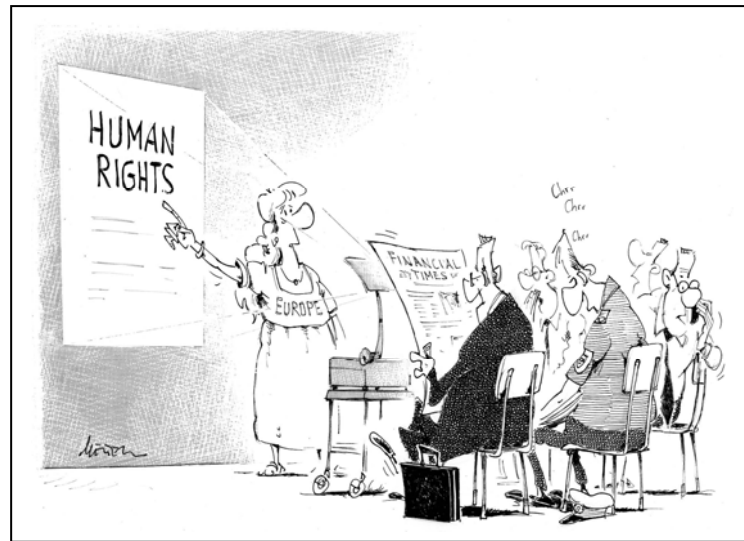


Topic: Human rights

The realisation of human rights is still an important part of the political agenda, even in Europe, posing a challenge for adult education. Training awareness, learning about one's own rights, finding strategies for implementing them into daily life and promoting minorities and the disadvantaged; these are all elements of relevant practical training carried out locally. This edition of the InfoLetter presents a few examples.



Cartoon: Mester

Human rights are a result of a collective learning process

Europe. Interview with Morten Kjaerum director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA Vienna) since 2008 and former head of the Danish Institute for Human Rights

(Michael Sommer) **What are the biggest problems concerning human rights in Europe today?**

From my experience, sadly, all human rights concerns are still relevant for Europe today. We are confronted with racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. The way our governments and societies treat asylum seekers and immigrants raises serious human rights questions. Other very disadvantaged groups are minorities such as the Roma, who are facing discrimination particularly regarding housing, education and employment. There is also evidence of homophobia and of unequal treatment of people with disabilities. It also remains quite a lot to do on gender equality concerning domestic violence or pay gaps, for example. Other issues are the rights of the mentally ill, the rights of children, or the issue of trafficking, which is, in fact, modern slavery. More topics come to my mind, such as, such as the protection of sensitive personal data in relation to the fight against terrorism, the access to justice and the right to a fair trial. All these facts should set off alarm bells for all of us.

How can (adult) education and lifelong learning help to improve this situation?

In my opinion, human rights, human rights as we know them today - enshrined in laws - are a result of a collective learning process of humankind. I am also convinced that this learning process must and will continue. Education - of children as well

as adults - therefore plays a hugely important role. Human rights education, both in the formal and non-formal sense, can be an effective tool in raising awareness on the various human rights issues, but at the same time this education must be more than just learning the facts: it should be both learning with the head as well as with the heart. From my experience, the best "learning" in this sense happens when persons meet a diversity of people of different cultures and backgrounds, people of a different skin colour, with disabilities, etc. - and to realize that they are not so different from us after all. Ultimately, human rights are about respect for every human being.

One component of the FRA programme 2009 is education. What exactly is planned?

The Agency's (relatively new) mandate also comprises awareness-raising on fundamental rights, and human rights education is one of the key tools for this. In 2009, the FRA will continue its networking and human rights education activities, such as our joint seminars with Yad Vashem where students can meet Holocaust survivors (mostly via video conferences), and our teachers' seminars on Holocaust education. We will continue producing our "S'cool Agenda" for young people to learn about fundamental rights issues in Europe with a range of helpful tools, such as the "human rights temperature" test, a glossary, or tips on how to fight discrimination, while keeping track of their own daily activities and homework.



Morten Kjaerum
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 European InfoNet
 Grundtvig Project Adult Education

CONTENT

European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights
Page 2

EUNET: An education and training net-work for European integration
Page 2

Integration means learning from one another
Page 3

Educators instead of victims
Page 3

A challenge for adult education: human rights education for the police institution
Page 4

Let's give the Roma a break
Page 4

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EUROPEAN
AFFAIRS

European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights – the European Union’s engagement in promoting human rights

European Database for Financial Education

The European Commission has published a European Database for Financial Education (EDFE). ▶

CEDEFOP: Call for study visits 2009/2010

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) has launched on 19 February 2009 a call for applicants for education and vocational training specialists. ▶

