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EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION
COMITE SYNDICAL EUROPEEN DE L'EDUCATION

Report on

**ETUCE International meeting in cooperation
with KTOS, KTOES and DAÜ-SEN:**

“Peace education in schools: The role of teachers in promoting peace through awareness raising and information on conflict prevention and conflict resolution in divided societies.”

Famagusta, Cyprus

17-18 May, 2013





1. Introduction

The aim of ETUCE international meeting on *Peace education in schools* was twofold. First to demonstrate solidarity with ETUCE's three member organisations in the occupied area: KTÖS, KTOEÖS and DAÜ-SEN. Second to provide information to teacher trade unions on the role of education in peace development processes. In particular, the meeting aspires to support the promotion of peace education as part of the reconciliation process in Cyprus.

2. Presentations

ETUCE had invited a number of prominent speakers to the international meeting. The first presentation was given by **Professor Dr. Volker Lenhart** from University of Heidelberg, Institute for Education Studies on "**Peace Education in Conflict Areas - Examples and Evidences.**"

Prof. Dr. Lenhart noted that from the end of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1990s the objective of peace education was to prevent war, however this changed from the 1990s when the focus increasingly shifted towards armed conflicts inside countries, civil wars and wars between countries. Peace-building educational exercises became increasing the focus in the context of, or after armed conflict.

Prof. Dr. Lenhart informed about three different projects of peace education:

- The Hand-in-Hand-Schools (Israel/Palestine) focusing on the educational influence on the community through the components of bilingualism, diversity, civic education, educational influence on the community outside the school and high cognitive learning results.
- Guidelines for Writing History Textbooks (Bosnia-Herzegovina) concentrating on citizenry-education through multi-perspectivity. The objective of the project was through the introduction of new history books to create tolerance among the pupils by the exchange of curriculum units and presentations on different perspectives and encouraging the students to do independent work and to make conclusions about historical processes and phenomena.
- Twic Olympics (Sudan) through sports activities the participants learned to follow rules that all sides agree upon, to develop a team spirit, to estimate fair play, to accept decisions in sportive victory or defeat, to respect the other competitors and to make friends with them. As a consequence an attitude change towards peaceful interaction is enabled.

Prof. Dr. Lenhart described the study project involving the following countries; Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan. The study project focused on mutual understanding and identity through learning about living conditions of "others". The assumption is that it is easier to start out at the personal level and then proceed to the socio-cultural- and political level. The project compared the attitudes towards the opposite/conflicting groups(s) among a sample of the people being involved in peace education projects and a sample of persons, who had not been involved.

The results showed that the people who had participated showed a higher degree of readiness for peaceful conflict resolution and a less hostile attitude towards the conflicting group(s). Finally, it was emphasized that peace education is not the only or the main way to peaceful conflict transformation but it can nevertheless contribute to reconciliation.



The next speaker was **Prof. Joanne Hughes** from Queen's University, Belfast and Director of the Centre for Shared Education in Belfast focusing on **"Sharing education and building relationships in a divided society: a case study from Northern Ireland"**.

Prof. Dr. Hughes said that the societies in Northern Ireland remain much divided, and the Centre for Shared Education in Belfast is a new initiative in order to address the issue that 94% of the students attend divided schools. Research points to a relationship between social fragmentation and separate schools; as such schools are seen as central elements towards promoting more cohesive communities. The rationale is provided in the contact theory as the contact between members of separate communities is seen as a key element in order to overcome prejudice and negative stereotypes against the other group. In particular, research shows that the effect is most noticeable via cross-group friends. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize differences among groups and recognize the persons from the other group as members to the group and not treat them as exceptions of the group.

Prof. Dr. Hughes informed about two large-scale empirical studies conducted by Centre for Shared Education and Centre for the Study of Intergroup Conflict at Oxford. The Shared Education Programme (SEP) began in 2007 with 5000 participating pupils from 60 schools. The contact hypothesis was verified in the studies; especially the opportunity for contact is a predictor of friendship and positive out-group responses.

