



Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and
Cultural Minority Communities

**Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe through
Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights and
Education in Adult Learning**

Conference Report

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FORWARD

Combating poverty and Social e has been at the heart of the Lisbon Treaty which was signed by 27 countries including the UK. As part of celebrations to mark this event, Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland (member of Dare Network) in partnership with the DARE Network will be delivering an EU conference in Scotland aiming at raising awareness of poverty and social exclusion while exploring how Human Rights Education (HRE) and Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) can be deployed as effective mechanism to combat poverty and social exclusion.

In this endeavour, both DARE and BEMIS have been proactively engaging with government bodies, policy makers, NGO, voluntary, academic institutions, and various stakeholders including equality groups and diverse communities. The conference aims at empowering a voice to those who experience poverty and social exclusion as well as ensuring that decision makers and politicians are involved directly within this civic gathering. This conference seeks to promote and stimulate debate regarding combating poverty and social exclusions at various levels in addition to setting a collective legacy and responsibility towards combating Poverty and Social exclusion in Europe through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. The conference provided a platform for various members' states to share experiences and learning within the context of HRE and EDC.

Acknowledgment

BEMIS would like to express their appreciation and thanks to the following organisations and individuals for their contribution and participation in this conference.

Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing
David Martin, Member of the European Parliament

Presenters

- Mr. Frank Elbers, Chair of DARE, Director of Programmes at Human Rights Education Associates (HREA). The Netherlands
- Yulia Pererva, Council of Europe, Division on citizenship and Human Rights Education Directorate General IV - Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth & Sport
- Frederick Banson, Educational officer for Human Rights at the European Fundamental Rights Agency. Vienna.
- Dr John McKendrick, School of Law and Social Sciences Glasgow Caledonian University. Scotland
- Mr. John Wilkes (CEO) Scottish Refugee Council.
- Mr. Robin Tennant (Training & Field Work Manager) – Poverty Alliance
- Ihsan Ikizer, Leuven University /VORMEN, Belgium.
- Najimee Parveen, PATH Scotland
- Gabriella Patriziano Human Rights Office, International Volunteers for Development
- Tsvetoslav Nikolov, Partners Bulgaria Foundation
- Nageeb Ahmed & Tony Breslin Citizenship Foundation

Workshop Facilitators

Tanveer Parnez, BEMIS

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And most importantly to all the delegates who made the time to attend, participate and demonstrate their commitment to this vital cause.

Executive Summary

Impact of Poverty

There are a wide range of groups in society who are affected by poverty and social exclusion and are thus vulnerable. These groups span different demographics such as children, young people and adults as well as parents and families. In addition it affects individuals from minority groups such as Ethnic Minorities, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as those facing exclusion due to sexual orientation, disability or health and social problems such as drug use, mental illness. It is also clear that these groups are subject to prejudice and stereotyping and these views are often based on perception rather than fact. The latter is often fuelled by negative and non factual reporting from the Media.

Poverty and social exclusion affects people's rights and opportunities in a number of ways:

- Low income can limit ability to access basic needs such as housing as well as opportunities to participate in social and leisure activities and access to services
- Limited opportunities to access education in both formal and informal formats can result in a lack of skills and knowledge and thus individuals are not powered
- Limited access to information which in turn can mean having low awareness, knowledge or understanding of their individual rights in a number of settings
- Ability to access employment and if they do access, it can be on a salary that is not sufficient enough to provide basic needs such as accommodation
- Ability to access health services thus poor health can be an outcome which in turn can lead to a shorter lifespan
- Overall these groups can suffer from a 'lack of voice' in that individuals are not able to have their needs heard or have input into the design and delivery of services within their communities which will meet these needs.

There was a general consensus that the aforementioned factors are inextricably linked thus demonstrating that poverty and social exclusion is multi dimensional. In addition poverty and social exclusion cannot be eradicated through economic measures as this will not in itself lead to a more equal and cohesive society.

Conclusions and Recommendations

By sharing information and providing a platform for debate and discussion amongst this wide range of stakeholders the audiences were able to increase their learning on the subject and also develop recommendations which had the groups support.

- Poverty and Social Exclusion is a significant problem in today's society and affects communities' abilities and opportunities to access vital services and fully participate in society. There is a need to acknowledge and act upon the fact that poverty and social exclusion is not one dimensional related solely to income levels but multifaceted and peoples lives are affected in a number of arenas including education, employment and health.
- Tackling poverty and social exclusion is the 'responsibility of all' and it needs to be recognised that everyone has role to play be this at a personal and/ or organisational level.