European-Asian Conference on Teachers and Trainers in Lifelong Learning

In the context of the work of the ASEM professionalisation network, the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) will be presenting the conference “Teachers and Trainers in Lifelong Learning – Professional Development in Asia and Europe” near Cologne at the end of June 2009. ▶

New Identities, future persons

Europe. Without a shared vision of democratic community we risk the danger of differences collapsing into new forms of separatism. In trying to avoid the “tyranny of the whole” we must not get trapped in “the dictatorship of the fragment”. This is one dilemma facing adult educators dealing with human rights and citizenship. ▶

New Skills for New Jobs

The European Commission published in December 2008 a European initiative with a proposal for a series of action to better match labour market skills with vacancies in the framework of the EU’s European Economic Recovery Plan. Also the role of lifelong learning is highlighted in the field of upgrading skills. ▶

Europe. *Human rights as a core value of the EU are embedded in its founding treaty and reinforced by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, proclaimed in 2000 but not yet adopted. The EU implements worldwide programmes on human rights such as the Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights through which measures in the field of adult education can also be implemented, illustrated by a project example of dvv international.*

(Simone Kaufhold) “Human rights are called that because every human being is entitled to them” - with this sentence Europe Aid introduces one of its funding programmes: the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) regarding human rights as a guiding principle of EU cooperation policy. Europe Aid is the Directorate General of the European Commission responsible for implementing external aid programmes and projects across the world. Probably the most popular initiative in the field of the worldwide cooperation of the Europe Aid department is that of the EU election observation missions.

The EIDHR was created by an initiative of the European Parliament in 1994. The legal base of the programme, the EIDHR regulation, goes back to 1999 by the European Council. The initiative as it works today was established in 2006, which means that it has now been working for three years.

The programme’s coverage is worldwide with a budget line for 2008 of about 120 million euros. Europe Aid collaborates with partners from Asia, Latin America, Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific, the gulf region as well as the European Union’s southern and eastern neighbours.

One of the most interesting points about this programme is that the EIDHR is an independent instrument which means that no governmental consensus is needed. It is implemented in partnership with non-governmental organisations and international organisations which means that the EIDHR aims to strengthen the role of civil society. That is the reason why the EIDHR is a perfect addition to the European cooperation programmes such as CARDS, TACIS etc., which have to be implemented jointly with the state governments.

Priority themes

For the funding period of 2007 to 2010, distinctive objectives for the programme were specified, such as supporting actions on human rights and democracy issues (human rights dialogues, human rights defenders, the death penalty, torture, children and armed conflict), enhancing the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform and supporting the peaceful conciliation of group interests. In the wider field of peaceful conciliation of group interests the following project was implemented.

Project Example

The dvv international – the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV) organised a project called “The Folk High Schools” in Samtskhe-Javakheti within the framework of the EIDHR, with the priority theme of Combating Racism and Xenophobia and promoting the rights of Minorities in Georgia. The project ran from January 2006 to June 2008 and was co-financed by the European Union with 400,000 €.

The project was intended to endorse the rights of national minorities by realising their legal right to education, including non-formal education. The objective was to protect the rights of different ethnic and religious minorities and more specifically the assistance in development of human resources in Samtskhe-Javakheti (southern Georgia), which is the most multi-national region of the country. The Project was accomplished by setting up Folk High Schools in southern Georgia.

Key skills such as the ability to communicate and to hold a debate, willingness to conduct independent research and obtain information, the ability and willingness to cooperate and seek agreement on the basis of rational compromise were of great importance in the courses. Also, different cultural events such as debates, clubs, lectures, seminars and so on were organised in order to reduce potential conflict and promote inter-cultural and inter-ethnic mutual understanding. After the funding period the Folk High Schools should function independently on a fees basis. The project shows how adult learning plays a key role in human rights by offering adult learners and especially marginalised people access to education, in this case with the help of EU funding. ... ▶

EUNET: An education and training network for European integration

Europe. *The “European Network for Education and Training e.V.”, EUNET for short, is a network for European education and training institutions. 55 members are brought together, offering educational work aimed towards European integration.*

(Michael Sommer) “We are probably the only network of education and training institutions that these European orientations have”, confirmed Thomas Heckeberg, Managing Director of the network whose headquarters are in Bonn (Germany). Members are institutions for the on-site training of young people and adults, which offer ways to improve European integration, such as the Maison de l’Europe de Paris (France) or the European Academy Vienna (Austria). Most of the members of the network, which was founded in 2004, are from France, Germany and Italy. ... ▶

Integration means learning from one another

Sweden. *“Reciprocity and exchange between people on equal conditions forms the basis for our work with refugees”, says Karin Ekermann, who is involved in a cooperation project between the Red Cross and adult education in Stockholm. “When we learn from one another on equal conditions we improve the opportunities for integration”.*

(Hetty Rooth) “The Buddy Project” is the name of the Swedish Red Cross initiative in which refugees are offered the opportunity of one-to-one meetings with people who already live in the country. The idea is to make the passage into Swedish society a little easier.

