

## Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee

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### Areas of action and work groups from January 2018

- Promotion of civil society participation in political decision making
- Prevention of corruption
- Protection of human beings and human dignity

and

Solidarity in responding to risks

### Context

There is a shrinking civil space in Europe and a crisis of European democracies in Europe. There is a loss of trust in the democratic process in Europe and an ongoing war on democracy inside Europe leading to populism, anxiety etc. There is a tendency towards centralisation, easily assimilated populism and digital technologies that can be asset for good governance. This committee aims to restore the bonds between governments and citizens

### Key points

CoE (Council of Europe ) is undergoing a difficult time. It has financial problems as a symptom of lack of revenue. Aspects of previous work of NGOs in CoE have been suspended because of budget cuts e.g. holocaust memorial and disabled rights initiative NGOs need to strengthen alliances with congresses of the region, exploit commonalities and develop strong relationship with parliamentarian assembly.

#### Key Focus 1: Equal access of men and women to participate in decision making in public life

We need equal access of men and women to participate in decision making in public life

There is a trend towards less women in political and public arena. Electoral systems may not make it possible to accede to elections and this should be reformed. There is a democratic deficit in parity in women and making taking political decisions within parliament. Virtually no parliament has the recommended 40% of MPs being women. Gender stereotypes of the roles of women in family and wider life need to be challenged. Women do not have time to devote time to political problems.

When women do participate in public life, different perspectives are offered which lead to different decisions than if the whole decision making process is undertaken by men only.

CoE works in Eastern countries and Balkans mostly to focus on training of female candidates because women here do not hold positions of responsibility and are not able to campaign themselves. CoE helps women to become campaigners, create and submit a political platform and familiarises them with a range of instruments.

**Outcome:** There will be a task force on Gender equality led by Anne Negre, Bettina Hahne

#### Key Focus 2: Social and territorial cohesion

As a reflection of European identity and diversity, the landscape is our living natural and cultural heritage, be it ordinary or outstanding, urban or rural, on land or in water. Climate change is always approached from a quantified approach and human rights are often overlooked.

NGOs need to Join forces and be active and do small activities that make it possible for things to change

Outcome: contribute to COP24 that will draw upon work done so far. People are invited to contact and participate

#### **Possible implications for Comenius Association Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee:**

CA can teach and help teacher trainers to think about role of women in political life of society and teach girls about identity and their role in politics and raise aspirations and discuss with boys about their identity in a more equal world.

Teacher trainees can learn how Children can discuss violence against women

Teacher trainees can think about gender construction as opposed to differences of sex

Participate in World Forum for Democracy "Women's participation in public and political affairs and combatting violence against women" Strasbourg, 19-21 November 2018

## **What are the working groups?**

Participation in democratic processes

Preventing corruption by engaging in the civil society

Protection of the dignity of human beings

Social and territorial cohesion (transversal working group)

+

*Transversal working group 'Poverty' Linked to Human Rights*

*Task Force on Migration*

## **What is going on in each working group?**

### *Working group Protection and dignity of the human being*

#### **TARGET GROUP**

This group has outlined as target group vulnerable or weak :

- The migrants: the minors, in particular isolated minors, women, in particular pregnant women, elderly migrants, the handicapped persons, the political and climatic refugees,
- Prisoners and their possible lack of access to human rights,
- Elderly and particularly isolated elderly,
- Children, in particular abused children,
- Issues on the topic of ethics such as bio-ethics, ...
- People roaming about, without address, being vulnerable, minors without address
- Stateless persons and marginalized persons

#### **TOPICS**

- Marginalization, exclusion
- Identities: the loss of identity and the administrative or juridical procedures for those who do not have a standard situation (for example in the case of loss of birth certificate)
- Inclusion and integration
- Access to care and healthcare
- Access to education and formation
- Good practices

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Collect and list the chosen elements (not exhaustive) that belong to the themes for every target group: link up these themes and target groups, analyze them.
- Collect negative and positive examples and situations being able to exemplify the analysis of the themes and the target group and realize syntheses for the elaboration of recommendations or resolutions taken by the general assembly of the reference committee or, for example, for distribution and dissemination in the Task Force Migrations. Joining the Seminar on "Rethinking the classroom in times of Superdiversity" is an option that is being considered.

#### **PRODUCTS/OUTCOMES**

At every meeting, the president will present a status of the project and he will make an assessment of every objective. He will take the steps that need to be taken.

The recommendations, the data sheets, the proposed resolutions will be the object of a common work of writing on the basis of the established elements. The president or the reporter will take care of their transmission at the

commission for validation after study thereof.

Niomi is in this working group, involved as secretary .

### **Possible implications for Comenius Association *Transversal working group 'Poverty'***

Implications for the Comenius Association :

This group want to focus on the most vulnerable in our society and collect, list and analyse positive and negative situations and experiences. Then in a second step the group will produce recommendations on a policy level on how to help and support those in our society who are the most in need. We have pinned down the target group to migrants, and within this group women, pregnant women, elderly and children. These children need access to education, and even more, need education that benefits their wellbeing. For this we need to look at curricula, and at the teachers that work with these children. The Comenius Association has been asked to help in collecting these examples, to help collecting ideas and results, both on the level of schools and teachers, as on the level of teacher training.