- There is a strongly held view and evidence which supports a correlation between lack of education, democracy and human rights and an increase in poverty and social exclusion. Thus tackling poverty and social exclusion through human rights education and democratic citizenship seems to be the way forward.
- This approach to eradicating poverty and social exclusion has implications for EU member states, policymakers and NGO practitioners.
- There is a need for a shared understanding of the reasons for poverty in Europe and this needs to be a prerequisite for any European Strategy in combating poverty and social exclusion
- Politically there is a need to seriously consider the interrelationship between xenophobic, homophobic and right wing extremist tendencies that put vulnerable groups across Europe at the risk of exclusion
- Citizenship skills are a basic need of any democratic, cohesive and economically strong society. Thus it is imperative that the focus of policy measures be on people and their opportunities to participate in life long learning and across all aspects of life. It is believed that NGO's have a key role to play in this area.
- Adult education programmes should have a specific focus on civic and human rights education and democratic participation. In addition adult education programmes should be defined with the learners particularly those from vulnerable groups.
- Sustainable funding and political commitment for education for democratic citizenship and human rights is crucial for long term capacity and maintaining high quality results.

There was a strong consensus that NGOs have a fundamental role to play in eradicating poverty. A number of key areas for these organisations to address are

- Ensure people are at the core of their agenda and implement inclusive approaches in education for democratic citizenship rather than stigmatizing those who are excluded.
- Non formal education needs to come from the bottom up as opposed to the top down. Examples of current good practice cited were Community Education Network – Aontas Ireland and Young Muslim Leadership Network
- Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education must at its roots link to people's real lives for example empowerment in the workplace, community education, family and peer learning. Nether should it be limited to a particular age or life stage rather it must be about lifelong learning.
- Similarly the tools and methods used in learning environments must be based on the learners needs and should be designed and developed with input from these individuals

- Finally as was noted earlier those who are at risk of social exclusion often have 'no voice' and as such ways must be found to develop their leadership and participation skills. At the same time NGO leaders need to have the skills to communicate effectively with policy makers in their language.

1. Background to the Conference

The year 2010 marks the year of 'Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion'. It stems from a joint decision by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers that explicitly recognises people's right to live in dignity. A budget of around 26 million Euros has been provided of which 17 million Euros comes from the EU.

There are four cross-disciplinary objectives at the heart of this European Year:

- **Recognition:** recognise the fundamental right of persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to take an active part in society;
- **Shared responsibility and participation:** promote public support for social inclusion policies, emphasising collective and individual responsibility in combating poverty and social exclusion, and fostering commitment by all public and private factors;
- **Cohesion:** promote a more cohesive society, where no one doubts that society as a whole benefits from the eradication of poverty;
- **Commitment and practical action:** renew the pledge of the EU and its Member States to combat poverty and social exclusion, and involve all levels of authority in the pursuit of that aim.

BEMIS are keen to ensure Scotland plays an active role at UK and EU levels in addressing awareness of poverty through Education and Democratic Citizenship. As part of this process the conference on Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Adult Learning was held in Glasgow City Chambers on the March 4 and 5 2010.

Organised by BEMIS and DARE it brought together stakeholders in the field of Human Rights Education and Education for Democratic Citizenship (HRE/EDC). This included practitioners in formal and non-formal education, NGO activists, educational experts, political scientists and policy makers ranging from City Councils to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe.

Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing opened on the first day and Mr. David Martin, Member of the European Parliament on the second day.

The conference consisted of a number of presentations and workshops.

The conference provided a forum for discussion and debate on poverty and social exclusion and the possibility of tackling this through the education of human rights and democratic citizenship. Content spanned the causes of poverty and social exclusion, what impact this has on the lives of individuals, groups and communities and, approaches that have been adopted in tackling poverty and social exclusion.

This report details the key areas of discussion at the conference along with a summary of the key issues.

2. Definition of Poverty and Social Exclusion

This section looks at the definition of poverty and social exclusion and the implications of poverty on a day to day basis.

Poverty is often associated with third world countries but it is a significant problem across Europe. In context it is recognised that it is relative poverty and just as serious albeit with different causes and outcomes.

Poverty and social exclusion is a real problem in Europe. Despite the fact there are social protection systems in the EU and that Europe is among the most highly-developed in the world, many Europeans still live in poverty today:

- **79 million people** live below the poverty line (set at 60% of their country's median income). This represents **16%** of Europe's population
- **One European in ten** lives in a household where nobody works although work does not always guard effectively against the risk of poverty
- For **8% of Europeans**, having a job is not enough to work one's way out of poverty
- In most Member States, children are more exposed to this scourge than the rest of the population: **19% of children** live under the threat of poverty

People living in poverty are likely to experience

- Poor housing or homelessness
- Poor health and reduced access to healthcare
- Reduced access to education, training and leisure activities
- Financial exclusion and over-indebtedness
- Limited access to modern technology such as the Internet

Thus poverty is a multi dimensional problem and not solely a monetary issue. The EU has proposed the following actions to address poverty and social exclusion:

- **Encourage** involvement and political commitment from each and every segment of society to participate in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, from the European to the local level, whether public or private;
- **Inspire** each and every European Citizen to participate in the fight against poverty and social exclusion;
- **Give voice** to the concerns and needs of people experiencing poverty and social exclusion;
- **Engage with** civil society and non-governmental organisations that fight poverty and social exclusion;
- **Help** deconstruct stereotypes and stigmas attached to poverty and social exclusion;
- **Promote** a society that sustains and develops quality of life, social well-being and equal opportunities for all;
- **Boost** solidarity between generations and ensure sustainable development.

