



DDCP-YD/TS Segr/1/2012

Strasbourg, September 2012

The role of youth work in combating segregation in school environments

A seminar for youth workers and actors in formal education

21 – 24 November 2012
European Youth Centre Strasbourg

PRESENTATION OF THE SEMINAR

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Background

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) defines segregation as “*the act by which a (natural or legal) person separates other persons*” on the basis of a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, “*without an objective and reasonable justification, in conformity with the proposed definition of discrimination*”.

In the same document ECRI defines two forms of discrimination, as follows:

- “*direct racial discrimination*” shall mean any differential treatment based on a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, which has no objective and reasonable justification. Differential treatment has no objective and reasonable justification if it does not pursue a legitimate aim or if there is not a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised,
- “*indirect racial discrimination*” shall mean cases where an apparently neutral factor such as a provision, criterion or practice cannot be as easily complied with by, or disadvantages, persons belonging to a group designated by a ground such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, unless this factor has an objective and reasonable justification. This latter would be the case if it pursues a legitimate aim and if there is a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised¹.

Segregation may exist as *spatial* segregation or *social* segregation, with three relevant basic dimensions: *demographic* segregation, *social* (class) segregation and *ethnic* segregation².

Segregation negatively affects cultural and social integration. For instance, minority segregated communities have difficulties in developing their language competences and in forming their social networks into the majority society. It also hinders social integration and reinforces stereotypes and racism among communities. When segregation occurs in school environments, this hinders the realisation of the human right to education and, consequently, the realisation of other human rights, producing a spiral of marginalisation, intolerance, and isolation.

Segregation in school environments exists in different forms in Europe, many of which are a product of deep and historical social and economic landscapes in each country and region. School environments refer not only to the institutions of school and education, but also to extra-curricular activities and to the broader relation of the schools with the community. Some examples of segregation in school environments include:

- Segregation in multicultural environments along linguistic and ethnic lines, due to – for example – the disproportionate use of a single language teaching system for children of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds;
- Segregation due to residential segregation as well as economic exclusion (employment and housing), affecting in disproportionate manners children of migrant background;

¹ Explanatory Memorandum, General Policy Recommendation N°7: National legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, adopted by ECRI on 13 December 2002

² Explanatory Memorandum on “Improving the integration of migrants through local housing policies”, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

- Segregation of Roma children in schools for children with mental disabilities;
- The institution of separate or remedial classes for Roma children in mainstream schools;
- *De facto* segregated schools in multiethnic settings separating children along ethnic lines (such as the system of “two schools under one roof”);
- A disproportionate representation of children of immigrant backgrounds in certain schools, linked to the formation of ghetto housing estates;
- The placement of children and young people with disabilities in specific institutions;
- Children from minority communities disproportionately attending “practical schools”, where the level of teaching is of lower quality than in mainstream education, sometimes without fully-informed consent of the children and their parents.

While the situation at grass-roots level remains precarious for the communities affected, there is a consensus among the member states of the Council of Europe that segregation needs to be thoroughly combated and replaced with integrated school policies, while avoiding any form of forcible assimilation, as well as prevented through an active engagement for living together in diverse societies. Among the measures aimed at de-segregating schools included in the ECRI recommendations on the right to education, there are:

- Setting clear and measurable targets for transfers of children from special to ordinary education and for overall desegregation of the school system, particularly in the case of Roma children;
- Development of intercultural education with pupils, parents, school staff and the communities;
- Setting standards for school staff training on teaching in a multicultural context;
- Rewriting school textbooks and other teaching aids in order to reflect more adequately the diversity and plurality of the society, and include, to this end, minority groups’ contribution to society, their language, history, and culture;
- Inclusion of human rights education and anti-racist education in the school curricula;
- Measures to allow parents an informed consent before placing their children in special schools;
- Mediation between Roma and other ethnic communities and school authorities;
- Forms of participants in the school’s decisions and activities for parents of pupils from minority groups;
- Assistant teachers that facilitate the integration of children and students from ethnic minority groups;
- Support local educational initiatives – in particular those designed to counteract segregationist thinking;
- Setting systems to monitor racist incidents at school and compile data on these phenomena in order to devise long-term policies to counter them.

The work of the Council of Europe

The work of the Council of Europe in relation to segregation in school environments seeks to guarantee access to quality education with dignity and respect, based on the principles of human rights and on the rights of the child. Several provisions of the main human rights treaties and a significant number of policy recommendations have been developed.

