the status of such education while avoiding the pitfalls of standardised testing.
6. Increase co-operation between state authorities and civil society.
7. Support and encourage international co-operation.
8. Collect and promote examples of good practice illustrating the relevance of citizenship and human rights education for everyday life.
9. Increase the levels of promotion of the Charter to all the stakeholders involved, including examples of how it can be applied.
10. Further strengthen the Charter review process, support the development of strategic goals for the next five years and facilitate the development of national indicators/benchmarks/priorities for assessing progress achieved and guiding further action at national and international level.

PART I

OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

VIEWPOINT

“Every day, we are confronted with news of hatred and violence; and the response we witness to violence and terror often involves more violence and terror, in a spiral of degrading barbarity. We all need to better think through our strategies if we are to tackle the world’s challenges today, from poverty to conflict, discrimination, disease, climate change and beyond. We will only progress if our decisions are grounded in the common understanding that we all belong to one humanity and that all of us are equally deserving of dignity, respect and justice.”

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Council of Europe promotes human rights and democracy through education, as a means of building peaceful societies where the human dignity of all people is respected. With the adoption of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE)¹ in 2010, the member states committed themselves to the aim of providing every person within their territory with the opportunity of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. This text also outlines the member states’ agreement on the objectives and principles (section II); policies (section III); and evaluation and

co-operation in this area (section IV). Improving the effectiveness of such education is an imperative for the Council of Europe member states, and the main focus of the present “Report on the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe”.

DEFINITIONS

“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.

“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.

Source: Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

1. Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

BACKGROUND

VIEWPOINT

“Signed in 1950, the European Convention on Human Rights, the first strong act of the Council of Europe, was also the first concrete expression of the ideals contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Convention and the European Court of Human Rights have been very successful. They have an influence that makes them a source of inspiration even beyond Europe; and through the protection and development of rights they have been a factor for peace, stability and the strengthening of democracy. The essential point is that in the first place states take ownership of the Convention for the benefit of persons under their jurisdiction. At state level training in human rights must take place and I can only encourage the states to implement this. That is also part of shared responsibility.”

Guido Raimondi, President, European Court of Human Rights

The Council of Europe’s work on education for democratic citizenship and human rights benefits from the longstanding support of its member states:

- ▶ The Charter was adopted in the framework of the Swiss Chairmanship as one of the decisions intended to provide follow-up to the Action Plan adopted at the Committee of Ministers High Level Conference on the Future of the European Court of Human Rights (Interlaken, 2010) as a text that supports the prevention of human rights violations by strengthening the culture of human rights.
- ▶ The first Charter review conference was held in the framework of the Andorran Chairmanship

(Strasbourg, 2012), in co-operation with the European Commission and the European Wergeland Centre. The Andorran Chairmanship consequently organised a conference (Andorra la Vella, 2013), which gave impetus to the work on competences for democratic culture.

- ▶ Finland hosted the 24th Session of the Council of Europe’s Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Helsinki, 2013), which called on the Committee of Ministers to “consider developing descriptors and a reference framework to assist member states in implementing a competence based education for democracy and intercultural dialogue”.
- ▶ Belgium hosted the 25th Session of the Council of Europe’s Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (Brussels, 2016), where the ministers undertook to support the development of a long-term strategy for education for democratic citizenship and human rights at European level. The ministers also endorsed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and requested the Council of Europe to consider ways of increasing the impact of the Charter.
- ▶ The 3rd Compass Forum on Human Rights Education (Budapest, 2016) provided initial input and proposals from non-governmental partners and governmental experts active in the Joint Council on Youth. Among other things, the forum called for the continuation of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme.²

2. “Message to the Council of Europe”, Learning Equality. Living Dignity, 3rd Compass Forum on Human Rights Education, European Youth Centre Budapest, 5-7 October 2016, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16806acdfc>, accessed 15 December 2017.

Today the Charter is used as a basis for sharing expertise, evaluating achievements and defining priorities for action. This learning process consists of a report and a conference organised every five years. The present report builds on the recommendations of the first review cycle (2012). While opinions were very diverse in relation to the need for and feasibility of stronger evaluation mechanisms, there was an emerging consensus on the benefits of ongoing dialogue among key actors in this area and on the added value of the Charter as a clear framework and impetus for such dialogue.