The World Conference on Human Rights, that took place in Vienna in 1993, affirmed that 'extreme poverty and social exclusion' constitute a violation of human dignity and that

urgent steps are necessary to achieve better knowledge of extreme poverty and its causes, including those related to the problem of development.

One view held on the approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion would be through the education of human rights. As noted by the UN General Assembly (in Resolution 49/184, 1994) declaring the decade: "Human rights Education" should involve not only the provision of information but a comprehensive life-long process by which people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.

3. Current Political and Economic Landscape in Europe

This section summarises the aims of the government in Europe including Scotland in respect of tackling poverty.

As previously noted poverty is a significant problem in Europe. The divide between the rich and the poor is increasing and the income of the richest 20% in the EU is nearly 5 times that of the poorest 20%. Employment does not eradicate poverty and there are 19 million working poor (working but so poorly paid they are in danger of falling into poverty). The current worldwide recession has exacerbated the issue and it is anticipated that there will be a further six million jobless in the next few years. This in turn will lead to increased debts, more people on the breadline and more homeless.

The European Parliament treats poverty and social exclusion as a priority area with its new Social Agenda (adopted in July 2008). There is specific funding dedicated to tackling change in five key areas related to poverty. EU funding 'PROGRESS', has a global budget of 743 million Euros for seven years (2007 – 2013), to address change in:

- Employment
- Social inclusion and Protection
- Working conditions
- Non-discrimination
- Gender Equality.

Also deemed essential is the need to ensure poverty is not passed from generation to generation and also to help immigrants, ethnic groups and other vulnerable people who face social exclusion. Today there is also greater fragmentation, a more divided society and as such conflict, instability and fragility.

A strategy is being developed around this new social chapter with a focus on social coherence and mechanisms for making sure Governments do something to adhere to this. Within this context NGO's can make complaints if Governments are not adhering to and thus it is also important that many different organisations work together.

Key programmes and initiatives being implemented by the Council for Europe include:

- A programme for Citizenship and Human Rights Education (initiated in 1977) resulting in a draft charter
- Contribution to world programme on Human Rights Education
- Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law provide an excellent framework for moving forward

The Scottish Government is also committed to addressing poverty and social exclusion. And, they have three interlinked policies;

- 'Achieving Our Potential',
- The Early Years Framework
- 'Equally Well'.

The focus is to tackle the root causes of poverty and take action against it. Specific aims and initiatives are

- To work with The Scottish Government to ensure the Equality Bill streamlines and strengthens equality legislation
- To educate people to become good citizens and to create a Scotland free from discrimination and bigotry
- To provide opportunities through the Curriculum for Excellence for young people to learn about Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Holocaust
- Continued investment in adult learning
- Investment in language skills – to help people whose first language is not English in order that they can be fully involved with community and society
- To continue to work across Health and Education strands.

Tackling poverty through human rights was central to the speech from the Chair of Dare and this organisation believes it to be an effective approach. Driving this theory is the rationale that people living in poverty are often treated as less than human; this is confirmed by the way they are treated by the state, employers, retailers and services. Thus there is a need to protect people's human rights. People are robbed of self worth, ability to stand up for themselves and to plan and have hope. One vehicle that can be used by people to lift themselves out of poverty is education.

The Millennium Development Goals included primary education to be universally available by 2015. It is a human right to have access to education:

Key features of possible strategies include:

- Most vulnerable groups have free of charge access to education
- Vocational training
- Poor should not be discriminated against (drop out rates should be monitored)
- Special support programmes should be in place (school meals, bursaries etc)
- Human rights should be on all school curriculums.

Human rights educators can contribute in a number of ways:

- Encourage involvement in a civil society
- Encourage others in the EU
- Work to break stigmas

Thus in theory Governments in Europe appear to recognise the serious problems and implications of poverty and conveyed a commitment to tackling a major problem in today's Western World.

4. Groups and Communities Affected by Poverty and Possible Solutions

This section outlines different aspects of poverty from the perspective of the presenters. Issues within the context of their own country are considered along with possible strategies to address.

