

NECE – Networking European Citizenship Education

Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 23 – 26 September, 2004

Workshop I: Organisations for European Citizenship Education (non-public sector):

Referees:

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John Petersen, ACC International Programme Office, Denmark

Ingemar Svensson, Agency for Flexible Learning, Sweden

Jorma Turunen, EAEA/Workers' Educational Association, Finland

Chair: Hannelore Chiout, Dare-Network

Reporter: Jaime Balaguer de la Riva, Spain

Summary:

1st Session:

Ingemar Svensson: explains that the "Agency for Flexible Learning" is a Swedish Governmental organisation to promote flexible learning in the formal and non-formal adult education in Sweden. The Liberal Adult Education part is known as Folkbildning: 147 Folk High Schools and around 500 local study circles spread all over the country. Some of the schools are owned by county councils, but most of them are owned and operated by popular movements as a tool to educate their representatives and support democracy. About 320.000 circles are organised all over the country with somewhere between 1,5 and 2 million participants. Liberal Adult Education is financed by government and counties. Concerning the future, the following questions were formulated: How can the Liberal Adult Education movement support the development of democracy, support the individuals in their wish to practise their democratic rights? How can it work for democracy by constituting an arena for public discussions?

In the Swedish formal school system, citizenship education is not a Specific subject but is integrated in political science studies. The Agency for Flexible Learning actually is promoting Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, but necessarily we have to find the good combination between face-to-face and online learning. This project also wants to produce a wide variety of good practice examples of how this can be done.

The principal target groups are low educated people, immigrants, disabled and people living in isolated rural areas. But also young people have a high priority. A lot of them tend to leave the traditional political parties and instead make their voices heard, often through the internet.

The most important pedagogical discussion for the agency is about Promoting online learning and the community forums, in search of new citizen forums. In relation to gender, the majority of participants are women.

Discussion topics: women are more inclined to get involved in Flexible learning. But then, why women are not represented in the principal Spheres of decision in society? Suggestions were formulated about a

Specific programme for women and to use the gender differences in learning processes. Men more often reject the tradition of face-to-face education, preferring the e-learning.

Jorma Turunen: represents the European Association for Education of Adults(EAEA), with 100 organisations throughout Europe and WEA in Finland. In this country a lot of initiatives reinforce and promote Civic Education(CE). One example is the Policy Programme for Citizenship Participation and the parliamentary committee promoting CE. Finnish government supports those initiatives with increasing subsidies. But how can we translate these initiatives into real practice?

We should rethink reality no longer restricted to national-European levels. There are many levels of citizenship, local, national, European and global citizenship. Also the European level is a multicultural level today, where citizens have different identities. On the other hand, we shouldn't forget that the informational society could have negative consequences. Networks cannot replace the face-to-face interaction. To log out, two Final recommendations: we need to collect, exchange and disseminate the different practices in CE; and lobbying on European level, in order to Influence educational policies.

Discussion topics: often we just talk about collecting materials, but is it not more important to discuss the issue how we can involve people in this programs? In the Year of Citizenship through Education in 2005, the NGOs have an opportunity to recollect and present approaches, concepts, target groups, topics. Online networking is very important for exchange (between organisations, formal and non-formal, public institutions and NGOs); but we probably need to change methods, not aims.

Karl Monsen-Elvik: One of the principal providers of CE in Scotland is the school, but out of the formal curriculum; the Scottish Civic Forum Has increased social participation; the local colleges have shown some Interest in CE but not with a formal structure; other significant providers are the community Workers, the new government agency Communities Scotland and some K organisations. In the present context Scotland has a new parliament; a process of governmental modernisation to enter into engagement with local levels, with a more participative democracy, not only representative, and searching higher levels of inclusion. But lifelong learning and cultural development are understood mainly as a way to increase employability. The Volunteer Centre works for an active citizenship, helping volunteers, focusing its activities on young people, advising organisations, training supervisors, measuring impact and influence in policies. The Active Citizenship Essential Skills project (ACES) steers groups of local partners. The education Programme consists of 15 people during 15 weeks (1 day a week), with modules as citizenship and personal development, democracy and social inclusion, study visits, etc; also basic skills on new technologies, a confidence building programme, workbooks, guest speakers and group works. The participants are unemployed or disabled or caring people, with low educational achievement (generally) active in their community (as volunteers), with a desire to make a difference (to the community and to themselves). They have a chance to link up with other people like themselves during the study visits, in the internet, etc. For breaking down barriers, the groups are constituted by 50/50 Percent men/women. They obtain support for travel, food, childcare, and extra care to those with disabilities. Diversity and inclusion are part of the programme. The main outcomes for people are an understanding of "the system" (how to have an influence on it), confidence to speak up, but also increasing sense of self and personal worth, broadening horizons and skills in citizen's forums, participation processes and consultations. In such a task Europe represents an open door and a big opportunity.

John Petersen: the ACC (Association for Community Colleges) is not a national organisation; it is an European non-governmental and non-profit organisation with more than 400 members. The mission of the ACC is to Develop an European public sphere. They want to construct an European project with the residential school format as a tool for this purpose. The courses are organised in common topics and European interests. Governed by culture, the community colleges are "coloured" by local traditions and culture. Diversity is welcome. The ACC promotes an act proposal on Community Colleges. Concluding, it is an initiative for creating more forums for ordinary people, for ordinary citizens to increase the European public sphere.