In 2016, 40 countries³ responded to the survey on the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe, organised by the Council of Europe Education Department. In preparing their responses, the governments consulted a broad range of partners.

Feedback from civil society organisations, including youth organisations, was also collected directly by the Council of Europe Youth Department through an online survey, with almost 100 responses received from 44 countries. The present overview sums up the conclusions of these surveys.

3. Albania, Andorra, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

RECOGNISING EDUCATION AS AN ESSENTIAL RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES FACED TODAY

VIEWPOINT

“If radicalisation is partially nurtured by a feeling of exclusion, is it not because we failed to transmit and promote our European values to uprooted young people yearning to build an identity? If social cohesion is jeopardised, isn't it because we forgot to build communities on common ground? If the integration of people with a migrant background is sometimes difficult, is it not because we also failed to provide a positive and confident identity, and we did not share our culture of democracy? ... In times of political turmoil, in times of uncertainty, the last thing we can afford is to neglect and forget the value of our values.”

Tibor Navracsics, EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

Between 2012 and 2016, substantial progress was made in the respondent countries: education for democratic citizenship and human rights education (EDC/HRE) is gaining more recognition in education systems and in school communities across Europe. In particular, education is increasingly recognised as an essential response to the challenges that our societies are facing.

The respondents from governments and civil society organisations found EDC/HRE to be most relevant in addressing the following challenges:

- ▶ violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism;
- ▶ deficit of democratic participation of both vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups in society;
- ▶ integration of migrants and refugees.

The economic crisis, austerity measures and social exclusion were in general seen as slightly less of an issue for EDC/HRE to address. It could be of interest to reflect on the possible reasons for this, as well as on the possible connection between social exclusion and disillusion leading to the rise of populism.

It was also pointed out by the respondents that while EDC/HRE can make an important contribution towards addressing these challenges, it cannot do this alone and it must not be seen in isolation from the broader environment. The political, social and economic context influence people's values, beliefs and attitudes and EDC/HRE reforms are most effective when they are a part of a comprehensive strategy for social change.

EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE: GREECE

In the framework of the economic crisis in Greece, as well as the large influx of refugees and newly arrived migrants in the country, issues related to EDC/HRE are gaining ground in education at all levels. As a result, several public and civil society stakeholders have initiated and are planning activities to promote it. These include, apart from the bodies of the Ministry of Education itself, the Greek Ombudsman for Children, the scientific societies of EDC/HRE educators and university departments.

EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE: ITALY

Italy's National Youth Council organised a national training course in human rights education based on *Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People*, which brought together young trainers and activists. The course led to the inclusion of human rights education in the main priorities of the National Youth Council and a very active network of human rights educators in Italy. It paid special attention to the role of young migrants and refugees as human rights educators.

USEFUL RESOURCE

Final Declaration of the 25th Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education Brussels, 11-12 April 2016

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE PRIORITY GIVEN TO EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

VIEWPOINT

"Human rights and citizenship education has been called upon in recent political statements to provide responses to the many challenges faced by our societies: extremism and populism, hate speech, discrimination and poverty, a general climate of fear and doubt. On the other hand, every day we note more cuts in education budgets, more human rights defenders and educators are facing danger and limited freedom in doing their work. It is time to match the political statements with policy measures, appropriate recognition and protection for the work of youth organisations active for human rights education."

Marko Grdošić, Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe

While according to government respondents the priority given to EDC/HRE is generally high across different types and levels of engagement and support, this perception was not shared by civil society respondents. In particular, the respondents considered that priority is given to EDC/HRE to a fair or to a large extent as follows: at the national government level (96% for government respondents and 29% for civil society respondents); at education institution level (91% for government respondents and 33% for civil society respondents); and to supporting training about EDC/HRE for teachers and school heads (88% for government respondents and 41% for civil society respondents).

