

Report 2009 on Education for Human Rights, Peace, Democracy, International Understanding and Tolerance

Estonia

In Estonia human rights education is a part of Estonia's national curriculum for basic schools and upper secondary schools and is taught in the frames of social studies syllabus where texts of legislation are studied. Human rights are reflected in the constitution's 2nd chapter, in Gender Equality Act and in section 2 (2) of Education Act. Human rights education is also a part of in-service training for human studies teachers.

In social and human studies syllabuses children's' rights and human rights are reflected. In upper secondary schools an elective course "Law" is available. In co-operation with International Red Cross an elective course "Humanitarian law" has been developed. Basic School and Upper Secondary School Act requires schools to ensure the availability of an elective course "Religion studies" if such a subject is desired by a student or parent.

Teaching materials on tolerance have been created in a virtual learning environment MIKSIKE (www.miksike.ee). To be used in schools Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (with comments), directives 2000/43 and 2000/78 of the Council of the European Union have been translated and printed in Estonian and Russian. Schools have also received the texts of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights are reflected in a teaching material "Man and society" which was published in 2006.

In 2008 two training seminars with an overall of 90 participants were organized for social studies teachers. Seminar materials are available at the website of Estonian History Teachers' Association (www.eas.edu.ee). The association also participated in an international human rights education project in 2007-2008. EUROCLIO questionnaire on human rights education was answered on February 2nd 2008 when a working seminar took place in the frames of the project. The aims of the project were to exchange good practices and experiences between participating countries and to discuss the possibilities of improving the teaching mechanisms of human rights in general education schools. Estonia contributed with a chapter from the teaching material "Man and Society" which was highly valued by the evaluation committee. In 2008 methodical materials of humanitarian law were translated into Estonian, a thematic seminar was organized and the materials were tested in schools; the implementation of the initiative is continuing.

Estonian UNESCO Chair in Civic Education and Multicultural Studies which is established at the Jaan Tõnisson Institute Civic Education Centre launched a project „Enhancement of awareness about diversity of cultures and provision of equal opportunities for obtaining social and learning skills in international cooperation” in 2008. The project was financed by UNESCO's Participation Programme and Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, it will be carried out in 2009; the results should contribute to international curriculum development in teaching cultural diversity, peace and tolerance. A Global Education Centre also works in Jaan Tõnisson Institute which runs various global education projects for formal education sector. The projects include human rights education through films and educational materials.

Estonian Institute of Human Rights cooperates with several universities, international human rights organizations and non-profit organizations. Some examples: during the recent years the institute has taken part of: Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, course, September 2005; Seminar of the UN Human Rights Council, July 2009; Annual conference on the European Labor Law, March 2009.

Estonian Human Rights Centre has been created and it always accepts invitations coming from schools and youth organizations and which fall into the expert assessment of the Centre. For example in 2008 a representative from the Centre participated an observer and commentator in the quiz organized in Tallinn Kopli Occupational Education School. The quiz concerning human rights and UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights was organized for Estonian and Russian secondary school teachers. In 2007 the representatives from the Centre participated in the Estonian Session of the European Youth Parliament. The main theme in the session was UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; experts of the Centre participated as consultants in workshops. The Centre offers quality human rights education in higher education level and organizes events for the public.

Estonia finds that our system of human rights education needs continuous developing; we also plan to systematically update and prepare relevant teaching materials. In-service trainings and placing human rights into teachers' basic education programme are also to be continued.