Then **Stephanie Knox Cubbon** from Teachers without Borders presented on "Train the teachers: Preparing teachers as peace educators in classrooms."



S. Knox Cubbon

Ms Knox Cubbon started by emphasizing the role of teachers in promoting peace by citing the UNESCO constitution: ***"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."***

Essentially, peace can be learned and to achieve that goal peace education training for Teachers is needed. About the Teachers Without Borders (TWB) the aim is to bring teachers together and provide teacher professional development by focusing on creating local change on a global scale. TWB has a particular programme on Peace Education based on three pillars;

- Unit 1: History, Definitions, Key Thinkers, Core Concepts.
- Unit 2: Scope of Peace Education
- Unit 3: From Theory to Practice – Towards a Peaceful Classroom, School and Community

Afterwards, **Naghmeh Sobhani** from Education for Peace – Balkans presented on **"Building peace through civil society alliances: The role of parents, schools and communities in safeguarding and promoting peace"**.

Ms Sobhani began by giving an overview of the fragmented arrangement of the state institutions and mode of governance following the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina with distinct Bosnian/Croat/Serb curricula, 13 Ministries of Education and 8 Pedagogical Institutes. The Education for Peace Program started as a pilot project involving all three communities. The program has involved 112 school located in 60 communities across the country. Approximately 80,000 students and 5,000 teachers have been engaged. The model of the Education for peace program has been integrated as a guiding principle in the educational vision and mandate of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms Sobhani highlighted that the importance of the program derives from the fact that it brings together the different actors, and stressed that a unity-based collaborative alliance is necessary as a pre-requisite for building peace. As such in order to avoid conflict active peace promotion must be introduced. Ms Sobhani pointed out that peace and education are inseparable components, as the school environment and teachers play a fundamental role in the development of the child's world-view.

Then **Ali Yaman**, former President of the North Cyprus Mediation Association presented on **“The need for conflict resolution and peace education in Cyprus.”** Mr Yaman introduced the North Cyprus Mediation Association and its goals of spreading the “Win-Win” philosophy of mediation throughout Cyprus, providing mediation service to all levels of society, introducing conflict resolution- and peace education into the school system and to integrate the alternative dispute resolution techniques into the legal system. The North Cyprus Mediation Association is facing a number of challenges in its work. The major ones concern the negative connotations attached to the words “peace education” and “mediation”, the bad press, especially from certain sections of the community and the lack of resource material in Turkish and Greek. In order to meet the challenges the approach that has been taken by the Mediation Association was to „Cypriotizing“ the material on peace education.

3. Sum-up

Constantinos Ahniotis, Co-president “United Cyprus” and **Sener Elcil**, General Secretary, KTÖS presented on **United Cyprus, The Turkish Cypriots/Greek Cypriots – Teachers Platform and their aims and activities.**



C. Ahniotis

Mr Sener Elcil noted that the political system is nurtured by the education system, and as a logical consequence education should be placed in parallel to politics. Mr Constantinos Ahniotis observed the different perspectives exist, which is based on the experiences of the different communities. Mr Ahniotis emphasized that both sides play a crucial role in how they handle the Cyprus issue with important implications for a solution of the Cyprus problem.

Martin Rømer (European Director, ETUCE) concluded the international meeting by thanking all the participants and speakers. Furthermore, he noticed the long engagement of ETUCE on Cyprus.



The fact that a real cooperation between all teacher trade unions on Cyprus still has to be established as well as the problems of organising the meeting demonstrates the difficult situation that exists on Cyprus. However, the communities must come together to find a solution, as the alternative will be less advantageous for Cyprus. In addition, Mr Rømer emphasized the importance of showing solidarity and support to all member organisations of ETUCE, as the meeting is an evidence of. ETUCE will continue this work and in particular to facilitate the progress between the two communities.



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**European Trade Union Committee for Education
Comité syndical européen de l'éducation**

Bd du Roi Albert II, 5 – 9th Floor
B-1210 Bruxelles, Belgique

T + 32 2 224 06 91/2
F + 32 2 224 06 94

secretariat@csee-etuice.org
www.csee-etuice.org