4.1 The 5 I's of poverty in Scotland (Introduction, Impact, Incidence, Intervention and Interface) – Professor McKendrick, Glasgow University

This presentation focused on poverty amongst children in Scotland where similarly to the UK and Europe there is a perception is that there is no poverty. Again, this is partly due a perception that the Welfare system protects the poor. And also attitudinally opinion that people can't be poor they buy their children new trainers, computer games etc or people who have difficult circumstances go on to better things'

This view is too simplistic and not a reflection of reality; not everyone who endures hard times goes on to success. Also the purchase of material goods does not always reflect wealth but because parents feel the need to do this as these materials are part of children's identity. At the same time parents may use working hard and long hours as a means to try and escape poverty but this then results in parents not having time to spend as a family or as a couple.

The Scottish Government has a three tier measure of poverty – absolute low income, relative low income and relative low income and material deprivation combined. The latter has only been introduced in the last five years. There has been a steady year-on-year reduction in poverty of children and pensioners since late 1990s. However there has been no reduction in the number of children and pensioners living in poverty between 2004/5 and 2005/6. Nor has there been any significant change in the prevalence of poverty among adults of working age since the late 1990s. In addition, children consistently have higher levels of poverty than adults. Furthermore children are not having access to things they should have access to for example safe areas to play, holidays, school trips, leisure and hobbies, friends round to visit as well as celebrations of special occasions such as birthdays.

Whilst the UK Government has a firm commitment to eradicate poverty by 2020 more needs to be done to improve both children's rights and tackle child poverty. Potentially taking the approach of a child's right may provide a stronger framework than a social investment approach. It may facilitate

- A Check against pre-occupation with instrumental focus on targets
- A means to embed tackling child poverty in wider children's agendas (as opposed to wider welfare/work agendas)
- A means to refocus the child poverty debate to lend greater urgency to efforts to eradicate child poverty
- Tackling povertyism

4.2 Role of Informal Training and Education in Anti Poverty Advocacy Work - Scottish Poverty Alliance

This presentation examined the use of education including informal training as a vehicle to escape from poverty. One example of this organisations approach was the EPIC project funded by the Big Lottery. This is a national project looking to bring a Scotland wide perspective on poverty.

The project comprises of training sessions four times a year and the idea is to take training out across Scotland, and run bespoke sessions if required,. For example, a women's only session was undertaken as this was appropriate for the support group they were engaging with. Participant costs are paid to cover childcare and travel expenses thus ensuring people are able to come along.

Research is also part of the EPIC programme and takes account of both urban and rural areas and is driven by the people experiencing these issues. It is also tied into the anti poverty framework and builds on existing skills and developing new skills. Finally feedback into dialogue forums allows for the evidence to go to the right people.

The Poverty Alliance is aiming to build upon previous work and work with other organisations to create more participatory forms of governance in Scotland. Specifically they look at grassroots experience to inform continuing development of policies that are in line with what is happening in reality. Work in progress includes building more democratic societies where those who are not traditionally heard can be supported to engage at a government level.

In conclusion EPIC:

- Aims to join up with all levels
- Provide support for those less heard groups
- Provide more places for organisations already working on the issues to come together
- Facilitate opportunities for local and national government to go beyond the 'usual suspects' and widen the poverty debate.

4.3 Challenging Poverty and Social Exclusion in Housing (Case Study) PATH Scotland

PATH as an organisation has aimed to tackle ethnic discrimination in the housing sector. It is the only national black led positive action charity offering 3 year placements within RSLs and Local Authorities in Scotland

The Scottish Government draft Housing Bill involves reform of RTB and social housing regulation

- Using human rights to think about poverty
- Using human rights to mobilise communities
- Using legal processes to realise rights and combat poverty

An assessment of the Social Rented Sector revealed the need for social landlords to improve their understanding of need across all equalities strands and set targets to reduce inequalities in staffing and access to services. Recommendations include

- Human rights to promote participation in decision making processes by communities experiencing poverty
- Using human rights to enrich and extend equality based approaches to anti poverty work

4.4 Tackling social exclusion; promoting active participation of young people from Southern Italy

Italy is the sixth most populous country in Europe and the highest density is in Northern Italy. Southern Italy is the most underdeveloped area of the Country. Emigration, including brain drain, from these areas has been a continuous trend throughout the entire post-war period. There are low levels of education and a significant proportion of young people from the most unprivileged social categories leave school and start to work at a very early age with the risk of social exclusion and the danger of drifting into organised crime. This situation leads to young people being discouraged and excluded from society and gives rise to the vicious circle of exclusion liable to lead also to chronic social exclusion.