For example, the segregation of Roma children in education has been addressed by the European Convention on Human Rights in its 2007 landmark ruling in the case *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*. In this case, it was demonstrated that Roma students in the Czech Republic were 27 times more likely than similarly situated non-Roma to be placed in special schools. The Court found that this pattern of racial segregation violated the European Convention (Article 14 on non-discrimination and Article 2 of Protocol 1 on the right to education).

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has also monitored and researched the topic of access to education and has set standards through policy recommendations to the member states of the Council of Europe. Particularly, the ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 10 (2006) makes provisions regarding what member states should do in order to combat racism and racial discrimination in and through school education and to ensure “compulsory, free, and quality education for all”. Recommendation 10 also calls for measures to combat racism and racial discrimination at school and school staff training to work in a multicultural environment. Several country reports of ECRI still testify to current problems with segregation in schools. While in many countries anti-discrimination legislation exists, there is often an ineffective implementation of these rules in the educational system.

The 2008 White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, “Living together as equals in dignity”, underlines that in order to live together in peace, people need skills or “competences” which are not automatically acquired. However, they need to be maintained for life and taught and practised from an early age. School teachers obviously have a vital role to play in helping children develop these skills, but informal education and life-long educational programmes can also play an important role in sustaining them, as well as helping adults who have missed out on this aspect of full-time education.

The Pestalozzi Programme³ of the Council of Europe has developed also significant expertise in the area of training for teachers and education actors. In recent years, the programme has included activities on the topic of intercultural competences and education for the prevention of discrimination. In 2012, the publication “Intercultural competence for all - Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world” has analysed the development of intercultural competence as a key element of mainstream education.

The Council of Europe 2012 – 2015 Strategy for the Rights of the Child includes measures in regards to education, such as “the promotion of citizenship and human rights education, including the development of training programmes for education professionals, with particular focus on children’s rights, democratic culture, equality, new media environment, intercultural dialogue and a child and learner-centred pedagogy, with a view to ensuring a non violent environment”. On the specific problem of school violence, the strategy refers to the need to

³ More about the Pestalozzi Programme can be found here: www.coe.int/pestalozzi

take action in order to provide for a “healthy psychosocial and physical school environment which promotes children’s well-being, as well as the elimination of practices such as bullying, discrimination, degrading punishment and harassment by promoting non-violent values and behaviour”⁴.

Since 2011 the work of the Council of Europe with Roma has been refocused with the development of the network of mediators (ROMED), providing concrete support for bridging Roma communities and local public institutions including educational institutions. The Dosta! campaign continues to counter prejudice against Roma and recognises the full potential of Roma people. This is supported by the Ad-Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM); who will produce a report in November 2012 on the specific situation of segregation in schools affecting Roma children.

The role of youth policy and youth work

The youth sector has acquired an undisputed reputation for expertise in developing educational approaches and materials suitable to both formal and non-formal contexts, as well as to multicultural environments. Educational approaches and tools have been developed in order to support youth organisations and youth work structures cultivate anti-racist and human rights education initiatives. The focus of these programme has been both on finding responses to the situations of discrimination, as well as developing processes to prevent it. Training strategies for youth workers and youth leaders on human rights education have been complemented by the development of educational tools, such as “Compass – A Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People”, “Compassito – A Manual on Human Rights Education for Children” and the “Education Pack All Different – All Equal”. The work with multipliers, the impact of projects such as the “all different – all equal” youth campaign, and the youth sector’s long-term training courses have all contributed to the development of projects that make their impact at the grass-roots level while being pre-eminently European.

The Roma Youth Action Plan

The Roma Youth Action Plan⁵ is a response of the Council of Europe to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to their empowerment, participation in policy-making processes and structures at European level, and the realities of discrimination. The action plan includes participation from the Youth Department and other sectors of the Council of Europe as well as activities by other intergovernmental and nongovernmental agencies who are interested in working together to enhance efficiency.

The plan gives priority to human rights and intercultural dialogue as responses to discrimination and antigypsyism; such as segregation in education of Roma children and young people.

Access to social rights for all young people

This seminar is also included among the activities of the youth sector of the Council of Europe related to access to social rights for young people. Access to education is a core condition for young people to access other human rights. The *Enter!* project promotes inclusion and access to social rights of young people, in particular those exposed to social exclusion, discrimination, and violence, through youth work interventions, youth policy support measures, and the recognition of youth work.

