

NECE – Networking European Citizenship Education “EYCE 2005: National Experiences – European Challenges”

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**Corina Leca
CRED (Centre for Education and Human Development)
Romania**

Country Profiles III. Romania

This paper is based on a rough-analysis of the formal plan of action envisaged for the year 2005 and on informal discussions with some actors of the educational field (e.g. school inspectors, class teachers, researchers, NGO activists and mass media people).

I have to start by emphasizing that in Romania EYCE 2005 largely mirrors the general image of civic education and human rights education in their formal and non-formal aspects. To be more specific there are not too many activities beyond the regular plans and agendas of schools or NGOs, the main cause being the lack of publicity for the general public and mainly the lack of special grants. Therefore those constantly interested in EDC and/or HRE have planned and run a large range of activities not necessarily generated by the Council of Europe's event but whose agenda is shaped or structured round the major themes of this body or those of the European Union (such as non-discrimination, multiculturalism, European citizenship, equality of chances, migration, free mass media, violence and terrorism).

The national coordinating committee was created in February 2005 and brought together representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, Institute of Educational Sciences, intergovernmental bodies (UNICEF and the Council of Europe Office in Romania), public radio station, cultural centres (British Council and Goethe Institute) as well as various NGOs. The Committee set up the following priorities: - promoting EDC and providing specific information for students, youth, civil society and the general public;

- teacher training;
- encouraging students' participation and
- developing specific EDC capabilities for non-governmental sector (training of members, capacity building etc. in order to encourage them to get involved in and launch EDC projects).

Local school inspectorates requested schools to send them the activities planned for the whole year and then summarized and forwarded them to the Ministry of Education and Research. Other entities, mainly NGOs sent their plans directly to the Committee. The plan of action has been placed on three sites (www.edu.ro – the Ministry of Education and Research, www.coe.ro - the Council of Europe Office in Romania, and www.civica-online.ro – the Institute of Educational Sciences) and has been updated within the Year.

The activities run in Romania vary from:

- competitions between students (knowledge about human rights standards or EU laws and essays on contemporary problems) and exhibitions (drawings, portfolios) to meetings of students' councils (using children's rights);
- conferences and workshops for teachers and other people involved in education to human rights courses for NGO members;
- simple school events to bi/multilateral partnerships (supported by EU grants);
- thematic camps for students to meetings with EU officials and so on and so forth.

Although a formal analysis of the Year has not been carried out yet and the current paper depicts personal views I dare to state some opinions regarding the general context of the year 2005 in Romania. The quality and effectiveness of projects and activities run by various actors depend rather on their personal commitment and professionalism than on the national policy on the EYEC. There are school inspectors who did not hear about this big event and there are inspectors who conceive and co-ordinate substantive projects. There are teachers who have been developing four-year activities comprising movie sessions, simulations and conferences (history, political sciences, and philosophy papers) on human rights as the core of education for democracy, who do not know anything about the topic of the year 2005 decided by the Council of Europe. There are radio reporters (this example deserves a separate presentation) who are real human rights activists at the same time

and do much more concrete things for students and teachers than educational institutions. There are NGOs (Association Assistance and Programmes for Sustainable Development – Agenda 21) who challenge students to really participate in their community by training them in students' ombudsman institution and there are schools who simply ask students to make drawings on Universal Declaration on Human Rights articles and exhibit them on the 10-th of December.

My point is that in spite of the humble portfolio developed by Romanian EDC and HRE actors within EYCE, the changes that can take place do take place. The lessons learnt by students (who were the most committed and enthusiastic participants in all activities), the experience got by teachers and trainers in using interactive (student-centered) methods, the good partnership of some schools and NGOs in developing materials and training people, the dialogue of various groups (lawyers and non-lawyers, students and pupils, mass media professionals and NGO members, etc.) and other "small things" succeeded to bring human rights and democratic citizenship into public attention and even create some democratic habits in specific environments (schools, youth clubs, professional associations, mass media institutions). The good side of our experience is that *learning by doing* is a really effective approach to democracy and democratization. The less positive side is that the lack of evaluation and monitoring at all levels and in all phases of a process leads to a bad management of already scarce resources.