VIS *Non-Formal "School" of Global Education*, has aimed to tackle this problem by promoting *active participation of young people from Southern Italy*. *Specific aims of the project are:*

- To involve young people in finding solutions to emerging Human rights problems in their communities
- To stimulate the empowerment of young people in order to invite them to play a constructive role in the development of Human Rights in their communities
- To encourage projects aimed at raising young people's awareness of everyone's responsibility in tackling poverty and marginalisation as well as at promoting the inclusion of groups with fewer opportunities
- To develop double-pronged integrated actions to enlarge the capacities of young people at risk of social exclusion in participating actively, freely and meaningfully
- To strengthen capacities for empowerment, accountability and networking of rights holders and duty-bearers in formal and informal education settings
- To develop skills and competences of young people in working with human rights education at local level
- To promote '*peer to peer*' education in order to enable young people to act as trainers or facilitator of human rights education activities based on non-formal learning approaches
- To power young people in order to strengthen their competences to fight against social exclusion
- To motivate participants to advocate for Human Rights Education
- To enable young people in the use of information and communication technology as part of their own learning
- To provide a non-formal space in which young people can learn to work in co-operation with others
- To promote peer to peer education as a tool of powering of young people

The project began in September 2005, and promotes peer to peer education, as a means of dialogue between equals. During face-to-face meetings, young people are invited to share information with each other, acting as facilitators of discussions. Participatory activities are used such as games, art competitions and role-plays. This methodology allows participants to acquire the potential to influence their peers in positive ways; becoming aware of the basic communication skills required to be a peer educator and supporting and helping their peer in managing conflicts in difficult situations.

The use of networking and ICT aims to enhance young people's participation both in the project implementation and in the international network itself, connecting young people and allowing them to widen their perspectives and develop a world active citizenship. In some case, participants used the online course and the forum to share information about their projects and work as well as to discuss about relevant topics in their work and in their daily life, in relation to Human Rights and Human Rights Education.

The project is based on experiential learning approaches developing critical thinking through different steps and levels of learning:

1. an understanding of one's own rights, duties and underpinned values;
2. personal reflection, interiorizing those values and rights;
3. learning to put into practice and learning to defend one's rights and those of others.

Another important step is the translation of the theory into reality and daily lives of the participants through, for example, field visits and youth voluntary service exchanges. The "School" also provides access to experts in the field of human rights to give the participants the opportunity of gaining skills and knowledge of Human Rights Issues.

4.5 Young Muslim Leadership Network Project – A project of the Citizenship Foundation

People of particular faiths are often impacted by poverty and one such group is Muslims who have been further affected by the current political climate. The Young Muslim Leadership Network Project is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation and a leading source of expertise, training and advice on Citizenship Education to Government, policy makers and schools.

They have an extensive international programme delivered with partners such as the British Council and the Council of Europe.

- Radical Islamists respond to American and British foreign policy with the destruction of the Twin Towers (9/11) in New York and 7/7 bombings in London in 2005
- Britain discovers that many of its terrorists are 'home grown'
- Counter terrorism strategies are matched by a British government strategy to 'Prevent Violent Extremism through strengthening communities and through educational strategies.

The YMLN is one project funded by this 'Prevent' funding stream. The aim of the project is to support and empower a group of young Muslim men and women (16-21) to

investigate a range of issues relating to Muslim alienation through research and interrogation of expert witnesses. These witnesses are people in positions of authority or influence in mainstream society, including politicians, lawyers, police officers, journalists, and educators. Group members will identify issues they particularly want to address. They will communicate their findings and views to their peers and to others via a range of media (including new media) and through face-to-face workshops or training sessions.

4.6 Social Exclusion in Istanbul

Social exclusion is also prevalent in Istanbul in Turkey where vocational training has been used as a means to address this problem. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) has focused on tackling social inclusion via vocational training courses, centres for the disabled, health centres especially for women, centres for the elderly, aid in cash and kind, and mass housing for the low-income group

Vocational training courses in Istanbul were opened under the name of ISMEK (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses) in 1996. Similar courses were opened on the same year in Ankara, under the name of BELMEK.

When ISMEK first opened in 1996, there were only three vocational courses in Istanbul. During 2008-2009, nearly 230.000 trainees attended 123 different courses across 218 centres in Istanbul including slum areas. The numbers of trainees has increased each year and by 2010 the total number of trainees was around 810.000. All the courses in ISMEK are free of charge and anyone over the age of 16 can apply. ISMEK training branches are determined according to the requests from trainees. Training spans a range of subject areas including vocational, technical, music, languages and sports.

