

# Press Release

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## **National commitment and international co-operation are essential for human rights education at school, say participants in Strasbourg meeting**

Strasbourg, 06.11.2007 – Committed, vigorous and concerted national action is essential to ensure proper integration and implementation of human rights education in the school system, participants in a two-day Regional European meeting in Strasbourg concluded today.

"The development of education for democratic citizenship and human rights should be seen as a priority in the best interest of all nations. It contributes positively to the effectiveness of the national education system as a whole, which in turn plays a fundamental role in economic, social and political development," said Ibrahim Wani, Chief of the Research and Right to Development Branch of OHCHR

The event was organised jointly by the Council of Europe, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). Over 200 experts from governments of the Council of Europe and OSCE member states, NGOs and other bodies attended the meeting.

"The protection of Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law are the overall aims of our organisation," said Ólöf Ólafsdóttir, Head of Department of School and Out-of-School Education of the Council of Europe. "Since our mandate is to promote these common values, it is clearly necessary to ensure that these values are properly understood and embraced – through education."

Linda King, Chief of Section for the Promotion of Rights and Values in Education of UNESCO said that many avenues were open for strengthening responsible and coordinated partnerships: "Today, there is a strong call to build enhanced partnerships where each and everyone participates to bring a unique contribution to the cause of human rights education."

The meeting participants also noted significance of promotion of human rights education for ensuring peace and security. "Human rights education is an area widely recognised and accepted by governments and civil society as being instrumental to establishing and maintaining peaceful and democratic societies built on principles of respect for human rights," said Kirsten Mlačak, Head of Human Rights Department of the OSCE/ODIHR.

The co-organisers of this meeting have invited education practitioners to make submissions for a Compendium of good practices in human rights education in the school system, including citizenship education and education for mutual respect and understanding. The aim of this resource, currently under development, is to facilitate exchange of experiences and networking among relevant actors.

Follow up to the Regional European Meeting will be given at the UNESCO International Conference on Human Rights Education in October 2008, which is organised in the framework of the commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Council of Europe also plans to host an inter-institutional meeting on teacher training in citizenship and human rights education in 2008.

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