### **Transversal working group 'Poverty' Linked to Human Rights**

(A transversal working group exists to make connections between different thematic groups in NGO CofE.)

**Context:** there is Increasing populism and polarisation in Europe and this enmeshes with increasing inequalities. When there are wide inequalities there are senses of injustice that leads to populism

This leads to problems of poverty for people:

- Poor people vulnerable to Populism because they do not have access to information.
- Poor people exclude themselves from society and rights,
- Poor people suffer from health problems
- There is the problem that people are working but still find themselves in poverty
- There is a cycle of poverty
- Poverty leads to problems beyond solely economic problems
- Media needs to be challenged because it does not inform adequately ( implications here for education especially critical literacy)

### **The aims of the Transversal working group are:**

- Increase the enjoyment of social rights in Europe (use social charter <https://www.coe.int/en/web/turin-european-social-charter> ) to protect people and allow them to overcome poverty in many cases. Help people to not only have rights but also to enjoy them. Rights may be there but there may be complicated structures that prevent them from enjoying them.
- Identify what is happening and then act on it by first Monitoring and then Acting e.g. producing, acting, lobbying. There will be a Continuum from monitoring (gathering information) to action and use the information to do something that effects change.
- Group to work *with* people in a state of poverty so we are involving them as much as possible.
- Contribute to overcoming social and cultural exclusion, including that caused by self exclusion
- Recognise that education breaks poverty cycles, both access and sustained lifelong learning

### **Products/outcomes**

- Contribute to every cycle of assessments of the Social Charter
- Making use of all the existing documents and bring together to make easy kits that can be used for local training, awareness and campaigns therefore create a place for people to understand and make contact with other interested people.
- Use the 17<sup>th</sup> of October as the International Day to mark the fight against poverty and to use it in a way that can advertise the work being done and mark it with some form of event. Maintain involvement in these days while innovating the ways that we celebrate and make connections with products.

To achieve this there are three tracks on the Road map

### **Tracks:**

- Social rights
- Social inclusion
- Education

The task of each track is to:

- group to collect all relevant documents for the work of the group
- spread news and recruit
- have meetings of sub groups before August

#### **Possible implications for Comenius Association** *Transversal working group 'Poverty'*

Teachers work daily with children and parents who are living with poverty and inbuilt into teacher training can be understandings of *causes and consequences and experiences* of poverty. Comenius Association can contribute to this. How?

Children who will live in poverty can be taught *financial literacy*. This can be addressed by Comenius Association. Can children be taught how to *participate* in civil society to change their circumstances – this is linked to *critical literacy*.

Advocate for *systematic education* to protect people from and to bring them out of poverty

Teach Trainees about Media Education and reporting

\*People from the Inclusion Working group can be invited to participate in this working group

Jonathan Rooke is inside the Education track and will receive information about the working group and report to the Comenius Association

#### **Task Force on Migration**

This task force is a smaller group of experts than a 'work group'. The task Force has a limited number of participants, any people with core knowledge and experts are in this team. The restricted number of participants will enable the taskforce to handle quicker and swifter than other work groups.

#### **The aims of this task force are**

- Collect data and information of the current state of affairs on migration in Europe. The media does not (!) provide us of a full picture
- Find ways to inform all partners involved in an accurate way
- Find ways to counteract to populist voices
- Collect and analyse good practices by means of an enquete sent to all NGO's of the conference
- Set up a platform to correctly inform partners involved on current information and best practices.

#### **Possible implications for Comenius Association** *Task Force Migrations*

AS the members are limited to the currently existing members, we cannot join this task force. However, we explained the importance of feeding into the curricula of teacher training, and in-service training courses for teachers, and we now received a status as 'observing member'. We will be in CC with all communication, though we are not supposed to participate.

After more conversation on this topic, the CA should now write a document on what exactly we can do, to reinforce the taskforce, and then we will probably be granted full membership next year.

This Task Force closely works together with the Working Group PDHB (Protection of the dignity of Human Beings – see above) where Niomi is secretary. So we will be involved for sure, directly or indirectly.

#### **Working groups were not attended but do exist:**

- Participation in democratic processes
- Preventing corruption by engaging in the civil society
- Social and territorial cohesion (transversal working group)

### **Possible implications for Comenius Association Human Rights Committee**

In Comenius Association we teach out trainee teachers about disinformation and promoting media literacy – this can be done at primary and secondary school e.g. critical literacy can be linked to refugee literature/education for non refugees

Teacher Trainees can learn how to teach Media Education and teach about civil society education on reporting (Turkish journalist)

### **What will be the follow up?**

- World Forum for Democracy « Women's participation in public and political affairs and combating violence against women » (Strasbourg, 19-21 November 2018)
- Contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the 5th Global Summit of the Open Government Partnership (Georgia, July 2018)
- Contribution to the Fundamental Rights Forum of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (Vienna, September 2018,)
- Event to mark International Democracy Day (15 September 2018)