The aim of the courses is to provide trainees with vocations or equip them to enter the labour market. Targeted groups include:

- Those who have not acquired vocational courses
- Those who wish to advance in their acquired vocations
- Adults who wish to acquire a new hobby and skill
- Those who need rehabilitation
- Groups that have difficulty in adaptation to the city
- Those who wish to make new friendships and enlarge their social network
- Groups that need support such as prisoners and residents of houses for the elderly

The successful trainees completing the credits of the branch received a Course Graduation Certificate approved by Ministry of National Education and these certificates are valid in every part of Turkey. Moreover, for some branches, ISMEK starts to issue certificates that are valid abroad in collaboration with foreign institutions having international accreditation.

A statistical measurement of the effect of ISMEK was not undertaken but is believed that it is an influential tool in tackling social exclusion in Istanbul. One theory is as more than 800.000 people have taken ISMEK courses since 1994, it is an effective means of facilitating opportunities for trainees to have more social contacts and to acquire a vocation to be a candidate for labour market

5. Workshops and Case Studies

This section of the report details the issues highlighted and discussed during the workshops. Again in these scenarios information was presented on particular groups being excluded and in some cases how this is being addressed.

5.1 Case Study Slovenia: The CoE Compass on Human Rights Education and the Roma Minority”

The Roma population in Slovenia is a minority group and is artificially divided into “autochthon” and “non-autochthon” Roma. Their political and social rights are affected by their status and where they live. Roma in southern Slovenia are facing greater social difficulties and human rights violations because of their illegal status, traditional way of life and romafobia from the majority of the population.

Most of the Roma population in Slovenia:

- Housing standards are lower than average
- Only 2% are employed
- Remaining live on social transfers or operate in the black market

In the last decade the state has focused on organising Roma minority. They are networked by Slovenian Roma Union Association which is considered an official partner to the state in the decision making processes. In 2007 a Roma Community Act was passed in parliament and since then some improvements have been made The National Roma Strategy 2010-2015 is now being drafted.

The majority of Roma does not have Slovenian citizenship and are therefore deprived of most of the citizens’ rights. .A key problem is that due to practicing their traditional way of life women are by the rule not sent to schools. As young mothers they are then not proficient in the Slovenian language to teach their children thus their children enter primary in an unequal position relative to their peers. They are also often taken out of schools by parents for longer periods. This all contributes to a lower educational status and an inability to get a well paid job or continue education at a post-secondary level.

A key challenge was how to bring human rights education to those most in need, specifically Roma children and women. On this basis since 2003 EIP Slovenia – School for Peace has been developing a national HRE training of trainers and teachers and every year they have managed to train NGO activists, political youth leaders, youth workers and teachers on HRE using COMPASS manuals.

In 2006 they wanted to train members of different national and ethnic minorities. As the long term training courses are mostly done on-line and are quite demanding, they failed to attract representatives from the Roma minority. It was therefore decided to develop an HRE project for this group. Cooperation was started with a regional NGO for volunteers in Novo mesto and located Roma students of post-secondary schools that were interested in volunteer work and activism. Useful suggestions were also gathered from Amnesty International Slovenia.

HRE workshops were adapted for use in primary schools with Roma children. The workshops were presented in Romani language and conducted by young Roma students (peer-education) with the assistance of skilled HRE trainers. Parents of these children were invited to be 'guests' at the workshops. This approach in turn facilitated access to children in Roma settlements and the opportunity to organise short empowerment workshops and discussions on importance of knowing and respecting human rights.

Translating COMPASS manual into Roma language had two key challenges; firstly the amount of material in the manual and secondly, Roma language is very limited in vocabulary. A compromise was to go for a partial translation and selection was based on developing something functional that could serve best in HRE with young people and women.

A small number of specific workshops were selected on the basis that they were all suitable for beginners and could be performed in all environments – classrooms, backyards etc. (modest requirements). It was agreed that the best format would be e-version so it was put on the website and was free for downloading in pdf form. It was also distributed on CDs to interested activists.

The evaluation of the project on HRE with the Roma minority in south Slovenia concluded that goals were achieved. Young people and especially their mothers were informed on some basic HR concepts and empowered to use these in their daily life. Some individuals are already taking advantage of this empowerment. At a grassroots level activists from partner NGOs in Novo mesto are continuing HRE work using the manual and developing new HRE materials for children at local primary and secondary schools. Over 15 workshops have been undertaken and more than 100 individuals have been reached.

5.2 "Enhancement of awareness about diversity of cultures and provision of equal opportunities for obtaining social and learning skills in international cooperation" UNESCO 2008-2009 participation program project

This project was financed by the UNESCO and focused on young people's values orientations and comprehension of democracy within a multicultural society across five countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and the USA). A questionnaire was designed to take account of respondents' awareness and comprehension of basic values in a democratic society and covered the following areas:

- awareness of and attitudes to a multicultural society
- readiness and openness for communication with representatives of different social groups.
- comprehension of a democratic society and a good quality of life in it.
- comprehension of equality and equal rights of people in society.
- comprehension of a democratic society perceived as individually accepted values.
- evaluation of different factors influencing development of their values and social skills.
- comprehension of active participation in social life.