Moreover, only 17% of civil society respondents claimed that there was a shared definition of EDC/HRE in their countries, compared with 78% of government respondents. Only 30% of civil society respondents are aware of any measures or activities planned to promote EDC/HRE in their countries, in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Charter, whereas 93% of government respondents report the existence of such measures.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ All 40 countries taking part in the survey reported that concrete measures had been taken to promote citizenship and human rights education, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Charter, compared with two thirds of respondents in 2012.
- ▶ There has been an increase of over 30% in the number of countries where action has been undertaken or is foreseen to evaluate strategies and policies in this area in the last four years.
- ▶ Almost all countries have the Charter available in their language, and most countries have it available on the websites of their ministries of education or other relevant bodies.
- ▶ Only 30% of civil society respondents are aware of any measures or activities planned to promote EDC/HRE in their countries, in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Charter, whereas 93% of government respondents report such measures.

The substantial differences in perception point to the necessity of improving the channels for information sharing, feedback collection and analysis. In this respect, establishing a central focal point has proved to be effective in several countries.

One possible explanation for the discrepancies might be that it takes time to translate political commitment into practice. It will be interesting to see in the next review cycle to what extent the political impetus of 2016 has influenced education policy reforms in Europe. It will be important to include feedback from different partners to ensure a balanced representation of different perspectives.

EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE: LUXEMBOURG

In the light of failings related to the implementation of certain aspects of the EDC/HRE Charter, an independent centre has been set up to better co-ordinate and plan different components of EDC/HRE.

EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE: GEORGIA

The youth organisation Human Rights Association, in partnership with the Teachers Professional Development Centre, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Civic Education Teachers Forum and the European Wergeland Centre, developed a long-term training course for school teachers and youth workers on human rights and citizenship education, enabling participants to create common projects contributing to the inclusion and participation of young people in community life.

USEFUL RESOURCE

Share&Connect: Community of practice for educational professionals in the field of education for human rights, democratic citizenship and intercultural understanding. See European Wergeland Centre, www.theewc.org, accessed 8 December 2017.

LONG-TERM APPROACH AND POLITICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PRIORITY

VIEWPOINT

"There is evidence that schooling systems in Europe have increased receptivity to inclusion of EDC/HRE approaches as one strategy to protect against discriminatory and prejudicial behaviours that undermine societies and contribute to youth alienation and potential radicalisation. I would argue that EDC/HRE is necessary for a healthy democratic society, regardless of the particular challenges faced at any given time. However, educational systems need to commit to carrying out EDC/HRE in a manner that is sustained and of high quality. This is consistent not only with the aim of the Council of Europe Charter but also the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 and the Global Citizenship Education initiative."

Felisa Tibbitts, Professor of Human Rights Education, University of Utrecht

While most respondents consider that there are no inconsistencies between EDC/HRE principles and national education policies, 66% of government respondents reported inconsistencies between policies and their implementation in 2016, compared with 20% in 2012. The most salient implementation issues according to the respondents relate to the lack of resources, lack of a long-term approach, lack of evaluation tools and lack of awareness among key partners.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Bulgaria: the educational standard on civic education (EDC/HRE) is taught across many subject areas at school. However, there is no monitoring mechanism in place to research and analyse the extent to which the standard is being applied in class, in what way and in which curricula.

Croatia: The curricular reform launched in 2015 at the political level and in the strategy advocates citizenship education but on the implementation and curricular level citizenship education is marginalised, as one of seven cross-curricular topics. This new approach is now under public discussion.

Cyprus: Not enough data are collected to assess whether what is decided at policy level is implemented successfully.

Estonia: Often there is lack of pedagogic awareness about hidden curricula. This occurs when the knowledge obtained in civics classes about active and responsible citizenship in a democratic society is not supported by the school culture. EDC/HRE is often not valued in policy sectors outside education.

Greece: The greatest inconsistency exists between the curricula for EDC/HRE, the textbooks for use in schools and teaching practices. While there are state-of-the-art statements of principle, the instructional materials are mainly academic-oriented and the teaching practices are sometimes traditional. More innovative and creative approaches are needed.