



## MEMORANDUM

### from the symposium *Education for a Europe of Rights*

*held at the Central European University in Budapest on 1-2 December 2017*

Human rights (hereinafter: HR) education, that includes education for democracy, inclusiveness and European values, represents a core component for building sustainable societies with reasonable governance, based on equal concern and respect for all individuals. HR education brings a positive contribution to the quality of democracy in the long run and the level of human rights protection.

We have identified that questions related to HR education are largely neglected in policy discussions in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, and are not considered to be a priority. This has direct negative impact on the quality of HR education at all levels of schooling, its prominence in course curricula, available materials, trainings and innovative approaches.

We call upon domestic authorities, especially executives (ministers and ministries of education) but also legislatures and, where applicable, regional and local authorities, to consider the policy in HR education a priority for the long-term sustainable development of the society.

Receiving the basic competences already at an early age is essential for young people to be able to become active and involved citizens who know their rights and are aware of the importance of respecting the rights of others.

The policies and practices of HR education at all levels (from pre-primary up to university level) should be based on reliable data and evidence. They should respect the following principles, which should be implemented by all state institutions, international organizations, schools and civil society actors in the field:

- **Empowerment:** Thanks to HR education, students should understand the importance of being actively engaged with public affairs, and human rights protection in particular. They should receive and practice a skillset, including supportive vocabulary that makes such engagement possible and encourages them to participate in public affairs, including elections, representation, petitions, public discussions and initiatives.
- **International and cross-sectional cooperation:** More international and transnational institutional collaboration should be present for designing HR education curricula, including among civil society actors. State institutions should welcome and wherever possible, implement initiatives that are results of such cooperation. Moreover, they should devote substantial attention to continuous development of the curricula for HR education, combining a rich toolkit of guidelines, materials and trainings at the disposal of teachers and facilitators with a possibility for educational institutions and other actors engaged in HR education to employ tailor-made, creative approaches.
- **Participation in the decision-making and implementation:** HR education should be designed in consultation with key stakeholders, including youth, civil society organisations, experts and teachers. There should be a clear set of bodies responsible for implementation of each State's international obligations in the field of education for democratic citizenship and human rights



education. These bodies shall represent the main stakeholders in education and should be independent from immediate political changes. They should potentially have constitutional status and should be granted an advisory and monitoring role.

- **Inclusive setting in the education process:** HR education should particularly support environments in which no one feels to be excluded and where diversity is perceived as a strength for learning together and enriching each other.
- **Democracy and democratic environment in educational institutions:** It is imperative that schools and other institutions engaged in HR education support learning by example by themselves being governed based on the principles of involving everyone's opinion in the decision making and enhancing participative forms of decision making. Past and present positive traditions and practices should be highlighted. Meaningful and effective legal remedies should be available to the students in case these principles are not respected.
- **Strong role of non-formal education:** Non-formal education (defined as “any planned programme of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting”) including self-reflective artistic activities, role-play games and, where possible, activities with the use of digital tools, is particularly effective for the goals of HR education. Therefore, it should be employed frequently by teachers and students themselves and there should be enough space created in the curricula for developing non-formal educational activities. Formal and especially non-formal education should promote social skills and values such as equality, diversity, non-discrimination, social cohesion and intercultural and interreligious dialogue.
- **Role of non-governmental organisations, youth organisations and other stakeholders:** Non-governmental organisations and youth organisations have a valuable contribution to make to HR education, particularly through non-formal and informal education, and accordingly need opportunities and support in order to make this contribution. This should be provided by state institutions by giving them substantial roles in decision making and space for engaging in activities, including by developing and maintaining financial support schemes for projects in the field of HR education.
- **Role of teachers and educators:** Participative teaching methods should be encouraged. Teacher training in methods, including non-formal education, should be available to all teachers. There should be a specialization on HR education during university studies of civics as well as a study program or at least a specialization on Human Rights. The graduates of these programs and specializations should be equipped with innovative tools for teaching HR and helping teachers of HR education in schools. Teaching materials should be available and accessible in national languages to teachers and educators.

(Inspired by the most common guidelines on HR education, based on: 1. *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7* ; 2. *Declaration of the 44th session of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, October 1994)*; 3. *Online article of UNESCO Adapted from UNESCO (1998) Citizenship Education for the 21st Century*; 4. *OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Guidelines on human rights education. For secondary school systems, 2012*).