Analysis was undertaken by specialists at Purdue University in the USA and at Aarhus University in Denmark.

The sample consisted of 150 students in each of the five countries age 16-18 and from diverse social backgrounds.

In summary the findings revealed that views and opinions between students from Estonian medium and Russian medium schools differed greatly. Most marked were views on multiculturalism in Estonian society, life in Estonia in general and young people's own individual position in society. Discomfort of students from Russian medium schools was observed as well as feelings of insecurity when living in Estonia.

At the same time the findings show that individuals are well aware of their situation and also have a vision for living in Estonia in the future. Whilst students from Estonian medium schools consider the present situation natural and feel protected by guarantees – their concerns are smaller, their views and expectations have a more collective approach. In contrast the students from Russian medium schools perceive dangers and limitations and their expectations are of a more individualistic character.

Thus through active participation a lot can be learned about the future wishes of young people, their visions and social ideals. Given the different visions of students from Estonian and Russian medium schools it also shows, how difficult it is to reach any consensus even in a relatively small society. Finally it may be tentatively concluded that the unused potential of schooling and education in general could be one of the reasons for insufficient knowledge and underdeveloped social skills of the young people.

5.3 Drugs Case Study Overview of drug users situation in Lithuania “Legal services to drug users”

Injecting drug users (IDU) are a very latent group in society and official data in Lithuania reports a population of 3,200 (population of Lithuania is 3 million). According to unofficial estimations the number of IDU is up to 10 times bigger and nearer 32.000.

This is one of the most problematic groups in society:

- Spread of the infectious diseases, e.g. HIV, Hepatitis B and C, other (round 70 % of all HIV infected got the virus through injecting drug use).
- Drug related crime (IDU need up to 100EUR per day for dose. Most often they get this money by stealing, providing sex services, etc.)

This group is also the most socially excluded group of society:

- Most of IDU are jobless, do not have social insurance and therefore their access to public social, health care and other services is very limited.
- IDU constantly face stigma and discrimination: according to the tolerance research (2005) Lithuanian are most intolerant towards IDU (more than 47 % don't want to live in neighborhood with IDU).

- Social inclusion/integration of IDU would contribute significantly to the society's safety (reduce of criminal related crime), health (prevention of the spread of infectious diseases) and economy (integration in labor market).

This group also faces discrimination in social and healthcare across a number of dimensions including access and quality and also as a result of legal restrictions.

- Low coverage of threshold services (e.g. methadone and buprenorphine treatment in 2009 was available for 17,5 % of IDU)
- Not enough public funded rehabilitation services (the month in private rehabilitation centre costs round 350EUR)
- Lack for other social and health care services
- Discrimination and harassment from social and health care specialists
- Violations of patients' rights (mainly right to privacy)

And existing legislation limits the access to social and health care services due to a mandatory registry of drug users

Similarly in the field of law enforcement there is

- Human right violations during the detention (illegal detention, discriminative, insulting and violent behavior of police officers)
- Human rights violations during trial (right to fair trial, right to defense, right to consultations, other)

Other human rights violations and problems that face IDU:

- Discrimination from employers (impossible to get a job)
- Bailiffs - many IDU have public liabilities but due to poor/bad financial situation can not return the debt. According to the legal acts there are alternative ways to eliminate the debt but bailiffs are not interested in those alternative options

Very often IDU are not able to solve their problems and to protect their rights properly because:

- They lack knowledge about human rights and skills to protect them
- They lack money to appeal for legal assistance
- Due to stigma and discrimination it is difficult to find allies and to "prove the truth"
- It is difficult to represent and protect their interests because of health state (dependency is heavy disease that affect brains)

All of the above reinforces the fact that minority groups are facing human rights violations and there is a need to improve this groups human rights.

5.4 The Impact of Stakeholders in EDC/HRC on present and Future EU Policies on Poverty and Social Exclusion: Advocacy Approaches.

The view here was that there is a need to advocate for a holistic and comprehensive approach to developing a voice that includes all agencies and communities and within these ensuring all equalities are represented. On this basis both incorporate formal and informal education would be required. An example of this premise was work that is being carried out by PhD students in the centre for community practice to develop a common

voice from the issues and concerns of the 31 different organisations and communities in the area.

The need to locate this work within a theoretical framework that puts social learning on active citizenship and human rights across four levels building links from the personal, to the institutional, cultural and finally structural – the big story about what is happening.

