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Conference on “The role of NGOs in Education for Democratic Citizenship”
Warsaw, 21-24 April 2005

Declaration

The national and international non-governmental organisations meeting at the conference on “The role of NGOs in Education for Democratic Citizenship” held in the framework of the Polish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as a contribution to the 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education

- welcome the holding of this conference in Warsaw;
- take note with satisfaction of the exemplary partnership existing between the Council of Europe and INGOS;
- take note with satisfaction of the deep, ongoing commitment displayed by NGOs in 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education;
- recognise the impact of formal and non-formal education for building democratic societies and the crucial role of Education for Democratic Citizenship in all areas of social life;
- underline the value of non-formal education and learning carried out by NGOs in the field of Education for Democratic Citizenship and consider it necessary to develop innovative practices in such learning;
- emphasise the role of higher education institutions in fostering democratic values, in particular through the initial training of teachers;
- underline the importance of a balanced participation of women and men in decision-making bodies at all levels as a precondition for democratic citizenship;
- stress the need for further focussing on the vital role of young women and men and their organisations in building peaceful and democratic societies through their active participation in the decision-making processes;
- underline the necessity to include the participation of persons from migrant and ethnic minorities, and other disadvantaged groups at all decision-making levels;
- support the idea of an exchange between organisations, institutions and governments across borders and inside countries on best practices and encourage future regular reporting in order to measure progress made;
- call for the development of partnerships, particularly between civil society NGOs, community-based groups, opinion-formers and policy-makers at all levels;
- call for a public European debate on democratic citizenship – the skills, knowledge and attitudes an active and responsible citizen should have and ways to promote them;
- call on all institutions acting in the public sphere to ensure transparency and accountability;

- **call on the Council of Europe to:**
 - set up a system for quantitative and qualitative assessment of the results of the 2005 Year and the programme on Education for Democratic Citizenship,
 - ensure that the discussion papers, working documents and proposals on activities for the 2005 Year and beyond be disseminated as widely as possible,
 - make every effort so that all the networks and working contacts built up during the year continue and develop in the future;

- **call on all NGOs to:**
 - develop their own democratic structures and widen their accessibility,
 - practice the principles of democracy with their staff and volunteers,
 - ensure a balanced participation of women and men in their decision-making structures,
 - include young women and men in their decision-making processes,
 - highlight democratic values on all levels and foster a non-violent society without dividing lines,
 - pay special attention to the opportunities for children to learn and be educated in their mother tongue;

- **call on governments to:**
 - introduce education for democratic citizenship, including peace and human rights education, into school curricula, in order to combat violence, promote intercultural understanding, solidarity and encourage a climate of dialogue,
 - provide awareness-raising and training on how all stereotypes, including sexist stereotypes, lead to exclusion and constitute a hindrance to democracy,
 - incorporate activities into school education to create awareness of girls and boys, women and men, about the importance of gender equality as a prerequisite for democratic citizenship,
 - promote European identity on the basis of the principle “unity in diversity”, and to this effect, broaden European civil society as a strong and democratic one,
 - encourage increased co-operation between formal and non-formal education;

- **call on the Heads of State and Government, meeting at the Third Summit, and on all political leaders to**
 - strengthen their efforts to ensure equal access to quality education for all, including all disadvantaged sectors of society and ethnic, national, social, sexual, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities,
 - express their support for, and profound commitment to Education for Democratic Citizenship, and continue their efforts to make public opinion aware of this vital dimension of democracy,
 - support efforts by NGOs to encourage civic participation and to form effective, well-informed and committed citizens,
 - endorse the proposal of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly that a Convention of the Council of Europe on the guidelines for education for democratic citizenship be prepared,
 - support the organisation of an annual NGO forum on education for democratic citizenship;

- express their will to contribute to the sustainability of Education for Democratic Citizenship, and mobilise sufficient resources for this purpose in the year 2005 and beyond;
- devote themselves to the “All different, all equal” campaign on active participation and democratic citizenship in 2006 as a natural follow up for the Year.