Karin Ekermann, who is in charge of the integration issues at the “Studieförbundet Riksförbundet”, The Swedish Study Promotion Association, is a volunteer in the Buddy project herself.

“I have met a woman from Sri Lanka a few times. We celebrated Sweden’s National day together and we have been for walks and to cafés. Although we haven’t seen much of each other, we have got to know each other a little better and learned quite a lot from one another.”

“I can now see the conflict in Sri Lanka from a completely new perspective, not only the political and military situation, but also the religious aspect. I also feel closer to the people there through the pictures she has shown me and what she has told me about the family she has left behind in her home country.”

“For her part I think that it has been important to have someone to whom she can ask questions, someone who can explain our ways and customs and how society works. She has a job but she is giving a lot of thought to her education and future and whether she will be able to go back home one day.”

Increase understanding

Karin Ekermann thinks this type of pairing project between refugees and inhabitants of Sweden is a very worthwhile initiative. She also stresses that a lot of progress can be made through the collaboration between a non-profit making organisation, such as the Red Cross, and liberal adult education. Adult education has the opportunity to develop a scheme which can not only promote personal relations, but also a wider community, in study circles and cultural events.

“We hope, for example, to be able to arrange study circles where several of these pairs can get to know one another in groups once or twice, before beginning to meet on a one-to-one basis. We are also planning taster evenings with various cultural activities such as music, arts and crafts and dancing. We are going to organise study visits to various popular movements. But we are also going to widen the exchange of knowledge and offer circles to the public to increase understanding of refugees, why people are forced to live in exile and what happens to someone when they flee from their country.

Political issues

The problems immigrants and refugees face in being able to live a full life and participate in Swedish society is a hot topic which is constantly coming up in the political debate. The government has been looking at the issue of how the reception of immigrants and refugees can be improved in order to achieve more rapid and more effective integration into society. One of the very recommendations to come out of these investigations is investment in introduction mentors.

One of the many consultation bodies which has been given an opportunity to comment is the study associations’ interest organisation, “Folkbildningsförbundet”, the Swedish Adult Education Association: “The introduction of new arrivals is more effective and more successful if it is kept close to people’s everyday experience and builds on the interests and experiences they bring with them. This down-to-earth approach can be achieved if society works with the study associations and gets them involved”.

The Association emphasises that liberal adult education has considerable resources to organise study circles in social studies and to work with democratic values. With just under 300 member and cooperative organisations, the nine Swedish study associations are deeply rooted in voluntary work.

“The associations also include many ethnic associations. This provides a unique opportunity to add further dimensions to association and social studies in collaboration with the associations.”

These concepts are entirely in keeping with the intentions of the Buddy Project, and similar conversational schemes are now to be found in several areas within adult education. The names may vary, for instance, “Someone to talk to”, “Exchange words” or “Pensioners as mentors”, but the factor common to all of them is that Swedes and immigrants talk to each other about everyday things in everyday surroundings.

Worthwhile meetings between people are just as important for new arrivals from other countries as for refugees with a permanent resident’s permit and the existing residents of the country.

The Buddy Project is aimed at refugees with a permanent resident’s permit and is partially financed by funds from the European Refugee Fund. ▶

Educators instead of victims

Denmark. For almost 100 years the Danish speaking people living south of the border to Germany were depicted and treated as victims to pity. Now the Danish voluntary association, established to help the Danish minority is making a complete U-turn. They want the rest of Denmark to see the minority as role models and the minority to be educators in meeting of cultures and integration. ▶

Projects

Senior citizens: greater political participation through education

Germany. The SEVIR project is an educational project aimed at improving older people’s ability to participate and giving them the capabilities needed to actively participate in social and political discussion processes. ▶

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Adult education among whirling dervishes

Serbia. Conference of the Balkan Society for Pedagogy and Education in (Konya) Turkey, on the topic “Further education in the Balkan countries”. ▶

Information and training on non-violence is urgently needed to prevent a “blaze” of human rights

Italy: In recent months, Italy has witnessed alarming signs of violence and discrimination against immigrants, especially the Roma people. ▶

Young Muslims for peace

Sweden. 100 young Muslim peace agents have received training and qualifications in a collaboration between two of the study associations in Sweden which are run along religious lines. ▶

Greek riots 2008: Spaces of despair, Voices of absence

Greece. Confronted with this situation Greek adult educators have to think as learners, try to understand and not be authoritative educators, as professor Helen Hodolidou has said. ▶

Romania: A look at the recent developments in Romanian Adult Education ▶

PRACTICE

A challenge for adult education: human rights education for the police institution

Human rights: Thai-soup for Roma under the Sava Bridge?

