

Central points/Conclusions of the Federal Agency for Civic Education

The results of the discussions in the individual workshops are presented in the respective reports. On the whole, the following points are of central importance for the further work of the Federal Agency for Civic Education in the follow up to the conference.

The topic of Civic Education/EDC in the European context is being given wide coverage at the moment and increasing notice is being taken of it by the Council of Europe and at EU-level. This can be clearly seen inter alia in:

- The proclamation of the European Year Citizenship Through Education (2005) by the Council of Europe.
- Setting key points of focus in the educational sector during the Dutch Presidency of the Council.
- The announcement of the European education ministers to consider more strongly Civic Education/EDC within the framework of the educational programmes.
- The obligation of the European Council (Education) to undertake additional efforts to achieve the Lisbon goals, in order to foster by means of education the sense of citizenship and social integration.
- The new structuring of the European educational programmes for general and vocational education as well as for the youth, which focus stronger from 2006 on the area of lifelong learning and European citizenship.

This rise in significance is associated with challenges which societies see themselves confronted with both on a national and international level: falling electoral participation, consequences of globalisation, the growing cultural and social diversity, the necessity to strengthen an active citizenship also at a European level and alongside the national identity a European identity, as well as the increase in new communication technologies.

Correspondingly, central fields of action/thematic areas of EDC/Civic Education crystallised at the conference in the course of the workshops and the plenary sessions: intercultural learning/ dealing with diversity, sustainable development, ethics and values, participation, media literacy, Large coverage was also given to the question of how the contents of EDC/Civic Education can be europeanised; respectively how the distance between Europe, its values, structures and institutions can be narrowed. This association shall receive once again a special society-relevant dimension in 2005 through the process of ratifying the European Constitution in the countries of Europe. This must be taken up by the organisations of civic education.

There exists initiatives for the imparting of EDC in the schooling and extra-curricula area in almost all countries belonging to the Council of Europe. Whereas a far-reaching agreement in respect of the underlying values can be ascertained, nevertheless there is still variation in institutional anchorage, approaches and methods.

Alone the examples of work in practice presented at the conference have shown that in regard to the important common fields of action there already exist concrete models and experiences. The fact that these were developed before the respective local and national historical, societal and political conditions, set certain limits to a transferability, but does not make this more and more impossible. The necessity to tailor EDC/Civic Education to the respective specific needs does not in any way contradict the possibility of learning jointly and from each other where common problem situations are evident. This applies especially there where it concerns conveyance of capabilities and competences that are necessary in order

to get involved as an active citizen at a European level.

The prerequisites for this have to be still improved. This means creating more transparency on what is already present, compiling successful approaches, identifying relevant players and enabling a continual exchange of information.

Besides the exchange of providers and players in Civic Education, a further challenge is involved in seeing to that the offers of EDC/Civic Education are europeanised and the target groups are also increasingly offered the possibility to work on common problem situations with people from other European countries.

So that EDC can generate the appropriate impact, it must be an integral part of lifelong learning from the school right into adult age. Required for this, and here the participants were in agreement, is the parallelism of the various players from public institutions up to NGOs or initiatives including as well school and extra-curricular, formal and informal offers. Political decision-makers have here the responsibility to make it possible that the necessary infrastructure is present.

In spite of the increasing attention given to this topic and the various initiatives that already exist, the implementation of EDC within the framework of a stable infrastructure is still not taking place everywhere to a sufficient extent. Even existing structures seem to be again and again questioned. Thus there is clearly the tendency in various countries to reduce, in view of the more and more extensive growing demands of the scientific community, the offer in EDC/Civic Education in favour of other sectors in which the competences that are regarded as "hard skills" are being imparted. For example, when the curriculum in schools has to be supplemented by additional aspects.

This is an indication that the necessity of lifelong learning is ever still focused to a large degree on the creation of employability. The significance of lifetime learning for a democratic European citizenship is not adequately taken into cognizance for to bring about a stable and development-capable Europe borne by its citizens.

That is why joint endeavours and lobbying are required in order to establish a political public for EDC/Civic Education at local and national levels as well as in the European context.

A platform must be erected for to open up the dialogue between political decision-makers and state-run and non-state-run providers of EDC/Civic Education as well as citizens, in order to make clear the performances up to now, to identify challenges, and to define the necessary implementation steps. Strong institutions and networks can make an important contribution to this – the European year can provide the frame for this.

The Federal Agency for Civic Education will undertake further steps within its possibilities and in interplay with partner organisations, in order to respond to some of the challenges that were picked out as central themes at the conference. The following steps are first of all planned:

- Documentation of the contributions and results of the conference, which shall be made available to the participants and decision-makers at the European level
- Establishment of a mailing list for the conference participants, which can be opened to further interested persons after a test-run

- Gradual compilation and translation of important texts which enable an insight to be obtained into the situation of EDC/Civic Education in different countries. The publication is effected via the homepage of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (starting end of 2004)
- Creating a database in English with players in Civic Education in Europe (2005)
- Holding a European conference on the European Year in cooperation with the network D.A.R.E., the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Cultural Affairs and other partners (end of 2005)