Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1346 (1997)[1]

Human rights education

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the member states of the Council of Europe almost fifty years ago, has contributed significantly to protecting citizens of Europe against acts and decisions of governments which prevented them from fully exercising their rights. It is hoped that the entry into force of Protocol No. 11 to the Convention will enhance the effectiveness of this protection.

2. Other Council of Europe conventions have also contributed to the protection of human rights in specific situations. The European Social Charter of 1961, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1987, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1995, can be mentioned in this context.

3. The Council of Europe Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance showed that disrespect for, and violations of, human rights are not only a matter of government policies but also depend on the attitudes of ordinary citizens in everyday life.

4. In addition, in several member states of the Council of Europe, there is still a certain lack of human rights culture and a failure to understand the true meaning of human rights and their implications in everyday life.

5. In this context the Assembly welcomes the 1994 decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations to start a decade of human rights education all over the world, in order to achieve a culture of peace.

6. The Assembly has repeatedly and consistently pointed out that ignorance – of human rights but also of other groups or cultures - is at the root of most of the negative attitudes towards people belonging to such groups, for example Jews, Muslims, Roma / Gypsies, immigrants, or members of national minorities. It has therefore advocated education as one of the most effective ways of preventing such attitudes.

7. In its Recommendation 1222 (1993) on the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, for instance, the Assembly recommended to "introduce or reinforce, as a matter of the utmost urgency, an active education and youth policy stressing the combat of intolerant, racist or xenophobic attitudes; special attention should be given to human rights education and language teaching".

8. As it stated in Recommendation 1283 (1996) on history and the learning of history in Europe, the Assembly believes that the teaching of history should enable pupils "to appreciate cultural diversity. Stereotypes should be identified and any other distortions based on national, racial, religious or other prejudice."

9. The Assembly is aware of the considerable work done by the Council of Europe in the fields of human rights education and awareness raising, education for genuine democracy, history teaching, gender equality and related areas. Mention should be made of the work of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) projects on "Democracy, human rights, minorities: educational and cultural aspects" and on "Education for democratic citizenship."

---

1. Assembly debate on 26 September 1997 (32nd Sitting) (see Doc. 7887, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mrs Verspaget). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 September 1997 (32nd Sitting).

10. The Assembly feels, however, that the situation of human rights throughout Europe is still far from satisfactory and that there is a real need for further action by the Council of Europe in this field.

11. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on member states:

11.1. to review curricula from primary school to university, with a view to:

a. eliminating elements that might contribute to the creation of negative stereotypes;

b. pointing out the positive aspects of different cultures and ways of life;

c. introducing elements to promote tolerance and respect for people from different cultures;

11.2. to include education in human rights in all school curricula, starting with teacher training programmes, including in-service training, institutes for the study of law and training courses for journalists;

11.3. to include education in human rights and tolerance in the training of all officials dealing with the public, such as the police, prison staff and people dealing with refugees and asylum seekers;

11.4. to encourage politicians and the media to commit themselves publicly to the protection of human rights, inter alia, by checking and vigorously dismissing racist, xenophobic or intolerant declarations.

12. The Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers consider human rights education as a priority for the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe in the years to come, and consequently:

12.1. undertake or develop research into the nature, causes and manifestations of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance;

12.2. establish and make accessible, for example on the Internet, a European database of educational material for the promoting of tolerance and inter-ethnic understanding as well as informing about human rights issues and procedures;

12.3. promote the further contribution of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe and of non-governmental organisations to this process;

12.4. instruct the Council for Cultural Co-operation, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and other competent Council of Europe bodies to monitor and evaluate national policies on human rights education, with a view to identifying examples of good practice;

12.5. co-ordinate its work in the field of human rights education with that of the European Union and Unesco;

12.6. inform the Parliamentary Assembly on a regular basis of progress made in the implementation of these recommendations.