⁴ More about the Strategy for the Rights of the Child here: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/StrategySept2012_en.pdf

⁵ More about the Roma Youth Action Plan: www.coe.int/youth/roma

The aim of the youth policy of the Council of Europe “is to provide young people – girls and boys, young women and young men – with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society”⁶. Situations of segregation and structural discrimination in access to education constitute violations of the right to non-discrimination; they are also clear obstacles to the equality of opportunities that should preside youth policy.

The role of youth work in combating or addressing situations of segregation in school environments is not self-evident. Youth work, and non-formal education in general, sometimes has a role of compensating shortcomings of schooling systems and often plays a complementary function in supporting learning and integration of children and young people. These experiences, whether explicit and recognised by public institutions or not, represent an important contribution to supporting social cohesion and fighting segregation. However, they remain largely taken for granted and generally ignored in educational and youth policies.

By organising this seminar, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe seeks to support the role of youth work, youth organisations and education actors actively engaged in fighting segregation, by promoting the exchange of practices on fighting segregation and identifying principles and approaches applicable to youth, educational, and social policies.

Objectives of the seminar

- To review the causes, challenges, and manifestations of school segregation across Europe;
- To share practices and approaches from the field of youth work and formal education;
- To identify future actions needed to better equip youth work and policies for addressing segregation in schools;
- To familiarise participants with the approaches and activities of the Council of Europe in the area of fighting segregation in schools, and supporting intercultural and human rights education;
- To provide input from the Roma Youth Action Plan and the Enter! project on access to social rights for all young people.

The seminar is also designed as a mutual learning situation where participants can share their realities, experiences, and approaches across Europe in an intercultural dialogue.

Profile of participants

The seminar is designed for participants who are:

- active in youth organisations and other youth work structures tackling segregation in school environments

or

⁶ Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe

- working in the field of formal education on the topic of segregation in school environments.

All participants must also:

- have direct experience in working to combat segregation in school environments;
- are motivated to develop their competences in anti-discrimination work through youth work and to share their experiences with other participants;
- are committed to attend for the full duration of the seminar;
- are able to work in English;
- are residents in member states of the European Cultural Convention⁷ of the Council of Europe and residents of Kosovo⁸.

Programme Outline

Tuesday, 20 November:

Arrival of participants

Wednesday, 21 November

Welcome and introductions

Background to the seminar

Mapping realities of segregation in Europe

Thursday, 22 November

Exchange of practices of working to combat segregation

Introduction to the Council of Europe standards and activities on segregation

Friday, 23 November

Training sessions on approaches to combat segregation (human rights education, intercultural dialogue etc.)

Saturday, 24 November

Identification of needs of youth work for fighting segregation

Identification of actions needed by the Council of Europe

Follow-up and conclusions of the seminar

Evaluation and closing

Sunday, 25 November: Departure of participants

A revised detailed programme will be sent at a later stage to the participants.

Application procedure and selection of participants

All candidates must apply online, completing the application form through this link:

<http://youthapplications.coe.int/> . Applications must be submitted by **Monday, 22 October 2012.**

⁷ List of countries: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=018&CM=&DF=&CL=ENG>

⁸ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

The preparatory team will select 20 participants on the basis of the profile outlined above. It will try as far as possible to respect the organisations' priorities, but also to ensure a balance between sexes, geographical regions, different types of experiences, backgrounds and organisations, institutions, or projects. Candidates will be informed whether their application has been accepted or rejected, or if they have been put on the waiting list, by the end of October 2012.

Financial and practical conditions of participation

Travel expenses

Travel expenses and visa fees are reimbursed (on presentation of the relevant receipts) according to the rules of the Council of Europe. Only the participants who attend the seminar can be reimbursed. The payment will be made either by bank transfer after the seminar, or at the end of the course in cash (in Euros).

Accommodation

Board and lodging for the seminar will be provided and paid for by the Council of Europe at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg.

Other activities of the Youth Department

If you are interested in an activity in international youth work, but your profile does not fully correspond with the requirements of this seminar, please note that the Youth Department organises other training courses for youth workers, youth leaders, and trainers. Further information about the courses can be obtained from the Youth Department: <http://www.coe.int/youth>

Further information and contact

For further information, please contact
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