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**Citizenship Education and Democracy in Times of Change**

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# Report

# Forum 7
# Intercultural Learning on human rights
# and citizenship education

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**Inputs:**
Farida Makar, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (Egypt)
Claudia Lenz, European Wergeland Center, Norwegian University for Science and Technology (Germany)
Lise Kvande, Norwegian University for Science and Technology (Norway)
Cihan Tekeli, Anne Frank House (the Netherlands)
Patrick Siegele, Anne Frank Zentrum (Germany)
**Moderator**:
Gabriella Patriziano, DARE Network (Germany)

**Summary:**
In general the atmosphere was vivid, the good thing was that among our participants we had many people who deal with the issue of human rights education. These participants were the most active ones; they had very interesting and meritorious questions and comments. Thanks to them both forums turned up to be even more valuable. On the other hand it was clear that during the second session participants were very tired, and of course it had its reflection during the debate.

**Part I:**

The first speaker Farida Makar from the Cairo Institute for Human Right Studies in Egypt gave a short lecture on the situation of non-governmental organizations in North Africa (mainly in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya – however she highlighted that she is an expert only in

the case of Egypt). All of these countries suffered from long-term dictatorships that during their time systematically fought against all grassroots movements and every sign of developing civil society. They also didn't support any type of formal civic education and moreover they constantly oppressed free press. There were some civil society institutions, but they presence was limited only to people from an upper-middle class, who were living in few biggest cities (the worst situation was in Libya, where for working in favour of creating civil society one could be sentences for death). Definitely we can't say that any actions taken by these institutions were nation-wide.

After the Arab Spring the overall situation of the non-governmental institutions in Egypt didn't change as much as many people could expect. No state steps were taken to improve their situation, however civil society institutions were able to expend their programs and reach new groups (outside of Cairo).

In Libya at the beginning the situation was much better - the new, very progressive laws on associations were passed, that largely meet international standards. Unfortunately now the concern over the future of local NGOs was growing due to the new political climate - Islamists parties won the last election and they have a majority in the recently created Constitutional Assembly. The new discourse present in the local politics was very much against human rights institutions (they are described as foreign agents who try to overthrow the government). During both sessions after this presentation there were no questions and we moved to the next part of the forum.


**Part II:**

The second presentation (during the first session – during the second session that was the last presentation) was lead by Claudia Lenz and Lise Kvande, both from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, whereas Claudia Lenz also works for the European Wergeland Center (on of them lead their presentation during the first session, the second one lead the presentation during the second one). They talked about their multi-partner project called 'The Intercultural Glossary Project'. According to them, nowadays, mainly because we live in such a "liquid" and globalized world, it is hard to say what some most important expressions that are a key to our culture actually mean. There are many different understandings of these crucial concepts, so it should be seen as extremely important to push a debate on that, for it is difficult to define ideas, and come up with some more widely accepted definitions. Present misunderstandings could be a source of some serious social or political disagreements, but also a very valuable resource for learning. For example one of this most important issues mentioned by both speakers can be a meaning of the term of *citizenship*. It was really hard to say how should we understand it (as some kind of volunteering or participating?). This term has many different layers that moreover changed a lot during the time.

That is why several European civic education institutions (among them 'Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung'; bpb) decided to develop and test an educational tool focused on the interactive investigation and reflection of the key concepts in the areas of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC), Human Rights Education (HRE) and Intercultural Education (ICE). The basic assumption of the project is that there are no "real", objective definitions of any concepts – they are always open to many interpretations that can differ according to the cultural zone or historical period.

The Intercultural Glossary Project is an online learning tool and resource, based on the idea of Wikipedia and Web 2.0, what makes it follow the aim of the democratization of knowledge (however is hard to say if should we find it as an advantage or weakness). Thanks to this tool we have an opportunity to investigate the meanings of many key concepts (both – within the

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contemporary context, and over the history). It should be treated as a useful tool for learners at all ages, also during their formal and informal education. Its main goal is to contribute learners' civic and intercultural competence through curiosity and openness towards diversity of meanings, search for knowledge and understandings about concepts and reflexivity and critical thinking. Parts of this project are an interactive online tool, learning methods and materials that can be used by educators, and peer learning activities.