The importance of incorporating a sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) that seeks to understand the inter-related factors and influences that affect how people in deprived and excluded communities create a livelihood for themselves and their households. These factors can include natural resources, technologies, skills, knowledge, capacity, health, access to education, sources of credit, or networks of social support – as well as issues of employment.

Finally a radical democratic view of justice that recognises the impact of maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation in communities that experience social exclusion. This raises the issue of how these communities can become a powerful stakeholder in social and built regeneration initiatives.

Three conclusions stemmed from this debate

- Popular education methodologies are important to developing a shared voice. Often current educational methodologies don't reach the most excluded people.
- Methods that work with people where they are, to consider the issues they face and how they can go about tackling them are more likely to produce results.
- Local projects are key. They provide something for people to come together around and build learning about each other. The friends of Govanhill Baths have met as a group every two weeks since 2001 bringing together people from the whole range of different communities in the area.
- Citizenship skills for children are important and must start early. There was some concern that there can sometimes be an over emphasis on rights and not enough attention paid to responsibilities.

5.5 UK Government Strategies to Tackling Poverty

The UK government is committed to addressing poverty and as such have introduced a number of anti poverty strategies which aims to provide support at different stages of development.

- Invested in Early Years education
- Set up Nurture classes
- Introduced Sure start programmes-integrated centres for under-fives as part of the Government Strategy Every Child Matters

With regards to anti -poverty initiatives this includes

- Support for Money Advice/Debt Management organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureaux
- Tax credits to supplement low income working families

There are also government initiatives to promote apprenticeships and training for unemployed school leavers and finally the modernising of Social Protection Schemes including a new clause of social status /low income in current Equality Bill

Nevertheless there are a number of challenges such as

- changing educational aspirations in low income communities
- Outcomes do not always reflect the rhetoric
- Perception of the causes of poverty in Britain differs from that of other European countries
- The divide between the wealthiest sector and the poorest sector has increased in the last decade
- The impact of the economic crisis

In the Scottish Government Anti-poverty Strategies include the following objectives

- To increase overall income and the proportion of income earned by the three lowest income deciles as a group by 2017 through either personal taxation; Welfare; Public Sector.

Within the public sector this may involve addressing pensioner poverty and those on low wages through a free bus pass/free personal care. In addition public sector low wages have been boosted via for example the Glasgow City Council Living Wage Initiative initially set at £7 per hour.

A further initiative is the example of addressing rural poverty is the Community Land buy outs in Islands such as Gigha where local control of the land has allowed the development of new, small cooperative ventures with incentives to attract younger people with children to increase the local population.

In respect of human rights the Scottish Government Social Inclusion Initiative has used human rights law to protect asylum seeker families. However a key difficulty for the Scottish Government is that it would appear to have to tie its anti-poverty strategy closely to UK initiatives because of its lack of independent economic controls.

Nevertheless there are a number of Human Rights and Equality Initiatives

- Race Relations Amendment Act 'General Duty' on Public Authorities-
- to promote good race relations among persons of different racial groups
- To promote equality of opportunity
- To rove unlawful racial discrimination
- Impact Assessment

There are currently courses within the education system available in relation to Human Rights namely University of the West of Scotland IPPRE Course (Introduction to Professional Practice in Racial Equality-twice yearly evening course)

6. Key Findings

- Poverty and social exclusion affects a wide range of groups in society spanning all demographics as well as minority groups such as Ethnic Minorities, asylum seekers and refugees, and those facing exclusion due to sexual orientation, disability or health and social problems.
- Poverty and social exclusion affects people's rights and opportunities across a number of areas
 - Housing
 - Social and leisure activities
 - Education and information
 - Employment
 - Health
- And, overall a 'lack of voice' means that their needs are not heard, nor do they have input into the design and delivery of services.
- Poverty and social exclusion is a multi dimensional problem and this needs to be acknowledged by all groups and individuals.
- One possible way forward to tackling poverty and social exclusion is through human rights education and democratic citizenship
- This approach to eradicating poverty and social exclusion requires EU member states, policymakers and NGO practitioners to share information and work together.
- Politically there is a need to seriously consider the interrelationship between xenophobic, homophobic and right wing extremist tendencies that put vulnerable groups across Europe at the risk of exclusion
- Sustainable funding and political commitment for education for democratic citizenship and human rights is crucial for long term capacity and maintaining high quality results.
- NGOs have a fundamental role to play in eradicating poverty. They need to focus on
 - Placing people at the core of their agenda
 - Non formal education needs to come from the bottom up as opposed to the top down.
 - Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education must link to peoples real lives and the focus must be about lifelong learning.
 - Learning and learning environments must be based on the learners needs and should be designed and developed with input from these individuals
- Finally those who are at risk of social exclusion often have 'no voice' and as such ways must be found to develop their leadership and participation skills.

Appendix: Conference Programme