COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

**Recommendation Rec (2002)12
of the Committee of Ministers to member states
on education for democratic citizenship**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 October 2002
at the 812th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.*b* of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members and that this aim may be pursued, in particular, through common action in the cultural field;

Bearing in mind the European Cultural Convention signed in Paris on 19 December 1954;

Recalling the primacy of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the other Council of Europe and United Nations instruments in guaranteeing to individuals the capacity to exercise their inalienable rights in a democratic society;

Recalling the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 10 and 11 October 1997), which expressed the "desire to develop education for democratic citizenship based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the participation of young people in civil society" and decided to launch an action plan for education for democratic citizenship;

Recalling the adoption by the Committee of Ministers, during the official celebration of the Council of Europe's 50th anniversary in Budapest (1999) of the Declaration and programme on education for democratic citizenship, based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe;

Concerned by the growing levels of political and civic apathy and lack of confidence in democratic institutions, and by the increased cases of corruption, racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, intolerance of minorities, discrimination and social exclusion, all of which are major threats to the security, stability and growth of democratic societies;

Concerned to protect the rights of citizens, to make them aware of their responsibilities

and strengthen democratic society;

Conscious of the responsibilities of present and future generations to maintain and safeguard democratic societies, and of the role of education in promoting the active participation of all individuals in political, civic, social and cultural life;

Having noted the conclusions of the 20th Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education (Cracow, 2000), at which the ministers endorsed the results and conclusions of the Education for Democratic Citizenship Project launched at their 19th Session (Kristiansand, 1997);

Noting that at this 20th Session the Ministers expressed the wish for a Committee of Ministers' recommendation based on the conclusions of this project;

Taking account of the project's results and conclusions, the report of the final conference held in Strasbourg in September 2000, and the draft guidelines on education for democratic citizenship based thereupon;

Noting the central role already accorded to education for democratic citizenship in the educational reforms under way in many member states, and its key position in international co-operation for peace and stability in several European countries or regions,

1. Affirms:

- that education for democratic citizenship is fundamental to the Council of Europe's primary task of promoting a free, tolerant and just society,

- and that it contributes, alongside the Organisation's other activities, to defending the values and principles of freedom, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law, which are the foundations of democracy;

2. Declares:

- that education for democratic citizenship should be seen as embracing any formal, non-formal or informal educational activity, including that of the family, enabling an individual to act throughout his or her life as an active and responsible citizen respectful of the rights of others;

- that education for democratic citizenship is a factor for social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and solidarity, that it contributes to promoting the principle of equality between men and women, and that it encourages the establishment of harmonious and peaceful relations within and among peoples, as well as the defence and development of democratic society and culture;

- that education for democratic citizenship, in its broadest possible sense, should be at the heart of the reform and implementation of educational policies;

- that education for democratic citizenship is a factor for innovation in terms of organising and managing overall education systems, as well as curricula and teaching methods;

3. Recommends that the governments of member states, with respect for their constitutional structures, national or local situations and education systems:

- make education for democratic citizenship a priority objective of educational policy-making and reforms;

- encourage and support initiatives which promote education for democratic citizenship within and among member states;

- be actively involved in the preparation and staging of a European Year of Citizenship through Education, as an important vehicle for developing, preserving and promoting democratic culture on a pan-European scale;

- be guided by the principles set out in the appendix to the present recommendation in their present or future educational reforms;

- bring this recommendation and the reference documents on which it is based to the attention of the relevant public and private bodies in their respective countries through the appropriate national procedures;

4. Asks the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to draw this recommendation to the attention of those states which are parties to the European Cultural Convention but which are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2002)12

1. General guidelines for education for democratic citizenship policies and reforms

The formulation and implementation of policies on education for democratic citizenship should be conceived from the angle of lifelong education, which means taking into account the following:

- all the components and levels of the education system, that is, primary, general and vocational secondary, higher (university and non-university) and adult education;

- all the instruments, institutions and organisations of non-formal education;

- all opportunities for informal contribution to education for democratic citizenship from social institutions, particularly the family, and from organisations, structures and fora of civil society, which may include training and education among their aims (even if this is not their primary objective).

In order to ensure that education for democratic citizenship can help in the reinforcement of social cohesion and the development of a democratic culture, it would be useful:

- to involve all public and private, official and non-governmental, professional and voluntary actors in designing, implementing and monitoring policies on education for democratic citizenship. For example, such a partnership could take the form of an advisory and consultative body assisting the authority responsible for implementing such policies;

- to ensure, as early as the policy-making stage, that research and evaluation facilities are available for assessing the results, successes and difficulties of educational policies;

- to ensure the availability of means of action, tailored to the objectives pursued, through mobilising the appropriate resources, forming synergies and partnerships among the actors involved and by rationalising technical facilities.

Under the terms of the present recommendation, education for democratic citizenship is a factor which promotes relations of trust and stability in Europe beyond the boundaries of the member states. The European dimension should consequently be a component as well as a source of inspiration when formulating the corresponding policies.

It is therefore recommended:

- that each state's contribution to the European and international debate on education for democratic citizenship be reinforced by establishing or consolidating European networks of practitioners, researchers, fora for experimenting on and developing education for democratic citizenship ("sites of citizenship"), educational resources and documentation centres and research and assessment institutes;

- that action should be taken in individual states to contribute to the Council of Europe's future work in this field, particularly with a view to implementing European projects or campaigns.