Discussion topics: They promote the idea of Community Colleges courses in a long term. The participants stay usually 14 days. They are normally young people active in other organisations from different countries.

2nd Session.

Hannelore Chiout: at first, this session is dedicated to exchange intercultural experiences of the participants. Working in couples, the participants give an explanation introducing themselves to their partners. After 15 minutes each one introduces his/her partner to the audience: name, organisation, target groups, institutional structure and a short reference about how they promote CE.

Discussion: the following organisations were mentioned, namely European Mission Movement (Belgium), the National Association of Adult Education (Ireland), the European Dare-Network, the Association of German Education Centres (Germany), the European Network for Education and Training, the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Germany), the Training Foundation (Austria), the Lithuanian College of Democracy (Lithuania), the Social Communication Institute (Lithuania), the Citizen European Association, the Association for the Advancement of Political Action (Germany), the ACC International Programme Office, the Catholic Youth (Austria), the International Education Centre IUC-Europe (Denmark), the School Instrument of Peace (Italy), the Welsh Centre for International Affairs (Great Britain), the SBI training & advise (Netherlands) and the Alert Citizen (Belgium).

Hannelore Chiout: calls for how can we make more visible NGOs' work in CE. This Congress represents an opportunity to express the expectations And interests of the NGOs in CE.

Discussion: the NGOs haven't got sufficient financial support. The authorities want lifelong learning but mainly finance training for unemployed. The role of the Council of Europe is limited in this area, but gives opportunities to show the NGOs' work on CE. At national level it is difficult to obtain financial support, but on the European level the NGOs have more expectations. This congress is an opportunity to show the diversity of the CE and the value of the lifelong learning for the social inclusion of all kinds of population.

In the end, politicians have to recognise the value of Citizenship education and education for democracy. The politicians have failed in the recent European elections of June. So, is an important moment for the NGOs to influence the European Commission and get a solid statement. NGOs contribute to the democratic culture in Europe.

On the one hand, it is necessary to connect the local policies and educational processes. Local policies and CE have to be strongly connected. On the other hand it is necessary to empower young people, to put them in positions of power, give them more visibility. People could lose confidence in democracy. So we cannot forget that democracy is an unfinished project.

Most of the participants' expectations are summarised in two words: recognition and support. To develop citizenship we need activists and methods to put into practice. We have a huge gap and NGOs work on it. We need a networking of NGOs and governmental organisations, a networking with different groups. The message is: there are other ways to participate and the NGOs is one of these ways in order to promote democratic citizenship.

Hannelore Chiout: calls the participants to extract the final Conclusions to be exposed on Sundays Congress plenary. A very small group will meet this evening to transcribe the main points. In order to support this statement, a meeting with all the members of the workshop will be celebrated on Saturday afternoon.

**DECLARATION OF THE WORKSHOP I:
ORGANISATIONS FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (NON-PUBLIC-SECTOR).
(NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION)**

NGOs from different European countries, also a European organisation and a European network, active in the field of Education for Democratic Citizenship, met at the conference aiming to foster networking on the European level and organised by the Federal Agency for Civic Education in Germany from 23 to 26 /9/04 in Santiago de Compostela.

Envisaging the coming European Year of Citizenship through Education we expect a high degree of civil society involvement.

We refer to a recommendation of the Council of Europe explicitly inviting NGOs to participate in the planning and implementation of the Year.

EYCE 2005 provides a good opportunity for stimulating cooperation between NGOs specialising in Education for Democratic Citizenship. Their involvement in the planning implementation and evaluation of the national and European plans for the year could be a good starting point for a more durable partnership. We should like to stimulate the national authorities to take steps to establish such cooperation, as potentially an excellent stimulus for raising the professionalism of this sector. If EYCE 2005 really wishes to be more than a one-off event, if it intends to create results that are sustainable, a key objective should be to ensure the existence of a sufficient level of expertise and capacity in civil society within each country and at European level. As a result of their dynamism and commitment NGOs are very well suited to fulfil this role.

Education for democratic Citizenship is more than teaching democracy. NGOs specialising in this field provide a space for experiencing democracy and pathways to participation.

They provide not only knowledge of democracy, but value-based, self-determined, competencies and skills which empower the individual to be an active citizen. They are meeting places for all groups of society, and moderators and mediators between the grass-root level and politics.

They offer a platform for a dialogue between different classes, between young and old, men and women, natives and foreigners, between nations, thus contributing to the development of enlightened, self-confidence and responsible identity of citizens. These are important prerequisites for the cohesion of society, throughout a nation and throughout Europe, because we all know that democracy is a never-ending fragile experiment, which has to face changing challenges, conflicts and contradictions.

There can be no credible lifelong learning without including education for a democratic, active citizenship as an integral part of the system.

We therefore appeal, for resources to be made available for a Sustainable work. In many European countries NGOs concentrating in Education for Democratic Citizenship find themselves in a continuous struggle for survival, which in itself results in too much time and effort being spent on finding resources, thus endangering continuity and quality. It is highly desirable that a stable support infrastructure for such NGOs be put in place by national authorities, and that this is complemented at European level by a mechanism providing stable support for networks for such NGOs.

We hope that after EYCE 2005 the Council of Europe, the European Commission as well as national authorities will launch a new phase of the big project of Education for democracy. This next phase should emphasise capacity-building, i.e. raising the expertise and capacity of civil society actors in Education for Democratic Citizenship.