During the first session after this presentation participants had many questions, but due to the very limited time the moderator Gabriella Patriziano from DARE Network in Germany permitted only a few of them to ask their questions. During the second session people were more tired and after a short discussion the forum has ended.
Several questions asked during the first session were concerned with organizational issues (funding, participation, etc.), however, the speakers Claudia Lenz and Lisa Kvande replied that this project is only at the pilot phase; thus many things in this area can change in the future. So far, not many people could participate in this project, but later there should be no restrictions for example for teachers to fully participate.

Some participants noticed several weaknesses of this project - first of all according to them it shouldn't be only in English - you should use many different languages to promote diversity, otherwise if you narrow it down to only one it had less to do with the concept of human rights (to make it more equal for everyone one participant as a joke suggested to exclude from the project all native English speakers). Speakers replied that at the next stage there is a possibility of adding some new languages like Spanish or Arabic. Participants also pointed out that it shouldn't be available merely online (this could be a limitation for older teachers). There was also a suggestion to reach teachers at their training, to inform them about this project during their studies, when they have more time to participate. They other problem highlighted by one of the participants was how the people who will lead this project can avoid their own point of view (it is impossible to place itself "outside" of a culture, to have a clear an objective view).
Some participants pointed out that this project is not suitable for countries that experience an on-going struggle for human rights, such as Egypt, Lybia or Tunisa (they have to focus on some more urgent tasks than this dictionary, this kind of project doesn't reflect their everyday needs) - however some other participants said that this project should be used as an inspiration for Arab NGOs, and can show them some valuable pedagogical ideas and concrete methods, that maybe one day they will be able to use.

**Part III:**

The third presentation (second during the second session) was lead by Cihan Tekeli from the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Patrick Siegele from the Anne Frank Zentrum in Germany, and it concerned the common project of these two closely related institutions called Free2Choose. It is linked to an exhibition prepared by Anne Frank house on the subject of tolerance and human rights. Now it developed to be a multinational project for youngsters that gives them possibility to discuss the boundaries of freedom (freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of press, right to demonstrate and right to privacy) and difficult dilemmas that can occur when several of these freedoms clash. As a part of this project several short-clips on these dilemmas were made. These movies are being used during workshops with students - first of all they have an opportunity to study Civil Rights Card, then they watch together a movie that presents a problematic situation of some kind of freedom's clash, and at the end they have to discuss it and choose which right or freedom would they indicate if they would have to. Sometimes students as a part of this project prepare short-clips themselves. Both speakers pointed out that this is a very good

training for youngsters that can show them how to lead a democratic debate. During both sessions a short-clip was presented about a controversial situation concerning a clash between freedom of religion and state's secularism. Actually during the second session we had an opportunity to take part in a short exemplary workshop and discuss ourselves what should be an answer for a question "Can a police officer wear a religious symbols on duty?"
After this presentation participant again had an opportunity to ask questions - this part turned up to be a most vivid and interesting one. Some people asked both speakers Cihan Tekeli and Patrick Siegele what are the biggest obstacles for them that they have to face during their project. Cihan Tekeli answered that their biggest problem is to convince their potential partners that Anne Frank House is not a Jewish organization, that they are not any political agenda, and that their project shouldn't be seen as any type of propaganda (that especially applies to the workshops held in countries like Turkey). One participant pointed out that for many teachers this kind of controversial subjects can be seen as a threat, because it is hard to say where the classroom debate may go. The answer should be teachers' trainings on the subject of human rights - every teacher would need an extended knowledge on that matter to be able to lead such discussion or workshop. Also it may be very problematic with some different groups of students when they can get very radical. To try to avoid such situations at the beginning of each meeting a discussion leader should lay some ground rules, such as "we operate within the law", "we respect each other" (both speakers highlighted that they prefer to use the term "respect" than "tolerance" - it is easier to discuss it), and, more generally, "we listen to each other".

**Conclusion:**
The most valuable matter about both sessions was that participants could learn about some very inspiring and concrete educational ideas and experience personally how deep and interestingly they go into the subject of human rights. In my opinion, this sessions were also very useful for all the speakers who could not only present their projects to an international audience, but also take part in an interesting debate that could offer them some fresh views on their own projects what could actually help them to develop their ideas.