

Compass⁺

for trainers

The readers of Coyote may have already seen or received a copy of Compass – the manual on human rights education produced by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe. In this article, I would like to share some details about Compass that may interest educators and trainers involved (either explicitly or implicitly) in human rights education.

Why a manual?

It can be argued that a substantial part of the youth work practice of non-governmental organisations and educators across Europe has always been fundamentally human rights education work, i.e. activities whose ultimate goal or value has been the promotion of human dignity. Most of us do this with specific youth groups (students, groups of vulnerable people, young women, etc.), using special educational or political approaches, or focussing on a particular issue that is of closer interest to the group's membership or community (education, environment, peace, democracy, etc.). In this process, human rights and human rights education have often served as the background of values and as a political framework for a multitude of activities and projects that may range from a summer camp to a youth exchange or a school club.

The Council of Europe's youth policy itself has traditionally focussed on issues of "burning" interest to young people (including human rights). This has been and remains the main way to pursue, in the youth field, the mission of the Council of Europe: the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and greater European co-operation. The main objective – as defined by its statutory bodies – of the programme of the Directorate of Youth and Sport from 2003 to 2005 is "to empower young people, through non-formal education and participatory methods, to play an active role in the strengthening of civil society in Europe and to find ways of meeting both the challenges facing them and their aspirations". Within the Council's secretariat, it had also been understood that human rights education was primarily the responsibility of the Directorate of Human Rights and of the Directorate of Education.

The youth activities carried out in the framework of the celebrations of the fifty years of the Council of Europe and of the European Convention on Human Rights have re-placed the emphasis on human rights education and have revealed the need for educational materials that can be used by human rights activists who are interested in conducting human rights educational activities; not so much because there are no available HRE materials (they exist, from different kinds of human rights education organisations and from the Council of Europe itself), but because they are considered either too specific (focusing on legal education, for example) or they are not always suitable for non-

formal educational activities with and for young people. The fact that most of them are produced within a specific national context and the corresponding language(s) makes them less accessible or interesting to a wider European public, such as the participants in European educational and training activities.

The experiences acquired by the Directorate of Youth and Sport in the field of educational and training materials (e.g. Domino, Education Pack, T-Kits) made the absence of specific materials on human rights education more visible, while demonstrating the relevance and appropriateness of such materials.

From the point of view of the practitioner in training and youth work, human rights education allows us to address explicitly burning social and political issues of Europe today, without being afraid to step into "political matters", in as far as they are placed in a context of human rights and human rights education.

The Human Rights Education Youth programme has thus been developed around the idea of bringing human rights education into the mainstream of youth work practice. The provision of educational materials to all those who are concerned but are not "human rights educators or trainers" is essential for this purpose, while sustaining the work of multipliers at the local level.

What is in Compass?

Compass – a manual on Human Rights Education with young people – is special in the sense that it aspires to be a global tool, including legal texts, theoretical background on human rights and human rights education and on key human rights issues. Its core remains the methods, activities, exercises or games that make it practical for users. And, yes!, it also includes the fundamental human rights documents and even basic tips for non-trainers on group facilitation, learning, debriefing and even some energisers!

It is not surprising that Compass weighs more than 1 kilo, the weight being so far the main negative criticism expressed by users.

The production team of Compass received a mandate to produce a manual that is:

Sufficient – anyone wanting to venture into human rights education should be able to start immediately, with no need to check other books or materials.

by Rui Gomes



Ready to use – it should have activities, methodologies and texts that can be used immediately (no further training needed).

Up to date with young people – it should address human rights issues from the perspective of young people or reflecting their primary concerns.

Practical and experiential – the activities and methodologies should be holistic and, as far as possible, build on experience, helping learners to learn and encouraging them to take action.

Addressing values and attitudes – in the sense that human rights are not just about laws or institutions (bring human rights closer to the young people).

Encouraging action: learning about human rights is also learning for active participation in society. The activities should always lead towards action.

Suitable for formal and non-formal education: all activities (in format, duration, etc.) should be suitable for the classroom and for non-formal youth work activities.

Adaptable: all activities and contents should be easily adaptable and translatable to the local social and educational context where they are being used.

A starting point: Compass is neither a recipe book nor "the" manual with answers to everything. The use of other materials and approaches is recommended for all those wanting to go further or to go deeper into issues.

A central element in the philosophy of Compass is that the facilitators (teachers, group leaders, trainers...) do not need to have any special previous training. Compass, in fact, is not so much addressed to specialists in human rights education (who are already experienced in other materials) than to those who are curious and motivated but have had no opportunities for training or do not want to become specialists. The provision of basic tips and materials for non-formal education and training should be seen in this context and not as training of trainers. This attempt to "democratise" and "popularise" HRE through Compass is perhaps the most ambitious of the objectives of the project.

With this in mind, the 420 pages of Compass are organised as follows:

Chapter 1: familiarises the reader with what we mean by human rights education and how to use Compass.

Chapter 2: is a collection of more than 49 activities of different levels of complexity, which cover different themes and address different types of rights.

Chapter 3: is entitled "Taking action" and contains ideas and tips for those that would like to be more active in promoting human rights.

Chapter 4: contains what the user needs to know about human rights and international standards and documents;

Chapter 5: provides supplementary background information about the themes

The *appendices* contain essential information and legal documents, because human rights are also about laws.

What is in it for trainers?

For the professional and occasional trainers involved in youth programmes, the most interesting aspect of Compass may be to provide an easy-to-use collection of activities which, by being theme-based, should easily fit with the priorities of a particular group or the theme of a youth exchange, summer camp or workshop. Ultimately, one may not even need to talk about human rights education, even though it is highly recommended.

The 15 themes are meant to illustrate and represent the areas of major concern regarding human rights for young people across Europe today. Addressing human rights through these themes contributes to a better understanding of the universality and interdependence of human rights and makes human rights education concrete and relatable to the local reality of participants (as opposed to what is happening in other countries). The themes are:

Children's rights	
Citizenship	
Democracy	
Discrimination and Xenophobia	
Education	
Environment	
Gender Equality	
Globalisation	
Health	
Human Security	
Media	
Peace and Violence	
Poverty	
Social Rights, and	
Sport.	

Bringing human rights education into the mainstream of youth work practice at a national level may also present interesting professional opportunities and challenges, not the least because the mainstreaming effort has to include and go through trainers who are experienced in non-formal education principles and practices with young people. The possibility to work together with human rights (education) organisations and with institutions from the formal education sector is another interesting opportunity to exploit, disseminating the practices and standards used in youth work training.

What next?

Compass is now available in English; the French version – Repères – will be available before the end of the year. The Council of Europe is also producing the Russian and the Arabic versions. Compass is at present being translated into Dutch, Polish and Slovenian (with expressions of interest for other languages) by accredited partners.

The most important step may be yet to come: very soon the first on-line version of Compass will be available on the Internet, featuring some innovations which, we believe, will also encourage further exchange and co-operation between trainers and other users of Compass. Check it at

<http://www.coe.int/compass>.

Meanwhile an ambitious programme of national and regional training courses is being carried out with local partners. National courses on human rights education – using Compass as the main tool – have been held in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Poland and preparations are under way for courses in Italy, Armenia, Portugal, Romania and Finland (for the Nordic-Baltic region).

These courses are a follow-up to training courses for trainers in human rights education, held in 2002 and 2003 (a 3rd one will be held in November 2003). A specialists seminar will be held in September 2003, possibly leading to an advanced training course for trainers in HRE in 2004.

For updated information, please visit
<http://www.coe.int/bre>.