2. Educational objectives and contents of education for democratic citizenship

Education for democratic citizenship as defined in this recommendation covers specific disciplines and varied or cross-curricular fields of learning and institutions in the member states, depending on their traditional approach to this area.

For instance, it might involve civic, political or human rights education, all of which contribute to education for democratic citizenship without covering it completely.

In order to fulfil the general aims of education for democratic citizenship, the following actions are needed:

- encouraging multidisciplinary approaches and actions combining civic and political education with the teaching of history, philosophy, religions, languages, social sciences and all disciplines having a bearing on ethical, political, social, cultural or philosophical aspects, whether in terms of their actual content or the options or consequences involved for a democratic society;

- combining the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills, and giving priority to those which reflect the fundamental values to which the Council of Europe is particularly attached, notably human rights and the rule of law;

- paying particular attention to the acquisition of the attitudes necessary for life in multicultural societies, which respect differences and are concerned with their environment, which is undergoing rapid and often unforeseeable changes.

To that end, it would be appropriate to implement educational approaches and teaching methods which aim at learning to live together in a democratic society, and at combating aggressive nationalism, racism and intolerance and eliminate violence and extremist thinking and behaviour. The acquisition of the following key competencies would contribute to reaching these aims, namely, the ability to:

- settle conflicts in a non-violent manner;

- argue in defence of one's viewpoint;

- listen to, understand and interpret other people's arguments;

- recognise and accept differences;

- make choices, consider alternatives and subject them to ethical analysis;

- shoulder shared responsibilities;

- establish constructive, non-aggressive relations with others;

- develop a critical approach to information, thought patterns and philosophical, religious, social, political and cultural concepts, at the same time remaining committed to fundamental values and principles of the Council of Europe.

3. Methods of education for democratic citizenship

The knowledge, attitudes, values and key competencies, as described above, cannot be truly and effectively acquired without having recourse to diversified educational methods and approaches in a democratic environment.

Such acquisition should be encouraged:

- through active participation of pupils, students, educational staff and parents in democratic management of the learning place, in particular, the educational institution;

- through the promotion of the democratic ethos in educational methods and relationships formed in a learning context;

- by promoting learner-centred methods, including project pedagogics based on adopting a joint, shared objective and fulfilling it in a collective manner, whether such projects are defined by a class, a school, the local, regional, national, European or international community, or by the various civil society organisations involved in education for democratic citizenship (non-governmental organisations, enterprises, professional organisations);

- by promoting research, personal study and initiative;

- by adopting an educational approach closely combining theory and practice;

- by involving learners in the individual and collective assessment of their training, particularly within the aforementioned project-based methods;

- by encouraging exchanges, meetings and partnerships between pupils, students and teachers from different schools so as to improve mutual understanding between individuals;

- by promoting and strengthening education and awareness-raising approaches and methods throughout society, and particularly among pupils and students, that are conducive to a climate of tolerance, and to the respect of cultural and religious diversity;

- by bringing formal, non-formal and informal education closer together;

- by setting up civic partnerships between the school and the family, the community, the

workplace and the media.

4. Initial and further training for teachers and trainers

Every educational initiative requires the initial and continuing preparation of teachers and trainers. Fulfilling the specific objectives of education for democratic citizenship presupposes the energetic involvement of actors (teachers, trainers, advisers, mediators, etc.) with a necessarily wide variety of roles and functions depending on whether the activities are taking place within the formal or non-formal systems or in an informal framework.

While bearing in mind the specificities of these various roles and functions, we should provide for the resources and methods enabling all the educational actors to acquire:

- an understanding of the political, legal, social and cultural dimensions of citizenship;

- the above-mentioned key competencies;

- the ability to work in an interdisciplinary environment and on educational teams;

- a command of project and intercultural pedagogics and of evaluation methods specifically related to education for democratic citizenship;

- the ability to establish the necessary relations with the educational institute's social environment;

- an awareness of the need for in-service training.

In order to ensure acquisition of these competencies and skills, it would be appropriate:

- to set up specific curricula related to education for democratic citizenship in the framework of the creation or the reform of initial and in-service teacher training systems;

- to incorporate awareness-raising on the principles, objectives and methods of education for democratic citizenship as described in this recommendation into initial and in-service training programmes for teachers of all disciplines and subjects;

- to provide for the requisite teaching back-up materials, particularly in formal teacher training institutions;

- to encourage the development of methodological and educational resource and advice centres open to all actors involved in education for democratic citizenship;

- to provide for the recognition of the role and statute of actors working in non-formal and informal contexts.

5. The role of the media and the new information technologies

The media and the new information technologies are a vital component of contemporary society. They are also powerful educational instruments, whose potential has not yet been fully explored or tapped.

Where education for democratic citizenship is concerned, it would be appropriate to:

- develop media education and education in the new information technologies;

- be guided by the recommendations contained in the Declaration on a European policy for new information technologies, adopted by the Committee of Ministers at its 104th Session (Budapest, May 1999), particularly with regard to securing access to and a command of these technologies and protecting rights and freedoms;

- encourage educational experiments and innovations facilitated by the new information technologies, particularly in areas relating to education for democratic citizenship;

- encourage the mass media to contribute to the promotion of education for democratic citizenship.

Related Documents (Meetings, URL, multimedia, ...)
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812 Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies / 16 October 2002