Serbia. As one of the most endangered groups in Serbia, Roma are subject of numerous projects and activities of national and international organizations, especially in the area of education. ▶

Stories of Possible Worlds: positive experiences to help establish human rights

Italy. Telling stories to publicise new, positive ways of living in harmony with the environment and with others. This is the aim of the international prize "Storie di Mondi Possibili" ("Stories of Possible Worlds"). ▶

Human rights in film

Adult education subscribes to the notion of lifelong learning. It pays heed to the multidimensional nature of this process and to the crucial significance of experience in acquiring new knowledge and attaining new skills. Within the process itself, there is a visible shift away from educational institutions in people confronting new personal and social challenges. This not only inclines them to seek the appropriate form of education, but, primarily, sensitises them to the educational situation. ▶

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Germany. In their sensitive field of work, the police are confronted daily with human rights issues. As an institution, the police are required to make an active contribution towards protecting human rights and dignity. This is a chance for particularly well-qualified supporters of adult education from outside the police force to play a part in teaching the police about human rights.

(Stefan Baumeister) Performing a necessary function in society as a core element of the state monopoly on the use of force, it is the daily job of police officers to implement the protection of human rights. The international human rights agreements on the respect for and protection and guarantee of human rights, which have been ratified by Germany, are at the centre of police work. The police also have to protect human rights from violation by others. The police can only correctly fulfil these tasks if human rights education has a clear presence in basic and further police training structures and, if policemen and women have the chance to or are required to debate human rights issues in a radically open manner. Human rights education entails learning about, through and for human rights: it focuses on transferring knowledge and shaping values and negotiation skills, and thus has a dual function of legal and moral/ethical education.

During police training it must be ensured that the topic of police and human rights is debated in depth and in the case of further police training, content relevant to human rights should be touched upon regularly. According to Barbara Lochbihler (2005), Secretary-General of the German branch of Amnesty International (AI), there needs to be feedback from practical work and theory regarding the protection of human rights. As well as further training measures within the police force, outside experts and trainers are brought in for courses on human rights issues. The external pool of expertise, made up of "outside" mediators and lecturers who are supporters of adult education from the German organisation 'AKSB' (Federation of Catholic-Social Formation Centres in Germany), already supports the police and contributes to the success of human rights education programmes.

It is however to be questioned whether the purely curriculum-based approach to human rights within the police force in reality qualitatively and absolutely corresponds to the German Federal Government's 7th report on human rights policy in the police force (German Federal Foreign Office, 2005). It is stated in this report that: "Human rights education is an integral part of training for a police service career, as well as in the education establishments and service positions of the individual police forces on a federal or state level." As an institution the police have recognised that they have difficulty in some areas in guaranteeing that officers' behaviour during their everyday work will be based on human rights and is working on tackling this issue. This is coming about not only due to the recent anchoring of human rights education

in police training and further training qualifications, but also because more and more police service posts are developing new models for the service, which entail human rights protection as a central element.

Model projects by police training institutions in conjunction with members of the civil society have increased knowledge on the professional implementation of various political education methods including competence and behavioural training, as well as bringing forward the promotion of cooperative relationships and integration within the police in a trusting manner. Human rights education is also part of training and further training in security forces in other European countries. Since 1997 the Council of Europe has been running the programme "Policing and Human Rights", which is being carried out in close cooperation with police officers from the EU member states. The learning and teaching materials used within the programme have been elaborated, seminars conducted and experiences documented in a handbook entitled, "Is your Police Service a Human Rights Service?". Amnesty International is the largest human rights organisation in Germany, providing support to basic and further police training in matters of human rights. Police officers, scientists and other civil society organisations are working together within the framework of an AI working group, in Germany and abroad, in order to promote the police profession as a model "human rights profession".

Further information:

Günter Schicht: Human Rights Education for the Police. Published in 2007 by the German Institute for Human Rights. ▶

Let's give the Roma a break

Hungary. The various communities of European Roma (Gypsies) are not at all the same have a great variety of different cultures, languages and lifestyles. The Hungarian Roma – as is the case in other countries as well – appear to be a minority group, on the one hand, and the most seriously discriminated against and permanently excluded group, on the other hand. This twofold minority status is the reason why we are looking for a solution to put an end to their exclusion.

(Eva Tanczos) The most serious social problem in Hungary since the political and economic change of regime (1989) has been, and still is, the disadvantaged position of the Roma (Gypsy) folk. There is very little precise data available on the Roma, due to a lack of statistics relating to them. It is estimated that there are approximately 700,000 Roma living in Hungary today, which is 7% of the total population (10 million). Their collective schooling and employment rate is pitifully low. ▶