



NGO Youth Leaders Coalition



The Baltic Forum on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights

Tallinn, Tuesday, 17 October 2017

Radisson Blu Hotel Olümpia, conference rooms Beta&Gamma
Liivalaia 33, 10118 Tallinn Estonia

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Human Rights and Democracy in Action

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Background and objective

Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and Human Rights Education (HRE) is the way through which many organisations and state actors contribute to the development of young people's active citizenship, participation and responsibility within their own societies and within Europe. Yet there is more to EDC and HRE than learning about human rights and civic responsibilities: it is about the present and the future of Europe and young people have an important role to play.

The current European situation is requiring more than ever commitment by education actors to provide learning scenarios for promoting social and civic competences and embed them in a strong intercultural learning programme. The refugee crisis, the changes in the speed of information sharing across borders, the new needs of the labour market and economic crisis from which societies are still recovering can create fertile ground for radical ideas and intolerant actions by young people. In this situation it is crucial to undertake sustainable efforts and consolidate respect for human rights and democratic competences as fundamental values of our societies.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has continuously engaged in programmes aimed at reinforcing democracy and the rule of law and preventing human rights violations through promoting human rights education and democracy in schools and communities around Europe. In 2010, the Council of Europe's member states adopted the [Council of Europe's Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#). The Charter is an important step forward in mainstreaming human rights education in both formal and non-formal education, with the aim to provide real support for both governments and non-governmental partners in making access to EDC/HRE a reality.

The three Baltic States have found various ways of putting in action this important political framework, for example through the Baltic Summer Academies organised in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre, hosted by rotation every year by each country since 2015. A more recent development is the current project **„Baltic Partnerships for Human Rights Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship“** undertaken by the Estonian Institute of Human Rights, the Youth Leaders' Coalition from Latvia and the Cultural Centre *In Actio* from Lithuania in 2017. This project brings together various state actors who join their efforts in contributing to the advancement of the educational practices as a response to

current challenges. Besides reinforcing ties at national level between educational authorities, non-governmental organisations and schools, the project reaches out for regional cooperation in exchange for good practices and further policy development in the three Baltic states. The project also makes use of the valuable resources produced by the Council of Europe in the field of EDC-HRE, in particular the *“Teacher training in EDC/HRE – how to develop the ability of students to assess information from media and social networks?”* and *“Teaching controversial issues – developing effective training for teachers and school leaders”* by their translation into 4 languages (Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian), adaptation, further development and dissemination, piloting of these tools and supporting their introduction in the education systems of the 3 participating countries.

In addition to contributing to the implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, the project also corresponds to the priorities of the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) and of the provisions of the Paris Declaration.

The similar historical background of the Baltic States and circumstances today give reason to look into those problems together and cooperate in strengthening the educational efforts at local, national and regional level. The circumstances and specific challenges related to EDC and HRE are very similar in all Baltic countries. The main problem might be described as a gap between what is foreseen in the curricula and what actually happens in the classrooms. According to the curricula of the Baltic countries, human rights and democratic citizenship are core values of general education. The curricula and strategic documents prescribe such goals and principles for the education system but the actual practices of teachers and headmasters are not always in compliance with them. The reasons for that are the lack of awareness and understanding about human rights and relevant teaching methodologies and, even more importantly, often the mind-set of the educators.

Besides the educational actors, there are also civil society organisations, research institutions and other stakeholders who tackle these problems, promoting learning about diversity, cooperation, human rights and value education. However, it is often the case that these efforts are not always mutually reinforcing and systemic, therefore regular stakeholder meetings are necessary.

The Baltic Forum is an excellent opportunity to examine these issues in-depth. This gathering provides an opportunity for all three Baltic countries to exchange good

practices and plan the actions for the advancement of EDC/HRE via transnational cooperation and mutual learning.

Its concrete aims are:

- 1. to bring together stakeholders (educational authorities' representatives, teachers, non-governmental organisations etc) from the three countries and take stock of current developments in EDC-HRE**
- 2. to discuss the methods of teaching controversial issues and developing the ability of students to assess information from media and social networks ;**
- 3. to present the results of the current project cooperation as good practice and have teachers share their experiences of piloting.**
- 4. to open ways for identifying further possibilities of advancement in the field of EDC/HRE, through cooperation and mutual learning.**

From an international perspective, this Forum also contributes to the progress of the Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education, by its efforts of mainstreaming human rights in national education policies and teacher training and working towards promoting a culture of peace, non-violence and appreciation of cultural diversity.

Programme

- 09.00 *Welcome coffee and registration*
- 09.30 **Opening Remarks**
Elizabeth KASA-MÄLKSOO, Estonian Institute of Human Rights,
Project coordinator

Katia DOLGOVA-DREYER, Programme Coordinator, Council of
Europe

Christel DE-JONGE, Policy Assistant, European Commission (tbc)
- 09.45 How to **teach controversial issues through Education for
Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education –**

Key Note Speaker: David Kerr
- 10.15 **Developing teachers' competences in teaching controversial
issues – the Baltic cooperation experiences**
- overview of the current project and the piloting activities in
the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian schools

Moderator: David Kerr

- Estonian Ministry of Education and Research
- Latvian Ministry of Education and Science/ the Youth Leaders'
Coalition from Latvia
- Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science/ the Cultural
Centre *In Actio* from Lithuania
- 11.00 *Coffee break*
*networking
*exhibition of national initiatives in EDC-HRE from the three
countries
- 11.30 **Digital Era: Importance of assessing information from media
and social networks**

Presentation by the Council of Europe expert

- overview of the current project and the piloting activities in
the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian schools
Moderator: Council of Europe expert (tbd)

- Estonian Institute of Human Rights
- the Youth Leaders' Coalition from Latvia
- the Cultural Centre *In Actio* from Lithuania

12.30 *Lunch*

13.30 **Parallel Sessions**

Session 1: Developing skills to assess information from media and social networks: Teacher competences – What to do next?

Session 2: How to handle controversial issues in the classroom and in the school: role of teachers, civil society, school management and parents.

15.00 Coffee break
*networking

15.30 **Plenary Session – Conclusions of parallel sessions**

Chaired by Katia Dolgova-Dreyer and Christel de Jonge (tbc)

16.00 **Working in partnership for the advancement of EDC-HRE in the Baltics: future steps**

- Round table

Moderator: Christel DeJonge and Katia Dolgova-Dreyer (tbc)

17.15 *Closure*